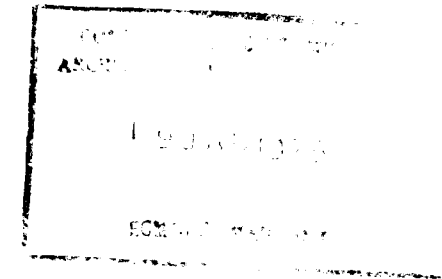


July-September 1975

Vol. XII No. 3



The Indian Economic and Social History Review

● The Indian Economic and Social
History Association
Delhi School of Economics
University Enclave
Delhi 110007

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd
5 Ansari Road
New Delhi 110002

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Institutions: Rs 60 \$16 £6
Individuals: Rs 20 \$8 £3

XL 2, N 75
N 75-12.3



PRINTED IN INDIA

At Delhi Printers, 21 Daryaganj, Delhi 110006, and Published
by Mrs Sharda Chawla, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd,
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

1120
**Factory Labour during the Early Years of
Industrialization: An Appraisal in the Light of the
Indian Factory Commission, 1890***

BANIPRASANNA MISRA

Factories on a modern scale came to be established in India after 1850. The two industries which figure prominently in this respect are cotton and jute. In 1889-90, there were 27 jute mills employing 62,789 persons, and 114 cotton textile mills where 99,224 persons were employed. Not much is yet known about the origin and growth of industrial labour force and also the life and condition of industrial labour during the early years of industrialization. Morris David Morris's book, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India*, although a highly valuable work, is confined to the Bombay cotton mills only because, in the opinion of Morris, 'satisfactory studies of the creation of an industrial labour force cannot be made on an all-India basis,' and also because 'all India studies tend to be too diffuse for precise analysis.'¹ Morris had made almost no use of the *Report of the Indian Factory Commission, 1890*. In his opinion, 'This testimony is difficult to quantify.'² He relied mainly on the Census data, Bombay Mill Owners' Association's Reports, and the survey conducted by them in 1940 of labourers in 19 Bombay mills. Because of gaps in data it was not possible for Morris to write exhaustively on the life and condition of factory workers during the early years of industrialization. More recent writers have also faced similar problem and have found that the evidence given before the Factory Commission of 1890 cannot provide a definitive quantified answer, but does produce enough qualitative data for some preliminary hypotheses.³

It may be mentioned here that the evidence of 96 mill operatives working

*The author is grateful to Professors Amalendu Guha and Ashok Sen of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, Professor Dharma Kumar of the Delhi School of Economics, and Arunendu Mukhopadhyay of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, for their comments and encouragement. However, for any mistake in the analysis, the author alone is responsible.

¹Morris David Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India*, 1965, pp. 4-5.

²*Ibid.*

³P.S. Gupta, 'Notes on the Origin and Structuring of the Industrial Labour Force in India—1880 to 1920,' *Indian Society—Historical Probings in Memory of D.D. Kosambi*, 1974, pp. 414-34, especially see p. 416.

THE INDIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY REVIEW

is a quarterly journal edited by a committee representing three disciplines: history, economics, and sociology. It published articles dealing with the economic and social history of India and other Asian countries and on related theoretical issues.

Contributors are requested to send their manuscripts in duplicate, typed double-space with wide margins. Footnotes should be numbered serially and references to literature cited should be carried within the footnotes; diacritical marks should be avoided. Each author will receive 25 offprints of his or her contribution and one copy of the journal free of charge. Additional copies will be supplied on request at cost price.

Editor

DHARMA KUMAR

Associate Editors

APARNA BASU, S. BHATTACHARYA, and OM PRAKASH

Editorial Advisers

RANAJIT GUHA, IRFAN HABIB, NURUL HASAN,
K.A. NAQVI, K.N. RAJ, TAPAN RAYCHAUDHURI,
AMARTYA SEN, R.S. SHARMA, and M.N. SRINIVAS

THE INDIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY REVIEW

Volume XII

July-September 1975

Number 3

FACTORY LABOUR DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION: AN APPRAISAL IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDIAN FACTORY COMMISSION, 1890 Baniprasanna Misra	203
LANDOWNERSHIP AND EQUALITY IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY, 1853-54 TO 1946-47 Dharma Kumar	229
THE BENGAL ZAMINDARS: LOCAL MAGNATES AND THE STATE BEFORE THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT Ratnalekha Ray	263
THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF VIVEKANANDA'S IDEOLOGY Prabha Dixit	293
SWAMI SHIVAGAN CHAND, KAYASTHA CONFERENCE ORGANIZER Lucy Cartoll	315
BOOK REVIEWS	
AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI, <i>Private Investment in India, 1900-1939.</i> by PARTHA SARATHI GUPTA	327
RICHARD G. FOX, <i>Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule: State-Hinterland Relations in Pre-Industrial India</i> , by VEENA DAS	329
ECKEHARD KULKE, <i>The Parsees in India. A Minority as Agent of Social Change</i> , by ASHISH NANDY	331
LALITA PANIGRAHI, <i>British Social Policy and Infanticide in India</i> , by VISHWA NATH	333
SARTAJ A. ABIDI and SURESH K. SHARMA (eds), <i>Fifty Years of Historical Writing</i> , by APARNA BASU	334
Obituary: Daniel Thorner (1915-1974), by DHARMA KUMAR	335

in various factories of Bombay, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, and Calcutta were recorded by the Commission. This is the only place where one gets a near-complete picture of factory workers in as early a year as 1890. Thus, there is considerable scope and necessity to re-examine the evidence and also to reset them in a proper historical perspective. It is curious to note that although the Commission interviewed such a large number of mill workers, they did not discuss the points which they could have discussed on the basis of the evidence in the main body of their Report. This was so because the Commission was primarily interested in policy prescription regarding hours of work. A modern researcher having a different frame of mind has to extract the relevant points from the lengthy and somewhat incoherent evidence. This paper treats the evidence of the 96, recorded by the Factory Commission, 1890, as so many case studies of factory workers at the close of the nineteenth century and tries to utilize them to the fullest extent possible. It may also be remarked here that the Government of India appointed sometime after this in 1907 the Indian Factory Labour Commission. Few workers were interviewed by this latter Commission. It remained satisfied with the evidence given mainly by the mill owners and managers, as did the Royal Commission of 1930. The Report of the Factory Commission, 1890, is thus the only place where the story of factory workers is narrated by such a large number of workers themselves.

Before we discuss any particular point let us examine the representative character of the evidence available to us. The Factory Commission was primarily entrusted with the work of determining appropriate hours of work for women, children, and male adults and also granting of holidays by employers to mill-hands. The Commission was to enquire among the operatives who were employed in the mills in the Bombay Presidency and the provinces of Bengal and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Oudh. The Commission was headed by A.S. Lethbridge and included, besides members, selected representative of the mill-hands to assist in the enquiry. For the Bombay Presidency, Narayan Meghaji Lokhanday, President of the Bombay Mill-hands Association, was selected. The representatives for Bengal and the NWFP were Rasiklal Ghose and Framji Manakji respectively. During the enquiry Sadasheo P. Kelkar, a missionary of the Prarthana Samaj, 'who takes an interest in the welfare of the Bombay operatives' volunteered to collect mill-hands for giving evidence before the Commission. The Commission interviewed 47 factory workers at Bombay, 11 at Ahmedabad, 13 at Kanpur, and 25 at Calcutta. (See Table 1 for sex, age, and industry-wise classification of worker witnesses.) Of those interviewed in Bombay 12 were produced by Lokhanday, five by Kelkar, and the remaining 30 workers were selected by the Commission. In contrast to this all the Ahmedabad workers were selected by the Commission itself. At Kanpur

TABLE 1
SEX, AGE, AND INDUSTRY-WISE DIVISION OF WORKER-WITNESSES

Mfg. Industry	Place	No. of Workers				Total Workers
		Sex		Age		
		Male	Female	12 and below	Above 12	
Cotton	Bombay	25	9	9	25	34
	Ahmedabad	7	4	3	8	11
	Kanpur	3	2	2	3	5
	Calcutta	6	1	1	6	7
Jute	Kanpur	2	1	—	3	3
	Calcutta	6	5	3	8	11
Woollen	Kanpur	2	1	—	3	3
Silk	Bombay	2	1	1	2	3
Flour	Bombay	2	—	—	2	2
Sugar	Calcutta	1	—	—	1	1
Leather	Kanpur	2	—	1	1	2
Paper	Calcutta	2	1	1	2	3
Printing Press	Bombay	3	—	—	3	3
Bone Mill	Calcutta	1	—	—	1	1
Copper	Bombay	1	—	—	1	1
Iron	Bombay	1	—	—	1	1
Gun and Shell	Bombay	1	—	—	1	1
	Calcutta	2	—	—	2	2
Mint	Bombay	2	—	—	2	2
Total	Bombay	37	10	10	37	47
	Ahmedabad	7	4	3	8	11
	Kanpur	9	4	3	10	13
	Calcutta	18	7	5	20	25
Grand Total		71	25	21	75	96

the Commission selected ten workers and the remaining three were produced by Framji Manakji. In Calcutta Ghose produced seven witnesses and 18 were chosen by the Commission. The representative of the operatives of each province was asked to arrange for the appearance before the Commission of men, women, and children who as mill-hands represented any labour organization or where there was no such organization were selected for their special intelligence or for their influence among fellow workers. The Commission after recording the evidence of mill-hands selected in the above manner proceeded to visit local mills without giving any previous notice and at different hours of the working day. On their arrival at the mill work was stopped and the operatives paraded outside. The Commission then

visited the factory premises and selected some workers. Each witness was examined separately in his own language and the answers recorded in detail by the President himself. Standard questions were adopted although in practice not all questions were asked to everyone. Thus it would appear that the workers selected as witnesses might reasonably be regarded as representatives of their class, although it is possible that they represented the slightly more advanced section among them. It is also possible that a little overweightage has been afforded to the proportion of women and children in the total number of labourers so selected.⁴ Further it needs hardly any mention that the size of the sample is definitely smaller than what one would perhaps expect in an ideal situation. But with historical data such lacunae are inevitable. Moreover, the final selection of labourers so made may be viewed as having been obtained through a two-stage stratified sampling and thus the efficacy of the data will perhaps not turn out to be negligible. (See Appendix 2 for industry and factory-wise number of worker-witnesses.) In what follows we shall analyze the available data for purposes of knowing the composition and condition of industrial labour force during the early years of industrialization. Where necessary such data will be supplemented by extracts from the evidence of operatives in the original report and from other sources.

II

One crucial point of investigation in the Indian context is the caste composition of industrial workers during the early years of industrialization, the data regarding which is presented in Table 2. (For an explanation of the caste names see Appendix 1.)

⁴Rajani Kanta Dass, *Factory Labour in India*, 1923. The author cites official data to show that during the last decade of the nineteenth century the percentage of male, female, and child labour was 80, 14, and 6 respectively; see especially p. 17. However, these data do not appear to be either reliable or comparable. The Factory Commission, 1890, observed the following distribution of labour force in some mills:

Ahmedabad Spg. and Weaving Mill	male: 977, female: 194; adult: 818, child: 353.
Kanpur Cotton Mill	male: 714, female: 111; adult: 774, child: 51.
Victoria Cotton Mill, Calcutta	male: 472, female: 91; adult: 406, child: 157.
Budge Budge Jute Mill	male: 3,342, female: 258; adult: 2,547, child: 1,053.
Baranagar Jute Mill	male: 4,326, female: 1,078; adult: 4,715, child: 689.

From these it will be noticed that distribution differed considerably between factories. Correct estimates will have to be made therefore after further investigation.

It will be noticed that the Marathas in Bombay, the Wagris in Ahmedabad, the Koeris in Kanpur, and the Muslims in Calcutta were the single largest group of industrial workers produced before the Commission as witnesses. This could not happen just accidentally if we consider the witnesses as representatives of their class. The Muslim workers were many in Ahmedabad as well. In Calcutta, Tanti and Bagdi caste workers were also quite frequent. In Ahmedabad and Calcutta no Brahmin workers are found in the list of witnesses. The single Kayastha worker in Calcutta was from Orissa. The Brahmin and Kayastha who formed the Bhadrakalok castes are not known to

TABLE 2
CASTE-COMPOSITION OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORK FORCE

Bombay	No.	Ahmedabad	No.	Kanpur	No.	Calcutta	No.
Maratha	21	Wagri	6	Koeri	4	Tanti	5
Bhandari	3	Muslim	4	Brahmin	2	Muslim	6
Wani	2	Rawul	1	Chamar	2	Bagdi	4
Brahmin	2			Ahir	2	Koiborto	2
Muslim	4			Chutri	1	Bairagi	2
Parsi	1			Kurmi	1	Kayastha	1
Dhobi	1			Muslim	1	Muchi	1
Mali	1					Teli	1
Teli	1					Sankari	1
Kamathi	1					Jaiswara	1
Kumbhar	1					Kandick	1
Muchi	1						
Gowra	1						
Sonar	1						
Kunbi	1						
Lohar	1						
Chutri	1						
Brahmo	1						
Caste unstated	2						
Total	47	Total	11	Total	13	Total	25

have joined the industrial labour force in Bengal. Taken as a whole it may be said that upper castes were rare among labourers in all places. Of the two Brahmin labourers of Bombay one came from Jounpur in the NWFP and the other from the Sholapur Collectorate. Sitaram the Brahmin who worked in mixing cotton in the Scott Cotton Press, Bombay, had left his family members in Sholapur where he had his house and fields. It was said of him, 'He visits his home, sometimes every year, sometimes once in two years, in the monsoon to cultivate his fields. He remains there two or three months.' He was recorded as saying, 'I want to earn money and go home.'

Of the two Brahmin labourers in Kanpur, one was 'ousted by a zamindar from his land. That is why he has come here.' The other had his mother and brother living at the village. He and his father remained in Kanpur and worked in the Kanpur Cotton Mills.

But even though a particular caste was rare among industrial workers it should be noted that people from many different castes came to work in factories and thus because of the common place of work they had to come in close contact. The caste prejudices were to be given up in such a situation but the transformation could not have taken place immediately. One of the questions that was asked to the mill operatives related to the hour of eating during factory work. The answers to this question incidentally refer to interesting die-hard caste prejudices among workers. Matha Bux, the Brahmin from Jounpur, cooked his own food and ate only once in the 24 hours at 9 or 10 P.M. Mir Mahomed, a worker of Ahmedabad, 'being a Mahomedan takes his food in the room' (i.e. work-room). Sunker, belonging to the Rawul caste, replied that he used to come outside to eat because, 'the Wagries or low caste people eat inside but the better caste men eat outside.' Sheo Shanker, a Brahmin worker of Elgin Mills, Kanpur, 'feels aggrieved here because of the arrangements for supplying water to the different castes.' About him it was recorded by the Commission, 'At noon he eats dry grain, being a Brahmin. He goes home and cooks and then eats his dinner, the only cooked meal in the day.' Almost the same was the case with Audhar, a Brahmin boy working in the throshles of Kanpur Cotton Mills, who 'could not get time even to eat all his dry food [*chabena*] at the recess. He eats cooked food daily once in the night' for 'being a Brahmin he cannot eat any cooked food here.' Kunhyi, the Chamar working in the machine for screwing the soles at Cooper, Allen and Co.'s Boot factory, Kanpur, also ate dry food during one hour's recess at 12 noon. It is not known, however, if he ate dry food for fear of polluting other higher castes working in the boot factory. That eating food was difficult for many workers is corroborated by the Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908 also. Gangaram Kandas and Asa Ranechond, Kunbi patidars working as weavers in a cotton mill at Ahmedabad, submitted in a memorandum before the Commission that '... mills ought to be made to provide shelters or rooms where the workers can eat their meals. We Kunbis are put to great inconvenience in finding a place to eat our food outside, where we can avoid contamination by lower castes.'⁵ In this connection it may also be noticed that in selecting occupations like

⁵Indian Factory Labour Commission, 1908, *Report with Evidence*, Vol. 2, p. 28. See also Morris David Morris, *Caste and the Evolution of the Industrial Workforce in India*, 1960. Morris says: 'There is no substantial evidence to indicate that there have been any serious problems raised by arrangements that in the villages represent quite sensitive areas of inter-caste relations.' See pp. 131-32,

those of weaver, spinner, doffer, turner, etc., caste considerations were apparently ignored by prospective labourers but in certain occupations caste prejudices appear to have been quite significant. Thus we find Kunhyi, the Chamar, attending the machine for screwing the soles in the shoe factory at Kanpur and also Junggy Khan, a Muslim, working in the bone crushing machine of Bally Bone Mill. This does not imply that Muslims or Chamars were engaged only in leather or bone work. They were offered other occupations in jute or cotton textile factories as well. But it appears that the higher caste people were as yet reluctant to take up very lowly occupations.

III

It has been noticed that it was predominantly the members of the so-called lower castes who had joined the working class during the early years of industrialization. The lower castes are generally known to contract their marriages early. The demographers who worked with Indian data have generally concluded that age at marriage in India is very low and that it was more so some hundred years back. The villagers and the lower caste people have been particularly spotted out in this regard.⁶ From Table 3, giving the marital status of factory workers as obtained from our sample,

TABLE 3
MARITAL STATUS OF FACTORY WORKERS

Age Group	Male				Female				Grand Total
	Un-married	Married	Widower	Total	Un-married	Married	Widow/ Separated	Total	
10-10	3	—	—	3	—	1	—	1	4
10-15	25	—	—	25	2	—	—	2	27
15-20	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	2	3
20-25	1	10	—	12*	—	2	2	4	16
25-30	3	7	—	10	—	4	4	8	18
30-35	—	7	1	8	—	3	1	4	12
35-40	1	3	—	4	—	—	1	1	5
40-45	—	5	—	5	—	—	3	3	8
45-50	—	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	2
50-55	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Total	33	35	2	71*	2	11	12	25	96

*Marital status of one male worker belonging to the age group 20-25 was not available in the Report.

⁶Edwin D. Driver, *Differential Fertility in Central India*, 1963, see esp ch. 4 on 'Age at Marriage and Socio-economic Status'; see also S. N. Agarwala, *A Demographic Study of Six Urbanising Villages*, 1970, see esp ch. 6 on 'Marriage and Gauna.'

it will be noticed that no male below 15 was married. There are 50 male workers in the sample below the age of 30 out of which 32 are in the unmarried group and only 18 of them married. About females there were three of them below 15 out of whom only one was married. However, there are no unmarried females in the sample for ages 15 and above. All above 15 are either married or widowed or separated. Eleven females out of 25 are in the married group. It therefore appears from Table 3 that the marriage age was generally 20 and above for the male labourers, and for the females the corresponding age was usually above 15. This conclusion sounds so different from what we have known previously that further research on this line should be undertaken without any bias or preconceived notion whatsoever. The data presented here is sufficient to cast doubt on our currently held notion and justify a *prima facie* case for further investigation.

IV

From a careful scrutiny of all relevant information the following has been worked out to indicate the places of origin of the Bombay workers as obtained in our sample. It will be seen from Table 4 that Ratnagiri was the single largest source of industrial workers for Bombay; Ratnagiri and Kolabe, i.e. the Konkan area, accounted for 22 out of 46 workers interviewed at Bombay. Nine out of 46 or about 20 per cent of the workers were, however, recruited from the Bombay city only. Thus it appears that by 1890 Bombay city had become the permanent home of many people who lived by labour alone. Seven out of 40 workers came from the NWFP or what is now known

TABLE 4
SOURCES OF SUPPLY OF BOMBAY INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Area	No. of workers
Ratnagiri	16
Kolaba	6
Nasik	1
Bombay	9
Poona	5
Sholapur	1
Benares	3
Jounpur	2
Allahabad	1
Farukhabad	1
Unspecified	1
Total	46*

*One of the workers working in a Jalgaon factory excluded from the above Table.

as U.P. This is not an insignificant figure and points to high mobility among workers even some hundred years ago. In 1908, Shiva Bhawaji, a Maratha working as a jobber in the Sun Mills, Bombay, claimed before the Indian Factory Labour Commission: 'Very few of the Bombay Mill operatives are permanently settled down in Bombay—almost all of us have our homes in Ratnagiri district and the Konkan, and we go there once or twice every year for a short visit. When a man is too old to work he does not return to Bombay but passes his old age at home, being helped by remittances sent from Bombay by working members of his family. Our children are as a rule all born in Ratnagiri district, not in Bombay.'⁷ The composition of worker-witnesses produced before the Commission of 1890 gives a somewhat different picture; so the very first sentence in the above statement should be regarded as pertaining to that section of the Bombay operatives who hailed from Konkan instead of a general proposition applicable to all labourers. It is also noticeable that there was no labour movement from the south to Bombay excepting possibly that of the only Kamathi in our sample.⁸

In contrast to the Bombay workers, a large number of whom migrated from other places, the Ahmedabad mill workers were residents of Gujarat. Most of the Ahmedabad mill-hands had their permanent residence in Ahmedabad city itself or in the neighbouring villages. Some of them came from the Baroda state and Palanpur also. The Kanpur workers also gave their usual residence as Kanpur or neighbouring districts.

Twelve out of 25 or about 50 per cent of workers interviewed in Calcutta factories came to work from Calcutta or its nearby villages, in striking contrast to Bombay. If we take the workers from Cuttack, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Chuprah, Patna, and Jounpur together the total figure comes to eight. Thus eight out of 25 or about one-third of the Calcutta mill-hands migrated from outside the state in 1890. This is not to deny that in certain factories many mill-hands were recruited from other states. The Commission noted that the majority of the hands in the Bally Paper Mill were upcountry men. But there must have been other mills where the local Bengalis predominated. In 1908 when giving evidence before the Indian Factory Labour Commission, Kirtivas Mandal, Gopalsing Baru, Bibinchand Bairagi, Loku Ramjan, and Umedali Malikhina, who were all weavers in the Budge Jute Mills near Calcutta, stated that 'out of 325 weavers in Mill No. 1 where we work about 315 are Bengalis belonging to villages in the neighbourhood of the mill; only 8 or 10 are upcountry men.'⁹

⁷n. 5, p. 156.

⁸Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, 1971, pp. 93-102.

⁹n. 5, p. 278.

TABLE 5
SOURCES OF SUPPLY OF CALCUTTA WORKERS

Area	No. of workers
Calcutta and neighbourhood	12
Hooghly	1
Nadia	1
Bankura	1
Midnapore	2
Cuttack	2
Gaya	2
Bhagalpur	1
Chuprah	1
Patna	1
Jounpur	1
Total	25

An analysis of the evidence of the 96 mill-hands shows that some of the workers had no country home and were born and brought up in their places of work such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, and Calcutta. Another section of mill-hands, which came originally from the countryside to work in the factories located in the towns, migrated along with their family members and in 1890 they were not found to be maintaining any link with their original place of residence. Only a section of the workers were found during the enquiry to have links with their country home. Members of their family stayed behind to work in fields. The city worker would go home for a change, to see parents, or on the occasion of death or marriage in the family, or where they themselves fell ill. But they would rarely participate in the agricultural work during their stay there. A negligible few had living links with village and agriculture in the sense that they would definitely go to villages to help in cultivation. Mill-hands like Dhoorpathee of Bombay who 'goes once every year to her home for a month or so for cultivation' or like Majoo Maithi of Calcutta who had village home, land and bullocks and who used to go home after a year and a half or two years and stay eight or ten months to work in his fields were exceptions rather than the general type one could expect to meet among industrial workers of 1890. The Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908 had written in its report that 'the habits of the Indian factory operatives are determined by the fact that he is primarily an agriculturist, or a labourer on the land. In almost all cases his hereditary occupation is agriculture. . . . Whenever factory life becomes irksome, the operative can return to his village; there is probably always work of some kind for him there

if he wishes it; and in most cases he is secured against want by the joint family system.' Even a casual glance through the evidence as given in the original report will show how mistaken this idyllic notion held by the Commission had been. Even in 1890 the so-called close ties of the factory worker with villages was largely a myth. Morris David Morris has greatly helped to show the falsity of such notions in his book. The findings obtained by him for Bombay during this century hold perhaps equally good for any industrial centre of India. The condition of those who opted for factory work did not differ in substance between regions. In Table 6 is tabulated what appears to be the link of factory workers with villages and agriculture.

TABLE 6
LINK OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS WITH VILLAGES AND AGRICULTURE

Category	Centre	No. of Workers
Strong link	Bombay	13
	Ahmedabad	—
	Kanpur	2
	Calcutta	7
	Total	22
Negligible link	Bombay	10
	Ahmedabad	1
	Kanpur	3
	Calcutta	6
	Total	20
No link	Bombay	24
	Ahmedabad	10
	Kanpur	8
	Calcutta	12
	Total	54
Grand Total	All Centres	96

NOTE : (1) Strong link with villages and agriculture is assumed for those who have both land and houses in villages and who also periodically visit there and participate in agricultural operations.

(2) Negligible link with villages and agriculture holds for those who have houses but no land and who do not visit to participate in agricultural work.

(3) Those workers who do not fall in any of the above categories and who appear to have no country home nor any link with rural occupation belong to the third category of workers having no link with villages and agriculture.

Thus, it will be noticed that 54 out of 96 workers or a little more than 56 per cent had no link with villages and agriculture. Only 23 per cent had land

and houses in villages and they would periodically visit home and participate in agricultural occupations. Where less than one out of every four workers is definitely known to have strong ties with villages, any generalization that all or even a majority had rural mooring is completely unwarranted. The majority of the workers appear rather to belong to the category of those who had been pushed out of the village by insufficiency of livelihood. The data on marital status presented earlier support this conclusion. Not only did the majority of them had no link with agriculture and other allied occupations, but they also had overcome to some extent, maybe because of pressing economic compulsions, the rural way of life, if marital data can be any indicator of it. In the case of Ratnagiri which had supplied 16 workers to Bombay only seven retained strong ties with their original place of migration at the time the enquiry was conducted. Four out of those 16 had definitely lost all links with villages. It is also remarkable that in Ahmedabad ten out of 11 workers and in Kanpur eight out of 13 had no ties with villages. Compared to Bombay or Calcutta, Ahmedabad and Kanpur were both smaller urban centres, but the proportion of workers without any link with villages is on the higher side. Thus, it appears that, at this stage of development, there is no appreciable relation between the growth of urban centres and the extent of proletarianization.

V

What were the reasons for joining the factory? A few of the answers are worth looking into seriously. Suckram, a sorter in the Kashipur Jute Pressing Factory, Calcutta, gave a poignant reply. He said: 'We are labouring people; our business is to work if we can get work. What I want is to earn more money.' There were others like Sunker who worked in an Ahmedabad mill simply because he preferred to work for his living although his people had been beggars by profession. Ramdai of Kanpur Woollen Mills belonged to a criminal tribe but 'came here in the last famine for work.' Many Bengali women employed in the Calcutta mills worked because they were widows. 'Unless Bengali women are widows they do not come to work in the mills.' The cases of Suckram, Sunker, Ramdai, or of the many Bengali widows have one common characteristic. It is that they had nothing else to lean upon as a source of livelihood but to sell their labour-power. The beggars, criminal tribes, or the widows were such for whom the traditional society of the time had failed to make any viable provision. The newly opened factories in the comparatively freer urban centres provided them with a promising shelter.

Let us also examine the situation of the child labourers in this regard. The father of Kamasimidoo, a Bagdi boy working in the Kashipur Gun Shell Factory, Calcutta, was a fruit-seller. The father of Baboo, a Muslim

boy, working in the Bally Paper Mill, worked as a thatcher. Venkoo Ramaya, a boy of 11, worked in the Hindustan Mill, Bombay, while his mother earned something by selling country cheroots. These children had to work in factories to earn their living presumably because they did not come from any land-owning class and had no prospect in the occupations pursued by their parents. Most of the boys of eight to ten years had to work against their wishes. They had to supplement the income of their guardians. Kondee, a 25-year-old female, when asked how she came to be a mill-hand herself at ten, said, 'her parents beat her and compelled her to go to the mill.'

The marginal farmers and landless labourers, some among whom also had swelled the ranks of industrial workforce were, however, definitely unlike the above category—they were not the lumpens of the old Indian village civilization. Sitaram, the Brahmin, who worked in the Scott Cotton Press, Bombay, had his house and fields in the Sholapur Collectorate, but came to work here because he wanted more money. Bhola, a weaver in the Kanpur Woollen Mills, was a ryot formerly. He had his land, but 'there not being sufficient work for him at home he came here.' Ramdeen, a Chutri boy, working in the same mill had to come because 'his fields have been taken by the zamindar since his father's death,' and also because 'he did not find the occupation of a herdboys sufficiently remunerative for him.' Sheo Shankar of Elgin Mills, Kanpur, also came to work in a factory because 'he was ousted by a zamindar from his land.'

Alongside the decay taking place in the established rural order and the sinking of the village economy, first out of its inherent internal contradiction and then because of the external onslaught carried out by an imperialist state, another group of people were also being gradually thrown out of their traditional sources of livelihood, and thus had no option other than accepting the role of a wage labourer in the modern factories. Mir Mahomed, a weaver working in the Gujarat Spinning Mill, provides one such example. His parents had been working as independent weavers but he himself was compelled to join a factory. Rajab was another Muslim boy who was working in the Kanpur Jute Mills. From his testimony before the Commission it is known that 'his father worked in the same mill. His father has just joined it. He used to be a weaver at his own house.' Mahabeer, a boy of nine, belonging to the Chamar caste, had joined as a learner in the Cooper, Allen and Co.'s Boot factory at Kanpur, while his father was an independent artisan in the local bazar. Natha, a turner at the lathe machine in the Byculla Iron Works, Bombay, said, 'those who love money go to the mill which enables them to earn more.' He was a native of Farukhabad, and belonged to the Lohar or blacksmith caste. Presumably he had been an independent artisan in his village before travelling such a long distance to Bombay.

It is but highly natural that when the structure of a traditional society

develops so many cracks and slowly but definitely gives way, the superstructure built over it also cannot sustain for long. The case of Vinayak, a boy of 11, who had just joined, perhaps as a learner, in Jewraj Balloo's Cotton Mill in Bombay, provides an example. His native place was Alibag in the Kolaba district. It was only ten months since he came to Bombay along with his father. He did no gainful work for the first nine months. It was documented by the Commission: 'His father is a sort of priest in his caste, and gets his living from others of his caste. His father sent him to the mill.'

From a review of the cases enumerated above it will be clear that there was little basis for the general remark passed by the Commission of 1908 that 'whenever factory labour life becomes irksome, the operative can return to his village; there is probably always work of some kind for him there if he wishes it; and in most cases he is secured against want by the joint family system.' The joint family system, whatever its worth may be, cannot survive in the families of those who live by hard labour. What holds good for the propertied section of the society should not be assumed to be true for all.

For the purposes of a meaningful analysis, the workers can therefore be classified into four categories by their sources of origin: (i) Agriculturists, including the marginal farmers and landless labourers in the field; (ii) artisans and manufacturing classes, including weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and the like; (iii) service workers, e.g. priests, washermen, etc.; (iv) lumpens, including beggars, criminal tribes, and widows. Had there been no change in the traditional occupation of a Brahmin, for instance, then immediately he could be supposed to be a service worker. But if information other than caste, like that available regarding sex, marital status, and actual occupational practice before joining the industrial work force, is also taken into account, then a Brahmin may be found to be an agriculturist and not a priest. Similarly a Teli, i.e. oil-presser, is a manufacturing caste, but it was in our sample that one of the Telis was an agriculturist before joining the factories. It was possible to analyze the necessary data for 92 of the 96 workers available in our total sample (see Appendix 1), and the following distribution was obtained. Out of the 92 workers, 19 came from agriculture, 11 from manufacturing and artisan classes, service sector provided four, lumpens were 42, and the remaining 16 workers were believed to be pursuing more than one of the above occupations, and hence the last one formed a mixed category. If we allocate the 16 workers pursuing a mixed occupation equally between the four principal sectors then the distribution would be as given in Table 7.

This analysis into the origin of the industrial labour force has some important bearing for the economic historian writing on India. Why did the agricultural productivity remain stagnant in India during the nineteenth century,

TABLE 7

CLASSIFICATION OF FACTORY WORKERS BY INDUSTRIAL SOURCES OF ORIGIN

Source	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	23	25.0
Manufacturing	15	16.3
Service	8	8.7
Lumpen	46	50.0
Total	92	100.0

and the mode of production in agriculture was not revolutionized despite some attempts at industrialization here and there? In the light of the above discussion the following hypothesis may be advanced to be examined and tested upon in greater details in future. It has generally been noticed in the writings on economic history that in the beginning of an industrial revolution the interests of the manufacturing bourgeoisie demand that people be released in increasing numbers to work in factories. Also in certain situations the demand for extra food and more so of raw materials to be processed by manufacturing can be met only by revolutionizing agriculture. The satisfaction of these needs of the industrial bourgeoisie leads to a number of possible situations. In the case of England, the classical instance of industrial revolution, these needs were satisfied through the enclosure movement which helped increase agricultural production and also released labour force to be employed in manufacturing. However, the colonies under the Empire being the principal source of raw material for the British manufacturer, the solution of the problem of making a large labour force available for industrial employment seems to have been the major achievement of large capitalist farming in England. The Poor Law administration for the surplus labour force supplemented the efforts of the capitalists in the same direction.

The second course is what appears to have been charted by India. Till the middle of the nineteenth century the principal non-agricultural activities developed in this country were limited to either mining or plantations. And, as is well known, the supply of the bulk of labour force for these two was provided by the aboriginals living in India's forests or hill areas, and practising little of settled agriculture. After the middle of the nineteenth century when factories began to be set up on any appreciable scale the labour force was provided from a number of sources: (i) artisans who had lost their employment already by a competition from cheap manufactured goods from Britain; (ii) criminal tribes, beggars, and other lumpens of the old social order; (iii) people serving the superstructure of the rural economy like the priests, barbers, washermen, etc.; and (iv) the agricultural population

properly so called, including the marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The total labour force demand from the manufacturing sector bore such a small proportion to the total population that there was possibly no need to release people by revolutionizing agriculture. Moreover, in contrast to England, India had a large supply of people from the other three categories mentioned above. The large population of artisans and superstructural classes provided a testimony to the glory of her past great civilization while the equally impressive size of tribals, beggars, and lumpens indicated the failure of it. But what is important here is that small farming could be, by and large, left in its traditional state undisturbed. This may also explain to an extent why the controversy of land tenure throughout this period was limited only within the narrow framework of zamindari versus ryotwari, or between permanent and temporary settlement of revenue.

VI

One of the major considerations that led to the appointment of the Factory Commission was the regulation of child labour and hours of work in factories. It must have been noticed from Table 3 that 31 workers out of 96 in our total sample belonged to the age group below 15. Since when did the problem of child labour assume great importance in India? Or, was it existent right at the beginning of industrialization? From whatever data available with us an attempt has been made to answer this question. In this connection reference can be made to Table 8 wherein workers have been cross-classified by their age and year of joining the labour force. In some cases considerable discretion had to be applied before classification could be attempted.

TABLE 8
WORKERS CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO YEAR OF JOINING
LABOUR FORCE AND AGE AT THE TIME OF JOINING

Age at the time of joining	Year of joining						Total
	1860-65	1865-70	1870-75	1875-80	1880-85	1885-90	
5-10	—	—	1	—	2	14	17
10-15	—	1	2	9	5	17	34
15-20	—	1	1	5	2	10	19
20-25	1	—	1	3	6	7	18
25-30	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
30-35	—	—	—	1	1	—	2
35-40	—	—	—	—	—	4	4
40-45	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	1	2	5	18	16	54	96

But it is hoped that the grouping of five years data together would reduce most of the errors and that the resultant Table 8 is fairly reliable. It will be noticed that 54 workers out of 96 in our sample had joined during 1885-90 and 14 of them were below ten at the time of joining. During 1880-85 the number of workers joining labour force was 16 and only two of them were below ten. No worker in the sample joining during 1860-70 and 1875-80 was below ten. Only one out of five among those joining in 1870-75 was below ten. It thus appears that up to around 1875 the problem of child labour in Indian factories was negligible. This might have been a subsequent development arising out of the need of a rapidly growing industry and competition faced by employers from both within and outside the country.¹⁰

VII

The data presented above show the need for thoroughly re-examining the emergence of an industrial labour force in India. Many of the currently held notions are derived from partial observations made by the Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908 and the Royal Commission on Labour of 1930. The opinions of these Commissions have made the picture obscure and sometimes misleading too. Another example is that of labour turnover. It has widely been believed that labour turnover in the Indian industries has always been very high. The factory worker would leave work on the slightest pretext and his services would therefore no longer be available to the employer for any considerable length of time continuously. Further, the workers alone are sometimes blamed for such a state of affairs notwithstanding the seasonality of work in many factories, particularly so a hundred years back, and the not-so-attractive service conditions and rules prevailing in them.

It is difficult to calculate the rate of labour turnover according to its orthodox definition from the data we have. But for operational purposes, most of the theoretical definitions given in economics have to be reduced and adjusted, and we propose to do the same with this vexed question also. We have cross-classified the workers according to their total length of service since joining the rank of work force and the number of years they have put in in a particular factory in which they were found at the time of enquiry. When a worker leaves a particular factory the following courses are open to

¹⁰Rajani Kanta Das, *Factory Legislation in India*, 1923, see pp. 5-14, wherein the author enquires into the origin of the movement for factory legislation in India. He finds that the demand for factory legislation originated from representatives of Manchester interests during the years 1874 to 1876 when the growth of female and child labour force and also long hours of work in the Indian factories made them apprehensive of losing their grip over Indian market.

him: (i) joining another factory; (ii) reverting to the village; (iii) joining a non-industrial occupation in an urban area; or (iv) ceasing to work altogether. The last three situations will remain unaccounted for in the cross-classification that we have attempted, and turnover because of them will remain unknown for the present. For a total of 88 workers out of 96, the length of service in the present job and in all occupations taken together are given. From a cross-classification of data pertaining to these 88 workers it was found that 68 of them had continued to serve in the same factory throughout their working career. It is, however, not improbable that the selection of witnesses was somewhat influenced by a continuous and satisfactory service over a long period. This factor might have been decisive, particularly in the case of those witnesses produced by the so-called labour representatives for different provinces. All the witnesses produced by the labour representatives in Calcutta and Kanpur, and ten out of 17 produced similarly in Bombay had had a continuous service under the same employer. Out of 27 nominations made by the labour representatives 20 workers had been serving under the same employer throughout their career. This forms 74 per cent of all nominations. From a comparison of this figure with the entries in Table 9

TABLE 9
LABOUR TURNOVER

<i>Length of service (in years)</i>	<i>No. of workers serving through- out in the same factory</i>	<i>Cumulative frequency of Col. 2</i>	<i>Total workers serving X years or less</i>	<i>Percentage of workers serving throughout in the same factory to all workers</i>
1	2	3	4	5
1*	20	20	20	100.0
2	8	28	29	96.6
3	8	36	39	92.3
4	6	42	48	87.5
5	4	46	53	86.8
6	1	47	56	83.9
7	1	48	58	82.8
8	2	50	61	82.0
9	1	51	62	82.3
10	3	54	65	83.1
11	2	56	67	83.6
12	3	59	71	83.1
15	3	62	81	76.5
18	1	63	82	76.8
19	2	65	84	77.4
20	2	67	86	77.9
25	1	68	88	77.4

*Includes all workers who had served for one year or less.

there is no reason why it should be treated as something exceptional. Further, it is improbable that the regular members of the Commission, or its Chairman, were also motivated to select only those having a long and continuous service record under an employer. It can therefore be concluded that the picture obtained from Table 9 is a fair indicator of contemporary labour turnover. Not one out of 20 workers who had worked for one year or less had changed his job. There were nine workers who had been working for two years. Only one among them changed his employer in these two years. Two from among ten workers who had been working for three years never changed their employer. Out of nine workers working for a length of four years only three had changed their employer. Thus the labour turnover does not appear to have been exceptionally high. It compares favourably with that prevailing in other industrial countries during the period under study, and unless it can be shown that a large number of factory workers in India used to revert to villages or cease working altogether, the notion that labour turnover in India was exceptionally high may have to be recast.

VIII

The wage rates in certain selected occupations in the cotton textile industry are presented in Table 10. It appears that an industrial worker used to receive between two to eight rupees per month depending on the place, nature of occupation, his age, and experience. These rates do not appear to have been very high. Even the much talked about tea garden coolie in Assam or an agricultural worker could not have been worse off. Considering the conditions and hours of work in factories it may be said that unless workers were pushed out of villages and their traditional occupations they would scarcely have joined the industrial work force. The presence of a large number of erstwhile lumpens must have facilitated the payment of low wages to the factory worker.¹¹

The Factory Commission of 1890 asked its worker-witnesses the following questions:

'If you leave the mill will there be candidates ready to fill your place? About how much would a successful candidate have to give as *bukhsheesh* to those who got him the appointment?'

¹¹ D. Mazumdar, 'Labour Supply in Early Industrialization: The Case of the Bombay Textile Industry,' *The Economic History Review*, August 1973, pp. 477-96. In this article the indexes of industrial and agricultural earnings for the period 1900 to 1937 have been compared, and it has been observed that the wages in the textile industry was maintained at the higher level than the alternative earnings of labour in the rural sector. Even if it is held true for the period 1900 to 1937 the methodology and data used by Mazumdar are not beyond doubt. The wage differential between agriculture and industry from the mid-nineteenth century onwards need rather to be examined from disaggregated data at the micro-level.

TABLE 10
WAGE RATES IN COTTON INDUSTRY FOR SELECTED OCCUPATIONS
(in rupees per month)

Occupation	Bombay	Ahmedabad	Kanpur	Calcutta
Winder	6.50 to 10.00	—	3.00 to 4.00	—
Doffer	6.00 to 8.00	2.00 to 4.50	2.00	2.00 to 3.50
Weaver	10.00 to 15.00	—	10.00 to 15.00*	10.00 to 14.00*
Rover	12.00 to 14.00	8.00 to 10.00	—	5.00 to 11.50
Reeler	7.00 to 9.00	—	6.00	—
Throstle-boy	8.00	—	3.00	—
Piecer	10.00 to 13.00	8.00	—	—
Drawer	9.00	8.00	—	3.50*

*Refers to wage rates for similar occupations prevailing in woollen or jute mills.

The characteristic replies to these were: 'Yes, at once. There are lots of them', 'There are a number of weavers waiting to take my place', 'There are plenty of people waiting to take her place', and so on. There were a few exceptions to these, e.g., the worker who came from Jalgaon replied: 'There is not much competition. There is generally want of men for six months in Jalgaon, because they have lots of other work available.' A labourer of a copper factory said: 'They cannot get trained men easily.' But this was not always so because Sorabjee, an experienced turner in the Government Gun-Carriage Factory, said that 'there are other men available to take his place if he goes.' Generally speaking, a picture of labour abundance and not of labour scarcity emerges from a scrutiny of the answers given by the mill operatives.

In Bombay it appears that the custom of giving buksheesh for getting a job was not common because none of the workers complained about it. This custom existed, however, in the factories at Ahmedabad. Ballee, a worker in the Tricumlall Harilall Spinning and Manufacturing Factory, Ahmedabad, was recorded as saying, 'In other mills they do give the overseers buksheesh.' In the two former mills she paid Rs 2 each to *muccadums*

(labour overseer). Sunker of the same mill, who had formerly worked in the Gujarat Weaving and Spinning Company and also in the Ahmedabad Spinning and Weaving Factory, said, 'The *muccadums* in other mills take 3 to 5 rupees for appointing a hand; but if this is mentioned by the operative he is certain to be dismissed.' He also said that in his former mill the head-man wanted Rs 5, but he actually paid him Rs 2.50. But then there was a dispute over this and he had to leave that mill ultimately. In Kanpur also the same custom prevailed. From the evidence of Sheo Shankar of the Elgin Mills, Kanpur, it is known that the *mistry* (foreman) sometimes took Rs 5 for each winder admitted. About Calcutta operatives the information on this point is insufficient because the question was not asked of most of them. But from the evidence given before the Indian Factory Labour Commission in 1908 by Kazi Zahir-ud-din Ahmed, the Chairman of a labour association of Calcutta, it is known that giving buksheesh for getting a job was prevalent in Calcutta factories. In his oral evidence before the Commission, Kazi Zahir-ud-din said, 'The operatives were compelled to tip the *sirdar* or *babu* before obtaining employment. The weavers paid him from Rs 2 to Rs 8. A shifter boy had to give up one week's wages. In the preparing room Rs 2 were paid, and in the machine sewing from Rs 2 to Rs 4. In the hand-sewing room the "admission fee" rose to Rs 2, and then the head *sirdar* took from each hand one or two annas a week. The *sirdar* and *babu* worked together. The *babu* sometimes received half the money, and sometimes a quarter, depending upon his influence over the *sirdar*. When there was a shortage of labour, the *sirdar* allowed a hand to come in without any admission fee. The head *sirdar* received about Rs 30 from the mill, and made at least Rs 100 a month in *dasturi*. It was perfectly true that the *sirdars* made the hands leave in order to change them about, and allow new hands to come in that gave them more money.'¹² It is possible that the same type of situation had prevailed in 1890 as well. The practice of bribing the *babu* is another pointer to the fact that labour supply might have been abundant even though it might not have been equally abundant everywhere. The wage rates were generally lower in Kanpur and Calcutta than in Bombay or Ahmedabad. Whether and how far this was due to differential availability of labour force in different places cannot be decided from the data at our disposal immediately.

IX

We have attempted to derive as many conclusions as possible from the *Report of the Indian Factory Commission, 1890*. It must be admitted however

¹²n. 5, pp. 263-65.

that the conclusions are tentative and further supplementary data will have to be collected from other sources. Also the grounds covered are not exhaustive. Nevertheless, very useful, if tentative, conclusions can be drawn on such topics as caste composition, age at marriage and marital status, areas of migration and link with villages, reasons for joining industrial work force, growth of child labour, labour turnover, wage rates, labour abundance, and corrupt practices. The discussions on age at marriage of industrial workers, growth of child labour, and labour turnover in particular show that current preconceptions need to be revised, besides demonstrating in a general way how valuable the descriptive data thrown up by the Indian Factory Commission, 1890, become, if analyzed rigorously.

APPENDIX I
EXPLANATION OF CASTE NAMES AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE
SAMPLE WORKERS INTO VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL CATEGORIES
PRIOR TO THEIR JOINING FACTORY EMPLOYMENT

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Traditional Occupation</i>	<i>No. of workers by actual occupation before joining factories</i>	
Maratha	Warriors; agriculturist; artisan—potter, blacksmith, oil Presser, carpenter, etc.; service-worker—gardener, barber, washer-men, etc.	Agriculture	— 6
		Lumpen	— 10
		Mixed	— 5
Bhandari	Palm-juice drawing and distillation along the Konkan coast	Agriculture	— 1
		Lumpen	— 1
		Mixed	— 1
Wani	Small trader	Service	— 1
		Mixed	— 1
Brahmin	Priests; agriculturist	Agriculture	— 3
		Mixed	— 1
Muslim	Agriculturist; artisan	Artisan	— 5
		Mixed	— 2
		Agriculture	— 1
		Lumpen	— 7
Parsi	Trader; artisan	Mixed	— 1
Dhobi	Washerman	Service	— 1
Mali	Gardener or florist—sometimes growers of <i>jire</i> (cumins seed) and <i>haldi</i> (turmeric); also cotton-braid weavers	Lumpen	— 1
Teli	Oil-presser	Agriculture	— 1
		Mixed	— 1
Kamathi	Labouring class from Telegana—wandering tribe of robbers; performing monkeys; magicians; pickpockets, and prostitutes	Lumpen	— 1
Kumbhar	Potters; makers of tiles, bricks, earthen pots, etc.	Lumpen	— 1
Muchi/Chamar	Leather worker	Artisan	— 2
		Lumpen	— 2
Gowra	Similar to <i>dhangar</i> , or shepherd; sometimes wool weavers	Lumpen	— 1
Sonar	Goldsmith	Lumpen	— 1
Chutri	Agriculturist	Agriculture	— 2
Kunbi	Agriculturist; field labourer	Lumpen	— 1
Lohar	Blacksmith	Artisan	— 1
Wagri	Occasionally agricultural labourer; otherwise tends trees like <i>bassia latifolia</i> , or <i>mimusops hexandra</i> ; rearer of sheeps and goat; deal in green parrots and fowls; repairer of grindstones; supplier of twigs for teeth cleaning; beggars; generally ill-reputed for theft and burglary	Lumpen	— 6

APPENDIX 1 (Contd.)

Raval	Bard; beggar; weavers of tape; sometimes known as <i>jugi</i> or astrologer	Lumpen	—	1
Koeri	Weaver	Artisan	—	2
		Lumpen	—	2
Ahir	Herdsman and milkman	Agriculture	—	1
		Lumpen	—	1
Kurmi	Agriculturist	Agriculture	—	1
Tanti	Weaver	Artisan	—	1
		Mixed	—	3
		Lumpen	—	1
Bagdi	Agriculturist; fisherman; menial caste of western and southern Bengal—sometimes masons and palanquin bearers	Service	—	2
		Lumpen	—	2
Koiborto	Fisherman	Agriculture	—	1
		Lumpen	—	1
Bairagi	Mendicant and beggar	Lumpen	—	2
Kayastha	Landlord and professional class	Agriculture	—	1
Sankari	Manufacturer of conch-shell ornaments	Mixed	—	1
Jaiswara	Inferior <i>Rajput</i> —subdivision of <i>Chamar</i> , <i>Kurmi</i> , <i>Teli</i> , <i>Bania</i> —originally came from Jais, a manufacturing town of Oudh	Agriculture	—	1

NOTE : One Brahman working in a Jalgaon factory, another reportedly bearing the caste name *Kandick Ooriya* working in a Calcutta factory, and two Bombay workers whose castes are not given in the Report are left out of the above list.

APPENDIX 2

DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO FACTORIES

Centre	Industry	Name of the Mill	No. of workers
Bombay	Cotton	1. New Great Eastern	3
		2. Bombay Cotton	1
		3. Khattav Mackanjee	1
		4. Empress	1
		5. New Empress	1
		6. Connaught	1
		7. Framjee Petit	1
		8. James Graves	1
		9. Howard Bullough's	4
		10. Imperial Cotton	1
		11. Khandesh Spinning and Weaving	1
		12. Bombay United	2
		13. Jewraj Balloo	6
		14. Dinshaw Manockjee Petit	1
		15. Hindustan	3
		16. Manockjee Petit	3
		17. Lalljee Spinning	2
		18. Scott Cotton Press	1
Ahmedabad	Flour	1. Bhedwar Flour	1
		2. City of Bombay	1
	Copper	1. Ripon Copper Works	1
		1. Sassoon and Alliance	3
	Silk	1. Education Society's Press	3
		1. Byculla Iron Works	1
	Printing Press	1. Govt. Gun-Carriage Factory	1
		1. Government Mint	1
	Gun	1. Gujarat Spg. and Weaving Co.	3
		2. Ahmedabad Spg. and Weaving Co.	4
	Mint	3. Tricumlall Harilall Spg. & Mfg. Co.	3
		4. Ahmedabad Spg. & Mfg. Co.	1
	Cotton	1. Elgin	3
		2. Kanpur Cotton	2
Kanpur	Cotton	1. Kanpur Woollen	3
		1. Kanpur Jute	3
	Woollen	1. Kanpur Jute	3
		1. Cooper, Allen & Co.	2
	Jute	1. Union Jute	2
		2. Baranagar Branch	4
	Leather	3. Budge Budge	3
		4. Central	1
Calcutta	Jute	5. Kashipur Jute Pressing	1

APPENDIX 2 (Contd.)

Cotton	1. Bowreah	1
	2. Bengal	1
	3. Goosry Old	1
	4. Empress of India	2
	5. Victoria	2
Bone	1. Bally Bone	1
Paper	1. Bally Paper	3
Gun and Shell	1. Government Gun Foundry and Shell Factory	2
	1. Kashipur	1

Landownership and Inequality in Madras Presidency: 1853-54 to 1946-47*

DHARMA KUMAR

Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi

In one standard version of Indian economic history, from some point (not always clearly specified) in the nineteenth century, peasants have been increasingly dispossessed of their land: all over India the growth of commercial agriculture and the monetization of the economy led to the rise of moneylenders and the impoverishment of the peasant; the village economy was further weakened by the destruction of village handicrafts, and the new legal system facilitated the transfer of lands. An additional burden of high taxation was imposed on the peasantry in the raiyatwari areas of the south. Millions of once self-sufficient peasant families were turned into agricultural labourers, and were joined in this fate by village artisans. Within the group of landholders, the ownership of land became concentrated in the hands of moneylenders and large farmers.¹

Indeed, the Government of India itself sometimes took a gloomy view of agrarian developments. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the authors of the *Memorandum on the Resolution of the Power to Alienate Interests in Land* predicted that

as time goes on and the development of the country progresses, the tendency must surely be for the transfers which are pernicious to increase more rapidly than those which are beneficial. As population increases, cultivation extends, the area available for its further extension diminishes, communications improve, and new markets are opened, the competition

*I am grateful to the Indian Council of Social Science Research for a grant enabling me to carry out the research required for this paper; to Stephen Lord of the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, and P.M. Mathew, P.N. Kar, and M. Achi Reddy for statistical calculations; and to the following for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper: Chris Baker, Meghnad Desai, S. Guhan, Alan Heston, Tom Kessinger, P.K. Pattanaik, T.N. Srinivasan, Burton Stein, and K. Sundaram. I have been very fortunate in having been able to draw on the experience of South Indian officials, in particular T.L. Shankar.

¹ This view has been discussed in Dharma Kumar, *Land & Caste in South India*, Ch. XI. There is a strikingly similar version of Russian history described in T. Shanin's *The Awkward Class* (Oxford, 1972, p.1) except that there is no reference to handicrafts.

for land will be keener, prices and rents will rise, the profits of the land-owner will increase, and the land itself become more valuable, and there will thus be a stronger inducement to the moneylender to acquire it, while its occupants will, owing to the sub-division of holdings and the pressure of population on the land, be in a worse position to resist. The process of transfer has already worked such terrible evil in some parts of India, that the burden of proof lies on those who contend that in other parts it has done no ill, and still more on those who say it will do none in the future.²

They were speaking of the transfer of lands to non-agriculturists, particularly moneylenders, and not of the increasing concentration of landownership *per se*, but the two are connected.

Scattered references from official reports are frequently cited in support of this view, but there has been no systematic analysis of landholdings, partly because we do not have information on the distribution of actual area held under raiyatwari at different points of time. What we do have for Madras at least are land revenue data. This paper attempts to extract from the land revenue statistics for Madras Presidency information on changes in the pattern of landholdings, and in particular on the question of increasing concentration in landholdings and shows that there is little evidence in the land revenue statistics for the view that 'the rich grew richer', at least in terms of land, in Madras Presidency.

USE OF LAND REVENUE DATA

Under the raiyatwari system, all landholdings are registered for revenue purposes. Every plot of land on which land revenue is payable is registered in the name of an individual who is responsible for the payment of the land revenue; he is issued with a document, a patta, describing the lands registered in his name.³ The man who pays the revenue on the land was in effect its owner. The government argued:

Under the Ryotwary system, every registered holder of land is recognised as its proprietor and pays direct to Government. He is at liberty to sub-let his property, or to transfer it by gift, sale or mortgage. He cannot be ejected by Government so long as he pays the *fixed* assessment. . . . The ryot, under this system, is virtually a proprietor on a simple and perfect title, and has

² Government of India, *Note on Land Transfer & Agricultural Indebtedness in India*, no date, probably 1895, para 56.

³ The patta specified the area held, type of land, land revenue payable, and the instalments in which it has to be paid; the road cess, village cess, etc., and other particulars, such as restrictions of mining rights.

all the benefits of a perpetual lease without its responsibilities, inasmuch as he can, at any time, throw up his lands, but cannot be ejected so long as he pays his dues: he receives assistance in difficult seasons, and is not responsible for the payment of his neighbours.⁴

If the pattadar defaulted on his land revenue, the Government sold as much of his land as was enough to recover the dues. The pattadar was allowed to relinquish part or all of his land so that he would not be liable to pay the land revenue due on it, provided, first, that he applied for permission to do so early in the season so that the land was available to others. Any one could apply to take up unoccupied lands, though mirasdars and residents of the village were given first refusal.⁵

However, the patta is not in itself a title deed; government officials were expected to see that the register of pattas recorded the actual ownership of land accurately, but inaccuracies were unavoidable. There are two main reasons for inaccuracy: deliberate evasion of tax liability, and failure to record land transfers.

One could evade land revenue either by concealing the holding altogether or by understating the liability. It is impossible to conceal one's land holdings in a village, so holdings could only be kept out of the village records with the collusion of the village revenue officials. Such collusion was common enough before the 1870s and 1880s when extensive surveys on modern principles were first carried out, and it was probably the richer and more influential peasants who succeeded in concealing their holdings. Thus, the figures for 1853-54 may underestimate the actual degree of inequality on this account.⁶

But in the modern period of raiyatwari, it is unlikely that any significant extent of land was unrecorded. The village surveys were much more carefully carried out, and extensive areas of hitherto unrecorded land were registered and made liable to tax, as the government attached great importance to the accuracy of the registers. Some holdings may still have been undervalued as a result of collusion between village officials and pattadars, but this was very much less than in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The other reason for inaccuracy is that even if the holding and its tax liability are correctly registered, the name of the actual owner may not be. When land is transferred by sale or otherwise, the change of ownership ought

⁴ Quoted in *Manual of the Settlement Department*, Madras, 1877, p. 3.

⁵ The dates varied for each district, so as to follow the first rains; C.D. Maclean, *Manual of Administration for Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1885, Vol. I, pp. 121-24.

⁶ In the early period (and perhaps later) both the mirasidars and their 'tenants,' the actual cultivators who paid the revenue, fought to obtain pattas. Before the 1850s the collectors tended to favour the mirasidars but later their attitude changed somewhat. I am indebted to David Ludden, who is working on Tirunelveli, for this information.

to be recorded in the land revenue registers and a new patta issued, but the parties to the sale as well as the village accountant may neglect to do this. A patta is not a legal title deed, and to get a new patta takes time, trouble, and the expenditure of a small sum of money, so neither party may bother to change the patta (the new owner will of course pay the land revenue—he cannot disavow liability without disavowing ownership).

In recent years, these discrepancies have been very large: I have been told that it has been estimated in Andhra Pradesh that in anywhere between 20-45 per cent of the pattas, the name of the owner is wrongly recorded. It is not known whether certain classes of holdings are more prone to these errors than others, so nothing can be said about the bias, if any, which these inaccuracies may impart to estimates of concentration of ownership. Some officials believe that these inaccuracies have grown enormously over the last 10 or 20 years, but this is of course no proof of the accuracy of the earlier figures. One should note, however, that at least at every resettlement, a vigorous attempt should have been made to correct all inaccuracies in the pattas.

One may well ask why it is worth analyzing the patta records when they are so liable to error. The records of land transfers, such as the sale deeds kept in the Sub-Registrar's office in each taluk, would be a much better guide to ownership: the sale deed is the only legal title deed, and sales of property above a certain amount must be registered. But these records omit the vast number of sales of fragments of land, and there are no summary tables of these sales; these would have to be compiled from the original registers, a daunting undertaking for the whole Presidency, or indeed even for a district. And in any case these records are not likely to be available for as far back as 1853-54.

Thus it is only the patta data that enable us to make any statements at all about overall trends in land distribution, and it is the argument of this paper that if one bears in mind their shortcomings it is possible to extract significant conclusions from the figures. One should also add that writers on South India continue to use patta data to describe rural inequality in South India for want of better figures,⁷ so it is in any case necessary to analyze the strength of the conclusions the data can support.

The land revenue data have the additional advantage of being presented in a form which can readily be used for the construction of Lorenz curves, a useful graphic device for showing changes in the pattern of distribution.⁸

⁷ Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 171; David Washbrook, 'Country Politics: Madras 1880 to 1930,' *Modern Asian Studies*, July 1973, p. 487; Burton Stein, 'Privileged Landholding: The Concept Stretched to Cover the Case,' mimeo, 1974.

⁸ To construct a Lorenz curve, one must tabulate the cumulative percentages of land held, starting with the percentage of the total land held by the poorest class of landholders. These figures are then plotted on a graph, with the percentages of landowners being shown on the

Various objections have been made to the use of the Lorenz curve, some of which are misconceived, some of which apply to all statistical measures, and some of which apply to the inferences drawn from Lorenz curves rather than the technique itself. But there remain valid problems which one must bear in mind.

Like all curves that are fitted to a limited number of points, the Lorenz curve is a very approximate representation of reality, and this is the more true the fewer the number of points. Ideally, in other words, one should plot a point for each individual, but even if separate figures were available for each pattaholder⁹ this would be an impossibly cumbersome task. If the raw data were not already aggregated into classes, one would be forced to do so, though of course one might well choose to divide the data into a larger number of classes than the published tables present; nine classes are available for most of our years.

It is worth noting that if one is considering the Lorenz curve for any one year, the averaging out implied in considering classes rather than individuals, and in connecting points with a straight line, always underestimates the actual extent of inequality.¹⁰ The extent to which the inequality is underestimated is unknown, so if one is comparing Lorenz curves for two different points of time, the Lorenz curves may conceal a real change in either direction, of greater equality or greater inequality. The danger that this will happen will depend on the size of the classes—the greater the range within each class the greater the risk of real changes being hidden. For the data we are considering, the two lowest class intervals are very small—Re 1 and less, and Rs 10 and less but more than one rupee—so the possibilities of significant redistri-

horizontal axis, and the percentage of the land held being on a vertical axis; the curve joining the various points is the Lorenz curve. If the land were perfectly equally divided, the Lorenz curve would coincide with the diagonal: the bottom 10 per cent of the landholders (though one can hardly talk of 'bottom' here) would hold 10 per cent of the land, 30 per cent of the landholders would hold 30 per cent of the land, and so on. If the curve were perfectly unequal, the Lorenz curve would coincide with the axes of the diagram to the right of the diagonal: the richest landholder would hold 100 per cent of the land, and everyone else would have 0 per cent. The Lorenz curve usually falls between these two extremes, and the extent to which it falls below the diagonal is an indication of the 'inequality' of the distribution. Since Lorenz curves for different years can be plotted on the same diagram, this technique is a convenient way of showing changes over time. Thus, if the Lorenz curve for 1936 clearly lies below that for 1836, the distribution of land has clearly become more unequal whereas if it lies above it, it has become more equal.

⁹ For recent years, individual figures are theoretically available in each village register, but the further back one moves in time, the less likely it is that individual records exist.

¹⁰ The points plotted must fall on the actual Lorenz curve. These points are then connected by straight lines, and the straight lines are sometimes smoothed out into a curve, the curve being as near the straight line as possible. Since the Lorenz curve must be convex, the arcs joining points on it must be above it, i.e. must lie nearer the 45 per cent line showing equality.

bution within these classes, particularly the lowest class, are not very large. But the range widens with the size of the class, and for the largest class, 'over Rs 1000,' no limit is specified, so redistribution within each of the largest groups, which is obscured, may be important.

This is an argument for increasing the number of classes, but it is not an argument against the use of Lorenz curves unless the number of available classes is extremely small, say 3 or 4. And if only such a few classes are available, all statements about inequality, whether statistical or verbal, are suspect.

Another 'objection' is that Lorenz curves show an unambiguous move towards or away from equality only if the curves do not intersect. But this is a defect not of Lorenz curves but of reality. The curves may intersect because the middle groups have lost to those at either extreme. How one values this change depends on the relative extent to which the poorest and the richest have benefited, and whether the egalitarian gets more pleasure out of the poorest becoming better off than pain from the rise in the landholdings of the richest. Supporters of a 'sturdy independent peasantry' might be depressed by the intersection of the Lorenz curves, i.e. by the relative impoverishment of the middle groups.

Economists have evolved various summary statistics of inequality, of which the most common is the Gini coefficient. These measures enable one to rank distributions, unlike the Lorenz curve, but each measure involves making some assumption about the weights to be given to the various classes (the Gini coefficient gives equal weights), and different measures will give different ranking.¹¹ The Lorenz curves yield sufficient information for most of our purposes, but Gini coefficients have also been calculated for the Presidency as a whole.

BIAS

But there may still be some systematic bias in the figures. To repeat, the land revenue statistics divide pattas into classes, according to the land revenue payable on each patta. For each district, the summary statistics give information on (a) the numbers in each class of patta as a percentage of the total number of pattas, and (b) the land revenue paid by each class as a share of the total revenue.

Statistics of the acreage held by each class of pattas are also given for some years, but since the classification of pattas is on the basis of land revenue paid,

¹¹ There is a large and rapidly growing literature on these and other measures of inequality. J. Pen, *Income Distribution* (Allen Lane, London, 1971) provides a very clear introduction. Also see A.B. Atkinson (ed.), *Wealth, Income and Inequality*, Allen Lane, 1973.

not acreage,¹² it is preferable to plot on the X-axis the percentage of land revenue paid by each class rather than the percentage of area held. In any case it is arguable that in many ways the amount of land revenue paid is a better guide to the distribution of income or wealth than land area. If one acre of wet land yields the same income as five acres of dry land, the holder of the dry land is equivalent in income and wealth to the holder of the wet land, not five times as rich.¹³

Two assumptions are being made: first, that land revenue is a constant proportion of income, and secondly, that each patta corresponds to one and only one landholder.

To take the first point, the land revenue in Madras was at least in theory fixed at one-half the net produce. Elaborate calculations of gross output from each kind of soil, of the expenses of cultivation, etc., were made at the initial settlement and net produce was valued by taking into account not only current prices but those of the preceding 30 years; these revenue rates (in money terms) remained fixed for about 30 years though remissions were made for poor harvests. There is thus an abundance of reasons why the land revenue should not in fact equal half the net produce—from arithmetical errors in calculation to the divergence of actual prices from those taken into account in the revenue calculations.

But the kinds of error we are interested in are those which introduce a systematic bias in favour of some particular group of landholders, thus rendering invalid inferences about changes in inequality from Lorenz curves. Cowle lands, newly cultivated lands on which the assessment was light for a period, were not extensive enough to affect the argument. But there is one important possibility of such bias: the incidence of land revenue on certain crops may have been lower than on others, either because of errors at the time of settlement, or because crop prices diverged between settlements. Thus there is some evidence that in the 1930s the incidence on food crops was higher than on others. If large landowners grow proportionately less food than small, then the land revenue statistics would have underestimated the degree of inequality in the 1930s. To isolate this effect, one would have to analyze groupwise cropping patterns and the movements of relative prices—no *a priori* statements can be made, but there is no reason to believe that official calculations were thus systematically biased.

The ratio of land revenue to income varied not only across space but also

¹² A proposal was made towards the end of the century to classify holdings by area, but the Board of Revenue decided in 1899 that this would not be feasible, G.O. No. 413 (Rev); 28 June 1899.

¹³ As an illustration of the range of assessments in the 1880s, the rates in the heaviest assessed district were around Rs 2-13 as. to Rs 3-12 as. per acre; in the lightest, from 11 annas to 14 annas per acre. B.H. Baden-Powell, *Land Systems of British India*, Vol. III, p. 72.

across time. There appears to have been an increase in the incidence of the land revenue from the beginning of the twentieth century: the collections of land revenue were on an average 4.15 per cent of the gross output in 1900-01 to 1904-05; 4.87 per cent in 1935-36 to 1939-40, and 5.44 per cent in 1942-43 to 1946-47.¹⁴ However, to the extent that these changes were caused by fluctuations in the general level of prices (relative crop prices have already been dealt with), these variations over time do not affect Lorenz curves at any point of time, and hence do not affect comparisons of Lorenz curves over time. But they would affect measures of absolute changes in, e.g., numbers below the poverty line.

The second set of problems arises from the possible divergences between the number of pattaholders and the number of actual landholders. Series A of the graphs has been drawn on the assumption that each patta corresponded to one and only one pattaholder. This was not the case, for three main reasons. First, there were joint pattas: in one joint patta the names of several holders were recorded as joint holders. This presents no great difficulties in principle since the total number of shareholders in each class is also given so that one can calculate the average size of pattas: ¹⁵ this has been done in Series B of the graphs.¹⁶

If one compares the graphs of pattas with those of shareholders, no clear pattern emerges. In many districts, such as Ganjam and Krishna, the patterns are similar. In others, such as the Tamil districts of Tiruchi, Madurai, and Coimbatore, the graphs for shareholders are nearer the diagonal at the lower end of the scale, suggesting that there was more sub-division in the richer groups (this can also be directly discovered from the tables). In Tanjore, on the other hand, the curves are very similar, with the shareholder graphs being fractionally less unequal. It would be tedious to compare the figures district by district and year by year: the point to make is that whether one takes figures of pattas or of shareholders, there is no clear evidence of a trend of increasing concentration of landownership.

Secondly, a much more serious problem is that joint ownership (or even the split-up of a holding) may fail to be recorded. A father and three adult sons may work a holding together with a single patta in the father's name: when

¹⁴ Land revenue figures from the Administrative Reports of the Madras Presidency; output figures from George Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India, 1891-1947*, Appendix Table 4C. The percentages are only a rough indication of the incidence of raiyatwari, since both sets of figures include zamindari and inamdari.

¹⁵ This involves making the assumption that in each size class there are an equal number of joint holders per patta, which is clearly inaccurate. This assumption, therefore, leads to some underestimation of concentration at any point of time.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, data on numbers of joint holders were not available for 1853-54 which is one reason why Series A was also drawn. Series A is entitled 'Pattas' and Series B 'Shareholders'.

the father dies, if the patta now records the joint ownership of three brothers, or is split up into three pattas, the figures will show a decrease in average size of holdings for this group, whereas in fact there has been an increase¹⁷ if one assumes that the sons had as much right over the land when their father was alive. If the father had superior rights, then the patta figures are correct. Or again, the patta may be initially registered in the name of the eldest brother, but at some stage the other two may insist on separate pattas or on their names being added to a joint patta: the patta figures will then record a change in ownership when only a change in frequency of registration has taken place. Thus in the 1880s Benson stated that the growth in joint pattas over the previous 30 years was 'probably due to the operation of the Hindu Law of sub-division and to the necessity which has been imposed on the ryots of securing a record of their coparcenary rights in holdings.'¹⁸

TABLE I
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SHAREHOLDERS PER JOINT PATTAS,
1890-91, 1930-31, 1945-46

Class (Rs)	1890-91	1930-31	1945-46
0-1	—	3.22	2.70
1-10	—	3.19	2.91
0-10	3.01	3.20	2.84
10-30	3.55	3.25	3.34
30-50	5.66	3.75	3.45
50-100	4.46	4.08	4.13
100-250	4.13	4.78	4.09
250-500	4.65	5.71	4.92
500-1000	6.12	6.79	5.63
1000 and above	10.09	15.52	5.04
TOTAL	3.43	3.26	2.98

To settle this question one requires information on family structure in relationship to ownership rights, and on whether certain classes in particular fail to record changes in ownership because of unfamiliarity with legal procedures or for other reasons. Vaidyanathan analyzed the NSS all-India data for 1958-59 to show that the size of the family varied directly with the size of the landholding,¹⁹ and this is also true for Madras. It seems likely

¹⁷ There is the further complication that at some point before his death the father may become too old to work—he should ideally be counted amongst the dependents at this stage.

¹⁸ C. Benson, *A Statistical Account of Kurnool*, p. 102. This report also points out that differences in frequency of joint pattas between taluks may have resulted merely from differences in administrative practices: this may also have been true of variations over time.

¹⁹ A. Vaidyanathan, 'Some Aspects of Inequalities in Living Standards in Rural India' in T. N. Srinivasan and P.K. Bardhan (eds), *Poverty & Income Distribution in India*, Calcutta, 1974, p. 226.

that joint families are more prevalent amongst the higher castes, which also are larger landowners: the resurvey of 12 villages in Madras in 1936-37 showed that joint families were breaking up faster amongst the depressed classes, particularly in the Tamil districts.²⁰ The patta data also show more names per joint patta in the highest size groups (Table I). But the question is, do the figures for the higher class sizes underestimate the actual number of joint holdings? If they do, the patta figures overestimate inequality at any point of time and if the tendency is growing over time (there is no reason to suppose that it is) the growth of inequality is exaggerated. There is no way of answering this question, unfortunately.²¹

Thirdly, the assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between pattas and landholders also errs in the other direction: one man may hold several pattas. In theory each patta records all the land held by one man (or group of joint holders) within a revenue village, but if a man owns land in x villages he will be given x pattas.²² Again, those with joint pattas very often also held single pattas separately. Since it is more likely that large landholders own land in several villages than poorer peasants, the figures understate the true extent of concentration at any point of time. For instance, the survey of Vadamalaipuram village in the 1950s found that the large landowners (those with over 25 acres) held a quarter of their lands outside the

²⁰ P. J. Thomas and K. C. Ramakrishnan, *Some South Indian Villages, Madras, 1940*, p. 337.

²¹ One cannot compare the patta data on joint holdings with the NSS data on family size, since the latter include women, children, and other dependents. Household size depends not only on patterns of landholding, the number of children per couple, etc., but also on patterns of migration—do adults who migrate take their wives and children with them or leave them behind in the family house in the village?

²² Thus the patta figures do not reveal the full extent of sub-division and fragmentation. One reason in the early years was the desire to equalize the value of holdings in the family: 'The average extent of land in the puttah gives no idea of its minute sub-divisions, as each puttah includes, as a rule, many scattered patches of a diminutive size. This seems to be the remains of the old Pasengerei system, under which the whole lands of the village were constantly sub-divided among the cultivators, the object being to equalize the burden of assessment by the almost annual change of each ryot's land, so that all might share in turns in the good and bad. This minute division has thus unfortunately been permanently stamped in the more definite arrangements which have followed'; Proceedings of the Madras Government, 19 October 1860, No. 1, 906, quoted in *Selections from the Records of the Madras Government*, No. 74, p. 588. But 70 years later the Collector of Tiruchirappalli remarked that 'The tendency of each shareholder here to get possessed of a share from all the different pieces of varying extent lying in the different places owned by the family is not as pronounced as it was several years ago.' GO No. 735, 12 April 1929. These proceedings contain a number of interesting reports from collectors who were asked to comment on the need for a law enforcing consolidation. The consensus of opinion was that such a law was either unnecessary or unenforceable: farmers liked to hold fragments of different types of land to spread risk, spread labour over the year, and for ease in selling and mortgaging small amounts of land.

village: nothing is explicitly said about the extra-village holdings of the small farmers, presumably because they were not important.²³

The question is whether the degree of underestimation has been growing over time, i.e. whether there was a growing tendency for large landholders to own land in several villages or even to hold several pattas within a village. It is plausible that with growing economic integration large landowners did tend to spread their land acquisitions across villages. But this is one of those plausible assumptions which needs to be checked against the historical evidence. Unfortunately such evidence is not readily available, but it is interesting that as early as 1797, it was said of the Baramahal and Salem districts, 'It being a practice with the ryots to cultivate in their own, and in neighbouring villages, at the same time, many of them are no doubt twice registered [in the revenue statistics]. . . .'²⁴

LANDLESSNESS

Since the figures only relate to landholders, a serious omission is that of the landless. This, if all the landholders in the smallest group lost their lands to those in the middle groups and became labourers, the Lorenz curves would show an increase in equality within the landholding group, and would be correct in doing so, but if one took the agrarian system as a whole, there would have been an increase in inequality. Again, if landless labourers began to buy land, the distribution of land within the landholding group might become more unequal while the distribution of wealth within the community as a whole had become more equal.

In principle, one could include the landless if one knew how many of the landless there were. But this is an uncertain figure even for Census years, for well-known reasons, and doubly uncertain in inter-Censal years. The Census figures for Madras Presidency do not show a significant increase in the proportion of agricultural labour to the total workforce. Male agricultural labourers formed 16 per cent of the male workforce in the Presidency in 1871, 18 per cent in 1901, 18 per cent in 1951, and 17 per cent in 1961.²⁵ But many of these labourers would own some tiny plot of land. The minimum piece of land for which pattas are issued is 1 cent (one-hundredth of an acre), so there is bound to be some overlapping between pattadars and the Census

²³ University of Madras, Agro-Economics Centre, 'Survey of Vadamalaipuram Village,' mimeo, p. 51.

²⁴ 'Explanation of the Statistical Statement of the Baramahal and Salem Districts for Fusly, 1206,' para 17. Government of Madras, *Baramahal Records*, Sec. XXI, Vols. I and II.

²⁵ Kumar, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-73; 1961 figures have been calculated from Census of India, 1961; Paper No. 10, *Final Population Totals*. The Agricultural Labour Enquiry figures show a much higher proportion; see Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

figures of agricultural/landless labour. It is, therefore, impossible to include them in the Lorenz curves; one can only note that the omission of the totally landless means that the full extent of inequality in the agricultural community as a whole is not reflected in the Lorenz curves.

INAMDARI AND ZAMINDARI LANDS

Since our figures only relate to raiyatwari lands, inamdari and zamindari lands have been omitted, and the areas covered by these two tenures were large: in the 1870s, of the more than 138,000 square miles of the Presidency, over 80,000 were raiyatwari (48,000 square miles being unassessed waste), over 12,000 inam, and nearly 40,000 zamindari; and the remaining 6,000 acres, officially unclassified, may well have been zamindari too. The omission of zamindari lands from our figures means that an additional source of inequality has been omitted; this is particularly important for such districts as Vishakhapatnam, by far the major part of which was zamindari. But the area under zamindari started to decline after the middle of the nineteenth century. And besides there was very little overlapping between the zamindars and the raiyatwari pattadars. The case with inamdari is quite different. There were inam lands in practically every village, and by far the greater part of them were held by individuals, not institutions.²⁶ Many of these inamdars were also raiyatwari pattadars, so the omission of inam lands vitiates the raiyatwari figures also. This is particularly so since in the first half of the nineteenth century one easy way to evade land revenue was to get as much of one's lands classified as inam lands as possible. But this became progressively more difficult. Unfortunately, as figures of the distribution of inams by size or value are not available one can only attempt to guess at how the inclusion of inam lands would affect the calculations of inequality. If there were village karnams and headmen whose holdings of both inam and raiyatwari lands were substantial, in local terms, there were also school teachers and priests with tiny inam holdings. But on the whole the details of inam holdings, if we had them, are more likely to add to inequality at a point of time. But not over time. There was no expansion of the area under inamdari, nor could individuals buy up others' inams, so the *de facto* subdivision of inam rights must have proceeded considerably faster than under raiyatwari.

There is another point that should be noted here. The larger inamdars were generally institutions, particularly temples. Once the British had

²⁶ Of the 346,207 inam titles confirmed by the Inam Commission 254,473 were held by individuals; these accounted for 65 per cent of the total assessment and 69 per cent of the total area settled (about 8,330 square miles); *Selections from the Records of the Madras Government*, New Revenue Series No. 1.

confirmed inam titles, there were no additions to their inam lands: private individuals could not and the government would not convert raiyatwari lands into inam and then gift them to temples. But private individuals could and did gift raiyatwari lands, or the income from them: we come across instances in the records of Chettiars buying land to gift them to the temples. And the large temples themselves bought lands out of their ample incomes, as a useful investment. Temples, it is estimated, owned a third of all the land in Tanjore district. The richest temple in the South (if not in all India?), Tirupathi, owned three whole taluks (which may have totalled some 1 million acres) in the early twentieth century; its income has grown from Rs 5 lakhs per annum in the late nineteenth century to over Rs 1 lakh per day now. It is true that control over temple funds was a very important source of political and economic power, and that the enormous growth of temple funds may well have led to a concentration of such power.²⁷ But the control temple managers have over the income and assets of the temple are in law and even in practice different from those a landowner enjoys over his private lands. Ideally one should separate the raiyatwari lands held by temples, and if one did so, the calculations of inequality may well be modified, at least in those districts with rich temples, such as Tanjore, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Ramnad, and Turnelveli in Tamil Nadu.

We can now attempt to sum up the factors making for erroneous or biased estimates of inequality. In the table below factors which underestimate inequality are marked with a minus and those which exaggerate it with a plus; a distinction is drawn between estimates of inequality at a point of time and of trends over time.

TABLE II
SOURCES OF ERROR OR BIAS

Factor	Point of time	Trend
Concealment of land	—	+*
Change of ownership not registered	?	?
Averaging out of class data	—	?
Incidence of land revenue varies at any point of time	?	?
Incidence of land revenue changes over time	0	?
Unrecorded joint holdings	?	?
Land held in several villages	—	—
Omission of landless	—	— (?)
Omission of inams and zamindaris	—	+
Inclusion of raiyatwari lands of temples	+	+

*Because this source of bias was probably greater in the earlier years.

²⁷ D. A. Washbrook, 'Temples & Political Development' in C. J. Baker and D. A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, Delhi, 1975. The figures for Tirupathi and Tanjore cited above are on p. 71.

Thus the bias of most factors is unknown and certainly Table II is purely personal. Some other writers will value the factors differently. My own conclusion is that the extent of inequality is very probably underestimated at any point of time, but it is more doubtful that there is a similar bias in the trend figures.

WHAT DO THE LORENZ CURVES SHOW?

For the Presidency as a whole Lorenz ratios²⁸ have been calculated: these show very little change in the degree of inequality between 1853-54 and 1945-46, if one considers pattas and some increase in inequality between 1890-91 and 1945-46, if one considers shareholders.

TABLE III
LORENZ RATIOS FOR SELECTED YEARS

	1853-53	1890-91	1900-01	1930-31	1945-46
Pattas	0.63	0.59	0.62	0.63	0.62
Shareholders	—	0.54	0.59	0.63	0.60

The Lorenz curves for selected districts are set out in Figures 1 to 11; they reveal a marked degree of inequality in districts such as Tanjore, and a fair degree of inequality in several others as early as 1853-54. The settlement reports for this period do not contradict this view: of Manargudi it was said in 1860, 'there are many of the vellala caste in particular, who are influential men, holding large tracts of land, and paying up to as much as Rs 7,000/- a year to Government [in fact the rent roll shows 2 paying over Rs 1001/-]. Whole villages in several cases, and considerable portions in others are the property of a single individual or family...'²⁹; on the other hand over half the pattas paid less than Rs 10.

The figures show no clear trends for all the districts, there are some in which there is some increase in concentration between 1853-54 and 1950-51, such as Ganjam, Krishna (from 1890-91 to 1950-51), S. Arcot, and S. Canara (where there was a substantial increase), and some in which concentration was actually *reduced*, such as Tiruchirapalli, Tirunelveli (a big reduction), Coimbatore, and Malabar. And in some districts there was practically no

²⁸ Lorenz ratio = $1 - (y_i + y_{i+1}) (x_i + x_{i+1})$ where y_i is the cumulative share of assessment and x_i is the cumulative share of pattas/shareholders in their respective totals. With complete equality LR = 0; with complete inequality LR = 1

²⁹ G.O. No. 1906, 19 October 1860. The average assessment per acre in Manargui was Rs 35 per acre, so the largest landowners had around 200 acres.

COIMBATORE

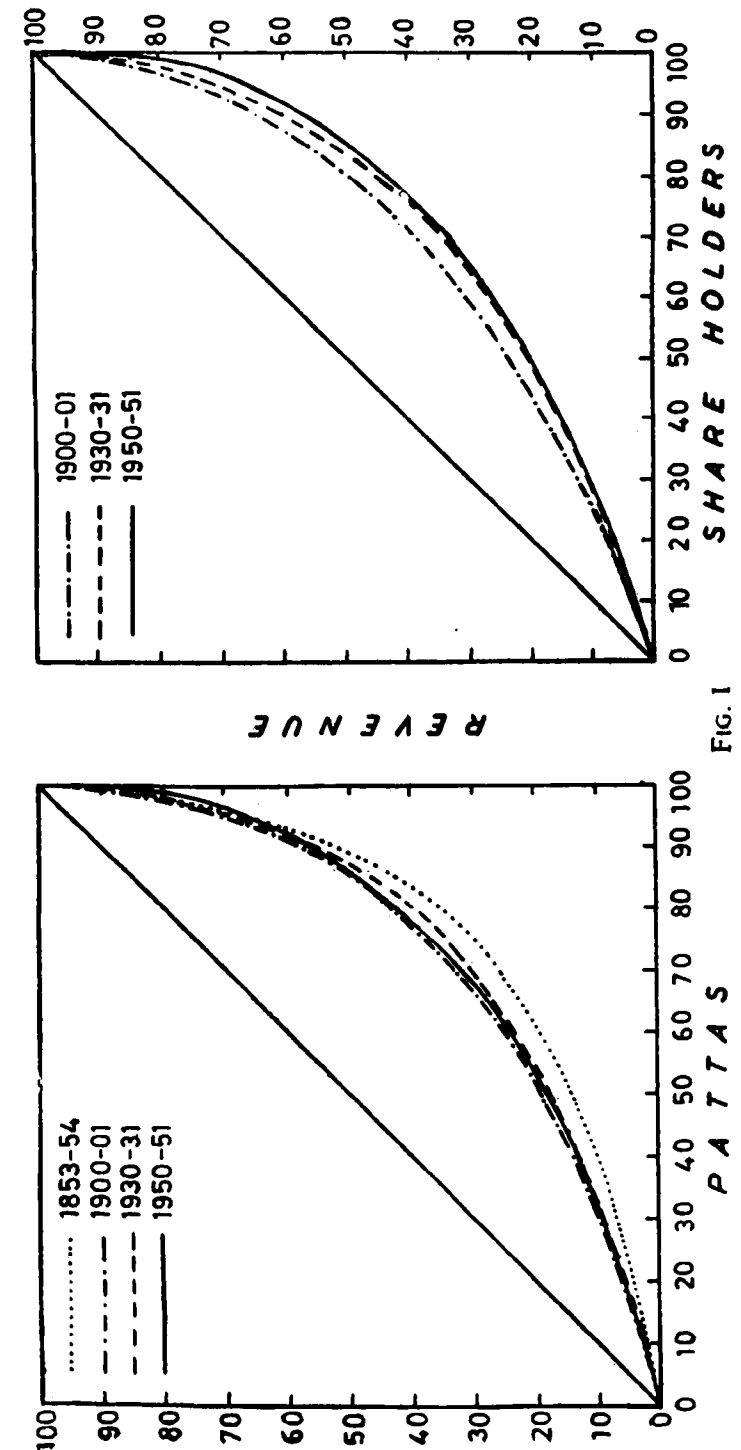


FIG. 1

KURNOOL

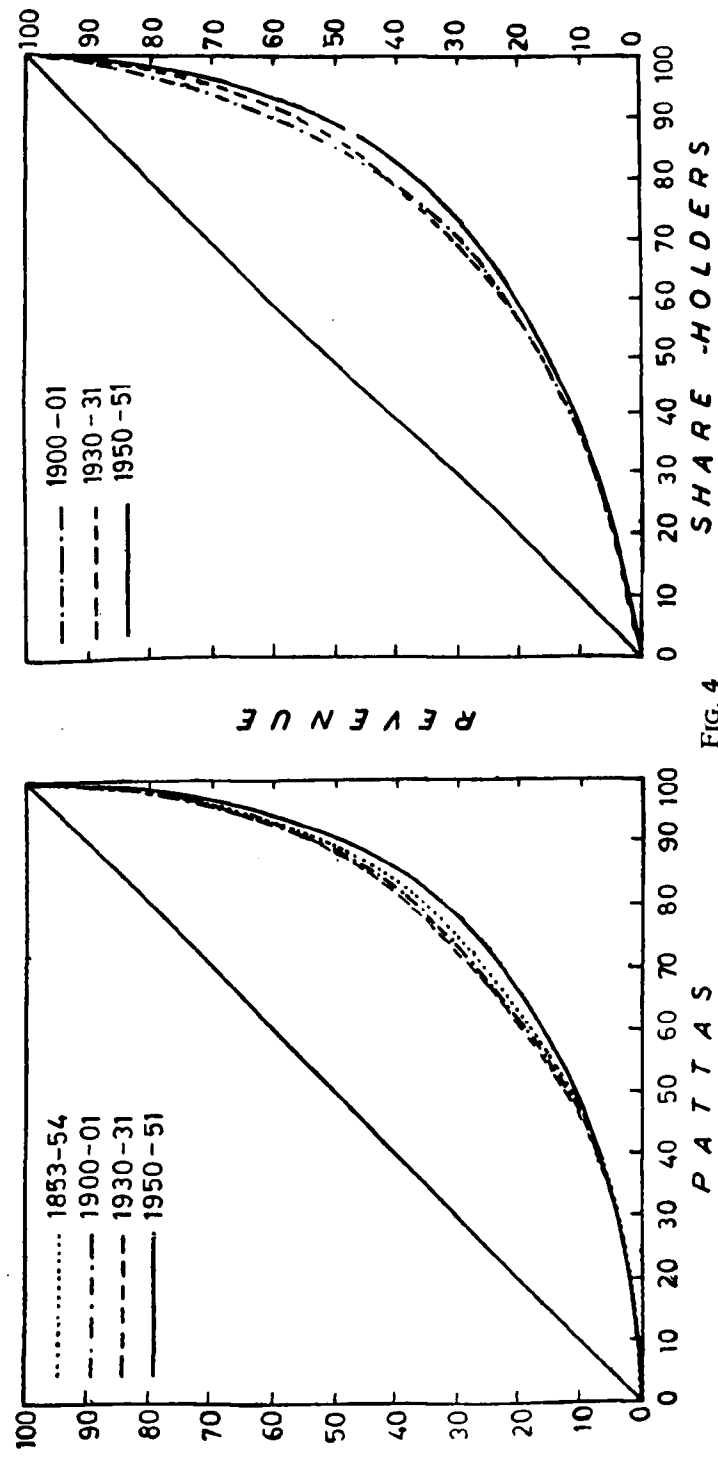


FIG. 4

MALABAR

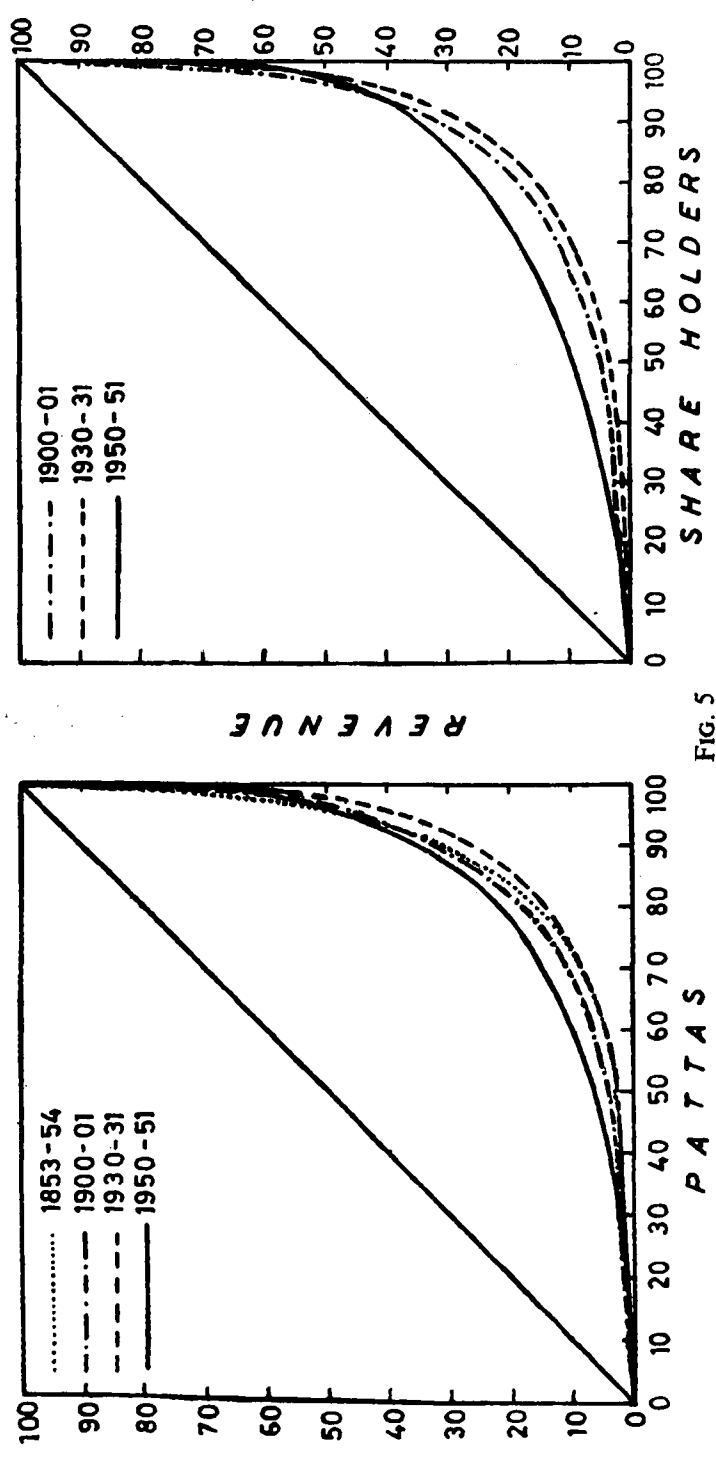


FIG. 5

GANJAM

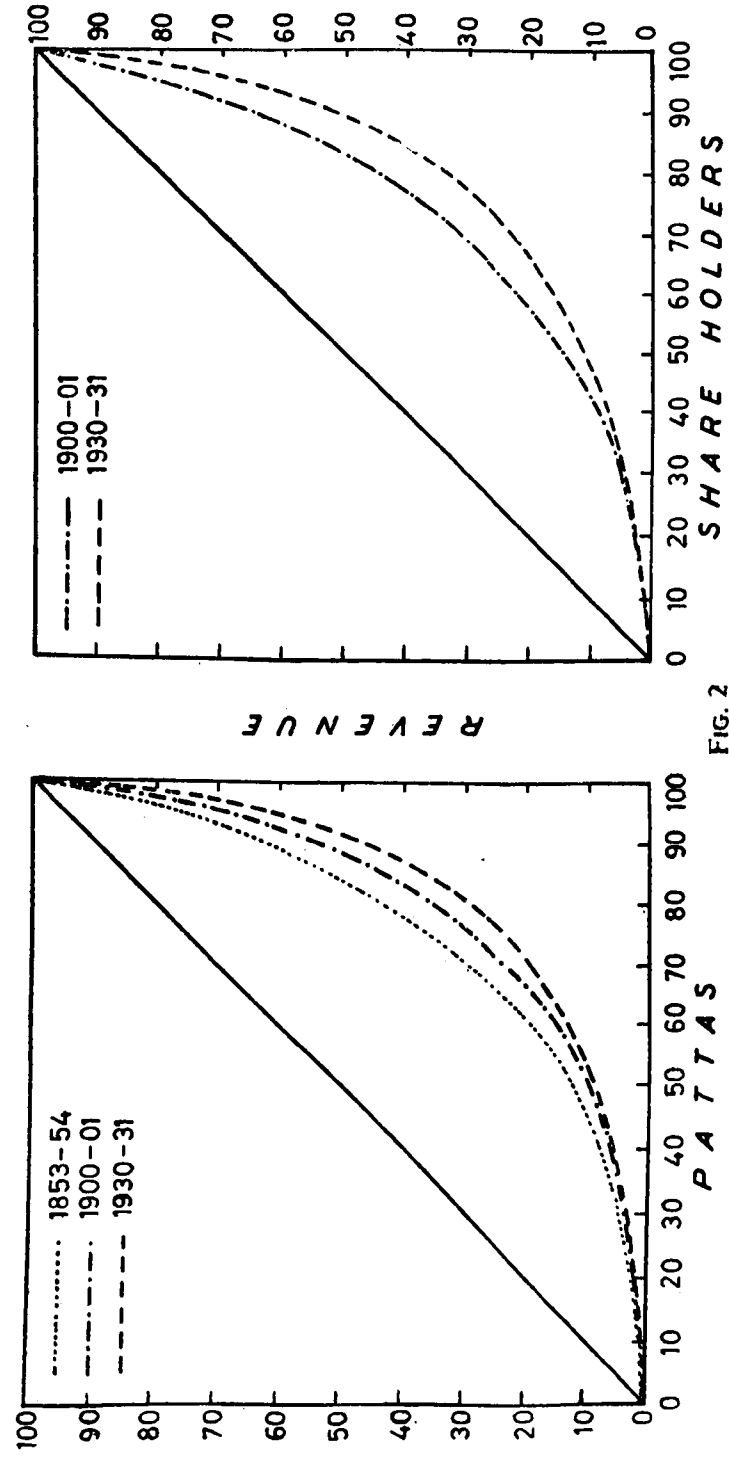


FIG. 2

KRISHNA

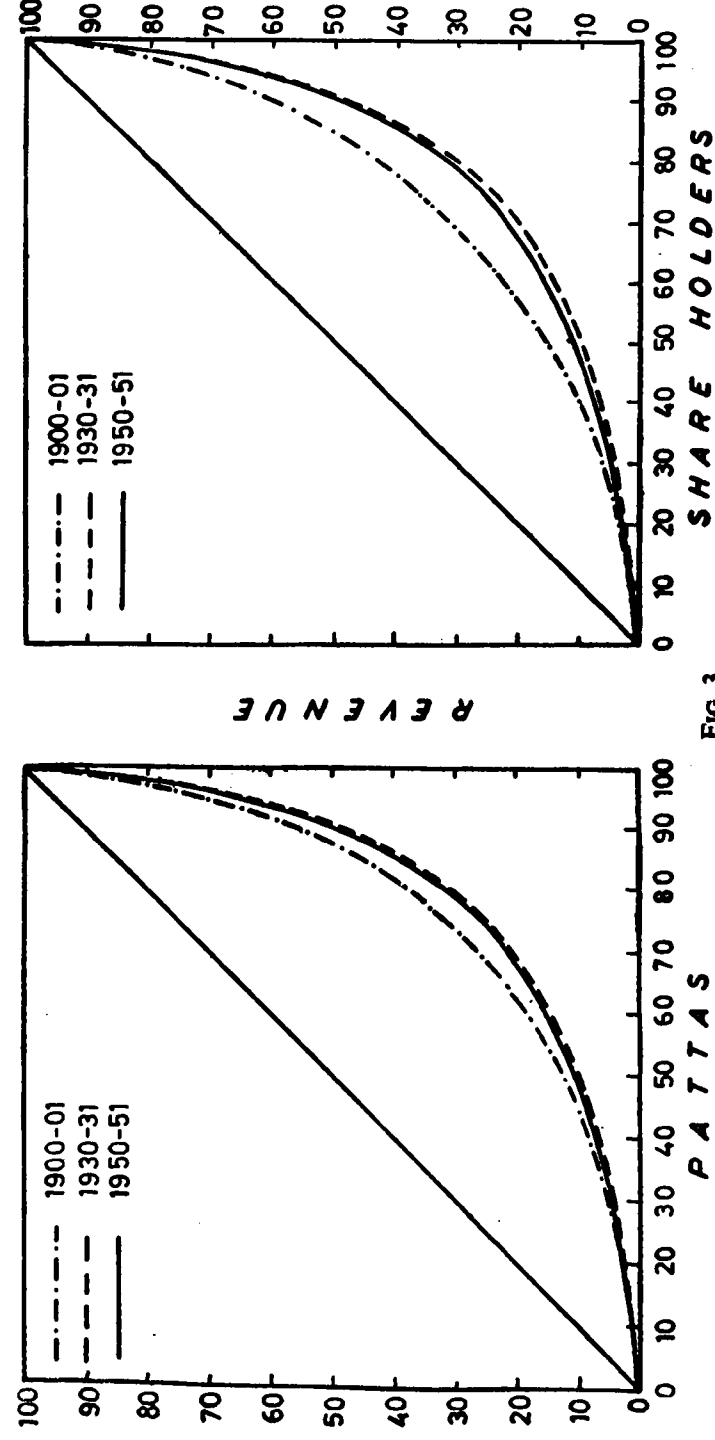


FIG. 3

NELLORE

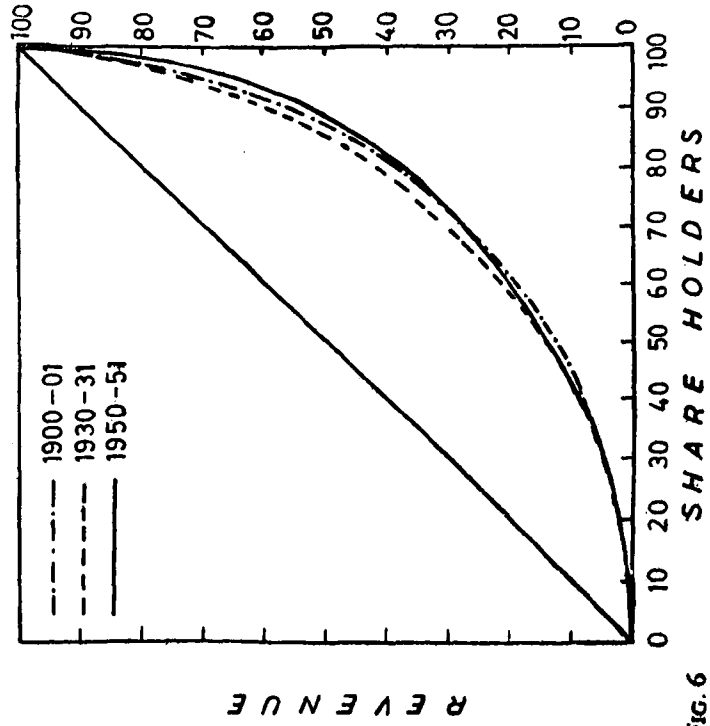
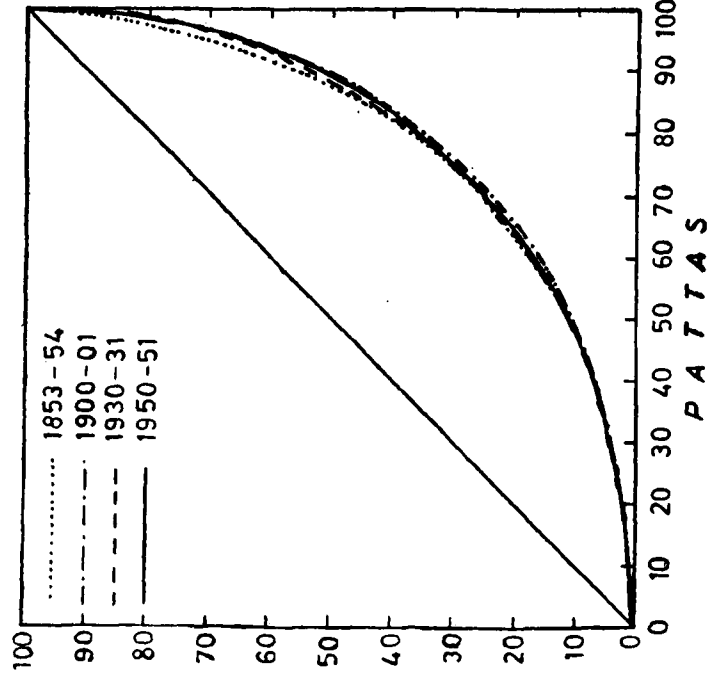


FIG. 6

SOUTH ARCOT

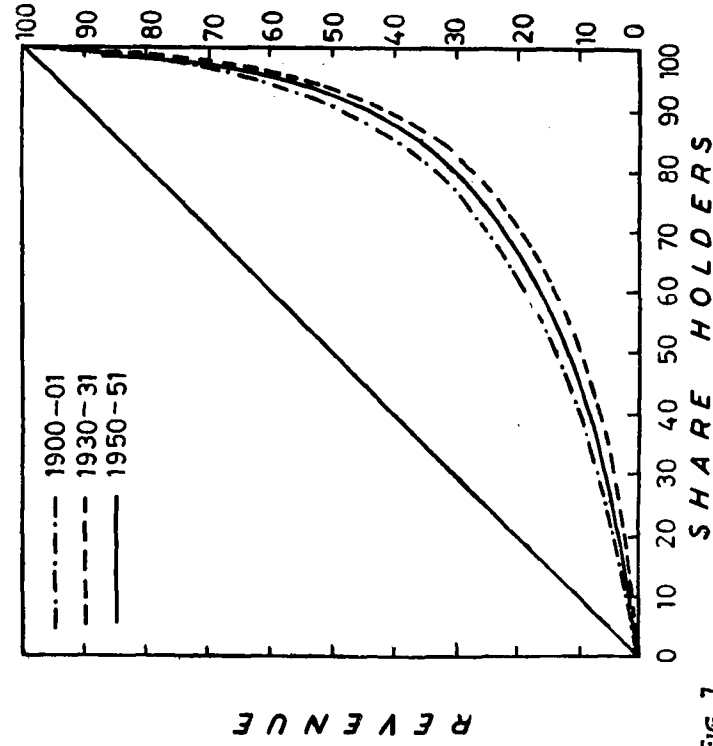
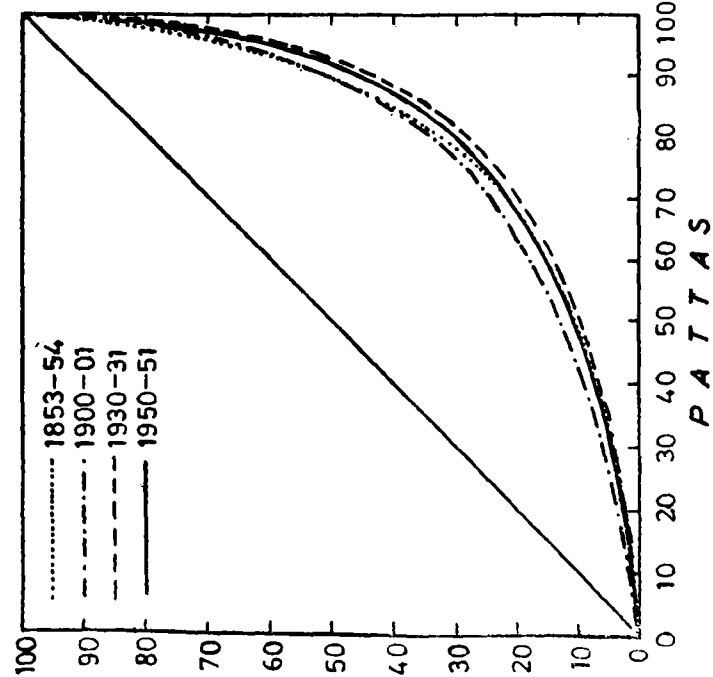


FIG. 7

SOUTH CANARA

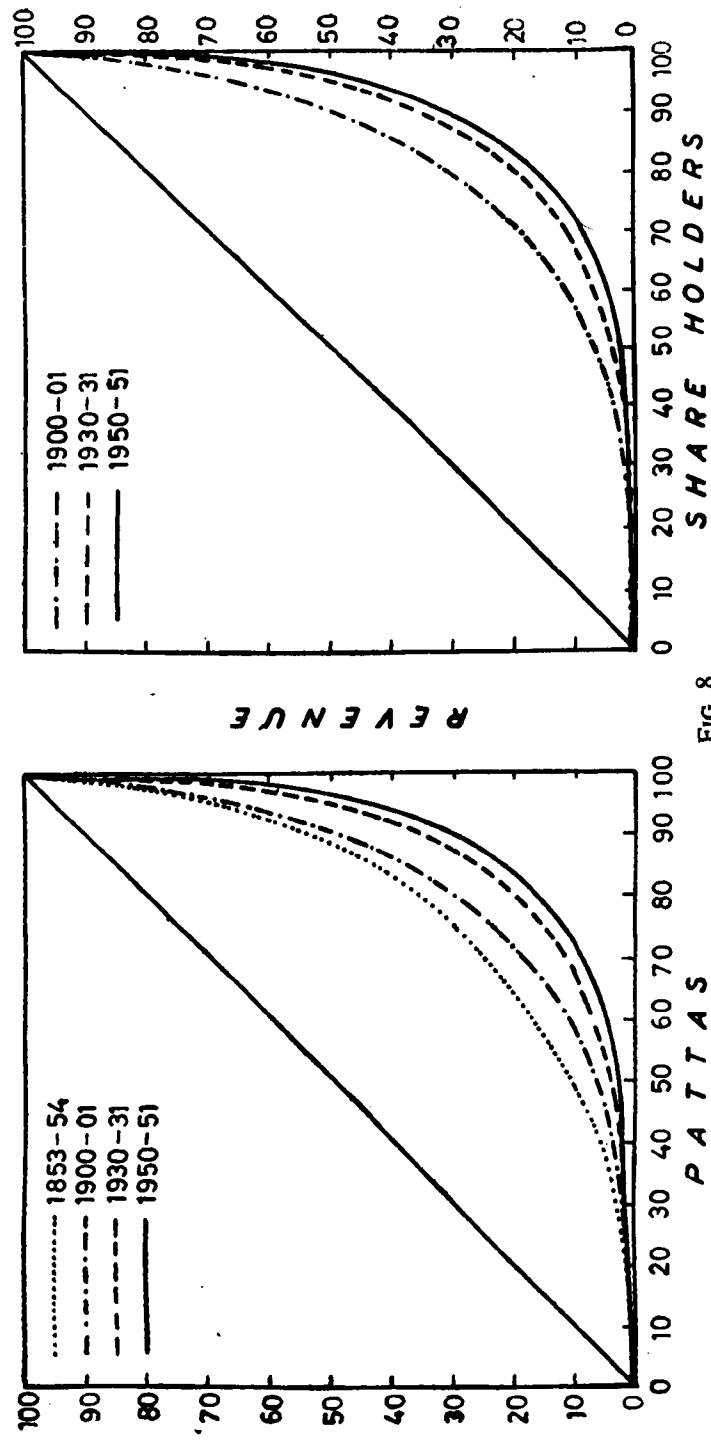


FIG. 8

TANJORE

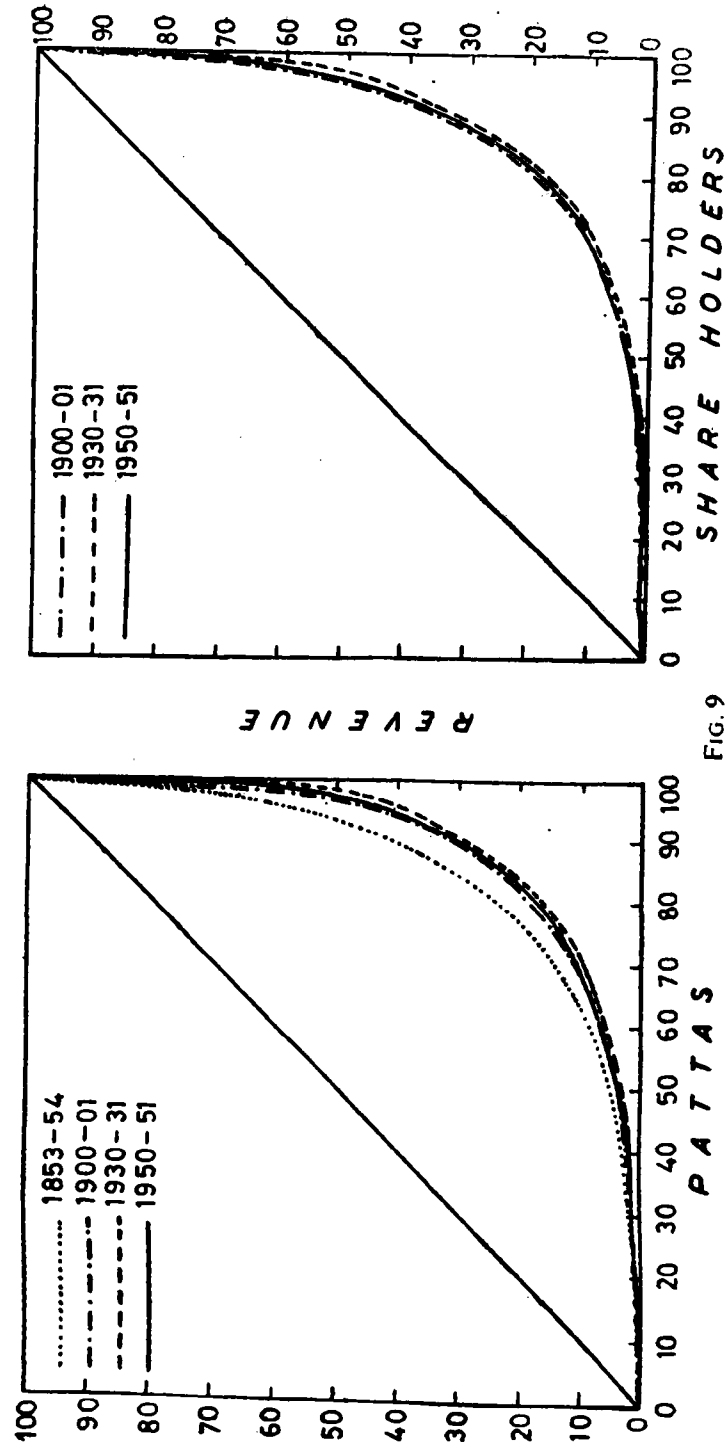


FIG. 9

change: Kurnool, Nellore, and Salem.³⁰ Nor can one detect any clearer trend by considering intermediate years: concentration increases and then falls, or vice versa. But it is perhaps significant that it is in general in the irrigated districts that concentration increases and in the very dry areas, such as Bellary and Kurnool, that concentration falls or hardly changes (the diagram for Bellary has been omitted).³¹

The dominant impression left by nearly all the figures is first, that the distribution of holdings was already very unequal in 1853-54, and secondly, that there was no marked overall trend in concentration over the 92 years of our figures.

Those who wish to argue the case for concentration will have to find some other evidence. Because of the indirect nature of the data used here, the questionable assumptions, and the possibilities of statistical errors, further analysis of land ownership data may reveal a rather different picture from that suggested by our graphs. But till this is produced, it seems reasonable to hold that by and large there was no great increase in the concentration of landholdings in Madras Presidency between 1853-54 and 1946-47.

One check on the patta data is to compare them with the NSS data on landholdings for 1953-54. In Figures 12 and 13 the 1950-51 patta figures have been compared with the 1953-54 NSS data for the districts comprising Madras state and Andhra Pradesh: the Lorenz curves are fairly close to each other for Madras state: in fact, the NSS figures show more equality in the higher ranges (the effects of land reform?). However, the NSS data show a very much greater degree of inequality than the patta figures in Andhra Pradesh. Is this a sign that the modern revenue data are much worse in Andhra Pradesh than in Madras state?

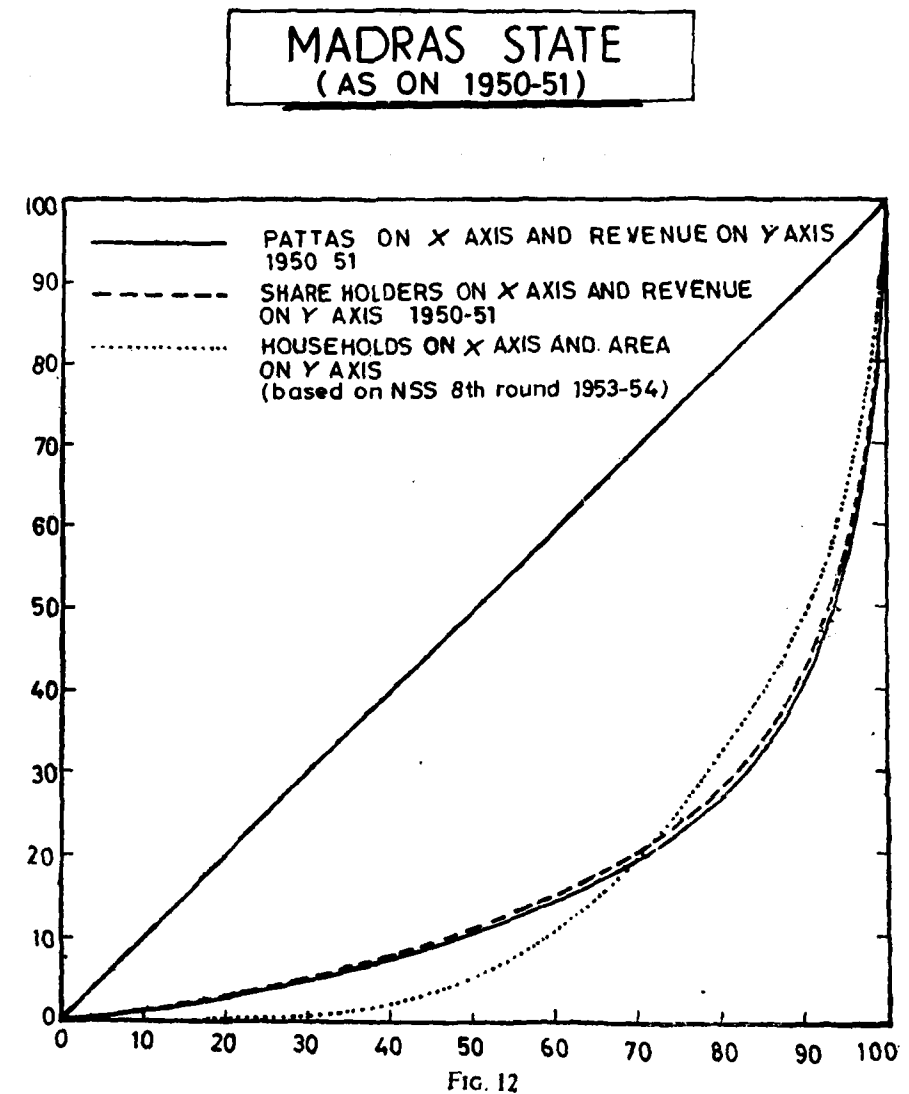
Another point somewhat in support of the Lorenz curves is that the differences between districts that they reveal conforms to what one would have expected on other grounds—Tanjore is famous for its large landowners, Kistna for the growth of large commercial farmers. Thus, it does not seem satisfactory to reject the patta figures out of hand as totally worthless.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE TRENDS IN LANDHOLDINGS

Even if the patta data are correct in suggesting that there was no overwhelming trend towards the increasing concentration of landholdings over the century considered, it is still possible that various factors making for inequality of wealth and income did operate—commercialization, the grow-

³⁰ One must also bear in mind changes in district boundaries; the data have not been adjusted for these changes.

³¹ A complete set of diagrams and tables will be presented in a working paper of the Delhi School of Economics.



ing hold of moneylenders and so forth—but that they were not reflected in changes in landholdings. As the Government of India pointed out in 1895 :

...it must always be borne in mind that the area of land which has been actually transferred by no means fully represents the area in which the proprietors interest is virtually lost beyond recall. The successive stages in the process are debt, simple hypothecation, usufructuary mortgage, and sale. Of these stages the figures [of land transfers] represent, though but imperfectly, the results of the fourth and still less completely those of the third. But the land under simple hypothecation, which has in some cases been estimated to fall little short of that under usufructuary mortgage, does not appear at all, while the amount of debt for which, under our law as it stands, the land is liable is enormous, and much of it is of such a nature that it must inevitably pass through the further stages to the final conclusion of sale.³³

Sixty years later the patta figures did not in fact show that 'the final conclusion of sale' had been reached on an enormous scale. The fears of the Government of India, particularly that land would pass into the hands of non-agriculturists, were exaggerated, as various detailed reports from the Provinces showed.³³ It may well have been true that the majority of the raiyats were in debt and that the volume of debt increased over the period, with violent fluctuations. What seems to be in doubt is that indebtedness led to increasing concentration of landholdings.

It is possible of course that the creditors preferred to prolong debt bondage rather than to foreclose because of the other advantages—purchases at low prices, unpaid labour, social power, etc.—that the hold over their debtors gave them. As the Director General of Registration remarked in 1906, 'a pure money-lender or trader seldom cares to invest in lands, unless he wishes to become an agriculturist himself, since as an absentee landlord his investment in land will not bring him as much profit as he can secure by other investments.'³⁴

Again, the growth of inequality may have manifested itself not in large landowners buying up smaller ones, but in the larger landlords diversifying

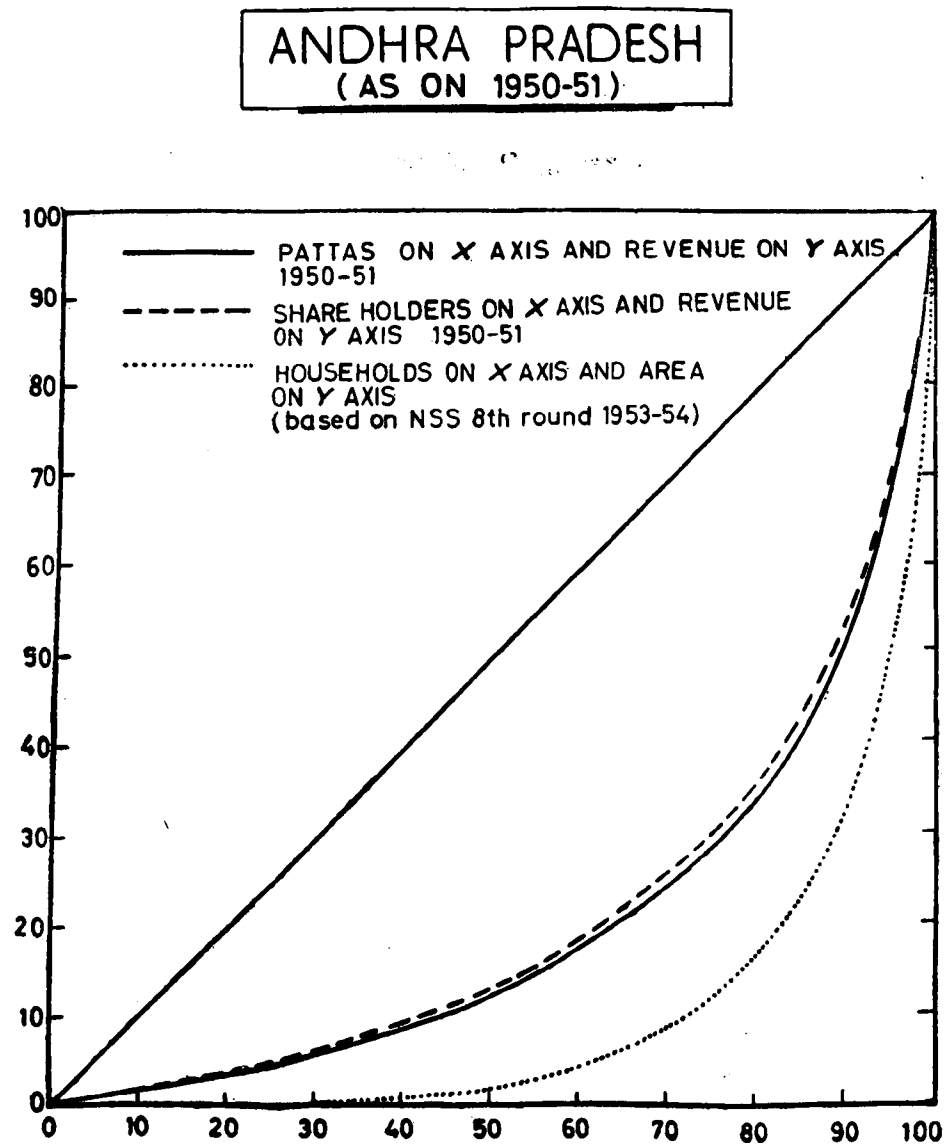


FIG. 13

³³ Government of India, *Memorandum on the Resolution of the Power to Alienate Interests in Land* (1895), para 48.

³⁴ In 1900, the Inspector-General of Registration examined the figures on sales of land, he found that lawyers, officials, etc., had called themselves agriculturists and there were also benami transactions. 'But making every allowance for these defects, the information already tabulated shows generally that in no district of the Presidency is there any reason to fear that lands are passing from the hands of the agriculturists to the trading or other classes.' G.O. No. 1952-53; 23 July 1900.

³⁴ G.O. No. 468, Judicial, 14 March 1906, p. 5.

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI

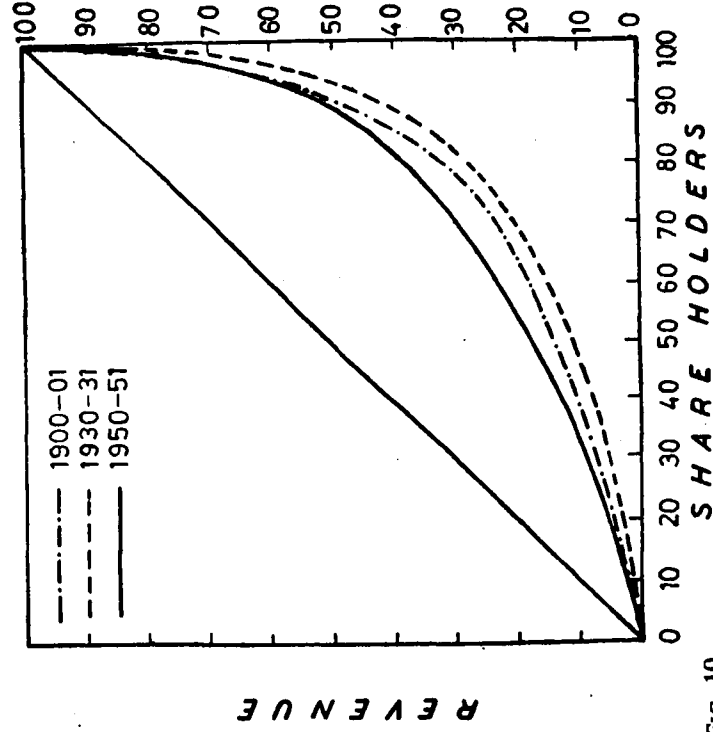
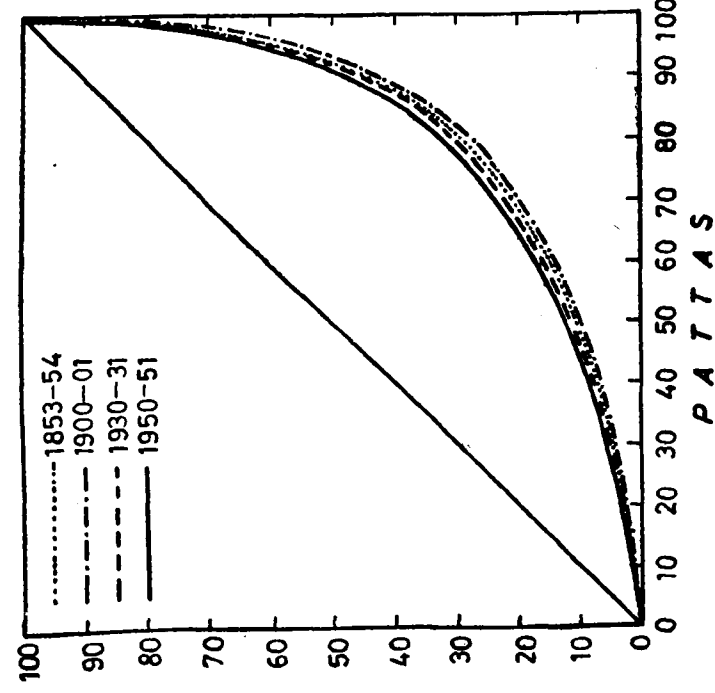


FIG. 10

TIRUNELVELI

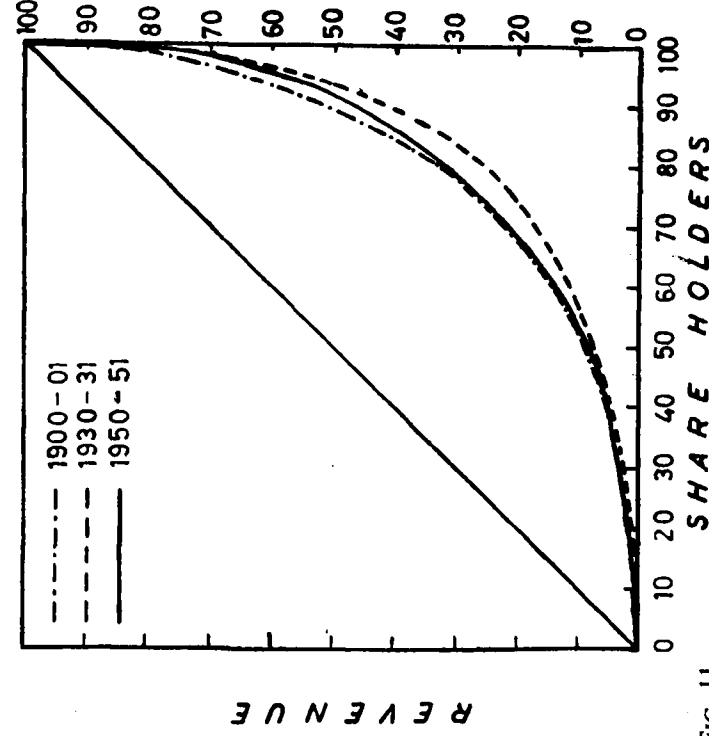
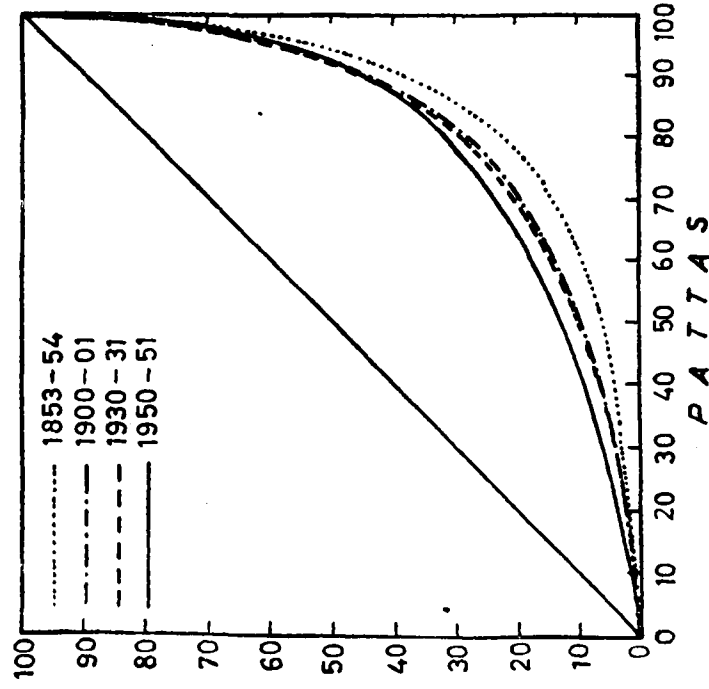


FIG. 11

their assets, and going into trade, banking and industry, particularly agricultural processing industries, such as sugar and rice milling.³⁵ David Washbrook has described how the wealthy peasants of the Kishna and Godavari deltas went into the mica business, cotton mills, and banking in the 1920s and points out that despite the growth of their wealth the amount of land transferred was not great;³⁶ in Tanjore they went into rice and sugar mills.

But there are also various possibilities which may have made for the reduction of inequalities over time. The first set of factors are demographic: if fertility rates varied less between different groups than death rates, so that a larger number of the children of the better-off survived, the land would be partitioned faster among them. Unfortunately we know practically nothing about differential rates of natural growth amongst the different castes or classes. Commenting on the statement that the poor have more children than the rich is a well-established fact and that hence 'there is an inverse relationship between family size and socio-economic status,' Shanin remarks, 'the Russian peasantry failed to appreciate such fruits of modern demographic thought. For them, the reverse held true, mainly because the rich had lower rates of mortality and adopted more children.'³⁷ As we have seen, it is also true of India that the rural rich have larger families than the rural poor, but it is not clear to what extent this is because more of their children survive or are adopted, or because they have a larger number of other dependants.

Both the joint patta figures and the village surveys suggest that throughout our period, large landholdings were broken up, not enlarged. In the 1936-37 village resurvey, there is no mention of any holding having increased in size—and this is a point investigators looked at—whereas in one village, in Tanjore, the holdings of the largest landowners had decreased.³⁸ Again in a study of Pathikanda village in Chittor district in 1962, the two authors note that while landownership in the village was extremely concentrated, with one family owning nearly one-fourth the area, its holdings had fallen from 800 acres in the previous generation to 265, as a result of partition.³⁹ These are, of course, ridiculously small samples, but it is all we

³⁵ Washbrook, 'Country Policies: Madras 1880 to 1930,' *Modern Asian Studies*, July 1973, pp. 508-11.

³⁶ Washbrook, 'Political Change in a Stable Society: Tanjore District 1880-1920' in Baker and Washbrook (eds), *South India*.

³⁷ T. Shanin, *The Awkward Class*, p. 63; the previous quotation is from U.N., *The Determinants & Consequences of Population Trends*, 1953.

³⁸ Thomas and Ramakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

³⁹ G. Parthasarathy and L. Krishnamurthy, *Changes in Rural Society*, Agro-Economic Research Centre, University of Madras, 1962, p. 67. The authors go on to state that the large landowners of today are moneylenders and traders who acquired land from cultivators in the past, but provide no further information on this point (p. 68).

have found so far. No doubt, a really extensive search will throw up some more instances but it is very doubtful that there are sufficient village studies to alter our conclusions.

The patta data, which reveal a marked decline in the average size in each class after 1900-01, show that it is the rich groups that are being broken up faster, but this point should not be stressed too far, since it may simply reveal greater fragmentation of holdings amongst the rich (Table I shows a very sharp fall in the number of shareholders per joint patta in the highest class after 1930-31; the reason for this is not clear).

At the other end of the scale, the picture in the nineteenth century was one of ceaseless mobility: of men of no means, taking up lands for cultivation (and being given pattas) which they threw up as soon as there were bad harvests. P.B. Smollet in 1858 said, 'the number of pauper cultivators has largely increased of late years for the system of sub-division of tenure is fostered by the inferior revenue servants, because at the time of settlement it affords a wide field for chicanery and fraud in the granting of new remissions.'⁴⁰ Smollet admittedly was a fervent and rare supporter of the zamindari against the raiyatwari system, but references to 'pauper cultivators' abound in the literature. It would be useful to analyze the mobility within this group, and the way cultivable waste was taken up for cultivation.

There are also factors making for the equalization of landholdings over time. For instance, the Government of Madras followed a policy of allotting lands to depressed castes and agricultural labourers, either directly or through Christian missionaries.⁴¹ The total waste lands assigned to the depressed classes by the end of 1931 amounted to 342,611 acres:⁴² over 1 per cent of the cultivated area and over 5 per cent of the cultivable waste.

But it is also true that the government itself followed the rule 'when dealing with extension of cultivation to offer the tenancy of land hitherto uncultivated in the first place to the holder of adjoining cultivated land, if he declines it, to other landholders, so that no landless agricultural worker can get it unless all the landholders refuse it. . . . But in such districts as North Arcot where land is held by rich pattadars and cultivated by Pariah *padiyals* (day labourers) it is obviously unjust. The pattadars will even take it in turns to pay rent for the new land and hold it without even cultivating it, merely to prevent the

⁴⁰ P.B. Smollet, *Madras: Its Civil Administration*, Madras, 1858, p. 7.

⁴¹ G.O. No. 2910 of 18 December 1916 mentions that in the preceding three years five grants of land were made in Trichy, Guntur, South and North Arcot, to missionary societies for distribution to Panchamas; these amounted to under 1,200 acres in all. These grants were made by the Government of Madras, but District Officers could also assign lands to 'panchamas and other landless classes.' As a result of assignments to the labouring classes, Sathyanathan remarked, 'many labourers have now become small holders of land.' See S. Sathyanathan, *Report on Agricultural Indebtedness*, p. 40.

⁴² G.T. Boag, *Madras Presidency, 1881-1931*, pp. 131-32.

padiyal from having a chance of emancipating himself by its means. . . .⁴³ These provisions were most frequently invoked in the mirasdari villages: in the whole of Chinglepet, where mirasdari was very common, the Pariahs, who formed 25 per cent of the population held only 2 per cent of the land in 1891 and this proportion would have been much lower had it not been for the non-mirasi villages.⁴⁴

It is true too that the poorest groups suffered from very grave social and economic disabilities that made it extremely difficult for them to move up the ladder. Debt bondage was common and was supported by the courts, if the labourer defaulted, the penal provisions of the Breach of Contract Act could be brought into force.

But the mobility of the poorest increased over time, as did that of the highest social groups. The changing fortunes of agriculture, as well as the chances of escape from village bondage into the freedom of the cities or abroad, and the possibilities of earning money there, enabled some labourers to buy land, and induced some of the upper castes to sell it. The Director General of Registration concluded from the enquiries made during several tours at the beginning of this century, that 'field labourers' who migrated abroad returned and bought land with their earnings.⁴⁵ There is, for example, the Brahmin village of Dusi, where Slater found the *padiyal* landless in 1916. By 1936 they had increased in number, changed their caste name from Gounder to Naicker, and had bought some land. In 1959, many of the Brahmins had emigrated though some still remained in the village as non-cultivating landowners, and by then 40 per cent of the 293 Naicker families owned land.⁴⁶

It is also possible that large holdings broke up more easily than small ones precisely because the larger landholders found it easier to obtain credit; they frequently borrowed to buy land, and often had to sell in hard times.⁴⁷

⁴³ Gilbert Slater, *Some South Indian Villages*, p. 240.

⁴⁴ Though only one-eighth of the total number of villages, these contained nearly one-third of the total Pariah holdings. This suggests that in the Presidency as a whole considerably more than 2 per cent of the land was held by Pariahs, though doubtless much less than their share in the total population.

⁴⁵ He added, '... this weapon of emigration in their hands is gradually securing to them better treatment from their employers here. In fact, owing to the fear that the labourers might run away with advances of seedgrain and money given to them, employers of agricultural labour are also finding it necessary to take labour contracts.' Proc. Judicial Dept. No. 468; 14 March 1906.

⁴⁶ University of Madras, 'Village Survey of Dusi,' 1962, p. 27. The proportion of the total land of the village held by Naickers is not given.

⁴⁷ S. Sathyanathan, *Report on Agricultural Indebtedness*, p. 42. Again,

'The effects of the famine [of 1866-67] are not at all clear, but it appears that the larger pattadars suffered more than the smaller; for, in the matter of remissions, they were treated far less leniently in faslis 1276-77 [1866-67] than the smaller holders, as it was considered

These considerations support the hypothesis that the land revenue figures are not totally misleading in suggesting that there were no clear trends for the ownership of land to become increasingly concentrated from 1853-54 to 1950-51. But nothing stronger has been established. It may be impossible to do so for the Presidency as a whole, though it would doubtless be useful to attempt to reconstruct landholdings for much smaller areas (though larger than a village) or to trace the growth of some families of large landlords, from the records of landownership and possibly from private records. The fortunes of the great landowners of Tanjore, pre-eminently the district of large landowners would richly repay study. Did Chidambaranatha Mudaliyar of Shiyali, 'by far the richest landowner in Tanjore,' really own more than 40,000 acres in 1913, as he was said to,⁴⁸ and what has become of his holdings since then?

that they were in a better position to meet their obligations'. See Benson, *A Statistical Account of Kurnool*, p. 103.

⁴⁸ Report of the Deputy Collector of Tanjore, Madras G. O. No. 3594-95, Rev., 9 December 1914, p. 67. This statement seems implausible from what is known of the landholders of that area today.

The Bengal Zamindars: Local Magnates and the state before the Permanent Settlement

RATNALEKHA RAY

THE MUGHAL SYSTEM, 1575-1707

Much of the controversy regarding the revenue settlement of Bengal among rival factions of the company's government tended to centre round the question: who were the zamindars? Not only senior company servants like Boughton Rouse and James Grant but high native revenue officers expressed diametrically opposite opinions on the subject. Shitab Rai, the *naib diwan* (deputy finance minister) for Bihar, expressed the following view: 'The revenue belongs to the king, but the land to the zamindar.' Rai Raiyan Rajvallabh put forward the opposite view: 'The proprietor or the lord of the soil is the Emperor. Zamindars and Chaudhuris are written as officers, and depend, conditionally on the carrying on of the improvement of cultivation, and discharging the revenue of the government, together with the duties of protecting the highways, and of their respective limits and boundaries, and the chastisement of evil-doers.'¹ These differences of opinion, even among experienced native revenue officers who were not guided by the European misconceptions of Indian practices, arose from the complexity of zamindari rights due to developments over time and differences between localities.

For the province of Bengal at any rate, the term 'zamindar' was a Mughal revenue innovation introduced for the first time by Akbar² to denote all

¹ Qanungo Ramram Chaudhuri combined both views in his statement: 'A Zamindar and Chowdhury is, according to the Raje-ul-Mulk, an object of inheritance; and the zamindars and chowdhuries are there in hereditary themselves; but inasmuch as the payment of the revenue of Government, the maintenance of the peace, and the protection of the country, and the carrying on of its cultivation and improvement, are committed to them on the part of his Majesty; it is therefore an office; neither are they independent of the approbation of Government.' Boughton Rouse, *A Dissertation on the Landed Property of Bengal*, India Office Library Tract No. V. 3325, Appendices containing the opinions of the native revenue officers, pp. 272-99.

² 'Zamindar' is a Persian compound-word, but was not in use in Persia. In India it was used in the fourteenth century by the Persian historians, Barani and Afif, to denote Hindu chieftains, but the term was not then a revenue-administrative category and the official terms for land-holders of various types within the Delhi Sultanate were 'knuts', 'muqaddams,' and 'chaudhuris'. Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, Bombay, 1963, p. 10; Ziauddin Barani, *Tarikh-e-Firozshahi*, translated in H.M. Elliot, *The*

categories of existing landholders (the most prominent being the so-called 'twelve bhuiyas'³ who were crushed by the Mughal armies) and was in this sense as much a blanket term invented for administrative convenience as the British shorthand category of 'landlord.' The Mughal system, with its insistence on standardization of revenue arrangements through uniform appointment or confirmation of zamindars to the charge of regularly defined *parganas* (fiscal units grouped together under *sarkars* or districts and comprising *mauzas* or villages), substantially modified the fluid structure of land rights headed by the practically independent bhuiyas who had mushroomed during the anarchy of the transition from Afghan to Mughal rule. The most substantial change was the destruction of resisting bhuiyas with large armies, such as Pratapaditya of Jessore and the Afghan chiefs of Bhati (Sudarbans including tracts along the Meghna in Dacca and contiguous districts), and their replacement by more amenable zamindars and taluqdars who were regarded by theoreticians of Mughal statecraft as officials appointed for collecting the revenue and administering the territory of the *parganas* and *sarkars* recorded in the manuals of administration. In the East Bengal tracts formerly held by the *bara bhuiyas*, numerous petty zamindars and taluqs sprang up after the fall of the bhuiyas and their position came to be regulated in theory at any rate, by official rules.⁴ The administrative regulations of Akbar introduced a device called the *diwani sanad* (title-deed given by the finance ministry) which was uniformly given to all kinds of landholders grouped under the category of zamindar.⁵ In the sanad, their function was explicitly stated to be the *khidmat* or service of collecting the land revenue. The sanad was granted without an explicit mention of the right of transference and inheritance which was allowed by custom. The supreme owner of

History of India as Told by its Own Historians, Vol. III, London, 1871, pp. 182-83. A Hindu local chieftain called Raja Kans (identified with Raja Ganesh) who temporarily seized the independent Muslim state of Bengal after the break-up of the Delhi sultanate was described by the author of the *Riyazu-s-Salatin* as the zamindar of Bhaturia, but it must be remembered that this work was composed as late as 1786 when the term 'zamindar' had supplanted older contemporary terms by which Kans had been known. Ghulam Hussain Salim, *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, translated by Maulavi Abdus Salam, Calcutta, 1902, pp. 112-13. The term used most commonly by Bengalis to denote landholders before the invention of the administrative category 'zamindar' was 'bhuiya'.

³ Many of the chiefs subjugated by the Mughals, some of the *Bara Bhuiyas* in particular, were Hindu or Pathan upstarts who grabbed territories during the transition from Afghan to Mughal rule, but a few—such as the Rajas of Bishnupur, Susang, and Chandradvip—were older Hindu princes who had ruled independently from time immemorial. Tapan Kumar Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, An Introductory Study in Social History*, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 17-18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁵ S. Nurul Hasan, 'Three Studies of Zamindari System' in *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Vol. 1, Aligarh, 1969, p. 234.

the land, the state, gave a sanad to whom it appointed to the office of zamindar.⁶ The zamindar did not have the right to alienate one bigha of revenue-paying land without the sanction of the government,⁷ nor to sell it, though by custom he could inherit, alienate, or sell his revenue management rights which contained unmistakable features of property.

According to the high Mughal theory of government, the zamindar held his office upon the pleasure of the government, that is to say, upon the due performance of the duties of revenue collection and rural administration assigned to him by the sanad.⁸ How far was this theory translated into practice? The division of the *suba* (province) of Bengal into 19 *sarkars* and 688 *parganas*, enumerated in the *Ain-i-Akbari* by Abul Fazl, implied the extension of a regular imperial administrative machinery over the whole territory of Bengal.⁹ But these territorial divisions were largely theoretical (since much of the territory was not under the political control of the Mughal government) and the revenue demand of 472,726,81 dams on Bengal mentioned by Abul Fazl was merely an estimation of the land tax which could be realized from the province when brought under proper sarkar administration.¹⁰ Throughout the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir, the zamindars were

⁶ In course of time the zamindars themselves came to accept this theory, though in practice their position might be different. In a petition relating to the Decennial Settlement the zamindars of Rangpur state: 'The country belongs to the Company and we, the Zamindars, are only appointed for the purpose of transacting the business of it.' Quoted in W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. VII, p. 319.

⁷ But in Bengal zamindars were able, because of their entrenched local position, to alienate large quantities of *malguzari* (revenue-paying) land as *devottar* (temple), *brahmottar* (priestly), and other types of revenue-free property. The Nadia Raj Papers (Table 1) contain the list of devottar lands appropriated by the Raj Family.

⁸ Board of Revenue Proceedings, 13 March 1789, no. 14, answer of the Roy Royah to the questions put to him by the Board of Revenue, 27 February 1789.

⁹ Abul Fazl-i-Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. 11, translated by H. S. Jarrett, Calcutta, 1949, p. 141.

¹⁰ It was not until the administration of the Governor Islam Khan (1608-1613) that the Afghan chiefs of Bhati were subjugated and regular political control was imposed over the whole province. Long after Abul Fazl had drawn up the ideal scheme for the administrative divisions of the province of Bengal, local military officers of the imperial government were pushing on the administrative boundaries of the empire by pacifying the areas assigned to them, and by collecting tribute from the local chiefs who had offered submission. At this stage there was little sign of the usual activities of a regular civil administration by local officers at sarkar or pargana level. Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-79. Tapan Raychaudhuri remarks, 'In the literature of the period, even the small zamindars appear as Rajas, omnipotent within their territories, while the representatives of the imperial power seem to be a distant reality hardly intruding into the zamindar's sphere of influence.' Tapan Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 22. These conditions persisted throughout the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. As pacification progressed, faujdars and shiqdars took charge of sarkars and parganas, but they did not press hard on the local tribute-collecting political systems. By the time of the Viceroy Shah Shuja, who made a new revenue settlement of Bengal, 15 more

TABLE I
DEVOTTAR LANDS OF NADIA RAJ FAMILY

Name of deity	Name of Donor	Name of property	Area	Date of gift	
Britti Srimati Maharajni	Raja Krishnachandra	Isvarnagar	3,553	1768	
Devottar Sri Sri Chandi Thakurani	-do-	Sahebnagar	2,427	1742	
Devottar Sri Sri Thakurani	-do-	-do-	2,427	1742	
Sri Sri Devottar Krishna Chandra Thakur	-do-	-do-	1,578	1735	
Sri Sri Gopal Thakur	-do-	Dudhsar	2,150	1732	
Devottar Sri Sri Laksmi-narayan	Raja Rudra Ray	Dakatia Pata	1,000	1700	
Devottar Sri Sri Thakur	Raja Raghuram Ray	Sandah	2,111	1728	
Sri Sri Rajeswar Thakur	Krishnachandra	Hummia Pata	1,854	1752	
Devottar Sri Sri Gopinath Thakur	Raghuram	Gopinath Ray	1,900	1728	
Devottar Thakurani	Sidhveswari	Krishnachandra	Bishnupar	708	1742
Devottar Thakur	Govindadev	Raghuram	Jatrapur	1,589	1701
-do-	Ramjivan Ray	Baikuntha Sarak	225	1714	
-do-	-do-	Natun Sarak	—	—	
-do-	Raghuram	Mrigipota	502	1702	
-do-	-do-	Adapota	580	1701	
Devottar Thakur	Krishnadev	Krishnachandra	Ghugragachi	1,230	1748
Devottar Jaleswar Thakur	-do-	Teghari	2,296	1768	
Anandadev Thakur	-do-	Kalinagar	—	—	
-do-	-do-	Haradham	509	1754	
-do-	-do-	-do-	67	1751	
Devottar Thakur	Krishna Ray	Raghab Ray	Jagananathpur	3,467	1671

SOURCE: List of Devottars entered in the 1202 B.S. Taidad in the possession of Maharaja Girish Chandra Ray, Nadia Raj Papers.

local chiefs—both Hindu and Afghan—who paid tribute as vassals.¹¹ In other areas of Hindostan, the Mughal government insisted on fixing revenue rates on the peasants through its own local revenue machinery and the zamindars were allowed a separate cess as their *malikana* (proprietaryship) in addition to their private revenue-free lands. But in Bengal the zamindars paid a fixed sum of tribute over long periods instead of a varying land tax

sarkars and 688 more paragnas had been added to the older divisions. Atul Chandra Ray, *History of Bengal Mughal Period (1526-1765)*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 339.

¹¹ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 31-32.

from year to year,¹² and made collections from peasants at rates fixed by custom or by themselves. Even as late as the reign of Aurangzeb, only about 1.5 per cent of the villages had been measured in Bengal, though in the Mughal Empire as a whole (excluding Bijapur and Hyderabad), 49 per cent of the villages had been measured and settled by the government. In Agra, only 9 per cent of the villages were left unmeasured, in Allahabad 5 per cent, and in Lahore 9 per cent.¹³

In Bengal, unlike Hindustan, the government had no direct contact with the villages.¹⁴ Those rulers who offered submission to the Mughal emperor as the sovereign continued to form the *de facto* government of their territories, which bore the political characteristic of *rajs* (principalities) within the Mughal state. Because of the weakness of the Mughal state in Bengal, not only did many old principalities survive,¹⁵ but new principalities were built up within Mughal territory by mushroom zamindars through regular warfare against neighbouring magnates.¹⁶ The Mughal state, which enjoyed no monopoly of the instruments of coercion and administration, permitted

¹² Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, pp. 145, 177-79. An *asal jama* (original revenue) was estimated by Akbar's finance Minister Todar Mal for Bengal in 1586, which remained virtually unchanged until the next revenue settlement by Shah Shuja in 1658 at an increment of revenue of 16½ per cent over the sum estimated by Todar Mal. The increase was derived mainly from territories annexed in the interval. The next settlement was made in the time of Murshid Quli Khan. James Grant, 'Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal', appendix no. 4, to the Fifth Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, *Parliamentary Papers*, sess. 1812, Vol. VII.

¹³ The following was the area in different subas measured in bighas: Bengal—3 lakhs 34 thousand; Bihar—1 crore 27 lakhs; Allahabad—1 crore 97 lakhs; Awadh—1 crore 90 lakhs; Agra—4 crore 1 lakh; Delhi—6 crore 1 lakh; Lahore—2 crore 43 lakhs; Multan—44 lakhs. If we compare these figures with the number of villages in each suba, the extent to which Bengal was under-administered stands out clearly; Bengal, 112 thousand; Bihar—55 thousand; Allahabad—47 thousand; Awadh—52 thousand; Agra—30 thousand; Delhi—45 thousand; Lahore—27 thousand; Multan—9 thousand, Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ The only exception was the sarkar of Purnia, a faujdari area (as distinct from diwani areas where revenue was collected by the diwani department) where the *faujdar* (a military officer of the nizamat department) collected revenue almost wholly from raiyats and not from taluqdars, revenue-farmers, and zamindars as was general in Bengal. The only advantage enjoyed by the zamindars in Purnia was an allowance called *nankar*, and not village and mufassal charges for tax collection (*saranjami*) as in other parts of Bengal. See Walter K. Firminger (ed.), *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. 2, proceedings of 13 December 1770, to Richard Becher from Ducarel, 3 December 1770.

¹⁵ Most notably, the Bishnupur, Susang, and Chandradvip rajs, which were already quite old. The more recent principalities built up by mushroom bhuiyas like Pratapaditya of Jessore and Isa Khan of the Bhati tract were crushed out of existence.

¹⁶ A striking example was the build-up of the Jessore raj, created under Mughal rule by a Kayastha soldier of Man Singh's army which crushed Pratapaditya of Jessore. Bhabeswar Ray, the soldier of fortune, got hold of a part of the territory of the fallen bhuiya and his descendants expanded the zamindari by conquest.

these violent activities of its more prominent subjects and remained content with a distant overall control, exerted by a relatively small number of town-based officials.¹⁷ Since it was the weakness of the supreme government in the countryside which permitted the existence of the system of intermediary government known as the zamindari system, the exact nature of the presence of the Mughal government in rural Bengal deserves closer study.

According to the manual of administration drawn up by Abul Fazl, the government was represented in the mauza (village revenue unit) by the *patwari* (village accountant) and in the pargana by the *amin* (surveyor) and *shiqdar* (police officer and revenue collector).¹⁸ But, in practice, the *patwaris*, *shiqdars*, and *amins* were not under direct government control but were officers manning the zamindari establishments in the interior (*mufassal*) and were under the control of zamindari officials at the headquarters (*sadr*).¹⁹ The basic fiscal jurisdictions, mauzas and parganas, were thus virtually out of reach of the supreme government and were controlled by the subordinate government of the zamindars. The parganas were grouped together in a number of sarkars which constituted the Bengal suba. Theoretically each sarkar should have had a *faujdar* (a military officer representing the Nizamat who was responsible for law and order) and an *amil* (a revenue collector representing the *diwani* or the revenue department). In practice *faujdar*s, where they existed at all (there were none for Bishnupur and Birbhum), held a large number of sarkars under their jurisdictions,²⁰ and for the whole

¹⁷ Bengal was so under-administered even at the end of Aurangzeb's reign that the foundation of Mughal rule remained shaky in Bengal and the province was periodically disturbed by revolts of powerful barons. In 1691 Nurulla Khan was the joint *faujdar* of Jessore, Hugli, Burdwan, Midnapur, and Hijli though there should have been a *faujdar* for each of these important sarkars according to the manual of administration drawn up by Abul Fazl a century before. This laxity of control encouraged the zamindar of Chitwa, Sobha Singh, to raise the banner of revolt against Mughal rule in association with Rahim Khan, the leader of the Afghans in Orissa. When the revolt broke out in Midnapur and Burdwan, Nurulla Khan marched out from his distant headquarters in Jessore, but the enemy had already secured the strategic points, so that he was compelled to fall back on the fort of Hugli and subsequently to retreat precipitately from it. Half the province of Bengal on the west side of the Ganges from Burdwan to Rajmahal was occupied by the rebels. The revolt was suppressed only after pitched battles fought by an experienced general appointed by Aurangzeb. See Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-37.

¹⁸ Abul Fazl-i-Allami, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-60.

¹⁹ Home Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 206, Amini Commission Report.

²⁰ The task of the *faujdar* was to prevent rebellion against the government rather than to perform police and judicial functions at the village or pargana level, which were exercised by village and pargana officers under the zamindar. The *faujdar* had under him a *daroga*, a *qazi*, and a *naib qazi* who constituted the criminal court of the sarkar, but the jurisdiction of these criminal courts (*nizamat adalats*) seldom reached out of the headquarters into the localities, where disputes were settled locally as far as possible. See B.B. Misra, *Central Administration of the East India Company, 1773-1834*, Manchester, 1959, pp. 224-25. The local police

of Bengal Salimulla mentioned only nine *faujdar*s, stationed in Chittagong (Islamabad), Midnapur, Purnia (Jalalgarh), Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur, Rangamati, Burdwan, and Hugli.²¹

As for *amins* who were supposed to collect the revenue from each sarkar it seems that these revenue officials did not usually reside as permanent officers stationed at the district headquarters,²² but were sent annually from Murshidabad to different zamindaris to take charge of collection. With the purpose of checking fraud on the part of the zamindars and the *amins*, the Mughal government maintained an establishment of *qanungos* down to the pargana level. The *qanungos* kept all pargana accounts relating to land and had the authority to summon village papers from the *patwaris*. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the *qanungo* establishment as a check on fraud was much impaired by the fact that local families acquired the office of *qanungo* on a hereditary basis (just like the office of zamindar and *chaudhuri*) and utilized their position to augment their own rent-free properties.²³ Whatever the theory of government set forth by Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, in Bengal throughout the Mughal and Nawabi periods the government at Murshidabad did not have a regular system of district administration approaching the collectorate network built up by the East India Company for concluding the Decennial (subsequently Permanent) Settlement. The Mughal government in Bengal had no systematic control of the business of the interior; the real units of local, and even district, administration were the zamindaris.

The sphere of zamindari thus lay in the polity rather than in the economy.²⁴ A zamindari was not, like an English estate of the eighteenth century, a unit of production. The basic unit of production was the village and the *rai*yati holdings appertaining to it. Zamindari was a pyramidal revenue-collecting and tribute-sharing structure through which *mal* (revenue) and *sayer* (customs

establishments—*paikan* establishments at village level and *thanadari* establishments at country level—were under the authority of zamindars who were answerable to the government for law and order. India Office Library, 'Regulations for Criminal Courts in Bengal, 1790,' *Mss. Eur.*, p. 231.

²¹ W. K. Firminger, *Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report*, Calcutta, 1962, p. 43.

²² *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. 2, proceedings of 3 December 1770, Naib Diwan's representation, p. 8.

²³ The head *Qanungo* of Bengal himself built up the extremely under-assessed zamindari of Rakunpur by acquiring choice *mahals* in all parts of Bengal. Dispersed in minute divisions of territory, taken from different zamindaris as reward for suitably doctoring the accounts, this zamindari naturally escaped regular assessment as it could not be subjected as a whole to the local surveys which took place from time to time; James Grant considered this zamindari to be richest of its size in Bengal. See his 'Analysis of the Finances of Bengal,' *Parliamentary Papers*, sess. 1812, vol. 7, p. 269.

²⁴ Except in so far as the polity affected the economy, particularly through the levy and apportionment of the *jama* (assessment) and *adwabs* (irregular cesses).

duties) were collected for distribution between the Mughal state and the rural classes of high caste origin above the peasantry who manned the subordinate government of the country. This subordinate local government, at the head of which stood the zamindar of the area, extracted as tribute (jama with abwabs) a sizeable portion of the social surplus of the villages, leaving a margin of the surplus for the village landholders and a bare subsistence for the majority of cultivators and labourers. The zamindars were able to do this because they represented authority and government to the raiyats, controlled within their territory superior force, and provided the minimum administrative conditions for the maintenance and extension of cultivation by giving official loans to *taqavi* (agriculturists) and maintaining *pulbandi* (embankments).²⁵ The traditional social authority of the zamindars, their hereditary local influence, and their paternal image among the raiyats helped materially in the maintenance of the subordinate government of the country over the villages, each of which had its own oligarchy seeking collaboration with the zamindari government for bolstering their own position within the village. In addition to land revenue the zamindars also collected sayer which was imposed on *hats* (rural markets), *ganjs* (commercial centres) and bazars where merchandise like grain, tobacco, sugar, and silk were bought and sold, zamindars claimed an equal right in the revenue arising from marts and entrepôts as in the revenue from lands (a fact further illustrating the point that they were territorial rather than landed magnates). In times of agricultural scarcity, the subordinate government of the zamindars could thus bear the losses from rent with the help of the usually more regular income from the duties from trade which continued throughout the year and gave them a certain extra authority within their territories.²⁶

The process of social conflict in rural areas was quite often channelled through the zamindari establishment in the form of rival factions of zamindari

²⁵ Cultivators looked up to their zamindars for the provision of these essential needs of cultivation. There was a rather touching instance of this in 1790 when the collector of Birbhum conveyed a petition of the raiyats for the immediate repair of the embankments, pleading that as the Raja of Birbhum was in confinement (for arrears of revenue) there was nobody to take care of them. BRP, 20 August 1790, no. 1, collector of Birbhum to BR, 2 August 1790.

²⁶ BRP, 15 April 1790, no. 41. Questions relative to gunges, hats and bazars with answer from collector of Burdwan; *Bengal District Records, Dinajpur*, Vol. II, no. 226, p. 145; Collector of Dinajpur to Shore, 30 October 1787. The territorial magnates maintained armies, dispensed criminal justice, enforced law and order and decided disputes of boundaries within their territory. When a raiyat delayed or withheld his revenue, when any inhabitant of the zamindari infringed the laws of the state and the customs of the country, or when any officer employed in the mufassal abused his trust, the zamindar had the right and privilege of punishing, fining, or banishing the offender from the district. He had the power of hearing and enquiring into complaints, summoning people before him when necessary, and of inflicting punishment (not capital) according to the magnitude of the offence. BRP, 13 March 1789, No. 15. Answers of the Qanungos, 27 February 1789.

officials, for the zamindari was the unit of government within which, by the operation of its own administrative establishment, the distribution of power, social prestige (caste and family), precedence, and economic resources (rent-free grants, service lands, revenue farm and *mokarai*²⁷ lease) was determined. The zamindari establishment operated as a machinery of distribution through the exercise of the customary and de facto power (though not recognized in the diwani sanad) of the zamindari to make sales, conveyances, and donations of land.²⁸ The numerous dependent landed rights which were created in this way within a zamindari contained the characteristics of property, for there was a brisk selling market for these rights which freely circulated within the zamindari.²⁹ The local gentry of *grihastha*³⁰ status who sought to secure these titles to the land, necessarily had to develop connections with one or other of the factions in the zamindari to ensure their own share in the resources of the local society.

THE NAWABI SYSTEM, 1707-60

From an analysis of the functional content of the zamindari system during the Mughal period it becomes clear that zamindari was essentially a function of the governance of the country and was an integral part of the political and administrative structure of the Bengali society. Since the political and administrative framework changed considerably with the emergence of a practically independent nawabi in Bengal under Murshid Quli Khan, the zamindari system in turn underwent substantial modification. Three important measures of policy adopted by Murshid Quli Khan permanently changed the political system in Bengal. In the first place, the continuous

²⁷ Permanent.

²⁸ BRP, 13 March 1789, No. 14, answer of the Roy Royan. The right confirmed by the Roy Royan did not imply any power to alienate malguzari land from the revenue-roll without the sanction of the government. Nevertheless, zamindars had vastly extended their power of distributing malguzari lands. The accounts of *baze-zamin* (alienated lands) of the zamindars of Mahishadal settlement show great quantities of lands in these zamindaris alienated to various classes of people; priests (*devottar*), Brahman (*brahmottar*), mandals (*mahattran*), barbers, washermen, leather workers, blacksmiths, milk-men, book binders (*mindaran*), and the zamindars and their relatives themselves (*nij jote*).

²⁹ Midnapur Collectorate Records, Permanent Settlement Records including resumed estates Kabuliyats, Serial No. 2, which contains old Bengali and Persian sanads. Two instances may be given. Raja Naranarayan of Kasijora gave three bighas of household land in lease to Sheikh Marhum of Parganas Kasijora in 1154 B.S. (1747-48). His son Sheikh Sanaullah sold the household and landed property to Sheikh Muhammad Shah at Rs 21. In Pargana Kurulchour of Chakla Jaleswar, Nabanikar Chaudhuri sold 111½ bighas of rent-free land in village Keot Khalsa at Rs 90 to Rahman Khan in 1178 B.S.

³⁰ *Grihasthas* were respectable householders (*griha*—house, *stha*—resident) of good caste enjoying *bhadrasan* (ancestral household) and cultivable lands.

inflow of Muslim nobles and *mansabdars* (high officers) who were paid in *jagirs* (assignments of revenue made by the state to its officers in lieu of salaries) ceased, and by transferring the jagirs (which had so long intervened between the provincial government and the local barons) to Orissa,³¹ Murshid Quli Khan established direct political alliances with selected local barons, on whom the Nizamat henceforth became more and more dependent for managing the countryside. Secondly, the area measured in Bengal and fixed with new revenue rates on the basis of measurement was extended to some new areas by Murshid Quli Khan who put recalcitrant and defaulting zamindars into prison at Murshidabad and made over their zamindaris to the charge of Bengali amils for survey and measurement. Certain areas—especially faujdars' areas like Rangpur and areas of small zamindaris and taluqs like Dacca—were brought under a regular system of amils who exercised supervisory control over the zamindaris under their charge even if they did not directly collect revenue from the raiyats.³² Thirdly, in the much larger

³¹ Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

³² Salim-alla in *Tarikh-i-Bangla* and Ghulam Hussain Salim in *Riyazu-s-Salatin* stated that the Bengali amils sent *shiqdars* (collectors) and *amins* (measurers) to all the villages of the parganas for measuring the cultivated and waste lands in order to conclude a settlement village by village, plot by plot, and raiyat by raiyat. After the completion of the settlement, the amils continued to collect directly from the raiyats according to rates fixed by the *hast-o-bud* (survey) and the zamindars, deprived of their management of the revenues, were pensioned off with *nankar* (private lands) for subsistence. Salim-alla seems to imply that this process of measurement, direct raiyatwari management through amils and abolition of the revenue management rights of the zamindars, occurred throughout Bengal, but Ghulam Hussain Salim is careful to mention only defaulting zamindars and to imply by inference that the process of measurement occurred only in the areas where the zamindars were put into prison for default. Both Salim-alla and Ghulam Hussain Salim make frequent references to zamindars engaged in collecting revenue even after the new revenue reforms had been carried out. See Francis Gladwin, *A Narrative of Transactions in Bengal*, a translation of Salim-alla's *Tarikh-i-Bangla*, London, 1788, pp. 42-57; Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.* Salim-alla himself mentions that the zamindaris of Birbhum and Bishnupur remained free from these new regulations and continued to pay a fixed tribute in *peshkash* (cash); he also mentions that trustworthy and faithful zamindars were allowed to realize the revenues for the state from their respective zamindaris. It is probable that in their case no measurement took place at all. It is known for a fact that the zamindari of the English East India Company, consisting of the three towns of Calcutta, was not measured. After carefully considering the evidence, a modern biographer of Murshid Quli Khan concludes that Salim-alla's evidence must be accepted with some reservation and that the survey was by no means as thorough as he implied. Abdul Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan and His Times*, Dacca, 1963, pp. 88-89. The question as to how extensive was the area in which the survey and appointment of amils for revenue collection was put into effect can be answered only by inference and by reading history back from the conditions prevailing at the time of the British take-over of the revenue administration. It seems that in the larger zamindaris with powerful barons, who came to control in course of time more than half the territory in Bengal, no survey took place. The amils were appointed in these zamindaris merely to receive

areas not affected by these regulations for regular revenue management, Murshid Quli Khan encouraged the concentration of zamindari rights by placing a large number of parganas under a few trusted revenue-farmers and officials like Raghunandan (his *peshkar* or assistant) of Natore who imposed a new zamindari jurisdiction over former proprietors throughout the huge raj of Rajshahi.³³ Murshid Quli Khan and his successors found it profitable to assist the expansion of a few favoured zamindaris, for such a policy resulted in substantial reduction of the costs of peace-keeping and revenue-collection. Only a small force, of 2,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry represented the military power of the Nizamat under Murshid Quli Khan.³⁴ All the same he and the succeeding nawabs managed to control the countryside and collect the revenue at little cost by working through a dozen big zamindars who enormously expanded their dominions by the independent use of force against neighbouring zamindars and taluq-

the revenues and they exercised no supervision over the large zamindaris unless the zamindar was a minor. These big zamindaris were formed in the diwani area, where temporary amils sent from Murshidabad by the diwani department collected the revenue on tour. In the faujdari areas, where a resident faujdar collected the revenue and appointed amils for receiving the dues from the parganas, a more regular revenue administration prevailed. Dacca, which was not a faujdari but was regularly administered by a niabat, also fell in this category. The zamindars of the niabat of Dacca were numerous and held only small parganas, exercising supervision over the zamindar of each parganas. At the time of the British take-over of the revenue administration, a number of smaller zamindars and taluqdars were under the regular district based supervision of faujdars and amils in the following areas: the faujdaris of Purnia, Rangpur, Sylhet, Chittagong, and Midnapur and the niabat of Dacca. It is possible that Murshid Quli Khan's revenue measures affected these districts more closely than the rest of Bengal. For the comparative study of conditions of revenue administration and control of zamindaris during the administration of the naib diwan Reza Khan (1765-1772) see Walter K. Firminger (ed.), *The Letter Copy Books of the Resident at Durbar at Murshidabad 1769-1770*, Calcutta, 1919; and Walter K. Firminger (ed.), *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad 1770-1772*, Vols. I and II, Calcutta, 1919. See also Abdul Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal 1756-1775, A Study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan*, Cambridge, 1969.

³³The Raj of Rajshahi was a result of the weeding out of disaffected and refractory zamindars by Murshid Quli Khan and the conferment of their zamindaris on Ramjivan, his *peshkar* (assistant), Raghunandan's brother. A powerful baronage was created in this case by the deliberate action of the Nizamat. There were three revolts by zamindars during the administration of Murshid Quli Khan; first by Udaynarayan, zamindar of Chakla Rajshahi; second by Sitaram, zamindar of Bhusna; third, by the Afghan zamindars of Mahmudshahi. After the suppression of each revolt Murshid Quli Khan conferred the confiscated zamindaris on Ramjivan of Natore, a small zamindar who had been punctual in payment of revenue and whose brother was a trusted official of the Nawab. The pursuit of the policy of political alliances with loyal and powerful barons permanently changed the political map of Bengal. See Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, pp. 259, 267, 278.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 257.

dars. As a result of this process of agglomeration by private warfare and public favouritism, at the time of the British occupation nearly 60 per cent of land revenue of Bengal was paid by 15 large zamindaris, comprising 615 parganas out of 1,256 in the province (see Table 2). From Table 2,

TABLE 2

Name of Zamindaris	No. of Parganas	Assessment	Caste	Remarks
Burdwan	57	2047506	Khatris	Founded by Abu Khetri, a revenue collector appointed in 1680, described by Grant as an 'enlarged compact and fertile zamindari in grain, cotton, silk and sugarcane', this raj was put together by the conquests of Maharaja Kirtichand between 1701-39.
Rajshahi	139	1696087	Brahman	Founded by Raghunandan, peshkar of Murshid Quli Khan. The largest zamindari in Bengal, the Nator Raj was built up between 1710-40 through active favour by the Nizamat.
Dinajpur	89	462964	Kayastha	Founded by Sukdeb Ray, an officer of the zamindari of Khetlal who obtained a zamindari sanad in 1650, the Dinajpur Raj was built up by the conquests of his successors Prannath and Ramnath between 1682-1760.
Nadia	73	594846	Brahman	Founded by Bhabananda, recorder of the Hugli qanungo <i>daftar</i> (office of land register) in the reign of Jahangir.
Birbhum	22	366509	Pathan	Formerly an ancient Hindu kingdom, seized by a Pathan adventurer and held as a border march from 1697.
Calcutta	27	222958	British	Granted to the British in 1760.
Jessore	23	187754	Kayastha	Founded by Bhabeswar Ray, a soldier of the Mughal army under Mansingh, who reduced the Bengal chieftains during the reign of Akbar.
Bishnupur	2	129803	Rajput	A kingdom founded in the legendary past, the independent Bishnupur Raj was reduced to a zamindari by Murshid Quli Khan in 1715.

TABLE 2 (Contd.)

Name of Zamindaris	No. of Parganas	Assessment	Caste	Remarks
Lashkarpur	15	125516	Brahman	Enclosed on all sides by the Nator Raj, the Putia Raj (Lashkarpur) was the only older zamindari founded probably in the seventeenth century which survived the rapid expansions of the Rajshahi zamindari in this area under official favour.
Roknupur	62	242943	Kayastha	Conferred on Shaw Narayan, qanungo of the suba in the first half of the eighteenth century.
Mahmudshahi	29	110633	Brahman	Conferred on Ramdeb in 1722. This zamindari was dependent on the Nator Raj.
Fatehsing	11	186421	Brahman	Conferred on Hari Prasad, a zamindari south of Murshidabad city.
Idrakpur	60	81975	Kayastha	Founded at the same time as the Dinajpur Raj by another officer of the Khetlal zamindari in the middle of the seventeenth century.
Tipperah	—	47993	Rajput	The independent rajas of Tripura held Hill Tipperah as their independent state and plains Tipperah as a zamindari under the Mughal government.
Pachet	2	18203	Rajput	Old and imperfectly reduced jungle zamindari
Other zamindaris	1140	4395973		
Total	1256	10918084		

SOURCE and NOTES: James Grant, 'Analysis of the Finances of Bengal', *Parliamentary Papers*, Sess. 1812, Vol. VII, pp. 267-69; series of articles entitled 'The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal', *Calcutta Review*, 1872.

it will appear that the only really ancient zamindaris were Bishnupur, Birbhum Lashkarpur, Tippera, and Pachet, each of which were former kingdoms which submitted to Mughal sovereignty. The large zamindaris of Burdwan, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Roknupur, Mahmudshahi, and Idarakpur were mushroom growths which underwent their real expansion in the first half of the eighteenth century. Nadia and Jessore, which also attained their huge size during this period, were of somewhat older status. Many of these zamindaris, such as Burdwan, Rajshahi, Nadia, Roknupur, and Mahmudshahi, were built up through official patronage or misuse of office. The close correlation between office-holding and zamindari was striking. Except a

few Rajput, Pathan, and Khetri adventurers of non-Bengali extraction, all the magnates sprang from the Rarh (West Bengal), Varendra (North Bengal), or Vanga (East Bengal) *samajs* (regional sub-section of caste) of the Brahman and Kayastha gentry, and were thus related by kinship to the high caste gentry of smaller fortunes who constituted the literati of the countryside.

Below the rajas, but related to many of them by blood and marriage, stood the various local clans of ritually pure groups collectively known as the *grihasthas* (gentry). The traditional rural community of Bengal was stratified, in terms of social esteem, into the two socially distinct estates of *grihastha* and *chasi* (cultivator). The status group of *grihasthas* consisted of Brahmans, Vaidyas, Kayasthas, Qazis, Maulvis, Khondkars, etc., who, however humble in their circumstances, considered it derogatory to their honour to hold the plough. The *chasis* in all cases were agriculturists, though in each village there would be families of rich peasants (*sampanna chasis*) whose heads might imitate neighbouring agriculturists *grihasthas* by confining their role in agriculture to supervision and direction. The *chasis* who held ploughs were either Muslims of agricultural stock or Hindus of semi-clean or unclean caste, such as Kaivartas, Namasudras, Sodgops, Rajbangshis, and Pods.³⁵ From region to region the social composition of the *grihastha* and *chasi* strata varied, and the revenue-collecting and land-holding structures of each region bore unmistakable signs of these local variations.³⁶ In East Bengal the classical social model of *pargana* Bikrampur was characterized by a relatively neat equation of Brahman, Vaidya, and Kayastha castes with *grihastha* status and of Muslim and Namasudra castes with *chasi* status. In the socially peculiar region of Hijli (Tamluk and Contai subdivisions of the present Midnapur district), on the other hand, Brahmans and Kayasthas were few in number and the respectable agriculturist Kaivartas of the area formed the *grihastha* class, though in other regions their caste fellows were treated with contempt as *chasis*. In Bishnupur the number of Brahmans was so large that many of them performed all agricultural operations, short of holding the plough; the existence of a considerable number of poor cultivators among the Brahmans and Kayasthas of Bishnupur, Burdwan, and other parts of West Bengal marked the high caste Rarhis sharply off from their Varendra or Vangaja caste fellows.³⁷

But whatever the local caste composition of the *grihasthas* (Brahman and Kayastha was the norm), all over Bengal there existed a local gentry, very numerous in some places (as in Bikrampur) but quite thin in ranks in others (as in Patiladaha and many other *Parganas* of North Bengal). Their

³⁵'The Zamindar and the Ryot,' *Calcutta Review*, Vol. VI, 1846, Part II, p. 325.

³⁶This becomes evident by a comparison of Dacca with Midnapur, and of Bishnupur with Dinajpur and Rangpur.

³⁷See Jogendranath Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects*, Calcutta, 1968, p. 33.

local influence varied from region to region in relation to their number, but the bigger zamindars could seldom bypass the local gentry in the collection of tribute from the villages. By virtue of their literacy, Brahmans, Kayasthas, and Vaidyas manned indispensable services and professions. They staffed the Nizamat and zamindari administration as officials, clerks, and writers (mainly Kayasthas) and filled the various professions as priests (Brahmans), teachers (Brahmans and Kayasthas), and physicians (Vaidyas). Naturally they claimed a share in the tribute from land and without making terms with them neither the Mughal state nor the territorial magnates could collect it. They obtained their share in the tribute of the land in three forms: (i) *taluqs* which contained the property features of zamindari but were smaller in size and which paid the revenue to the state through a big zamindar (except in the case of *hazuri* or independent *taluqs*); (ii) *ijaras* (farms) and *dar-ijaras* (sub-farms) of revenue given by the zamindars to their own dependents and officials and influential local people; and (iii) small rent-free or quit-rent holdings (*devottar brahmottar, aima*, etc.) and larger jotes with underrated assessments which were granted by the state or the territorial magnates. Inevitably the revenue-collecting structure was complicated by these different forms of land tenure. The pyramidal shape of revenue-collecting structure was deeply rooted in the social and economic gradations in Bengal and enabled the literate rural stratum of local gentry to exist.

The contours of the revenue-collecting structure, and the extent of formalization of the rights of the local gentry within it changed from district to district according to various factors like the number of gentry, the size of zamindaris, and the amount of waste land. The rights of the smaller gentry were most sold in the Niabat of Dacca, where there were thousands of small *taluqs* with distinct features of property. The zamindaris in this area were not very large and the zamindars were appointed and changed at pleasure by the deputy governors of Dacca (called *naibs* of Dacca, hence *niabat*) for the task of collecting revenues from innumerable petty *taluqdars*. The *taluqdars* continued in possession while zamindars came and went. The *taluqs* were created mostly by grants of jungle lands (of which there were plenty in the delta near the sea, covered by the Sunderbans) which were eagerly taken up by the dense ranks of the Bikrampur gentry in the neighbourhood of Dacca. In the zamindari of Dinajpur in the north, where the number of rural high caste gentry was very small, the *raj* (which had been built up by conquest and reduction of existing proprietary rights) collected revenue directly from the *jotedars* in most villages and the number of intermediary *taluqdars* was not great. The high caste literate Hindus who had influence were accommodated as *sadr* and *mufassal* officers within the zamindari establishment which went down in several tiers from Dinajpur *sadr* to the individual

mauzas. In the zamindari of Burdwan, an even bigger raj built up by equally sanguinary methods of conquest, a much larger number of local gentry were accommodated by a long chain of farms and sub-farms going down from the *sadr mustajirs* in Burdwan town to the *qutqinadars* in the villages; these farms were temporary both in theory and practice. In Bishnupur the very numerous Brahman gentry held considerable rent-free *brahmottar* and *devottar* properties which gave them better security of livelihood. But in general, wherever big rajs had come into existence by conquest, the revenue-collecting rights of the smaller gentry were rather inchoate compared with the extremely secure tenures of the *taluqdar* class in districts of small zamindaris like Dacca and Midnapur.

Until the break-up of the big rajs under the Permanent Settlement, therefore, the local gentry in Bengal were a dependent vassal class, subject to the caprice of powerful rajas. Even in areas where they enjoyed secure *taluqs*, as in Dacca (where, moreover, there were no aggressive rajas of the size of Burdwan or Dinajpur) the policy of the Mughal government to deal with small revenue-payers only through zamindars of one or more *parganas* subjected them to vexatious exactions by superior proprietors. The zamindars of Buzrugumedpur, who got themselves appointed to the zamindari through official influence (Maharaja Rajvallabh, the founder of the family, was the deputy-governor of Dacca), liquidated the rights of a considerable number of *taluqdars* whose properties they annexed as *nij* (own) *taluqs* of the zamindar. On the other hand, many among these dependent gentry showed a considerable aptitude for seizing opportunities and rising to the more exalted walks of life. Maharaja Rajvallabh was himself originally a petty *taluqdar* who rose in the service of the Nizamat and acquired three lucrative *parganas*. The Raj families of Nadia, Dinajpur, and Rajshahi were all at one time insignificant *grihasthas* (however high in caste rank) who built up their fortunes by exploiting the opportunities of office under the Mughal government. The majority of *grihasthas*, who probably never left their rural homes, contended themselves with the dues from their small properties; but there was always to be found among them a number of enterprising men who supplemented their income from properties by service, either in the revenue (*diwani*) and records (*qanungo*) branches of the government or in the *sadr* and *mufassal* establishments of the big zamindars. In these offices or land administration, there were splendid openings for unscrupulous and quick-witted men to acquire zamindaris for themselves by defrauding their masters (whether the government or private persons). The composition of the zamindar class was thus quite fluid and it was estimated by Shore that at least half of the properties in Bengal changed hands from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the establishment of British rule. The local gentry of Bengal under the Nawabs of

Murshidabad were a dependent but mobile social element who stood poised to seize the new opportunities of the British revenue arrangements.

The British revenue arrangements thus intruded on a highly fluid and differentiated state of land rights for which the abstract and all-inclusive concept of zamindari was no adequate guide to understanding. From the Nawabi period the British inherited two main categories of hereditary revenue-managing rights that had emerged from the revenue policies implemented by Murshid Quli Khan; the smaller zamindaris and *taluqs* that had survived the process of agglomeration and the extensive Rajs of proven loyalty to the Nizamat that had suddenly mushroomed after 1700.³⁸ The smaller zamindaris and *taluqs* characterized the areas around active centres of Mughal government, such as the *faujdari* of Midnapur and the *niabat* of Dacca. The smaller zamindaris and *huzuri taluqs* (independent *taluqs* paying revenue directly to the government) were grouped together under *faujdar*s and *amils* who supervised their management from *sarkar* headquarters; the *mazkuri* (dependent) *taluqs* were made over to the supervising authority of government-appointed zamindars and *chaudhuris*,³⁹ who exercised their authority over the *taluqdars* from *pargana* headquarters. These petty landlords were subject to exactions by the superior authorities appointed over them.⁴⁰ Their revenue-managing rights could be either traditional ritualized local rights or mushroom products of connections with government establishments. In Midnapur many Brahman and Kayastha *Kanungos* and other officers in the employ of the *faujdar's* government had acquired portions of the *parganas* under their charge and entered them as their hereditary *taluqs*. But there were also very old families of *Kaivarta* agriculturists, long-settled in the country, who acquired revenue management rights over the villages in which they held agricultural lands in the form of dependent *taluqs* held under the *Kaivarta* rajas who had led the original settlements and migrations.⁴¹ In Dacca, similarly, there were *jangalbari* (forest-clearance) *taluqdars* under zamindars who had acquired their rights by clearing forests and settling the country. But many among these Brahman, Kayastha, and *Vaidya taluqdars* were also officials employed at the *niabat* of Dacca who acquired *taluqs* by fraud or purchase whenever they got an opportunity.⁴²

³⁸But there were also a few surviving ancient kingdoms such as Bishnupur and Birbhum, which must be included in the category of extensive baronages.

³⁹Hereditary collectors of revenue appointed by sanad to *paraganas* whose position in this period was practically identical with that of the zamindars.

⁴⁰Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, pp. 299-300, 305-06, gives instances of the oppressive conduct of the assistant to the Deputy-Governor of Dacca and the *faujdar* of Rangpur towards the zamindars in their districts.

⁴¹This was especially true of Central and Eastern Midnapur.

⁴²In a detailed recent study of the Natore Raj, which was a typical example of the mushrooming baronages patronized by the Nizamat, it has been remarked that through-

Leaving aside the niabāt of Dacca and the border faujdari areas which were controlled by local revenue authorities, the revenue administration of the interior of Bengal was under the direct charge of the distant diwani department in Murshidabad which managed the collection of the revenue through peripatetic amils. In this area had sprung up in the first half of the eighteenth century large principalities owing allegiance to the Mughal state and collecting tribute from the village oligarchies. By the time of Alivardi Khan the Nizamat had become dependent to an extraordinary degree on the loyal and influential baronages which governed the countryside through a complex zamindari bureaucracy and supplied the feudal levies which the state needed in times of external threat.⁴³ A moderate revenue demand enabled the zamindars during the time of Alivardi Khan to accumulate riches and to maintain large armies, both of which proved crucial contributions to the defence against the Maratha invaders. By the time the Marathas erupted on the Bengal scene in the 1740s, a mutually advantageous relationship had been worked out between the rajs and the nawab, which enabled the former to live 'in a state of Power, Parade and Independence in their Zamindaris'⁴⁴ and the latter to collect a regular revenue at little cost

out the vast area of the zamindari of Rajshahi, the well-remembered Rani Bhavani and her officials constituted the government in the eyes of the mass of the people. From the palace of Natore, there spread out across the zamindari an intricate network of zamindari officials representing authority in the mufassal. The Rani's *paiks* (footmen) maintained the peace of the country, her revenue officials kept embankments in repair, her agents constructed tanks, temples, and *serais* (inns), her munificence supported the priests, teachers, and medical practitioners. A.B.M. Mahmood, *The Land Revenue History of the Rajshahi Zamindari (1765-1793)*, SOAS thesis, 1966, pp. 298-99. Before the organization of the collectorate system in Bengal by the British Government, the territories of the big magnates formed in effect states within the state, from which emanated the administrative authority and action which affected the villages and their ruling cliques.

⁴³ The army of Newab Sarfaraz Khan which marched out from Murshidabad against the invader Alivardi Khan was composed of high Muslim officers of state, faujdars, mansabdars, and zamindars of Bengal. Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-12. After Alivardi Khan conquered Bengal and turned his arms against Orissa, it was the arrival of an auxiliary force of the Raja of Burdwan under the command of Manikchand at a crucial moment what turned defeat into victory against the Orissa army. *Ibid.*, pp. 329-30. When the Marathas invaded Bengal, the Rajas of Burdwan and Bishnupur sunk their hereditary enmity and combined with Alivardi Khan in the common defence of their territories. After the capture of the tract from Rajmahal to Midnapur, the Marathas themselves started diplomatic negotiations with the zamindars for consolidating their hold on the captured territory. *Ibid.*, pp. 343-44. The revenue demanded by Alivardi Khan from the zamindars was very moderate but as a result of his policy of allowing the zamindars to flourish financially he was able during the Maratha invasion to raise the enormous contribution of Rs 1 crore at one time and Rs 50 lakhs on another occasion. *The Letter Copy Books of the Resident at the Durbar, op. cit.*, pp. XI-XIV, extract of a letter from Becher to the Honourable President, 24 May 1769.

⁴⁴ Walter K. Firminger (ed.), *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*,

and to call on extraordinary financial and military resources in emergency. It should, however, be noted that the effectiveness of the raj as a centre of power vis-a-vis its own territories depended very much on whether or not an adult male of at least moderate ability with an undisputed claim to the succession presided over the zamindari. There was a tendency for the large zamindaris to be torn by faction from the *sadr kachari* (head office) downwards to the village establishments which only adult male zamindars with undisputed authority among the officers of the zamindari establishments could keep in check effectively. When the zamindar happened to be a female or a minor, or when there was a dispute over succession to the zamindari, rival factions among the zamindari servants contended with each other for misappropriating the resources of the zamindari, and the dominant village groups were encouraged by this struggle for power above them to withhold revenues.⁴⁵ Even where an undisputed adult male zamindar presided over a large zamindari, the system of farming out revenues which seems to have been a widespread practice in many of the major rajs of Bengal before 1760 implied certain limits to his power with regard to the farmed-out villages and parganas of his zamindari.⁴⁶

To sum up, there were in Bengal under the nawabs independent chiefs whose kingdoms lay outside Mughal territory, such as the rajas of Kuch Bihar; autonomous chiefs who tendered submission to Mughal sovereignty but retained their kingdoms by paying a tribute, such as the frontier rajas of Birbhum and Bishnupur; office-holding families who staked out in course of a few generations a hereditary claim to jurisdictions over large areas, such as the rajas of Burdwan and Nadia; more recent revenue-farming or record-keeping families who under official favour acquired the status of territorial magnates, such as the rajas of Natore and the Qanungo Mahashayas of Rokunpur; smaller zamindars who held single parganas or shares in parganas as co-sharing proprietors, such as the Ponabalia Raychaudhurs who held a six-anna share of the small pargana of Haveli Selimabad in Bakarganj; and in some areas, a numerous body of taluqdars, some of whom might have enjoyed influential local positions of long standing (ante-dating the zamindars over them, as in the case of Bikrampur taluqdars) while others had merely acquired by exploiting official connections scattered revenue collecting rights over certain mahals under different zamindaris.⁴⁷ The com-

Vol. II, 3-31 December 1770, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 5-7, proceedings of 3 December 1770, minute by Richard Becher.

⁴⁵ This happened in the zamindaris of Burdwan, Dinajpur, and Bishnupur.

⁴⁶ In Burdwan, for example, revenue-farming had been carried to a further extent than in any other zamindari before 1760 and many of the revenue-farmers were hereditary farmers who held their farms almost as ancestral properties.

⁴⁷ An example of this type was the notorious dacoit of Dacca, Ainuddin Shiqdar, who or whose ancestor apparently held the post of shiqdar under the niabāt.

plexities of these historical developments were compounded by the regional differences in the structure of zamindaris at any point in time. There was a strong contrast between the border rajs of Birbhum and Bishnupur in West Bengal with the numerous petty Bikrampur taluqs in the closely administered naibat of Dacca during the time of Murshid Quli Khan.

BREAKDOWN OF THE MUGHAL SYSTEM AND RISE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY, 1760-90

The political system of Bengal, of which the large baronages in the diwani areas under Murshidabad and the petty vassalages in the niabat of Dacca and the faujdari area under the sadr towns of the sarkars formed so integral a part in the days of Alivardi Khan, began to break down gradually after the battle of Plassey. The localized subordinate governments designated as zamindaris and taluqs by the Mughals came under great pressure as a result of the political changes in the structure of the supreme government. The pressure at the intermediate levels of the political system (i.e., the levels between the state and the villages) became evident from 1760 onwards, when the British took over the revenue administration and farmed out the revenue of the districts of Midnapur, Chittagong, and Burdwan (and earlier in 1757 24 Parganas). In the rest of Bengal, which was made over to Mir Qasim, the Nizamat badly mauled its time-honoured revenue arrangements in a last desperate bid to save itself from further British expansion. When this final bid for survival lay in ruins on the battlefield of Buxar, the zamindari system had started cracking both in the baronages and in the faujdaris as a result of tremendous exactions by the Nizamat in its efforts to mobilize financial resources for defence against the East India Company.⁴⁸ In its attempt to save itself, the uppermost level of the political system—the Nizamat—tried to crush out the intermediate level of the zamindaris, with which it had co-existed so long from the date of the Mughal conquest of Bengal.

The revenue settlement of Murshid Quli Khan in 1722 had fixed the land revenue of Bengal at Rs 1 crore 42 lakhs.⁴⁹ Mir Qasim, in his settlement of 1763, fixed an additional sum of Rs 1 crore 26 lakhs on the territory remaining under his revenue administration, so that in the shrunken territory under the Nizamat (excluding Burdwan, Midnapur, Chittagong, and 24 Parganas) the revenue stood at Rs 2 crore 56 lakhs. By imposing abwabs, resuming profits of jagirs and carrying out *hast-o-buds* (surveys), Mir Qasim nearly

⁴⁸ This result was felt most in Dinajpur where exactions were particularly heavy.

⁴⁹ By the time of Alivardi Khan Subadari *abwabs* (cesses collected by the Nizamat) had raised this sum to Rs 1 crore 56 lakhs.

doubled the revenue of his territory in three years from 1760 to 1763.⁵⁰ This impossible additional demand was never collected in full, but the strenuous efforts to realize it began to produce structural distortions in the zamindari system. Dispossessing the zamindars, Mir Qasim let loose a horde of faujdars, amils, and revenue-farmers on both the diwani and faujdari areas, who quickly exhausted the resources of the territories made over to them. In this process the distinction between the diwani and faujdari areas was effectively swept aside.⁵¹ The Dinajpur Raj was placed practically on the same footing as the neighbouring faujdar of Rangpur. In Rangpur the faujdar Abid Ali Khan took a farm of the district at an enormously increased revenue; in Dinajpur the raja was replaced by the revenue-farmer Ramnath Bhaduri who engaged to pay more than double the existing revenue. Mr Qasim threw into prison, along with Jagat Seth and Rajvallabh (zamindar of Rajnagar and deputy-governor of Dacca), the zamindars of Dinajpur, Nadia, Rajshahi, Birbhum, Fatesingh, and others; and suspecting them of conspiring with the British he killed Jagat Seth, Rajvallabh, and some of the other zamindars.⁵²

Two years after the overthrow of Mir Qasim, Clive obtained in 1765 the diwani of Bengal which was made over to the Naib Diwan Reza Khan for administering according to established Mughal forms under the supervision of a British resident at Murshidabad. But although Reza Khan prided himself on having restored the Mughal system, important changes crept into it on account of the continuous pressure of the British demand for increased collections of land revenue. Under the Mughal system, as we have seen, *malguzari* agreements with zamindars and taluqdars had been the common form of revenue management. *Tahuds* (temporary revenue engagements) with amils and faujdars had been extremely rare in diwani areas (though not in faujdari areas like Rangpur and Purnia) until Mir Qasim entered into revenue engagements with amils, faujdars, and ijaradars at a massive increase of revenues. The British were equally insistent on increased collections and to satisfy the demand Reza Khan employed 'numerous tribes of fougedars, Aumils and Sikdars'⁵³ for realizing greater amounts of tribute.

⁵⁰ Shore minute of 18 June 1789, *Parliamentary Papers*, sess. 1812, VII.

⁵¹ The baronages in the diwani areas which came under the greatest pressure were Dinajpur, Nadia, and Rajshahi. Leaving aside irregular contributions, the increase of revenue by *hast-o-bund* on a permanent basis was for Dinajpur Rs 11½ lakhs, for Nadia 7½ lakhs, for Rajshahi 4½ lakhs. See *Ibid.*

⁵² Ghulam Hussain Salim, *op. cit.*, p. 393. The author does not mention the names of the murdered zamindars. It is known that the Raja of Dinajpur survived and got back his zamindari, so did Krishnachandra, Maharaja of Nadia, after Mir Qasim's overthrow. Their escape was narrow in view of the murder of Rajvallabh.

⁵³ N.K. Sinha (ed.), *Fort William—India House Correspondence*, Public series, Vol. 5, 1769,

Richard Becher, the Resident at Murshidabad, noted that in Alivardi Khan's times the amount of revenue put into the treasury was much smaller than the large sums brought in at Murshidabad under Reza Khan's management and wrote to his government in Calcutta:

When the English first received the grant of the Dewannee their first consideration seems to have been the raising of as large sums from the country as could be collected The zamindars not being willing or able to pay the sums required, amils have been sent into most of the Districts. These amils on their appointment agree with the Ministers to pay a fixed sum for the districts they are to go to and the man that has offered most has generally been preferred. What a destructive system is this for the poor inhabitants: The amils have no connection or natural interest in the welfare of the country where they make the collections, nor have they any certainty of holding their places beyond the year. . . .⁵⁴

Spelling out the consequences of this altered form of revenue management for the zamindari system, Becher observed in a minute:

Be it remember'd also the situation these Zamindars & co found themselves in when under the Government of the Soubahs who, tho' arbitrary and despotic to the highest degree, left the Zaminder to live in a state of Power, Parade and Independence in their Zemindarries [demanding from them] except on emergent occasions only the punctual payment of the Malguzza-ry settled annually to be paid to the Government. . . . As certain it is that since the English have been in possession of the Dewannee, the Zeminders have been reduced to a much inferior situation to that enjoyed under the Soubahs, & that in general they are now poor, when it is considered what numerous families and dependants they have to provide for. . . .⁵⁵

Delhi, 1949, letter from Court of Directors to President and Council at Fort William, 3 June 1769, p. 212.

⁵⁴ *Letter Copy Book of the Resident at Durbar, op. cit.*, extract of letter from Becher to the Honourable President, 24 May 1769, pp. XI-XIV. The amildari system under Reza Khan, which practically amounted to annual revenue-farming, was fundamentally different from that used by Murshid Quli Khan, under which amils were employed with the regular administrative purpose of measuring the lands and fixing the revenue rates.

⁵⁵ *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. II, proceedings of 3 December 1770, minute by Becher, pp. 6-7. An example of the pressure on the zamindari system caused by the sending of amils was the zamindari of Idrakpur, where the diwan of the Raja combined with the amil to ruin the Raja and his country. The zamindar could scarcely get sufficient allowance to maintain his family, far less to support the rank which his position implied. So great was his financial distress that he was willing to give up his zamindari to the British in return for a sufficient allowance for himself and his family.

The famine of 1770, which engulfed the majority of the large zamindars of West and North Bengal in financial ruin, put an end to the dual government at the centre and the administration by amils in the districts. Assuming direct administration of the diwani in 1772 Warren Hastings introduced for the whole of Bengal a five-year experiment of farming out revenues by bidding that had already been tried in 24 Parganas and Burdwan.⁵⁶ Some big zamindars were temporarily dispossessed by revenue-farmers of the Calcutta *banian* (merchant) type, though others managed to retain possession as farmers of their own zamindaris, or as under-farmers below the Calcutta *banians*. The intrusion of the native commercial and official classes of Calcutta into the revenue system of the interior started from 1772, though the penetration was probably not very deep as the majority of the zamindars managed to retain possession of their properties.⁵⁷ Nevertheless their financial and political position suffered a decline from which many had no hope of recovery. Hastings' revenue policy, as Francis put it in rather violent terms, was to raise from the land the enormous sum required for financing the Company's 'investment' (purchased goods for export) and commercial charges (formerly met by import of specie) and to effect this, together with some other purposes, perhaps equally interesting to himself by reducing every Native of every Rank to what he calls a *competent subsistence*.⁵⁸ The quinquennial farming experiment from 1772 to 1775 was simply a great loot in which not only the East India Company but also its seniormost European officers and their native assistants participated for purposes of private gain in addition to the public objective of financing from Bengal revenues the investment, the territorial expansion, and the China trade of the Company. It was estimated by Maharaja Nabakrishna Deb, the former diwan of Clive, that Hastings, Barwell, Middleton, Vansittart, and other senior officers who concluded the settlement received from the zamindars, taluqdars, and farmers cash presents to the amount of Rs 42 lakhs.⁵⁹

The high ruling prices of grain immediately after the famine induced many revenue-farmers to over bid, and due to the spreading depopulation across the countryside large balances accumulated. When the quinquennial

⁵⁶ The farming system of 1772 has been treated at length by N.K. Sinha, *op. cit.*, and need not be analyzed here.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁵⁸ Francis Mass. Eur. E. 13C, Letter from Francis to Mr. Ellis, 20 November 1776.

⁵⁹ The following are the particulars supplied by Nabakrishna to Henry Strachey, though he could not produce any evidence to back his somewhat extravagant accusations: 'An account of the Money received by Governor Hastings and other Gentlemen from the Zamindars, Talookdars and Farmers of the soubah of Bengal from his accession to the Government till the arrival of the General and other Gentlemen; exclusive of *nuzzers* (presents), pearls, jewels, cloths and complementary present. Appendix to a letter from Raja Nabakrishna to Henry Strachey, 23 March 1776, Francis Mss. Eur. F.7.

farming settlement was thus thoroughly discredited, Hastings restored the zamindari system in 1777 in practically the older forms, though the system had now been badly mauled.⁶⁰ Police, embankments, customs duties on markets, and other functions which had constituted their local governing power were restored to them. Until the great revolution in the administrative structure of the country between 1786-93 the zamindari system still represented an old, not a new, order. Nevertheless, due to the deepening British thrust into the Mughal revenue system from 1757 the government of the local rajs came to suffer from much the same kind of weakness that had characterized the administration of the countryside by the Nizamat over

⁶⁰A typical example of the deterioration of the system was to be found in the Dinajpur Raj. The extremely able and warlike Raja Ramnath had ruled this zamindari autonomously during the administration of Alivardi Khan without any interference from amils. He was well remembered afterwards for his extremely successful administration during which the Raj underwent tremendous expansion by conquest. After his death, his successor Baidyanath had to contend for the zamindari with his cousin, Kantonath. This dispute gave an opportunity to the ambitious and unscrupulous officer Ramanath Bhaduri to seize control of the zamindari with the help of Mir Qasim, to whom he gave exaggerated accounts of its capacity. Mir Qasim, in his bid to mobilize resources for war against the Company, set aside the zamindari in favour of Kantonath, threw the dispossessed Raja into prison, carried out a survey of this practically unscrutinized zamindari with the aid of Ramanath Bhaduri in the minutest detail of the mauzas, raised the revenue on the basis of this survey from Rs 12 lakhs to 26 lakhs, and gave a revenue farm of the zamindari to Ramanath Bhaduri for realizing this amount. But in spite of strenuous efforts which ruined the zamindari, Mir Qasim obtained no more than Rs 24 lakhs, which was slightly less than what Raja Ramnath himself had collected on the average each year (Rs 24-25 lakhs). But the exhaustion of its resources led to a decline of collections to Rs 19 lakhs afterwards. Reza Khan restored Baidyanath to the zamindari but placed an amil at the sadr kachari for supervising the collections. The zamindari administration was thoroughly undermined and there were great embezzlements by 50 tahsildars and their underlings, who collected revenue from petty *ijaradars* (revenue-farmers) in the mufassal. Then came the famine of 1770, which desolated and depopulated Baidyanath's zamindari. He reported that for want of seed and implements of cultivation large portions of his zamindari had fallen waste. He calculated the deficiency caused by deaths and desertions of raiyats at 4 lakhs 76 thousand out of a surveyed capacity of Rs 18 lakhs 46 thousand. During the quinquennial farming settlement which followed Baidyanath was pensioned off with a *moshaira* (subsistence allowance) of Rs 1 lakh 50 thousand. Due to these violent changes in the structure of the zamindari, the authority of the zamindar suffered a permanent decline vis-a-vis the dominant village groups of the jotedar class who became extraordinarily powerful in this area. After the end of the quinquennial farming settlement, Baidyanath was restored, and a reduction was allowed in his zamindari. He even managed to expand the zamindari to some extent. He was succeeded by his minor son Radhanath, whose officers sold up and divided the zamindari among themselves. See *Letter Copy Book of the Resident at Darbar*, *op. cit.*, enclosure on a separate paper to letter from Richard Becher to Harry Verelst and gentlemen of the Select Committee, 25 April 1769, p. xxvi; *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, vol. 2, proceedings of 31 December 1770, Vansittart to Becher, Dinajpur, 16 October 1770, p. 143, N.K. Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 54, 84, 102.

long periods. By the time of the Decennial Settlement, when the pressure of British rule had stripped the rajas of much of their coercive authority, the zamindar's control of his establishment, in the sadar as well as in the mufassal tended to be lax, and he could collect the revenue only by working, like the Nizamat, through locally dominant elements.

TABLE 3
NABAKRISHNA'S ACCOUNT OF PRESENTS TAKEN BY HASTINGS AND
OTHERS FROM ZAMINDARS IN THE SUBA OF BENGAL

	Rs	
Dacca		
Ready money		500,000
Mr. Barwell		400,000
Rangpur, etc.		
Ready money	100,000	
Promissory	100,000	200,000
Murshidabad (exclusive of Middleton)		300,000
Dinajpur		200,000
Bhagalpur		150,000
Birbhum, Bishnupur, etc.		100,000
Midnapur		
Vansittart and other gentlemen		350,000
Raja Krishnachandra(?)		150,000
Burdwan (exclusive of Stewart)		
Through Diwan Brajakishor	200,000	
Pulbandi (embankment contract)	150,000	
Mandalghat salt contract	150,000	500,000
Hugli, Hijli, etc.		
Ready money	100,000	
Settlement for salt mahals	600,000	700,000
Jessore, etc.		
On account of salt of Raymangal, etc.		200,000
Farmers of 24 Parganas		50,000
From Raja Huzuri Mal and Mudan Datta for relinquishing the farm of Purnia		100,000
Profit of <i>batta</i> (exchange), premium on bills, etc. from Raja Huzuri Mal and Dol Chand		150,000
From servants wages		100,000
TOTAL		4200,000

THE STRUCTURE OF ZAMINDARI ON THE EVE OF THE DECENNIAL SETTLEMENT

The formal structure of zamindari bureaucracy, at least in the bigger zamindaris, had apparently always consisted of a graded hierarchy of *mufassal kacharis* (local establishments) in mauzas, *tarafs* (portions of a pargana), and parganas in an ascending order to the head office and a regular chain

of accounts going up from the patwari to the diwan or naib of the head office.⁶¹ Starting at the bottom of this chain of command, the *mandal* or headman of a village held his office at the goodwill of the villagers, subject to the approval of the zamindar. He was the mediator between the body of raiyats in the village and the petty collectors of the revenue. Besides the *mandal*, the village also contained a patwari, theoretically an accountant and a servant of the village, but in reality the lowest officer of the zamindar collecting the revenue from the village. In many villages the zamindars also appointed *karmacharis* (servants) who collected the revenue. The *karmacharis* and patwaris were seldom changed and the office of the patwaris seems to have been hereditary in many places.⁶² The experience and the knowledge which they possessed made them indispensable in the process of collection of revenue, and whether they paid revenue to a zamindar, a revenue farmer, or an *amil*, these village officers continued to hold their offices. Because of their local and hereditary position, the patwaris and *karmacharis* could not be brought under proper bureaucratic control by the zamindar.

Proper zamindari bureaucracy started at the level of the *gomasta*, an officer placed as a check on the patwaris. The *gomasta* was immediately appointed by the person who had settled for the revenue and was frequently changed at the end of the year without any great inconvenience to the collection of revenue. The *gomastas* of different villages transmitted their accounts and paid their revenues to *shiqdars* and *etmamdars*, who were temporary officers appointed to collect the revenues from *dihis* (collection of villages), *tarafs*, and *parganas*. Over these mufassal establishments stood the *sadr kachari* situated at the usual place of residence of the zamindar.⁶³

The difficulties of managing from the *sadr* these various mufassal establishments, which at the lowest level were local and hereditary, need little emphasis. The problem of a proper control of affairs in the mufassal was also enhanced by the fact that in larger zamindaris, it was the usual practice to farm out the revenues to farmers. When the revenues were farmed out in this way, the mufassal establishments of the zamindari were placed under the authority of the farmers. The farmers were often specifically prohibited from changing the mufassal establishments, but such restraints were seldom

⁶¹The account of zamindari establishments which follows is based mainly on the report of the Amini Commission appointed by Warren Hastings after the failure of the quinquennial farming settlement. The Amini Commission made detailed investigation of zamindari management and revenue arrangements during 1776-77 and its report can be accepted as a fairly accurate picture of the prevailing system of zamindari management not only during early British revenue administration but also in the Nawabi period. The report is to be found in the Home Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 206.

⁶²Midnapur Collectorate Records, Register of Patwaris.

⁶³Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 206, Amini Commission Report. Francis Mss Eur. E 28, "On the different Modes of Settlement" (no date, probably 1774).

very effective. At the time of the British take-over of the revenue administration under Warren Hastings, zamindari management in the big zamindaris of Burdwan, Bishnupur, Birbhum, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Nadia, etc., consisted in a long chain of farms and sub-farms (taken by the local gentry who also staffed the zamindari establishments) going down to the village level where the system was confronted by the village heads—a class of superior raiyats variously known in different regions as *mandals*, *pardhans*, or *busnias*. This revenue-farming system in the bigger zamindaris was sometimes an alternative to the chain of *sadr* and mufassal establishments we have just described, but very often, as in the case of the zamindari of Dinajpur, the regular zamindari establishments and the revenue farms and sub-farms continued to co-exist. The farms and sub-farms would be interposed between the *sadr* and mufassal establishments so that each mufassal establishment would hand over the revenue to a revenue-farmer in the interior who in turn would pay the revenue to a superior revenue-farmer directly under the *sadr* establishment.

A zamindar of a large district, having made a settlement with the government, farmed his zamindari in *ijaras* to several *sadr* farmers called *mustajirs* and *ijaradars*. These again made over their leases in whole or in part, to renters of inferior denominations in a descending order down to the revenue-farmers of the villages (*qutqinadars*) who were given the charge of collecting the revenue from the village establishments of the zamindari. If we look at this same hierarchy from the other end of the scale, the cultivators paid the revenue, in the first place, to village officers manning the village establishments of the zamindars. They in turn paid to a *qutqinadar* or a small local renter of perhaps two or three villages, he to a farmer of a *taraf* or a division comprehending several villages and so on through farmers of a *pargana* to the zamindar.⁶⁴ This was the condition in all big zamindaris where revenue-farming seemed to prevail almost invariably.⁶⁵ In the medium-sized zamindari, if the zamindar happened to be sufficiently energetic to look after his establishments in the interior, the farming system would be dispensed with. But even if such an energetic zamindar appointed his own officials, little reduction in the revenue-collecting chain resulted. Only in the smaller zamindaris and *talucs* did the holders collect—and by no means invariably—directly from the raiyats. The zamindars and his *sadr* officers knew little of what passed beyond the first degree of revenue-farmers.

Even at the *sadr* office, however, it was not often that the zamindar had a firm control of affairs. In the large zamindari of Birbhum, for instance, where

⁶⁴Shore minute of 18 June 1789, Appendix No. 1 to Fifth Report, *Parliamentary Papers*, sess. 1812, Vol. 7.

⁶⁵In Nadia, for instance, subletting of farms to the third or fourth degree only added to the machinery of mismanagement. Nadia, Old English Correspondence, Collector Redfern to BR, 16 March 1787.

the raja died before the Permanent Settlement leaving his son a minor, Lala Ramnath, the diwan, and other officers divided the zamindari among themselves, holding mahals as renters. The young raja was put in possession of the zamindari before he became a major by the interested parties who could get any paper signed by him. Great embezzlements took place and the zamindari was ruined by the raja's rapacious servants who were involved in court intrigues, taking advantage of the fact that the raja was both ignorant and reluctant to conduct business.⁶⁶ The Collector of Rangpur, describing the notorious incapacity of the zamindars of his district to look after their own interests, observed: 'The zamindars of this district either from sex, age or long habitual indolence are never known to interfere in public business and are in such a state of dependence on their gosmasthas that I have known a Zamindar attending day after day the Durbar of his own gomastha thereby reversing the distinction of their respective ranks in life.'⁶⁷

Fundamental to the problem of controlling a zamindari was the dichotomy between the *sadr* and the *mufassal*. As the Collector of Rajshahi reported, the people in his district had 'continually in their mouth the necessity of distinguishing between *sudder* and *mofussil*; by which they mean, in this instance, the difference between the general knowledge that can reach the Governing Power, compared with the real state of things in detail. The Naib if he never leaves his Pargunah Cutcherry will form a very defective judgment of the state of his villages. The Zemindar if he relies on his Naibs or his Diwans, will know as little of his Pergunnahs.'⁶⁸ By the custom of the country, *mufassal* officers enjoyed considerable power which made them in a sense independent of the control of the *sadr* *kachari*. *Pattas* (leases) granted by naibs and *karmacharis* to a raiyat did not require the zamindar's authority, and as the granting of the *pattas* was exclusively vested in these officers, *pattas* granted by them were necessarily valid and could not be set aside consistently with the *raje-ul-mulk* (law of the land).⁶⁹

In the interior, the practice of every *mufassal* officer becoming a farmer

⁶⁶BRP, 17 February 1789, Petition of the Ryotts and Inhabitants concerned in the revenues of the District of Birbhum, BRC, 9 October 1795, No. 21.

⁶⁷Walter K. Firminger (ed.), *Bengal District Records, Rangpur, 1786-1787*, Vol. VI, No. 54, pp. 41-42. Collector to BR, 24 April 1786. The gomastas, taking full advantage of the situation, oppressed the country by their exactions and instigated the raiyats to create disturbances and hamper collections. By acting together they increased their own power. Four gomastas of Rangpur combined to foster intrigues in the revenue business of the district. One gomasta, Rajmohan Chaudhuri, acted as gomasta for four zamindars and thus wielded extraordinary power. See *Ibid.*

⁶⁸Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 385. Speke's report on Rajshahi, 23 May 1788.

⁶⁹BRP, 22 May 1787, No. 50, Report of the Qanungos of Mahmudshahi, 19 February 1787.

in his own right was well established.⁷⁰ They obtained annually considerable remissions from the fixed *jama* of their lands on the ground that much of them had fallen out of cultivation. These lands, being brought back again into cultivation, yielded considerable profits as they were now virtually revenue free. *Sadr amlas* held *talucs* in collusion with *mufassal* officers. They fed the zamindars with false reports of the capability of land in order to avoid payment of the full revenue. Lower down the revenue-paying hierarchy substantial local people holding leases of *jote*⁷¹ and *qutqina*⁷² invariably possessed themselves of more land than specified in their leases. By these collusive means villagers of substance managed to obtain under-assessed raiyati holdings and the lower classes of raiyats had to make up for the deficiency by paying irregular cesses.⁷³ The process of collection was 'a constant struggle between fraud, exaction and concealment.'⁷⁴

In this struggle the advantage lay with the local men who knew the real state of things in detail rather than with the governing power at the *sadr*. Harrington's survey of the Swaruppur paragona of the Natore Raj (bought by Darpanarayan Tagore of Calcutta in 1789) clearly showed this.⁷⁵ In this pargana the village officers of the zamindari—38 amins and 53 *karmacharis*—received only a small allowance from the zamindar. Their wages, diet, and private expenses were paid by the raiyats and, thus, although they were supposed to prevent any encroachment by the raiyats in the rights of the zamindar, they were dependent on the influential raiyats for their livelihood. Most of the amins and *patwaris* were natives of the pargana and held raiyati lands themselves from which they derived a profit. Some of the amins came from neighbouring Bhaturia and supported themselves by the established allowance given by the zamindar and the contributions raised by the raiyats. The naib of the zamindari appointed all the amins and gave them *sanads*, but in general the raiyats appointed the *patwaris* and the naib merely gave approval. The raiyats could remove the *patwaris* appointed by themselves but not the *patwaris* and amins appointed by the naib without his permission. If, however, ten raiyats were dissatisfied with an amin or a *patwari*, he was removed at their request unless he was a favourite at the head office. The disorder and partiality in the *mufassal* settlement which Harrington found

⁷⁰Walter K. Firminger (ed.), *Bengal District, Records Dinajpur*, John Shore, 17 March 1787, No. 124, p. 72.

⁷¹Large raiyati holdings granted directly by the zamindar.

⁷²Revenue farm of a village held by an influential local man under a superior farmer of the revenue.

⁷³BRP, 28 May 1790, No. 8, Enclosure from Collector.

⁷⁴Shore minute of 18 June 1789, appendix no. 1 to Fifth Report, *Parliamentary Papers*, sess. 1812, Vol. VII.

⁷⁵Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 385, Seroopore.

in Swaruppur was due to the fact that the mufassal officers were dependent on the leading raiyats in a very large measure. According to the prescribed pargana rates, each raiyati holding should have been equitably assessed on the basis of size, quality of soil, and nature of the crop but, in fact, these pargana rates were simply swept aside and assessments were fixed in lump over villages in a manner which favoured the powerful and oppressed the weak. Venality and fraud vitiated all the standard arrangements of revenue in the mufassal and the sadr authorities could exercise no detailed control of the affairs of the villages.

Though in theory the revenue of the raiyats should have been fixed directly by the governing power at the sadr according to equitable economic principles, in practice the fixation of the jama and the collection of it (*hasil*) was determined by a whole set of political relations between the village, the mufassal establishment, and the head office. The political character of the relations between the village and the zamindari (complementing the political relations between the rajs and the Nizamat) was clearly illustrated by the method of collection by quartering footmen on recalcitrant villages to which the naib of Swaruppur had frequent recourse.⁷⁶ Payment of the jama was like the rendering of tribute which awaited the demonstration of sufficient force by the superior power to overawe the village oligarchies. The control of the Bengali zamindar over his villages stood on an altogether different basis from the control of the English landlord over his tenants.

⁷⁶Describing these methods the naib of Swaruppur said to Harrington: 'First a Pyke carries the Chitta (Demand for the monthly Kist), if there be any delay another Pyke is sent and then a Peudah. If it be judged necessary more Peudahs are sent; but in general one only is sufficient. When the Rents are all remitted the whole are withdrawn, and sometimes when a Peudah is sent the Pykes are recalled. The *paiks* (village footmen) and *piadas* (sadr footmen) quartered on the villages were maintained at the villagers' expense. If I have reason to think that the Ryots misbehaved I sent over Mohussils to the Head Ryots and summon them to the Sudder, where after hearing any complaints I oblige them to pay what is due and if necessary to borrow it from the Mahagans. The means of enforcement are either that of confining them, or that of chastising them with the Rattan. First however, I chastise the Aumeen and Putwarree, because they are Zamindarry Servants after which if the Ryots are not awed by the punishment of the Aumeen & Putwarree & the rents be still in arrear I chastise the Ryots. If however the Aumeen & Putwarree represent the arrears to be owing to the misbehaviour of the Ryots, these are summoned, & after an Enquiry they are punished, but they are not expressly charged with misbehaviour. Rigour is used in the first instance towards the Aumeen and Putwarree.' See *Ibid.*

The Political and Social Dimensions of Vivekananda's Ideology

PRABHA DIXIT

Miranda House, Delhi University

Vivekananda's popularization of the Vedanta philosophy was not a unique event in the religious history of the Hindus. In this, he had greater predecessors in Gorakhnath, Jnaneshwar, Kabir, and most of other minor saints who fill the pages of India's medieval past. His uniqueness lies in the fact that he presented Vedanta to the people not as a way for achieving individual salvation, but as a religious ideology for national regeneration and reconstruction—a path to achieve national salvation. This ascension from mere concern for the individual to concern for the nation added a political dimension to his teachings which became the source of inspiration for many generations of Hindu freedom fighters. Referring to the impact he made on Indian politics Jawaharlal Nehru said: 'I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him. . . . He was no politician in ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders . . . of the national movement of India, a great number of people who took more or less an active part in the movement at a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda.'¹

Vivekananda's image as a saint-patriot and a radical Hindu thinker is so well established that it is hardly ever questioned. And, yet it can be said with a great measure of justification that this is far from correct. The credit given to Vivekananda in this respect by some eminent Hindus is not only exaggerated but verges on a misrepresentation of the role he played in the development of modern India and his influence on Indian politics. Vivekananda has been credited with saving the unique identity of the Indian nation against the onslaughts of western culture, infusing 'self-confidence' into the Hindus and raising the prestige of the Hindu nation abroad. A careful analysis of his writings, however, shows that his services to his country and

¹Jawaharlal Nehru, *Swami Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda*, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 6 and 14. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in *Pravasi*: 'His message imparted energy to man . . . The adventurous enterprises that are in evidence among the young men in Bengal, have at their root that message of Vivekananda which addressed itself to the soul of man, not to his finger.' *The History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, Calcutta, 1957, p. 209.

his community were basically negative in character. The saint-patriot and radical reformer of the nationalist mythology was in fact a traditionalist in the sphere of culture and a status-quoist and non-interventionist in the sphere of politics. His religious philosophy was not meant to inspire men to political action. It was meant to act as an alternative to political action. The gateway of spirituality which he opened before his countrymen led to political escapism and intellectual stagnation.

Vivekananda's successful propaganda abroad, we are repeatedly told, added glory to Hinduism and liberated the Hindu mind from the existent demoralizing sense of inferiority. But his success in America and Europe was only ephemeral and personal in nature. The way Hindus interpreted and looked upon his teaching (and continue to do so) was more a consequence of their deeply felt inferiority complex than an expression of liberation from it.

The so-called cultural triumph of India over the west achieved through the message of Vivekananda, which finds detailed description in our history textbooks, forms only an insignificant part of the intellectual history of Europe and America. The Euro-American intellectuals like Max Muller, Paul Deussen, Emerson, Thoreau, and so on, who are known for their study and appreciation of Hindu philosophy, had done so long before Vivekananda's contact with the western world. They had discovered the spirituality of Indian culture independently of Indian endeavours. Many translations of Hindu scriptures and histories of Sanskrit literature were published long before the Chicago Parliament of Religions.² In fact, the movement initiated by the western Orientalists and Indologists preceded and inspired the Indian movement aimed at Hindu religious and cultural revival.

The interest of western scholars in the religion and culture of India was not merely an outcome of the desire for oriental learning nor just a simple result of the intellectual aspirations of a few individuals. The forces which produced this movement had far greater significance. Empires are won by brute force, but they are sustained mainly through indoctrination. A successful indoctrination for imperial purpose always requires a thorough understanding of the minds of the subjects who have to be indoctrinated. It is not surprising, therefore, that Europe should be engaged in the study of the ancient past of Asia in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Commendation or condemnation of a particular strand in the culture of India was done with speci-

²To cite a few examples—Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (English translation), Vol. I, London, 1907; A. Barth, *Religions of India*, London, 1881; Emerson's poem titled 'Brahma' was published in 1856; A. Weber, *A History of Indian Literature* (German edition), 1859; F. Max Muller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (German edition), 1859; *India: What Can it Teach Us*, London, 1881; see details in H. G. Rawlinson, 'Indian Influence on the West' in O'Mally (ed.), *Modern India and the West*, London, 1968.

fic imperialist aims. Through the subtle technique of appreciation of certain aspects of Hinduism the growth of the indigenous culture, in spite of its contact with the dynamic West, could be directed in a manner that would not harm the imperial interests. Whether it was a missionary, William Carey, or a scholar, Max Muller, or a historian, Elliot, their intellectual endeavours were meant to serve a common end. Even Count Gobineau, the first important ideologue of the inherent superiority of the white races, was conversant with the cultural heritage of the non-European nations, particularly of India and China. In essence his appraisal of the Hindu culture was not different from that of Max Muller. According to him the Hindus, in opposition to the Europeans and the Chinese, 'have in a high degree the feeling of the supernatural' and 'that they are more given to meditation than action.'³ The fact that the indoctrination aimed at by the imperialists was only partially successful is another story. Every nineteenth-century Indian intellectual was a victim of the imperialist indoctrination. The man who succumbed to it completely, as I would show later, was not Raja Rammohan Roy but Vivekananda, the so-called 'Prophet of Modern India.'

Vivekananda's success in America was strictly personal in character. To project it, as has been done by almost all Hindu historians (particularly from Bengal), in broader national or communal terms is nothing less than a gross distortion of facts which has resulted in the perpetuation of a myth.⁴ Most of the affluent Americans who paid 25 or 50 cents for their seats in the lecture hall to hear Vivekananda had a very marginal interest in the Vedanta philosophy and India's great past. They had discovered in the flying ochre robe of the 'Indian Rajah' and 'Brahmin' a new source of amusement which had no parallel in their society. The lecture bureau which had engaged him on a three-year contract was fully aware of the commercial possibilities of the deal. The managers of the bureau announced his entry in the lecture hall 'by beating big drums as if he was a circus turn.'⁵ Advertisements appeared in the 'Amusements' column of the local dailies which announced him in the large letters as 'One of the Giants of the Platform,' 'A Perfect

³Gobineau, *Selected Political Writings* (edited by Michael D. Biddiss), London, 1970, p. 87.

⁴For examples of this reverential and uncritical approach see Nemai Sadhan Bose, *The Indian Awakening and Bengal*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 159-64; Atindra Nath Bose, 'Vivekananda' in A. C. Gupta (ed.), *Renaissance in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1958, pp. 108-12, 119; Amlesh Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge*, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 20-26; K. P. Karunakaran, *Religion and Political Awakening*, Delhi, 1966, pp. 72-76; Sankar Gosh, *The Western Impact on Indian Politics*, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 182-84; S. Natrajan, *A Century of Social Reform*, Bombay, 1969, pp. 74-76; R. C. Majumdar, *The British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 123-30; A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, London, 1948, chap. VII.

⁵Romain Rolland, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, Almora, 1931, p. 83.

Master of the English Language,'⁶ etc. In order to draw a large crowd the managers did not fail to enumerate 'his moral and physical advantages, especially his physical, his bearing, his height, the colour of his skin and clothing with attestation from those who had seen [and] heard him So might an elephant or a patent medicine have been advertised.'⁷ Outside the lecture hall, as pointed out by Romain Rolland and his other biographers, he was 'monopolised by a group of rich friends, who were far more interested in him as a man of the day than in his message.'⁸

'Fashionable religion' preached by the 'Indian Monk' in the drawing-rooms of the rich Americans very soon became the target of popular resentment and sarcasm. A letter published in the *Detriot Free Press* (20 March 1894) expressed the feelings of ordinary Americans in these words:

The religious revival inaugurated in Detriot by Swami Vivekananda, citizen Palmer, and others is the ideal of missionary work. To deliver paid lectures to a select audience, to give banquets where the guests are all intellectual and interesting people, and while sipping the good old wine, discourse on genuine Christianity When Vivekananda was lauding missionaries like Francis Xavier, the poor in Detriot could not listen to him, because they had not the money to pay for their seats and their clothes were too antiquated to sit with propriety among well dressed listeners.⁹

While it is unthinkable that Vivekananda had any impact on the American masses in general, his impact on even the intellectuals proved to be rather ephemeral. Once the novelty of the 'Indian Rajah' wore off, the interest in the 'Hindu theory of incarnation,' 'Hindu manners and customs,' and yoga also disappeared. There were occasions when Vivekananda felt thoroughly disappointed with the American attitude. 'I am getting disgusted with this lecture business. It will take a long time for the Westerners to understand higher spirituality. Everything is £.s.d. to them. If a religion brings them money or health or beauty, or long life, they will flock to it, otherwise not. . . .'¹⁰ Romain Rolland was pained to discover that within the short span of less than two decades Vivekananda's name had become unfamiliar to those intellectuals with whom he had come in close contact during his travels in Europe.¹¹

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*, also see Marie Luise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, Calcutta, 1958, pp. 30, 31, 36, 146-49, 151.

⁸Romain Rolland, *op. cit.*, p. 84; Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁹Burke, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-55.

¹⁰*Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (hereafter referred to as *Letters*), Almora, 1948, p. 124.

¹¹Romain Rolland, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

In spite of this mass of negative evidence the Hindu historians persist in magnifying the temporary and personal success of Vivekananda as the triumph of India's spirituality over the West indicating the subjugation of the victor by the culture of the vanquished. In the opinion of R.C. Majumdar he 'not only elevated Hindu religion and placed it on high pedestal of its pristine glory, but also enhanced its prestige in the world outside India to a degree it has never reached during the last thousand years.'¹² According to Nemai Sadhan Bose, Vivekananda's speech at Chicago Congress 'impressed the minds of millions of Americans and others in Europe' and transformed him into a 'world figure.' It was he who was responsible for raising the 'prestige of India in the West' and for 'breaking her isolation from the rest of the world.'¹³

In reality, instead of instilling a new spirit amongst the Hindus, the American publicity emphasized the ugly fact that the greatness of Indian culture was not an established truth. It was dependent on the recognition and admiration of a handful of Americans or Europeans. Vivekananda's speech was not 'the resounding voice of a new and confident India.' It was the whimper of the wounded pride of a subject people. No wonder Vivekananda considered the import of foreign disciples into India a great asset for the spiritualization of his countrymen. In his letter to Alasinga from America, dated 23 March 1896, he wrote: 'One of my new sannyasins is indeed a woman The others are men. I am going to make some in England and take them over to India with me. These "white" faces will have more influence in India than the Hindus . . . moreover they are vigorous, the Hindus are dead. . . .'¹⁴

Vivekananda's trip to the West did not revolutionize world opinion towards Hinduism or the Hindu nation. In fact, it was Hindu opinion towards Vivekananda which underwent a revolutionary change as a result of it. This change was so overwhelming that Vivekananda himself could not resist the temptation of informing his American admirers about it. He wrote to Miss Mary Hale: 'I was one man in America and another here. Here the whole nation is looking upon me as their authority—there I was a much reviled preacher. Here princes draw my carriage, there I would not be admitted to a decent hotel.'¹⁵ 'What do I owe them [Americans]? Except your family, Mrs. Bull, the Leggets and a few other kind persons, who else has been kind to me. Who came forward to help me work out my ideas?'¹⁶ In another letter he wrote: 'I am just now the guest of the Raja of Ramnad, my journey has been

¹²R. C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom*, Bombay, 1967, p. 986.

¹³Nemai Sadhan Bose, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-64, Atindra Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁴*Letters*, p. 304.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 277.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 398.

a huge procession—crowds of people, illumination, addresses, etc., etc. A monument 40 ft. high is being built on the spot where I landed. The Raja of Ramnad has presented his address to "His Most Holiness" in a huge casket of solid gold beautifully worked. Madras and Calcutta are on the tip toe of expectation as if the whole nation was rising to honour me. So you, see, Mary, I am on the very height of my destiny....¹⁷ He also proudly recorded, 'and dear Mary, these feet have been washed and wiped and worshipped by the descendants of the kings, and there has been a progress through the country which none ever commanded in India.'¹⁸

But when he sailed to America in 1893 Vivekananda did not carry similar pleasant memories of his countrymen to cherish or to boast about. Applause in the lecture halls of America invariably reminded him of the indifference with which he was treated at home. 'I am ashamed of my own nation when I compare their beggarly, selfish, unappreciative, ignorant, ungratefulness with the help, hospitality, sympathy and respect which the Americans have shown me.'¹⁹ He felt homesick, yet decided to extend his stay. Because, as he explained to his friend, 'the Americans are a million times nobler than the Hindus, and I can work more good here than in the country of the ingrates and heartless.... Here I have food and drink and clothes, and everybody so kind, all this for a few words!! Why should I give up such a noble nation to go to the land of brutes and ingrates and brainless boobies held in the eternal thralldom of superstitions, merciless, pitiless wretches?' Or again, 'Where on earth is a better field than here for propagating all high ideals? Here, where if one man is against me, a hundred hands are ready to help me: here where man feels for man and women are goddesses!!'²⁰ It is only when those whom Hindus regarded as their superiors had applauded him did he emerge as their most 'venerated spokesman,' 'His Most Holiness.' Vivekananda did not free India's intellect from the 'hypnosis of foreign culture.'²¹ It was the hypnosis of foreign culture which aroused the Hindus of Madras and Bengal to erect welcome arches to honour him after his return from the West.

Vivekananda did not wish his name to be associated with those who were struggling for political change. He assiduously maintained a safe distance from the political controversies of the day, and repeatedly enjoined his followers not to mix in politics and keep away from the politicians.²² He was anxious that he should be taken only as a man of religion. 'I will

¹⁷Letters, p. 360.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 397.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 145-46.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 117-18.

²¹Atindra Nath Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²²Letters, p. 393.

have nothing to do with... political nonsense. I do not believe in any politics. God and truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash.'²³ He was alarmed to see his Bengali followers giving a political slant to his writings. He wrote to a South Indian friend from America: '... one thing I find in the books of speeches and sayings published in Calcutta. Some of them are printed in such a way as to savour of political views; whereas I am no politician.... So you must warn the Calcutta people that no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings.'²⁴ However, his proclamation of non-involvement in politics does not negate the fact that what he preached had serious political implications. His negation of the then current Indian politics, deliberate as it was, was accompanied by an emphatic assertion of India's spirituality. Thus, his whole religious philosophy and plan of action was counter-parallel to the nineteenth-century politico-social ideologies propagated by the nationalist leaders. His views regarding a plan of national regeneration would make the implicit political dimension of his religious ideology obvious.

According to Vivekananda, like an individual, each race has a peculiar bent which constitutes its backbone, the foundation, and the bedrock of its national life. The peculiar bent of the Indian mind, he said, was religion.²⁵ 'Politics... never formed a necessity of Indian life, but religion and spirituality have been the condition upon which it lived and thrived, and has got to live in future.'²⁶ Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of these 'physical' liberties, Hindus did not and should not care for these material things. They should merely concentrate on religion. He warned his countrymen, 'If you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics, or society or any other thing as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will become extinct.'²⁷ To prevent this inevitable doom, the Hindus should make all and everything work through that vitality of religion. Political and social independence are secondary, 'but the real thing is the spiritual independence—Mukti.'²⁸ 'Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was and it never will be.'²⁹

²³Letters, p. 243.

²⁴Ibid., p. 135.

²⁵Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III (hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*) Calcutta, 1955, pp. 148, 203-4; see also 'India the Land of Religion' in *Selections from Swami Vivekananda*, Almora, 1957.

²⁶Complete Works, Vol. III, p. 204.

²⁷Ibid., p. 220.

²⁸Complete Works, Vol. V, Almora, 1936, pp. 361-62; Vol. IV, Almora, 1948, p. 409.

²⁹Complete Works, Vol. III, p. 108, 298.

Vivekananda was clear that political ideals and objectives were incapable of unifying the diverse elements of Indian society into a nation. According to him:

The one common ground that we have in our sacred traditions, is our religion. That is the only common ground, upon that we shall have to build. In Europe, political ideals form the national unity. In Asia, religious ideals form the national unity. *The unity of religion is, therefore, absolutely necessary as the first condition of future India. There must be the recognition of one religion throughout the length and breadth of this land. . . . It is not only true that the ideal of religion is the highest ideal . . . in the case of India it is the only possible means of work; work in any other line without first strengthening this, would be disastrous.*³⁰

National unity through religion, as he visualized it, naturally did not take into cognizance the non-Hindu elements of Indian society. He went to the extent of suggesting to his co-religionists not to use the word 'Hindu' to denote their identity because, technically speaking, it simply meant inhabitants of India. In the eyes of the foreigners everyone living in India irrespective of religious differences was a Hindu. The use of the name Hindu was justified in ancient times when the people who lived here had professed one religion. The Hindus in order to distinguish themselves from others should now either call themselves 'Vaidiki,' the followers of the Vedas, or better still, 'Vedantists,' or the followers of the Vedanta.³¹ National unity to be achieved through popularization of the Vedanta was obviously synonymous with Hindu unity for him. 'All of us have to be taught that we Hindus—dualists, qualified monists, or monists, Shaivas, or Pashupatas—to whatever denomination we may belong, have certain common ideas behind us, that the time has come when for the wellbeing of ourselves, for the wellbeing of our race, we must give up all our quarrels and differences. These quarrels are condemned by our scriptures, and forbidden by our forefathers.'³² In short, the 'Future India' of Vivekananda was going to be a Hindu India—a nation of the Hindus bound by the sacred tie of religion.

For a nation grounded in religion, political subjection need not be a matter of any serious consequence. A Hindu would willingly suffer all losses except the loss of his religious freedom. In the words of Vivekananda: 'Rob him of everything he has, kick him, call him a "nigger" or any such name, he does not care much; only keep that one gate of religion unmolested.'³³

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 83, 286.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 118.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 287-88.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 277, 279.

Foreign rulers who did not interfere with the religious freedom of the Hindus could always claim their unreserved loyalty. He pointed out to the British rulers that their empire in India could not be preserved through the grant of politico-economic concessions to Indians. The only way to perpetuate it was the way of the Mughal rulers who had followed the policy of religious tolerance. 'So long as the English understand this thoroughly, their throne in India will remain unsullied and unshaken.'³⁴

Not surprisingly, therefore, Vivekananda viewed the global empire of England as a boon to the Hindus. It had created for them an opportunity for 'elevation and expansion.' 'Owing to English genius, the world has been linked in such a fashion as has never before been done.' He recalled that in the past 'whenever there has been a great conquering race' in India 'bringing the nations of the world together, making roads and transit possible, immediately India arose and gave her quota of spiritual power to the sum total of the progress of the world.'³⁵ Now the same situation had arisen again. The global political hegemony of Great Britain could be converted into the spiritual hegemony of the Hindus, the materialism of the West could be synthesized with the spiritualism of India, giving birth to a new universal order based on peace, love, and brotherhood. The West would be India's 'Guru regarding practical sciences, etc., for the improvement of material conditions' and the people of India would be its 'Guru in everything pertaining to religion. This relationship of Guru and disciple in the domain of religion will for ever exist between India and the rest of the world.'³⁶ He told his followers: 'This is the great ideal before us, and every one must be ready for it—the conquest of the whole world by India—nothing less than that and we must all get ready for it—strain every nerve for it.' 'Up, India, conquer the world with your spirituality.'³⁷ It was a unique plan of division of labour through which the vanquished nation of the Hindus could not only raise itself to be at par with the conquerors, but could also dominate over other nations. It was an ideology of vicarious imperialism conceived to instill false confidence into a subject people and divert their energies from the question of emancipation at home towards compensatory spiritual success abroad. The political agitator was to don the garb of a monk and was to set out immediately for his spiritual *digvijay* to the lands of plenty and prosperity—America and England.

By emphasizing the innate spiritual quality of the Indian people and India's religious obligations towards other nations, Vivekananda merely

³⁴ *Complete Works*, Vol. V, pp. 361-62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 109, 139, 171, 222; Vol. IV, pp. 205, 261, 275.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 269.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 277.

94106

supported and magnified the idea propagated by the nineteenth century western indologists who had declared that the Hindus were essentially a nation of 'philosophers.'³⁸ To Max Muller, 'The only sphere where the Indian mind found itself at liberty to act, to create . . . was the sphere of religion and philosophy; and nowhere have religious and metaphysical ideas struck so deep in the mind of a nation as India.'³⁹ It was also generously pointed out that 'the less the Indian nation has taken part in the political struggles of the world . . . the more it has filled itself and concentrated all its powers for the fulfilment of the important mission reserved for it in the history of the East.'⁴⁰

This image of India, deliberately portrayed by the European imperialists to which men like Vivekananda fell an easy prey, had a practical end in view. If Indians were essentially philosophers, engaged in the search for eternal truths, it automatically followed that the materialist white man would bear the burden of managing their material world. The West would administer to India's material needs so that she could fulfil her allotted spiritual mission in the world.

The interests of subject India did not clash with the interests of British imperialism in Vivekananda's plan of national and international spiritualization. They complemented and supplemented each other. Vivekananda sternly rebuked his countrymen for raising the 'eternal cry of Give' before the British rulers. 'What more they will give you,' he asked, 'they have given you railways, telegraphs, well ordered administration to the country—have almost suppressed robbers, have given education in science—what more will they give you? . . . Well, they have given you so much; let me ask what have you given them in return?'⁴¹ Vivekananda deliberately closed his eyes to those blessings of British rule which had once brought curses on his lips: 'Vengeance of God . . . will come upon the English; they have their heels upon our neck, they have sucked the last drop of our blood for their own pleasures, they have carried away with them millions of our money, while our people have starved by villages and provinces . . .'⁴² He had then defined English civilization as 'composed of three Bs—Bible, bayonet, and brandy.'⁴³ But after his trip abroad he discovered in England 'a nation of heroes, the true Kshatriyas.' His opinions underwent a change, and he advised his countrymen that once the elephant (India) had been sold the quarrel over the goad

³⁸ Max Muller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (English translation), Allahabad, 1926, p. 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴¹ *Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 270.

⁴² *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

(taxes) was meaningless.⁴⁴ It became important to him that India should not fail in fulfilling her obligations towards her English masters. He suggested: 'From time immemorial India has been the mine of precious ideas to human society. . . . The English are in India today to gather those higher ideals . . . to acquire knowledge of Vedanta, to penetrate deep mysteries of the eternal religion which is yours. Give those valuable gems in exchange for what you receive from them.'⁴⁵ A sannyasi who spurned politics showed great enthusiasm in presenting an address to Queen Victoria in 1897. He instructed Swami Brahmananda (Rakhal):

In the proposed Address to the Queen Empress the following points should be noted:

That all religions having been protected during her reign we have been able fearlessly to preach our Vedantic doctrines both in India and England.

Her kindness towards the Indian poor—as for instance, her inspiring the English to unique acts of charity by contributing herself to the cause of famine.

Prayer for her long life and for continual growth of happiness and prosperity among the people of her dominions.⁴⁶

Vivekananda called himself a Karmayogi, but in reality he was an exponent of political inaction. Those Hindus who contemplated political action were told: 'If you believe that we shall in case of conflict with them gain freedom by applying those material forces, you are profoundly mistaken. Just as a little piece of stone figures before the Himalayas, so we differ from them in point of skill in the case of those forces. Do you know what my idea is? By preaching the profound secrets of the Vedanta religion to the Western world, we shall attract the sympathy and regard of those mighty nations, maintaining for ever the position of their teacher in spiritual matters.'⁴⁷ This status of super-ordination and subordination was assumed to be eternal and unchangeable. The political weakness of India, of which he was fully conscious, did not fill his heart with despair. The man who claimed to preach action-oriented religious philosophy showed utter lack of faith in action when it came to changing the political destiny of his nation.

The poverty of the masses caused deep anguish in Vivekananda's heart, their neglect he condemned as a 'national sin' and told the political agitators: 'No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed and well cared for.' He made upliftment

⁴⁴ *Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 130.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-71.

⁴⁶ *Letters*, p. 388.

⁴⁷ *Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 403.

of the 'destitute, the poor, and the illiterate peasantry and labouring classes' the mission of his life. 'If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them . . . ' 'Where should you go to seek for God, are not all poor people the miserable, the weak, God?' Daridranarayan was declared to be the new God of new India. But he did not relate the cause of this widespread misery to foreign imperialism. For him it was the consequence of the moral degeneration of the Indian people brought about by the autocratic rule of the former rulers, the intellectual monopoly exercised by the priestly class, and the absence of contact with the outside world. Until Indians became spiritual no economic or social regeneration was possible.⁴⁸ The future of India could be saved by the revival of the Vedanta religion, it could not be saved by politico-economic revolution or social reform. 'Our life blood is spirituality . . . Political, social and other material defects, even the poverty of the land will be cured if that blood is pure.'⁴⁹ Poverty implied that the nation had become spiritually diseased.

Vivekananda claimed to be a socialist on the ground that 'half a loaf is better than no bread.' But there was no ideological conviction behind such statements. In fact, he entertained serious doubts about socialism as a way of life. 'Everything goes to show that socialism or some form of rule by the people . . . is coming on the boards. The people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs . . . What guarantee have we that this, or any other civilisation, will last, unless it is based on religion, on the goodness of man? Depend on it, religion goes to the root of the matter. If it is right, all is right . . . Man can not be made virtuous by an Act of Parliament. And that is why religion is of deeper importance than politics.'⁵⁰

The socialism he aspired to was not a classless society to be established by the abolition of private property. His was a plan of spiritual socialism which merely required the abolition of religio-cultural privileges of the Brahmins. It was conceived within the framework of the caste system and could be brought about not by 'bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher.'⁵¹ 'The ideal at one end is the Brahmana and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala and the whole work is to raise the Chandala upto the Brahmana.'⁵² Elevation of the Sudra to the level of the Brahmin could be accomplished without experiencing the agony of politico-economic revolution or social reconstruction. The simple process of Sanskritization was sufficient for the purpose. He advised the Sudras

⁴⁸ *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 380.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 132.

⁵¹ *The History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, op. cit., p. 136; *Complete Works*, Vol. II, pp. 198, 293; Vol. V, p. 143.

⁵² *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 295.

not to seize every opportunity of attacking the Brahmins, but assimilate their culture which was the source of their strength: 'The only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit, and this fighting and writing and frothing against the higher caste is in vain . . . The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, education which is the strength of the higher castes . . . Use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has, and the thing is done. Why do you not become Sanskrit scholars?'⁵³ How the low caste Hindus, without economic resources, were going to acquire the culture of the higher castes he forgot to tell.

Vivekananda's fulmination against the priestly class—'kick out the priests who are always against progress. Because they would never mend, their hearts would never become big'—should not be interpreted as an attack on the caste system as such. He had no quarrel with the *Varna Vyavastha*, his quarrel was restricted to the Hindu concepts of purity-impurity and *Jati*. Even after appropriating the culture of the Brahmins the Sudras were to retain their original status. He prophesied ' . . . a time will come when there will be the rising of the Sudra class, with their Sudrahood; that is to say, not like that as at present, when the Sudras are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the Vaishyas or the Kshatriyas, but a time will come, when the Sudras of every country, with their inborn Sudra nature and habits . . . will gain absolute supremacy in every society.'⁵⁴ Unfortunately, in their temperament and character Sudras were inferior to other higher castes. 'The Sudras, as a rule are either meanly servile, licking like dog the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts.'⁵⁵ The advantages of Sudra rule 'will be the distribution of physical comforts—its disadvantages, the lowering of culture. There will be great distribution of culture but extraordinary geniuses will be less and less.'⁵⁶

In spite of his spiritualism he was not above traditional caste prejudices. He rebuked one of his followers, Indumati, who was Brahmin for adding 'Dasi' after her name. 'The Vaishyas should sign as *Dasa* and *Dasi* but the Brahmin and Kshatriya should write *Deva* and *Devi*.'⁵⁷ When his right as a Kayastha, whom Brahmins put in the category of the Sudras, to preach Vedanta was challenged he retaliated by saying: 'I trace my descent to one [Chitrugupta] at whose feet every Brahmin lays flowers and whose descendants are purest of Kshatriyas . . . These detractors ought to have known [that] . . . our three castes . . . the Brahmin, the Kshatriya

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 291, 298.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 365, 401.

⁵⁵ Swami Vivekananda, *Caste, Culture and Socialism*, Almora, 1947, p. 89.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Letters*, p. 58.

and Vaishya have equal right to be sannaysins.⁵⁸

In economic terms his socialism did not extend beyond the advocacy of charities and social service during natural calamities like floods, famines, and droughts. Monks who were to teach the rudiments of learning to the boys and girls of peasant and labouring classes were warned, 'You must take care not to set up class strife between the poor peasants, the labouring people and wealthy classes. Make it a point not to abuse the moneyed classes.'⁵⁹

The social apathy of the rich classes and their ruthless exploitation of the poor did arouse Vivekananda's anger and caused him immense pain. But he did not raise his voice to end the inequitable social system which permitted 'a handful of men to live in extreme luxury' at the cost of the misery of the multitude. Instead, he only expected that the people of wealth would act as trustees and spend part of their wealth in philanthropic works to elevate the conditions of the poor and the ignorant. Since 'Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism and like other sects' were 'the vanguard of the social movement' that was to take place in the near future,⁶⁰ some amount of sacrifice, he said, had become urgent on the part of the rich to escape from the impending catastrophe. His criticism of the rich was in the nature of a warning. According to him: 'It was the bounden duty of the privileged classes to make voluntary exit by rapidly handing over their culture to the masses. Delay would be dangerous: for that would mean inevitable class struggle, the foregone conclusion of which would be the supremacy of the mere mass power.'⁶¹ Like all those who favour social stability and the status quo Vivekananda was an opponent of class strife or the supremacy of the masses. He cautioned the rich, 'When the masses will wake up, they will come to understand your oppression on them and by a puff of their mouth you will be entirely blown off—therefore, I say, try to rouse those lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them. When they will awaken they also will not forget your good service to them and will remain grateful to you.'⁶² In other words, the spread of Hindu spiritual culture accompanied with charity could reduce the significance of material comforts and minimize the pain of deprivation. The oppressor could thus stand forth as benefactor and India could acquire a capitalist society with class harmony.

Vivekananda was confident that the spread of education would restore the lost individuality of the Indian masses and make them fit to decide

⁵⁸ *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 211.

⁵⁹ *Letters*, p. 443.

⁶⁰ Swami Vivekananda, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Preface, p. IV.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.

their own future without assistance from above or outside.⁶³ He, therefore, laid great stress on the education of the masses in the plans he recommended to his followers from time to time. But the education he wished to spread from village to village had nothing in common with the type of education introduced by the British government or its modified version exemplified in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College founded by the Aryasamajists at Lahore in 1886. The education through which he hoped to break the centuries-old slumber of the Indian masses was nothing more than an acquaintance with the universal religion preached by Ramakrishna mixed with a bit of astronomy, geography, etc.⁶⁴ 'Go from village to village and proclaim to all Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa's teachings, can there be a more blessed lot than this?'⁶⁵ 'The flood of spirituality has arisen, I can see it is rolling over the land.' This flood must engulf the masses. 'Whatever the Vedas, the Vedanta and all other incarnations have done in the past, Sri Ramakrishna lived to practise in the course of a single life... From the date that he was born has sprung the Satya Yuga. Henceforth there is an end to all sorts of distinctions, and every one down to the Chandala will be sharer in the Divine Love. The distinction between... the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate—he lived to root out all... Whoever—man or woman—will worship Sri Ramakrishna, be he or she ever so low, will then and there be converted into the very highest.'⁶⁶

The gigantic task of spiritualizing the Indian masses through religious education could not be entrusted to the members of the upper classes who 'were physically and morally dead.' Nor were the peasants and pariahs qualified for the task. Only the 'Giants' trained at the Ramakrishna Maths or the English-educated 'fiery young men' belonging to the middle classes were considered worthy to act as the guides and philosophers of the Indian masses.⁶⁷ Vivekananda's elite-oriented approach rested on the conviction that 'whenever you see the most humanitarian ideas fall into the hands of the multitudes, the first result you notice is degradation. It is learning and intellect that keep things safe. It is the cultured among a community that are the real custodians of religion and philosophy in their purest form.'⁶⁸ In every society the genuine leadership which leads to progress and change, he pointed out, is always provided by the microscopic minority of the intellectuals. 'What you call majority is mainly composed of fools and men of common intellect. Men who have brains to think for themselves are few, everywhere.

⁶³ *Letters*, pp. 109, 110.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3, 105, 172, 288.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 157, 247, 250, 259.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 103, 164-65, 280, 304.

⁶⁸ *Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 124.

These few men with brains are the real leaders in everything and every department of work, the majority are guided by them as with a string. . . .'⁶⁹

Vivekananda's burning zeal for the spiritual regeneration of India and his passionate love for Daridranarayan did not make him a supporter of radical social reforms. It merely made him a champion of traditional values and norms. 'If our national life of ten thousand years,' he said, 'has been a mistake, there is no help for it, and if we try now to form a new character, the result will be that we shall die.'⁷⁰ In the gradual process of evolution only those elements survive which fulfil some basic socio-economic needs of a people. Revolution by causing sudden break destroys elements which promote social stability and growth. His emphatic assertion, therefore, was: 'I do not believe in reform, I believe in growth, I do not dare to put myself in the position of God and dictate society.'⁷¹ He was determined to see that the unique identity of Hindu culture was not compromised by the import of western values on the false ground of social reform. 'We must try to keep our historically acquired character as a people. I grant that we have to take many things from others but . . . I am sorry to say that most of our modern reform movements have been inconsiderate imitation of Western means and methods of work; and that surely would not do for India. . . .'⁷² Acceptance of the one involved rejection of the other. Vivekananda rejected all social reconstruction which demanded rejection of traditional cultural values and institutions. In his view, Hindus did not really require any radical social reconstruction. Their institutions were 'in their plan and purpose best suited to make mankind happy.' If they were injurious for social progress, the Hindus as a people would have long ago disappeared from the surface of this earth. Their survival amidst all political vicissitudes was a proof of the inherent strength of their culture. If, therefore, he had to make a choice between the 'Scylla of old Hindu orthodoxy' and 'the Charybdis of European civilisation,' he lent his support to the former.⁷³ 'We should choose the orthodox,

⁶⁹ *Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 213.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 151. By misquoting the following letter of Swami Vivekananda written to Mohammad Sarfaraz Hussain in June 1898, the Bengali historians have tried to establish his credentials as a secularist. The letter however, as can be seen, does not contain anything to warrant such conclusion:

Dear Friend

I appreciate your letter very much. . . . Whether we call it Vedantism or any ism, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. We believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either Hebrew or the Arab; yet practical

because there is some hope in him. . . . He has a national theme, something to hold to; so he will live, but others will die.'⁷⁴

Vivekananda opposed those who stood for social reform also on the ground that the social change proposed by them touched only the fringe of the Hindu society and left the masses unattended. No doubt, this criticism contained a lot of truth, but the legitimate question that can be asked is: What plan of action did Vivekananda himself put forward to improve the material condition of the Hindu masses? Charitable hospitals or doling out of free food to the victims of natural calamities could hardly bring about the end of their misery and social backwardness. These were age-old methods which did not require a Vivekananda to formulate them. Charity to the poor has always been considered a sacred obligation in all religious traditions. Therefore, if the concern of the political leaders and social reformers of the nineteenth century for the 'poor masses' of India was verbal (though such was not the case) and meaningless, so was also that of Vivekananda. The poor masses of India did not find a place in his immediate mission or in his vision of 'Future India.' Training of the monks for religious propaganda in India and the West was all important to him. He wrote to Alasinga from Chicago on 12 January 1895: 'I have given up at present my plan for the education of the masses. It will come by and by. What I now want is a band of fiery missionaries. We must have a college in Madras to teach comparative religions, Sanskrit, the different schools of Vedanta and some European languages, we must have a press and papers printed in English and vernaculars. . . . If you can not do anything of the kind in India, then . . . I have a message to give, let me give it to the people who appreciate it and will work

Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, is yet to be developed among the Hindus universally.

On the other hand our experience is that if the followers of any religion approach to this equality in an appreciable degree in the plane of practical work-a-day life—it may be quite unconscious generally of the deeper meaning and the underlying principle of such conduct, which the Hindus as a rule so clearly perceive—it is those of Islam and Islam alone.

Therefore we are firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas nor the Bible nor the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of The Religion, which is oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope. . . .

See *Letters*, p. 427. This letter is the only instance where Vivekananda takes cognizance of Islam. In his public speeches, interviews, and letters to Hindu and Christian friends no reference was made by him to this special quality of Islam. Nor did he take any practical step to join the 'brain of Vedanta' with the 'body of Islam' as suggested in the above letter.

⁷⁴ *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 153.

t out. What care I who takes it?'⁷⁵ The shaping of the 'Future India' required only two things. One, to rediscover and popularize the gems of knowledge hidden in the Hindu scriptures, two, to establish Maths in different parts of the country for the propagation of religion and training of monks.

According to Vivekananda, the nineteenth-century social reform movements were a camouflage for compromise and imitation. They followed the same line that was taken by northern Indian sects during the sway of the empire of Delhi. They are the voices of the dead or the dying—the feeble tones of a terrorised people, pleading for the permission to live. They are ever eager to adjust their spiritual or social surrounding according to the taste of conquerors—if they are only left the right to live, especially the sects under the English domination. . . . The Hindu sects of the century seem to have set one ideal of truth before them—the approval of their English masters. . . .⁷⁶

The synthesis of the Indian and western culture as visualized by Vivekananda was in no way superior to the synthesis attempted by Raja Rammohun Roy and later taken up by reformers like Ranade, Dayanand, etc. None of these reformers borrowed from the west in order to ingratiate themselves with the British administrators. The purpose of their imitation of certain western values and institutions, if that can be called imitation, was emancipation—social, cultural, and political. In fact, the crisis of identity, which results from a blind imitation of another culture, aroused by the desire for a cultural identification with the foreign ruling class, did not affect the educated Indians elsewhere in the manner and extent noticeable in Bengal.⁷⁷ For example, Madras, Lahore, Bombay, and Lucknow did not produce educated young men who delighted in wounding the religious susceptibilities of their countrymen and heralded their social revolt and reform by shouts of 'I have eaten beef, I have eaten beef' as was the case in Calcutta. Macaulay's prophecy regarding the emergence of a class of people Indian in blood and colour but European in taste and opinions found its true fulfilment only amongst the educated Bengalis who, in their desperate attempt to change their cultural identity, became the caricature of 'Modern Indian.' In his article 'The Confessions of a Young Bengali' published in *Monkherjee's Magazine*, in December 1873, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had pointed out with despair: 'That, in the outward circumstances of social and personal life, English educated Bengalis are rapidly getting Anglicised, few educated Bengalis will deny. The stamp of the Anglo-Saxon foreigner is upon our houses, our furniture, our carriage, our food, our drink, our dress, our very familiar

⁷⁵ *Letters*, p. 197.

⁷⁶ *Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 138.

⁷⁷ See Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Bombay, 1964, Chap. IV, V, X.

letters and conversation. . . . Our culture is thoroughly English and we mean to reconstruct society according to English notions.'⁷⁸ But unfortunately even the imitation so meticulously attempted by the English-educated Bengalis failed to bridge the gulf between the rulers and the ruled. In the message of Vivekananda they found the much-awaited solution of their dilemma. The emphasis on religion provided wing to their wounded soul to soar high and view from above the spiritual poverty of the whites below. This explains Vivekananda's immediate popularity and later glorification amongst the members of the Bengali middle classes.⁷⁹

The fundamental difference between Vivekananda and other reformers was that neither social reform nor cultural revival constituted their ultimate goal. For them they were the necessary steps towards political liberation without which the starving millions could not be saved. Explaining the need for social reform Raja Rammohun Roy had said: 'I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them, has entirely deprived them of political feeling, and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. It is I think necessary that some change should take place in their religion for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort.'⁸⁰ After the mutiny the spirit of *swadeshi* and reform went beyond the confines of culture. *Swadeshi* culture was gradually linked with *swadeshi* economics and *swadeshi* politics. When an aged Sadhu advised Dayanand to withdraw from active life and seek Mukti he replied: 'I am not anxious about my salvation. I am particularly anxious about the lakhs of people who are poor, weak and suffering. I do not mind if I may have to take birth several times. I will attain salvation when these people attain it.'⁸¹ Lack of moral virtues or social evils were only partially responsible for India's backwardness: 'What can you expect but misery and poverty, when the people of a country trade only among themselves, whilst the foreigners control their trade and rule over them.'⁸² Dayanand

⁷⁸ *Bankim Rachnavali*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1969, p. 137.

⁷⁹ Writing in 1907 Satyavrata Mukerjee pointed out that the students of the Hindu College, Calcutta, 'adopted an aggressive attitude to everything Hindu and openly defied the canons of their inherited religion, while some of them offended public opinion by their youthful exuberance, such as drinking to excess, flinging beef-bones into and houses of the orthodox—some even embraced Christianity. . . . Denationalising emasculation was the prevailing characteristic.' Quoted in Heimsath, *op. cit.*, p. 13; for further details see B. B. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967, Chap. III; S. C. Sarkar, 'Derozio and Young Bengal' in A. C. Gupta (ed.), *op. cit.*; S. Natrajan, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

⁸⁰ J. C. Gosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, pp. 929-30.

⁸¹ Quoted in Heimsath, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁸² *Satyarth Prakash* (Ajmer edition), p. 317.

gratefully acknowledged the advantages conferred by British rule, but also added: 'Say what you will, the indigenous native rule is by far the best. A foreign Government, perfectly free from religious prejudices, impartial towards all—the natives and foreigners—kind, beneficent and just to the natives like their parents though it may be, can never render the people completely happy.'⁸³

Vivekananda was not thus the Messiah of the poor nor the harbinger of any new social order. He was a protagonist of political and economic status quo and a defender of traditional culture. Nationalist leaders who had started their careers by counting the blessings of British rule had become aware by the end of the nineteenth century of its exploitative character. Grudgingly they had arrived at the conclusion that the economic misery of the Indian people and their social backwardness would not end without some fundamental change in the existing system, leading ultimately to the establishment of self-government. They had realized that in the absence of political power all their efforts towards national progress were doomed to failure. Achievement of political power, even if it could be gained only partially to begin with, had become the main goal of their struggle. At this juncture, Vivekananda's message of spiritual development at the cost of political and economic progress amounted to a reversal of the whole process. In his ideology, the right and obligation to reconstruct society on modern lines was sacrificed at the altar of spirituality and Hindu religion. In essence his religious philosophy was an honourable justification for the social status quo and a call for withdrawal from the political front. This aspect of political orientation latent in the teachings of Vivekananda is well illustrated in the subsequent history of the Mission founded by him.⁸⁴ Writing in the nineteen twenties Romain Rolland noted with satisfaction that in spite of political upheaval the followers of Ramakrishna had remained firmly rooted in

⁸³ Quoted in B. B. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁸⁴ To avoid the displeasure of the British Government Sister Nivedita's membership of the Mission was terminated, and various rules and regulations were framed making it impossible for the revolutionaries to abuse the hospitality of the Mission or to exploit its name for obtaining recruits during the Swadeshi movement. The authorities of the Mission gloated with pride in having converted some revolutionary young men of Bengal into peaceful monks. The Governor of Bengal was duly informed of the aim of the Mission through a memorandum submitted to him in 1917. 'The acceptance of such novices [revolutionaries] would be for the purpose of leading them from the points of view these express, to the new and inward life of religion which is the ideal of the Mission, and to that active discipline of social service which is its daily exclusive aim.' The list of those converted to the Mission's ideal of 'inward life' contained the names of Debrata Bose, Sachin Sen (of Maniktola Bomb Case), Priyanath, Satish, and many others. These indirect services to the cause of British imperialism did not go unrewarded. The Mission had the good fortune of enjoying the patronage of the British Government in the form of various grants and concessions till 1947. See *The History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, *op. cit.*, p. 211-18.

religion and had 'kept themselves aloof from the campaign of Gandhi.'⁸⁵

Vivekananda's ideology, strongly rooted in the traditional culture and guided by a zeal to establish the glory of Hindu spiritualism, failed to broaden the mental horizon of the educated Hindus. It merely inculcated in them a false sense of spiritual and cultural arrogance. Orthodoxy which was ridiculed and dishonoured by Raja Rammohun Roy and his followers regained its lost prestige and glamour through him.⁸⁶ Under the weight of his romantic vision of the past the present became irrelevant and future got distorted. As one of the architects of modern India Vivekananda, instead of preparing the ground for the growth of a modern nation, unwittingly became responsible for providing an ideological rationale to the politics of Hindu communal movements. The universal brotherhood of men which he aspired to create through the Vedanta religion could not even unite his own countrymen. By its own logic his philosophy of Hindu spiritual elevation and expansion culminated in an ideology of communal elevation and Hindu supremacy.⁸⁷ Vivekananda had rejected politics, but politics did not reject him.

⁸⁵ Romain Rolland, *op. cit.*, Appendix I, p. 360.

⁸⁶ For the adverse effects of Vivekananda's teachings on the social reform movement in Bengal see Heimsath, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-66.

⁸⁷ Compare the ideas of Vivekananda on education, Hindu nation, Hindu religion, etc., with M. S. Golwalkar's *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 10, Chap. III, 'Call of our National Soul,' Chap. IV, 'For True National Glory,' Chap. VIII, 'Children of Motherland,' Chap. XX, 'Character—Personal and National,' and the project of Indianization as outlined by the Bharatiya Jan Sangh in its election manifesto of 1952 and restated by Balraj Madhok in 1969 at Patna.

Swami Shivagan Chand, Kayastha
Conference Organizer*

LUCY CARROLL

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the birth of many caste and religious movements in North India. Of the religious movements, that of the Arya Samaj was the most important; of caste organizations, that of the Kayastha Conference. The Kayastha Conference was the direct outgrowth of an exercise in educational entrepreneurship on the part of a wealthy, childless Oudh vakil. Kali Prasad—the leading vakil of Oudh—had established a Kayastha Pathshala in Allahabad in 1873. Originally a primary school, by 1886 the Pathshala was teaching up to the entrance standard of the Calcutta University and further development was envisaged by the founder. This he did not live to see: Kali Prasad died in 1886 at the age of 46, bequeathing his estate, with the exception of a small maintenance allowance for his wife and his brother's widow, to the Kayastha Pathshala.¹ The endowment totalled nearly Rs 500,000 and the responsibility for the development of the institution fell upon the community to whose welfare Kali Prasad had dedicated his wealth.

A few months after Kali Prasad's death, Hargovind Dayal and Sri Ram, vakils of Lucknow—both of whom had been associated with Kali Prasad in the work of the Pathshala—issued an 'Appeal' to the Kayasthas of North India proposing that a Kayastha Conference be held. Reproductions of Kali Prasad's will and of the rules which the founder had drawn up for the Pathshala formed an integral part of this 'Appeal.'²

The first session of the Kayastha Conference met in Lucknow in November 1887, almost a year to the day after Kali Prasad's death. The president of the session was Jai Prakash Lal, Dewan of the Dumraon Raj and perhaps the most distinguished Kayastha of North India at the time. The secretary of the reception committee was Sri Ram, co-author with Hargovind Dayal of the

*This essay is based on research conducted in India in 1971-72 under a grant from the American Association of Indian Studies, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

¹ An English translation of Kali Prasad's will may be found in the *Kayastha (Agra)*, II, January-February 1897, pp. 38-40; and Murli Dhar, *The Kayastha Pathshala, Allahabad. Its Origin, Objectives and Progress* (Revised by Dr Anant Prasad), Allahabad, Kayastha Pathshala, 1912, pp. 16-18.

² *Kayastha (Agra)*, II, January-February 1897, p. 45.

'Appeal' calling for the Conference and father-in-law of Jai Prakash Lal's daughter. A reported 159 delegates from out-stations and 545 Lucknowis attended the Conference, at which the main resolutions dealt with education, provision of educational facilities (boarding houses, etc.), and encouragement of non-clerical occupations. It was also resolved to 'organize Kayastha Sabhas in every town and place of importance, having a sufficient Kayastha population.'³ At this point the Kayastha movement received the assistance of an eloquent speaker and energetic organizer in the person of Swami Shivagan Chand, to whom it presented a unique opportunity and to whom is creditable much of the early organizational activity of the Kayastha Conference. '[T]he reforming enthusiasm of Swami Shivagan Chand... gave it its present expansion. He travelled from north to south and east to west and awakened the sleeping masses to a sense of their moral and social duties, establishing Kayastha Sabhas all over the country.'⁴

The three individuals most prominent in the founding of the Kayastha Conference—Hargovind Dayal, Sri Ram, and Swami Shivagan—each brought to the movement different skills and resources and for each the communal organization served a different end. Hargovind Dayal conceived the Conference primarily as a supporting constituency for the Pathshala and worked for it 'zealously, assiduously and indefatigably to the ruin of his health and professional practice.'⁵ Sri Ram was one of the large patrons of the Conference and to him it provided a useful political network, his election in 1893 as a member of the Legislative Council of the North Western Provinces and Oudh was appropriately celebrated by the Provincial Kayastha Sabha of Oudh and marked by contributions from the newly-elected Legislative Member of Rs 2,000 to the Sabha and Rs 1,000 toward the founding of a Kayastha boarding house at Lucknow.⁶ For Swami Shivagan Chand, on the other hand, the Kayastha movement served as a vehicle and constituency for his professional career as a sadhu.

The saga of Swami Shivagan is illustrative not only of the role of a professional organizer and publicist in the creation of a voluntary association, but also of the intimate relationship between the Kayastha movement and other social movements of the time. Given the general assumption concerning the emphasis on 'sanskritic' reforms by caste associations, it is further worthy

³ *Lahore Tribune*, 24 December 1890.

⁴ *A Short Account of the Aims, Objects, Achievements and Proceedings of the Kayastha Conference*. Allahabad, Muttra Conference Reception Committee, 1893, p. 2.

The Swami's name is variously spelled. I have adopted the more modern spelling but have retained the different spellings if these appear within a direct quotation.

⁵ Sachchidananda Sinha in *Kayastha Samachar*, II, November 1900, p. 23.

⁶ *Lahore Tribune*, 4 November 1893.

of note that the most important religious functionary of the nineteenth-century Kayastha movement was a heterodox, eclectic sadhu.

* * *

Lala Shivagan Chand entered government service as an inspector of post offices in the Punjab in 1871, but his post was brought under reduction four years later, according to Shivagan Chand because of personal animosity on the part of his European superior. Sometime afterwards he re-entered the postal service and held the position of head postmaster of Nowshera. Again he apparently did not get on well with his superiors and 'was so badly treated that at last he had to resign his appointment.' He made his valedictory statement in a pamphlet entitled *My Experiences in Official Life* which, according to the *Lahore Tribune*, reflected 'much discredit upon the postal department.' 'Lala Shivagan Chand held a comparatively high post in the department, and the treatment, therefore, dealt out to those holding inferior appointments can be better imagined than described.'⁷

After leaving government service, Shivagan Chand involved himself in the Arya Samaj activities but this did not seem quite to his taste either. '[F]inding the leaders of the Arya Samaj were too partial and narrow-minded, he severed his connection with the movement though not his sympathy.'⁸ At this time—late 1887—the first Kayastha Conference was held and Swami (as he was now called) Shivagan Chand 'busied himself in the Kayastha Reform movement,'⁹ quickly becoming a folk hero, a man 'who resigning a good Government post and sacrificing all his worldly comforts, devoted himself heart and soul to the [Kayastha Conference] cause.'¹⁰

⁷ This paragraph is based on a review in the *Lahore Tribune*, 22 May 1886, of *My Experiences in Official Life*.

After he had become a Swami, Shivagan Chand wrote a pamphlet *Toufaht-ul-Mulazmin* (Present to Public Servants). 'This book was compiled by the Swami at the request of the Kayastha Literary Association of Allahabad and has undergone two editions under the auspices of that association. It contains most useful and practical advice for the officials. Briefly speaking, it enumerates the qualifications necessary for an official and suggests how to acquire them; how to respect and obey the superiors, and treat with love the equals and subordinates; &c., &c. The book has been very well received by both the Kayastha Community and the general public and has been patronized by many Heads of Departments and Educational Officers.' (Swami Shivagan Chand, *The Divine Wisdom of Indian Rishis or an Essence of the Hindu Vedic Truths and Yoga Philosophy*, Agra, 1899, p. 3 fn.) The book was adopted as a prize book by the educational authorities of Oudh and Rohilkhand Divisions. (*A Short Account*, p. 4.)

⁸ Narayan Prasad Asthana, 'Preface,' to Swami Shivagan Chand, *Gyan Gutaka Being a Synopsis of the Leading Principles of Hindu Religious Philosophy in the Form of Questions and Answers*. Agra, Shivagir Shanti Ashram, 1898, p. iii.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *A Short Account*, p. 2.

The Swami toured North and Central India, rousing the 'sleeping masses of the Kayastha community' with his 'eloquent and impressive addresses' and forming local Kayastha sabhas.¹¹ In Patna he helped found in 1889 the English-language *Kayastha Gazette*, edited by Mahesh Narayan who was to become the leading Bihari journalist of his time.¹² The same year he visited Hyderabad (Deccan), collected contributions of Rs 1,000 each from Raja Sheo Raj Dharmwant and Raja Murli Manohar for the Kayastha *upadeshak fund*, and decided to use the money to start a newspaper—the Urdu *Kayastha Conference Gazette*, which during its initial months was located in Lucknow, conducted by the Swami, and distributed gratis. The *Lahore Tribune* noticed the first issues of both these publications, particularly the *Conference Gazette*, unique in that it was to be distributed free, 'a novel experiment in India.'¹³

In 1890 it was announced that Swami Shivagan Chand had become a yogi and renounced the world for seven years.¹⁴ His spiritual guide was a sannyasi who had 'of all the virtues, chosen that of silence,' and of whom it was said, when he died seven years later, that he had 'for the last 25 years of his life never uttered a word, spending his days and nights in deep meditation.'¹⁵ Swami Shivagan's withdrawal from the world, however, did not last long: 'at the request of [the] leading men' he was present at the Kayastha Conference held in Lahore the following November.

[A] sudden commotion at the entrance caused all eyes to be turned in that direction and the whole Conference Hall rang with cheers as Swami Shugan Chandgee, now a retired but once a celebrated missionary of the Kayastha community, moved . . . to the platform.¹⁶

The 'leading men' in this case were prominent Arya Samajists: Lakshmi Narayan, Lahore barrister, secretary of the Conference reception committee, and virtual host of the Conference; Roshan Lal, Lahore barrister and member of the reception committee, and Bhim Sen, pleader, president of the Punjab Provincial Kayastha Sabha, a 'very near relation' of Swami Shivagan Chand, founder-president of the Sialkot Arya Samaj, and father of Kunwar Sen,

¹¹ Narayan Prasad Asthana, 'Preface,' *Gyan Gutaka*, p. iii. Swami Shivagan Chand's lectures were described by Gopi Nath, secretary of the 1892 Kayastha Conference (Ajmere), as 'always full of enthusiasm and original thoughts, ornamented by Sanskrit Shlokas and Arabic proverbs, by Persian couplets and English phrases, delivered in a frank and bold style. . . .' ('Preface' to *Divine Wisdom*, p. i.)

¹² *Kayastha Samachar*, IV, August 1901, p. 170.

¹³ *Lahore Tribune*, 20 March 1889; 26 April 1890.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1890.

¹⁵ *Divine Wisdom*, p. 1; *Lahore Tribune*, 17 March 1897.

¹⁶ *Lahore Tribune*, 8 November 1890.

Rawalpindi barrister and president of the 1924 session of the Kayastha Conference.

In 1892, in anticipation of the sixth Kayastha Conference scheduled to meet at Ajmere, a 'great agitation was . . . created throughout the length and breadth of Rajputana by the thrilling lectures of Swami Shagan Chand, a great philanthropist and reformer of the [Kayastha] community.'¹⁷ In early 1893 the Swami was again lecturing under Arya Samaj auspices.¹⁸ The Arya Samaj was at this time in the midst of internecine strife and, according to the *Sat Dharm Parcharak* (the organ of the 'Mahatma' section of the Arya Samaj), Swami Shivagan 'could not decide which party he should follow, and attached himself to the "cultured" and the "Mahatma" Aryas by turns, with the result that the Samaj refused to send him to the Chicago Religious Conference as its representative.'¹⁹ To compensate for his inability to appear at the Chicago Conference in person, Swami Shivagan Chand wrote a pamphlet, *The Divine Wisdom of Indian Rishis*, to send to the Chicago organizers.²⁰

In 1895 the Swami started the Dharm Mahotsava movement—an Indian conference of religions held annually at which speakers representing the various religions found in India (including Islam, Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity as well as the diverse Hindu sects) delivered lectures on their respective faiths in the interest of mutual understanding and tolerance.²¹ In an age of increasing religious polarization, the Dharm Mahotsava was unique—and doomed to failure. It was, however, a reflection of the Swami's own eclectic approach to religion. 'My prayers,' Swami Shivagan Chand had written to the promoters of the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, 'are that all human beings may profess one religion, or at least all men believing in one true God may adopt one religious code [and that code cannot be any other than the *Laws of Nature*] for their guidance.'²²

Two years later his 'spiritual father, Baba Shivagiri [], renounced his body' and Swami Shivagan Chand founded Shivagir Shanti Ashram at

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25 January 1893. Swami Shivagan's nephew, Kunj Behari Lal, was Prime Minister of Alwar (Rajputana) and the Maharaja of Shalpora (Rajputana) paid for the publication of *The Divine Wisdom*. (*Divine Wisdom*, pp. iv, 1.)

¹⁸ *Lahore Tribune*, 8 February 1893; Narayan Prasad Asthana, 'Introduction,' *Gyan Gutaka*, p. iii.

¹⁹ *Sat Dharm Parcharak*, 13 December 1901, in *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Punjab*, 1901, pp. 794-95.

²⁰ *Divine Wisdom*, p. 5.

²¹ *Kayastha* (Agra), 1 July 1896, pp. 13-15; *Lahore Tribune*, 2 October 1895; 20 June 1896; 30 December 1896.

²² *Divine Wisdom*, p. 10. (Italics in original.)

Gujrat (Punjab) in his memory.²³ The Ashram was primarily devoted to the rehabilitation of able-bodied sadhus, who were taught in the Ashram's seminary 'that work and hard work is real worship' and catechized in the Dharm Mahotsava ideal of religious toleration.²⁴ The land for the Ashram was donated by the president of the Gujrat Arya Samaj 'in the capacity of a private gentleman,' a point which was stressed by an Arya Samajist who objected to Swami Shivagan Chand's fund-raising appearances before mofussil Arya Samajs, in which he implied that his project had been sanctioned by the Gujrat Arya Samaj organization.²⁵

In 1899 the Swami was advocating the formation of Sadharan Dharm Sabhas 'whose mottos have been selected to be such as are not to be objected to by any of the Hindu sects existing at present.'²⁶ He frequently lectured under Kayastha auspices, as for instance before the Kayastha Self-Improvement Society, Delhi, and in the Lahore house of the late Kanhaya Lal, father-in-law of Roshan Lal and grandfather-in-law of Sachchidananda Sinha. Kanhaya Lal's daughter, Srimati Hardevi—a child widow who had married an Arya Samaji barrister—often took part in the Dharm Mahotsava gatherings, which after the foundation of the Ashram were held in conjunction with the Ashram's anniversary. She lectured to female audiences not on the Brahmo Samaj, with which she and her late brother (Seva Ram) had been connected, nor on the Arya Samaj, in which her husband (Roshan Lal) was so active, but on Swami Shivagan's Sadharan Dharma.²⁷

Swami Shivagan Chand attended many of the National Social Conferences and moved the resolution on observance of personal purity and abolition of *nautch* at the 1899 session.²⁸ The report of the same session listed his Shanti Ashram (Gujrat) among the 'associations whose object is to promote social reform among Hindus.'

A prolific writer, Swami Shivagan's publications were patronized by a diverse collection of patrons: J. C. Nesfield, Director of Public Instruction, N.W.P., the Maharaja of Shalpora, Rajputana; the Arya Debating Club of Gujranwala, Punjab; the Kayastha Literary Association of Allahabad; Rai Bahadur Salig Ram, Guru of the Radha Swami sect; the educational authorities of Ajmere; Diwan Bhagat Bihari Lal of Jeypur; and the Sat Sabha of

²³ Narayan Prasad Asthana, 'Introduction,' *Gyan Gutaka*, p. iv. *Lahore Tribune*, 17 March 1897.

²⁴ *Lahore Tribune*, 17 March 1897. *Hindustan Review*, XIX, March 1909, p. 308. *Report of the Thirteenth National Social Conference, 1899*. Poona, 1900, Appendix C, pp. 29-30.

²⁵ *Sat Dharm Parcharak*, 30 June 1899, in *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1899*, p. 380.

²⁶ *Lahore Tribune*, 19 September 1899.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1900.

²⁸ *Report of the Thirteenth National Social Conference, 1899*, p. 42.

Baleli, Baluchistan.²⁹ He also authored a series of pamphlets known as the Kayastha Social Reform series and issued by the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Hind, the executive body of the Kayastha Conference.³⁰

Maintaining his connection with the Kayastha movement after his retirement from full-time work on its behalf in 1890, Swami Shivagan Chand frequently appeared at the Conference sessions, at Kayastha youth clubs, and at the functions of the Kayastha Pathshala. He was closely associated with the Education Committee of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Hind, on whose behalf he undertook fund-raising tours.³¹ The Swami's commitment was clearly to modern education rather than to the 'old doctrines of spirituality.'

[A]t the present day, the so-called propagators of religion, such as Sadhus and Brahmans [among the Hindus] or Mullas and Maulvis [among the Mohammadans] have... little or no acquaintance with technical arts, nor do they endeavour to learn them. Hence their inability to influence others or to do any tangible good to them.... These fellows never cease talking and discussing the unessential and unintelligible old doctrines of spirituality. It behoves us to pause and consider how useful would it be for the country if all these men were properly educated.³²

Swami Shivagan was not without his detractors. Together with Lakshmi Narayan—an Arya Samajist barrister of Lahore and secretary of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Hind, in the early 1890s—he was the subject of a series of attacks in the short-lived (1891-95) *Kayastha Mitra* of Lahore. This faction fight within the Kayastha movement was apparently related to the faction fight within the Arya Samaj itself—and provides occasion for another example of the tendency of modern scholars to endow the Kayastha movement (and other caste associations) with qualities of unanimity and cohesion, qualities which were in fact more conspicuous by their absence.³³

²⁹ *Divine Wisdom*, pp. iv, 2-4. *Hindustan Review*, XIX, March 1909, p. 308.

³⁰ *Divine Wisdom*, p. 2.

³¹ In reporting a meeting of the Education Committee held in December 1899, Sohan Lal wrote: 'Several gentlemen delivered speeches, among whom the names of B. Baldeo Prasad, pleader, Bareilly, and Swami Shiva Gun Chand Acharya, deserve special mention.' (*Kayastha Samachar*, I, February 1900, p. 130.) Baldeo Prasad was a prominent Arya Samajist. See also: *ibid.*, IV, August 1901, pp. 180-83. *Hindustan Review*, XII, December 1905, p. 539; XVII, May-June 1908, p. 526.

³² Swami Shivagan Chand, quoted in *Hindustan Review*, XII, February 1906, p. 184.

³³ For a previously noted example of this tendency see Lucy Carroll, 'The Kayastha Samachar,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, September 1973, pp. 280-92; and Lucy Carroll, 'Caste, Social Change, and the Social Scientist: A Note on the A-Historical Approach to Indian Social History,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, forthcoming.

In early 1893 it was announced that Lakshmi Narayan would accompany the Maharaja of Kapurthala on the latter's world tour, the itinerary of which included a visit to the Chicago exhibition. In March a meeting of the local Kayastha sabha at Moradabad passed a resolution declaring Lakshmi Narayan 'competent by virtue of his office [i.e., secretary of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Hind.] to represent the whole Kayastha community and especially the Kayasthas of Moradabad at the Chicago World's Fair.'³⁴ December the same year, in his report to the National Social Conference on social reform activity within his circle, the non-Kayastha Brij Nath remarked that the Kayastha 'community' had 'deputed Pandit Lakshmi Narayan to represent them at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago.'³⁵ A recent scholar, speaking of the Kayastha Conference and drawing upon Brij Nath's report, asserts that 'the [Kayastha] caste found itself strong enough to send a pandit to represent it at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893.'³⁶ No Kayastha funds—either local or Conference—were involved in Lakshmi Narayan's trip; he was not delegated by the Conference or by its executive body, the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Hind. A local Kayastha sabha in Moradabad had merely resolved that they considered him 'competent' to represent the Kayasthas, 'especially the Kayasthas of Moradabad,' on a trip upon which he was independently preparing to embark.

Far from constituting an act by the Kayastha 'community' demonstrating the strength of the Kayastha caste, the resolution passed by the Moradabad sabha was a move in the factional battles then raging among the Kayasthas. It had been Baldeo Sahay—an Arya Samajist member of the Moradabad Kayastha sabha—who had earlier threatened the *Mitra* with libel proceedings for its attacks on Swami Shivagan Chand and Lakshmi Narayan.³⁷ The attacks, however, had continued and the *Mitra* had been censored by the Kayastha Conference in December 1892,³⁸ shortly before Lakshmi Narayan's forthcoming trip abroad was announced and the Moradabad sabha passed its resolution deputizing him as their representative. Baldeo Sahay, who had threatened the *Mitra* with libel charges in 1891, was secretary of the reception committee for the 1895 Kayastha Conference held at Moradabad, of which Lakshmi Narayan was president and at which Swami Shivagan Chand

³⁴ *Lahore Tribune*, 1 April 1893.

³⁵ *Report of the Seventh National Social Conference, 1893*. Poona, 1894, Appendix B, p. 57. Neither by caste nor education was Lakshmi Narayan entitled to the title of 'Pandit'; this was simply a mistake on the part of Brij Nath. Somehow Lakshmi Narayan managed to pick up an LL.D. during his brief visit to the United States and thereafter used the title of 'Dr' (*Lahore Tribune*, 1 November 1893.)

³⁶ Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 282.

³⁷ *Lahore Tribune*, 26 September 1891.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 January 1893.

delivered the opening address.³⁹

The Swami's following was impressive. His appearances at the Kayastha Conference sessions were hailed with cheers and young Activists like Narayan Prasad Asthana, who wrote the 'Preface' to one of Swami Shivagan's books in 1898,⁴⁰ regarded him with reverence and affection, appreciating his emphasis both on modernity in education and rationalism in religion. Indeed, as the *Kayastha Mitra* scornfully remarked, among his followers 'Sadhu Shugan Chand is compared with Swami Dayanand Saraswati.'⁴¹

The Swami's publicity in the non-Kayastha press (with the exception of a section of the Arya Samaj press⁴²) was quite favourable—and frequently identified him with the Kayastha movement. The *Lahore Tribune* in 1900 wrote:

Among the religious and social movements going on in the Punjab that of the Shanti Ashram is certainly not the least important. Its leader... is the well-known Swami Shivgun Chand who has done yeoman's service in connection with the Kayastha Reform Association [i.e., the Kayastha Conference].⁴³

And the *Advocate* of Lucknow eulogized him ten years later in the following terms:

It is the fashion in these days to decry wholesale the class of Sadhus and Sanyasis. While not denying that a good many of them lead the life of drones which brings no honour to the holy robe they wear, there are at least some among them who are the very jewel of their class [...] whom to know is itself a liberal education.⁴⁴

The *Advocate* was in this notice reviewing a Nagri edition of Swami Shivagan's book, *Sadharan Dharma*, which the *Advocate* recommended as suitable for adoption as a religious textbook in the schools. 'It traverses all subjects which touch on the physical and moral well-being of man and is thoroughly

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 January 1896.

⁴⁰ *Gyan Gutaka*, pp. i-iv. Narayan Prasad Asthana also addressed a Dharm Mahotsav meeting in early 1904 on the subject of 'Caste Conferences—Their Advantages and Disadvantages.' The speech is reproduced in *Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar*, IX, February 1904, pp. 154-59.

⁴¹ *Kayastha Mitra* (Lahore), 15 August 1891, Supplement, p. 6.

⁴² See, for example, *Sat Dharm Parcharak* (Jullundur), 30 June 1899, in *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1899*, p. 380; 1 February 1901, 13 December 1901, in *ibid.*, 1901, pp. 119, 794-95.

⁴³ *Lahore Tribune*, 5 July 1900.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *Hindustan Review*, XXI, March-April 1910, p. 360.

impartial and undenominational in its teachings.⁴⁵ The book had been originally published in 1896.

Swami Shivagan had been largely responsible for the organizational development of the Kayastha Conference of the nineteenth century. He was credited with founding more than three hundred Kayastha sabhas during the three years (1887-90) that he worked as a full-time organizer on behalf of the Conference,⁴⁶ and Narayan Prasad Asthana testified in 1898 that 'what we see of the Kayastha reform movement in these days is mainly the result of Swamiji's extensive tours.'⁴⁷ At the same time, the personal network, contacts, and reputation that Swami Shivagan Chand acquired through his missions on behalf of the Kayastha Conference and the Arya Samaj served to launch him on his career as a professional sadhu [and (non-denominational) moral preceptor.

* * *

The Kayastha movement in all its diverse aspects provides innumerable examples of entrepreneurship and opportunism. Kali Prasad, the founder of the Kayastha Pathshala, Allahabad, was a farsighted educational entrepreneur of his day. As the various organizational and philanthropic activities associated with the Kayastha movement got underway in the years immediately following Kali Prasad's death, there were opportunities for talented and ambitious individuals to carve out a bit of the action for themselves. The rewards were varied—personal and political reputation, power, and influence; power bases and constituencies for various goals and objectives. This is not to say that these organizers, publicists, and activists had no regard for the philanthropic and idealistic side⁴⁸ of the movement, it is only to suggest that truly altruistic action is everywhere rare and that the happy combination of personal and professional advancement and the service of a worthwhile cause is everywhere attractive.

The parallel between Sachchidananda Sinha's use of the opportunities afforded him when he accepted the editorship of the journal of the Kayastha

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Divine Wisdom*, p. 2. Although the figure three hundred is frequently cited in reference to the number of local Kayastha sabhas in sources dating from the 1890s, and although Swami Shivagan Chand may have visited and tried to organize sabhas in as many places, a good proportion of these sabhas appear to have been very short-lived.

⁴⁷ 'Introduction,' *Gyan Gutaka*, p. iii.

⁴⁸ Or more accurately, *sides*, for there was a plurality of interests, each considered by its respective supporters as the ideal to be pursued, the appropriate end toward which communal philanthropy should be devoted. The controversy between the Educationists and the Social Reformers exemplifies such a conflict.

Pathshala Trust, the *Kayastha Samachar*,⁴⁹ and Swami Shivagan Chand's use of the resources and opportunities that came to him as a Kayastha Conference organizer is obvious. Both the Anglicized barrister and the eclectic sadhu exploited communal organizational resources to project themselves into professional situations in which their communal identity was not particularly important. Similarly, Kamta Prasad was another would-be leader looking for a following when he set about to centralize the Kayastha temperance societies under his leadership.⁵⁰ None of these individuals, however, relied exclusively upon the resources of the communal institutions with which they were associated: what the Indian National Congress was to Sachchidananda Sinha, the Arya Samaj was to Swami Shivagan Chand, and the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association was to Kamta Prasad.

As the activities of these 'caste' activists demonstrate, 'caste' institutions cannot be viewed apart from the social and political environment within which they functioned. Caste associations and institutions were intimately related to this environment because the people who were involved in organizations like the Kayastha Conference were the very people who were caught up in and aware of the social and political ferment of their time. The Kayastha Conference drew upon the educated Kayasthas of the towns and cities, not upon the more isolated and unlettered village Kayasthas. It drew upon those groups which were aware of and sensitive to the changing conditions in which they lived and concerned about the issues which the Conference addressed—i.e., with the issues of education, employment, and economic security; with the necessities and the opportunities for change 'under the altered conditions introduced into the country by the constitutional Government of England.'⁵¹ It drew in fact upon the same recruitment reservoir upon which movements like the Indian National Congress and the Arya Samaj drew; not surprisingly, there was a high degree of overlapping membership.

The Kayastha Conference was further integrated into its historical environment by the disagreements within the Kayastha movement over its relationship to the various other social and political movements around it. The prominence within the Kayastha movement of individuals of heterodox (i.e., Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Radha Swami) religious views was a divisive factor and the Conference propagandists were forced to deny that the Conference was involved in any way with the religious movements of the day. The Kayastha Conference was not to be 'confounded' with any of 'the several religious movements which are at present being propagated under the names

⁴⁹ Lucy Carroll, 'The Kayastha Samachar,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, September 1973, pp. 280-92.

⁵⁰ Lucy Carroll, 'Origins of the Kayastha Temperance Movement,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*.

⁵¹ *A Short Account*, p. ii.

of the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, or the Bharat Dharma Mandal respectively. With none of these bodies has the Kayastha Conference any direct or indirect connection.⁵² Likewise, the issue of the Indian National Congress was a source of factional discord within the Kayastha movement. The question of the identification of Kayastha institutions with Congress politics came to a head when Sachchidananda Sinha took over the editorship of the *Kayastha Samachar*, the publication of the Trustees of the Kayastha Pathshala Trust.⁵³

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵³ Lucy Carroll, 'The Kayastha Samachar,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, September 1973, pp. 280-92.

BOOK REVIEWS

AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI, *Private Investment in India, 1900-1939*, Cambridge University Press, South Asian Studies no. 10, 1972, Pp. xii+482, Tables, Bibliography, £6.40.

Professor Bagchi's book is a major contribution to modern Indian economic history. The author's aim is to examine the pattern of private investment in India, mainly in the industrial sector, and offer some explanation of its determinants. While he has not looked at any unpublished government records or private papers he has done a thorough examination of published sources (both governmental and non-governmental) and has taken great care in providing a statistical framework for examining his hypotheses.

A general theoretical framework at the beginning of the book examines the circumstances in which the level of investment may go up in an industry catering to the domestic market under conditions of protective tariff, and considers under what conditions protective tariffs would make an industry dynamically efficient. The theoretical framework is rounded off by considering various supply-oriented hypotheses which seek to explain the slow rate of economic growth in India by one or more of the following factors: scarcity of capital, shortage of entrepreneurial talent, immobility of labour, lack of responsiveness of the peasantry to market opportunities, and low level of savings reflecting a lack of the propensity to save. Professor Bagchi considers most of these supply-oriented hypotheses to be oversimplified and hardly based on careful empirical research. His own investigations in the remainder of the book, which deal with the government policy, the agrarian situation, the supply of capital, entrepreneurship and labour, and, more specifically, the case-histories of seven major industries in twentieth-century India (cotton, jute, iron and steel, engineering, cement, sugar, and paper) lead him to conclude that factors on the demand side were much more important in explaining the slow growth of modern industry.

Underlying most of the situations which kept the level of demand for consumer goods and capital goods low was British imperial policy. '... During the period from roughly 1880 to 1914, India was practically the only sizeable economy which was forced to pursue a policy of free trade and non-intervention in industry' (p. 25). The consequences of this policy for the Indian cotton textile industry are well known. What Professor Bagchi has shown in addition is that the role of British businessmen and bankers in India, even when apparently antagonistic to their metropolitan competitors, was not

really beneficial to economic growth in India. In the first place, investment by British businessmen in India was mostly out of incomes and profits made inside the country earlier, so that while on the one hand, India did not benefit from the flow of capital which had helped Australia and North America to industrialize in the late nineteenth century, on the other hand, she suffered a net loss when ultimately the British in India repatriated their profits home. Secondly, official patronage and commercial intelligence was readily available to these people, which was not the case with Indian entrepreneurs. The fact that capital was seldom scarce to float British enterprises in India, sometimes with the help of European-controlled presidency banks (p. 173), disproves the general hypothesis about a chronic shortage of capital. Thirdly, there was a big racial barrier between British businessmen and officials in India and the Indian entrepreneur, as a result of which there was no diffusion of the developments in the British sector to the Indian. The racial barrier also retarded the recruitment of Indians to the technical services and thereby the growth of a skilled supervisory staff. Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter VI, which deal with these racial factors, are a major contribution to knowledge, which the present reviewer at any rate has never come across in any academic study earlier.

The author has rightly put the phenomenon of British colonialism in India back on the map in any discussion of modern Indian economic history. As a general proposition, especially for the period before 1914, the following statement is unexceptionable: 'The top priority was attached to the maintenance of stability in the imperial system: the interests of individual industries in Great Britain or of British industrialists in India were subordinated to that overriding objective.' (p. 421). This is not quite true for the period after the First World War, on the author's own evidence. After the First World War the Government of India was prepared to make concessions to Indian businessmen (p. 198), India began to provide more of her requirements of cotton, textiles, iron and steel, paper and cement (p. 192), and the policy of discriminatory protection for the Tata Steel Company helped it not only to survive and grow but also reduce production costs (p. 319). The overall effects of the Ottawa agreements were beneficial to India (pp. 87-91), and in the thirties there was 'a greater degree of bilateral equilibrium in current trade between India and the U.K.' (p. 439). The colour bar in industrial policymaking was mitigated by the participation of Indian entrepreneurs in the government of the country (p. 440), and the coming of protection helped Indian entrepreneurs in new industries like cement, paper, and sugar (p. 216).

One of the weaknesses of the book—it may be a defect of presentation or chapterization—is that these facts are not consistently presented within an overall theory of the precise nature of British imperial economic policy on a global scale in the inter-war years. Taken by themselves the facts cited

above could be used to argue that imperialism was in retreat, and in the short run the Government of India and its bureaucracy were much more concerned to placate the Indian bourgeoisie as long as the bureaucracy's own monetary privileges were safeguarded by keeping the rupee-sterling ratio fixed. [On the monetary policy of the Government of India, incidentally, Professor Bagchi's analysis (pp. 65-67) is fully borne out by the present reviewer's researches into the cabinet papers for the years 1929-31.] Professor Bagchi does not appear to subscribe to this 'imperialism in retreat' hypothesis and somewhat cryptically suggests (pp. 198-9 and fn 132 on p. 199) that the Indian entrepreneur was ambivalent in his attitude towards foreign capital; he preferred to borrow technological knowledge from abroad and collaborate with foreign capitalists—a tendency that became more marked after independence. If this is so, it needed to be developed more fully, and required archival research into the pattern of lobbying by economic pressure groups. The present reviewer has shown elsewhere that from 1930 onwards the Federation of British Industries was prepared to have a reallocation of industrial production within the British empire, even if it hurt some of the old British staple exports like cotton textiles, and that Sir Basil Blackett, erstwhile Finance member of the Government of India, was associated with this. The penetration of India by foreign firms like I.C.I., which Professor Bagchi just touches on in the penultimate page of his text, could then be understood in terms of a new theory of imperial-colonial relationship in the thirties. The matter is of some importance, because with it is linked the whole question of the dual role of the Indian bourgeoisie and Professor Bipan Chandra's recent article criticizing the older theories which minimize the nationalist commitment of that class.

None of these criticisms detract from the fact that Professor Bagchi's book is and will remain indispensable to any serious student of modern Indian history for years to come.

PARTHA SARATHI GUPTA

RICHARD G. FOX, *Win, Clan, Raja and Rule! State-Hinterland Relations in Pre-industrial India*, University of California Press, 1971, Rs 40, Pp. 187.

The distinctive feature of this book is the application of anthropological concepts to historical materials for an understanding of the political processes in preindustrial India. The specific problem to which the author addresses himself relates to the interrelationship between the localized segments of Rajput clans and state level administrative and revenue institutions. The sources on which the analysis is based are the revenue and the ethnographic reports of the nineteenth century by British civil servants. His venture into the past, he hopes, will help throw light on various anthropological issues

regarding the nature of social processes in complex societies.

As both anthropologists and historians have emphasized recently, the political system in the mediaeval period was extremely fluid. Between the local level political activity and the state level, there were many levels of political organization resulting in a dispersal of coercive powers and civil jurisdiction. All this is well known. What Fox's analysis adds to all these well-known points is a detailed examination of the different forms of lineage organization among the Rajputs. He traces the growth and development of specific lineages, not only to demographic and ecological factors but also to the ability of central authorities to circumvent the authority vested in local level lineage elites. Taking his cue from the research on the developmental cycle of domestic groups, Fox argues that the different kinds of lineages did not constitute discrete types. Rather, they constituted different phases in a chronological sequence and a single lineage could go through all the different phases. I find his use of the concept of cycle somewhat misleading, for it is quite clear that the demographic forces such as increase in population as well as the ecological forces such as pressure on land were not reversible. There seems to be a confusion between segmentation and cyclical replacement in the analytical categories of the author. Nevertheless, the point that the different forms of land tenure such as the *pattidari* and *bhaicharya* systems were not fixed, but there was a movement from one to another, deserves serious attention. As in many other cases, the administrative systematization attempted by the British froze a dynamic system at one point of time. Taking a dynamic approach to the lineage organization of the Rajputs should prove very fruitful in our understanding of the relationship between kinship and politics in mediaeval India.

In the final two chapters Fox raises some interesting questions on the nature of Rajput feudalism. He asks whether it is possible to view Rajput feudalism as a variant of European feudalism. Naturally, a good deal of attention is paid to the role of kinship, and especially of corporate kin groups in the development of feudalism. Perhaps, Fox takes too literally the differences in the role of corporate kin groups in stateless societies and in societies with states. These differences were exaggerated by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes for analytical convenience, but they certainly realized that these differences were formulated at the level of models. A careful reading of Fortes' work shows that when confronted with the analysis of a particular society in its specificity, he was acutely sensitive to the role of unilineal kinship groups in societies with centralized states. As for Rajput feudalism, one common problem with most writers is that they find it difficult to believe that Indians can distinguish between empirical association and role relations. On the other hand, many Rajput proverbs show that even when the noble and the serf were related, they interacted as kinsmen in the domain of kinship

and as master and serf in the politico-economic domain. The concept of domain, now commonly used to distinguish between the field of domestic relation and the field of politico-jural relations in societies where kinship organizes both, may be used with suitable modifications for an understanding of Rajput feudalism.

What Fox finds distinctive in the Rajput case is the extensive use of hypergamous marriage links for binding disparate groups. However, it is precisely in analyzing the system of marriage among the Rajputs that he is at his weakest. This is because of his exclusive reliance on the records of British civil servants. An effort to supplement these with vernacular records available at district and Taluka levels would have gone a long way in giving more substance to his claim about the uniqueness of the links between kinship and politics in the Rajput system.

VEENA DAS

University of Delhi

ECKEHARD KULKE, *The Parsees in India. A Minority as Agent of Social Change*. Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, Delhi, 1975, Pp. 300.

This full-length study of the Parsees is organized around a major theme: the ability of a marginal community to act as an agent of social change in the larger society. The book describes the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the Parsees, changes in these characteristics since the beginning of the British colonial rule in India, the nature of their political participation, and the relationship between social change within the community and that within India generally. The history of the Parsees and the lives of some of the critical figures in this history have also been touched upon.

Conforming to the popular image of Teutonic scholarship, Kulke begins at the beginning and ends at the end. Though avowedly structured in terms of a single theme, the book leaves hardly any area of Parsee lifestyle untouched and has in effect become a comprehensive handbook on the community. As a result, it has turned out to be an encyclopedic volume which social researchers will use for years. It will be now next to impossible to write anything on the Parsees without referring to it.

The author's style is heavy ('While a small group of Parsees still remained active in the Congress, without ever again, however, being able to play an influential all-India role, and some Parsees even joined extremist circles, the gross persevered in a passive posture, peddling in their attitudes between the Westernized secular Liberal Party and Parsee communalist groups.' p. 190), but his thesis is simple. When an intruding colonial power

begins to catalyze large-scale social changes within a historical society, the groups marginal to the society are likely to serve as an interface between the external power and the core sectors of the society.

The Parsees, who had come to India about 1000 years earlier, were well integrated within the Indian society at the time of British conquest. They had maintained intact their faith and rituals but, being nonproselytizing, had never suffered at the hands of the majority community. In other respects too, their integration within the larger society was almost complete. One indicator was language. The Parsees no longer spoke any Persian; long back, they had switched to Gujarati, the language of the province in which they had settled and a language which was then as now the language of commerce in Western India. However, the cultural and ethnic identity of the community was well-defined and was maintained through strict rules of endogamy. And, of course, the psychological feelings of marginality never waived. Thus, when the British came, the group attached itself to the colonial power, became highly educated and Westernized, and took to the modern sector like fish to congenial water. In fact, certain types of business and certain professions became their preserves. As a result, however, the community became excessively dependent on the colonial structure and allowed itself to be manoeuvred into a position of total subservience and unconditional support to the *raj*. The Parsees produced, it is true, some gifted nationalist leaders who led the country during the earlier phases of the freedom movement. But these men had no legitimacy within their own community and were political isolates whose dissent sought and found validation outside. It is only after independence that the Parsees, forced to reconcile themselves to the new authority system in India, are seeking a new identity with the framework of a secular, participant society. This phase of adaptation has not ended and the signs are that soon the Parsees will be as successful under the new dispensation as they were in their heyday under the *raj*.

One only hopes that it is not too late. The long history of social and psychological marginality has extracted a heavy toll. The community has one of the highest rates of mental illness, including suicides. Their performance in spectacular crimes has matched their institution-building, scientific and charitable works. Low fertility, combined with late marriages, has cut down the Parsee growth rate to below zero. There is a decrease in annual rate of marriages and a large number of divorces. Emigration is high. Inter-community marriages have meant loss of population because the Parsees continue to disown most of these marriages. Kulke's humourless compendium of facts will, one hopes, apart from its scholarly merits, increase the awareness of the larger Indian society that it is dealing here with a vanishing tribe which might in a few decades become extinct. If it in the process also increases the self-awareness of the Parsees and heightens their sense of survival, a

very significant 'incidental learning,' as the psychologists call it, will have resulted from the book. What more can Kulke want?

ASHISH NANDY

LALITA PANIGRAHI, *British Social Policy and Female Infanticide in India*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1972, Pp. 204, Rs 30.

Mrs Panigrahi's book is a detailed account of the measures adopted by the British for the suppression of female infanticide in India during the nineteenth century. She deals with a practice that was widely prevalent among the Rajputs and a few other castes such as the Khattris, Jats, Ahirs, and Lewa Kanbis in the North-Western Provinces (later the United Provinces), Punjab, Rajasthan, the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh), and Gujarat (then part of Bombay Presidency).

The author tries to explain why female infanticide was extensively practised by Rajputs and some other castes, and describes the discovery of female infanticide by the British in various parts of northern and western India during the nineteenth century. The practice was first discovered by the British in 1789 in the Benares division, then part of the North-Western Provinces. Subsequently, they found it to be prevalent extensively in other parts of northern and western India.

The British driven by a strong sense of moral abhorrence tried to suppress female infanticide. Their efforts to eliminate it extended practically throughout the nineteenth century and included a law entitled 'An Act for the Prevention of the Murder of Female Infants' passed in 1870. Mrs Panigrahi has shown that mainly two types of measures were taken by the British against female infanticide: (i) Coercive measures which included registration of births and deaths of newly born infants, police supervision of families and castes suspected of practising female infanticide; and (ii) measures aimed at persuading these people to voluntarily renounce it. Attempts were made to persuade them to reduce wedding expenses, especially payment of heavy dowries for contracting hypergamous marriage alliances, since female infanticide was related to hypergamy.

The author has also dealt with the various schools of thought and reform movements which influenced the British administrators who came to India. Thus quite a few of those who were sent by the British East India Company to hold positions of responsibility in India were evangelists or were influenced by utilitarian ideas.

Though the book covers comprehensively the various measures taken by the British to suppress female infanticide it is not clear how a practice that

was so widely prevalent was related to other social institutions. At places Mrs Panigrahi equates female infanticide with superstitious practices, but female infanticide must be seen in an institutional framework and as part of the social system.

The author relies heavily on British sources. But one would also like to know what the people themselves have to say about female infanticide. The practice was prevalent even at the turn of the nineteenth century and there must still be some old people among the castes who practised female infanticide who may have some interesting things to say on the subject. As is well known the neglect of female infants among some castes is not uncommon even today.

Mrs Panigrahi calls the measures adopted by the British to suppress female infanticide in different administrative regions of northern and western India 'systems' but was there the internal consistency and an interdependence of parts which would make it meaningful to refer to 'The Punjab System,' 'The North-Western Provinces System,' and so on.

VISHWA NATH

University of Delhi

SARTAJ A. ABIDI and SURESH K. SHARMA (eds), *Fifty Years of Indian Historical Writing*, Gitanjali Prakashan, New Delhi.

Fifty Years of Indian Historical Writing is an index to articles published in the *Journal of Indian History* from 1921 to 1972. These issues contain articles by eminent Indian historians like Nilkanta Shastri, Nandlal Chatterjee, H.K. Sherwani, P.C. Majumdar, K.K. Datta, R.S. Sharma, H.D. Sankalia, and many others. Among the foreign contributors are T.G.P. Spear, P.E. Roberts, H.G. Rawlison, A. Moreland, and Holden Furber.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part lists articles on the three eras of Indian history—ancient, modern, and medieval. Each is again subdivided by suitable headings. The modern is subdivided into European settlements, Later Mughals, Marathas, Mutiny, National Movement, etc. Articles on regional history as also those on special aspects such as biography, economic history, education, social and religious history are listed separately. The second part follows the author approach, and lists all the articles by the same author together.

This book which is the result of two years of painstaking effort of two young librarians should prove useful to scholars working on Indian history.

University of Delhi

APARNA BASU

OBITUARY

DANIEL THORNER (1915-1974)

We mourn the death of Daniel Thorner, who was one of the editors of this journal.

Daniel Thorner was born in New York in 1915 and educated at the City College of New York and Columbia University where he completed his doctorate on British Railway and Steam Shipping Enterprise in India, 1825-1849, later published as *Investment in Empire*. He first came to India on the US Lend-Lease Mission to India from 1944 to 1946. Thorner returned to academic life at the University of Pennsylvania but McCarthy terminated his American career and he was never to return to work in his homeland. Fortunately for us, Thorner spent 1952 to 1960 in India working with his wife Alice on a great range of problems, but with two main foci: agrarian problems and the occupational structure. He wrote several papers during this period on land reforms, co-operatives, and the evaluation of bhoodan, and the important paper "The Working Force in India, 1881-1951". With Alice Thorner, he worked on the actual improvement of the Census of 1961. Many of his articles, particularly those collected in *Land and Labour in India*, have entered the mainstream of Indian economic history: generations of students will debate Thorner's views on de-industrialisation and all of them quote his work on the railways, especially "Great Britain and the Development of India's Railways" (*Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XI, 1951).

Thorner became Research Professor at the famous VI Section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and remained there till his death. He continued to visit India frequently and to write on it, but he was also turning to broader fields. His interests in India's agrarian problems led to considering "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production" (*Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 9); and to peasant economies in general. His prescience in introducing to English readers the work of Chayanov is becoming increasingly apparent, not least in the new work being done on India. His paper "Peasants as a Category in History" has been used by historians of medieval England, amongst others. Thorner travelled more about the Indian countryside than any Indian historian and he showed more sympathy with Indian peasants than any foreign historians do; these qualities are reflected in his work which is scholarly without being pedantic and critical but understanding.

The economic historian, important though he was, was only a small part of Thorner's personality. As a colleague, as a teacher, and as a friend he was unmatched in his generosity. His home, whether in Bombay or in Paris,

was always open to his friends who came from every part of the subcontinent and almost from every walk of life; his knowledge was at the service of anyone who wanted to work in his field. There was nothing he would not do for his friends, from making innumerable trunk calls to ensure that an Indian historian was enabled to attend a conference abroad, to visiting Bangladesh in 1971 in order literally to save the lives of many scholars there. The history and the historians of the subcontinent stand deeply in Thorner's debt.

DHARMA KUMAR

Xm 2, N25

N25-12-3



PAST AND PRESENT

a journal of historical studies

Past and Present began publication in 1952. It now appears in February, May, August and November. It aims to publish a wide variety of scholarly and original historical articles primarily concerned with social, economic and cultural changes, and their causes and consequences. The journal is designed to reach an audience that includes both specialists and non-specialists; to communicate the results of historical research in readable and lively form; to provide a forum for debate in which historians and scholars in allied subjects take part and to encourage the examination of particular problems and periods for the light they throw on wider issues of historical change.

Past and Present has a very well-established reputation. The French journal *Annales* has referred to it as "la plus grande revue d'histoire du monde anglophone".

Though the majority of articles in the Journal are concerned with European history, *Past and Present* is world-wide in its coverage and without restriction on period. It has thus published many important studies on non-European history. For instance, articles on the subcontinent of India have included:

- E. R. Leach*, "Hydraulic Society in Ceylon" (no. 15, Apr. 1959)
- R. A. L. H. Gunawardana*, "Irrigation and Hydraulic Society in Early Medieval Ceylon" (no. 53, Nov. 1971)
- Romila Thapar*, "Asoka and Buddhism" (no. 18, Nov. 1960)
- Eric Stokes*, "Traditional Resistance Movements and Afro-Asian Nationalism: The Context of the 1857 Mutiny Rebellion in India" (no. 48, Aug. 1970)
- Eric Stokes*, "The First Century of British Colonial Rule in India: Social Revolution or Social Stagnation?" (no. 58, Feb. 1973)
- A. P. Kamangara*, "Indian Millowners and Indian Nationalism before 1914" (no. 40, July 1968)

For free Classified Table of Contents covering nos. 1-65 (1952-1974) and for details of Subscription Rates, the price of Back Numbers, etc., write to:

The Business Manager, *Past and Present*,
P.O. Box. 28, Oxford OX2 7BN, England.

PAST AND PRESENT invites contributions on the history of India or any other part of Asia. These should be sent (two copies) to:

The Editor, *Past and Present*, Corpus Christi College, Oxford OX1 4JF, England.

THE INDIAN HISTORICAL REVIEW

Volume II Number 1

It is a biannual journal of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, containing articles which, as far as possible, deal with one major theme and discuss its various aspects.

This issue contains:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| R.S. SHARMA | Class Formation and its Material Basis
in the Upper Gangetic Basin
(c. 1000-500 B.C.) |
| VIVEKANAND JHA | Stages in the History of the
Untouchables |
| R.N. NANDI | Origin of the Virasaiva Movement |
| K.K. TRIVEDI | Changes in Caste-Composition of the
Zamindar Class in Western Uttar
Pradesh, 1595-c. 1900 |
| HITESRANJAN SANYAL | Social Mobility in Bengal: Its Sources
and Constraints. |
| RAJAT K. RAY | Differential Modernization in the Colo-
nial Society: Bengal under the
Lieutenant-Governors |
| BINAY BHUSHAN
CHAUDHURY | The Process of Depeasantization in Bengal
and Bihar, 1885-1947 |

Reviews of Books

Short Notices

Subscription Rates

Institutions

Annual: Rs 50 \$14 £5
Single Issue: Rs 30 \$7.50 £2.75

Individuals

Annual: Rs. 30 \$7.50 £2.75
Single Issue: Rs. 15 \$4 £1.50

Subscription and trade enquiries to

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Vol. 14, No. 3

July-September 1975

This is the quarterly journal of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, containing articles in the fields of International Politics, Economics, Law, Diplomacy, and Disarmament, as well as on political, economic, and social developments in Asia and other areas.

This issue contains:

INDIA'S NUCLEAR EXPLOSION: A STUDY IN PERSPECTIVES

K. P. Misra and J. S. Gandhi

STUDY OF THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM:

A STUDY OF SINO-UAR RELATIONS, 1956-59

G. P. Deshpande

PARIS TALKS ON VIETNAM AND AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

Jaya Krishna Baral

THE ADVANTAGES OF A MULTIPOLAR INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM:

AN ANALYSIS OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

John F. Copper

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND RELATIONS,
JULY-DECEMBER 1974

Satish Kumar

Bibliography

INDIA AND WORLD AFFAIRS: AN ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1973

S. Shyamala and Madhu Bala

Book Reviews

Subscription Rates

Annual: Rs 80 £8 \$25
Single Issue: Rs 25 £2.50 \$7.50

Subscription and trade enquiries to

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

THE INDIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY REVIEW

Volume XII Number 4

October-December 1975

It is a quarterly journal, edited by a committee representing three disciplines: history, economics, and sociology. To keep track of developments in Indian social and economic history, it publishes results of the latest research and emphasizes a multi-disciplinary approach.

This issue contains:

B. R. TOMLINSON	India and the British Empire, 1880-1935
PATRICK A. ROCHE	Caste and the British Merchant Government in Madras, 1639-1749
JOHN HURD II	The Influence of British Policy on Industrial Development in the Princely States of India, 1890-1933
M. A. NAYEEM	Mughal Documents Relating to the <i>Peshkash</i> of the Zamindars of South India, 1694-1752
T. R. DE SOUZA, S. J.	Goa-based Portuguese Seaborne Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century

Book Reviews

Subscription Rates

Institutions: Rs 60 \$ 16 £6

Individuals: Rs 20 \$ 8 £3

Subscription and trade enquiries to

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT

LARRY COLLINS
DOMINIQUE LAPIERRE

Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre tell the story of an epochal period with the same combination of scrupulous research and vivid reporting as made so triumphant a success of *O Jerusalem!* and *Is Paris Burning?* Hundreds of interviews, including over thirty hours of tape-recorded conversation with India's last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, thousands of pages of archival material, much of it never before made public, three years of work and countless miles of travel underlie *Freedom at Midnight*. Theirs is an India of emaciated sadhus and prosperous cotton brokers, maharajas and beggars, of the Khyber Pass and the funeral pyres of Benares, the foetid slums of Calcutta and the mansions of Bombay's Malabar Hill. It is the India of Jawaharlal Nehru, heart-broken by the tragedy of his country's division; of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a Moslem who drank, ate pork, and rarely entered a mosque, yet led forty-five million Moslems to nationhood, proclaiming "We shall have India divided or India destroyed"; of Louis Mountbatten, beseeched by the leaders of an Independent India to take back the powers he had just passed to their hands; of Gandhi the "half naked fakir" who stirred a subcontinent without raising his voice and humbled Britain by refusing nourishment; of his killers, describing here for the first time, in all its chilling detail, their awful deed.

Exciting and readable, important and impressive, *Freedom at Midnight* is worthy in every way of the great subject it describes.

PRESS COMMENTS

"There is indeed an epic tone never before encountered. This is popular history... but a history which more than anything else none has been able to produce until now... They had a marvelous story to tell and they got the very best out of it..."

John Kenneth Galbraith in
Le Nouvel Observateur

"The book is irreplaceable not only because it evokes an essential episode in the history of the twentieth century but also because it provides the elements of a vital dossier: that of the first phase of a revolution capable of modifying in a decisive manner the balance of the forces in the world."

Le Monde

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD

ARTHA VIJNANA

Quarterly Journal of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics,
Poona 4 (India)

Vol. 17 No. 3 CONTENTS September 1975

SELECTED RAILWAY STATISTICS FOR THE INDIAN
SUBCONTINENT (INDIA, PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH),
1853—1946-47

MORRIS DAVID MORRIS and CLYDE B. DUDLEY

TABLE

- I Total Miles of Railway Track Open at Year-End, 1853—1946-47
- II Capital Outlay at Year-End and Employment
- III Passengers Carried
- IV Goods Carried
- V Principal Commodities Carried

Subscription Rates (inclusive of postage) :

Annual: Rs. 25; \$7.50; 45s.

Single issue: Rs. 7.50; \$2; 15s.

Please address all correspondence to :

The Editor, Artha Vijnana, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics,
Poona 4 (INDIA)

MAIN CURRENTS IN INDIAN SOCIOLOGY

VOL. I: CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Some Sociological Perspectives

edited by
GIRI RAJ GUPTA

This is the first volume in the series, *Main Currents in Indian Sociology*. This series is a substantial contribution which brings together in a single source extensive discussion by distinguished scholars of significant issues of modern Indian social developments.

The volume defines the framework for sociological research on modern India. Theory and methodology are discussed extensively, and the prospects of educational and demographic change are considered. The diffusion of agricultural innovations and the place of higher education in development are among the topics discussed. In all, thirteen authors are represented in this work, and each article presents research findings based upon either field research or personal familiarity with the topic. Every article is, therefore, particularistic and deals with one topic in depth. Yet, as a collection of articles, they are interrelated.

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD

CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN SOCIOLOGY NEW SERIES

It is a biannual journal, sponsored by the Asian Research Centre, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. It provides a forum for the presentation of research material on Indian and South Asian societies and for the discussion of different approaches to their sociological study.

The July-December 1975 (Vol. IX, No. 2) Issue contains :

SYLVIA VATUK	Gifts and affines in north India
LOUIS DUMONT	Terminology and prestations revisited
T.N. MADAN	Structural implications of marriage in north India : wife-givers and wife-takers among the Pandits of Kashmir
R.S. KHARE	Embedded affinity and consanguineal ethos : two properties of the northern kinship system
JAMES TURNER	A formal semantic analysis of Hindi kinship terminology

For a sociology of India

Subscription Rates

Annual: Rs 40 \$10 £4
Single Issue: Rs 25 \$6 £2.5

Subscription and trade enquiries to

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

Contributions, books for review, and requests for back numbers (Vol. I, No. 1 and Vol. IX, No. 1 are not available) should be addressed to:

The Editor
The Indian Economic and Social History Review
Delhi School of Economics
University Enclave
Delhi 110007



VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
DELHI BOMBAY BANGALORE KANPUR