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THE MAN BEHIND THE PLOUGH

THE MAN BEHIND THE PLOUGH

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PREFACE

AGRICULTURE is the occupation of the bulk of the rural population of Bengal and on it depends the welfare of the province as a whole. An attempt has been made in this book to study the problems of land and agriculture in this province, to lay bare the economic facts of rural life to-day and to discuss some of the primary problems concerning the condition of the Bengal peasantry.

Nowhere throughout this book have I tried to support any preconceived views nor have I attempted to arrange facts in such a way as to be able to deduce from them any theory of my own. The book no doubt interprets facts, makes suggestions and draws conclusions at places, but facts have been left mostly to speak for themselves and to tell their own tale and the suggestions and conclusions must not be taken in any way as dogmatic utterances. Others may suggest different conclusions from the facts presented or may even present different sets of facts arranged in different ways and the author will have no quarrel with them. Possibly they may present another side of the picture and tell a different story from their own points of view. And so much has, for such a long time, been presented of the other side of the story, that no apology is needed to publish the story on behalf of the man behind the plough.

There may be some who may try to render the conclusions nugatory by calling in question the facts

on which my arguments are based. I shall leave them to their own facts and their own conclusions ; but even they may, at least, look at the facts presented in this book, mostly drawn from historical records, statistical reports and administrative resolutions of Government. Without denying the importance of other view-points, the book aims frankly at approaching the problem from the point of view of the peasant and his plough. But even the most hostile critic will, perhaps, concede even if he does not agree with the facts and conclusions as presented here, that they open up an unexplored avenue of approach to the consideration of agriculture and agricultural policy of this province.

The constitutional changes under the Government of India Act of 1935 have brought in a new outlook in the country. The balance of political forces is dominated to-day by the agricultural vote. It exercises a powerful and most decisive influence in the legislature of the province. There is, therefore, a real need to-day that agriculture and its problems should be examined carefully and critically in relation to the general economic condition of the country. The task of devising remedies to remove all obstacles to ordered progress and balanced development is one of great difficulty, but it is for the student of economics to lay bare the realities, to raise the issues without being drawn into the forum of controversy, and to pass judgment on the question of policy and programme for the province, but only after the most sober and well-considered review of facts and events and after fully assessing all the inevitable repercussions on the province as a whole. Caution is

nowhere more needed than in dealing with our social and economic troubles but let not things be thrown into worse confusion through deductions from wrong data.

Any study of the economy of rural life necessarily brings in the problem of land and particularly so in Bengal where, the State demand is fixed in perpetuity. Man's relation to the land, on and by which he lives, has been an eternal problem in the history of mankind. The fundamental fact which has given land a unique position, specially in the tropical countries where agriculture is the mainstay of the people, is that the sustenance of the man and the animal depends upon the growth and produce from land. It becomes consequently a matter of momentous national concern where the population has been increasing greatly and where man, by habit and the traditions of centuries, as much for reasons of national psychology, lives and has to live in his hearth and home. Where, from a lack of suitable industrial outlets and avenues of employment, there cannot be any great flow of population to industrial and urban areas, where limited factors of food supply have come into play and where the prosperity or otherwise of the population is largely determined by the fertility of the soil, land is a question of life and death for the very existence of the race and becomes the primary problem of human life.

With land, as an essential item in the economy of production, comes the importance of land system and land tenure. No land system and tenure can long survive if the producer from the land does not

get even bare subsistence from it and if there is no adequate return for human labour, leaving aside any resultant profit for the toiling worker. The landed, in such circumstances, gives up his land in despair and becomes landless. The patient peasantry, the country's pride, soon fades out of the picture ; agriculture falls into decay and chaos inevitably overtakes society and ere long breaks up the entire social structure. Where, due to sharp decline in agricultural prices without any corresponding adjustment in rent, interest, taxes and commodity prices, profits from land go even below the marginal limit, tenure and rent assume a special importance of their own.

I have not attempted to discuss the problem of land in a spirit of condemnation of landlordism. Landlordism, in any land system, is an admitted asset in the economy of social life, always provided the landlord possesses a sense of his responsiblility to the land and its tenants. It is then a power for immense good but it becomes an admitted evil if the landlord does not adjust himself to the needs of the times which all must regard as the only valid justification for landlordism. Psychological changes are imperceptibly going on around us every day. If things which have grown to be admitted evils are not mended, they will find themselves ended and nothing can keep them intact in the evolutionary progress of man. As Darling has so well put it: "The past has been so kind to the landlord that he cannot believe that the future may be harsh."* Let it not be forgotten that gone are the days of mere blind obedience

* Darling—Rusticus Loquitur, p. 335.

to social and economic forces, simply because they exist or have been allowed to exist for decades.

It may possibly appear that the landlord, in some places, has been painted in dark colours, but there the aim has been not to deal with any person or persons as such but as personifications of certain categories, embodiments of a system of class interest in their relation to the man behind the plough. No individual landlord is held responsible nor any good landlord touched by the many criticisms in this book. Socially and economically, he may even raise himself above his class. Only, it should be realised that the frailties of human nature are such that personal and private interests always raise violent and even mean passions in human relationships and it is exactly here that social and economic laws have to intervene in the interests of all. If anything paralyses the growth of society or perpetuates practices which are not only illegal, but immoral and irrational, it cannot survive in the merciless adjustment of nature, however much one may succeed in putting off the day of reckoning. No one, of any rank or grade in society, can live in isolation to-day or live only for himself and for his own selfish ends. Every one has to justify his existence as a necessary link in the chain of the economic life of a nation. When rules of morality and the sanctions of religion lose their binding force upon economic conduct, law and public opinion must sooner or later intervene. Every man to-day is in the care of another and humanism is the dominant keynote of all our social and economic acts. Society cannot allow a single man to starve, for poverty brings about the most

degrading and demoralising struggle in the economic history of man. Every man born is of right entitled to opportunities for earning a decent living by his own honest labour and in the sweat of his brow. Any system that comes into conflict with this principle is bound, in the long run, to be attacked by the besieging forces of society and humanity.

Bengal tenantry have suffered from economic injustice and the evils of the past. But let them not suffer from the follies of the future. It is for statesmen and politicians to find out the solution to the problem as to why the hard-working toiling peasant, with fertile land and with many natural advantages, does not get even two square meals a day, why he remains steeped in debt, why he is a chronic victim to adverse circumstances. In no other province is there a greater need to-day for a national economic policy as in Bengal, to reclaim agriculture from its present slough, in the interests of generations to come.

The needs of the Bengal peasant are very modest and limited. A little food, some scanty clothing, a few crude utensils, a humble shelter, a few lean animals to plough with and the simplest instruments for tillage—these are all that he needs. He lives on the land of his ancestors and he would be happy to die in the same open yard where all those who had gone before him breathed their last. He has no equipment in the shape of either education or knowledge to enable him to go out of his village to seek his living elsewhere. He loves his land, his family and his inefficient and uneconomic cattle. He even loves the money-lender and the landlord in spite

of what they stand for in the economy of rural life to-day. It is, therefore, a veritable tragedy which completely breaks his backbone, when he is evicted from his land for failure to pay his debts, and his family rendered homeless, when his household utensils and other humble belongings are summarily attached for his rent liabilities—liabilities and dues which he cannot meet, merely because of bad harvest or seasonal disaster ; always in want, he is unable to stand the strain in his gambling struggle with the season, the weather and the monsoon inspite of his many toiling hours day after day. The saint-poet Kabir truly felt the pulse of the peasant when he sang mournfully: —

"Bhukhe bhagat na kije,
Yeh mala apni lije.
Hau mangun santan rena,
Main nahin kisi ka dena.
Do sar mangun chuna,
Pao ghiyo sang lena.
Adha sar mangun dale,
Moko dono wakat jawale.
Main nahin kita labho
Ik nam tera main phabo."

"A hungry man cannot perform Thy service,
Take back this rosary of Thine.
I only ask for the dust of the Saint's feet,
Let me not be in debt.
I beg for two seers of flour,
A quarter of seer of butter and salt.
I beg for half a seer of pulse (*dal*),
Which will feed me twice a day.

I have never been covetous,
I only love Thy name."*

Give my innocent children, my devoted and loving wife two simple meals a day, before I get my even scantier meals; let me have a few copper coins to purchase some drops of medicine when my children and family suffer from shivering attacks of Malaria; then take away the rest and leave me to die where those who have gone before me have died and be buried in the same land where their mortal remains now lie in eternal peace—this is the wailing cry from across the fields.

The Bengal peasant is often the inheritor of his ancestral debts. He has himself continually to run into debt. His debts show no sign of abatement or reduction and when he dies, he leaves a legacy of debt behind him. Passing by a wide expanse of land in the countryside, one will often notice an unsophisticated ploughman, leaving his yoke and plough behind, sitting beneath a bare *Babul* tree which gives him neither shade, shelter nor protection, praying to the Almighty with the hot midday sun blazing down on him. He prays to the Almighty for his soul. Would that humanity only looked after his body!

In conclusion, I may be pardoned if I strike a personal note. My career in the legal profession first brought me into direct contact with rural life and made me see the adversities and woes of the Bengal *raiyat*. It was exactly 20 years ago, when, in conjunction with the Hon'ble Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq, the

* Darling—Rusticus Loquitur, page 36.

present Chief Minister, I had to represent the cause of the oppressed *raiyats* in a corner of my district, that I first saw what landlordism stood for in Bengal and what it meant for the Bengal *raiyat;* but it was a little over 15 years ago, when I was called upon to serve as the President of a Union Board, that I first began to see the inner realities of village life. I saw much more after 1926 when I was elected the Vice-Chairman of the District Board of Nadia. The work in the District Board and the successive elections for the legislature that I had to contest, made me go to almost every village in my district. From 1927 I had occasions fortunately to serve on various Committees—the Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee, the Jute Enquiry Committee, the Bengal Board of Economic Enquiry, the Retrenchment Committee, the Indian Franchise Committee and many others—which gave me valuable data and facts, more than what usually comes to public light. As a member of these Committees, as a member of the Bengal Legislative Council and later as a Minister of the Government of Bengal, I had occasions to study facts from many points of view and had numerous opportunities to go to Bengal villages and to compare them with the conditions prevailing in villages of other provinces. Throughout the last ten years, I have been collecting statistics and materials for this book and I may fairly claim to have written it after a careful and critical study of the problems of the Bengal peasant. I have discussed these problems, from time to time, with many friends to whom I must always remain grateful for their valuable suggestions and

criticisms. They are too many to mention by name. But I shall be failing in my duty if I do not specially mention the name of the Right Hon'ble Sir John Anderson, G.C.B., G.C.I.E., but for whose genuine encouragement and sympathy, I would probably have never ventured to publish the book in its present form and to whom I must express my gratefulness for the keen interest he took in my study of the problem of the economic reconstruction of Bengal.

I have written this book in the hope that it may help all those engaged in devising measures for the economic reconstruction of rural Bengal, for the workers who love the man behind the plough and love him with all their heart. In prosperity the Bengal peasant is a model for human society; in poverty he is one of the finest specimens of humanity, with patience, fortitude and every other supreme quality of manhood. Self-restrained, composed and resigned in his adversity, he is hospitable, generous and kind in his prosperity. He bears the burden and the heat of the day with a uniform patience; he begins his unceasing toil in his field from early dawn, patiently and without complaint, and yet he cannot make both ends meet; he stands to-day with a face deeply marked with lines of semi-starvation in an attenuated frame. In all humility, I place this book before all who are devoted to the cause of the *raiyat* of Bengal, all who wish him well and all who wish to know the tragic realities of the man behind the plough.

M. AZIZUL HUQUE

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52	Do	Line 8	1,352,027	1,342,027
64	21	1930-81	Rs. 5.5	Rs. 5.4
	Do	1983-84	Rs. 3.18	Rs. 3.10
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THE MAN BEHIND THE PLOUGH

"India's wealth, in an overwhelming degree, is in her agriculture; and upon the fields of her cultivators is founded the whole structure of India's economy. The peasant, now as ever, is the chief source and creator of both her wealth and her greatness and of him it may with truth be said that he is India."

The Marquess of Linlithgow,
—The Indian Peasant.

CHAPTER I

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Rural and Urban areas—Environment and Rainfall—Soil—Rainfall—Zones of rainfall—Western zone—Central zone—Northern zone—Montane zone—Submontane zone—Riverain zone—Coastal zone—Intermediate zone—Natural calamities—Burdwan Division—Presidency Division—Dacca and Chittagong Divisions—Rajshahi Divisions—Gamble on Monsoon.

Rural and Urban Areas

THE Presidency of Bengal is 82,955 square miles in area; 74,703 square miles constitute the Presidency proper, 5,434 square miles lie within the States of Cooch Behar and Tippera while a small area of 2,818 sq. miles is in the little mountain State of Sikkim. The total population of Bengal proper is just over 50 millions.* Only a little more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions or barely 7% of the total population live in urban areas in 144 towns. But out of these 144 towns, only 20 have a population of over 30,000 each, while as many as 62 have a population below 10,000 each. Most of these towns below 10,000 have conditions and problems approximately similar to those in rural areas. The rest of the population numbering near about $46\frac{1}{2}$ millions, the vast majority

* This was the population in the Census year 1931. The estimate of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India of the population of Bengal at the end of the year 1936 was 52,332,256.

of the people, live in rural areas comprising a little over 86,000 villages or rural mouzahs.

Environment and Rainfall

A careful study of the geography of Bengal agriculture will show that the seasonal selection of crops, their production and adaptation to particular localities, the prosperity or otherwise of agriculture are mainly determined by two important factors—the natural environment and features of the country and the extent of the rainfall. That Bengal is the largest rice-producing tract in the whole of India, that one tract specialises in Aus (Autumn paddy), another in scattered Aman (Winter paddy), another in transplanted Aman, that the eastern districts of this province are comparatively immune from any large failure of crops, that the Himalayan Terais of Darjeeling and the Duars and the hill tracts are the ideal home for the plantation and production of tea, that the submontane districts of Mymensingh and Tippera, the riverain tracts of Dacca and Faridpur, the intermediate districts of Rangpur and Pabna have a high production of the best variety of jute, are ultimately due to these two factors.

Lying roughly between latitudes 21° and 27°, with the Tropic of Cancer practically dividing the province, with the mighty Himalayan snowy peaks ranging as a barrier on the north, with majestic rivers passing through the province and with the Bay of Bengal breaking into its coastal regions, the province has special natural features of its own, each in varying manner affecting the weather and the rainfall.

Soil

The soil of Bengal is composed mostly of alluvial deposits due to the action of silt-laden rivers and streams. Torrents of rain fall in mountainous regions and form the hill streams. They descend the mountains, rush down the villages and with the rapidity of their motion, the work of denudation goes on. Enormous quantities of disintegrated earth are thus carried down by these streams till they reach the plains and join together to form rivers. When the more level grounds are reached, the rivers flow more slowly and then begin the process of depositing the silt in their beds and spill areas. As the rivers approach the sea, deltas are formed as additions to existing land. It has been calculated that the Ganges, in one year alone, carries and deposits 6,368,000,000 cubic feet of solid matter. In winding through valleys and plains, the process of widening, filling, making new beds and courses, of throwing up extensive islands, the formation of alluvial accretions on one bank with diluvion on the other, have been going on for thousands of years. In this way the forming and re-forming of soils by the settling down of silt, sand, clay and gravel have gone on for ages. The soil of Bengal is but the work of such disintegration, denundation, transformation and reconstruction; again the fertility of Bengal soil is in its essence due to the nature of the silt deposits in the different tracts. The rich red silt of the western districts, the sands on the *char* of the Padma-Meghna, the rich clay of the Eastern districts, and the sandy loam of North Bengal, can all be traced to the action of rivers and streams. This combined with

the proximity or otherwise of Bengal lands to the hills of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas, to the Himalayas, the hill tracts of Chittagong and Tippera, the Garo hills or to the sea determine the character and composition of the soil and subsoil of Bengal and the level of the country. On these varying factors greatly depend the nature of the soil and its productivity.

Rainfall

The cold weather in Bengal is generally followed by a break of about two months of scanty, uncertain and occasional rainfall. The normal rainfall in January is less than half an inch, with about an inch in February. Sea-winds, however, set in on the coasts of Bengal in the early spring months bringing in vapour which is precipitated as the spring rains. In March, the normal rainfall goes up to near about 3 inches, and in April, while most of the districts have near about 2 inches, the districts of Dacca and Chittagong even go up to 6 and 7 inches in this month. It is at this season that nor'-westers and hailstorms are frequent In lower Bengal, two or three storms generally occur in March and April, sometimes even in May and this is traced to the meeting of the land and sea winds. In Eastern Bengal, showers are frequent in March, rainfall is almost general in April with often heavier showers in May. The spring rains are, however, heavier in the coast line and on the eastern margin of the Gangetic delta and in areas bordering the Chittagong and Tippera hills such as Comilla and places near-by.

Following a fortnight or three weeks of hot and dry weather, the south-west monsoon ordinarily breaks in the second or third week of June. Rainfall is generally heavy near the northern and eastern hill regions and the quantity of rainfall diminishes *ceteris paribus* with the distance from the coast line but it increases regularly on approaching the hill ranges on the windward side, whenever they present a steep face in that direction. The south-west monsoon has two important currents, the first the Arabian Sea current which, covering the west coast, turns round the Gangetic valley, the other the Bengal current which, first covering the east coast, is then pushed westward, supplying rain to the Gangetic plain and thereafter sweeping round Bengal in a south-eastern direction. The south-west monsoon lasts from June to September and then the cold weather slowly sets in the plains of Bengal where cold weather rains are less regular and lighter.

The rainfall varies in different districts month by month and Table 1 gives the monthly rainfall, as it varies in different districts.

TABLE 1

MONTHLY RAINFALL

	Month.	*Rainfall.*
Monsoon	June	10 inches to 25 inches
	July	11 inches to 32 inches
	August	10 inches to 26 inches
	September	8 inches to 20 inches

TABLE 1

MONTHLY RAINFALL—*Contd.*

	Month.	*Rainfall.*
Winter	October	3 inches to 8 inches
	November	Below 2 inches
	December	Below ½ inch generally
	January	Below ½ inch generally
Spring	February	1 to 2 inches
	March	1 to near about 3 inches
Summer	April	2 to 5 or 6 inches
	May	6 to 10 or 12 inches

Generally speaking, the Himalayan Terais and the neighbouring tracts, the eastern hills and the coastal regions have greater and heavier rainfall than the plains.

Zones of Rainfall

A study of the nature of rainfall and its amount will show that the province can be divided, as per Table 2, into nine definite zones, each zone having approximately common characteristics of rainfall. From the agricultural point of view each of these zones has its special features mainly conditioned by the rainfall.

TABLE 2

ZONES OF RAINFALL

		Districts.	*Normal rainfall in inches.*
Western Zone	...	Hooghly	55·91
		Howrah	58·76
		Burdwan	58·63
		Birbhum	56·96
		Bankura	57·00
Central Zone	...	Nadia	58·40
		Murshidabad	57·11
		Rajshahi	56·10
		Malda	56·10
Northern Zone	...	Dinajpur	71·10
		Bogra	70·97
Montane Zone	...	Jalpaiguri	122·32
		Darjeeling	123·27
Submontane Zone	...	Tipperah	90·31
		Mymensingh	92·95
Riverain Zone	...	Dacca	74·24
		Faridpur	71·72
Coastal Zone	...	Bakarganj	82·31
		Chittagong	102·73
		Noakhali	120·91
		Midnapore	59·05
Sub-coastal Zone	...	Khulna	66·06
		24-Parganas	52·54
		Jessore	66·03
Intermediate Zone	...	Pabna	60·20
		Rangpur	82·03

Western Zone

The Western zone consists of five districts, *viz.*, Birbhum, Bankura on the western littoral and Hooghly, Howrah on the south, with Burdwan lying between the two. The immense area of rocks forming the Chota Nagpur hills constitute the western border of Bankura, Birbhum and Burdwan while the eastern portions of Birbhum and Burdwan, Hooghly and Howrah gradually merge into the alluvial belt of Central Bengal, the great rice plains of Bengal. Beginning from the west, the district of Birbhum has gently undulating and uneven character with rounded ridges interrupted by dips and depressions till it forms an alluvial plain with a soil composed of dark clay or of sand and clay, patches of reddish clay with gravels, *ghutins* mixed with clay, sand or gravel. Towards the Burdwan border, there is a patch of Gondwana rock which forms a small belt of coal fields. There is a curious recess of granite rocks at Dubrajpur where columns of rocks suddenly rise perpendicularly, some even to the height of 30 or 40 feet, on a small area with few large granite boulders in the vicinity. Bankura also has the same characteristics of proximity to rocky regions in the west with a wide plain of recent alluvium to the east. The greater portion of the district consists of a rolling plain covered by laterite and alluvium, with hornblendic upland rocks. There is the area of laterite and associated rocks of sands and gravels, merging into hard, massive beds and blocks of true laterite on the one side with insensible gradations into a coarse sandy clay, con-

taining only a few ferruginous nodules of laterite which are barely sufficient to give a red tint to the whole. Agricultural conditions, therefore, differ greatly in the east and west of these two districts. The eastern portions consist of comparatively rich recent alluvium, but with a higher proportion of sand. The rest of these districts is for the most part undulating or hilly, the soil is mainly sterile laterite with ridges not admitting of any cultivation. The soil in both districts is generally porous, with rapid drainage. The nature of the country with its natural configuration renders reservation of water easy enough and old embankments, *bundhs,* tanks, and *danras* are numerous in these districts.

The district of Burdwan is covered by alluvium except in the Asansol Subdivision where Gondwana rocks are exposed. Coal is abundant in the Gondwana system. The soil in this district has marked characteristics of the debris of the hills of Manbhum, Singbhum and Santal Parganas and of materials transported by streams having their origin in the hills.

Howrah soil consists of alluvium and the present conformation of the district is due to the action of its silt-laden rivers with many marshes and *jhils.* Almost similar is the condition of Hooghly which also has been built up by silt deposits.

Central Zone

The Central zone comprises four districts, *viz.,* Nadia, Murshidabad, Malda and Rajshahi.

These four districts are in the main of alluvial formation. Malda and Rajshahi have a strip of *Barind* land—belonging to older alluvial formations, composed of a rather pale reddish brown hue, otherwise the soil formation is sandy clay or fine silt consolidating into clay. The whole of Murshidabad is a striking example of the operations of nature produced by fluvial action. It varies from hard, black clayey soil, splitting up in the hot weather and tenaciously muddy after rain, to sandy deposits on the other. Nadia soil on the other hand is composed of recent alluvium and the surface consists of sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers with fine silt consolidating into clay in the flatter portions.

Northern Zone

The Northern zone consists of Dinajpur and Bogra. The whole area is covered by recent alluvial deposits, old alluvium known as Barind, clayey silt, ash colour in appearance, soft sticky loam in rains hardening almost to the consistency of cement in dry weather, and sandy loam.

Montane Zone

The Montane zone consists of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Jalpaiguri is mainly covered by alluvial deposits, consisting of coarse gravels near the hills, sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers and fine sand consolidating into clay in the flatter parts of the river plains; the Buxa hills are composed of a series of beds consisting of variegated slates, quartzites

and dolomites fringed with tertiary strata. The Darjeeling district is on the Himalayan hills, and has all the characteristics of mountainous regions.

Submontane Zone

Tipperah and Mymensingh form the Submontane zone. Tipperah borders the forest-clad hills of Hill Tipperah with a gradual slope but otherwise the general aspect of the country presents almost a continuous flat surface. Near rocky regions, the soil consists chiefly of decomposed rock of a reddish colour, Elsewhere it is composed of clay and sand in varying proportions. Mymensingh lies almost in the centre of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta with stiff red clay rich in iron, but deficient in sand in what is known as the Madhupur jungle. The Brahmaputra and Jumna *chars* getting silt in rains are almost pure sand, while the rest of the district is rich clay deriving its fertility from decaying vegetation and flood alluvium. In some parts, the clods are so hard that ploughing will not easily break them but one shower is sufficient to change baked clay into liquid mud.

Riverain Zone

Dacca and Faridpur are the two riverain tracts of Bengal. Dacca is a low alluvial flat with Madhupur jungle dividing the district. Both the districts are inundated during rains, intersected by numerous channels, creeks and streams, and are a mass of water in the rains. The soil is uniformly alluvial but there are striking differences in texture and composition.

Coastal Zone

The districts of Bakarganj, Chittagong, Noakhali and Midnapore form the Coastal zone of Bengal. The littoral tracts bordering the Bay of Bengal have a considerable saliferous element and sand, requiring protection from sea sometimes by a range of sand hills or ridges. It is interesting to note that the Coastal zone according to its proximity to the sea-coast and the situation of the district has varying rainfalls, Midnapore in the extreme south-west with 69·05 inches, Chittagong and Noakhali in the extreme south-east with 102·73 inches and 120·91 inches, and Bakarganj with 82·31 inches standing between the two.

Intermediate Zone

The district of Rangpur stands between the Montane and Northern zones and has a normal rainfall of 82·03 inches. Rangpur is strongly infrequented with iron and contains nodules of carbonate of lime in some places. The district of Pabna stands between the Riverain block and the Northern zone with 60·20 inches of rainfall and is rich in alluvial deposits.

Natural Calamities

Experts in agriculture are of opinion that it is only once in ten years that there is normal and well-distributed rainfall in this province. But apart from seasonal fluctuations and the variations and vagaries of rainfall, different tracts of Bengal are subject to

natural calamities happening far too frequently and sometimes almost at regular intervals, with considerable damaging effects on agriculture.

Burdwan Division

The Burdwan Division, *viz.*, the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly and Howrah, frequently suffers from drought, deficient and ill-distributed rainfall. From 1933 to 1936, the districts of Bankura and Birbhum suffered from acute distress, scarcity and famine conditions and had to pass through most distressing times. Excepting Howrah and Birbhum, all the other districts suffer from disastrous floods of Damodar, Ajoy, Hinglo, Silye and Cossye. There are large tracts of embanked areas in these districts and when these embankments are broken, the adjacent areas are flooded. Appendix A gives a list of such natural calamities and abnormal conditions in this division.

Presidency Division

The Presidency Division (Nadia, Jessore, Murshidabad, Khulna and 24-Parganas) was at one time fertilised by the spill water of the numerous rivers, waterways and deltaic channels, most of which are now in a decaying and dying condition. The Ganges, the Hooghly, the Jalangi, the Coomar, the Nabaganga, the Bhairab, the Mathabhanga, the Ichamati, the Gorai, the Jamuna, the Pasar, the Kapotak and the numerous deltaic channels and cross channels, falling into the Bay of Bengal practically all between 88° and 90° longitudes, pass through this

division. The southern part of the districts of 24-Parganas and Khulna constitute the famous forest known as the Sunderbans and considerable areas of these two districts on the fringe of the Sunderbans are definitely salt water regions. Cultviation is carried on in these areas by embankments to keep out salt water from the cultivated lands. The rainfall in this area must be sufficient to wash away the surface salinity as also the saline deposits in those areas where, inspite of the embankments, salt water penetrates during flood times often owing to deterioration of these *bunds*. Sometimes salt water inundations practically destroy all crops and make it impossible to get sufficient crops till the salinity is fully washed away by the rains in the following years.

Practically, the whole of the Presidency Division has definitely deteriorated in fertility owing to the decaying condition of its rivers and waterways, The spill water of the Bhagirathi, before she was embanked on both sides by two railway systems, the E. B. R. and the E. I. R., first flooded the tract of the country lying between the Bhagirathi and the Jalangi and fell into the Jalangi. Similarly, the spill water of the Jalangi, flooding the belt between Jalangi and Mathabhanga-Churni, joined the flood of the latter. The Mathabhanga through its numerous channels and outlets then fertilised the interior of Jessore, while the spill waters of Ichamati, Bhairab, Nabaganga, Kapotak and Coomar, all at one stage or other received the spill water of the Mathabhanga and fertilised the districts of Jessore, Khulna and part of the 24-Parganas.

Most of these drainage channels running generally from west to east have been obstructed by at least three railway embankments running north and south, *viz.*, the Murshidabad section, the Goalundo-cum-Paksey section and the Jessore-Khulna section of the Eastern Bengal Railway. Numerous embanked roads in this area have also helped in obstructing the flow of spill water. No other division in Bengal has such a large mileage of roads as this division. Excluding Calcutta and municipal areas, there are 716 miles of metalled roads, and 10,724 miles of unmetalled roads. This large road mileage has affected the drainage levels. The obstruction has created deterioration in rivers; the deterioration of rivers has led to the gradual impoverishment of the soil and the poverty of soil has led to low vitality of men and animals.

This division was so long free from the effects of heavy floods—excepting certain border lands in Nadia, Jessore and Khulna, but in the two successive years of 1935 and 1936, and again in 1938, the high level of Ganges water brought in disastrous flood conditions in Murshidabad, Nadia and Jessore, very severely affecting the district of Nadia, destroying Aman crops, delaying the sowings of winter crops and demolishing numerous huts and homesteads mostly built upon land which had not seen floods within living memory.

A list of calamities in this Division is given in Appendix B.

Dacca and Chittagong Divisions

The Dacca Division comprises the districts of Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, and Bakarganj while the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali and Tipperah constitute the Chittagong Division. These two divisions with very fertile lands and producing excellent crops are liable to floods, cyclones and tornadoes. Complete failure of crops on an extensive scale is, however, rare, though insufficiency of rainfall sometimes causes drought and affects crops but not to the same extent as in the western and central districts of Bengal. Still floods, cyclones and tornadoes sometimes cause extensive damage to crops in some of these tracts. The low-lying lands are also flooded during sudden and heavy rains. Excessive rains not infrequently damage standing crops. Heavy rainfall in the Surma Valley, Garo Hills and Assam, or a sudden rise of the Brahmaputra, Padma, Meghna, Barak and Jamuna, results in flooding these districts. A list of the floods, cyclones and other natural calamities is given in Appendix C. Most of these natural calamities were isolated in character and generally never covered any wide area in these divisions, but despite these natural calamities from time to time, nature has gifted the soil of Dacca and Chittagong Divisions with wonderful recuperative capacity with jute as money crop in almost all this area. It should, however, be noted that the water-hyacinth has within the last few years become a real menace to agriculture in Dacca and Chittagong Divisions.

Rajshahi Division

The Rajshahi Division comprises the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Rangpur, Pabna, Bogra and Malda.

The staple crops in the Rajshahi Division are rice, jute and tobacco. The construction of the Sara-Sirajganj Railway has affected the drainage of a large area in this section but otherwise it is only heavy rainfall in the hills that creates any difficulty in this division. A list of natural calamities is given in Appendix D.

Gamble on Monsoon

A study of these natural calamities including insufficient, ill-distributed and heavy rainfall shows to what extent crop conditions and agricultural produce are affected by natural calamities which occur almost every year in some part or other of this province. No wonder, agriculture is said to be often a gamble on the monsoon. While nature is bountiful, she is no less capricious. She gives in her bounty and destroys in her whims. The monsoon fails, rains come at the wrong time or do not come at all in season, rivers in their fury rise, "sweep away harvest, hamlet and herd," while storm, tornado and hurricane leave havoc and destruction in their wake. Behind all these comes the helpless man plodding with his plough to get his food and subsistence from the land!

APPENDIX A

NATURAL CALAMITIES IN BURDWAN DIVISION

1916—Floods of Damodar, Ajoy, Hinglo causing serious loss of property and crops in Burdwan and Birbhum.

1917—Floods of Ajoy, Damodar and Silye but causing only slight damage.

1918—Heavy floods in August and September. Rainfall generally insufficient and badly distributed with bad outturn of paddy.

1919—Poor harvest owing to lack of rain.

1920—Poor harvest owing to defective distribution of rainfall and bad harvest.

1923—227 sq. miles in Ghatal and Tamluk Subdivisions in the district of Midnapore affected by heavy floods with total failure of crops in 92 sq. miles and damaging 2,423 houses. Lack of rain before monsoon; winter crops below normal.

1924—Drought and poor paddy crops.

1927—Abnormally heavy rains in June and again at the end of July. The Kalighai, Bagui and Subarnarekha burst through their embankments damaging winter rice crops over an area of about 100 square miles in the Contai Subdivision of Midnapore. Deficiency of rainfall with failure of crops requiring relief operations till November 1928.

1928—Breach in the embankment at Dokando in the district of Midnapore affecting a small area of 6 square mlies only.

1929—Heavy rains in August, causing floods in the Cossye and Silye rivers of Midnapore inundating 240 square miles chiefly in the Ghatal Subdivision of Midnapore.

1930—Unseasonable weather conditions prevailed in Bankura and Burdwan damaging harvest; drought and untimely rainfall.

1932—Injury to crops in Bankura and Burdwan.

1933—Flood in the Damodar and Ajoy and breaches in Chetua embankment in Ghatal and the Rupnarain embankment in the Tamluk Subdivision of Midnapore. Outturn of crops poor in Burdwan, Birbhum and Hooghly.

1934—Outturn of crops poor in the Sadar and Jhargram Subdivisions of the Midnapore district. Acute distress prevailing in Birbhum and Bankura in 1934-35 and continuing till 1936.

1935—Disastrous floods in the Damodar, one of the severest of its kind, deluging a wide area within Burdwan, Birbhum and Hooghly, stopping communications and seriously damaging crops and buildings.

APPENDIX B

NATURAL CALAMITIES IN PRESIDENCY DIVISION

1916—Cyclonic storm in September damaging autumn rice and sugar-cane in Nadia and heavy floods in the north and east of Jessore and in parts of Khulna.

1919—Phenomenal cyclone of September entered through Khulna and passed through a portion of Jessore, with considerable damage and devastation.

1920—Salt water inundation damaged embankments in Khulna and destroyed crops over 50 square miles with acute distress in the locality, followed in the following year by failure of crops over fairly large areas in the Sadar and Satkhira Subdivisions of Khulna.

1922—Sudden heavy rainfall in June submerged low-lying lands of 24-Parganas and part of Nadia and Jessore.

1932—Tornadoes of great violence passing over parts of Khulna caused serious loss of life, cattle and property.

1933—Heavy floods in parts of 24-Parganas.

1934—Heavy floods in Nadia, Murshidabad, Jessore and Khulna causing serious damage to crops.

1935—Heavy floods in Nadia, Jessore and Murshidabad.

1936—Heavy floods in Nadia, Murshidabad and Jessore.

1938—Heavy floods in Nadia, Murshidabad and Jessore. Unprecedented damages to crops and homesteads.

APPENDIX C

NATURAL CALAMITIES IN DACCA AND CHITTAGONG DIVISIONS

1915—Serious flood breached embankment of the Gumti destroying Aus crops and seriously damaging jute in large tracts of Sadar Subdivision in Comilla in June, followed by floods through excessive rain again in October. As a consequence of very heavy rains in the Surma Valley, 464 square miles in Brahmanbaria overflooded affecting 3,70,000 people also in October.

1916—Floods in Feni (Noakhali) covering 20 square miles in February. Heavy floods in September damaged winter rice crops in Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Bhola.

1918—Jute and paddy crops damaged by floods in parts of Dacca, Mymensingh and Faridpur and prolonged flood again in Brahmanbaria damaging Aust and jute considerably.

1919—Sudden flood causing failure of Bhadoi and Aus. A cyclone of phenomenal severity in September, 1919, rising apparently from the Bay of Bengal, passing through Khulna and a portion of Jessore, swept through the districts of Faridpur, Dacca as far as Mymensingh and the western portion of Tipperah, leaving death and destruction in its track. Many hundreds of lives lost, immense damage to live-stock, houses in large numbers blown down and unprece-

dented damage to trees, especially in the Bhowal forests. The jute trade was paralysed and food crops rose to famine price.

1921—Damage to seedlings in July in part of Bakarganj through flood.

1922—A severe cyclone in Cox's Bazar Subdivision; considerable damage to the houses of the people of the locality. Severe damage in Madaripur through heavy rainfall causing flood in June-July.

1923—Cox's Bazar Subdivision again suffered from a cyclone causing some damage in the locality.

1926—Two cyclones in Feni (Noakhali) causing heavy damages within the Subdivision; a tornado passed over a part of the Madaripur Subdivision. A heavy hail-storm in portions of Munshiganj, Madaripur and Gopalganj affecting standing crops and causing damages to houses of the people. A cyclone of considerable magnitude swept over portions of Pirojpur causing 30 deaths while large portions of the districts of Noakhali and Chittagong suffered from severe storms.

1927—A severe nor'-wester caused great damage to certain parts in the Chittagong district. In May, a severe cyclone pased over Teknaf and Nilla affecting a large area and with loss of 160 lives. In April a storm in Noakhali affected 1,600 huts and resulted in loss of 9 lives and injury to 80 persons and causing damage to the standing jute crop. An area of 10 square miles in Hathazari and Fatikchari in Chittagong was

devastated killing two persons and destroying 1,700 houses including public buildings.

1929—Abnormally heavy rain caused floods in Chittagong, causing extensive damage to Aus. Deluges in May and June inundated a large portion of Brahmanbaria.

1930—Gumti embankment broke flooding a large area and destroying crops in Tipperah.

1931—Brahmaputra and Jamuna rose to record height in July and August, deeply inundating the low-lying tracts of East Mymensingh and Manikganj and Munshiganj Subdivisions of Dacca suffering heavy damages.

1933—A severe cyclone in April and May visited parts of Manikganj and Patuakhali Subdivisions wrecking a number of houses while tornadoes of very great violence causing serious loss of lives and property passed over Khulna Sadar Subdivision, Faridpur and Mymensingh towns and 8 villages. In Faridpur an area of 5 miles in length and one-fourth of a mile in breadth devastated by tornado, 12 lives being lost, more than 80% of the houses of the people within the area completely wrecked and crops destroyed. The northern and western perimeter walls of the Mymensingh Jail blown down; 41 deaths and 175 persons injured.

1934—The Meghna rose unusually early and inundated a considerable part of *char* in Narainganj causing considerable damage to crops. Excessive rainfall in June and July caused floods in

parts of Chittagong, Tipperah and Noakhali resulting in serious damage to crops.

APPENDIX D

NATURAL CALAMITIES IN RAJSHAHI DIVISION

1918—Heavy floods over a great part of this division in August and September followed by a severe drought from October till the end of the year. The flood considerably damaged crops and homesteads, being the greatest in the districts of Rajshahi and Bogra.

1922—Heavy and disastrous floods in North Bengal caused considerable damage to houses of the people, due to sudden heavy rains towards the end of September—the rainfall in certain parts of the district of Rajshahi and Dinajpur during the week ending the 27th September being from 3 to 5 times in excess of the average rainfall for the whole month. Great loss of crops, cattle and houses in Rajshahi and Bogra and to a smaller extent in Dinajpur and Pabna. In the district of Rajshahi alone about 1,200 square miles or nearly half the area of the district with a population of 7,40,000 flooded in varying degrees, 35 lives lost and 1,400 cattle destroyed. The flood caused failure of crops to the extent of 75% in 2,22,605 acres of land under winter paddy while some 63,960 acres suffered to a less extent but still severely.

1927—The districts of Rajshahi, Malda and Dinajpur affected to a considerable extent by failure of seasonal rains, and the situation in Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Malda distinctly bad owing to a very poor outturn of winter rice crops. In Balurghat, owing to total lack of rains in November and December, seeds failed to germinate. Relief measures had to be continued till 1928.

1928—Jalpaiguri suffered from uneven distribution of rains.

1929—Weather conditions very unfavourable in Northern Bengal ; Balurghat, Bogra and Pabna affected, particularly also because Pamara insects ruined the crops.

1930—Distress in Rangpur, Bogra and Pabna.

1931—Unprecedented heavy floods in the Kurigram and Gaibandha Subdivisions of Rangpur, Nator and Naogaon Subdivisions of Rajshahi, Sirajganj Subdivision of Pabna, Malda and Bogra owing to the rivers rising to record height. In Jalpaiguri the Teesta and Dharla rivers joined in the work of destruction and flooded a considerable area causing extensive damage to crops, cattle, houses and property of the people in the affected area. The Teesta river breached the Bengal Duars Railway line in several places and the river Dharla breached the P.W.D. roads.

1932—Heavy flood affecting an area of 654 square miles in Kurigram and Gaibandha Subdivisions

of the Rangpur district. The river Brahmaputra rose and flooded the Palli area of the district of Bogra causing considerable damage to Aus and Jute. Distress in Rangpur and Jalpaiguri owing to bad crops.

1933—Uneven distribution of rain affected the outturn of crops in the district of Malda; flood in Aghore river in Bogra, Naogaon, Rajshahi and also in Malda damaging jute and paddy. Tobacco in Rangpur suffered severely from the effects of severe hail-storm. In Malda and in the Gangacharu Thana of Rangpur crops totally destroyed over an area of 3 square miles. In Pabna, a cyclone blew down a number of houses and a tornado of considerable violence caused serious damage to life and property in Boalmari —a village within the Santhia Thana (Pabna). In Rajshahi a violent tornado swept over the village of Sapaihat in Madla Thana, extensive damage being done to standing crops, cattle, houses in the affected areas.

1935—A large part of *char* area in Rajshahi literally under water for a considerable period and villages washed away causing acute distress in certain areas of the Rajshahi Division.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURE

The Peasant proprietor—Cultivated area and area available—Main crops—Crop calendar—Acreage of primary crops—Wheat—Barley—Gram—Oilseeds—Rape and Mustard—Sugar-cane—Need of money crops—Risks in agriculture—World events—Economic depression—Annual loss through fall in prices—Widening the basis of agriculture.

The Peasant Proprietor

Bengal is essentially the land of the small cultivator. Each agricultural family is a peasant proprietor and supplies to a large extent its own labour. Agricultural labour is, however, needed for field work during the season and within a definite cycle of time, and family labour is, ordinarily, never sufficient to look after all the fields at the same time. Outside labour is, therefore, needed by almost every cultivator, specially as the fields of a farmer are in scattered plots. One sometimes hears of the need of large scale farming with possibilities of using improved machinery, ploughs and plant. But this must remain, in Bengal, in the very nature of things, restricted within a narrow scope. Nor will the change in the unit of agricultural organisation be of any immediate benefit to the cultivators. The elimination of the small farmer and landowning worker, with a view to encouraging large scale farming, will inevitably produce two distinct classes—the capitalist-farmer and the

landless-labourer. But good farming will inevitably perish with large farms. This cannot but be a disaster to the millions of small holders unless there is scope for employment of the large bulk of the eliminated workers in other avenues of employment. The problem of Bengal must, for the time being, until there is industrial development on a wide scale, remain, in essence, the problem of the small farmer. All improvements in agriculture—implements and stock—must, therefore, be such as the small farmer can adopt within his limited means and resources.

Cultivated Area and Area Available

The total area of culturable waste in Bengal excluding Chittagong Hill Tracts, as per Season and Crop Report, 1936-37, is 4,991,266 acres and the total area of current fallows is 4,227,466 acres, the sum total of these two areas being 9,218,732 acres, against 24,258,800 acres of net cropped area in the province, excluding Chittagong Hill Tracts. The total area available for cultivation is thus 33,477,522 acres and the net area cultivated is 72·5 per cent of the total. But this varies widely from district to district. There is hardly any fallow or culturable waste in the districts of Bakarganj, Faridpur, Dacca, Tippera, Pabna, Noakhali, Rangpur, while in most of the districts of Central and Western Bengal and in some of the districts of Northern Bengal, large areas are still available for cultivation. Table 3 gives the proportion of the cultivated area to the total area available for cultivation district by district for the year 1936-37.

TABLE 3

CULTIVATED AND CULTIVABLE AREA WITH DENSITY OF POPULATION

District.	Total area available for cultivation.*	Net cropped area.	Percentage of cultivated area.	Percentage still available for cultivation.	No. of persons per sq. mile.
Burdwan	1,258,555	608,200	48	52	583
Birbhum	843,023	704,300	83·5	16·5	558
Bankura	1,166,820	650,700	55·7	44·3	424
Midnapore	2,727,403	1,710,600	63	37	534
Hooghly	511,545	316,100	61·8	38·2	930
Howrah	268,901	105,400	39	61	2,105
24-Parganas	1,482,071	780,400	52·6	47·4	516
Nadia	1,366,737	764,200	56	44	531
Murshidabad	1,084,672	850,900	78·4	21·6	656
Jessore	1,308,640	782,500	59·8	40·2	576
Khulna	1,278,747	823,900	64·4	35	654
Dacca	1,508,151	1,442,200	95·6	4·4	1,265
Mymensingh	2,789,173	2,388,500	84	16	823
Faridpur	1,394,900	1,388,000	99	1	1,003
Bakarganj	1,663,733	1,623,300	99	1	834
Chittagong	869,957	653,000	75	25	699
Tipperah	1,211,086	1,129,100	93	7	1,197
Noakhali	803,465	740,200	92	8	1,124
Rajshahi	1,404,293	1,019,600	72	28	548
Dinajpur	2,026,720	1,119,900	55	45	445
Jalpaiguri	1,336,980	745,600	55·7	44·3	335
Rangpur	1,928,970	1,718,300	89	11	742
Bogra	765,760	563,000	72	27	785
Pabna	1,063,690	979,000	92	8	795
Malda	1,128,998	464,400	41	59	597
Darjeeling	274,542	187,500	68	32	264

The table will show that out of the total cultivable area, more than or near about half is still available in Howrah, Malda, Burdwan, 24-Parganas, Bankura, Nadia, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Jessore, about

* Total of 'culturable wastes other than fallow' and 'current fallows,' but excluding 'area not available for cultivation', as per Season and Crop Report, 1936-37. Net cropped area as per Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.

one-third is available in Hooghly, Midnapore, Khulna, Darjeeling, about one-fourth is available in Rajshahi, Bogra, Chittagong, and Murshidabad, about one-sixth in Birbhum and Mymensingh, one-tenth in Rangpur, very little in Noakhali, Pabna and Tipperah, and almost nothing in Dacca, Faridpur, and Bakarganj. One of the main reasons of a large proportion of uncultivated land in some of the districts is that land in those districts is of poor fertility and requires periodical rest for cultivation purposes.

The acreage and population figures will also show that, excepting for special reasons, the cultivated acreage generally follows the density of population almost in every district.

Main Crops

Paddy, jute, tobacco, sugar-cane, cereals and pulses are the main crops of Bengal. Paddy is mainly of two varieties, Bhadoi or Aus and Winter or Aman, the latter being of two types—transplanted and scattered. There is another kind known as Boro paddy grown more or less in moisture and harvested before flood comes.

Crop Calendar

Both jute and Aus ploughings generally begin with the first rains in spring and continue till April. Sowing commences with the April rains, weeding is generally done from May to June while harvesting commences about mid-June and generally finishes in September or October. Seeds of transplanted Aman

paddy are sown in May and June in seed-beds. Beginning from the bursting of the monsoon in June and ending with July rains, lands are prepared to form a bed of mud and mire for the purpose of transplanting the Aman seedlings. The harvesting finishes by November and December, and even later in some places. In districts where rain water does not percolate down easily but stands in sufficient depth, Aman is scattered with the monsoon rains. Spring and winter crops are generally sown after Aus or jute and sometimes also after early Aman and are harvested and made ready for the market by February and March and sometimes in April. The interval between sowing and harvesting, if ploughing is left out, is about 4 to 6 months for Aus and jute, 6 to 7 months for Aman and 3 to 5 months for winter and spring crops. An agricultural calendar of a district growing Aus, Aman and winter crops is given in Table 4.

TABLE 4

English months.	Bengali months.				
	Falgun				
March		Ploughing commences.			
	Chaitra				
April		Ploughing continues.	Aus sowing begins.		
	Baisakh				
May			Weeding of Aus lands.	Sowing of Aman.	
	Jaistha				
June			Weeding of Aus lands.	Sowing of Aman.	Sowing of Arhar.
	Asar				
July			Harvesting of Aus begins.	Transplanting of Aman.	Sowing of Til.
	Sraban				
August			Harvesting of Aus.	Transplanting of Aman.	

	Bhadra			
September		Harvesting of Aus finishes.	Weeding of Aman lands.	Sowing of mustard.
	Aswin			
October				Sowing of Khesari, Mung, linseed, sesamum, etc.
	Kartick			
November			Harvesting of Aman.	Sowing of Masuri.
	Agrahayan			
December			Harvesting of Aman.	Harvesting of Til.
	Pous			
January			Harvesting of Aman finishes.	Harvesting of Arhar, Mung.
	Magh			
February				Harvesting of gram, linseed and mustard.
	Falgun.			

Acreage of Main Crops

The total acreage available for cultivation in Bengal including Chittagong Hill Tracts and the acreage under main crops are given in Table 5.

TABLE 5

CROPPED ACREAGE AND MAIN DISTRIBUTION

A.		
Culturable waste other than fallow ...	...	5,949,866 acres
Current fallows	...	4,690,883 ,,
Net area cropped	...	24,466,300 ,,
Total	...	35,107,049 ,,
B.		
Net cropped area	...	24,466,300 ,,
Deduct under Tea	...	203,100 ,,
Balance	...	24,263,200 ,,
C.		
Acreage under main crops: —		
Aus Paddy	...	5,756,600 ,,
Aman Paddy	...	15,803,600 ,,
Jute ...	...	2,154,800 ,,
Tobacco	...	307,300 ,,
Sugar-cane	...	354,800 ,,
Total	...	24,377,100 ,,

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

Practically the entire net cropped area thus covers the five main crops. All other crops are grown more

or less as secondary crops in double-cropped areas but such area is relatively small, being only 4,937,100 acres, most of which grow cereals and pulses, wheat and barley, oilseeds, and other miscellaneous crops.

Paddy is grown mainly as the food crop of the cultivator and jute, tobacco and sugar-cane are his main money crops. Tobacco as a money crop is confined mainly to the district of Rangpur and its neighbourhood.

Wheat

The acreage under wheat has gradually dwindled from 143,000 acres in 1911-12 to only 106,600 acres in 1927-28. Since then, there was a very slow rise till in 1934-35 the acreage stood at 154,700 acres, but it again went down to 149,500 in 1936-37. But this crop is confined in the main to a few districts, as will appear from Table 6.

TABLE 6

WHEAT ACREAGE—ITS MAIN DISTRIBUTION

Nadia ...	...	10,700 acres	
Murshidabad	...	43,800 ,,	
Rajshahi ...	...	10,500 ,,	
Malda ...	...	44,000 ,,	
Pabna ...	...	6,800 ,,	
Dacca ...	...	6,500 ,,	
Bankura ...	...	5,500 ,,	
		127,800 ,,	85½%
Other 21 districts	...	21,700 ,,	
Total	...	149,500 ,,	14½%

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

Barley

The total acreage under barley was 95,300 acres in 1936-37. In 1915-16, it was 99,500 acres. It gradually came down to 66,500 acres in 1927-28 and is thereafter very slowly going up. But this is also mainly confined to a few districts, as will be seen from Table 7.

TABLE 7

MAIN DISTRIBUTION OF BARLEY ACREAGE

Murshidabad ...	...	20,800 acres	
Pabna ...	...	8,000 ,,	
Malda ...	...	18,600 ,,	
Dacca ...	...	13,600 ,,	
Mymensingh	...	8,000 ,,	
Faridpur ...	...	10,700 ,,	
		79,700 ,,	83·6%
Remaining districts	...	15,600 ,,	16·4%
Total	...	95,300 ,,	

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

Gram

The total acreage under gram was 183,000 acres in 1916-17. It gradually came down to 91,800 in 1927-28. It was 174,900 in 1933-34, 206,900 in 1934-35 and 241,900 in 1936-37, but the acreage is mainly confined to a few districts as per Table 8.

TABLE 8

MAIN DISTRIBUTION OF GRAM ACREAGE

Nadia ...	...	60,400 acres	
Murshidabad	...	105,500 „	
Birbhum ...	...	7,000 „	
Rajshahi ...	...	12,600 „	
Bogra ...	...	7,000 „	
Pabna ...	...	11,700 „	
Malda ...	...	10,000 „	
Dacca ...	...	5,200 „	
		219,400 acres	90·7%
Other districts	...	22,500 „	9·3%
Total	...	241,900 acres	

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

Oilseeds

But the worst tale is that of oilseeds. The acreage in 1911-12 was 1,887,800. It has been shrinking ever since and in 1934-35, it fell down to 1,050,600 acres with only a slight rise in 1936-37 (1,100,500). Yet linseed, til, rape, mustard have great marketable value. Most of these are also confined to a few districts, as will be seen from the Tables 9 and 10, though two of them, *viz.*, rape and mustard, are still grown in a large number of districts.

TABLE 9

MAIN DISTRIBUTION OF LINSEED ACREAGE

Murshidabad	...	31,800 acres	
Nadia ...	...	23,000 ,,	
Noakhali ...	...	10,700 ,,	
Pabna ...	...	10,600 ,,	
Rajshahi ...	...	9,800 ,,	
Jessore ...	...	8,900 ,,	
Midnapore ...	...	7,400 ,,	
Faridpur ...	...	6,100 ,,	
Malda ...	...	5,000 ,,	
		113,300 ,,	86·7%
Other districts	...	17,300 ,,	13·3%
Total	...	130,600 acres	

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

TABLE 10

MAIN DISTRIBUTION OF TIL ACREAGE

Mymensingh	...	36,500 acres	
Dacca ...	...	26,500 ,,	
Pabna ...	...	26,100 ,,	
Bakarganj ...	...	22,000 ,,	
Chittagong Hill Tracts		16,900 ,,	
Faridpur ...	...	11,900 ,,	
Rajshahi	...	10,100 ,,	
Tipperah ...	...	8,600 ,,	
		158,600 ,,	86%
Other districts	...	25,200 ,,	14%
Total	...	183,800 acres	

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

Rape and Mustard

Rape and mustard are still grown in the largest number of districts, as will be seen from Table 11.

TABLE 11

DISTRIBUTION OF ACREAGE UNDER RAPE AND MUSTARD

Mymensingh	175,000 acres		
Rangpur	85,000 „		
Dacca ...	82,300 „		
Dinajpur	57,200 „		
Pabna ...	57,400 „		
Rajshahi	43,500 „	657,000 acres	
Jalpaiguri	38,600 „	88·7%	
Bogra ...	33,000 „		
Faridpur	23,300 „		
Murshidabad	23,000 „		
Tippera	20,700 „		
Jessore ...	18,000 „		
Nadia ...	9,000 „		
Burdwan	12,200 „		
Birbhum	8,200 „	58,300 acres	
Bankura	5,500 „	7·8%	
Hooghly	9,400 „		
Chittagong Hill Tracts	14,000 „		
Total	715,300 „		
Other districts	24,900 „	24,900 acres	
		3·5%	
	740,200 „	740,200 acres	

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

At a time when there were no transport facilities, every district had to depend for mustard oil upon local produce. Bengal still consumes the largest quantity of mustard oil. Yet the normal acreage in 1914-15 was 1,459,100 acres and it came down to 723,800 acres in 1934-35, being reduced by more than half in 20 years.

Sugar-cane

There is considerable scope for cultivation of sugar-cane in Bengal, as will be seen from a later chapter, but the total area under sugar-cane is still very small and its expansion is dependent upon the situation of sugar mills within easy reach and the obtaining of an adequate price by the grower. At present, the crop is mainly confined to a few districts. Table 12 gives the distribution of Sugar-cane acreage.

TABLE 12

SUGAR-CANE ACREAGE

Nadia ...	... 13,000 acres		
Rajshahi	... 20,500 „		
Dinajpur	... 52,700 „		
Rangpur	... 30,000 „	269,600 acres	
Dacca ...	... 43,400 „	76%	
Mymensingh	... 50,000 „		
Faridpur	... 15,000 „		
Bakarganj	... 45,000 „		
Burdwan	... 8,100 „		
Birbhum	... 7,400 „		
Midnapore	... 5,200 „		
Jalpaiguri	... 5,700 „	63,300 acres	
Bogra ...	... 9,000 „	18%	
Pabna ...	... 6,000 „		
Chittagong	... 6,000 „		
Murshidabad	... 7,700 „		
Malda	... 8,200 „		
Other districts	... 21,900 „	21,900 acres 6%	
Total	... 354,800 „	354,800 „	

(Season and Crop Report, 1936-37.)

Secondary Crops

The total acreage under secondary crops with its percentage is given in Table 13.

TABLE 13

SECONDARY CROPS, 1936-37

District.	Net cropped acreage	Total acreage under secondary crops	Percentage under secondary crops	Jute acreage	Percentage under Jute	Acreage under other secondary crops	Percentage of other secondary crops
24-Parganas	780,400	73,900	9·5	53,000	7	20,900	2·5
Nadia	76,400	228,200	30	61,000	8	167,200	22
Murshidabad	850,900	391,500	46	35,000	4	356,500	42
Jessore	782,500	164,400	21	85,000	11	79,400	10
Khulna	823,900	63,300	8	25,000	3·2	38,300	5
Burdwan	608,200	42,000	7	1,500	·2	40,500	6·8
Birbhum	704,300	29,000	4	—	—	29,000	4
Bankura	650,700	60,300	9	—	—	60,300	9
Midnapore	1,710,600	66,500	4	4,000	·2	62,500	3·8
Hooghly	316,100	42,300	13	22,500	7	19,800	6
Howrah	105,400	11,800	11	4,000	4	7,800	7
Rajshahi	1,019,600	296,300	29	87,500	9	208,800	20
Dinajpur	1,119,900	202,400	18	63,000	6	139,400	12

TABLE 13—*Contd.*

SECONDARY CROPS, 1936-37—*Contd.*

District	Net crooped acreage	Total acreage under secondary crops	Percentage under secondary crops	Jute acreage	Percentage under Jute	Acreage under other secondary crops	Percentage of other secondary crops
Jalpaiguri	745,600	113,000	15	31,000	4	82,000	11
Darjeeling	187,500	64,400	34	2,000	1	62,400	33
Rangpur	1,718,300	614,700	36	233,000	14	381,700	22
Bogra	563,000	175,400	31	80,000	14	95,400	17
Pabna	979,000	337,200	34	75,000	8	262,200	26
Malda	464,400	172,900	37	12,000	3	160,900	34
Dacca	1,442,200	534,000	37	64,000	18	270,000	19
Mymensingh	2,388,500	897,800	38	518,000	22	379,800	16
Faridpur	1,388,000	366,000	27	189,000	14	177,000	13
Bakarganj	1,623,300	197,400	12	39,000	2	158,400	10
Chittagong	653,000	15,300	2	300	—	15,000	2
Tippera	1,129,100	323,900	29	225,000	20	98,900	9
Noakhali	740,200	124,000	17	45,000	6	79,000	11
Chittagong Hill Tracts ...	207,500	40,800	20	—	—	40,800	20

N. B.—The following crops have been taken as secondary crops :—Wheat, Jowar, Barley, Bajra, Maize, Gram, other food grains (including pulses and marua), Linseed, Til, Rape and Mustard, other oil seeds, Sugar-cane, Jute, Tobacco, as per Season and Crop Report, 1936-37

It will be seen from the table that leaving aside the question of jute, which has been discussed in another place, there is very little of other secondary crops in the 24-Parganas and Khulna, practically in all the districts of the Burdwan Division and in Chittagong—they are mainly one-cropped districts; only a small quantity is grown in Noakhali and Tippera, Jessore, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Bakarganj; Jessore and Tippera, however, grow a fair percentage of jute, but the other districts are primarily paddy-growing districts. Most of these districts are very badly affected on the slightest irregularity of the monsoon. Certain portions of Burdwan, Midnapore and Hooghly have canal irrigation, but otherwise the crops depend entirely on the nature of rainfall, weather and monsoon.

Risk in Agriculture

Success of agricultural production in Bengal depends mainly upon timely and seasonal rainfall. It is considerably disturbed by seasonal fluctuations and disasters. Floods, excessive rains, untimely rains, hailstorms, etc., affect the outturn of normal crops and the agriculturist is also harassed by deficient rainfall, early cessation of monsoon, ill-distributed monsoon, drought, want of rainfall, irregular distribution of rainfall or the other side of the story in the riverain districts, namely, the unusually low level of rivers, destructive floods, cyclonic storms and tornadoes. All these beset agricultural production with extreme risks and the result is often not a matter of choice for the

agriculturist, however hardy, industrious and skilful he may otherwise be.

In the absence of adequate irrigation facilities in most districts—and Bengal has only a very small percentage of its cropped area irrigated in a scientific manner with large-scale farming almost totally absent —the position of the agriculturist becomes utterly helpless in spite of his best efforts. It is not a matter of option to him that he is an incorrigible fatalist. A shower in time or its absence may make or mar him for the rest of the year and is, therefore, bound to affect his morale.

World Events

And world events have also decided influence on the material condition of the agriculuturist. The Great War which continued from 1914 to 1918 acutely affected the prices of imported commodities and also of sugar, salt, cloth, kerosene, coal and other necessary requirements of life. Trade in jute also suffered from the effects of the War though to a certain extent it was counterbalanced by better prices obtained for other saleable produce and higher wages.

The Economic Depression

The abnormal rise in prices during the War had fallen to a certain extent after the end of the war but since about 1929-30 the abnormally low prices of jute and paddy badly affected the cultivator and Bengal passed through an abnormally acute economic distress for a period of 5 or 6 years. Prices were slightly better in 1935 and in 1936 but it is yet too early to judge the

movement of prices in the future, though signs for the present point to the return of more prosperous conditions for the future.

It may be noted that no other province was so badly hit by the terrible economic crisis as the province of Bengal. No other Provincial Government had to pass through such critical financial difficulties as the Government of Bengal had to face in those years. Primarily an agricultural province, agriculture in Bengal means production of only two main crops—rice and jute—and the phenomenal drop in the prices of rice and jute in the past few years affected every phase of economic life in this province.

Fifty years back, prices, it is true, were at a very low level. But the rise in the general price level within the last half-century had slowly influenced the entire economic life of the people. Rents, wages, commodity prices, standards of living, land values—all had gradually gone up, till suddenly the prices came down in a crash, without any corresponding adjustment either in relation to rents, land-values or taxes. Its economic consequence was the ruin of thousands.

Annual Loss through Fall in Prices

The normal harvest price of winter rice usually varied from Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 in the pre-depression period. The level came down to Rs. 2/8 to Rs. 3/8, while the autumn rice came down to even Rs. 2 per maund. The normal price of jute stood at Rs. 10 to Rs. 12, but the price came down to Rs. 3 and Rs. 4. It may be fairly assumed that the average price of rice came down by at least Rs. 2 per maund, while jute

price came down by at least Rs. 6 per maund. The average yield of rice in a normal year is about 13 maunds per acre (Bhadoi 12½ maunds, Winter 13½ maunds—average 13 maunds) and of jute 16½ maunds per acre. On these data the estimated economic loss of Bengal in terms of money-value come to over 85 crores of rupees in a normal year on these two crops alone, as will be seen from Table 14. This is, of course, on the assumption that the entire paddy and jute are sold by the cultivator. In fact, the cultivator retains a considerable portion of the paddy grown for his own consumption, though he sometimes sells paddy to meet his liabilities and then goes to the *Mahajan* for loan.

TABLE 14

ANNUAL LOSS THROUGH FALL IN PRICES OF RICE AND JUTE

	For rice	For jute
Normal acreage	23,533,600	2,310,300
Normal production per acre in clean grains	13 mds.	16⅙mds.
Loss per maund	Rs. 2	Rs. 6
Average loss on rice, 23,533,600×2×13 ...	=Rs. 61,18,73,600	
Average loss on jute, 2,310,300×6×16⅙	=Rs. 24,40,99,100	
Grand Total ...	=Rs. 85,59,72,700	

Widening the Basis of Agriculture

To-day there is no one remedy against any recurrence of such serious economic situation, but the most urgent need is to widen the basis of agriculture in the province—to grow more secondary crops and other suitable money crops. It is not likely that the price level will have any quick adjustment in the near future. But even if that were possible, we must even

now realise the economic folly of virtual dependence only upon two main crops. Every crisis has its lessons for the future and the last crisis will not go in vain if it can teach Bengal to take to other money crops, instead of mainly depending upon jute and rice.

Bengal must therefore produce more secondary and other money crops. With 117 municipalities, with jute mills, mining and industrial areas, with cities like Chittagong and Dacca, with Calcutta and wider Calcutta, it would be profitable to study the market needs of these industrial and urban areas. Lemons, pine-apples and papayas, potatoes, bananas, groundnuts, mustard and mustard-oil, sugar, wheat and pulses of all kinds, poultry, eggs and live-stock come in large quantities from outside places. The soil of Bengal is also suitable for the produce of all these articles. English vegetables of all kinds can be also grown both for market and food. It would be a profitable study for the economist to find out the extent to which Bengal is dependent upon outside supply of these articles. A careful organisation of market and adequate marketing facilities for these supplies would go a great way to improve the economic condition of the Bengal *raiyat*.

CHAPTER III

RICE

Special features of Rice production—Yield—Annual requirement—Annual deficit—More food production.

Special Features of Rice Production

"The problems that await solution in Bengal, if indeed the problems can be completely solved, are complex in their extreme"—these words of the Royal Commission on Agriculture are literally true of almost every agricultural problem in Bengal to-day. There is very little of canal irrigation in this province. Only about two lacs of acres is under a system of canal irrigation through Government irrigation canals out of $24\frac{1}{2}$ millions actually cropped in 1936-37. The proportion stands roughly 1 in 244. As per Season and Crop Report of 1936-37, out of this total irrigated area of 2 lacs of acres an area of 146,456 acres is said to be in the district of Burdwan and 38,425 acres in Midnapore. But in fact the area under irrigation in Midnapore is actually much less and is a gradually declining figure. It appears from the figures of the Irrigation Department that the irrigated area in Midnapore has declined from 91,000 acres in 1920-21 to only about to 10,491 acres in 1934-35. For all practical purposes, there are no proper irrigation facilities for crops in the other districts of Bengal. Some districts have a small area irrigated by private canals, tanks and wells, but they do not touch even the

fringe of the problem and the supply from such sources is extremely precarious. On the other hand, we have a comparatively short monsoon with small rainfall in many parts. The largest and the most common crop—paddy—is such that a deficiency of water at the critical periods of the growth of paddy plants spells failure and unfortunately rainfall has in the past been liable to very serious seasonal fluctuations. Unless the rain is received exactly when required, damage to rice crops will be inevitable and this cannot be made good by later additional supplies. Tornadoes, sudden and untimely floods and storms just before harvest cause considerable damage in some districts. It does not follow therefore that even in a year when the total volume of rainfall is normal, a good crop will be obtained, unless the rainfall has been both timely and sufficient and also provided that nature in her capricious moods does not otherwise play havoc.

Yield

Apart from these seasonal factors the average yield of rice is probably a gradually declining figure in this province as will be seen from Table 15.

TABLE 15

Quinquennium ending	Average yield per acre.
1906-1907	1,234 lbs.
1911-1912	983 „
1916-1917	1,036 „
1921-1922	1,029 „
1926-1927	1,022 „

TABLE 15—*Contd.*

Quinquennium ending	Average yield per acre.
1927-1928	779 lbs.
1928-1929	1,014 „
1929-1930	908 „
1930-1931	1,002 „
1931-1932	961 „
1932-1933	963 „
1933-1934	897 „
1934-1935	894 „
1935-1936	765 „

But whether this is due to decaying soil conditions or the absence of regular and well-distributed rainfall, the fact stands that in effect the produce per acre is a relatively low figure for this province. Taking the figures for the pre-depression period, the average of yield for 10 years from 1918-19 to 1927-28 was 1,007 lbs. per acre in Madras, 945 in Bombay against 851 in Bengal. On the other hand, the average for the same period was 1·2 tons (2,688 lbs.) in Egypt and 1·3 tons (2,912 lbs.) in Japan. Only a few decades before, crop production was as bad in Japan as it is in Bengal to-day but the present high yield in Japan has been achieved through the unflagging industry of the people combined with admirable organisation of Government. The soil is much more carefully and more intensively cultivated and Government there bestows very great care to get the utmost possible return from the land by special selection of quick-maturing crops. Canals for irrigation, dykes

and ditches for drainage considerably help the Japanese peasant. Land in Japan is heavily manured and the manure house is a special feature in Japan's agricultural life. Almost nothing is wasted that can be utilised as manure. "Issuing from every town daily may be seen strings of manure carts on their way to the surrounding villages where what cannot be used at once is easily stored in concrete cistern or sunken butt."* It is said that over 20 million pounds amounting to over Rupees 26 crores go into the Japanese soil every year in this shape.

Our Annual Requirement

Rice is the main diet of the people of the province, and for the cultivator, his chief food is rice and *dal* with very little of other dishes like vegetables, fish or meat. He takes rice for his breakfast, for his lunch and for his dinner. For the province the production of rice is therefore a matter of national health and national safety and yet Bengal does not produce enough rice needed for her own domestic consumption.

The population of Bengal is 510,873,436 of which 7,942,556 persons are from ages 0 to 5 years and 6,860,470 persons from ages 5 to 10 years. Deducting these two groups of ages, the number of persons from years 10 to 70 and over is 36,284,310. The bulk of those between the years of 4 to 10 in rural areas and specially in agriculturists' families cannot afford any other variety of children's food and they can get

* Mukherji's Rural Economy of India, p. 136.

nothing but rice for their meals. For them, the quantity may be taken at half the usual ration of an adult. There are 10,115,430 persons between the ages of 4 to 10 and they may be taken as equivalent in effect to 5,057,715 adults. The aggregate number of persons requiring full rations of rice therefore comes to 36,284,310 *plus* 5,057,715 = 41,342,025. Roughly we may deduct 1,352,027 persons as belonging to non-rice-eating communities and 40 millions of persons may approximately be taken as requiring rice as their main food. Taking the daily requirement of rice at 14 chataks per adult, the total requirement comes to 319 million maunds of rice per annum. Even if the ration is taken at 12 chataks, the standard Jail-ration, the aggregate quantity needed is just a little over 273 million maunds of rice. Converted to paddy, the figures on the 14-chatak basis come to 479 million maunds and on the 12-chatak basis to 410 million maunds of paddy.

Then there are requirements for seeds. The acreage in 1936-37 was nearly 22 million acres and on the basis of a maund per acre, the requirement is 22 million maunds.

Table 16 gives a comparative statement of estimated production and requirement and the annual deficit for the last ten years.

It should be noted that though there is slight variation of acreage year to year, the requirements of seed have been taken at the uniform figure of 22 million maunds of paddy but the difference is not such as to substantially affect the resultant conclusions.

TABLE 16

ANNUAL PRODUCTION AND ANNUAL REQUIREMENTS OF PADDY

A :—At 14 chataks—501 million maunds of Paddy (Consumption 479 and seeds 22)

B :—At 12 chataks—432 million maunds of Paddy (Consumption 410 and seeds 22)

Year	BHADOI				WINTER				BORO			Aggregate produce	Deficit on A	Deficit on B
	Area	Normal yield	Percentage of produce	Gross produce	Area	Normal yield	Percentage of produce	Gross produce	Area	Yield	Produce			
	Acres	Maunds		Maunds	Acres	Maunds		Maunds	Acres	Maunds	Maunds	Maunds	in million maunds	in million maunds
1936-37	5,756,600	18¾	76	82,031,550	15,803,600	20¼	98	313,622,442	432,300	22½	9,726,750	405,380,742	96	27
1935-36	5,851,300	,,	72	78,992,549	14,836,900	,,	59	177,263,863	403,700	,,	9,083,250	265,339,662	236	167
1934-35	5,571,800	,,	66	68,951,025	14,760,000	,,	74	221,178,600	407,900	,,	9,177,750	299,307,375	202	133
1933-34	5,775,300	,,	75	81,215,156	15,498,700	,,	77	298,156,240	398,500	,,	8,966,250	388,337,646	113	43
1932-33	5,787,500	,,	75	81,311,719	15,590,000	,,	79	243,242,975	393,900	,,	8,862,750	333,417,444	168	99
1931-32	6,163,000	,,	83	95,911,688	15,571,400	,,	86	271,175,931	394,400	,,	8,874,000	375,961,619	125	57
1930-31	5,082,100	,,	69	65,749,669	15,120,300	,,	92	281,691,189	379,600	,,	8,541,000	355,981,858	135	77
1929-30	5,031,100	,,	62	58,486,538	14,793,700	,,	78	233,676,492	399,800	,,	8,995,500	301,158,530	200	131
1928-29	5,649,000	,,	68	72,024,750	15,357,400	,,	89	349,424,000	397,500	,,	8,943,750	430,392,500	71	2
1927-28	5,072,400	,,	63	59,917,725	13,210,100	,,	62	165,852,505	399,700	,,	8,993,250	234,763,480	266	198
											Annual average ...		161	93

Table 16 has been prepared on the basis of calculations outlined above. But in order to guard against the possibility of any mistake, Table 17 has been compiled on the basis of the total yield of rice as reported in "The Estimates of Area and Yield of Principal Crops in India," the annual requirements being taken, on 14-chatak rate, at 122 lacs of tons of rice, including about 5 lacs of tons of rice for seed requirements. This table also shows considerable deficit in production.

TABLE 17

REQUIREMENT AND YIELD OF RICE—ANNUAL DEFICIT

Approximate Annual Requirements on 14-chatak basis :— 122 lacs of tons (5 lacs of tons taken for seed purposes).

	Yield in tons	Deficit in lacs of tons (approximate)
1911-12 ...	... 8,635,000	36
1912-13 ...	... 8,356,000	38
1913-14 ...	... 7,412,000	48
1914-15 ...	... 6,411,000	58
1915-16 ...	... 8,276,000	39
1916-17 ...	... 8,028,000	42
1917-18 ...	... 8,647,000	35
1918-19 ...	... 6,901,000	53
1919-20 ...	... 8,254,000	39
1920-21 ...	... 8,219,000	40
1921-22 ...	... 9,269,000	29
1922-23 ...	... 9,049,000	31
1923-24 ...	... 7,509,000	47
1924-25 ...	... 7,711,000	45
1925-26 ...	... 8,218,000	40
1926-27 ...	... 7,355,000	48
1927-28 ...	... 6,493,000	57
1928-29 ...	... 9,684,000	25
Carried over	144,427,000	

TABLE 17—*Contd.*

REQUIREMENT AND YIELD OF RICE—ANNUAL DEFICIT—*Contd.*

	Yield in Tons	Deficit in Lacs of Tons (approximate)
Brought forward	...144,427,000	
1929-30 ...	... 8,202,000	40
1930-31 ...	... 9,206,000	30
1931-32 ...	... 9,493,000	27
1932-33 ...	... 9,364,000	28
1933-34 ...	... 8,680,000	35
1934-35 ...	... 8,273,000	39
1935-36 ...	... 7,208,000	50
	204,853,000	

N.B.—No deduction has been allowed for import and export figures nor for any increase or decrease of population which has been taken at the figures of 1931 Census. But these variations will not substantially affect the resultant deficit.

Annual Deficit

These tables will show that the production of rice in Bengal almost every year lags behind consumption and in some years heavily. Bengal is thus in annual deficit of her normal food requirements; to that extent the Bengal cultivator must be taken as getting even less than the average estimated diet. It is true that a certain quantity is imported into Bengal and exported out of the province. If the import of rice from other places is added and the figures of exports from Bengal are deducted, the sum total of aggregate food available for consumption in the province is still much below the normal level. According to the latest estimate made by the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, the position of net import and export for Bengal is given in Table 18.

TABLE 18

IMPORT AND EXPORT OF RICE

Average import 6 lacs tons.	Average export abroad ...	1	lac tons
	Average export to other provinces	2½	lacs tons
		3½	lacs tons

Net available for internal consumption :—
2½ lacs tons of rice equivalent to 3¾ lacs tons of paddy, equivalent to 95 lacs maunds of paddy—say, roughly 1 million maunds of paddy.

But against an average deficit of 161 million maunds, this addition of 1 million does not substantially alter the position that the production of rice is much below the normal minimum requirements of the province.

More Food Production

Bengal must grow more food within the province and our economic policy should be so framed that we may always have an assured supply of sufficient food. Our production should at least be equal to consumption. This is essential as a reasonable measure of economic security. Every country is from time to time faced with economic and political crises. It will be weakness in our economic life if the food supply is not sufficient to meet the strain of such occasions. One must remember that during the great European War, the presence of the "Emden" in the Bay of Bengal dislocated the movements of ships to and from Bengal ports considerably. It would be an economic disaster of the first magnitude if we are not

self-sufficient in respect of our food supply. The producers of food must also have enough food to maintain national health. According to our estimate, the average annual food requirement for this province is 500 million maunds of paddy. Our production has been 340 million maunds per annum taking the decennial average from 1927 to 1937. The average annual deficit stands at 160 million maunds. Even if any margin is allowed for varying factors such as less requirements for urban people, sickness, substitution by other cereals, the deficit on even a most modest estimate will stand at over 125 million to 130 million maunds of paddy per year. The best remedy for this shortage without further increasing the acreage under rice, is to increase the average yield by at least 5 maunds per acre, leaving any additional areas for production of other money crops. And this is not beyond the range of possibility if lands are well manured and if there is less dependence upon monsoon conditions.

CHAPTER IV

JUTE

Jute Acreage and its distribution—Distribution of Jute Money —Cost of Production—Jute Production—Demand for Jute—Jute Price—Comparative fluctuations of Jute Prices—Is there any over-production—Annual Production and Consumption of Jute—Total Production and Consumption of Jute—Prices in interest of the Trade—Middlemen—Importance of Jute.

Jute Acreage and its Distribution

Jute is said to be the principal money crop of the cultivator, but this must be taken subject to the reservation that its production is confined mainly to a few districts and its cultivation in those districts forms a comparatively large proportion of the total cultivated acreage in the province. It should, however, be realised that owing to the pressure of population, the size of an average holding in these jute districts is relatively small and that the area under jute for an individual family is not large in the predominantly jute districts. But taking these districts as a whole, jute certainly forms their principal money crop.

The total acreage under jute in Bengal in 1936-37 was 21,992,500 acres, and nearly one-fourth of this area was in one district only. The total jute acreage was distributed as follows:

70% in 7 districts
20% in 6 districts

9% in 6 districts
2% in 6 districts
none in 2 districts.

Table 19 shows the figures of the jute acreage in each district compared with the total provincial acreage and the total cropped area of the district.

TABLE 19

JUTE ACREAGE, 1936-37

District.	Net area cropped.	Area under Jute.	Percentage of Jute area in the district to total Jute area in the province.	Percentage of Jute area in the district to net cropped area in the district.
Mymensingh ...	2,388,500	518,000	24	22
Dacca	1,442,200	264,000	12	18
Rangpur ...	1,718,300	233,000	11	13·5
Tipperah ...	1,129,100	225,000	10·5	20
Faridpur ...	1,388,000	189,000	8·8	14
Rajshahi ...	1,019,600	87,500	4·06	8·5
Jessore	782,500	85,000	8·94	10·8
Pabna	979,000	75,000	3·48	8
Bogra	563,000	80,000	3·71	14
Dinajpur ...	1,119,900	63,000	2·95	5·6
Nadia	764,200	61,000	2·8	8
24-Parganas ...	780,400	53,000	2·46	6·8
Noakhali ...	740,200	45,000	2·09	6
Bakarganj ...	1,623,300	39,000	1·81	2
Murshidabad ...	850,900	35,000	1·62	4
Jalpaiguri ...	745,600	31,000	1·43	4
Khulna	823,900	25,000	1·16	8
Hooghly ...	316,100	22,500	1·04	7
Malda ...	464,000	12,000	·55	3
Howrah ...	105,400	4,000		4
Midnapore ...	1,710,600	4,000		·25
Darjeeling ...	187,500	2,000	·6	1
Burdwan ...	608,200	1,500		·25
Chittagong ...	653,000	300		...
Bankura ...	650,700	0	0	0
Birbhum ...	704,300	0	0	0
			100%	

Distribution of Jute Money

It is a common assumption that the material condition of the people of this province as a whole

improved during years of high prices, but in fact the jute money was not distributed over the whole province and also that the cultivators of all districts were not equally benefited. It appears from the Census Report of 1931 that the annual average of jute money received by the growers for the decade ending in 1929, was roughly Rs. 4,523 lacs. On the assumption that the different districts in this province grew jute proportionately to the normal jute acreage of 1929. Table 20 gives the distribution of this jute money, district by district, and will show how the money was not evenly distributed.

TABLE 20

DISTRIBUTION OF JUTE MONEY

Annual average during ten years ending 1929—Rs. 45,22.87 lacs

	In Lacs of Rupees.	Percentage.
Mymensingh	1058·75	23·8
Dacca	493	10·9
Rangpur	461·38	10·2
Tipperah	448·25	9·8
Faridpur	411·50	9·1
Pabna	285·20	5·2
Jessore	167·83	8·7
Rajshahi	167·88	8·7
Bogra	140·20	3·1
Dinajpur	135·66	8
Nadia	131	2·9
24-Parganas	126·66	2·8
Jalpaiguri	95	2·1
Bakarganj	90·5	2
Noakhali	72·38	1·6
Hooghly	68·33	1·4
Malda	54·25	1·2
Murshidabad	45·25	1
Khulna	45·25	1
Howrah	22·5	·5
Midnapore	22·5	·5
Burdwan	1·88	·03
Darjeeling	·45	·01
Chittagong	·08	...
Bankura	0	0
Birbhum	0	0

Cost of Production

Jute is an extremely exhausting crop for the soil. It is only the deposit of rich alluvial silt brought in by the rivers in flood that makes its cultivation possible even without manure in some places. In its preparation in the final form, the fibre requires washing in a tank, pool or stream for hours, done by human labour in waist-deep water. The wages of jute labourers are therefore high and the cost of production is consequently high. Jute, thus, can yield no profit when the price goes below a certain level. If the cultivator grows jute to-day in spite of the price of jute not being sufficiently high to meet the cost of production, it is in the expectation of a better and on account of the absence of any other suitable money crop of equal or higher value ; he has his land, he grows the amount of paddy which he considers sufficient for his purposes and he scatters jute seeds as a gamble with nature on the mere expectation of getting remunerative prices. For a parallel to this situation, one may look back to the nineties of the last century. There was successive increase in the acreage under cotton in America, in spite of the average cost of production being above the market price.

The production of jute is also conditioned by many natural and climatic influences. Heavy rains, drought, ill-distributed rainfall, insect pest, early flood, tornado—these and many others adversely influence the yield of jute.

According to a note supplied to the Banking Enquiry Committee of 1929-30, by the Director of

Agriculture, Bengal, an acre of jute, assuming an average season, requires 82 man-days and 29 bullock-days. Calculated on the basis of Eight Annas for human labour—and the wages of jute labourers is higher than the average—and Ten Annas for bullock labour which includes a pair of animals and a man, the estimated cost of jute production per maund will be, on an assumption of 16 maunds yield per acre, about Rs. 4 per maund. This does not include the rent or value of land, the Union rate or interest, the cost of manure or, in fact, any other liability. If the average yield is taken at $14\frac{1}{2}$ maunds, the cost per maund will be about Rs. 4-4-0. Calculating the rent, rates and taxes, seeds, manure, and the value of land, jute is an unremunerative produce, if the average harvest price is less than Rs. 5 per maund under the present market conditions.

Jute Production

The production of jute is the virtual monopoly of this province, only a small percentage being grown in Bihar, Orissa, Assam, and the States of Cooch Behar and Tipperah. No other country in the world produces jute. It has a definite international demand and there is a market in all the continents, for both manufactured and raw jute. Many countries have, for some time past, attempted to find substitutes for jute but their efforts have not on the whole been successful to such an extent as to have any commercial consequences. It would indeed be difficult to find for commercial purposes a substitute for jute equally useful and equally cheap.

Demand for Jute

During the Great War, there was very little international commerce, but large quantities of jute manufactures were required for war purposes. With the post-War rehabilitation of international commerce, jute was again in demand for commercial purposes. During the years of economic depression, there was a shrinkage in the demand. The normal annual demand usually varies from 90 to about 115 lacs of bales (400 lbs. each); it came down, during the years of depression, to about 80 lacs of bales. After the depression, the demand has been steadily on the increase and in 1936-37, it was 112 lacs of bales.

Jute Price

Yet with such a demand for jute the characteristic feature of jute prices has been their wide fluctuations. Compared with the price of other commodities, jute prices hardly ever keep any parity with the general price level. Table 21 will show the fluctuations of prices of jute compared with other commodities and it will show that the price level of jute does not move with other commodity prices.

Is there any Over-Production?

It is said that the fluctuations in jute prices are in the main due to variations in the production of jute and that its relatively low price is primarily due to over-production. Every agricultural produce must necessarily fluctuate from year to year and specially in Bengal, where so much depends upon season, monsoon and weather. Jute is not an exception to

TABLE 21

Comparative Fluctuations of Jute Prices

Year.	Winter Rice—Cleaned,	Wheat.	Gram.	Linseed.	Rape and Mustard,	Tobaoco.	Jute.
	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.
1923-24	5 4	4 13	4 0	8 0	8 4	13 5	9 0
1924-25	6 7	6 0	4 12	8 0	8 11	15 0	12 0
1925-26	7 0	6 1	4 14	8 0	9 8	16 0	18 13
1926-27	7 3	6 4	5 0	7 13	9 0	14 8	8 4
1927-28	7 8	6 2	5 12	7 8	9 0	17 4	8 4
1928-29	6 10	6 0	5 8	8 0	8 12	20 0	9 0
1929-30	6 0	5 14	5 0	7 0	8 5	15 0	8 0
1930-31	4 1	4 0	3 0	5 5	5 4	10 0	3 9
1931-32	3 5	3 8	3 0	4 8	4 10	8 0	4 4
1932-33	2 10	3 2	2 11	3 15	4 4	8 14	3 8
1933-34	3 0	3 0	2 10	3 13	4 5	8 0	3 8
1934-35	3 4	3 0	2 11	3 12	4 6	7 0	3 8
Percentage of fall on the triennial average of 1932-35 compared with 1923-26 taking the latter as 100.	53	45·5	44	53	51	46	75·5

such variations, and yet its prices fluctuate much more than what mere production can justify. Table 22 gives the quantity of annual production and consumption and the harvest price for the last 15 years.

TABLE 22

ANNUAL PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF JUTE

Year.	Production in lacs of bales.	Consumption in lacs of bales.	Harvest price per ton.	Deficit of surplus in production in lacs of Bales.
			Rs.	
1922-23 ...	64	80	273	−16
1923-24 ...	94	93	245	+ 1
1924-25 ...	91	98	827	− 7
1925-26 ...	84	94	518	−10
1926-27 ...	124	103	225	+21
1927-28 ...	130	106	225	+24
1928-29 ...	105	108	245	− 3
1929-30 ...	109	112	218	− 3
1930-31 ...	102	84	97	+18
1931-32 ...	66	77	116	−11
1932-33 ...	88	83	95	+ 5
1933-34 ...	87	89	95	− 2
1934-35 ...	98	93	95	+ 5
1935-36 ...	86	95	114	− 9
1936-37 ...	104	113	114	− 9

The table will show that while the price fell heavily in 1926 and 1927, the years of surplus production, it had no corresponding rise in the two following years of deficit, *viz.*, in 1928 and in 1929. In 1931, again, which was a deficit year, the price was less than the price of 1926 and of 1927, the two surplus years. The price did not rise correspondingly high in 1936 and in 1937, both years of deficit. Taking the figures from year to year, the variations between production and consumption may justify price fluctuations up to a certain extent and within certain limits, but not to the extent the actual

TABLE 23

Total Production and Consumption of Jute

In Lacs of Bales

Year.	Total estimated yield.	Crops exceeding or less than forecast.	Mill consumption.	Export (from Calcutta and Chittagong).	Country consumption.	Total production.	Total consumption.	Harvest Price in Rupees per ton.
1922-23	42·37	+21·52	46·15	29·02	5	63·89	80·17	278
1923-24	69·96	+23·91	50·04	37·71	5	93·87	92·75	245
1924-25	80·45	+10·66	55·19	38·22	5	91·11	98·41	327
1925-26	78·51	+15·00	53·44	35·16	5	83·51	93·60	518
1926-27	108·89	+14·94	53·74	44·48	5	123·83	103·22	225
1927-28	102·30	+ 9·20	56·33	44·86	5	129·50	106·19	225
1928-29	99·16	+ 5·67	58·79	44·28	5	104·83	108·07	245
1929-30	97·67	+11·41	62·46	44·46	5	109·08	111·95	211
1930-31	112·31	−10·78	44·37	34·27	5	101·61	83·64	87
1931-32	55·66	+ 9·89	41·50	30·53	5	65·55	77·03	116
1932-33	70·97	+16·99	42·45	35·67	5	87·96	83·12	95
1933-34	80·12	+ 7·02	41·97	42·25	5	87·14	89·22	95
1934-35	79·64	+18·29	44·54	43·52	5	97·93	93·06	95
1935-36	72·39	+13·14	48·73	41·40	5	85·53	95·13	114
1936-37	87·35	+16·29	58·93	48·71	5	103·64	112·64	114
						1,421·00	1,428·17	

Average annual production $94\frac{11}{15}$ lacs of bales. Average annual consumption $95\frac{1}{5}$ lacs of bales.

fluctuations go. It only shows that the price of jute, though undoubtedly affected by the volume of production, has special features of its own which brings down its prices relatively lower than the general price level. At the same time, taking the period of the last 15 years as a whole, the production of jute has not exceeded consumption and the total yield has not been more than the aggregate quantity needed for the markets in India and abroad. This will be seen from Table 23.

Taking the average of the last 15 years, the average annual consumption of jute was roughly 95 lacs of bales, while the annual production during the same period has been just above 95 lacs of bales. It may be noted that there was world-wide economic depression within this period restricting trade and necessarily reducing the demand for jute. But in spite of such abnormal disturbance in the economic condition of the world which persisted for some years, the production of jute in the long run has not been more than the needs of the market. One may reasonably conclude that the fluctuations in prices, as also the relatively low price of jute, could not have been mainly due to this factor and the argument that the depression in prices is due to over-production of jute, does not stand after scrutiny of facts.

Prices in Interest of the Trade

There is a considerable body of opinion in the country that the marketing conditions of jute and the process of movement of jute from the field to the factory determine the price in the interests of the

trade rather than the welfare of the growers. The grower has no power to hold over and he is compelled to bring his jute within a short compass of time to the market. Jute being the only money-crop of importance in the jute-growing districts, every one regards its harvest time as the season for collections. The landlord, the *mahajan,* the credit banks, the local authorities, in short, creditors of all degrees and ranks—all at the same time put pressure on the grower for the collection of their dues ; the grower is thus confronted all at once by his creditors and, in the absence of adequate and regular credit facilities, he is compelled to meet his liabilities by bringing all his jute at one time to the market. "Buy jute in Puja time" is now a tradition with the trade. That is the time when the cultivator is not merely confronted by all his creditors but has also invariably to meet other liabilities and expenses of his own. If there were a steady and regular flow of jute throughout the year, jute prices would probably have been firmer than at present.

The mills have invariably a large surplus stock purchased from previous years' crops and the trade is, thus, in a position to bargain on its own terms. The complete helplessness of the growers against organised trade and business interests naturally affects the price and the hierarchy of middlemen between the grower and the manufacturer reduces the margin for the grower who seems only to get the residuum after paying the share of everybody else. Yet it is the grower who has the monopoly of the raw material ; the trade has no such monopoly.

The number of looms for jute manufacture within India is only about 60 per cent. of the world's total.

Middlemen

The other contributory cause to the low price for the grower is the multiplicity of the middlemen between the grower and the consumer. In the absence of any contact between the producer and the consumer the grower gets only a portion of the total value not even sufficient to meet his cost of production. The *Farias* and the *Beparis,* the *Arathdars,* the merchants and the balers come in between the grower and the consumer. The number of middlemen is larger in the case of jute than in the case of other crops. It is partly due to the prevalent trade practices and partly to the special process of baling required at the finishing stage of the export of the fibre. According to the evidence before the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee, the number of *Beparis* in Narayanganj centre alone was estimated to be over 2,000.

The prevalence of different weights in different localities and the practice of additional weights and tollage further reduce the resultant price for the cultivator. It appears from the evidence before the Jute Enquiry Committee that various tolls are levied by middlemen ; dryage allowance known as *Dhalta* is often deducted in calculating the weight of jute sold ; some extra jute known as *Dasturi* is always taken with each maund weighed ; the sellers have often to give about two seers extra per maund ; 10 per cent wastage is generally charged in mofussil centres ;

the *Beparis* have in some places to give about 145 seers extra per each 100 maunds, in others even an excess of 12½ maunds per hundred maunds. Weighing charges, staff allowance, charges for festivals and functions, sometimes even contributions for *Goshalas* and other charitable institutions are realised and in some places the seller has to pay even for the cost of the barber, the washerman, the weighman, the sorter and such other staff of the purchasing firms! The Calcutta firms generally get an extra weight of five seers per kutcha bale.

According to an estimate made by the Deputy Director of Agriculture, Eastern Circle, Dacca, the lowest grades of *Farias* make a profit of 4 to 8 annas per maund, the *Beparis* make 4 to 8 annas per maund, the *mahajans* 4 to 8 annas per maund, kutcha balers 4 to 8 annas per maund, so that when the Calcutta price is Rs. 5 per maund, the grower does not get more than Rs. 3. The cost of transit from village to outlying markets and jute centres, including the *Bepari's* profits should not ordinarily exceed at the highest three annas per maund. The difference between the village price and the price at outlying jute centres should not, therefore, exceed three annas per maund, but it was reported before the Jute Enquiry Committee that the difference was on an average six annas per maund at Mymensingh and sometimes went even up to eight annas at Narayanganj.

Transport Charges

The cost of transport including other incidental charges, from outlying jute centres to Calcutta and

its neighbourhood, was estimated by a witness before the Jute Enquiry Committee as follows:—

	Rs.	As.	P.
Freight	0	7	6
Local Baling ...	0	1	6
Godown Rent ...	0	1	0
Hessian Ticket ...	0	1	0
Transit Insurance ...	0	0	6
Fire Insurance ...	0	0	6
Shortening weight claim	0	1	0
	0	13	0 per maund.

This works out at Rs. 22 per ton approximately, and this should be the difference between the harvest price and the Calcutta price of raw jute needed for mills in India.

Baling Charges

For purposes of export, jute in Kutcha Bales requires assorting and Pucca baling and the cost of such assorting, baling and transport to docks should not, on an average, be more than Rs. 16/14/- per ton. The customs duty and port dues, ocean freight, insurance and other sundry expenses, agency commissions do not ordinarily exceed Rs. 63 per ton.* Thus the difference between the export price of jute in Pucca bales and the harvest price should not be more than Rs. 102 per ton (Rs. 22 *plus* Rs. 16/14/- *plus* Rs. 63 = Rs. 101/14/-) including freight and port dues, or Rs. 39 per ton excluding such charges.

* Since 1937 the Ocean freight has increased by Rs. 5/8/- per ton and therefore the figure should be Rs. 68/8/- per ton since 1937.

Harvest Price and Manufacturing Cost

It would be interesting now to study the harvest price of jute as published in official reports and the price received by the manufacturers and balers. The following is an estimate of manufacturing cost according to one experienced in the manufacture and export of jute and jute fabrics.

For manufacture of one ton of Hessian of the standard type (40-10-½ oz. – 36 × 20) it is necessary to have one ton of jute *plus* a wastage of 7½ per cent. Even if the wastage is taken as 10 per cent, it means that one ton of Hessian requires 1 1/10 ton of raw jute. The manufacturing cost on the basis of 54 hours of work in Jute Mills is roughly about Rs. 140 per ton of Hessian. Again, a slightly better quality of jute is required for the manufacture of Hessian and at the highest a rupee extra per maund may be taken as the additional cost for this better quality. It is a fair estimate to calculate 7½ per cent on the total cost of production as the profit of the Mills, while another 7½ per cent may be taken as the depreciation charges. The transport charges from the mofussil, as has been shown before, come up to annas thirteen per maund or roughly Rs. 22 per ton.

For the manufacture of sack, an inferior quality of jute is required and the prices paid would be less than the average price. The manufacturing cost of a ton of sack is about Rs. 100. Practically no wastage need be calculated for sacks, as waste fibre is utilised for other purposes. Profits and depreciation charges may be taken as less than what has been calculated

for Hessian. But in our estimate, no deduction has been allowed for the lower price of raw materials, and a margin of 5 per cent has also been allowed for wastage while profits and depreciation charges have been calculated at the same rate as in the case of the Hessian, *viz.*, $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent as profit and $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent as depreciation. The mills in India generally manufacture 45 per cent Hessian and 55 per cent sacking.

Estimated on these figures, the comparative prices of Hessian fabrics and jute fibres against harvest prices are shown in Tables 24, 25 and 26:

TABLE 24

COMPARATIVE PRICES OF HESSIAN AND JUTE

Per Ton in Rupees

Year	Harvest Price*	Total manufacturing cost of Hessian.†	Price of Hessian.‡	Additional Margin.
1920	164	481	795	864
1921	164	431	862	431
1922	273	568	1005	437
1923	245	588	767	234
1924	327	636	997	361
1925	518	872	1044	172
1926	225	507	876	369
1927	225	507	1050	543
1928	245	583	948	410
1929	218	497	661	164
1930	97	346	487	141
1931	116	870	487	117
1932	95	343	520	177
1933	95	348	529	186
1934	95	348	518	175
1935	114	367	448	81
1936	114	367	456	89

* *Harvest Price* :—

Calculated from figures published in the Agricultural Statistics of British India. The harvest price is actually for the Financial year, e.g., the price of 1920 is for 1920-21. For purposes of comparison, the price for the Financial year has been taken to be the same for the Calendar year.

†*Manufacturing Cost* :—

For 1 Ton Hessian

1 Ton Raw Jute
10% wastage
} —at harvest price.

Rs. 22 per ton as transport, Kutcha Baling and other incidental charges.

Rs. 27 per ton as higher value of better quality of jute.

Rs. 140 as manufacturing cost, 15% on the aggregate cost, as above, as profit and depreciation charges.

‡*Price of Hessian* :—

Figures from the Indian Jute Mills Association for 40-10-½ oz.—36 x 22.

TABLE 25

COMPARATIVE PRICE OF JUTE FABRIC AND FIBRE

Per Ton in Rupees

Year.	Harvest Price.	Hessian cost.	Sacking cost.*	Average cost of Fabric.†	Average Price of Fabric.‡	Additional Margin.
1920	164	481	340	877	681	804
1921	164	481	340	377	488	106
1922	278	568	471	510	568	58
1923	245	533	437	476	581	105
1924	327	636	586	576	605	29
1925	518	872	760	805	711	– 94
1926	225	507	413	451	657	206
1927	225	507	418	451	600	149
1928	245	588	437	476	625	149
1929	218	497	404	441	561	120
1930	97	346	256	292	445	158
1931	116	370	281	317	330	13
1932	95	343	256	291	328	37
1933	95	343	256	291	318	27
1934	95	343	256	291	313	22
1935	114	367	279	334	316	– 18
1936	114	367	279	334	290	– 44

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* *Manufacturing Cost* :—

For 1 Ton Sacking—

1 Ton Raw Jute
5% wastage
} —at harvest price.

Rs. 22 per ton as transport, Kutcha bailing and incidental charges.

Rs. 100 as cost of manufacture.

15% on the aggregate value as above as profits and depreciation charges.

†*Average Cost of Jute Fabric* :—

45% of Hessian value, 55% of sacking value, mills production being approximately at the above proportion.

‡ *Average Price of Jute Fabric* :—

Figures calculated from the Report of the Sea-borne Trade—total value of Exports divided by total tonnage of Exports.

TABLE 26

COMPARATIVE PRICES OF PUCCA BALES AND RAW JUTE

Per Ton in Rupees

Year.	Harvest Price.	Pucca Baling & transport charges.	Total cost for Pucca Bales.*	Average Price of Pucca Bales.†	Additional Margin.
1920	164	40	204	355	151
1921	164	40	204	310	106
1922	273	40	313	360	47
1923	245	40	285	322	37
1924	327	40	367	368	1
1925	518	40	558	585	—18
1926	225	40	265	455	190
1927	225	40	265	345	80
1928	245	40	285	357	72
1929	218	40	258	345	87
1930	97	40	137	247	110
1931	116	40	156	181	25
1932	95	40	135	185	50
1933	95	40	135	150	15
1934	95	40	135	142	7
1935	114	40	154	169	15
1936	114	40	154	179	25

These figures may be taken as only approximately correct, but they are valuable as showing the prices received by the cultivator as against the prices of manufactured goods and the raw jute exported. They show the quantum of value received by the grower as against the additional profits of tradesmen and manufacturers. These figures indicate that till about two

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* *Cost of Pucca Bale per Ton* :—

Charges for Kutcha Baling, transport and other incidental charges	Rs. 22 per ton
Assorting, Pucca Baling and transporting to docks	Rs. 16/14
Miscellaneous	Rs. 1/2
Raw materials at harvest price.	

†*Average Price of Pucca Bale* :—

Figures from the Report of the Sea-borne Trade—Total value of Raw Jute divided by tonnage.

years back the jute trade and industry generally had an almost uninterrupted period of prosperity, but that the grower did not participate to a corresponding extent in this prosperity.

It is, of course, correct to say that in business, one always tries to purchase at the lowest price and sell at the highest. Unfortunately the conditions are different in this province where we have an organised industry and an unorganised body of agriculturists, ignorant and scattered over a very wide area and as such utterly helpless in the matter of bargaining powers with the powerful organisations in trade and industry. The ultimate welfare of the grower is, therefore, a factor which has to be considered and this should, at least to some extent, determine the amount of trade profits. While it is quite correct to say that no industry can survive without a fair margin of profit in order to retain its efficiency, it is also equally true that the grower must also obtain a fair price for the raw materials he produces.

Importance of Jute

Jute has a special importance all its own for this province both as an agricultural commodity and as an industry. It is a valuable money-crop for the cultivator in a number of districts ; as an industry it has a paid-up capital of about Rs. 25 crores invested in 104 mills, out of which 95 are within the province, all within a compact area. About 275,000 workers are engaged daily in these jute mills. It gives a substantial income to the Central and Provincial revenues;

Bengal's share of Jute Excise duties in 1937-38 was over Rs. 2½ crores and this represents only 62½ per cent of the total income. The Railways and Steamer Companies, other transport agencies, insurance concerns, brokers, balers, exporters, middlemen, dealers—in fact, every one in the chain gets a good return in the shape of profit or income from the distribution, manufacture and export of jute fibres and jute fabrics. The industry itself and every section of the trade are highly organised, resourceful and well-informed and get their quota of gain in the shape of wages, dividends, income and profits from export of the fabric and from manufactured goods, even though the industry is not a monopoly of the province. It is only the grower who does not always get his fair share of the return from the value of jute, in spite of the production of the fibre being virtually monopoly of the province and though it requires most rigorous and exacting labour to make the fibre suitable for the market, a jute grower does not in the present market obtain a price even sufficient to meet the cost of production.

CHAPTER V

SUGAR-CANE

Sugar-cane, its possibilities—Bengal Cultivator no novice—Bengal sugar trade—Differential duty on Bengal sugar—Sugar exports—Equalisation measure—Bounty fed sugar—Last stage in the decline—Success of Bengal sugar trade, its reason—Old methods of sugar refinements—Sugar trade of Nadia and Jessore—Attempts of European planters—Sugar Committee of 1920—Indian Tariff Board Enquiry of 1930—Comparative sugar-cane acreage—Average yield of *Gur*—Economic possibilities.

Sugar-cane—Its Possibilities

The acreage under sugar-cane in Bengal has been given in a previous chapter; in this chapter the economic possibilities of a large sugar-cane production are proposed to be investigated. This must inevitably depend on the establishment of more mills and the securing of a fair price for the grower. Sugar is now almost a prime commodity and has a large internal consumption. Its production, as a measure of national safety in times of war, was a recognised feature in economic life in pre-War and even in post-War Europe. In most countries, a well-regulated tariff policy reserves the home market for home-grown sugar.

Bengal Cultivator No Novice

The Bengal cultivator is not a novice in sugar production. "India was probably the original home of sugar and the area under sugar is larger than any country in the world," is the opinion of Mr. C. W. E. Cotton, in his *Hand Book of Commercial Information.*

It is just over a century since Sir John Colebrooke, in his treatise, *Husbandry of Bengal,* wrote: "The sugar-cane which very name was scarcely known by the ancient inhabitants of Europe grew luxuriously throughout Bengal in the remotest times. From India it was introduced into Arabia and thence into Europe and Africa"; and he was of the opinion that the Persian, Greek, Latin and modern European names of cane and its product were derived from the Sanskrit term for manufactured sugar, *viz.* "Sarkara." He further stated that sugar was common to the whole of Bengal and, apart from internal consumption, Calcutta itself exported a large amount of sugar to Great Britain and to other places in the West.

Colebrooke further records that from Benares to Rungpur, from the borders of Assam to those of Cuttack, there was scarcely a district in Bengal or its dependent provinces wherein the sugar-cane did not flourish. The districts of Rungpur, Birbhum and Midnapore are particularly mentioned where the sugar-cane "most specially thrives"; Colebrooke specially refers to the unlimited possibility of sugar-cane production in Bengal.

Bengal Sugar Trade

The East India Company began their trade in India much earlier than their assumption of the administration of the country. Between 1674 and 1680, the Company purchased a good quantity of white sugar for export to Europe. Prior to this, the Portuguese exported sugar from India to Europe. After they discontinued it, the East India Company

carried on trade in sugar between India and Europe. It appears from the evidence given before the House of Commons in 1830, 1831, and 1832 that Bengal cane sugar was as good as the West Indies product and further that some superior sugar had been manufactured in Bengal "after undergoing a special process."

Differential Duty on Bengal Sugar

But, perhaps in the interest of the West Indies, Bengal sugar was subjected, in Great Britain, to a very heavy duty and this stood in the way of any further expansion of the trade.

British West Indies was then the chief supplier of sugar to Great Britain. The eyes of the British nation were seriously turned for the first time to Bengal sugar owing to a sudden rise, about 1820, in the price of sugar in Great Britain partly caused by a failure in the crops in the West Indies and partly by the increasing consumption of sugar throughout Europe. Export of Bengal sugar on a larger scale began and continued for years in spite of heavy differential duties which Bengal sugar had to meet to reach the English market. Even though it cost less than 5 shillings per cwt. for Bengal sugar, where British West Indies sugar would have cost 30 shillings for the same quantity, Bengal sugar could not compete with West Indies sugar owing to these heavy differential duties.

Colebrooke pleaded for encouraging importation of Bengal sugar by equalising the duties. While the West Indies sugar was liable to a duty of 15 shillings per ton only, sugar from India was liable to an *ad*

valorem duty of £37-16-3 per cent. Colebrooke calculated that the importer of Indian sugar, who could have made a profit of about £18 per ton, if these duties were equalised, had to suffer a loss of about £4 per ton after the actual duty was paid.

Sugar Exports

In spite of the discriminating duties, sugar prices were so high and the supply so insufficient, that Bengal exported a large quantity of fine sugar to Great Britain. Calcutta exported, between 1830 and 1835, an annual quantity of the value of Rs. 21 lacs. British India was then considered a foreign country and the West Indies was supposed to have the right of monopoly in supplying sugar as against Bengal. A band of noble-minded Englishmen pleaded for promoting the prosperity and economic well-being of India and they succeeded in getting the Parliament pass a law in 1837 recognising the right of British India to be placed on equally advantageous terms with other British Colonial possessions.

Equalisation Measure

As a result of the equalisation measure of 1837, large quantities of Bengal sugar entered the British market. In 1837-38 the export from Calcutta was—

To Great Britain	...	595,856 Maunds
To other countries	...	218,915 Maunds
Total Value	...	Rs. 6,718,911/-

From 1840-41 to 1847-48 Great Britain itself was a sufficiently large market and exports to other places were almost insignificant, in fact just about

8,000 maunds, in 1845-46. The exports to Great Britain had a phenomenal rise during this period and in 1845-46 they rose to 1,831,263 maunds, of the total value of about Rs. 179 lacs.

Bounty-fed Sugar

Unfortunately, restrictions were reimposed in Great Britain on Bengal sugar in 1846. "With the view of protecting the home-refiner and West India proprietor from the effects of the full development of skill in the manufacture of the East," to quote Mr. Robinson,* higher discriminative duties were again imposed on any sugar imported from India of a higher grade than the standard of Muscovado or raw West India sugar. The law of 1846 arrested the growth of the trade. It restricted export from Bengal. Still there was a large demand for Bengal sugar, but it was soon threatened by a new danger.

England adopted Free Trade and India had to follow in its wake. While Continental bounty-fed sugar swamped and captured the world market including India, heavy import duties kept out Indian sugar from the foreign market. Between 1863 and 1897 there were successive Sugar Conferences but unfortunately India was out of the picture. More bounties and higher import duties killed the sugar trade of India and for a time India's old sugar trade completely disappeared. India came into the vortex of the international market and Java, Mauritius, Cuba, Germany, Austria, Japan and China dumped their sugar into Indian ports.

* The Bengal Sugar Planter—by Mr. S. H. Robinson (1849).

Last Stage in the Decline

The last stage in the decline of sugar trade came when Bengal adopted a deliberate policy of growing more jute with the result that it finally reduced sugar-cane cultivation in Bengal seriously, as will be evident from the figures in Table 27. With an extraordinary demand for jute, with jute mills within her borders and with the influence of the Agricultural Department in carrying on continuous propaganda in favour of jute, the price obtained for jute was too alluring for the cultivators to resist.

TABLE 27

ACREAGE UNDER SUGAR-CANE

Year	Area
1890-91	1,126,781*
1895-96	967,300*
1900-01	801,809*
1905-06	625,736*
1908-09	508,100*
1930-31	198,500

Success of Bengal Sugar Trade—Its Reason

India was, formerly, a country which supplied not only its own but also the foreign demand for sugar. Almost throughout the country, the manufacture of sugar was simple, cheap and possible without any costly plant. The machinery and utensils used consisted of a mill constructed on the simplest and cheapest plan with a few earthen pots suited to the simple adaptability of peasant life. "We cannot help

* These figures include Bihar and Orissa, but 60 per cent of these areas were in Bengal proper.

admiring how perfectly adapted the native contrivances are, in every way, for the ends they are meant to compass ; in giving the poor cultivator, as regards the first process of *Gur* making, the most effectual, cheap and economical means of producing a saleable commodity from the small patch of cane his labour is limited to ; and to the native refiner similar advantages in cleaning and whitening for the market the limited quantity of sugar he is, with his small capital, restricted to working upon" (Robinson). This old order has changed, and India to-day has ceased to be an exporter of sugar. India has now not only to depend upon the world's market but it is one of the most important dumping grounds of the world in sugar.

Old Methods of Sugar Refinement

In olden times, there were 5 stages of sugar refinement in Bengal, *viz.*, Khaur, Khanr or Khour, Dulloah, Pucka Cheenee, Dobarrah, and Candy. Khaur was nothing more than the *Gur* after the Molasses had been mechanically pressed or allowed spontaneously to drain from it when placed in a favourable position. It was light or reddish brown in colour, resembling in appearance brown Muscovado sugar. This was really the primary preparation to which the *Gur* was subjected in the manufacture of white sugar. The next stage of preparation was the Dulloah. Covered with a thick layer of an aquatic weed called Seala (Vallisneria Spiralis) found in all tanks and stagnant water, it had the effect of whitening the sugar and avoiding crystallisation. Practised

almost throughout Bengal, sugar was specially produced in Burdwan, Birbhum, Midnapore, Nadia, and Bankura. Pucka Cheenee was boiled sugar, whitened by the use of milk in the process of boiling, in some places by putting half a seer of ashes thrown into every maund of *Gur* in solution. The best qualities were manufactured in Jessore district. The next stage of refining was known as Dobarrah. The largest manufacturing place for this was at Santipur. It was of a clean white appearance of good crystal, resembling crushed loaf sugar. This sugar was largely exported, but Mr. Robinson mentions that with the passing of a Parliamentary Act in 1845, levying a higher rate of duty on all sugars superior in quality to the standard of Muscovado adopted by English custom, the good white Dobarrah was seldom met with in England. It had a yellowish colour, as the sugar was cut before it was cured properly, thereby giving it the desired hue enabling it to pass the English custom below the higher rate of duty fixed for white sugar. Mr. Robinson records this as an example of the unfair working of the legislation favouring the West Indian Colonies. The very last stage of refining was Sugar Candy, the duty on the importation of which into Great Britain was so high as to prohibit any demand for it in that country.

Sugar Trade of Nadia and Jessore

Santipur, in the district of Nadia, was noted for its native sugar manufacture and more Dobarrah sugar was made there than in any other locality in Bengal. Most of this was conveyed to the Calcutta

market and was frequently shipped to England. Robinson notices the district of Nadia as one of the places best adapted for sugar cultivation in Bengal and affording room for very great extension in both the cane and date varieties. About 1837, the Calcutta Agricultural Society took up experiments in foreign cane cultivation in Bengal and the most successful of these were reported from Krishnagar district (now Nadia), distinguished for the luxuriance of cane crop and lowness of cost. The district of Jessore was, and is, still famous for its date sugar industry. According to the Settlement Report, the number of date trees in that district was estimated to be 6 millions.

Attempts of European Planters

The thriving sugar industry of Bengal attracted the early attention of the European planters who attempted to develop a sugar industry here on modern lines. Successive efforts were made by these European planters to maintain a good export trade but without success. In 1829 Mr. C. H. Blade established the Dhoba Sugar Works near Kalna, in the district of Burdwan. In 1830-32, Mr. T. F. Henley started a manufactory at Baruipur in the 24-Parganas. Both these efforts ended in failure. Another sugar factory had been established, in 1794, at Baradhankote, in Rungpur, but it ceased to work after six years.

During the early forties of the last century, several Europeans started factories in the date growing centres of Jessore and Nadia but every one of these efforts ended in failure.

Sugar Committee of 1920

The Indian Sugar Committee, of 1920, surveyed the sugar position in the whole of India and recorded its opinion that nowhere in India was a careful survey, from the botanical and chemical points of view of the canes grown, more necessary than in Bengal. The range of canes grown in Bengal is wider than what it is in any other part of India—although it is further complicated by the introduction of exotic varieties. In discussing the Bengal cane position, the Committee was confronted with the fact that sugar-cane had not succeeded in recovering from the set-back it had received by the extension of jute cultivation. At the time of the Committee's report, high prices were ruling in rice and jute, and the Committee in reporting, in 1921, saw no prospect of any considerable revival or expansion of cane in Bengal in the near future.

Indian Tariff Board Enquiry in 1930.

The question was again examined by the Indian Tariff Board on Sugar Industry in 1930-31, which gave as its opinion that "the question as to the cost of production of sugar-cane has not been sufficiently examined in Bengal and we have not sufficient information to enable us to form an opinion whether Bengal offers economic possibilities for the white sugar industry."

The Indian Sugar Committee, of 1920, held that the work on sugar-cane in Bengal had been practically confined to varietal tests, remarking that these varietal

tests had been in progress sufficiently long to establish the suitability for distributing the Mauritius variety known as Yellow Tanna. From 1921-22 the work of the Agricultural Department was, year after year, confined to the distribution of sugar-cane cuttings, observation of certain sugar-canes under manurial and irrigation experiments, demonstration of the McGlashan and Hadi furnaces—and a few varietal tests. In 1931-32, we find a new furnace for boiling date palm juice being designed. Two years later, the production of sugar from Gur by means of centrifugal machines is reported to have been experimented upon —but nothing further was heard of any of them for some time. On the other hand, when one finds in some of the Departmental Reports that the juice of irrigated canes is much better than of non-irrigated cane, one only scents a touch of humour at such statements.

Comparative Acreage and Yield

Sugar-cane is largely grown in the four major provinces of India, *viz.*, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa and Bengal, but the average is the lowest in Bengal. Within recent years, the acreage has increased in the United Provinces and Bihar but not in Bengal. Yet the average yield of Gur is the highest in this province, as will be seen from Table 28.

TABLE 28

COMPARATIVE ACREAGE OF SUGAR-CANE YIELD

Province	Acreage in 1931-82	Acreage in 1935-86	Average yield of Gur during quinquennium 1926-27
United Provinces	1,514,000	2,211,982	2,600 lbs. per acre of irrigated land.
Punjab ...	474,000	474,200	2,045 „ per acre of irrigated land.
Bihar & Orissa	282,000	447,000 82,875	2,460 „ per acre of irrigated land.
Bengal ...	288,000	325,400	3,064 „ per acre of non-irrigated land.

Bengal has, thus a great advantage over the other provinces in the average yield of Gur without any additional burden in the shape of irrigation tax. In the quinquennium ending 1931-32, the average yield went up still further in this province and it now stands at 4,643 lbs. of Gur per acre and in a good many districts it is over 5,000 lbs.

Economic Possibilities

Under these conditions, the economic possibilities for sugar-cane in Bengal do not appear to be a mere myth. The cultivator is fully aware, even to-day, of the methods of its cultivation and also of sugar production. He has not been averse to using newer types of sugar crushing machines, if they are within his limited means. Throughout Bengal, one notices Renwick's sugar-cane crushing machines and pans used by the cultivators. It is estimated that about 35,000 of such machines, which are drawn by cattle, and 27,000 pans are hired and purchased annually by villagers in

Bengal. Started within the last few years, eight vacuum pan factories and 48 open pan factories were at work in 1937 and 3 more vacuum pan factories were under construction. But unfortunately, the grower is not getting a fair price for his cane, while, on the other hand, some of the factories are attempting to grow their own cane. This may develop the industry but the small grower will not be benefited by any such development.

The consumption of sugar is probably the largest in Bengal of all the provinces. Of the total sugar manufactured and imported into India, Bengal consumes about 13 per cent. But her production is only 2·8 per cent of India's total output. In 1935-36, there was an import into this province of 2,079,494 maunds of Gur and 2,943,311 maunds of white sugar. In 1936-37, Bengal produced 626,175 maunds but she consumed 3,539,250 maunds of white sugar. There is thus great scope for the development of sugar industry in the province but care should be taken to reach the profits to the growers. In organised industry there is always an inevitable tendency to profiteer at the early stage of its development. But the benefit to the masses must mean better prices for the growers in consonance with the ultimate value of the finished product and in any case sufficient to cover the cost of production in full with a margin of profit.

CHAPTER VI.

COST OF AGRICULTURE AND FAMILY BUDGET

Agricultural families—Average holding—Gross area and distribution—Average Yield—Value of crops—Rent—Cess—Union Rates—Labour and Bullock charges—Seeds—Ploughs and Implements—Interest—Debt—Fixed liability—Living expenses—Clothing—Total living expenses—Compared with Jail—Expenses not calculated—Family Budget.

Agricultural Families

According to the Census of 1931, the number of occupied houses, each of which was treated as a separate census family in the last Census, is 8,954,726 in rural areas, with a total rural population of 46,429,672 or an average of 5 persons per house. The total number of cultivating owners, tenant cultivators and *jhum* cultivators—actual workers only —according to the same Census is 6,204,385. These may be taken to be the number of workers who hold agricultural holdings, mostly their own, for purposes of cultivation. These figures do not include growers of special products such as tea, cinchona, fruits, flowers, vegetables, betel, arecanut, etc.

According to the Census Report of 1931, there are 2·5 persons who are non-working dependants to every earner and worker. On this basis, there are 15,510,962 dependants to 6,204,385 agriculturist workers. The aggregate total number of persons—workers and dependants—living on the land directly cultivated by them is 21,715,347. As five is the number

of persons in a census family, the same number may be taken to be the number in an average agricultural family. The total number, therefore, of such agriculturist families comes to 4,343,069. Such a family may be taken as a unit agricultural family, hereinafter called the unit family.

Average Holding

The net acreage under cultivation, in 1936-37, was 24,466,300 acres. As growers of garden and special produce have been excluded in calculating the number of agriculturists, the acreage under special produce has to be excluded from the net total acreage. Deducting 1,412,300 acres under tea, cinchona, fruits, vegetables, fodder and miscellaneous crops, from the total acreage, the net acreage available for agricultural purposes is 23,054,000 acres. Dividing this area among 4,343,069 agriculturist families, the average comes to 5·3 acres per unit family.

But the holding of an agriculturist consists also of fallow lands and, to a certain extent, of waste lands. Taking half the area of culturable waste to be in possession of agriculturists, the total area of fallows and wastes in their possession is 7,665,816 acres, or an average of 1·7 acre per unit family. The standard holding of a unit agriculturist family may, therefore, be taken as comprising 7 acres of land—5·3 cultivated and 1·7 fallow and waste.

Gross Area and Distribution

An average holding has always a certain quantity of double-cropped land. The area under double

crops in 1936-37 was 4,937,100 acres. Therefore, an average of 1·1 acre per unit family may be regarded as under double crops.

The gross area cultivated per unit family with its distribution is given in Table 29.

TABLE 29

GROSS AREA IN AN AVERAGE HOLDING AND ITS CROP DISTRIBUTION

Gross Area

Net area cultivated	...	5·3 acres.
Area under double crops	...	1·1 acre
Gross area	...	6·4, say, 6½ acres.

Distribution

Crops.	Total acreage.	Average per family.
Paddy (Aus and Aman) ...	21,560,200	4·9 acres
Jute	2,154,800	0·49 ,,
Rabi or other crops ...		1·01 ,,
Total	...	6·4 ,,

For average purposes this distribution may be taken as—

Paddy ...	...	5 acres.
Jute ...	...	½ acre.
Rabi or other crops	...	1 ,,
Total	...	6½ acres.

Average Yield

According to the reports of the Agriculture Department, the normal rates of yield per acre are 17·8 maunds of jute in East Bengal and about 16 maunds in West Bengal, or a normal mean of about 17 maunds. For paddy it is 20·25 maunds for Aman, 18·75 for Aus, or a mean of 19·5 maunds of paddy.

But the normal yield is not the average actual produce. The cultivator does not get a normal yield even once in ten years. The calculation, in Akbar's revenue system, to take the average of 19 years for rent purposes, is probably nearer the mark. A normal crop is defined as "that crop which the cultivator has a right to expect," or "the figure which in existing circumstances might be expected to be attained in the year if the rainfall and season were of a character ordinary for the tract under consideration, that is, neither very favourable nor the reverse." Briefly, it is stated to be "the average yield on average soil in a year of average character." This normal yield does not, therefore, correspond with the actual yield nor with the average for a series of years. The average yield per acre covering a district as a whole was very carefully enquired into during the Survey and Settlement operations and their estimates of yield in maunds per acre are given in Table 30.

TABLE 30

AVERAGE YIELD AS PER SETTLEMENT REPORTS

Yield per Acre in Maunds

District.	Aus paddy.	Aman paddy.	Jute.
Bankura ...	15	18	—
Midnapore ...	12	16	—
Jessore ...	14	15	13
Faridpur ...	11	18½	16
Nadia ...	9½	11½	13
Dacca ...	13	13	15
Mymensingh ...	—	15	16
Rajshahi ...	13	—	10
Pabna ...	12 to 15	15	17
24-Parganas ...	14	20	15
Average ...	12.8	15.5	14.37

It also appears from the figures prepared by the Director of Agriculture that the actual average yield in certain districts for the decennial period of 1927-28 to 1936-37 is also much below the normal, as will be apparent from Table 31.

TABLE 31

DECENNIAL AVERAGE YIELD PER ACRE
(1927-28 to 1936-37)

District.	Aus paddy in maunds.	Aman paddy in maunds.	Jute in maunds.
24-Parganas ...	12·75	17·25	15
Nadia ...	12	12	13·65
Murshidabad ...	11·7	14·25	14
Jessore ...	11·7	13·8	14·9
Khulna ...	15	18	15
Burdwan ...	12·75	15	—
Hooghly ...	14·25	15·45	—
Howrah ...	12·3	16·8	—
Rajshahi ...	13·5	16·5	14·9
Bogra ...	13·8	16	15
Pabna ...	14·25	15·75	10·75
Malda ...	10·5	15	15·6
Average ...	12·9	15·5	—

It will be seen from Table 32 that the average yield of paddy, according to "The Estimates of Area and Yield of Principal Crops in India", estimated on the production of twenty-five years (1911-12 to 1936-37) is 15·9 maunds.

TABLE 32

AVERAGE YIELD OF RICE

(Estimates of Area and Yield of Principal Crops in India)

	Area in Acres.	Yield of Rice in tons.
1911-12 ...	20,437,000	8,635,000
1912-13 ...	20,639,000	8,356,000
1913-14 ...	19,846,000	7,412,000
1914-15 ...	20,450,000	6,411,000
1915-16 ...	20,916,000	8,276,000
1916-17 ...	21,120,000	8,028,000
1917-18 ...	20,966,000	8,647,000
1918-19 ...	21,333,000	6,901,000
1919-20 ...	20,938,000	8,254,000
1920-21 ...	20,884,000	8,219,000
1921-22 ...	21,832,000	9,269,000
1922-23 ...	21,773,000	9,049,000
1923-24 ...	20,346,000	7,509,000
1924-25 ...	20,844,000	7,711,000
1925-26 ...	21,133,000	8,218,000
1926-27 ...	19,871,000	7,355,000
1927-28 ...	18,682,000	6,493,000
1928-29 ...	21,403,000	9,684,000
1929-30 ...	20,225,000	8,202,000
1930-31 ...	20,582,000	9,206,000
1931-32 ...	22,129,000	9,493,000
1932-33 ...	21,779,000	9,364,000
1933-34 ...	21,672,000	8,680,000
1934-35 ...	20,740,000	8,273,000
1935-36 ...	21,092,000	7,208,000
Total ...	521,632,000	204,853,000
Annual Average	20,865,280	8,194,120

Average yield per acre—880 lbs. of Rice = 10·6 Maunds of Rice = 15·9 Maunds of Paddy.

Again, the annual yield of jute calculated on a ten years' average as per Table 33 was 14·5 maunds. This yield was at a time, when conditions were relatively normal in the country.

TABLE 33

AVERAGE YIELD OF JUTE

	Area in Acres	Yield in bales. (400 lbs. each.)
1919 ...	2,459,000	7,567,800
1920 ...	2,169,000	5,247,000
1921 ...	1,316,000	3,595,000
1922 ...	1,528,000	4,746,000
1923 ...	2,410,000	7,463,000
1924 ...	2,358,000	7,166,000
1925 ...	2,685,000	7,951,000
1926 ...	2,321,000	10,652,000
1927 ...	2,933,000	9,004,000
1928 ...	2,670,000	8,519,000
Total ...	23,849,000	71,910,800

Average yield per acre = 1,200 lbs. = 14·5 Maunds.

It will, therefore, be fair to take the average yield, for Bengal as a whole, after making allowance for all factors, as follows: —

Jute—14·5 maunds.
Paddy—16 maunds.

Value of Crops

The price of crops, at the highest in the present day market, may be taken at Rs. 4 per maund of jute and Re. 1-8-0 per maund of paddy. The approximate value for the produce of an acre of Rabi and other crops in the present market may be taken as Rs. 20-0-0.

Taking the price of paddy at Re. 1-8-0 per maund. the price of a maund of rice, inclusive of a sum of Eight Annas as the cost of preparing rice, comes to about Rs. 2-12-0. It will appear from the Agricultural Statistics in India, 1934-35, that the harvest price of rice was—

	1932-33	1933-34	1934-35
Autumn rice cleaned ...	2/4	2/8	2/12
Winter rice ...	2/10	3/-	3/4

It appears from a statement recently published on behalf of the Paddy Merchants Association that during the last quarter of the year 1937-38, paddy of good quality was sold at Re. 1/10 to Re. 1/14 per maund in Calcutta and the primary price received by the cultivators was estimated at Re. 1/4 to Re. 1/8, the price of the average coarse quality being much less.

The price of Re. 1/8 per maund paddy is, therefore, a fair estimate and is higher than the average.

It also appears from Official reports that the harvest price of jute was as follows:—

	Rs.	A.	P.
1930-31	3	9	0
1931-32	4	4	0
1932-33	3	8	0
1933-34	3	8	0
1934-35	3	8	0

A price of Rs. 4 per maund of jute is, thus, a liberal estimate.

The figures for Rabi and other crops are approximate and in lump.

The total value of crops per average holding thus comes up to Rs. 169 as will be seen from Table 34.

TABLE 34

VALUE OF PRODUCE PER AVERAGE HOLDING

Crop.	Area. in acres.	Produce per acre.	Total produce.	Price per maund.	Total value.
Paddy ...	5	16 maunds	80 maunds	Re. 1-8	Rs. 120-0-0
Jute ...	½	14½ „	7¼ „	Rs. 4-0	Rs. 29-0-0
Rabi, etc. ...	1	Rs. 20	Rs. 20		Rs. 20-0-0
					169-0-0

Only a few years ago, when jute was selling at Rs. 3, paddy at Re. 1 and Rabi crops at similarly low prices, the total value of crops, as calculated above, was near about Rs. 116. It has to be noted that in calculating the value of agricultural produce for agricultural families in villages, one must calculate on the basis of the price the cultivator actually receives in the village and not the average price in Calcutta or other urban or urbanised markets. Even if the yield is taken at the normal rate as given in Official Reports which happens only in an exceptionally good year, the value of produce comes up to Rs. 200 as per Table 35.

TABLE 35

Crop.	Area in acres.	Produce per acre.	Total produce.	Price per maund.	Value.
Paddy ...	5	19½ maunds	97½ maunds	Re. 1-8	Rs. 146-4-0
Jute ...	½	17 „	8½ „	Rs. 4-0	Rs. 34-0-0
Rabi, etc. ...	1	20 „	Rs. 20		Rs. 20-0-0
				Total ...	Rs. 200-4-0
				say ...	Rs. 200-0-0

It is only when the price of jute is Rs. 6 per maund and that of paddy Rs. 2 per maund, with Rabi and other crops fetching Rs. 30 per acre, that

the total value of crops, calculated on the normal yield of 19½ maunds of paddy and 17 maunds of jute, is Rs. 276. With jute at Rs. 5 and paddy at Rs. 2 per maund and Rabi crops fetching Rs. 25 per acre, the value of such normal yield is Rs. 262-8-0.

It may be argued that our calculations do not take note of the entire produce of the cultivator. To this the answer is that the present calculations are really of a unit family with a holding of 7 acres, of which 1·7 acres are fallow, and 5·3 acres cultivated, and which grows only paddy and jute with such winter crops as can possibly be grown. This is the general condition for the average cultivator with an agricultural holding of his own. But even admitting that the entire produce has to be considered, Table 36 will show that the total produce, on an average in the present market, comes to Rs. 184.

TABLE 36

VALUE OF TOTAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE ON AVERAGE YIELD

Crop.	Average yield per acre in maunds.	Area in acre.	Total yield in maunds.	Price per maund in rupees.	Total value in rupees.
Paddy ...	16	21,992,500	351,880,000	1-8	527,820,000
Wheat and Barley ...	7	244,800	1,713,600	3-0	5,140,800
Gram ...	8	241,900	1,985,200	3-0	5,805,600
Other food grains ...	7	1,245,600	8,719,200	2-8	21,798,000
Oilseeds ...	5	1,100,500	5,502,500	5-0	27,512,500
Condiments, etc.	10	173,000	1,780,000	3-0	5,190,000
Sugar-cane ...	50 (gur)	354,800	16,740,000	3-0	50,220,000
Other sugar crops ...	...	68,000	...	...	6,800,000*
Carried over		...	...	...	649,786,900

* Taking Rs. 100-0-0 per acre.
The acreage figures are for the year 1936-37.

TABLE 36—*Contd.*

VALUE OF TOTAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE ON AVERAGE YIELD—*Contd.*

Crop.	Average yield per acre in maunds.	Area in acre.	Total yield in maunds.	Price per maund in rupees.	Total value in rupees.
Brought forward		...	...		649,786,900
Jute ...	15	2,154,800	88,322,000	4-0	1,29,288,000
Other fibres...	...	99,800	...	...	5,988,000**
Tobacco ...	8	307,300	2,458,400	6-0	14,750,400
			Total	...	Rs. 799,818,300

Dividing Rs. 799,813,300 among 4,343,069 families—Rs. 184 per family.

Even if the full normal yield is taken as per Official Publications and the value of the produce is taken at Rs. 2 for paddy and Rs. 5 for jute, the total produce will fetch only Rs. 288 as will be seen from Table 37.

TABLE 37

VALUE OF TOTAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE ON NORMAL YIELD

Crops.	Yield per acre in maunds.	Area in acre.	Total yield in maunds.	Price per maund in Rupees.	Total value in Rupees.
Aus paddy ...	18¾	5,756,600	107,936,250	2-0	
Aman paddy ...	20¼	15,808,600	380,022,900	2-0	895,371,800
Boro paddy ...	22½	432,300	9,726,750	2-0	
Wheat ...	10	149,500	1,495,000	3-0	4,485,000
Barley ..	10¾	95,300	1,024,475	3-0	3,073,425
Gram ...	10¾	241,900	2,600,425	3-0	7,801,275
Other food grains	8	1,245,600	9,964,800	3-0	29,894,400
Linseed ...	7⅜	180,600	963,175	5-0	4,815,875
Rape & Mustard	7⅖	740,200	5,625,500	5-0	28,127,600
Other oilseeds...	6	229,700	1,378,200	5-0	6,891,000
Condiments and spices ...	10	178,300	1,738,000	3-0	5,190,000
Sugar-cane ...	56⅞ (gur)	854,800	19,010,720	3-0	57,032,160
Other cane crops	...	63,000	...	...	6,300,000*
Jute ...	17	2,154,800	86,631,600	5-0	183,158,000
Other fibres ...	...	99,800	...	...	5,988,000
Tobacco ...	8	307,300	2,458,400	6-0	14,750,400*
			Total	...	Rs. 1,252,878,585

Divided among 4,343,069 families—Rs. 288 per family.

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* Taking Rs. 100-0-0 per acre.
** Taking Rs. 60-0-0 per acre.
The acreage figures are for the year 1936-37.

Rent and Cess.

We shall now attempt to calculate the expenses of a unit family. Taking rent as the first charge, the gross rental payable in Bengal, in 1936-37, was Rs. 169,969,223. It may be assumed that this amount, in effect, is payable on the total area available for cultivation, *viz.*, 35,107,049 acres (Table 5).

The average rent, per acre, thus comes up to about Rs. 4-14 and the total rent payable for an average holding of 7 acres to Rs. 34-2-0.

The total Cess demand for the province, in 1936-37, was Rs. 8,870,869, borne on 35,107,049 acres, which comes up to an average of Re. 0-4-6 per acre. The total cess payable for an average holding of 7 acres, therefore, comes up to Re. 1-15-6.

Detailed house to house enquiries were made during Settlement Operations at Jessore in 58 typical villages scattered through 19 thanas and the result brought out the fact that a sum of Rs. 7-5-9 was the incidence of rent and cess charges per head of population. According to our calculations, the total of rent and cess comes up to Rs. 34-2-0 *plus* Re. 1-15-6 = Rs. 36-1-6 for a family of five and it works out at Rs. 7-3-6 per head of population.

Union Rates

The Union Board population of Bengal was 39,697,584 in 1935-36 and the total Union Rates paid were Rs. 7,254,855, including Rs. 250,777 as rent of Chowkidari Chakran lands. Ordinarily 1/6th of this population is exempt, being too poor to pay the minimum rate. The rate is, therefore, borne actually

by 33,081,320 persons. It is to be noted that the whole of Bengal has not yet come under Union Boards. The Union Board area is 52,929 sq. miles out of 69,430 sq. miles constituting rural areas and covers a population of 39,697,584 out of a total rural population of 46,601,794. The Union taxation, therefore, works out at Re. 1-1-6 per family of 5 persons.

Labour and Bullock Charges

According to a note prepared by the Director of Agriculture and presented to the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee in 1930, the labour required to cultivate an acre of land is given in Table 38.

TABLE 38

LABOUR PER ACRE OF CULTIVATION

	Jute.		Aus.		Aman.	
	Men days.	Bullock days.	Men days.	Bullock days.	Men days.	Bullock days.
Preparation of land	14	27	14	27	14	28
Weeding ...	25	...	16	2	2	0
Harvesting ...	20	...	...	...	...	...
Reaping ...	...	...	8	...	9	2
Carting ...	...	...	1	2	...	...
Extracting, etc. ...	23	2	...	...	8	...
Transplanting ...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Total ...	82	29	39	31	83	80

Thrashing—Four Annas per maund.

The average rate of wages for human labour was about Annas 12 in 1929-30. To-day it stands at a lower figure, but it is safe to assume that it does not go below six annas, specially in the season of agricultural requirements. The labour value of a pair of bullocks per day was estimated by the Director of

Agriculture, in 1930, at twelve annas. To-day it has not gone below Annas 8 per pair. The total cost of cultivation for human and bullock labour per acre is, therefore, as per Table 39.

TABLE 39

LABOUR COST PER ACRE

		Jute.	Aus.	Aman.
Human labour—	1929-30 ...	61 8 0	29 4 0	24 12 0
	1936-37 ...	30 12 0	14 10 0	12 6 0
Bullock power—	1929-30 ...	21 12 0	23 4 0	22 8 0
	1936-37 ...	14 8 0	15 8 0	15 0 0
Thrashing—	1929-30 ...	.....	4 0 0	4 0 0
	1936-37 ...	.....	2 0 0	2 0 0
Total cost—	1929-30 ...	88 4 0	56 8 0	51 4 0
	1936-37 ...	45 4 0	32 2 0	31 6 0

But this valuation of the labour and bullock power takes into account the entire labour needed for cultivation. In the economy of rural life much of the field labour is provided by the cultivator himself and his family and he purchases his own bullocks. In estimating the cost of production, only outside labour need, therefore, be taken into consideration. Agricultural operations have a definite cycle of time and season. A field must be ploughed before it dries hard, sown just when the rain is threatening, weeded before a shower of rain turns it into a bed of mire and harvested before the rain beats down the heavy ears. Thus the cultivator has to hire labour for ploughing and sowing, and he has invariably to do so for weeding and reaping. The general experience in holdings of the size referred to in the previous pages is that, on an average, at least one-third of the labour required has to be hired. For cost of cultivation we have, therefore, to count the labour charges actually paid

for and to exclude the family labour. The outside labour charges paid per acre, assuming that agricultural wages is Six Annas per man and on the basis of the requirements estimated by the Director of Agriculture, are thus about Rs. 10 per acre for jute and about Rs. 4 for paddy. It is assumed that the needs of Rabi or other crops are entirely met by the labour of the cultivator and his family and that there no outside labour charges have to be incurred for thrashing purposes.

It is also assumed that the cultivator owns his animals and has to purchase them. A pair of bullocks, ready for the plough, cannot be purchased even to-day for less than Rs. 60. Considering the general poverty of the stock, it may be assumed that they will not be of service after 6 years and thus Rs. 10 may be taken as the proportionate annual charge for bullocks. Nothing has been calculated for the cost of feeding, as the average cultivator depends upon his paddy straw and field grass for this purpose ; nor for the cost of oil-cakes, pulses, salt, etc., almost necessary elements in properly feeding cattle doing hard works.

The outside labour charges for an average agriculturist family is as in Table 40.

TABLE 40

OUTSIDE LABOUR CHARGES PER HOLDING

		Rs.	A.	P.
For Paddy—5 acres	...	20	0	0
For Jute— ½ „	...	5	0	0
Total	...	25	0	0

Seeds

The Bengal cultivator almost always buys his paddy seeds or borrows them from the *Mahajan*. A maund of seed is required for an acre of paddy and three seers of jute seed are needed to sow an acre. The price of the best jute seeds, supplied through the Department of Agriculture, is roughly Rs. 20 per maund. The price of seed paddy is always higher than ordinary paddy and may be taken at Rs. 2 per maund. The cost of total seeds for an average holding is given in Table 41.

TABLE 41

COST OF SEED

	Rs.	A.	P.
Paddy—5 acres—5 maunds at Rs. 2 per md.	10	0	0
Jute—$\frac{1}{2}$ acre—$1\frac{1}{2}$ seers at Rs. 20 per md. ...	0	12	0
Rabi and other crops	0	8	0
Total Rs. ...	11	4	0

Ploughs and Implements

The Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee made the following estimate of a cultivator's equipments, *viz.*, a plough, a harrow, a ladder, a sickle, a weeder. The prices of all these articles have also gone down, though not proportionately, and Table 42 gives the Banking Committee's estimate of prices and the present estimated prices, with maintenance charges. The implements last about 4 years and the annual cost, as per Table 42, comes up to Re. 1-9-0 with Annas 14 as annual maintenance charges.

TABLE 42

PLOUGHS AND IMPLEMENTS CHARGES

	Committee's estimate			Present estimate
	Rs. A.		Rs. A.	Rs. A.
1 plough	... 4 5	to	7 4	3 0
1 harrow	... 3 4	to	4 6	2 0
1 ladder	... 0 6	to	0 8	0 6
1 sickle	... 0 8	to	0 8	0 8
1 weeder	... 0 6	to	0 8	0 6
Total Rs. ...	8 14	to	13 4	6 4
Average per year		...		... Re. 1 9

MAINTENANCE CHARGES

	Commitee's estimated cost			Present estimated cost
	Rs. A.		Rs. A.	Rs. A.
Tempering ploughshare	... 0 4	to	0 8	0 4
Changing wooden parts	... 0 6	to	0 10	0 5
Ropes, baskets, other repairs	0 6	to	0 6	0 5
Total Re. ...	1 0	to	1 8	0 14

	Rs. A. P.
Average annual charges ...	... 1 9 0
Maintenance charges ...	... 0 14 0
Total Rs. ...	2 7 0

Interest

The Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee estimated the average debt for an agriculturist family at Rs. 160. This figure was calculated at a time when the average debt of a rural member of a Co-operative Society was Rs. 85. To-day the average Co-operative debt has risen to Rs. 92. The successive years of depression must have also added to the outside debt

and it would not be wrong to calculate the average debt to-day at Rs. 175 for the average agriculturist family. The Co-operative Societies, generally, charged interest, till two years ago, at the rate of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to $18\frac{1}{2}$ per cent while private debts carried much higher rates of interest. The interest liability of an average agriculturist family may, therefore, be taken at least at Rs. 25 per annum.

Debt

In order to wipe out the existing debts of the agriculturist, he has to keep at least Rs. 15 per year to liquidate a debt of Rs. 175 in about 12 years' time.

Fixed Liability

To summarise, the fixed liability for an average agriculturist family with 5 persons and with 7 acres of land, of which 5·3 acres is the net cropped area, is Rs. 125 per annum, as will be seen from Table 43.

TABLE 43

FIXED LIABILITIES OF AN AGRICULTURIST FAMILY

		Rs.	A.	P.
A.	Rent	34	2	0
B.	Cess	1	15	6
C.	Union Rate	1	1	6
D.	Outside labour charges ...	25	0	0
E.	Bullock charges ...	10	0	0
F.	Seeds	11	4	0
G.	Ploughs and implements ...	2	7	0
H.	Interest charges ...	25	0	0
I.	Debt liquidation ...	15	0	0
	Total Rs. ...	125	14	0
	Say Rs.	125	0	0

Living Expenses

What are the living expenses of an agriculturist family? An average family has been taken to consist of five persons, of whom three may be taken to be adults and two children. The two children may be taken as equivalent to one adult. The agriculturist family may, therefore, be taken as one which has to meet the living expenses of 4 adults.

An average agriculturist--an adult—will require at least 4 chataks of rice for his morning meal, 6 chataks of rice for his midday meal and 5 chataks for his night meal.

Before he goes to work in the fields, he must have something to eat. His first meal consists of cold rice, steeped in water overnight. In Jail a convict gets 12 chataks of rice for two meals including a liquid meal of two chataks in the morning, with vegetables, fish and occasionally meat.

Under the Bengal Famine Code (Revised Edition, 1905) the scale of wages for an adult digger-worker is to be calculated on the basis of 16 chataks of rice, with two chataks as deduction in the allowance of grain when cooked food is given, the deductions representing the amount of pulse, salt, oil, condiments and vegetables which are given in addition to cooked rice. Famine rations were devised on the principle of giving the lowest quantity sufficient to save life and maintain health. Considering all these, the standard, taken at 15 chataks of rice per adult, is not an over-estimate in any sense. It is probably below the normal requirements of a hard-working adult doing field works.

A family of 5 persons or four adults requires at least 2 chataks of salt daily, an amount equal to what is provided in jail for 4 persons.

The daily cost of *dal,* vegetables and fish taken at one anna per day per family is Re. 1-14-0 per month, against the jail figure of Rs. 3-10-10 per month.

At least a pice (3 pies) is required daily for spices, a pice for kerosene and matches, and a pice for tobacco, and these are the barest minimum requirements of a family, probably less than the usual needs.

In Bengal, mustard oil is used for cooking purposes and is also used by the adults and the children for rubbing on their persons before their daily bath. It would not be an over-estimate if we take $1\frac{1}{2}$ chatak of oil as the daily requirement of a family, the jail scale being $1\frac{1}{4}$ chatak.

Gur is the only sweet consumed by the cultivators, children as well as adults, and its cost may be estimated to amount to Rs. 6 per annum for the whole family.

Betel leaves and betel-nuts are almost a necessity for the family and we may take $2\frac{1}{2}$ pice ($7\frac{1}{2}$ pies) as the weekly expenses or Rs. 2 per annum on this account.

The family requires at least two thatched huts with open verandahs and a kitchen, the annual repairs of which may well be taken to come up to at least Rs. 3.

The cooking and other domestic utensils require an expenditure of at least Re. 1 annually.

Clothing

Every adult man requires every four months at least one piece of cloth (5 yards), 1 *gamcha*

(used both as a towel and for rubbing the body—thin—$1\frac{1}{3}$ yard) and one small cloth (3 yards). In addition he needs a chadar or wrapper or shirt during winter. The wife requires at least 4 sarees (5 yards each) per year and two *gamchas* with no other winter apparel. Children require one piece of cloth (4 yards).

This is the barest minimum if a family desires to keep itself clothed somehow. The expenses for all these come up to Rs. 18-4-0 per family, as per Table 44.

TABLE 44

CLOTHING EXPENSES PER FAMILY

	Rs.	A.	P.
2 male adults:			
6 pieces cloths ...	5	4	0
6 gamchas ...	0	12	0
2 wrappers	2	0	0
1 female adult:			
4 sarees ...	4	0	0
2 gamchas ...	0	4	0
2 children:			
8 small cloths	4	0	0
2 winter wrappers	2	0	0
Total	18	4	0

Total Living Expenses

The aggregate living expenses for a family of 5 persons—3 adults and 2 children—taken as equivalent to 4 adults—are as per Table 45.

TABLE 45

LIVING EXPENSES OF AN AVERAGE FAMILY

	Rs.	A.	P.
Rice 15 chataks per adult per day—3 seers 12 chataks per day—34 maunds 9 seers annually of rice = 51 maunds 13½ seers of paddy at Re. 1-8 per maund ...	77	0	0
Salt 2 chataks per day—1 md. 5⅝ seers annually at Rs. 2-8 per maund ...	2	13	6
Dal, fish, vegetables—one anna per day ...	22	13	0
Spices—1 pice a day	5	11	0
Oil—1½ chatak a day—34 seers annually at As. 6 per seer	12	12	0
Kerosene and matches—1 pice a day ...	5	11	0
Tobacco—1 pice a day	5	11	0
Gur	6	0	0
Betel leaves and Betel-nuts	2	0	0
Repairs to Dwelling house	3	0	0
Utensils	1	0	0
Clothing expenses	18	4	0
Total ...	162	11	6

It is assumed that the cultivator uses his own paddy and the paddy is made into clean rice by family labour. The quantity of rice needed has, therefore, been converted into paddy and the price of paddy calculated at the same price as taken in the income account. On Re. 1-8 per maund of paddy, the price of a maund of rice comes up to Rs. 2-4, without taking into account the cost of converting paddy into rice.

Comparison with Jail

The rations that would be provided in jail for 4 adult prisoners are given in Table 46.

TABLE 46

LIVING EXPENSES AS PER JAIL RATE

	Daily per adult.	Daily for 4 adults.	Annually for 4 adults.	Price. Rs.	A.	P.
Rice ...	12 ch.	3 seers	1,095 seers (1)	61	9	6
Salt ...	½ ,,	2 ch.	45½ ,,	2	13	0
Dal ...	2½ ,,	10 ,,	228 ,,	21	6	6
Oil ...	5/16 ,,	1½ ,,	28½ ,,	10	11	0
Turmeric ...	1/64 ,,	1/16 ,,	1 seer 7 ch.	0	9	0
Chillies ...	1/32 ,,	⅛ ,,	2 seers 14 ch.	0	12	0
Onions ...	9/128 ,,	9/32 ,,	6½ seers	0	6	6
Coriander ...	1/128 ,,	1/32 ,,	12 ch.	0	2	0
Gur ...	¼ ,,	1 ,,	28 seers (2)	1	12	0
Fish ...	½ ,, (3)	2 ,, (4)	22¾ ,, (5)	11	6	0
Vegetables	4 ,,	1 seer	365 ,, (6)	11	6	0
Anti-scorbutics (if Tamarind pulp ⅛ ch.)		½ ch.	11 ,, (7)	1	0	0
			Total ... Rs.	128	14	0
			Say Rs.	124	0	0

The comparative table of Jail rates and our calculations is given in Table 47. It will be seen that we have taken slightly more than the jail figures in

(1) Price of rice taken at Rs. 2-4-0 per maund on the same principle as in Table 45.

(2) Price taken at Rs. 3 per maund.

(3) (4) On alternate days.

(5) Price taken at As. 8 per seer.

(6) Price taken at Pies 6 per seer.

(7) Price taken of tamarind pulp free from husk, fibre and seed at As. 1-6 per seer.

rice and actually less than the jail figures in *dal,* fish and vegetables and a little more than the jail figures in spices including onions and chillies. An average cultivator can afford to take so little of fish and vegetables that he has no alternative but to fall back upon *gur* at times, specially in the morning. The jail figure for oil is not quite adequate ; we have, therefore, taken a figure just slightly above the jail figure for the oil needed both for cooking and for rubbing the body.

TABLE 47

LIVING EXPENSES OF AN AVERAGE AGRICULTURIST FAMILY COMPARED WITH JAIL

Average family—3 adults and 2 children equal to 4 adults.

Jail—4 adults.

	Jail						Average family		
	Rs.	A.	P.				Rs.	A.	P.
Rice ...	61	9	6		...		77	0	0
Salt ...	2	13	6		...		2	13	6
Dal ...	21	6	6						
Fish ...	11	6	0	44	2	6	22	13	0
Vegetables ...	11	6	0						
Spices ...	0	9	0						
„ ...	0	12	0						
„ ...	0	6	6	1	13	6	5	11	0
„ ...	0	2	0						
Oil ...	10	11	0		...		12	12	0
Gur ...	2	14	0		...		6	0	0
Anti-scorbutics ...	1	0	0		...			...	
Betel leaves and Betel-nuts					...		2	0	0
	123	14	0						
Say Rs.	124	0	0	Carried over			129	1	6

TABLE 47—*Contd.*

	Average family Rs. A. P.
Brought forward	129 1 6
Kerosene and matches	5 11 0
Tobacco	5 11 0
Dwelling house repairs	3 0 0
Utensils	1 0 0
Clothing expenses	18 4 0
	162 11 6
Say Rs.	163 0 0

Our calculations of food expenses come up to a monthly average of Rs. 2-11 per adult or Rs. 2-2-9 per person.

Expenses Not Calculated

There is no provision in this calculation for any medical expenses nor constructions of any new hut, not a pice for fuel or coal, no toilet expenses for the wife, who at least occasionally requires some cocoanut oil to dress her hair, nothing for ornaments nor a pice for social ceremonies, nor any item of extravagance with which the Bengal peasant is sometimes cruelly charged. We have not in this Budget provided for even a glass bangle for the wife who, according to Indian tradition and custom, must have something on her wrists, nor have we provided a pice for a day's comfort. No provision has been made for any expenses for feeding cattle or for manure, not a pice worth of extras for the children. No provision has again been made for any milk, or any educational

expenses for the children, no expenditure for special occasions as births, deaths or marriages, or for any other social ceremony; not a pice for any religious festival or *mela,* or for litigation, if by chance the agriculturist is dragged into it. There is nothing like insurance against bad days or seasonal disasters.

Family Budget

The budget of a unit family with 5 persons holding 7 acres of land, including 1·7 acres as fallow, is given in Table 48.

It, therefore, appears that ordinarily the income of a unit agricultural family is roughly Rs. 170-0-0. On the basis of the highest computation of the value of his produce, *viz.,* on the assumption that his crop is normal and also that it synchronises with the highest price for his crops—and it is only once in ten years that there is normal rainfall in this province—it is Rs. 276-0-0. The barest minimum expenses of a family of five including two children is Rs. 293-0-0 and it may go up to Rs. 319 with a rise in the price of staple food. If there is any disaster, or the crop fails or is below the normal, if he is incapacitated or fails to work for any cause, if he gets fever and cannot work in the field, the agriculturist is immediately on the verge of acute distress. But even without these, he is in deficit year after year. Immediately he gets a bad crop or meets seasonal disaster or physical ailment, he must contract his expenses—by starving himself and his family in order to meet his fixed liabilities. In addition, he has to meet the illegal exactions and *Abwabs,* and to pay extortionate rates of interest.

TABLE 48

FAMILY BUDGET

Value of Agricultural produce.

Average yield—paddy 16 maunds, jute 14½ maunds.

			Rs.	A.	P.
Paddy at Re. 1-8	Jute at Rs. 4-0	Value ...	169	0	0
,, ,, Re. 1-0	,, ,, Rs. 8-0	,, ...	116	0	0
,, ,, Re. 1-8	,, ,, Rs. 5-0	,, ...	176	4	0
,, ,, Rs. 2-0	,, ,, Rs. 6-0	,, ...	228	8	0

Normal yield—paddy 19½ maunds, Jute 17 maunds.

			Rs.	As.	P.
Paddy at Re. 1-8	Jute at Rs. 4-0	Value ...	200	4	0
,, ,, Re. 1-0	,, ,, Rs. 3-0	,, ...	137	0	0
,, ,, Re. 1-8	,, ,, Rs. 5-0	,, ...	208	12	0
,, ,, Rs. 2-0	,, ,, Rs. 6-0	,, ...	276	0	0
,, ,, Rs. 2-0	,, ,, Rs. 5-0	,, ...	268	0	0

Expenses (with paddy at Re. 1-8 per maund).

	Rs.	A.	P.
Rent	34	2	0
Cess	1	15	6
Union Rate	1	1	6
Labour (outside)	24	8	0
Seeds	11	4	0
Bullock charges	10	0	0
Plough, etc.	2	8	0
Interest charges	25	0	0
Debt Liquidation ...	15	0	0
Food Expenses	129	1	6
Tobacco	5	11	0
Kerosene and matches ...	5	11	0
Dwelling house repairs ...	3	0	0
Utensils	1	0	0
Clothing	18	4	0
Total ... Rs.	292	13	6
With paddy at Rs 2/- per maund or Rice at Rs. 3/- ... Rs.	318	8	0

His expenses, as calculated above, do not take account of any expenses for purchase of land, for medical needs, education, construction of dwelling houses, social and religious ceremonies, litigation, fuel, toilet expenses, milk, manure, cattle food, or any luxury or comfort either for himself or for his children. He is rarely extravagant, for he really has no means to be so. He has hardly any scope for thrift. A man living from hand to mouth, or rather perpetually half-starved, can seldom save and if occasionally he feels tempted to satisfy the common cravings of a man, for himself or for his family, it is cruel to charge him with improvidence.

We have in this chapter discussed the income and the expenditure of the Bengal raiyat with reference to his land only. No allowance has been made for any subsidiary income such as from poultry, live-stock, milk, milk products or cottage industries such as rope making, etc., for they do not come out of the land proper. The income from such sources does not form the income proper of the average cultivator, who generally has little, if any, income from such sources.

CHAPTER VII

AVERAGE HOLDING

Holding in other places—Average holding in Bengal—Growth of population—Average income and deficit per holding, district by district.

Holding in Other Places

With a good deal of insecurity of harvest, due to complete dependence on nature, man must have not only plenty of land for purposes of subsistence but he should also be able to stand the strain of lean years. The holder of a few acres cannot possibly have enough for subsistence unless he takes to intensive cultivation or has some sort of a second string to his bow, else he is in the constant grip of grinding poverty. To draw a living from a tiny holding, scattered in many plots, is often a veritably insoluble problem for the peasant. As the result of a study of economic conditions in the Punjab, Darling* is of opinion that a man with a wife and two children requires a minimum 13 to 40 acres of cropped area to live on, the area depending on where he lives. In actual fact, the ordinary Punjab cultivator cultivates eight to ten acres, and the Punjab has irrigation facilities on an extensive scale. As Darling says, even in the richest part of England "it is considered that ten acres is the smallest area on which a man can support a family

* Punjab Peasant, page 119.

without any other industry to help him." But whereas the Punjab cultivator has an average holding of eight to ten acres with extensive irrigation facilities, an agricultural holding in Bengal is much less in size and is fragmented and scattered in tiny plots. It leaves no margin of profit and does not give enough for subsistence, and the Bengal cultivator has to borrow regularly. In a previous chapter we have seen that the average holding per an unit agricultural family is about 7 acres, of which 5·3 acres are cultivated and 1·7 acres are fallow. This figure is on the basis of the province as a whole, and in fact it varies widely from district to district. Table 49 gives the acreage of the normal cultivated area per head of population and for a family of five persons in each district, and Table 50 gives, district by district, the actual cropped acreage and the area still available for cultivation, per head of population and per family of five persons.

Table 50 has been prepared on the assumption that the entire cultivable area, including current fallows and cultivable wastes, is in the possession of the cultivator.

TABLE 49

NORMAL HOLDING, DISTRICT BY DISTRICT

District.	Cultivating owners and tenant cultivators.	Normal acreage.	Normal acreage per each cultivating owner and tenant cultivator.	Normal acreage per head of population.	Normal acreage per family of 5.
Burdwan ...	146,196	769,500	5·3	1·5	7·5
Birbhum ...	110,373	729,100	6·6	1·9	9·5
Bankura ...	126,308	754,200	6	1·7	8·5
Midnapore ...	417,809	1,968,000	4·7	1·34	6·7
Hooghly ...	122,996	239,000	1·9	·54	2·7
Howrah ...	49,959	109,600	2·2	·63	3·15
24-Parganas ...	263,941	962,300	3·6	1·03	5·15
Nadia ...	147,977	1,256,400	8·5	2·4	12
Murshidabad ...	128,198	979,300	7·6	2·17	10·85
Jessore ...	280,780	882,000	3·1	·9	4·5
Khulna ...	206,114	1,032,300	·5	1·4	7
Dacca	468,974	1,261,200	2·7	·77	3·85
Mymensingh ...	694,937	2,792,300	4·1	1·17	5·85
Faridpur ...	366,736	1,307,000	3·5	1	5
Bakarganj ...	364,775	1,725,600	4·7	1·34	6·7
Chittagong ...	124,971	626,100	·5	1·4	7
Tippera ...	436,932	1,146,100	2·5	·7	3·5
Noakhali ...	174,664	872,300	4·2	1·2	6
Rajshahi ...	220,433	986,300	4·4	1·27	6·35
Dinajpur ...	272,454	1,377,600	5	1·4	7
Jalpaiguri ...	110,958	752,000	5·8	1·65	8·25
Rangpur ...	413,415	1,628,800	3·9	1·03	5·15
Bogra	175,404	347,400	2	·57	2·85
Pabna	179,587	399,400	2·2	·63	3·15
Malda	111,900	840,500	7·5	2·14	10·7
Darjeeling ...	22,845	158,900	4·2	1·2	6·0

Normal acreage taken from Season and Crop Report, 1931-32, there being no substantial difference in 1936-37.

Normal acreage in 1931-32 ... ... 26,103,100 acres.
in 1936-37 ... ... 26,616,700 ,,

Each cultivating owner represents 3·5 persons including himself.

TABLE 50

AVERAGE HOLDING IN ACRES FOR AN AGRICULTURAL FAMILY OF FIVE PERSONS (1936-37)

	Per head of Population.				*Per Family of five persons.*		
	Cultivated.	Still available for cultivation.	Total.	Number of persons per square mile.	Cultivated.	Still available for cultivation.	Total.
Tippera ...	·7	·05	·75	1,197	3·5	·25	3·75
Dacca ...	·85	·03	·88	1,265	4·25	·15	4·4
Faridpur ...	1·1	·005	1·105	1,003	5·5	·025	5·525
Mymensingh	·97	·16	1·13	823	4·85	·8	5·65
Hooghly ...	·7	·43	1·13	938	3·5	2·15	5·65
Bogra ...	·9	·3	1·24	785	4·5	1·5	6
Rangpur ...	1·1	·14	1·24	742	5·5	·7	6·2
Noakhali ...	1·2	·1	1·3	1,124	6	·5	6·5
Bakarganj ...	1·3	·03	1·33	834	6·5	·15	6·65
Jessore ...	·8	·54	1·34	576	4	2·7	6·7
Howrah ...	·6	·94	1·54	2,105	3	4·7	7·7
24-Parganas	·83	·77	1·6	516	4·15	3·85	8
Pabna ...	1·55	·13	1·68	795	7·75	·65	8·4
Midnapore	1·14	·57	1·71	534	5·7	2·85	8·55
Khulna ...	1·14	·63	1·77	654 *	5·7	3·15	8·85
Rajshahi ...	1·3	·5	1·8	548	6·5	2·5	9
Chittagong	1·5	·45	1·95	699	7·5	2·25	9·75
Dinajpur ...	1·17	·94	2·11	445	5·85	4·7	10·55
Birbhum ...	1·8	·34	2·14	558	9	1·7	10·7
Burdwan ...	1·14	1·2	2·34	583	5·7	6	11·7
Murshidabad	1·9	·5	2·4	656	9·5	2·5	12
Bankura ...	1·4	1·14	2·54	424	7	5·7	12·7
Nadia ...	1·5	1·14	2·64	531	7·5	5·7	13·2
Malda ...	1·2	1·7	2·9	597	6	8·5	14·5
Jalpaiguri ...	1·9	1·5	3·4	335	9·5	7·5	17
Darjeeling ...	2·3	1·1	3·4	264	11·5	5·5	17

Hooghly and Howrah have a large number of industrial areas. Otherwise, in the four interior thanas of the Sadar Sub-division of Hooghly, the average comes to 631 per sq. mile. Entire Howrah is practically a developed area.

* Excluding Reserve Forest Area.

The figures in Tables 49 and 50 show that in the districts of Tippera, Dacca, Mymensingh, Hooghly, Bogra, Jessore, Howrah and the 24-Parganas, the area under cultivation is actually less than 5·3 acres taken as the standard basis for an average family of five persons, while the size of the entire holding, cultivated and fallow, is less than the standard of 7 acres in the districts of Tippera, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Hooghly, Bogra, Rangpur, Noakhali, Bakarganj and Jessore.

In the districts of Howrah, Dinajpur, Bankura, Nadia, Malda, Burdwan, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, more than 5 acres of land lie fallow and uncultivated in an average holding, about 2 to 4 acres in Hooghly, Jessore, the 24-Parganas, Khulna, Midnapore, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Birbhum and Murshidabad. But in the districts of Tippera, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Noakhali, Bakarganj and Bogra—practically the main jute districts—an average holding is already below the marginal limit and there is practically no fallow left. Every acre has been brought under the plough, naturally enough, owing to the smallness of the holdings.

In the fertile districts of Eastern and Northern Bengal, an average agriculturist family of 5 persons has thus to depend normally upon a comparatively small area of cultivated land, while the average holding is relatively of larger size in Western and Central Bengal, owing to gradually decreasing fertility of the soil with their decaying rivers and inadequate and irregular distribution of rainfall. It is only the cultivation of jute which partially compensates for the

diminution of the size of the holding in the fertile districts. What is lost in area is gained, to some extent, by the produce in jute, and what is lost in fertility is partially made up by the increased size of the average holding.

Generally speaking, the fertile districts have as much as 14 to 22 per cent of the net cultivated area growing jute, while the other districts of Bengal have not an average of even 2 per cent growing jute.

Growth of Population

The reason for this comparative disparity in the size of the average holding is in the extraordinary growth of population within the last fifty years in the fertile districts of Eastern and Northern Bengal. The first Census was taken in 1872, and we may, therefore, take the next Census, that of 1881, as the basis of our comparison. Compared with the population in 1881, the Burdwan Division gained 17 per cent, mainly due to the development of coal and other mining and industrial areas, the Presidency Division (Nadia, Murshidabad and Jessore only) lost about 5 per cent,, the Rajshahi Division gained 26 per cent, the Dacca Division gained 60 per cent and the Chittagong Division gained 88 per cent in 1931. Lands have, therefore, been left fallow, cultivated lands have become jungles and the size of the average holding has increased in the non-fertile regions, while the compelling force of the population figures, combined with the world's demand for agricultural products from India, has resulted in a gradual diminution in the size

of holdings in the fertile belts. In a few other places the size of holdings has gradually diminished for special reasons such as development of towns or industrial areas.

Generally speaking, the tendency has been that with the increase of population the size of the holding gradually shrinks. In the fertile districts of the North and the East, the saturation point has been reached and any further increase in the population will make cultivation still more uneconomic for the average family. On the other hand, there is still scope for better farming, and intensive cultivation and improvement in the districts of Western and Central Bengal, provided that they get good rainfall or are afforded better irrigation facilities and that the health of rural areas improves.

Average Income and Deficit

The average income, district by district, of a family of five persons, on the basis of the total cultivated area in Bengal in the year 1936-37, may now be calculated. Table 51 shows the average value of produce of a unit agricultural family of five and, on the estimate made in the previous chapter that a family of five persons needs at least Rs. 290 to meet its fixed liabilities and living expenses, it also shows the amount of deficit per family in the different districts of Bengal. These calculations for each district have been arrived at on the following basis:

The entire paddy area of a district has been calculated at the uniform rate of 16 maunds of yield

per acre, at a price of Re. 1-8-0 per maund. The entire jute area has also been similarly calculated on an average yield of 14½ maunds at Rs. 4-0-0 per maund. The remainder of the total cropped area in a district *minus* the areas under tea, cinchona, fodder crops, fruits, vegetables and miscellaneous crops has been calculated on a lump basis of Rs. 20-0-0 per acre. The total crop values thus calculated has been divided by the number of cultivating owners and tenant cultivators in the district excluding growers of special produce. Thereafter, as each cultivating owner and tenant cultivator represents a family of 3·5 persons, including himself, the figure for each such owner and cultivator has been converted to the unit family consisting of five persons.

In order to bring the different districts nearer their actual conditions, these figures have also been adjusted, by deducting 20% from the districts of Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bankura, and 10% from Malda, to make some allowance for the poor fertility of the soil and consequent poor outturn of crops in these districts, and by adding 20% to the districts of Bogra, Pabna, Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Chittagong, Noakhali and Tippera, the fertile districts of Bengal. Again, to show the actual state of the district, the rental charges, which vary from district to district, have been deducted from the total value of the produce, in estimating the effective deficit figures.

TABLE 51

AVERAGE INCOME AND DEFICIT PER FAMILY, DISTRICT BY DISTRICT

	Total value of crops.	Value of produce per unit family.	Adjusted value of produce per unit family.	Area for which rent is payable.	Rent payable per holding.	Net value of produce after deducting rent.	Net adjusted deficit after deducting rent
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Acres.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs.
24-Parganas ...	22,664,800	123	123	4·15	52 6	70 10	185
Nadia ...	24,031,200	231	185	7·5	51 0	134 0	122
Murshidabad ...	26,145,200	291	233	9·5	52 4	180 12	65
Jessore ...	22,953,600	114	114	4	40 8	73 8	182
Khulna ...	23,785,600	165	165	5·7	70 13	94 3	161
Burdwan ...	15,697,000	153	153	5·7	100 5	52 11	203
Birbhum ...	17,033,200	220	176	9	49 8	126 8	129
Bankura ...	15,957,600	180	144	7	42 7	101 9	154
Midnapore ...	40,269,600	137	137	5·7	40 0	97 0	159
Hooghly ...	9,353,000	109	109	3·5	38 8	70 8	185
Howrah ...	2,972,800	86	86	3	60 12	25 4	230
Rajshahi ...	30,834,600	200	220	6·5	33 5	186 11	69
Dinajpur ...	28,087,200	147	147	5·85	40 5	106 11	149
Jalpaiguri ...	16,740,000	214	214	9·5	74 12	139 4	116
Darjeeling ...	2,913,600	183	183	11·5	94 14	88 2	167
Rangpur ...	46,332,000	160	160	5·5	28 4	131 12	124
Bogra ...	18,606,000	151	181	4·5	41 1	139 15	116
Pabna ...	28,556,800	227	272	7·75	36 5	235 11	20
Maldah ...	12,006,000	153	138	6	39 6	98 10	157
Dacca ...	46,786,000	143	171	4·25	16 3	154 13	101
Mymensingh ...	97,244,000	200	240	4·85	24 0	216 1	40
Faridpur ...	43,398,000	168	201	5·5	34 0	167 0	89
Bakarganj ...	48,138,000	190	228	6·5	24 12	203 4	52
Chittagong ...	15,881,400	181	217	7·5	112 0	105 0	151
Tippera ...	41,672,800	136	163	3·5	18 2	144 14	111
Noakhali ...	25,968,800	204	244	6	39 6	204 10	51

Total value of crops calculated as follows :—

Total paddy area at 16 maunds per acre at Re. 1-8 per maund of paddy. Total jute area at 14½ maunds per acre at Rs. 4 per maund. Total area under other crops, excluding tea, fodder crops, vegetables, fruits, and miscellaneous crops at Rs. 20-0 per acre.

The net adjusted deficit calculated as follows :—

Rs. 290-0 is the requirement of a family and Rs. 34-0 is the average rent liabiilty on an average holding. Net requirement is Rs. 256-0 per unit family consisting of 5 persons. The deficit has been calculated after deducting the actual rent charges.

Adjustment figures to allow for variations in fertility :—

Add 20 % to Bogra, Pabna, Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Chittagong, Tippera and Noakhali. Deduct 20 % from Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Bankura, and deduct 10 % from Malda.

The relative proportion of total rent charges to the total money value crops is shown in Table 52. The table also shows the high proportion of rent to the total value of produce, district by district. In Burdwan, Howrah and Chittagong it is 60 to 70 per cent, in 24-Parganas, Khulna and Darjeeling it is over 40 per cent, in Jessore, Midnapore, Hooghly and Jalpaiguri it is over 30 per cent. This is on the basis of the value of crops, without any adjustment, to make allowance for varying degrees of fertility. If the value of crops is adjusted on the same basis as in Table 51, as will be seen from Table 52, it will show the still higher proportion of rent to crop value for the Western Bengal districts.

TABLE 52

PROPORTION OF RENT TO PRODUCE

	Total value of crops	Present gross rental.	Proportion of rent to produce without adjustment.	Proportion of rent to produce with adjustment.
	Rs.	Rs.		
24-Parganas ...	22,664,800	9,792,545	43%	43%
Nadia ...	24,031,200	5,232,470	22%	27%
Murshidabad ...	26,145,200	4,683,922	18%	22%
Jessore ...	22,953,600	7,934,235	35%	35%
Khulna ...	23,785,600	10,280,867	43%	43%
Burdwan ...	15,697,000	10,779,442	69%	69%
Birbhum ...	17,033,200	3,871,521	23%	29%
Bankura ...	15,957,600	40,61,556	26%	32%
Midnapore ...	40,269,600	11,983,534	30%	30%
Hooghly ...	9,353,000	3,684,567	39%	39%
Howrah ...	2,972,800	2,137,118	72%	72%
Rajshahi ...	30,834,600	5,244,133	17%	15%
Dinajpur ...	28,087,200	7,722,479	27%	27%
Jalpaiguri ...	16,740,000	5,916,252	35%	35%
Darjeeling ...	2,913,600	1,542,088	53%	53%
Rangpur ...	46,332,000	8,952,269	19%	19%
Bogra ...	18,606,000	5,129,551	28%	23%
Pabna ...	28,556,800	4,583,071	16%	13%
Maldah ...	12,006,000	3,046,623	25%	28%
Dacca ...	46,786,000	5,418,917	12%	10%
Mymensingh ...	97,244,000	11,711,820	12%	10%
Faridpur ...	43,398,000	5,324,325	12%	10%
Bakarganj ...	48,138,000	10,214,358	21%	18%
Chittagong ...	15,881,400	9,766,042	62%	51%
Tippera ...	41,672,800	5,872,708	14%	12%
Noakhali ...	25,968,800	5,082,810	19%	16%

CHAPTER VIII

INCIDENCE OF RENT, REVENUE AND TAXES ON LAND

Land Revenue incidence—Cess incidence—Incidence per head of rural population—Incidence per acre—Margin between rent and revenue—Total taxation per head of population.

Land Revenue Incidence

Bengal is mainly a permanently settled province. Its total land revenue demand in 1936-37 was Rs. 31,206,462 of which Rs. 21,498,926 was from permanently settled estates. The incidence of Land Revenue demand per acre of permanently settled land varies widely from district to district and bears no relationship either to the productivity or to the intensity of population. It is as high as Re. 1-14-0 in Howrah, Re. 1-7-0 in the district of Burdwan and goes down as low as Re. 0-3-6 in the district of Dacca and Re. 0-3-3 in the district of Mymensingh. The district of Burdwan, with 3,245 square miles of permanently settled area in it, pays more than Rs. 30 lacs in land revenue, while the whole of the Dacca Division, comprising four districts and embracing an area more than four times the area of the Burdwan district, has to pay less, in fact just a little over Rs. 26 lacs, and yet these four districts are the most fertile tracts in the whole of Bengal. The district of Birbhum, with 1,695 square miles, has to pay a land revenue of more than Rs. 10 lacs, while the district of Dacca, with about double the area, *viz.*, 3,030 square miles, pays not even half the land revenue of Birbhum—Dacca paying only about Rs. 4 lacs. The district of Nadia,

with the poorest soil in Bengal, has to pay more land revenue than the disrict of Mymensingh, even though the permanently settled area in Nadia is less than half of that in the district of Mymensingh. Broadly speaking, it will be evident from Table 53 that the incidence of land revenue is higher in the districts of the Burdwan Division and the Presidency Division than in the other districts of this province.

TABLE 53

REVENUE INCIDENCE PER ACRE

	Revenue per acre of permanently settled area. Rs. A. P.				Revenue per acre of permanently settled area. Rs. A. P.		
Burdwan	1	7	0	Faridpur	0	5	0
Birbhum	0	15	3	Bakarganj	0	9	0
Bankura	0	5	0	Chittagong	1	7	6
Midnapore	0	14	4½	Tippera	0	8	0
Hooghly	1	0	0	Noakhali	0	8	6
Howrah	1	14	0	Rajshahi	0	9	9
24-Parganas	1	0	0	Dinajpur	0	9	0
Nadia	0	8	0	Jalpaiguri	0	3	3
Murshidabad	0	12	0	Rangpur	0	6	0
Jessore	0	7	6	Bogra	0	8	0
Khulna	0	6	9	Pabna	0	5	9
Dacca	0	3	6	Malda	0	5	3
Mymensingh	0	3	3	Darjeeling	0	0	6

These figures were compiled on the basis of the figures in 1931-32, which are substantially the same as those in 1936-37, except in Midnapore, where the figure has been compiled from those of 1936-37.

Taking the province as a whole, the average revenue incidence of Bengal is Re. 0-9-0 per acre for permanently settled areas, while the incidence of revenue payable in estates held direct by Government is Re. 1-15-0 per acre.

Cess Incidence

The Cess incidence also is very high in Western Bengal districts. The incidence of local taxation per head of rural population, excluding Union rates, is Re. 0-6-4 in Khulna, Re. 0-4-5 in Jessore, Re. 0-4-2 in Burdwan, as against Re. 0-1-8 in Dacca, Re. 0-2-5 in Faridpur, Re. 0-1-10 in Tippera, and Re. 0-2-7 in Rangpur.

Incidence per Head of Rural Population

Practically, the whole of the revenue and rental charges and the entire Cess are paid by the rural areas. The municipal areas pay a very small share, as will be seen from the fact that the city of Calcutta pays only Rs. 11,984 as Government revenue. Excluding, therefore, the municipal population of all the districts, Table 54 shows how the incidence works in different districts per head of population, taking the entire rural population as the basis for our calculation.

The incidence of revenue has been calculated by dividing the total land revenue of a district, as shown in Appendix I of the Land Revenue Administration Report, 1936-37, by the total rural population of the district. The incidence of local taxation is taken from Column 85 of Form II of the Report on the Working of the District and Local Boards, 1935-36, and excludes Union Rates and Taxes. This is the Cess incidence in the main. The Union rate incidence is calculated for the year 1935-36 by dividing the total amount of rates and taxes under Sections 37A and 37B of the Village Self Government Act including Chaukidari

Chakran rates, if any, by the total Union Board population. The Rent incidence has been calculated on the basis that the figure, shown in Column 3 of Appendix XXVI of the Land Revenue Administration Report, 1936-37, is the total amount of rent paid by the lowest grades of tenants or by those who have lands in their actual physical possession. The rural population of a district is taken from Column 5 of Form IA of the District Boards Working Report for the year 1935-36.

TABLE 54

INCIDENCE OF REVENUE, RENT AND RATES

Per head of Population

1	2	3	4	5	6
	Revenue	Rent	Local taxation	Union Rates	Total 2, 3, 4
	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.
Burdwan ...	2 4 0	7 6 0	0 4 2	0 3 5	7 13 7
Birbhum ...	1 4 0	4 2 0	0 3 2	0 4 6	4 9 8
Bankura ...	0 8 3	3 14 0	0 3 4	0 2 9	4 4 1
Midnapore ...	1 0 0	4 4 0	0 3 9	—	4 7 9
Hooghly ...	1 0 6	4 0 0	0 3 11	0 3 10	4 7 5
Howrah ...	0 9 6	2 7 0	0 2 11	0 3 0	2 12 11
24-Parganas ...	1 2 0	4 8 0	0 3 9	0 2 6	4 14 3
Nadia ...	0 11 6	3 10 0	0 3 9	0 3 3	4 1 0
Murshidabad	0 13 6	3 6 0	0 2 11	0 2 6	3 11 5
Jessore ...	0 8 4½	4 12 0	0 4 5	0 3 2	5 3 2
Khulna ...	0 9 10½	6 5 0	0 6 4	0 2 9	6 14 1
Dacca ...	0 3 0	1 10 6	0 1 8	0 1 10	1 13 8
Mymensingh	0 2 11	2 5 0	0 2 10	0 2 6	2 10 4
Faridpur ...	0 4 10½	2 4 10	0 2 5	0 2 10	2 10 1
Bakarganj ...	0 15 7½	3 8 0	0 3 4	0 3 0	3 14 4
Chittagong ...	1 0 3	5 11 6	0 2 10	0 2 2	6 0 6
Tippera ...	0 6 3	1 14 0	0 1 10	0 1 9	2 1 7
Noakhali ...	0 12 0	3 0 0	0 2 7	0 2 0	3 4 7
Rajshahi ...	0 11 5	3 12 0	0 4 3	0 3 7	4 3 10
Dinajpur ...	0 14 10	4 6 0	0 4 2	0 4 0	4 14 2
Jalpaiguri ...	1 5 0	6 2 0	0 5 5	0 4 0	6 11 5
Rangpur ...	0 6 6	3 8 0	0 2 7	0 2 10	3 13 5
Bogra ...	0 8 0	4 14 0	0 3 8	0 3 3	5 4 11
Pabna ...	0 5 10	3 4 0	0 3 11	0 2 10	3 10 5
Malda ...	0 8 0	2 15 0	0 2 9	0 2 9	3 4 6
Darjeeling ...	1 8 0	5 4 0	0 4 3	0 13 0	6 5 3

Incidence per Acre

It may be assumed that the entire amount of rent and cesses are in fact payable out of the lands actually cultivated. It is true that there are non-agriculturists in rural areas, but generally they occupy nothing more than their own homestead, and being only a small part of the village population, they may be left out of consideration. We have seen that the municipal areas pay very little as revenue or rent, and in any case form only a very small fraction of the whole. On the assumption, therefore, that the real effective burden of rent and cess falls mainly on the acreage under actual cultivation, Table 55 will show the effective pressure of rent and cess on an acre of cultivated land in the different districts and, with a view to show the comparative revenue figures, revenue incidence has been worked on the same principle in that Table.

The marginal difference between rent and revenue per acre of cultivated area makes an interesting study. The districts of Western and Central Bengal have generally to pay a higher margin as between rent and revenue, compared with the districts of Eastern Bengal. Compared with Bakarganj the margin per acre is higher by Rs. 10-11 in Burdwan, Rs. 3-5 in Bankura, Rs. 6 in Hooghly, Rs. 13-15 in Howrah, Rs. 7-8 in 24-Parganas, Rs. 3-9 in Nadia, Rs. 2-4 in Murshidabad, Rs. 9-5 in Khulna. Compared with Dacca, it is Rs. 9-7 more in Burdwan, Rs. 2-1 in Bankura, Rs. 2-3 in Midnapore, Rs. 4-12 in Hooghly, Rs. 12-11 in Howrah, Rs. 6-4 in 24-Parganas, Rs. 2-5 in Nadia, Re. 1 in Murshidabad, Rs. 5-12 in Jessore,

TABLE 55

REVENUE, RENT AND CESS PER ACRE, 1936-37

	Net cultivated acreage	Gross Rental	Cess Demand	Revenue per acre	Rent per acre	Cess per acre	Total of rent and cess per acre	Margin between Rev. & Rent
		Rs.	Rs.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.
Burdwan ...	608,200	10,779,442	359,481	5 0 0	17 11 0	0 9 5	18 4 5	12 11 0
Birbhum ...	704,300	3,871,521	195,544	1 14 0	5 8 0	0 4 5	5 12 5	3 10 0
Bankura ...	650,700	4,061,556	219,532	0 12 0	6 1 0	0 5 4	6 6 4	5 5 0
Midnapore ...	1,710,600	11,983,534	593,465	1 9 0	7 0 0	0 5 6	7 5 6	5 7 0
Hooghly ...	316,100	3,684,567	199,627	3 0 0	11 0 0	0 10 1	11 10 1	8 0 0
Howrah ...	105,400	2,137,118	123,744	4 5 0	20 4 0	1 3 0	21 7 0	15 15 0
24-Parganas ...	780,400	9,792,545	522,109	3 0 0	12 8 0	0 10 8	13 2 8	9 8 0
Nadia ...	764,200	5,232,470	323,905	1 4 0	6 13 0	0 6 9	7 3 9	5 9 0
Murshidabad ...	850,900	4,685,922	248,651	1 4 0	5 8 0	0 4 8	5 12 8	4 4 0
Jessore ...	782,500	7,934,235	481,632	1 2 0	10 2 0	0 9 10	10 11 10	9 0 0
Khulna ...	823,900	10,280,867	548,339	1 2 0	12 7 0	0 10 8	13 1 8	11 5 0
Dacca ...	1,442,200	5,418,917	334,934	0 7 0	3 11 0	0 3 8	3 14 8	3 4 0
Mymensingh ...	2,388,500	11,711,820	704,990	0 6 0	4 15 0	0 4 8	5 3 8	4 9 0
Faridpur ...	1,388,000	5,324,325	288,563	0 8 0	6 3 0	0 3 3	6 6 3	5 11 0
Bakarganj ...	1,623,300	10,214,358	500,452	1 13 0	3 13 0	0 4 11	4 1 11	2 0 0
Chittagong ...	653,000	9,766,042	208,642	2 6 0	14 15 0	0 5 0	5 4 0	12 9 0
Tippera ...	1,129,100	5,872,708	320,625	1 0 0	5 3 0	0 4 6	5 7 6	4 3 0
Noakhali ...	740,200	5,082,810	233,854	1 10 0	6 9 0	0 5 0	6 14 0	4 15 0
Rajshahi ...	1,019,600	5,244,133	339,096	1 0 0	5 2 0	0 5 3	5 7 3	4 2 0
Dinajpur ...	1,119,900	7,722,879	436,882	1 6 0	6 14 0	0 5 10	7 3 10	5 8 0
Jalpaiguri ...	745,600	5,916,252	233,906	2 0 0	7 14 0	0 5 0	8 3 0	5 14 0
Rangpur ...	1,718,300	8,952,269	553,740	0 10 0	5 3 0	0 5 2	5 8 2	4 9 0
Pabna ...	979,000	4,583,071	272,283	0 9 0	4 11 0	0 4 5	4 15 5	4 2 0
Bogra ...	563,000	5,129,551	250,111	0 14 0	9 2 0	0 7 0	9 9 0	8 4 0
Malda ...	464,400	3,046,623	175,273	1 0 0	6 9 0	0 6 0	6 15 0	5 9 0
Darjeeling ...	187,500	1,542,088	44,687	2 0 0	8 4 0	0 3 10	8 7 10	6 4 0

Rs. 8-1 in Khulna. The reason for the higher revenue incidence in the Western and the Central districts may be the fact that it was imposed more than a century and a half ago. Inspite of the poor fertility of the soil in the Western and Central districts, and with higher pressure of population and greater fertility in the Eastern areas, the raiyats of the decadent districts of Western and Central Bengal have to pay much more in rent than those of the fertile districts of Eastern Bengal. The only place where such margin is comparatively high in the Eastern area is Chittagong, where it is Rs. 12-9, as compared with Rs. 2 in Bakarganj and Rs. 3-4 in Dacca. The conclusion is obvious that Western and Central Bengal have been much more rack-rented and the land system has screwed very much more out of these areas than out of the districts of Eastern Bengal, excepting Chittagong, and one must note that this is on the basis of the margin between rent and revenue.

Total Taxation per Head of Population

The incidence of total taxation—Imperial, Provincial, Local and Village—may now be calculated and compared with the rent incidence per head of population. Table 56 shows that every person in this province pays an average tax of Rs. 4-14 under all heads, *viz.*, Imperial, Provincial, Local and Village. But rent alone—and this excludes revenue, which has been taken as a provincial taxation—is Rs. 3 for every person in rural areas—man, woman or child—agriculturist or non-agriculturist.

TABLE 56

INCIDENCE OF TAXATION IN BENGAL (1935-36)

			Incidence per head
Imperial	Rs.		Rs. A. P.
Customs ...	537,759,881		
Income-tax ...	170,995,721		
Salt	80,611,677		
Total ...	789,367,279		
Total Population of British India		271,526,593	2 14 0
Provincial	Rs.		
Land Revenue ...	34,329,000		
Excise	13,373,000		
Stamp	29,594,000		
Registration ...	2,370,000		
Scheduled Taxes ...	1,471,000		
Total ...	81,137,000		
Total Population of Bengal excluding States ...		50,114,002	1 10 0
Local	Rs.		
Cess	8,796,469		
Total Population in Rural Bengal		46,429,672	0 3 0
Rural	Rs.		
Union Rate ...	7,254,855		
Total Union Population		39,697,584	0 3 0
			4 14 0
Land Tax	Rs.		
Total Rent ...	169,858,437		
Deduct Revenue ...	31,200,557		
Net Rental ...	138,657,880		
Total Rural Population		46,429,672	3 0 0

CHAPTER IX

DISPLACEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

High prices from 1920 to 1930—Decrease of cultivators—Increase of labourers—Replacement and loss—Increase of landlords, etc.

Bengal is primarily an agricultural province and any deterioration in her agricultural condition cannot but seriously affect the entire structure of her economic life and the moral and material welfare of the people of the province. Discussions in the previous chapters must have shown that agriculture does not afford a fair subsistence, and further, that it certainly yields no profit. The inevitable tendency, in such circumstances, to leave the land has distinctly been visible since the last Census decade.

High Prices from 1920 to 1930

During the whole of the last Census decade, prices of all agricultural commodities continued to be sufficiently high, as will be seen from Table 57.

TABLE 57

HARVEST PRICE OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES PER MAUND

	Autumn Rice	Jute	Linseed	Rape & Mustard	Tobacco
	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.
1920-21 ...	6 8	6 0	8 0	8 8	12 8
1921-22 ...	6 0	6 0	8 4	8 12	13 3
1922-23 ...	5 8	10 0	8 5	8 0	13 8
1923-24 ...	5 4	9 0	8 0	8 4	13 5
1924-25 ...	6 7	12 0	8 0	8 11	15 0
1925-26 ...	7 0	18 13	8 0	9 8	16 0
1926-27 ...	7 3	8 4	7 13	9 0	14 8
1927-28 ...	7 8	8 4	7 8	9 0	17 4
1928-29 ...	6 10	9 0	8 0	8 12	20 0
1929-30 ...	6 0	8 0	7 0	8 5	16 8

—Agricultural Statistics of India.

The high prices had a decided influence on the rise in wages. Compared with 1916, agricultural wages showed a marked increase in 1925, amounting in some cases to as much as almost 100 per cent. In the districts of Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, Jessore, Khulna, in all the districts of North Bengal except Malda, in all the districts of the Dacca Division and in all the districts of the Chittagong Division excepting Noakhali, the average rate of daily wages ranged between 10 and 15 annas. In the other districts it was about 8 to 9 annas.

Decrease of Cultivators

One would have expected a better agricultural outlook as a result of high prices. But inspite of a high price level the number of cultivators—cultivating owners and tenant-cultivators—has declined heavily within the last Census period (1921-31). The land-owning cultivators are being slowly expropriated or are leaving their land, to swell the ranks of landless labourers and the unemployed. Table 58 gives the comparative occupational figures for 1921 and 1931 to show the decline in the number of cultivating classes —the actual workers.

TABLE 58

DECREASE OF CULTIVATORS

	1931*	1921†
Cultivating Owners ...	5,317,973	9,020,472
Tenant Cultivators ...	873,094	
Jhum Cultivators ...	13,318	
Total ...	6,204,385	9,020,472

Decrease in 1931—2,816,087.

* Census of India—Bengal, 1931, Vol. II, p. 70.
† Census of India—Bengal, 1921, Vol. II, p. 198.

In any study of these figures, one must remember that the population of Bengal has increased, during the last Census period, from 46,695,546 to 50,114,002 —an increase of 7·3 per cent. If the cultivating population owning land had a similar proportional increase, we should have had a higher number of cultivating workers. But apart from any proportional increase, their number has not even remained stationary ; on the contrary, the number of cultivating owners and tenant-cultivators was actually less in 1931 by 2,816,087 as compared with the number in 1921. Calculated at the rate of 1 worker to 2·5 non-working dependants (the Census figures show that one worker has 2·5 non-working dependants), a population of 9,856,304 or roughly 10 millions of people—workers and their dependants—have been expropriated or have been compelled to leave their land in the course of the decade 1921-1931.

Increase of Labourers

This displacement of landed agricultural workers, the cultivating owners, must inevitably swell, to a certain extent, the ranks of landless agricultural labourers, leading to a fall in agricultural wages. The actual increase of landless agricultural labourers has been just over a million workers or earners, as will be seen from Table 59.

TABLE 59

INCREASE OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

	1931*	1921†
Agricultural labourers ...	2,874,804	1,789,984
Increase in 1931—1,084,820		

* Census-Bengal, 1931, Vol. II, page 70.
† Census-Bengal, 1921, Vol. II, page 198.

Calculating again at 2·5 dependants to 1 worker, the increase comes up to 3,796,870. There is thus an increase of landless agricultural labourers—workers and their dependants—by a total of 3,796,870.

Table 60 shows the increase in other non-agricultural and "small" occupations.

TABLE 60

INCREASE OF OTHER LABOURERS

	1931	1921
Labourers and workmen otherwise unspecified ...	441,921	284,944
Other domestic servants ...	866,946	457,079
Petty shop-keepers ...	157,468	55,679
Itinerant traders and hawkers	8,001	5,175
Total ...	1,474,336	802,877

Increase in 1931— 671,459 workers
= 2,350,106 workers and dependants.

Replacement and Loss

An estimate of the displacement from agriculture and the increase in other occupations is given in Table 61. It will be seen that about three millions of workers and earners, involving about 10 millions of people, have ceased to be cultivators in one decade. About two-thirds of these displaced people, comprising a little over 6 millions, have increased the number of landless agricultural labourers, domestic servants, petty shop-keepers, etc. This is a permanent loss to Bengal's agriculture and cannot but be a matter of serious concern to all interested in the welfare of rural Bengal.

TABLE 61

DISPLACEMENT FROM AGRICULTURE

	Workers	Workers and Dependants
Displacement from Agriculture	2,816,087	9,856,304
Increase in—		
Agricultural labourers	1,084,820	3,796,870
Other labourers, workmen, etc.	671,459	2,350,106
Total	1,755,279	6,146,976

On the basis of five persons to each family, 1,971,260 agricultural families had to leave their land, and out of these, 1,229,395 families have been absorbed in agricultural labour and other labouring occupations. It is not easy to determine the nature of occupations in respect of the rest. But even if it be taken that at least over a million families had to leave their hereditary occupation of agriculture, it does become a matter of serious concern to the province. It only proves the exceptional impoverishment of the Bengal agriculturist.

Increase of Landlords, etc.

It is interesting to note that the Census reports show an increase of 7,000 in law, 22,000 in medicine, 41,000 in the rank of teachers—an aggregate total of 70,000 workers representing 225,000 persons. On the other hand, the number of non-cultivating proprietors, taking rent in cash or kind, has increased from 385,170 to 783,755, an increase of 398,585 workers representing 1,195,755 persons—the number of land-holders having exactly doubled itself in ten years. The process of sub-infeudation resulting in an increase

of petty landlords has been the bane of the Bengal land system. And such is the mad craze for land investment in Bengal, that the moment they are in possession of some surplus money, merchants, businessmen, industrialists, money-lenders—all rush to invest it in zamindaries and lands. The conclusion is irresistible that whereas agriculture yields neither profit nor subsistence, the land system makes landlordism and zamindary a profitable concern. The high margin of rental above the revenue makes it inevitably so. It is probably the climatic influence that tends to make our people seek a life of comparative ease and comfort, involving no manual labour but bringing in easy profit. At the same time, respectability has been so much assumed to be associated with landlordism that the tendency is to become a landlord, at any cost, to make up for other deficiencies and shortcomings.

CHAPTER X

CATTLE

The deterioration of cattle—Acreage per plough and cattle—Development measures—Import of cattle—Loss of cattle.

The Deterioration of Cattle

The life of the Bengal peasant depends upon his cattle, "without them his fields remain unploughed, store and bin stand empty, and food and drink lose half their savour." Unfortunately, cattle have definitely deteriorated in the province of Bengal in weight, size and strength and are to-day a degenerated specimen, a weak and emaciated animal. Owing to the pressure of population on the soil, there is hardly any common pasture land in the village. Every inch of available space that may be cultivated has been either brought under the plough or is in the *khas* possession of landlords. There is very little cultivation of fodder crops, as such, for cattle, and whatever the cattle may find in fields left fallow, with the dry stubble of paddy and some chaff, when available, is the main item of food for the animals. Cattle dependent on such grazing and food are invariably half starved and are truly miserable animals. Owing to the low vitality of the cattle through decades of under-feeding, through want of pasture lands and of suitable and nourishing fodder crops, ploughing does not begin until the rains make the soil soft and easy to be upturned and broken. In other words, the soil must be soft enough for a

weak pair of bullocks to drive the plough. In other provinces, they have to plough dry hard lands and they have strong animals able to work longer hours and to carry heavier burdens. The housing conditions of these cattle in the river districts of Bengal are miserable. They are huddled up together on high land, sometimes for weeks, often without shed or shelter, and have to live upon a precarious and limited supply of fodder. The breed is also very poor. The weakness of the animal inevitably leads to shallow tilling and the plough of the Bengal peasant, only suitable for Bengal animals, is just sufficient to scratch the surface ; the ploughshare has neither width nor depth to stir up new soil. These animals cannot draw a heavy and improved plough that can make a little deeper upturn of the soil, if and where necessary.

Acreage per Plough and Cattle

On the other hand the acreage of net cropped land per pair of animals is quite high, as will be seen from Table 62.

It will be noticed at once from these figures that, generally speaking, in the dry districts of Western and Central Bengal, cattle have a lower acreage per pair of animals than in Eastern and Northern Bengal, but that is because the soil in Western and Central Bengal is much harder, whereas the sandy loam of the soft soil of the Eastern and Northern districts makes comparatively greater tillage possible. There are, however, certain districts such as Murshidabad, Pabna, Dacca, Mymensingh, Bakarganj, Noakhali, Chittagong, and Tippera where a pair of animals has to work from 6 to about

TABLE 62

CROPPED AREA PER PLOUGH AND PAIR OF ANIMALS

District	No. of bullocks	No. of male buffaloes	Total No. of animals	Total No. of ploughs	Net cropped area in 1936-37	Acres of cropped land per pair of animals	Area of cropped land per plough
24-Parganas	408,710	11,380	420,090	194,279	780,400	3·7	4
Nadia	357,301	52,433	409,734	151,000	764,200	3·7	5
Murshidabad ...	234,901	35,340	260,241	114,467	850,900	6·5	7½
Jessore	398,801	8,558	407,359	177,021	782,500	3·8	4½
Khulna	310,019	7,509	317,528	163,532	823,900	5·2	5
Burdwan	264,081	42,664	306,745	134,317	608,200	3·96	3½
Birbhum	240,859	14,049	254,908	106,133	704,300	5·5	7
Bankura	229,441	49,103	278,544	119,476	650,700	4·66	6
Midnapore	662,986	25,122	688,108	329,395	171,600	5	5
Hooghly	159,779	4,058	163,837	72,201	316,100	3·8	4½
Howrah	69,620	991	70,911	25,589	105,400	3	4
Rajshahi	302,768	56,008	368,776	191,534	1,019,600	5·5	5
Dinajpur	489,063	108,623	597,686	278,683	1,119,900	3·7	4
Jalpaiguri	244,979	49,809	294,788	124,419	745,600	5	6
Darjeeling	29,308	7,195	36,503	15,836	187,500	—	—
Rangpur	587,625	27,189	614,814	311,778	1,718,300	5·6	6
Bogra	174,895	27,512	202,407	132,330	563,000	5·6	4
Pabna	212,792	12,333	225,125	141,481	979,000	8·7	7
Malda	251,739	33,786	285,525	118,012	464,400	3·3	4
Dacca	358,202	2,249	360,451	241,961	1,442,200	·8	6
Mymensingh ...	708,306	26,595	734,901	546,594	2,388,500	6·5	4
Faridpur	559,002	1,582	560,544	163,156	1,388,000	4·9	8
Bakarganj	370,403	46,408	416,911	248,416	1,623,300	7·8	6½
Chittagong	200,462	9,426	209,888	147,951	653,000	6·2	4½
Tippera	356,342	337	356,679	219,502	1,129,100	6·3	5
Noakhali	182,898	11,170	193,968	114,459	740,200	7·6	6½
Chittagong Hill Tracts	11,192	8,035	19,227	8,676	207,500	—	—

9 acres of land—almost an impossible task for the poor cattle, making them poorer and weaker or, in the alternative, leaving the soil scrappily tilled. Where harder soil has to be tackled or the soil requires deeper ploughing, spade and man have to do the work, and often-times the harder soil has to be broken up with the spade before ploughing can commence and that too after the first showers of the rains have softened it. Though fodder crops for cattle are the greatest need of Bengal, the cultivation of fodder crops has not yet been taken up in earnest. No other province can grow, almost all the year round, such good fodder crops and green grass as Bengal. Apart from secondary crops that can be grown for human consumption, or for the market, Bengal requires a definite proportion of land for purposes of fodder for cattle.

The figures are also instructive in that they show that the acreage per plough runs parallel to the acreage per pair of animals. No other conclusion is possible except that cultivators cannot afford to purchase additional ploughs and cattle, although they are really needed. The districts that are outstanding illustrations of this state of affairs are Murshidabad, Pabna, Dacca, Bakarganj and Noakhali, which need more ploughs and more animals.

Development Measures

A more active policy for the supply of breeding bulls has been followed for the last few years. The Rural Development grant from the Government of India was used to purchase 1,000 pure bred Hariana

bulls in 1937-38. These were sent to ten selected districts. Lord Linlithgow's appeal has also succeeded in creating a wider interest in public men and local bodies and efforts are being made to supply stud bulls through local and voluntary contributions and agencies. Scrub bulls, 14,000 in number, were castrated in ten districts to improve the livestock. For some years past, steps have been taken to grow Napier grass and in 1937-38, 35 lacs of Napier grass cuttings were distributed among those who accepted the Hariana bulls as stated above. The only point that needs special attention in regard to this problem is that the imported animals should be such as would stand the climate of this province, and the ultimate basis of all veterinary efforts must be the improvement of the indigenous cattle of the province.

Import of Cattle

There is a constant stream of cattle being imported from Bihar and Orissa, and some of the border districts get these animals from across the frontier, such as Manipur and Nepal. The Sonepur Fair, in Bihar, is a great distributing centre, while the fairs in the Northern and Eastern districts, Alwakhwa, Nekmard, Darwani, Jamalpur, sell thousands of animals annually.

Loss of Cattle

Loss of cattle from drought and disease is a regular menace to Bengal peasantry, sufficient to break his backbone and it leaves him utterly helpless and his cultivation becomes completely disorganised.

CHAPTER XI

RURAL INDEBTEDNESS*

Agricultural Indebtedness—Its danger—Estimate of agricultural indebtedness—Must the cultivator borrow?—Credit requirements—Short-term and Intermediate—Causes of Indebtedness—Precarious monsoon—Litigation—Improvidence—Ancestral Debt—Indirect causes of Debt—Usury—Behind all, his Deficit Budget—Bengal Money-lenders' Act—Debt Conciliation—Land Mortgage Banks.

Agricultural Indebtedness

Agricultural indebtedness is one of the most serious problems of the Bengal peasantry. It is not peculiar to Bengal—the existence of agricultural debt is an acknowledged feature of rural life almost everywhere in the world. It may reflect the economic prosperity of the agriculturists if it represents the assets or the credit of the agriculturists. It may indeed be true, that under certain circumstances the total amount of rural indebtedness will, more or less, roughly indicate the credit of the borrowers but in Bengal the bulk of the loans are due to poverty and failure of crops.

Its Danger

There is no gainsaying the fact that the problem of agricultural indebtedness has assumed serious pro-

* It was at the last moment considered necessary to add a chapter on Rural Indebtedness and another on the Problems of Population. Owing to other exacting duties, the author could find very little time to write these chapters, and this chapter and the chapter on Population were written by the author's son, M. Asadul Huque, B.A.

portions in Bengal—very serious indeed because the agriculturists are in many cases being reduced to the position of mere labourers or landless labourers. No one will deny that the agriculturists are deeply involved in debt—so much so that in many cases even if they sell out their land, they will not be able to redeem themselves. The scourge of the money-lender is upon them—the rates of interest charged are atrociously exorbitant. To crown all, there has recently been a heavy fall in the price of primary products. The agricultural debtor cannot pay even the interests due, not to speak of the principal. He is being slowly pushed down the ladder of economic well-being—the last step is reached when he is reduced to the position of a landless labourer. The process has to be stopped if a universal agrarian unrest with its disastrous repercussions on the province as a whole has to be avoided. The average Bengal agriculturist is much too conservative, spiritual and resigned to his fate to be easily amenable to socialistic and communistic preachings. But a province with a vast mass of landless labourers as one of the features of its rural economy has within it the seeds of real danger. Dictatorship of the Proletariat is a very comprehensive phrase and may be twisted and distorted to appeal to the sentiments of the aggrieved and suffering classes. It is easy to appeal to one's emotions—it is still more easy to utilise radical and communistic theories. But it is time to anticipate the danger: agriculture must be made to pay, and this has to be done before it may be too late to stem the tide. There is a limit to

human endurance even in Bengal. Rural indebtedness condemns the agriculturist to the position of a slave and the cultivator and his children have to be immediately saved from perpetual serfdom. Release the cultivator from the bonds of indebtedness, help him to make agriculture pay and the country will be saved from some of the dangers of Communism. The "Kisan" agitation in some parts of India is a frankly communistic movement. Do the "Kisans" realise the full implications of the doctrines preached every now and then? Who will tell them that in the very home of modern Communism—Soviet Russia—its meaning has undergone a change? The essentials of private property are acknowledged features of Russian economic life today. Lenin acknowledged the defeat of his Communism. Stalin, today, has given statutory recognition to that great surrender. Are these facts known among the "Kisans" of India or among those who stand up for extreme communistic readjustment? Yet the gust of winds coming now and then from the West must open our eyes. Who knows when the delicate thread of human endurance will give way? Let us apprehend that Communism is specially attractive to poverty-stricken people. It has a fascinating appeal to the youth eager for amelioration. "He who is not a Red at twenty-one has no heart—and he who is not anti-Red at forty has no head," says Sir Philip Gibbs. The truth of the saying is apparent.

Bengal seems to be marked out by Nature as a great agricultural province, but, unfortunately, the existence of a crushing burden of agricultural

indebtedness inhibits improvement in agriculture in every possible way. Indeed the greatest hindrance to our agricultural prosperity is the existence of a huge agricultural debt, mostly unproductive in nature. As Henry Wolff puts it: "The country is in the grip of the Mahajan (money-lender). It is the bonds of debt that shackle agriculture."*

Estimate of Agricultural Indebtedness

Various attempts have hitherto been made to ascertain the total volume of agricultural debt in Bengal. In Bengal, Maor J. C. Jack, I.C.S., took up the question for the first time. He made a detailed survey in the district of Faridpur. According to his "Economic Life of a Bengal District," the average indebtedness turns out to be Rs. 122 or Rs. 121. The statistics of Major Jack were collected between the years 1906 and 1910.

Mr. Ascoli, in his Settlement Report for the district of Dacca, gives much more detailed information. According to him, the average debt per family turns out to be Rs. 121, but if the average is taken over families in debt, the figure soars up to Rs. 256. Mr. Ascoli's report also is now at least 25 years old. Probably the most authoritative estimate is that of the Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee. According to the last-named authority, the total agricultural debt is roughly Rs. 96 crores. According to the same authority, the average debt per agriculturist family amounts to Rs. 160.

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* H. Wolff: Co-operation in India, page 3.

There is every reason to believe that at the end of 1938 the total agricultural debt of this province stood at a higher figure. It is high time to pause and think of the consequences of this annual swelling of debt for unproductive purposes. If the volume of unproductive debt goes on increasing every year, it will inevitably lead to economic disaster.

Estimates of rural indebtedness of the various Indian provinces, as given in the reports of the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committees, are given below for purposes of comparison in Table 63.

TABLE 63

AGRICULTURIST INDEBTEDNESS

Province	Total debt in crores of rupees	Average debt per agriculturist family in Rupees
Bombay including Sind	81	329
Madras	150	19 per rupee of assessment.
Bengal	100	160
United Provinces ...	124	...
Punjab	135	104 per head of those supported by agriculture.
C. P. and Berar ...	36½	227
Bihar and Orissa ...	155	...
Assam	22	242

From the table given above, it appears that the position of Bengal is not wholly unfavourable. But there is no justification for this apparently facile conclusion. It must be remembered that in Bengal the mean density per square mile is the highest and our agricultural output per acre does not compare

favourably with some of the sister provinces. Further, it has to be remembered that these are 1928-29 figures: the total volume of indebtedness must be very much higher today.

Must the Cultivator Borrow?

Must the cultivator borrow? The answer clearly is in the affirmative: he must borrow and live on a system of credit till he is in a position to market his produce. The average peasant is not financially well off: he has no capital of his own. He must, therefore, borrow in order to finance agricultural operations and to maintain his family. The total annual expenditure of an average agricultural family of 5 persons cultivating 5·3 acres of land is estimated in our calculations to be Rs. 292 to Rs. 319. And this does not include anything but the barest minimum and not even expenses for primary education or for medical needs, etc. Assuming the average to be Rs. 300, assuming that agricultural operations are spread over the whole year, at least Rs. 150 (half of Rs. 300) have to be borrowed as short term or intermediate term loan. In our calculations there are over four million agricultural families in Bengal and they require every year a minimum credit amounting to Rs. 60 crores. As will be seen later, the average annual credit supplied by Co-operative Societies never exceeded Rs. 1 crore 60 lacs and that was in 1930. It came down to only about Rs. 25 lacs in 1935. The loan offices function only in a few districts and the annual credit supplied by them do not at present exceed a few lacs of Rupees only. For

the bulk of the 60 crores of Rupees the agriculturists have to fall back on the village money-lenders.

Credit Requirements—Short Term and Intermediate

Rs. 60 crores represent the annual short term and intermediate term debt of the Bengal agriculturists. The assumption is that a short term debt must be wiped off after the harvest each year and intermediate term debt within 5 years of borrowing at the latest. But are the agrciulturists of the present day in a position to pay off this huge amount even within 5 years, not to speak of immediate payment after the harvest? It has been estimated that an agricultural cycle of 5 years gives one good, one bad and three indifferent harvests. It is only in the good years that the agriculturists can possibly be expected to pay off their short term debts.

Causes of Indebtedness

The causes of indebtedness may now be enumerated and examined. The intense pressure of population on the soil, excessive sub-division and fragmentation of land, poverty of the soil, and the decline of village industries are some of the causes of indebtedness. But behind all there is the grinding poverty—poverty which makes precarious and uncertain living. Failure to provide for depreciation of cattle is another cause of indebtedness.

But it is too much to expect that an agriculturist will provide for depreciation when he and his family go without most of the necessaries of life and efficiency. Failure to provide for depreciation is

indeed a cause of indebtedness but it is very easy to appreciate the failure.

Another important factor is the perpetual ill-health of the agriculturist. He is victim to many preventible diseases, which devitalise many more than they actually kill. The cultivator is put out of action when his labour is most urgently needed. His efficiency is very much lowered, he grows less than what he might have produced, and he is forced to borrow for purposes of consumption. The tragedy of indebtedness is very much accentuated by the fact that the agriculturists borrow for procuring food. Borrowed finance is the life-blood of production, but when borrowed finance is the basis of consumption, it is time to pause and deliberate over the matter. Borrowed finance in industry is not a cause of alarm, neither is it a sign of distress, but for purposes of consumption in the sphere of agriculture, it is a distress signal.

Precarious Monsoon

The precarious nature of agriculture is another cause of indebtedness. As Sir Malcolm Darling has said: "The monsoon on which our agriculture is absolutely dependent has all the proverbial caprice of the Eastern potentate." The prospect of failure of rainfall haunts the agriculturist, the spectre of starvation disturbs his hard-earned sleep and oppresses him body and soul. If, and when, the rain fails, the village money-lender is the main hope of keeping body and soul together. The Indian Budget has been characterised as a gamble in rainfall, and the sam

remark applies to Bengal agriculture with probably greater truth. Bengal's absolute dependence on rainfall will be apparent from Table 64 given below.

TABLE 64

COMPARATIVE AREA UNDER IRRIGATION

Province	Proportion of irrigated to total sown area
Punjab	56 per cent.
United Provinces ...	29 ,,
Madras	27 ,,
Bihar and Orissa ...	21 ,,
Bombay	13 ,,
Assam	10 ,,
Bengal	7 ,,
Central Provinces and Berar ...	4 ,,

From the table given above, it appears that in Bengal, of the total area sown, only 7% is irrigated. But there are some economists who would not concede even that much. They are of opinion that only 6·2% of the total area sown in Bengal is irrigated. Whatever the actual figure may be, the fact stands out that Bengal agriculturists hardly get any irrigation facilities. A fairly steady supply of good rainfall is undoubtedly necessary, but there are still immense possibilities of irrigaton and drainage schemes in Bengal.

Litigation

Excessive love of litigation has often been mentioned as one of the causes of agricultural indebtedness. But it must be pointed out that such

a sweeping generalisation is neither fair to the vast mass of agriculturists not will it bear a moment's scrutiny. The Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee is definitely of opinion that "it is difficult to substantiate the charge that the Bengal agriculturist is really litigious."

Improvidence

It is said that the improvidence and extravagance of the agriculturist, particularly on social ceremonies and marriages, are some of the factors which contribute to the growth of agricultural indebtedness. But the point has indeed been very much exaggerated. "The great majority of agricultural debtors get into debt through improvident expenditure upon domestic expenses and in particular upon marriages," says Major Jack in his "Economic Life of a Bengal District." Professors Jather and Beri say: "We are inclined to the usual view that expenditure on marriage and social and religious ceremonies is one of the most important causes of debt. There are numerous instances of heavy debts having been contracted on these occasions from which the borrower has never been able to extricate himself." Against this usual point of view, it must be pointed out that, though it contains an important element of truth, it is not the whole truth.

This usual view was challenged by the Deccan Ryots Commission and the Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee. The Commission says: "Undue importance has been given to the expenditure on marriage and other festivals . . . the occasions occur

seldom . . . . it rarely appears as the nucleus of his indebtedness." There is every reason to believe that the opinion of the last two authorities is more representative and true to facts as revealed by statistics. Social and religious ceremonies make but small contributions to the total volume of indebtedness. Conditions of social and family life in India have not yet devised anything which may make it possible for marriages being held without some expenses. Marriages have to be given ; some expenses are inevitable. But they do not add gravely to the volume of debt of the peasant.

Ancestral Debt

One of the most important causes of the volume of the existing debt is ancestral debt—the legacy of debt being handed over from father to son, generation after generation, without any equitable restrictions. The Royal Commission on Agriculture remarks: ". . . . . innumerable people are born in debt, live in debt and die in debt, passing on their burden to those who follow." The average peasant is absolutely ignorant of his legal position *vis-a-vis* his ancestral debt which is regarded as a debt of honour. According to law, the agriculturist is liable for his inherited debt if he inherits property and only to that extent. It is not in any way suggested that there should be a wholesale repudiation of ancestral debt: such a policy would only shatter the foundations of rural credit. But both on legal and moral grounds, an inherited debt should have equitable restrictions

and the heir should not be liable in law for anything more than what is fair on moral principles.

Indirect Causes of Debt

The modern changes in the economic position of the cultivator have also been an indirect factor in the growth of indebtedness, particularly of mortgage debts. The value of land has increased and so also the peasant's capacity to borrow on the strength of it.

The money-lender with his abnormally facile system of credit has also been an indirect cause of indebtedness. Money-lending has always been a feature of our rural economy from the earliest times. But formerly, the position of the agriculturist was stronger inasmuch as there was in existence a vital village community. But the decline of the village community has made a change for the worse in the position of the cultivator. He has been called the "shahukar's serf." It is indeed true that the village money-lender has always met the demands of the cultivator but the rate of interest which he charges has been very much oppressive, to say the least of it. When the Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee concluded its enquiry, it was found that the rate of interest was extortionately high in many cases. The fertile districts had a much higher rate of interest than the districts of poorer fertility. In the districts of Pabna and Mymensingh, for example, the rate of interest was $37\frac{1}{2}\%$ to 300% and 24% to 225% respectively. Even Civil Courts decreed at as high a rate as 75% to 150%.

Usury

It is well-known that usury is prevalent in every district in Bengal. This may be attributed to the low credit of the cultivator, absence of financing agencies in the locality, shortness of capital in the hands of the money-lender, competition among the borrowers and lastly to the fact that the financing agencies cannot meet all the demands of the borrowers and as such, people are forced to go to the money-lender. The money-lender is generally represented as a blood-thirsty monster sucking the life-blood of the borrowers. It may be that this point of view is rather exaggerated. It may be that "to censure him is to censure the imperfections of mankind. We should rather blame the system than the man it has moulded," as Sir Malcolm Darling says, but the fact remains that by no standard of practical economics or morality can the highly oppressive rates of interest be supported. There are some who would suggest that the money-lender is perfectly entitled to charge a high rate of interest inasmuch as he takes a "great risk" when he lends out money to the cultivator. It is impossible to admit the justice of the argument. A borrower's credit may be very low but should the lender charge 300% on that account? It is, however, important to remember that the village money-lender is a very vital link in the chain of rural finance: at this stage, when the Co-operative movement is still not developed, rural life can hardly afford to do away with the money-lender. He is an indispensable feature of our rural economy. Let the money-lender and his system of credit remain but his system must be humanised.

Behind All His Deficit Budget

Behind all the factors leading to the indebtedness of the Bengal peasant, the real reason stands that he is perpetually under a deficit budget. His income is always behind, and probably often much behind, his expenditure. Land is the only means of his subsistence. Its produce is much less than what is barely necessary to maintain his family in meeting the grossly minimum physical needs. The monsoon fails, the weather is cruel, the shower does not come in time, the river floods the country, the tornado sweeps away the villages—and the peasant has to borrow. Malaria attacks the family and the children, waves of influenza pass over, small-pox rages round, cholera sweeps away hamlets and villages, the medical practitioner has to be paid, medicines have to be purchased, diet has to be provided—and the peasant has to borrow. He has to pay his rent and Union rate, and the collectors of these will not wait for the vagaries of the season, monsoon or market—he has to borrow. The epidemic of cattle mortality takes its toll—he has to borrow. He requires his seeds—he has to borrow. What else is left for him and where will he go? His debt burden rises in geometric progression. If any one says that money-lending does not pay, it may be correct to the extent that the money-lender does not receive his pound of flesh and by the terms of his bond. But if he had not received more than the equitable rates of interest, if he had not received his principal within reasonable period, would the money-lender from across and near the frontier have covered many hundreds of miles to

carry on money-lending in Bengal? Has there been any decline in the number of money-lenders in each Census period? Has there been any case of a money-lender becoming insolvent for his failure to collect his principal and his interest charges? Have not money-lenders added to their capital and their fortunes?

To speak of the improvidence of the Bengal peasant in the growth of his indebtedness is a tragic accusation. A starving family occasionally purchases a fish or a fowl or a fruit or some vegetables. Once in a season the agony of the father, the husband or the brother is momentarily drowned in the pleasure of seeing his dear and near ones enjoy their simple and poor meal. He goes to the urban market or a *mela*. Passing by the many show-cases of fancy goods and articles, he remembers the face of his sweet little child and perchance purchases a little toy; probably he purchases a pair of glass bangles for his wife or daughter. The Bengal peasant is after all a human being and is not moulded in a cast different from the rich and the happy. If he adds a little to a day's comfort to see the sweet smile of his child or the happy face of his wife—and if he is then called improvident, it will be human nature perversed and a tragedy too poignant to bear for any feeling heart.

Bengal Money-lenders' Act

It would be well to mention here that at present money-lending and usury in Bengal are regulated by the Bengal Money-lenders' Act of 1933 which the author of this book introduced as a private Bill and

piloted through the old Bengal Legislative Council. The main provisions of the Act are given below: —

(1) No court shall decree, on account of arrears interest, a sum greater than the principal.

(2) On all loans made after the commencement of the Act, no money-lender shall recover, by suit, any interest exceeding 10% per annum if the contract provides for compound interest.

(3) In respect of any suit concerning money lent after 1918, if the rate of interest exceeds 15% in case of secured loans or 25% in case of unsecured loans, or in any case where there is stipulation of rests at intervals of less than six months, the court shall presume such interest to be excessive, unconscionable and substantially unfair.

(4) Every debtor shall be entitled to get prescribed particulars of loans or sums due and shall be entitled to deposit payments in courts.

The Bengal Money-lenders' Act of 1933 has been subjected to criticism on the ground that it did not afford sufficient relief to the agriculturists. It is argued that even the prescribed rates of interest are too much for the people to pay. The criticism may be well founded, but the fact remains that it was the best scheme under the then existing circumstances. The choice at the time was a mean between immediate disorganization of the foundations of rural credit and adequate relief and protection to the agriculturists. Previous to this Act, there was no effective control against the quantum of interest. Even courts decreed extortionately high rates of interest. There was no Bill then contemplated by the Government to

give relief to the agricultural debtors. The Bill had to be piloted in a Council where nothing could be law unless the Government was prepared to allow it through. The consent of the Governor-General had to be obtained: notice of the Bill was given in November, 1931, but the consent was received towards the end of June, 1932, so that the Bill could only be introduced in September, 1932. It was strenuously opposed at all stages from various quarters and could only emerge from the Council by the end of August, 1933 and the Governor in Council gave effect to the provisions of the Act from 18th July, 1934. One had perforce to be satisfied with such as could be done in those circumstances. Against the Act of 1933, it has also been argued that it has disturbed the basis of rural credit and has resulted in contraction of credit. The implication is that the maximum rates of interest allowed to the money-lender under the Act are not sufficient inducement to the creditor to grant loans. As against this criticism it may be pointed out that there is a very strong feeling among the agriculturists that the rates of interest allowed to the money-lender under the Act of 1933 are still excessively high in view of economic changes during the last few years and specially during the depression.

Debt Conciliation

For remedying the chronic indebtedness of the agriculturists, the Central Banking Enquiry Committee recommended the pursuit, by the Provincial Governments, of a policy of debt conciliation and liquidation on a voluntary basis. This recommenda-

tion has been given effect to under the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act. At the present moment Debt Settlement Boards have been established in this province. There are two types of Boards in Bengal: ordinary and special. The main function of these Boards is to persuade the creditors to agree to a liquidation of the outstanding debt on the basis of cash or instalment payments. It is important to remember that the Boards are to make every endeavour to persuade the creditor to accept a sum which the debtor is in a position to pay. If the creditor remains obdurate, the case is then sent up to the Special Board with a request for compulsory settlement. The chief functions of the Special Board are to see whether the terms of compulsory settlement, in full or in part, have been fair or not and whether the calculation of outstanding debt has been correct or not. If the creditor is not satisfied with the award of the Special Board, he may appeal to the Special Appellate Officer who is a judicial officer. The ordinary Boards have no power of compulsory settlement—only the Special Boards can do that. If a case is pending in any civil court, except the High Court in its Ordinary Original Civil jurisdiction, in connection with an application before a Debt Settlement Board, the Board has the right of issuing a stay-order requesting stay of proceedings. The Chairman of an ordinary Board is generally an independent non-official whereas in case of the Special Board, the Chairman is a Government official.

There is no doubt that the Debt Settlement Boards have become very popular wherever estab-

lished and that they have put in a good deal of solid work. But it must be admitted that there is still great scope for development. Only the surface has been scratched but the importance of even that much as valuable spade-work must not be underrated. Debt Settlement Boards have yet to be established all over Bengal so that the humblest peasant may be benefited. The Bengal Agricultural Debtors' Act has come in for a good deal of criticism: there is a very strong opinion, which is steadily gaining ground, that the Act has destroyed the foundations of rural credit. The implication is this that as the money-lenders are being debarred from sucking the life-blood of the debtors, this must necessarily lead to contraction of credit. There is hardly any justification for such a point of view—there is no reason why the money-lender should expect the debtor to go on paying an exorbitant rate of interest on a principal which the debtor will not be able to pay off in his life. Even the lender is not justified in demanding back the outstanding principal if that is not within the range of economic possibility of the debtor. There is no reason why the money-lender should not be content with a rate of interest which the debtor can possibly pay. The history of the world does not yet record any instance where any attempt at debt settlement according to any principle of justice and equity has not caused dissatisfaction to the creditors and the cry of danger to rural credit has not been raised.

It is to be noted that the provisions of this Act do not apply to a non-agriculturist. Further the

Boards have no jurisdiction over debts owed by an agriculturist to a Co-operative Credit Society, but unfortunately the Act in some cases has been utilised in favour of non-agriculturists, on the plea that they have just a modicum of land in cultivation.

There are now about 3,000 Boards functioning in Bengal and up to the end of December, 1938 the ordinary Boards settled claims to the extent of Rs. 36,716,202 and the amount which was ultimately awarded on these claims was Rs. 17,872,818. It thus appears that most of these debts were settled at just about 50 per cent of the total liabilities and when one remembers that these claims are settled by agreement between the creditors and the debtors, it must be said that the creditors have been fully willing to come to an adjustment of their claims with the debtors on fairly reasonable terms. It may be noted that claims to the extent of Rs. 260,954,030 were still pending by the end of December, 1938 before these Boards.

There seems to be an impression that these Debt Boards generally force their decisions on the creditor. This is, however, not correct. That could only be done by the Special Boards. As against the claims of about 4 crores of rupees settled up by adjustment between the debtors and the creditors, the amount of claims compulsorily settled by Special Boards was only Rs. 585,246 and against these claims the award was given for Rs. 329,121. The compulsory settlements were made at a rate proportionately higher than the rate of adjustment by negotiation; the average of compulsory awards stands at 58 per cent of the amount claimed, while the voluntary adjustments work at only about 50 per cent of the amount claimed. As

against the claims of over 26 crores of rupees pending before ordinary Boards for adjustment by agreemnt, in December, 1938, the claims pending before the Special Boards for compulsory adjustment were less than Rs. 2 crores. It will, therefore, be seen that the extent of compulsory settlement is very small indeed compared with the volume of adjustment by agreement. Tables 65 and 66 give the comparative figures of these agreements and awards, district by district.

TABLE 65

PERCENTAGE OF AWARD TO CLAIM IN EACH CASE

	Amount of claim in each settled case Rs.	Percentage of award to claim	Amount of claim in each pending case Rs.
Burdwan ...	517	56	1,410
Birbhum ...	223	100	498
Bankura ...	—	—	815
Midnapore ...	946	79	639
Hooghly ...	376	79	525
Howrah ...	397	73	930
24-Parganas ...	285	85	716
Nadia ...	240	48	913
Murshidabad ...	—	—	535
Jessore ...	289	70	508
Khulna ...	347	79	478
Dacca ...	434	61	859
Mymensingh ...	560	47	982
Faridpur ...	318	84	384
Bakarganj ...	601	60	1,238
Chittagong ...	479	35	3,909
Tippera ...	843	64	790
Noakhali ...	623	61	732
Rajshahi ...	421	47	778
Dinajpur ...	915	40	542
Jalpaiguri ...	683	65	1,013
Rangpur ...	322	81	670
Pabna ...	220	54	728
Bogra ...	625	54	816
Malda ...	1,112	74	1,267

TABLE 66

VOLUME OF CLAIMS AND AWARDS

	No. of cases settled	Claims settled	Amount awarded	Pending cases	Claims in pending cases	Average claim in each application settled	Average percentage of award to amount claimed	Average claim in each pending application
		Rs.	Rs.		Rs.	Rs.		Rs.
Burdwan ...	721	254,494	165,298	2,706	1,688,305	353	65	623
Birbhum ...	163	44,131	35,016	3,886	2,549,232	271	79	456
Bankura ...	394	131,681	98,212	696	605,607	334	75	624
Midnapore ...	6,303	1,339,305	684,360	2,539	1,079,967	182	60	425
Hooghly ...	1,847	337,222	201,430	17,140	7,016,056	212	51	409
Howrah ...	775	257,921	164,994	3,723	1,528,604	332	64	410
24-Parganas ...	1,407	342,380	208,358	5,280	2,881,535	243	61	545
Nadia	29	1,502	698	513	135,257	52	46	263
Murshidabad ...	1,672	202,453	133,482	9,183	2,766,531	121	66	301
Jessore	3,377	449,339	228,992	12,697	2,081,103	133	51	164
Khulna	1,495	460,878	312,212	9,446	4,608,962	308	68	489
Dacca	3,838	1,604,675	735,500	28,573	22,271,026	416	46	779
Mymensingh ...	19,995	6,788,632	3,592,618	128,786	66,599,512	340	52	517
Faridpur ...	4,758	1,837,203	1,326,708	20,118	10,731,183	384	72	533
Bakarganj ...	14,278	5,333,995	2,472,143	65,851	21,827,801	373	46	330
Chittagong ...	3,760	1,276,936	627,627	12,934	6,453,995	340	49	499
Tippera ...	5,285	1,691,422	724,180	68,003	38,836,378	320	43	571
Noakhali ...	9,238	3,123,922	1,227,577	52,432	30,437,321	338	39	580
Rajshahi ...	4,129	987,493	475,981	12,923	4,466,476	239	48	345
Dinajpur ...	14,417	3,181,343	1,615,308	25,462	16,351,470	220	51	406
Jalpaiguri ...	1,903	795,467	407,321	1,390	830,650	418	51	602
Rangpur ...	6,117	1,990,233	763,202	23,384	5,148,165	325	38	220
Pabna	4,615	1,044,338	564,013	17,271	3,759,323	226	54	214
Bogra	7,234	2,257,419	866,265	32,115	9,364,526	326	38	288
Malda	3,420	981,818	441,270	8,583	2,899,145	289	45	337
TOTAL ...	121,175	36,716,202	17,872,818	565,797	260,954,030			

These tables will show that, whereas the work in most of the districts of Burdwan and Presidency Divisions has not proceeded very far, it has made a fair progress in most of the districts of Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi Divisions. The largest volume of work has been done in the district of Mymensingh and claims to the extent of about 68 lacs of Rupees had been already settled and claims of over $6\frac{1}{2}$ crores of Rupees were pending before the ordinary Boards on the 31st December, 1938. Similarly in the district of Bakarganj claims to the extent of about 54 lacs of Rupees had been settled and claims over Rs. 2 crores were pending; in the districts of Noakhali, Tippera, Dinajpur, Dacca, Pabna and Bogra a fair volume of work has been done. On the other hand, the problem had not even been touched in the district of Nadia where claims have been settled only to the extent of Rs. 1,500 with pending claims of only about Rs. 135,257.

It will appear from these tables that in the districts of Dinajpur, Malda, Jessore, Rajshahi, Bogra, Mymensingh, Dacca, Nadia, Noakhali, Pabna, Tippera, Bakarganj, Rangpur, Midnapore, Chittagong and Jalpaiguri, the adjustment has reduced the debts roughly by 50 per cent and in some districts even less. The adjustments have brought in the award liability of the debtor to only 38 per cent of the original claims in the district of Bogra, 39 per cent at Noakhali, 38 per cent at Rangpur.

On the assumption that each application represents the total volume of indebtedness of an agriculturist, the figures are interesting studies as to the

quantum of indebtedness in Bengal villages. It is probably correct that the average illiterate rural debtor has not yet come forward in large numbers before these Boards, as these Boards have been functioning only for a short period of time and it is only those who are comparatively better off than the average cultivator—men with some amount of education and information—that have hitherto taken advantage of these Debt Boards. That probably explains the comparatively high amount of indebtedness as shown in the above table but it certainly shows the volume of indebtedness after a fairly long depression period for a large number of agricultural families.

But debt conciliation can never be a permanent remedy of the problem of indebtedness. Debt conciliation may wipe off the outstanding debt with ability to pay as the sole criterion but there must be some agency for supplying the rural credit.

In co-operation lies our main hope. "If co-operation fails, there will fail the best hope of rural India," says the Royal Commission on Agriculture. The year 1904 saw the inauguration of the movement in India and ever since the organisation has been doing useful service in supplying the rural population with cheap credit.

Land Mortgage Banks

It is now being increasingly felt that the existing Provincial Bank, the Central Banks and the Rural Agricultural Credit Societies cannot undertake the responsibility of supplying the agriculturist with long term credit. They cannot afford to lock up their

resources for a long period ; from the banking point of view it would be suicidal to ask the provincial bank, the central banks and the primary societies to grant long term credit. Yet the agriculturists require long term credit for various purposes. If the cultivator is to extricate himself from the permanent burden of debt, he must make agriculture a paying proposition, and if he is to do that, he must effect costly improvements in his agricultural implements, methods and land. Lack of permanent improvements is one of the features of our agrciulture. Improvement of land and methods of cultivation, redemption of mortgages on land and liquidation of outstanding debts are of supreme importance, if the cultivator is to make agriculture pay and leave him a surplus. But he cannot effect improvements in land or in technique of production unless he is granted loans for long periods. To meet this situation, Land Mortgage Banks have been established in most of the provinces. Punjab has now 12 Land Mortgage Banks, Bombay has 13, Central Provinces has 10. There are in Bengal 5 such banks. It is to be noted that the scheme is still at an experimental stage but it is a matter of satisfaction that the working capital of these banks has increased from Rs. 30,820 to Rs. 2,02,113 and their membership from 617 to 1,087. These figures are correct up to 30th June, 1936.

The five banks working in Bengal are at Pabna, Mymensingh, Comilla, Jessore and Birbhum. At the close of the year ending June 30, 1936, the five banks between themselves received 2,628 loan-applications for a total amount of Rs. 1,329,086. The banks

enquired into 1,915 applications, and 757 applications were accepted for loans amounting to Rs. 349,575. Only in 484 cases, loans amounting to Rs. 213,735 were actually advanced; 1,158 applications for a total amount of Rs. 596,449 were rejected mainly on grounds of uneconomic holding and unsatisfactory repaying capacity, unwillingness of co-sharers to join and inability to produce sureties.

Loans have mostly been issued for redemption of mortgages and other prior debts. Out of a total loan of Rs. 214 lacs only Rs. 17 lacs represents loans for agricultural improvements and purchase of shares. One cannot help feeling that the progress of the scheme has been very slow but in a matter like this, one must realise the obvious limitations of land mortgage banks as such. Further, one should aim at consolidation rather than mere duplication.

In the success of land mortgage banks the Government must necessarily play a large part, because unless the banks have the patronage and credit of the State behind them, they would not be able to sell their bonds.

CHAPTER XII

DEBT AND CO-OPERATION

Cultivator must borrow—Capital Loans—Seasonal requirements—Credit—Rates of Interest—Money-market—Credit requirements—Underfinancing—Average Debt—Finances of rural Societies—Increase of Debt—Overdues—Reason for non-payment—Forced to the Mahajan—Other factors—Other deficits—Overfinancing.

The Cultivator Must Borrow

In agriculture, the producer must definitely wait for a period of time before he can expect the turn-over on his outlay. There are always intervals between cultivation, sowing and harvest. It is, therefore, incumbent on him to live on a system of credit to meet the necessary expenses of cultivation and his living expenses until he can reap his harvest and market his produce. Unfortunately, he is seldom in affluence and he must borrow not only in India but in every country in the world.

Capital Loans

In Bengal, the majority of cultivators have lands by inheritance. A cultivator, when he does not inherit land, has to secure the necessary capital to enable him to purchase or to take up a settlement of land. He has also to purchase bullocks or buffaloes for his plough. He has other inevitable expenses in connection with marriages and deaths. In certain parts, floods, cyclones and tornadoes necessitate the rebuilding of dwelling houses, etc. Droughts, insufficient rainfall,

want of seasonal rainfall, apart from floods, cyclones and tornadoes, often play their rôle in damaging crops. There are also exceptional years of distress and famine. Often he inherits, or contracts himself, a burden of debt from the money-lender at a high rate of interest.

Seasonal Requirements

In addition, he has his seasonal credit requirements. He wants implements of cultivation, must obtain his seed and manure, has to hire outside labour for his field requirements, and has to pay his usual rent, cesses, rates and taxes. He has also to maintain himself and his family till his crops are harvested and sold in the market.

Credit

For the first, he requires long-term credit. For the last, which are his annual requirements, he must secure short-term credits. For both these credit requirements, he has now to depend upon money-lenders, traders, shop-keepers and dealers, loan offices, Co-operative Societies and Government.

Rates of Interest

Till recent years, he was obliged to secure such credits at abnormally high rates of interest. The usual rates of interest, even now for paddy loan, is 50 per cent per annum. The rates of the money-lender were moderate if he charged about $37\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum. The Central Co-operative Banks usually charged 10 to 15 per cent per annum from rural credit societies and sometimes more, while village

societies lent to their members at 12 to 18 per cent. There was practically no difference in the rate of interest as between secured and unsecured credit. The Usurious Loans Act, of 1918, failed to give relief to the agriculturists from the exactions of high interest and enquiries during the Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee revealed many distressing cases of extortionate exactions.

Money-Market

The great defect, in agricultural finance in Bengal, is that it cannot draw upon the money-market of the country. The agriculturists, being in constant want of funds, have been at the mercy of the money-lenders and though an attempt is being made to have a regular system of agricultural finance organised through Co-operative Societies, the Co-operative movement has not yet been able to tackle the entire problem of rural indebtedness.

Credit Requirements

The total volume of annual credit requirements for the agriculturists in Bengal was estimated by the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee to be Rs. 96 crores. The maximum loan which was advanced to the members of agricultural credit societies in any one year in this province was 1 crore 60 lacs of rupees in 1930. In 1935, it was only about 25 lacs.

The Co-operative movement has thus touched only the fringe of the problem of rural indebtedness and Bengal is not yet even within sight of an effective

solution of a problem of such magnitude. Nor has the movement yet reached any large number of agriculturists if we consider their total population. In 1915, the number of agricultural credit societies was 1,853, with 85,515 members. Twenty-one years later, on the 30th June, 1936, the number was 21,112 societies with 506,610 members. The number of agriculturist families is 4,549,882 as calculated in a previous chapter. It means that only one out of nine agriculturist families is a member of a Co-operative Society. The total rural population in Bengal is 46,429,672. Out of every 92 persons in Bengal villages only one is a member of a Co-operative Society.

Underfinancing

It was unfortunate that the Co-operative movement, from its very inception, began with underfinancing the members. When an agriculturist cannot get the whole of his credit requirements from the credit society, he must go to the Mahajan for the balance. Once he is forced to go to, and to keep terms with, the Mahajan, Co-operative Credit, instead of solving the problem of his indebtedness, merely leads to an increase in his debts. The average annual credit requirement of an agriculturist family was estimated by the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee at Rs. 160. Against this the average annual credit received by a member for the last twenty years is given in Table 67.

TABLE 67

AVERAGE ANNUAL CREDIT RECEIVED BY A MEMBER OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

	Rs.	A.
1917	24	0
1918	19	12
1919	23	12
1920	31	0
1921	30	8
1922	22	4
1923	28	0
1924	32	8
1925	38	0
1926	42	8
1927	41	12
1928	38	0
1929	37	12
1930	35	0
1931	19	0
1932	10	10
1933	7	8
1934	8	0
1935	5	8
1936	5	8

Average Debt

It is essential for the sound development of the Co-operative movement that when an agriculturist becomes a member of a Co-operative Credit Society, the entire volume of his debt to the Mahajan should be determined and steps taken to relieve him of his debt-burden with its very heavy load of interest at the earliest possible moment. Unfortunately, at the inception of the movement and for many years after, this aspect of the problem was totally lost sight of and, while some credit was supplied to him from the

credit society—this being not sufficient in itself—he was left to deal with the Mahajan, as best as he could, which unfortuntaely and invariably led to his ruin.

Financing of Rural Credit Societies

Another defect arose from the nature of financing the rural credit societies. The rural society, when started, has no independent finance of its own. It has to apply for accommodation from the Central Bank and this is not sanctioned until after an enquiry by the Supervisor. The Supervisor cannot take steps immediately ; he has to deal with applications from a number of societies, all of which naturally come in about the same time and season. After the report from the Supervisor, the applications have to be put up before a meeting of the Directors of the Central Bank, convened after due notice. The loan is then sanctioned and notice sent to the village society to come and receive the amount. There is, thus, considerable delay in getting a loan for the primary society and year after year the same process goes on. If a member of the primary society applies for loan in any particular season, for any special purpose, he receives it long after his needs are over. More often than not, he spends it for purposes other than those for which the loan was intended. No attention whatsoever has been paid to the fundamental principle that loans should be utilised for the purpose for which they are granted.

The cumulative effect of these three factors has resulted in disastrous consequences.

Increase of Debt

First: The result has been that the average debt, annually repaid by a member of the Co-operative Society, has, invariably, been less than the average debt annually taken by him from the Society. This has been the most striking feature practically of the Co-operative movement for the last 20 years. Every succeeding year has tended to augment his burden of indebtedness to the Society and, whereas the total debt to the Society stood on an average at Rs. 56 per member, the outstanding debt to the Society today is about Rs. 94 per member.

Overdues

Secondly: The extent of overdues has been increasing year after year. In 1915, the overdues were only 25 per cent of the total debts. In 1935 they stood at 80 per cent. Whether the year was a fat or a lean one, whether the price of jute was Rs. 25 per maund or Rs. 3 per maund, the member's Society debt had a progressive rise. Year after year, till 1927, he has taken loans from the Society—always more than what he took in the previous year. Owing to stringent finances of Co-operative Societies of all grades with outstanding overdues increasing, the rural societies could not be financed to the same extent and since 1928 the economic depression still further crippled them till all that an individual member could be financed with came to be Rs. 7-8 in 1933, Rs. 8 in 1934 and Rs. 5-8 in 1935, while his repayments during these three years were Rs. 7-12, Rs. 8-10, Rs. 6-8 respectively.

The Reason for Non-Payment

But if the Bengal agriculturist has not, regularly and annually, paid his co-operative debt even to the extent of his annual borrowing, it is not because of any tendency on his part to avoid repayment of his dues. The Bengal agriculturist never repudiates his debts; debts are inherited from generation to generation without demur. He has almost a sacrosanct notion about his debt liability, and by tradition and sentiment he has suffered even the high rates of interest of the money-lender. Nor is it a fact that he does not appreciate the value of co-operative loans.

Forced to the Mahajan

Until the recent severe economic depression reduced the value of his produce even below the cost of production, there was no difficulty for the Mahajan to prosper in the rural areas of Bengal. The reason is obvious in the very nature of things as analysed at the beginning of this chapter. The peasant gets his loan from the Co-operative Society not when he needs it immediately. He cannot get his entire credit requirements from his Society. He has thus always to go to the Mahajan for his residual short term needs. The rates of interest charged by the Mahajan are always much higher than the rates charged on loans advanced by the Co-operative Society. Ordinary prudence, as also the probability of his again requiring credit from the Mahajan, compel him to pay his debt to the Mahajan at higher interest charges. It is also true that pressure of the village Mahajan is

always greater than that of the Society. The Mahajan is personally present in the village and it is a well-known fact that the personal presence of the creditor gives him always a priority over others—a fact which is well-known to a particular class of money-lenders getting an interest of two annas per rupee per month from even the most indigent debtor. The Mahajan can easily put the agriculturist in the meshes of civil court litigation and can put him to ignominy and shame by easily getting a *parwana* or attachment order from the civil court. After paying the debt of the Mahajan and his high interest charges and, almost for the same reasons, the rents and cesses of the zamindars with the usual perquisites of their collection staff, the cultivator has no margin left for meeting his liability to the Co-operative Society and he has not enough for his extremely poor subsistence. Co-operative debts are thus partly repaid by further loans and "the cultivator is born in debt, increases his debt throughout his life and dies more hopelessly in debt than ever."

Other Factors

There are other factors which have more or less contributed to the present position:—

(*a*) The repaying capacity of the members, considering, particularly, their outside debts, was not taken into account at all.

(*b*) Attention was not paid to the fundamental principle that loans should be utilised only for the purpose for which they were granted.

(*c*) There was a certain amount of laxity and leniency in the matter of recovery in the past.

(*d*) The bulk of the loans in many cases had accumulated in the hands of few individuals—mostly office bearers, and sometimes others on their *Benamis* leaving only a very small amount for the ordinary member.

(*e*) The failure on the part of many Central Banks and most of the Societies to distinguish between long-term and short-term loans.

(*f*) Inadequacy of the staff of the Co-operative Department.

Other Defects

Th Co-operative movement in Bengal also had a chequered career for the last twenty-five years. The Co-operative Societies Act was passed in 1904 and from 1904 to 1911 it was the stage of the most cautious experiments to find the right way. There were many defects in the Act which had to be rectified by the Act of 1912. The annulment of the Partition of Bengal, in December 1911, compelled the province to face the new requirements consequent on administrative changes, and while things were on the point of being settled, the Great War began in 1914 and trade and business, finance and prices were all dislocated. There was a heavy fall in the prices of jute and paddy and a phenomenal rise in the price of other necessities of life, particularly of all imported articles, such as cloth, kerosene, salt, sugar. The Co-operative movement was badly affected. The war ended in 1918. It was

hoped that things would shape better in the future. But the Non-Co-operation Movement, with the other political and economic disturbances associated with it, created a new situation. This was followed by the Constitutional changes inaugurated by the Montford Reforms. There was, however, a slow but gradual expansion of the movement during these years, and the working of the Department required reorganisation to suit new conditions. Money was actually voted by the Bengal Council but the financial settlement as a result of the Montford Reforms left the province in a hopeless financial mess. A Retrenchment Committee had to be appointed. The reorganisation proposals, for which money had been actually voted, had to be postponed pending the report of the Committee. The Committee recommended drastic curtailment which, for a time, created terrible uncertainty for the future. But excepting the abolition of the post of a Deputy Registrar, no other recommendation was accepted. But the reorganisation of the Department, to face the problems of expansion, was deferred and postponed. The Department required more auditors and more staff to deal with the increased number of societies and increase in the number of members. Their officers and staff needed training and the understanding of co-operative principles. The inadequancy of the staff weakened the supervision and led to deterioration. During this period, the province was not free from local deficiencies of rainfall, disasters, floods, tornadoes and cyclones. Things were, however, settling down to the normal when the world was shaken by an economic storm of unprecedented magnitude which

swept over it and disturbed credit conditions universally. Bengal, which depends for her economic prosperity on the price of her agricultural produce—mainly paddy and jute—saw a catastrophic fall in the prices of all agricultural commodities including these two commodities. The cultivator was hit first and was hit hard. His repaying capacity vanished. Co-operative Societies were visibly affected. Heavy outstandings accumulated. The overdues were 25·4 per cent in 1927-28, but they immediately began to swell ominously as will be seen from Table 68.

TABLE 68

GROWTH OF OVERDUES

	Overdues.
1928-29 ...	... 29·4
1929-30 ...	... 34·4
1930-31 ...	... 39·8
1931-32 ...	... 56·3
1932-33 ...	... 68·3
1933-34 ...	... 80·9

The Theory of Over-financing

It is sometimes alleged that the members of Co-operative Societies have been over-financed. This is not correct. Taking the figure of 1928-29 as an average normal year before the depression, the statistical figures show that the percentage of overdues was relatively low in the districts where the average amount of financing to a rural member was high, and *vice versa*. The overdues had correspondingly the opposite tendencies to the quantum of financing of each member. Where the amount advanced was relatively high, the extent of overdues was relatively low, and *vice versa*.

CHAPTER XIII

PROBLEM OF POPULATION*

Is Bengal Over-populated—Optimum Population—Over-population as a State and as a Tendency—Progress of Population—Mean Density—Mean Density in other Provinces and Countries—The Consequence—Increase of Population in other Countries—Birth and Death Rates—National Health—High Rate of Infant Mortality—High Female Mortality—Fall in Number of Women—Marriages—Our Problems—Reclamation of New Areas—Intensive Cultivation —Industrialization—Migration—Preventive Checks—Standard of Living—Mal-distribution and Over-production—Maximum Industrialization.

Is Bengal Over-populated?

It is proposed to discuss in this chapter the problem of an increasing population in Bengal. Is Bengal over-populated? It is impossible to give a straight answer to this question, but without anticipating the conclusions it may be pointed out that many thinkers are of opinion that Bengal is already over-populated and that it has assumed an alarming proportion, specially considering the availability of food materials and employment for the people.

Optimum Population

But one must get a clear notion as to what is exactly meant by the term "over-population". As Professor Edwin Cannan says: —

"At any given time, knowledge and circumstances remaining the same, there is what may be called a point of maximum return when the amount of labour

* Vide Foot-note to Chapter XI. This chapter was also written by the Authors son, M. Asadul Huque, B.A.

is such that both an increase and a decrease in it would diminish proportionate returns—just as there is a point of maximum return in each industry, so there must be in all industries taken together. If the population is not large enough to bring all industries up to this point, return would be less than they might be, and the remedy is increase of population; if, on the other hand, population is so great that the point has been passed, returns are given less than they might be and the remedy is decrease of population."* This is what is termed *Optimum Population,* and over-population means a departure from the optimum in the direction of excess.

Over-population as a State and as a Tendency

Over-population may exist as a *state* and as a *tendency.* When a given population is increasing in such a manner as to warrant a diminution of income per head, there is a *tendency* to over-population. When a diminution in the given population is in fact followed up by an increase of income per head, it is a *state* of over-population.

Progress of Population

According to the last Census, the population of Bengal is 50,114,002. Table 69 will show the progress of population in Bengal during the last 50 years:—

TABLE 69

INCREASE OF POPULATION IN EACH CENSUS DECADE

Year of Census		Population in millions	Increase per cent
1872	...	34·6	...
1881	...	37·0	6·7

* Edwin Cannan—Wealth, pp. 68-69.

TABLE 69—*contd.*

Year of Census		Population in millions	Increase per cent
1891	...	39·8	7·5
1901	...	42·8	7·7
1911	...	46·3	8·0
1921	...	47·5	2·8
1931	...	51·0	7·3

It shows that the population is steadily increasing ever since 1872, but the rate of increase is not so rapid as is often thought to be. But what is alarming inspite of this very slow progress of population is the fact that the pressure of population on the soil is being gradually intensified. Every Census shows an increase in the mean density per square mile. Bengal is predominantly an agricultural country and, as such, heavy pressure of population on the soil must necessarily result in grinding poverty of the people. It is an economic truth that to produce the same amount of wealth, manufacture requires much less land than agriculture, but unfortunately in Bengal the mean density per square mile is much higher than even some of the highly industrialised countries of the West. It has been estimated that even under the most favourable conditions agriculture cannot support more than 250 people per square mile. Bengal to-day is thus faced with the problem of inadequacy of land. The supply of land is fixed by nature and there is not the least sign of any diminution of the pressure on the soil.

Mean Density

Table 70* will show that the pressure of population on the soil is on the increase, not to speak of any diminution in it.

TABLE 70

MEAN DENEITY IN EACH CENSUS DECADE

Year	Number of persons per square mile
1872	422
1881	450
1891	484
1901	521
1911	563
1921	578
1931	646

Can Bengal support 646 persons per square mile at a reasonable standard of efficiency? The answer is clearly in the negative. Intense pressure on the soil will still further lower the already poor standard of living with tragic consequences. The 'positive checks' of Malthus will come into operation and there will necessarily be a tremendous loss of human life and energy. As a matter of fact positive checks are actually in operation in Bengal to-day. Terrible correctives in the shape of famines, epidemics, overcrowding, diseases, and general pauperism take their tolls of human lives year after year in this province.

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* Census Report, 1931—Vol. V., Part I, page 66.

Mean Density in other Provinces and Countries

The density of population in Bengal may now be compared with other provinces and some foreign countries. Table 71 gives the figures.*

TABLE 71

COMPARATIVE DENSITY OF POPULATION

	Density per sq. mile		Density per sq. mile
Bengal ...	... 646	England & Wales	... 685
United Provinces	... 442	Netherlands ...	... 544
Madras ...	... 328	Germany ...	... 332
Bihar & Orissa	... 379	Japan ...	... 215
Punjab ...	... 223	China ...	... 200
Bombay ...	... 178	Austria ...	... 199
		France ...	... 184
		Spain ...	... 107

Highly industrialised England and Wales support 685 persons per square mile whereas Bengal—a proverbially backward province even as regards her agricultural production—has to support 646 persons per square mile! †

But these figures do not fully indicate the gravity of the problem in the rural areas of this province. England has a large industrial population. She has her colonies, dependencies and mandated territories. Her industry, trade and commerce absorb a large bulk of the population. Here, in this province, we have 1 worker to 2·5 dependants. In England, the ratio is only 1·12 per worker. The total number of persons

* *Ibid.*, page 4.

† Jather & Beri—Indian Economics, Vol. I, page 44.

depending on agriculture proper, excluding special crops, in Bengal, is as follows: —

Workers only	6,204,385	—Cultivating owners, tenant-cultivators and 'jhum' cultivators.
	2,874,804	—Agricultural labourers.
	9,079,189	
Dependants ...	22,697,972	
	31,777,161	

The total net area cropped was 24,466,300 acres in 1936 and this means an acre of land has to maintain 1·3 persons. This works out at 830 persons roughly per square mile, and this is the effective density of population and its pressure on the cultivated soil of Bengal. Compared with this, England and Wales have a total population of 9,398,000 employed in agriculture. Including 1,312,926 dependants at the rate of 1 worker to 1·12 dependants, the total agricultural population comes to 2,485,182. The total arable area in England and Wales was 9,398,000 acres in 1935. But it may be noted that a large number of this population is employed in livestock industry and the area of pasturage proper excluding rough grazings is 15,559,000 acres, in addition to the arable acreage. But even if this factor is eliminated—and that will undoubtedly diminish the density of population—the total population of 2,485,182 on 9,398,000 acres works out at ·276 per acre or 166 persons per square mile. Bengal has, thus, an effective pressure of 830 persons against 166 in England and Wales per square mile of cultivated area.

But this story will not be complete without a reference to some of the densely populated districts of Bengal. Though the mean density is 646 as an average for this province, it really comes up to 830 persons for the rural areas. But against this average of 646, some of the district figures tell their own tales (Table 72).

TABLE 72

MEAN DENSITY IN CONGESTED DISTRICTS

District	Mean density
Dacca	1,265
Tippera	1,197
Noakhali	1,124
Faridpur	1,003
Bakarganj	834
Mymensingh	823
Pabna	795
Bogra	785
Rangpur	742

If 646 means effective rural density of 830, how much these district figures mean for their rural areas can be easily imagined.

The Consequence

What are the consequences of such an abnormally heavy pressure of population on the soil? The standard of living is inevitably lowered—people have no option but to live on the starvation level amidst indescribable insanitary conditions of dirt, disease and filth. People's desire and ability to work is sapped, which in its turn means enormous economic waste.

Sir Thomas Holderness is of opinion that, bearing in mind the frugal and thrifty mode of living of the ordinary peasant, five acres of *good irrigated* land would support a family of 5 comfortably. His estimate is very modest, inasmuch as he takes into special consideration the frugal mode of living of the peasant and he lays special emphasis on five acres of good irrigated land. According to the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture (1928) the great mass of the peasants has only 3·1 acres of cultivated land against 21 acres in England. On the other hand, Bengal has practically little or no irrigation facilities in most of the districts. The conclusion is irresistible that the ordinary Bengal peasant is in possession of a holding which is definitely uneconomic. The inadequacy of land is being keenly felt and the uneconomic holding of the peasant is keeping him perpetually deep down in the morass of economic stagnation.

Increase of Population in other Countries

The earlier figures of this chapter show that the increase in population in Bengal between 1872 and 1911 was 33·8 per cent—whereas, during the corresponding period, population increased by 73 per cent in Russia, 59 per cent in Germany, and 58 per cent in England and Wales. In the Western countries just mentioned, the rate of increase has indeed been very fast inspite of voluntary limitation of families at will. But here in Bengal, the rate of increase has been slow inspite of the fact that no preventive checks are in operation.

Birth and Death Rates

The reason is not far to seek. A comparison between our birth rate and death rate will furnish the reason for this very slow rate of increase in population. Table 73 will give the comparative figures.*

TABLE 73

COMPARATIVE BIRTH AND DEATH RATES

Country or Province	Birth rate in 1931	Death rate in 1931
Egypt	44·8	26·8
Japan	32·2	19·0
British India ...	34·3	24·9
U. S. A. ...	17·8	11·1
France	17·4	16·3
Germany ...	16·0	11·2
England and Wales	15·8	12·3
Bengal	27·8	22·3
Bombay ...	36·1	23·8
Madras ...	35·5	23·7
Burma	26·5	17·4
Assam	28·1	18·7
Bihar and Orissa ...	33·9	26·6
United Provinces ...	35·6	27·0
Punjab ...	42·7	26·0
Central Provinces ...	44·3	35·5

It is apparent that, so far as Bengal is concerned, the death rate has a tendency to approximate the birth rate, and hence, inspite of high birth rate, there is no

* Report of the Public Health Commissioner to the Government of India in 1931—pages 20, 26-27.

appreciably fast increase in population. So far as death rate is concerned, Bengal is better off than most provinces of India but there is wide scope for further diminution in the death rate. In June, 1933, the death rate in England and Wales was 10·8. There is every reason to hope that in 1939 the rate stands at a lower figure. Can the same thing be said of Bengal? Our annual death rate stood at 22·3 in 1931 and there has not been any substantial decrease in the death rate since then.

National Health

Preservation of national health is a sacred trust of the nation and its Government. Much human misery and agony are implied by the figures of death rate and a vigorous campaign for better health and sanitation is very much necessary to-day. More money has to be spent on Public Health, and well-conceived practical schemes are urgently needed. To quote the remarks of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health (England): —

"Public expenditure on national health is like expenditure on a life-boat or a fire-engine; even more, it is like a long term investment. It yields the interest with absolute certainty, a hundred-fold but only in the course of years and sometimes in the course of generations. Sometimes we hear the idle question: 'What is the use of all our expenditure on health?' It is often asked by persons who do not reflect that their welcome presence among us alive, alert, and competent is itself the answer."—Report of 1921.

High Rate of Infant Mortality

Our high death rate has at least three outstanding features which must continue to cause increasing concern to the Province. The first feature is our abnormally high rate of infant mortality as will be seen from Table 74.*

TABLE 74

INFANT MORTALITY

Province	Birth rate	Infant mortality per 1,000 births (1931)
Central Provinces	44·3	261·2
United Provinces	35·6	189·1
Madras ...	35·5	186·6
Punjab ...	42·7	178·3
Bengal ...	27·8	174
Bombay ...	36·1	161·6

From the above table it will appear that the case of Bengal, so far as the rate of infant mortality is concerned, is very sad indeed. It is, of course, true that Bengal compares favourably with most of the other Provinces, but it may be pointed out that, for a birth-rate of 27·8, such a high rate of infant mortality is a tragic story. According to Major-General Sir John Megaw, Bengal's rate of infant mortality is very much higher. He calculates the rate to be 189·15 per 1,000 births. Major-General Megaw conducted his enquiry in some of the Bengal villages and, as such, his estimate is of greater value

* Report of the Public Health Commissioner to the Government of India—1931.

in discussing the problem of rural areas. Whatever the actual figure may be, this heavy mortality among infants is a matter of deep concern to the Province. Dire poverty, appalling conditions of child-birth and dearth of proper medical aid are no doubt some of the most fundamental causes. But that is not all. Poverty can be mitigated, conditions of child-birth may be improved, medical aid may be facilitated, but how to insure against the lack of vitality of the infant itself who must struggle through the most critical period of its life? Taken along with the lack of vitalising food, this lack of vitality in the infant may be attributed to three main causes: (*i*) the tender age of the mother, (*ii*) the large number of children born and (*iii*) the rapidity with which they are born. In rural Bengal, girls are given in marriage much earlier in life. The result is equally disastrous for the young mother and the infant. It is not necessary to dilate upon these factors which are nevertheless of the highest importance from the point of view of the future of the generation. But this requires a change of the devitalising social opinion and an abandonment of the many irrational practices now playing havoc with the future of the nation.

High Female Mortality

The second feature of the high death rate is the high female mortality at the reproductive ages. The causes of this high female mortality at the reproductive ages are much the same as in the case of the infant mortality. In the earlier ages (0—10) more males die than females. But the table is turned

when the reproductive ages come (15—40) as will be seen from the following table.

TABLE 75

MORTALITY FIGURES

Province	Death rate per 1,000 (15-40 years) Males	Females
Coorg	16·0	21·9
Delhi	6·8	14·1
Central Provinces ...	11·2	13·2
Bihar & Orissa ...	13·9	13·5
Bengal	12·1	15·1
Assam	10·0	14·0
Punjab	10·7	13·2
Bombay	8·5	11·7
North-Western Frontier Province ...	11·3	11·0
Madras	9·5	11·1
United Provinces ...	10·8	12·5

In 1933 Major-General Sir John Megaw fully investigated into the question of maternal mortality in India and he gives us the following table: —

TABLE 76

MATERNAL MORTALITY

Province	Maternal mortality per 1,000 births
Bengal ...	... 49·16
Bihar & Orissa ...	... 26·57
Assam ...	... 26·40
Bombay ...	... 20·09
Punjab ...	... 18·73
United Provinces	... 18·00
Madras ...	... 13·24
Central Provinces	... 8·18
British India (average)	... 24·05

Bengal has the unenviable distinction of topping the above table: the rates for Bengal are almost incredibly high—nearly 50 per mille. In England there has been much agitation because the maternal mortality rate was as high as 4·11 per 1,000. More than 200,000 mothers die in child-birth every year in India and more than 100 girl wives out of every 1,000 die in child-birth long before they have ceased to have babies. This race-suicide must come to an end.

Fall in the Number of Women

The third feature of our high death rate is the continuous fall in the proportion of women to men in Bengal. In all the provinces of British India, with the exception of Madras, there has been a steady fall in the proportion of women to men ever since 1881. The following table will illustrate the point as regards Bengal.

TABLE 77

PROPORTION OF WOMEN TO MEN IN BENGAL

Year	Number of women per 1,000 males at all ages
1881	990
1891	970
1901	960
1911	950
1921	932
1931	924

This steady decline in the proportion of females to males is bound to give rise to grave social evils—apart from the adverse repercussion it will have on

the future of the nation. Paucity of females has a tendency to increase social vices, to lower the age of marriage and to prevent the effective operation of social legislation.

Marriages

Universality of marriage and early marriage are two very common features of our rural life. These two factors may have greatly intensified the pressure of the population on the soil and, as such, have contributed to the gravity of the broader problem of over-population.

Our Problems

Intense pressure of population on the soil, high birth rate and death rate, absence of preventive checks, poverty which compels a peasant to live on starvation, to wear the same shirt or clothing till it is tattered to bits, absence of nutritious food, illiteracy and absence of proper medical aid—these are the problems that have to be faced by this Province.

Reclamation of New Areas

How can the pressure of population on the soil be relieved? Much is sometimes made of the reclamation of new areas as a remedy. Mr. Porter, Superintendent of Census Operations, Bengal, is very much optimistic about the matter. He says: "Subsidiary Table 1 shows that of the total area cultivable only 67% is now actually under cultivation. If the

total cultivable area were brought under cultivation and if improved methods of cultivation yielding an increase of 30% over the present yield were adopted it is clear from a simple rule of three calculations that Bengal could support at its *present standard of living* a population very nearly twice as large as that recorded in 1931" (Pages 63-64, Census Report—Vol. V, Part I). Without being unduly pessimistic, it may safely be stated that our present standard of living will leave still much to be desired and as such Bengal would not be economically better off, if Bengal's population was doubled with the standard of living remaining the same. Fall in the standard of living is inevitable if population increases. Then again in the total cultivable area is included a vast acreage of what is known as "cultivable waste other than fallow." As the Royal Commission on Agriculture pointed out, "it is certain that much of this area could in no conceivable circumstances be brought under tillage." (Para. 526, Page 605.) There are indeed many economists who think that at least 82% of the total cultivable area has been brought under the plough in Bengal. The earlier chapters of this book show how some of the most thickly populated districts, specially the Eastern Districts, have very little of fallow or cultivable waste. There is undoubtedly some scope for extensive cultivation in Bengal but it is not much. Any attempt at relieving the pressure of population on the soil by way of extensive cultivation will not by any means yield spectacular result.

Intensive Cultivation

The real hope of the Bengal peasant lies in intensive cultivation of soil. In the domain of agricultural production, Bengal sadly lags behind. Artificial fertilizers are practically unknown and lands are scarcely manured; fields have, therefore, to be kept fallow to recuperate their productive powers. Cattle is a poor specimen, lean and emaciated through insufficient feeding. Crops do not get water, except what the monsoon favours, due to lack of irrigation facilities. There is hardly any proper rotation of crops, nor has there been any regional planning of production, nor any attempt made systematically to utilise the lands of Bengal to meet the marketing requirements of our towns and cities. Intensive cultivation means that such primitive methods and manners will have to be abandoned and scientific planning and methods should take their place. The technique of production must be brought in conformity with scientific inventions and improvements with a view to getting maximisation of production and to relieve the pressure of population on the soil.

The recent world-wide trade depression, with a disastrous fall in the price of primary products in its wake, has hard hit the agriculturist. The *per capita* income has been reduced. The problem of population, in the last resort, is the problem of national wealth. If an increase in population is accompanied by a proportionate or more than proportionate increase in national wealth, there will not be any economic hardship. The maximisation of national wealth should, therefore, be the ideal to be aimed at.

Industrialization

Agricultural planning has also to be supplemented by greater industrialization of the province in relieving the pressure on the soil, and in this connection cotton textile, sugar, iron and steel, oil, paper, cement and match industries have possibilities, however limited their scope may be. Yet the process will be long and involves a heavy capital outlay. Agriculture must, therefore, remain the primary occupation of the province and so it will remain for many more years to come. But taking a long period view, a policy of improvement and diversification of agriculture supplemented by gradual industrialization seems to be the only solution of our present problems.

Migration

Is migration of population any remedy of the pressure on the soil? Economists are all agreed that migration, in its broadest aspect, holds out no hope for the people of Bengal. Moreover, it does not constitute a permanent solution. Movement of population from one province to another may afford temporary local relief but the broader problem remains unaffected. The inauguration of the new Constitution has seen an intensification of the feelings of provincial patriotism. There is no reason to hope that the Bengalee immigrant would be very much welcome in any of the other provinces. Immigration into Burma is out of the question: there were several anti-Indian outbreaks and Indians had to live in mortal fear of their life and property. The cry of "Burma for Burmans" is steadily gaining ground.

Bengal directly will not benefit from emigration to Ceylon. Ceylon affords an outlet to the surplus population of Madras, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin. But even in Ceylon, anti-Indian feeling is growing. Boycotts of Indian traders have been organised and in 1933, the All-Ceylon Youth Conference passed a resolution declaring that "the continued presence of the Indian was detrimental to the economic and political welfare of Ceylon." Apart from this Dr. Hutton says: "The absorption of Indian labour in that country has nearly reached the saturation point." Malaya, Mauritius, South Africa do not hold out much hope. In Kenya and South Africa even domiciled Indians and long-settlers have received a treatment in past years which precludes any possibility of further migration to these places. Moreover, there is hardly any direct migration from Bengal to any of these countries. Migration cannot in any way relieve the pressure of the population on the soil. On the other hand the migration of people from other provinces is more and more intensifying in this province.

Preventive Checks

Are there any possibilities of artificial limitation of births as a protection against any danger of over-population in future and also as a method of relieving the present intense pressure of population on the soil? Malthus told us that population has an inherent tendency to outstrip production. That being so he advised the use of preventive checks so that Nature may not have any opportunity to use her positive checks. Malthus's fears have been falsified and his

theory has been ridiculed as unnecessarily pessimistic. But the fundamental principle upon which his theory is based stands unaffected by the march of time. Malthus could not anticipate the revolutionary changes which the Industrial Revolution ushered in, but all the same his theory holds good even to this day, with some modifications.

But as Mr. Porter says, birth-control or preventive checks of any kind are practically non-existent in Bengal. It is not necessary to go into the question as to whether birth-control is good or bad. It is beyond the range of practical politics to expect it in the rural areas of Bengal.

Standard of Living

It is important to remember that the conception of over-population is a relative one. If *per capita* income is increasing, at least at the same rate as population, over-population is not a danger, but may sometimes be helpful. But can it be said that our *per capita* income is increasing proportionately with the increase in population? There may have been at best only a slight increase in the *per capita* income, though there is honest difference of opinion on the subject. Judging by the purchasing power of money, there has probably been not any increase, but possibly diminution. But even a slight increase in *per capita* income does not improve the standard of living in a province where the total agricultural indebtedness amounts to at least Rs. 100 crores. It is apparent that the ordinary Bengal agriculturist lives in a state of perpetual insolvency and

his children are not born into this world but often damned into it.

Mal-distribution and Over-production

But there need not be any pessimism about the future, only if the present is taken care of with a keen eye to the future. Let us not be daunted by those alarmists who would have us believe that world-production has outstripped world-consumption. We have indeed been treated to the spectacular demonstration of wheat being used as fuel in the farming State of Idaho in the United States of America. We have heard people talking about saturation point having reached in wheat or cotton while the starving millions of the world go unfed and naked. In the farming States of the U. S. A. and Canada, we have heard of rivers and creeks whitened with milk that nobody wanted. Coffee crop has been burnt down in Brazil with pomp and ceremony and pests have been scattered in cotton lands to keep down the yield. "Too much" has become our enemy because we cannot distribute what we have produced. And failing to do that, we do not hesitate to commit outrages against suffering humanity. It is important to remember that the problem of population is not of mere size, nor of mere production, but, to a great extent, of equitable distribution. It will indeed tax the patience of the most distinguished economist to devise a better scheme of distribution without drying up the sources of national wealth, but shall we despair of human intelligence? The Industrial Revolution in the domain of Production is over but a greater Revolution in the sphere of Consump-

tion and Distribution is still to come. "The magnificent episode of the Nineteenth Century is indeed over," but we may console ourselves with the thought that the Twentieth Century is still young.

Maximum Industrialization

To summarise: In Bengal, all the accepted symptoms of over-population are to be found—high birth rate and death rate, absence of preventive checks, intense pressure of population and grinding poverty. There are many economic thinkers who are of opinion that, in Bengal, over-population exists both as a state and as a tendency. There are also others who hold the contrary view. People, who hold the latter view, point out that our natural resources are immense and, as such, exploitation of Mother Earth will enable us to support a bigger population. That is indeed very true. Nobody contends for a moment that if our natural resources are exploited to the fullest, our Province should not be in a better position *vis-a-vis* the problem of over-population. But that is purely a hypothetical proposition and, as such, must be acecpted with the usual reservations. The real remedy lies in so arranging our national economy that the national wealth may be maximised. Maximisation of national wealth will most certainly enable us to maintain a much greater population on a better standard of living. And there is absolutely no reason to believe that this is not within the range of possibility. It is only through maximisation of agricultural output, greater industrialization of the Province, development of village indus-

tries, spread of a rational system of education with a rural bias and better medical facilities that there can be a true solution to the problem of over-population in this Province.

CHAPTER XIV

LAND SYSTEM

Central feature—Mughal Revenue system *plus* English Feudalism—Mughal system—Zamindar in Mughal system—Zamindary an office and not a property—Proprietor of revenue and not proprietor of soil—Land Tax under Caliph Omar—Customary rent—Genesis of the Parganah rate—Origin of Tenancy—Parallelism in Roman and English Law—Blackstone—Legal and equitable property.

Central Feature

The central feature of the land system of Bengal is the perpetual fixity of the Government's share of the revenue from land but with no fixity for the rent of the tenant-cultivator. The Permanent Settlement created permanency in the revenue demand and tenure of the landholders in Bengal. It was intended to create a similar permanency for the raiyats leading to a prosperous tenantry and general agricultural well-being. In the words of Lord Hastings, recorded in 1819, "never was there a measure conceived in a purer spirit of generous humanity and disinterested justice than the scheme of Permanent Settlement." But, in actual effect, the raiyat has not yet secured permanency for himself. The zamindars have known to a pie for the last hundred and forty years what revenue they have to pay. The raiyats for whom the same permanency was designed are even to-day far away from such a position.

Mughal Revenue System *plus* English Feudalism.

Originally intended as a measure to stabilise the country, by enabling the cultivators of the soil to be secure in the enjoyment of the profits of their labour, "to promote the happiness of our subjects, by affording them security in their property," Lord Cornwallis superimposed a touch of English feudalism on the Mughal Revenue system. The history of the successive tenancy legislation bears eloquent testimony to the disastrous consequence of the Permanent Settlement upon the status and condition of the tenants in general. John Stuart Mill says: "The reasons which form the justification of property in land are valid only in so far as the proprietor of land is its improver. In no sound theory of private property was it ever contemplated that the proprietor of land should merely be a sinecurist quartered on it." The situation is made much worse when the land system degenerates into absentee landlordism, when in between the landlord (the rent-receiver) and the tiller (the rent-payer), there intervenes a hierarchy of middlemen who are mainly interested in profits from land through rent. The entire pressure of the profits of all these *rentiers* falls upon the actual cultivator who has to pay for all and rent ceases to be an equitable proportion of the produce. On the contrary it becomes merely a money-burden which leads inevitably to agricultural deterioration and the ruin of the peasant.

The Mughal System

In any study of the land system of Bengal, it is necessary to cast a glance over the Muslim revenue

system which was the basic foundation on which Lord Cornwallis built his structure of Permanent Settlement in Bengal.

Comprehensively planned first by Sher Shah, the system was carried to a high degree of efficiency by Akbar with the aid of his able Minister Todar Mull. It was founded on a detailed survey of the resources, ownership and qualities of land, of the area cultivated and the crops grown. It was administered by a body of officials and checked by others. The revenues were assessed on the basis of ability to pay. It had definite adjustability to suit flood, inundation or other natural calamities. The "Ussul Toomer Jummah" was based on a share of the average produce of land of average quality, and the rate after being fixed was commuted into money on the basis of average prices of the preceding nineteen years—the cultivator being given the option to pay in cash or in kind. It was a fixed share of the average produce or its fixed average price. Lands were divided into several classes according to their productivity and varying rates determined accordingly. There were only two grades of interests in the produce from the land—the Government who were entitled to a share of the produce and the cultivator who enjoyed the residue. The rent collectors were not interested except as collectors on behalf of the State and received their remuneration, paid out of the collections, from the State. There was a body of independent officials to supervise, to check and to ensure that the tenants were not made to pay more than their fixed liability. The basis of assessment was that "there should be left for every man who cultivates

his land as much as he requires for his own support till the next crop is reaped and for that of his family and for seed. This much shall be left for him ; what remains is land revenue and should go to the public treasury."* Against this principle of a residual basis of assessment, rent today is the maximum that can be forced from land, leaving the barest minimum for the actual tiller, the man who is the central figure in agricultural economy and the pivot round whom the life of the province revolves and who, as has been seen in a previous chapter, does not get even the barest subsistence from his land.

The Zamindar in Mughal Revenue System

In the Mughal Revenue administration, the zamindar was, thus, an agent of the Emperor for making due collections on behalf of the Emperor and was remunerated with a percentage out of his collections for his labour. The term "Zamindar" is a later development in the land system of the country. In the *A'yeen-i-Akbari,* he was the *Amul-Guzar* or Collector of the revenues and he was directed "to annually assist the husbandman with loans of money and receive payment at distant and convenient periods"—necessarily without interest which was unknown in Islamic law. Certain allotments of land were usually given to him rent-free for his maintenance known as *nankar,* and there was then plenty of land which was uncultivated, fallow and unoccupied.

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* Leake—Land Tenure in the Tropics, page 22.

Zamindary an Office and Not a Property

The zamindary was thus an office and not a proprietary right in land. The history of the grant of many ancient zamindaries, for example, shows that the zamindari of those estates was granted by the Mughal Kings to the ancestors of the present holders by taking it way from the previous collectors of revenue, often on the ground that they were oppressive and not acting equitably to the cultivators. In the Proclamation of the Court of Directors, dated the 11th May, 1772, divesting Nawab Muhammad Rezah Khan of his Naib Dewanship, in which they themselves stood forth as the Dewan, there is a list published of several branches of business appertaining to the Dewanee, and the seventh item in the list was "the constitution and dismissing of Zamindars with the concurrence of the Nazim." Every change in the zamindari was then subject to an Imperial Firman of confirmation and though the office gradually tended to develop along hereditary lines, it was never so as a matter of right but was subject to recognition by the Emperor or his Governor, on payment of a *Peshkush* and *Nuzzeranah* and on security for good behaviour.

Section 7 of Regulation I of 1793 specifically mentions that, from the earliest times till the Permanent Settlement was made, it had been "the practice to deprive them of the management of their lands and either to let them in farm or to appoint officers on the part of Government to collect the assessment immediately from the raiyats." And, as such, the zamindars

had no right in the lands for which they were liable to pay revenue to the State.

Proprietor of Revenue and Not Proprietor of Soil

The zamindar's share was the universal prescriptive law of the Empire, namely 10 per cent of mufassil collections of the estate. When Sir John Shore put the question to a learned scholar of his time—Ghulam Hosain Khan, the renowned historian, son of a former Nazim of Behar, "Why did the King purchase land since he was lord of the country and might therefore have taken it by virtue of that capacity?", the answer given puts the whole case in a nutshell: "The Emperor is the proprietor of the revenue, but he is not the proprietor of the soil"—"the *Milkeat* was never in the Emperor, he was entitled only to *Khiraj* or *Ushar*". Akbar, Shahjahan, Aurangzeb, Alamgir II, all purchased lands, required for their personal use or for construction of forts. Even in the days of the disintegrating forces of decay, Muhammad Rezah Khan, affirmed that princes had no property in the land and they had to purchase land to build mosque and cemeteries.

Land Tax under Caliph Omar

It is interesting to note here that the Mughal land system was not peculiar to India. It followed the revenue system administered in the early days of the Khilafat in the conquered lands of Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

Immediately on the conquest of the territories outside Arabia in the days of Omar the Great, the

second Khalifa, the problem of land taxation and land system with reference to the conquered people and of territories in relation to the State came to be a live issue. The principle then promulgated was that the Khalifa was entitled to impose *Khiraj* upon a conquered people on their lands and the Jijzia on their heads in lieu of military service but the land remained the property of the inhabitants. "The land of the *Sowad* is property of those who live in it; they have a right to sell it or to hold it in possession." Successive waves of conquests might lead to far-reaching political changes, hordes of conquerors might pass by, the vanquished might fly to seek refuge, but the tiller of the soil had nothing to fear and his plough plodded on while rival combatants were probably fighting in the neighbouring fields. The plough and the peasant were the only sure factors, no one else in the chain had any security of existence and continuance.

Customary Rent

By the time the British came to administer the country, the Mughal revenue system had taken such deep roots in the country that the rents of land throughout Bengal were regulated by a definitely known and fixed customary rate prevalent in the locality embracing a village, Taluka or a Parganah and called the Parganah Rate. In a form of government which was severely personal and where distance probably stood in the way of a more systematic or comprehensive check upon the doings of the State-collectors, custom always placed an embargo upon all excesses and oppressions. Such was the great influence of the original

Parganah Rate that any additional impost with the sanction of the State was treated as an addition to and beyond the original *Jama* which was always kept intact as a sacrosanct item. Remissions were also calculated as deductions from the original customary amount. Every *raiyat* had a definitely fixed amount of rental; he was subject to no eviction so long as he paid the rental for his lands.

Genesis of Parganah Rate

It is not difficult to find out the origin and development of such customary Parganah Rates. We in the twentieth centry sometimes fail to visualise the condition of India in the eighteenth century and look upon the events and incidents of those days with the prejudiced eye of today, where, in a highly organised political state, contract determines the relationship between the landlord and the tenant. Waves of conquests and of revolutions passed over India, dynasties and persons changed places, the collectors of State demand were imprisoned for failure to meet their liabilities, but land was abundant and population was sparse. Naturally the rent of the soil was paid and was payable as a State demand by anybody who occupied and cultivated it and to anyone who came with the authority of the State.

Origin of Tenancy

At the time of the Permanent Settlement, the rent of a tenant was governed by the customary Parganah rates, which, by the moral sense of the community and the exigencies of State demands, were

firmly established. It appears from the evidence of Mr. Holt Mackenzie before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, in 1832, that such tenancies were "independent of any known contract, originating in the mere act of settlement and tillage; the formal agreements were interchanged, when they were done, not to create the holding, but to define the amount to be paid on account of it." The words of Lord Cornwallis, in his Minute of the 3rd February, 1790, *viz.*, "*privilege* which the raiyats in many parts of Bengal enjoy of holding possession of the spots of land which they cultivate, so long as they pay the revenue assessed upon them," clearly mean that the origin of tenancies in Bengal was mere squatting and tillage. It was only inevitable that it should be so, if we consider the state of Bengal at the time.

Parallelism in Roman and English Law

We have seen how custom played its rôle in keeping the rents free from the arbitrary discretion of landlords. Contract comes into human societies in land systems at a later stage of development. It is interesting to note the parallelism in the evolution of the doctrines of property in India, in England and in Rome. In Roman Law *Occupatio* was a natural mode of acquisition of property. The man who first took possession with the object of occupation, manifested by any specific act, acquired the property and this occupancy was supported by Roman jurists as the earliest form of acquisition. The older Roman jurisconsults found such acquisition universally sanctioned by the usages of the societies around them and

the lawyers of a later age allotted them a place among the ordinances of nature. They undoubtedly believed that for mankind, living in institutions of nature, occupancy would be one of the first practices and rights. It was the process by which the no-man's goods of the primitive world became the private property of individuals in the development of human institutions. But with the development of society conflicts arose between the rights of the conquerors and the rights of the natural occupants. The Roman lawyers immediately found a distinction between Property and Possession and the genius of the great Roman Jurists tried to find a solution of this perplexing conflict. Possessory interdicts, the summary processes of Roman Law, were devised by Praetors for the protection of these classes of persons and the liberty was conceded to them of vindicating their rights of possessory remedies. A sort of equity was thus found for this and a distinction, which later developed in other countries, was found between equitable property and legal property, known in Roman law as *Quiritarian* and *Bonitarian.*

Blackstone

A similar evolution took place in England. Blackstone writes that the earth and all things therein were the general property of mankind through the immediate gift of the Creator. By the law of nature and reason he who first began to use it acquired therein a kind of transient property that lasted so long as he was using it. The right of possession continued for the same time so long as the act of possession lasted.

Whoever was in the occupation of any determined spot for rest, for shade or the like acquired for the time a sort of ownership, out of which it would be unjust and contrary to the law of nature to drive him by force, but the instant that he quitted the use or occupation of it, another might seize it without injustice.

Legal and Equitable Property

Amidst the conflict of feudalism with such a state of things, the English lawyers found a distinction between the Owner and the Possessor with their respective rights in the same property, and prescriptions were admitted as a ground of right, though at first with a reluctant approval. Admitting in theory that there were tenants-at-will, it was contended that time and undisturbed enjoyment had ripened their holding into a species of ownership and that it would be unjust to eject them for the purpose of redistributing the domain. Courts of Chancery thus developed equitable rights as against legal ownership and property was affected in many ways by equity in England, ultimately resulting in a complete severance of Equitable from Legal property. In India it was the evolution of the same principles which resulted in customary rights and Parganah rates finding a definite place in the law of the land against persons who were given the charge of revenue collections and who were later given in the Cornwallis Regulations the name of Proprietors.

CHAPTER XV

PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

Interpretation—Sir James Stephen—Sir William Hunter—Sir Courtney Ilbert—Lord Cornwallis—Sovereign's right of interposition—Inherent right as Sovereign—Protection and Welfare of Cultivators—Solemn pledge of the State—Zemindars not absolute Proprietors—Lord Lawrence—Sir Ashley Eden—Future authority to Protect—Full right of Interposition—We may enlarge the powers of landlords, but not the rights of tenants!—A simple contract to fix State demands—Proprietorship, but no extinguishment of others' rights—No rights created—Proprietorship for performance of duties—As Supreme Government and as Supreme Landlord—Did not divest itself of its right as Government—Did not affect rights of third parties—Raiyats must be protected by law—Sir William Hunter—Lord Ripon—Substantial benefits against nothing but assurance—Never absolute ownership of soil—Only a single promise—Our inherent and Indefeasible rights—Proprietor in Bengal and under English Law—"Who owns the land"—To English gentlemen—English landlords and Bengal Zamindars—No breach of Permanent Settlement—Mutual contract—Rights exaggerated, Terms ignored.

Interpretation

In any discussion of the land problem of Bengal, it is important to make a close study of the nature and character of the Permanent Settlement, its intentions and implications and to examine the evidence "showing what the authors of the Permanent Settlement intended to provide ; what, as a matter of fact, was provided in the regulations of the Permanent Settlement ; and in what sense those regulations were understood by the Government and by some of its best informed officials, before the documents which

explain the proceedings of 1793, faded to a great extent out of general recollection."*

Sir James Stephen

Speaking before the Indian Legislative Council in 1871, so high a legal authority as Sir James Stephen said: "A great public act like the Permanent Settlement is not to be interpreted, and can never have been meant to be interpreted, merely by reference to the terms of the document in which it is contained. Its meaning must be collected from a consideration of the circumstances under which, and of the objects for which, it was made; and considering what is and what is not consistent with its terms, we must look at the gradual changes which have occurred in the condition of the country since it was enacted. This is the only way in which it is possible to understand fully transactions of this kind, and it is peculiarly necessary in the case of a transaction which, however important, neither is, nor professes to be, a complete and exhaustive statement of the relations between the Government and its subjects. The Permanent Settlement regulates only one branch of one part of those relations, and it must be interpreted by reference to others."

Sir William Hunter

In the words of Sir William Hunter, at the time of the Permanent Settlement the tenants were "pro-

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* India's Despatch to tht Secretary of State, No. 6, dated 21st March, 1882, para 40.

tected by economic laws more powerful than any legal system. There was then more land in Bengal awaiting cultivation than there were people to cultivate it. The demand was by the landlord for cultivators, not by the cultivators for land. The charge of enticing away tenants by offers of land at low rent was frequently brought by one landholder against another."*

But a fundamental economic change has since then taken place. "The increase of population during the past century has reversed this state of things. The population in many parts of Bengal has outgrown the soil. It is no longer the landlord who stands in need of tenants, but the tenants who are competing against each other for land. The same economic laws of supply and demand which protected the tenant at the time of the Permanent Settlement, places him, in many Districts, at the mercy of the landlord today."†

Sir Courtney Ilbert

Sir Courtney Ilbert, in his speech during the concluding stage of the Bengal Tenancy legislation of 1885, observed:—

"Look at the social and economical condition of Bengal at the present day. What are its most striking features? Are they not transformation, transition, growth and change? Here as elsewhere in India, and here perhaps more than anywhere else in India, you find the past and the present, old things and new,

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* Speech of Sir William Hunter—Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 12th March, 1883.

† *Ibid.*

brought into sudden and violent contact with each other, with results which are often unexpected, and which, unless there is some intervention to temper the shock, may be disastrous. . . . . We are responsible for the introduction into this country of forces which threaten to revolutionise and disintegrate its social and economical system ; we cannot fold our hands and let them work in accordance with nature's blind laws. We must, to the best of our ability, endeavour to regulate and control their operation."*

In studying the Permanent Settlement, one must not, therefore, forget the condition of the country between 1793 and 1938, and the revolutionary changes in the economic, political and social structure and outlook of the people and the country today as compared with those at the end of the eighteenth century.

Lord Cornwallis

But what were the intentions of the authors of the Permanent Settlement? In his Minute, dated the 3rd of February, 1790, Lord Cornwallis observed:—

"I do not hesitate to give it as my opinion that the Zamindars, neither now or ever, could possess a right to impose taxes or abwabs upon the raiyats. . . . Neither is the privilege, which the raiyats in many parts of Bengal enjoy, of holding possession of the spots of land which they cultivate so long as they pay the revenue assessed upon them, by any means incompatible with the proprietary rights of the Zamindars.

* Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 2nd March, 1885.

Whoever cultivates the land, the Zamindar can receive no more than the established rent, which, in most places, is fully equal to what the cultivators can afford to pay. To permit him to dispossess one cultivator for the sole purpose of giving the land to another, would be vesting him with a power to commit a wanton act of oppression from which he could derive no benefit."

Sovereign's Right of Interposition

The Court of Directors, in their Revenue General letter, dated the 19th September, 1792, in sanctioning the proposals of Lord Cornwallis, wrote back: —

"But as so great a change in habits and situation can only be gradual, the interference of Government may, for a considerable period, be necessary to prevent the landholders from making use of their own permanent possession for the purpose of exaction and oppression. We, therefore, wish to have it distinctly understood that while we confirm to the landholders the possession of the districts which they now hold and subject only to the revenue now settled; and while we disclaim any interference with respect to the situation of the raiyats or the sums paid by them, with any view of an addition or revenue to ourselves; we expressly reserve the right, which belongs to us as sovereigns, of interposing our authority in making, from time to time, all such regulations as may be necessary to prevent the raiyats being improperly disturbed in their possession, or loaded with unwarrantable exactions. Our interposition, when it is necessary, seems also to be clearly consistent with the

practice of the Mughal Government, under which it appeared to be a general maxim that the immediate cultivator of the soil duly paying his rent should not be dispossessed of the land he occupied. This necessarily supposes that there were some measures and limits by which the rent could be defined, and that it was not left to the arbitrary determination of the Zamindar; for otherwise such a rule would be nugatory; and in point of fact the original amount seems to have been annually ascertained and fixed by the act of the sovereign."

Inherent Right as Sovereign

Immediately before the Permanent Settlement, the Court of Directors communicated the following instructions: "In order to leave no room for our intentions being at any time misunderstood, we direct you to be accurate in the terms in which our determination is announced. You will, in a particular manner, be cautious so to express yourselves as to leave no ambiguity as to our right to interfere from time to time, as it may be necessary for the protection of the raiyats and subordinate landholders, it being our intention, in the whole of this measure, effectually to limit our own demands, but not to depart from our inherent right as sovereigns, of being the guardians and protectors of every class of persons living under the Government."*

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* India's Despatch to the Secretary of State for India, No. 6, dated the 21st March, 1882.

Protection and Welfare of Cultivators

It was in such a spirit and intention that in fixing the Government revenue for ever, the Governor-General in Council, thought it necessary "to make the following declarations necessary to the Zamindars, independent and other actual proprietors of land: —

"First, it being the duty of the ruling power to protect all classes of people, and more particularly those who, from their situation, are most helpless, the Governor-General in Council will, whenever he may deem it proper, enact such regulations as he may think necessary for the protection and welfare of the dependent taluqdars, raiyats and other cultivators of the soil; and no Zamindar, independent taluqdar, or other actual proprietor of land shall be entitled on this account to make any objection to the discharge of the fixed assessment which they have respectively agreed to pay."*

Solemn Pledge of the State

Twenty-seven years later, the Court of Directors, on the 15th January, 1819, re-affirmed: —

"We fully subscribe to the truth of Mr. Sisson's declaration that the faith of the State is to the full as solemnly pledged to uphold the cultivator of the soil in the unmolested enjoyment of his long established rights, as it is to maintain the Zamindar in the possession of his estate, or to abstain from increasing the public revenue permanently assessed upon him."

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* Article VII, Sec. 8 of Regulation I of 1793.

Zamindars Not Absolute Proprietors

On a consideration of all papers and documents, the Government of India, in their Despatch to the Secretary of State for India, dated the 21st March, 1882, came to the conclusion that—

"The Zamindars, though termed 'actual proprietors' of the land, were not absolute proprietors as against the raiyats."

Lord Lawrence

Lord Lawrence, in his Minute in the year 1868, considered that "it would be necessary for the Government sooner or later to interfere and pass a law which should thoroughly protect the raiyat and make him, what he is now only in name, a free man, a cultivator with the right to cultivate the land he holds, provided he pays a fair rent for it."

Sir Ashley Eden

In 1879, the Rent Commission was appointed to consider the question of amending the Rent Law of Bengal and Sir Ashley Eden, in proposing his Bill, after consideration of the recommendations of the Commission, stated "that the rights originally conferred on the Zamindars, what else they might have been, were not those of 'absolute proprietorship', the Government prescribing a fixed rental to be adjusted by itself according to recognised rules, stringently forbidding any other exaction on the part of the landlords, taking numerous precautions for the protection of the raiyats 'in their possession' and reserving to itself the right of

future interference should it ever be necessary, on their behalf, without such interference giving rise to any claim on the part of the Zamindars for abatement of revenue."

Future Authority to Protect

In making their proposals for Tenancy legislation, in 1882, to the Secretary of State for India, the Government of India stated clearly: —

"Our authority to protect, not only dependent taluqdars and raiyats, but all other cultivators of the soil, is unimpeachable; and we would unmistakably assert that such authority is not exhausted on the present occasion, and that the Government reserves its liberty to repeat, at any future date, measures of protection similar to those which are now proposed."*

Full Right of Interposition

The Secretary of State, in his reply dated 17th August, 1882, said: "I consider it fully established that the reservations made at the time of Permanent Settlement give you the full right of interposition for the amelioration of the condition of the Bengal peasantry, and that legislative interposition at this time is justified by the facts disclosed."

We may Enlarge the Powers of Landlords but Not the Rights of Tenants!

But while the Zamindars have continuously pressed for reform of land-laws in their own interests, they have

* Para 94 of India's Despatch, dated 21st March, 1882.

always put up a strenuous opposition in combating any rights being conferred on the tenants. As Sir Courtney Ilbert said in 1883, in introducing the Tenancy Bill in the Indian Leglislative Council—

"But we have been told that whilst there is no reason in the world why we should not effect the one, there is a serious obstacle in the way of our effecting the other. We may legislate to enlarge the powers of the landlord, but we cannot legislate to enlarge the rights of the tenants. And why? Because we are barred from doing so by contract, the contract, namely—with the Zamindars which was embodied in the Permanent Settlement. Now, far be it from me to enter into any minute or exhaustive enquiry into the meaning and effect of the numerous documents, which together make up what is known as the Permanent Settlement."

A Simple Contract to Fix State Demands

And Sir Courtney answered in the following terms: "The Permanent Settlement then was simply a contract between the Government and the Zamindars as to the amount of land-revenue payable by the latter to the former. The parties to the contract were the Government on the one hand and the Zamindars on the other. The raiyats were not consulted about the arrangement and were in no sense a party to it; and, according to the most ordinary principles of contract, it could not affect any right which they then had or might thereafter acquire.

Proprietorship, but No Extinguishment of Others' Rights

"But then it was said that at the time of the Permanent Settlement, and as part of the same arrangement, a formal declaration was made declaring the property in the soil to be vested in the Zamindars; that throughout the Regulation of 1793, which confirmed and gave effect to the Permanent Settlement, the Zamindars are described as the 'Proprietors' or 'actual proprietors' of the land; and that this declaration and description are inconsistent with the notion of proprietary rights in the land being vested in any other class of persons. As to the use of the term 'proprietor', no serious argument can be based upon it. I have heard of the magic of property. But I never understood that there was any such magic in the phrase 'proprietor' as to wipe out any rights qualifiying those of the person to whom the phrase was applied; and it would be specially difficult to show that it had any such effect in the Regulation of 1793.

No Rights Created

"In the first place, the term, as applied to land, had no technical meaning in English law and if you were to ask an English lawyer what were the rights in the soil of a proprietor of land, he would probably tell you that you were using loose and popular language, and would beg you to make your meaning more precise and clear. In the next place, the term was freely applied to the Zamindars of Bengal and other persons of the same class in Regulations and other official documents of a date anterior to 1793,

and to use a technical term, connoting rights created at that date.

Proprietorship for Performance of Duties

"The use of the term 'proprietor' in this sense is closely analogous to the use of similar terms in English statute law. Here, for instance, is a definition of 'owner' taken from a recent English Act—the Public Health Act of 1875: 'Owner' means the person for the time being receiving the rack-rent of the land or premises in connection with which the word is used, whether on his own account, or as agent or trustee for any other person, or who would so receive the same if such lands or premises were let at a rack-rent. In this case, the legislature has said: —

'We intend to impose certain sanitary duties on the owners of land and houses. We will not inquire too closely which of several persons ought, as between themselves, to perform those duties. It is sufficient for our purposes to find out who gets the rent; we will treat that man as owner for the purposes of the Act. We will make him primarily responsible for the performance of duties imposed on owners by the Act, and leave all questions between him and third persons untouched.' And this is precisely the policy which the East India Company adopted in Bengal before the date of the Permanent Settlement. They found a number of persons claiming interests in the soil. Which of those persons had the best claim, as against the others, to be considered the true owner of the soil, was a theoretical question of enormous difficulty. But

which of those persons ought, for land revenue purposes, to be dealt with as owner of the soil, and primarily liable for land revenue accordingly, was a practical question, which admitted of a practical solution. The East India Company settled it in Bengal by selecting the Zamindars as the persons to deal with, and they christened them landholders or proprietors accordingly.

As Supreme Government and as Supreme Landlord

"In dealing with persons who had interests in the soil, the Government claimed rights over them in two capacities. It claimed to be both Supreme Government and Supreme Landlord. In one capacity it was dealing with subjects; in the other capacity it was dealing with sub-proprietors or tenants. But it was never very easy to say either what its right as supreme landlord comprised, or at what point the line was to be drawn between its rights as landlord and its rights as Government. As to the first question, it is, of course, obvious that the rights of a supreme landlord may be of the most limited nature. According to the theories of English law, all English land is held mediately or immediately of the Crown, and, therefore, says Blackstone, 'the sovereign only hath *absolutum et directum dominium* in the land.' But we all know that this absolute and direct ownership or proprietary right is of the most shadowy character. And as to the second question, I need only remind an Indian audience of the eternal controversy whether that share of the produce, which is payable to the Government in

districts not permanently settled, ought more properly to be denominated revenue or rent. Now, it was this second question which the Government endeavoured to solve in making the Permanent Settlement. It said to the Zamindars, we will not only fix for ever that share of the produce for the payment of which you are to be held responsible; but we will give up to you our claim to be considered your landlords. What you pay us shall be revenue, not rent. As between ourselves, you and not we shall be deemed to be the proprietors of the soil.

Did not Divest itself of its Right as Government

"But there were three things which the Government did not do by the Permanent Settlement. It did not divest itself of its general right—a right which belonged to it not as landlord but as Government—to make from time to time such laws and adopt such administrative measures as it might think expedient for the general welfare of all classes of its subjects; it did not define the nature and extent of the proprietary rights which it gave up to the Zamindars; and it did not include in its grant any proprietary or quasi-proprietary rights belonging not to itself, but to some other class of persons. Before the Settlement, the Zamindars when not cultivating themselves occupied a middle position between the Government, with substantial but ill-defined proprietary rights over them, and the great mass of cultivators, with substantial but ill-defined proprietary rights under them. After the Settlement, they were freed from the one, but they remained subject to the other."

Did not Affect Rights of Third Parties

Sir Courtney then dealt with the arguments about the absolute and full discretionary powers of landlords as to the mode of dealing with the lands:—

"And, even if any such right had been conferred, it would have been controlled and qualified by the express reservation of a power to legislate from time to time for the protection of the cultivators of the soil.

"No ; in construing the documents connected with the Permanent Settlement, as in construing other documents of a like nature, general words must be read with reference and subject to specific rights and customs, and a bargain between two parties must not be treated as affecting the rights of any third party. Construed in accordance with these principles, the Permanent Settlement did not, of its own operation, prejudicially affect any rights of the existing generation of cultivators, and custom or usage tending to protect the rights of future generations of cultivators, or any power of the legislature to interfere from time to time for the protection of those rights."

Raiyats must be Protected by Law

Sir Courtney finally concluded this part of his case by stating that "in an agricultural country like India, the great mass of the actual cultivators of the soil, whoever they may be, and however they may have come into the possession of the land, must be protected by law.*

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* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 2nd March, 1883.

Sir William Hunter

Sir William Hunter, speaking on the Bill before the Council, said:—

"The instructions of the Court of Directors before the Permanent Settlement, and the express words of that Settlement, prove to my mind that the Government of that day neither intended to make a contract with the landholders which should prevent it from afterwards securing the rights of the tenants, nor made any such contract. Even if such a contract had been made, the Hon'ble and learned member has shown that it could not interfere with the right of the tenants who were no party to it. But after these and all other legal difficulties have been cleared away, the Bill has still to be discussed and judged of on other and quite different grounds. For this Bill is in reality an attempt to counteract by legislative devices a fundamental economic change which has taken place in the relation of landlord and tenant in Bengal. It is by economic tests that the measure must now be tried, for by its economic results it will hereafter be justified or condemned. This law endeavours to reinstate the cultivators in a security of tenure somewhat similar to that which they enjoyed at the time of the Permanent Settlement."*

Lord Ripon

Lord Ripon, in concluding the debate in the Council for reference of the Tenancy Bill to the Select

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* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 12th March, 1883.

Committee, specially dispelled the idea that the Permanent Settlement prevented Government from coming to the assistance of the tenants, and said: —

"I hold, on the contrary, that the Government, in 1793, gave to the raiyats and all the cultivators of Bengal a distinct and binding assurance that they should look to them for protection and for promotion of their welfare. It appears to me that under these words the Government gave a distinct pledge that they would protect the raiyats and promote their welfare.

Substantial Benefits Against Nothing but Assurance

"From the moment when it was promulgated, the Zamindars and other landholders of Bengal, as a class, obtained substantial benefits which have subsequently been growing in value and importance from year to year; while, on the other hand, the cultivator of the soil received nothing but an assurance which, for long years of gradual depression through what His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal called to-day the culpable negligence of the Government, has been permitted to be wholly barren.

"Never Absolute Ownership of Soil"

"I am led irresistibly to the conclusion that there never has been in India an absolute owner of the soil in whom every possible kind of right of property is vested. It appears to me indisputable that the raiyats and cultivators of the soil have always had, or at least a great proportion of them have always had, rights in the soil more or less perfectly secured to them according to the circumstances of the time and the

position of the parties, that rights of this description have been at all times recognised, and that they have never been abandoned by those who believed that they possessed them. To my mind, then, so far as regards any question of right, we have to-day a most plain right—a right which was asserted and exercised in 1859—to deal with this question, if we consider it necessary for the purpose of protecting the interests and promoting the welfare of the cultivators of the soil."*

"Only a Single Promise"

At a later stage of the debate on the Bill, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal said:—

"The Zamindars contend that, in dealing with this Bill as we are doing, we are depriving them of those rights which were guaranteed to them by the British Government in the beginning of this century; and the argument is used that, as the claim of the Zamindar to do just as he likes with his own is indefeasible, they will accept nothing else and nothing less. I never could admit the validity of such a plea. The contention is a very one-sided view of the Permanent Settlement, for I think that if you examine Regulations I to VIII of 1793, you will find that there is nowhere throughout them anything more in the way of a promise than the single promise that the public demand on the land should be limited in perpetuity."

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* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 13th March, 1883.

Our Inherent and Indefeasible Right

Lord Dufferin, in the concluding stage, remarked: —

"I am convinced, as the British and Indian Governments of that day were convinced, that the 'permannecy' of Lord Cornwallis's settlement applied to the pledge given by His Excellency never to demand from the Zamindars an increase of the assessment which at that date was imposed upon them ; but that, so far from any quality of permanency having been then officially impressed upon the relations subsisting between the Zamindars and their raiyats, the Indian Administration of the day and the East India Company reserved to themselves in the most explicit and express manner the right of intefering in the interests and for the protection of the raiyats, whenever circumstances might require them to do so. I have no hesitation in adding that even if no such reservation had been made by Lord Cornwallis and his colleagues, there would nave remained an inherent and indefeasible right in the Government of India to enter upon legislation such as that we have undertaken as a matter of public policy and in the interests of the community at large."*

"Proprietor" in Bengal and under English Law

The word "proprietor" used in the days of Lord Cornwallis and incorporated in the Regulations of those

* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 11th March, 1885.

days must not, therefore, be confused with the Proprietor in English law and this was exactly the mistake committed in the post-Permanent Settlement years. Maine, in his "Village Communities,"* says: "There seems to be the heaviest presumption against the existence in any part of India of a form of ownership conferring the exact rights on the proprietors which are given by the present English ownership of land on fee-simple."

"Who Owns the Land"

Referring to the controversy relating to ownership in lands, Mr. Justice Field in his "Introduction to the Bengal Regulations," tersely put it as follows:—

"And so it happened that to English gentlemen possessed of marvellous energy, great ability, the highest honesty of purpose, and spotless integrity, but destitute of that light which alone could have guided them to the truth, fell the task of solving this problem: and the solution appeared to them to depend upon the answer to this question—'Who owns the land?'

"To English Gentlemen"

"—These gentlemen had, some of them estates in England: and those who are themselves possessed of no landed property, had been familiar from their boyhood with the estates of the English aristocracy and gentry; and perhaps hoped, as the result of their labours in India, to become owners of similar estates

* Maine—Village Communities, page 160.

in their own country in the evening of their days. From the point of view suggested by their knowledge and associations, they thought that some class in India must own the land in the same way as English landlords own their estates, and they set themselves to find out who this class were—in fact to answer the question, "Who owns the land?" Now the fact really was that no class or members of a class owned the land or any portion of it in the sense in which an Englishman owns his estate; the ideas of property in land were wholly different in the two countries: and there was in India no kind of ownership which corresponded with that aggregate of rights, the highest known to English law, and which is termed a fee-simple."*

English Landlords and Bengal Zamindars

Referring to the comparison frequently made between the Zamindars of Bengal and English landlords, Sir Courtney Ilbert said:—

"In the first place, everybody knows that a large portion of the money paid by an English tenant to an English landlord as rent represents interest on capital which has been expended on farm-buildings, drainage and the like. But what proportion of the money paid as rent by the ordinary Bengal raiyat represents interest on capital?

"In the next place the English landlord knows pretty accurately, or, if he does not, his agent knows for him, who his tenants are, what rent they pay and where their lands lie. But these are just the facts

* Field—Introduction to the Bengal Code, pp. 37-38.

which the Zamindar complains that both he and his agent have so much difficulty in finding out, and which he is always asking us to try and help him to find out. Imagine an English landlord coming to Parliament and asking it to help him in making up a proper rent roll.

"No; the English landlord is one thing, the Bengal Zamindar is another. A revenue-payer we found the Zamindar, a rent-receiver we made him; but a landlord or landowner in the English sense of the word, neither we nor his own effotrs have ever succeeded in making him."

No Breach of Permanent Settlement

The argument of the breach of Permanent Settlement sponsored by the landlords was met by the Hon'ble Mr. Evans in 1885. One of the main arguments was that "the legislation of 1859 was a breach of the Permanent Settlement; and they make it out in this way. They say that before the Permanent Settlement they had the right to demand rent according to their own arbitrary discretion. Shorn as they have been of their civil and criminal jurisdiction, and no longer representing the ruler's power, they still contend that their will is the measure of enhancement, and that the effect of the reign of law which the British Government have introduced is that the Courts ought to register their arbitrary demands as decrees, and that the resistless might of the Executive should be at their call to enforce their decrees and protect their persons. I deny that altogether; I think it was clearly competent to the Government to legislate as it

then did. India to-day is not the India of 1793. But neither on the narrow grounds of laws and regulations, nor on grounds of equity or any other moral considerations, these declarations and statements should be forgotten."

Mutual Contract

Every student of the Regulations of the Permanent Settlement will, therefore, realise that the Permanent Settlement was in the nature of a contract between the Government and the Zamindars, with reciprocal duties and obligations. But excepting the Permanent Settlement, it is rare to come across any solemn contract of State, where it is only one party that claims all the rights accruing out of such a contract without any regard for its corresponding obligations and responsibilities. The Zamindars were expected to improve their estates, to exert themselves in the cultivation of their lands, to conduct themselves "with good faith and moderation towards the raiyats" ; it was specifically provided that "the Governor-General in Council expects that the proprietors of land will not only act in this manner themselves towards their dependant talukdars and raiyats but also enjoin the strictest adherence to the same principles in the persons whom they may appoint to collect rents for them." "To promote the future ease and happiness of the people," it was further expected that they would behave themselves in accordance with the principles promulgated by the Permanent Settlement. If the Permanent Settlement created a permanency of revenue, it was expected that there would be perma-

nency of rent as well. If landlords were not to be ejected except on default of payment of revenue, the tenants were not to be liable to ejectment except on the ground of default in payment of rent. If the estates were heritable and transferable without sanction of Government by sale, gift or otherwise, it was expected that similar principles would govern the tenancies of the raiyats.

Rights Exaggerated, Terms Ignored

But unfortunately, to quote from the Administration Report of the Government of Bengal for 1871-72, "While there has been a general tendency to insist upon, and indeed exaggerate, the rights and privileges conferred on landholders by the Permanent Settlement, there has been at the same time an equal disposition to forget, evade and ignore the terms, conditions and obligations attached to those rights and privileges by the very Regulations which conferred or confirmed them. The idea of property has become stronger and stronger, and the idea of obligations attached to the functions of landholders has become weaker and weaker. It may be said that every point about which there could be any doubt has been allowed to settle itself in favour of the landholder and against the public."

CHAPTER XVI

TENANCY LEGISLATION AFTER 1793

Effect of Permanent Settlement—What followed—Haftum and Panjum—Unrestricted Regime of Harshness—Village Agencies and Kanungoes—Survey and Record of Rights—Patni Regulation—Subinfeudation—Police and Judiciary No Protection—Raiyats "in a train of annihilation"—Feudalism and Serfdom—Swordsmen and Clubmen—Destruction of Tenancy Rights—Loss of Every Vestige of Constitutional Claims—Reasons—State Interference—Emigration of Raiyats—Occupancy Raiyat a Creation of Statute in 1859—Customary and Fair Rent—Other Provisions in 1859—Landlords' Success in defeating Occupancy—And in Breaking up Holdings—A Wrong Remedy—Other Factors—Act of 1859 a Failure—Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali—The Act in Actual Operation—Further Legislation—Act of 1885—Criticisms of the Act of 1885—Act of 1928—Power to Legislate—A Resumé—Cultivation for Subsistence and Not for Profit—Mass Education—Aim for the Future—Treatment of Pledges by Responsible Government.

Effect of Permanent Settlement.

The Permanent Settlement fixed the revenue demands of the State but, as Darling has so well put it, revenue of the State may be obtained at too great a cost ; the ultimate loss to the country may be greater than the immediate gain to the Exchequer ; large revenues may be drawn without effort but a class of idle rich, who keep motor-cars and do no work may spring up at the expense of Government.* Prof. Carver, in his 'Principles of Rural Economics, says: "Next to war, pestilence and famine, the worst thing that can happen to a rural community is absentee

* Darling—Punjab Peasant, page 138.

landlordism"* Darling refers to similar conditions in Spain, namely the growth of a class of urbanised landlords with large estates in their hands, whose only object is to squeeze all they can out of the rack-rented peasantry.

Lord Cornwallis so devised his Permanent Settlement as to make the landlords function as a definite figure in the organization of production. In a country where the masses were without any organised system of primary education, and they are still so, the noble soul of Cornwallis hoped that an intelligent educated class of landlords would look after the peasantry and cultivation and stand as the best protector of interests and rights of the tillers of the soil. But the inscrutable ways of Providence decreed it otherwise. To-day the land system has degenerated into making the landlords a mere rent collector who wishes to live on his rent and is only interested in getting the maximum of rent from the land .

What Followed

The Permanent Settlement fixed the revenue demands of the State but these revenue demands were assessed on no definite or ascertainable basis. It has been seen in a previous chapter that the incidence of the revenue demand varies sharply from district to district. Population at the time was sparse. There was no competitive demand for land and the revenue incidence was also high in some parts.

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* Principles of Rural Economics, page 377.

Landlords' collections could not be prompt and satisfactory in any widely extended estate specially at a time when there was no Railway or any other modern transport facilities, no organised Post or Telegraph service and with a large tract of the country unknown and unsurveyed. Weather and climatic causes, defects in the collection system, and other normal and natural factors contributed to unsatisfactory collections of rents from tenants. But whenever landlords failed to meet their revenue liabilities, they attributed it to the "cussedness" of the tenant.

Haftum and Panjum

With a view to enable landlords to meet revenue demands with punctuality, the Distraint Act, Reg. VII of 1799, (known as the notorious Haftum,) was passed, giving landlords practically unrestricted power to distrain the crops, cattle and other personal property of the *raiyats* and, in certain cases, to seize their persons for arrears of rent without reference to court. It led to such an abuse that Reg. V of 1812 (the Panjum) had to be passed abolishing the power of arrest but retaining the right of distraint. Distraint was hitherto unknown to Indian laws and the Rent Laws Commission of 1880 described it as an "offset of English Law". But whether it was distraint or arrest, "the proceedings commenced by a strong presumption, equivalent to a knock-down blow against the Raiyat."*

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* Bengal Administration Report, Commissioner's Reports, 1872-73, p. 80.

Unrestricted Regime of Harshness

But even this was not the worst part of the story. The Zamindars had become cognisant of their wide and unrestricted power over the tenants, at a time when the country had still no definitely organised system for the maintenance of law and order. The legal power of the Zamindar, when taken away, was easily substituted by his illegal power. One Regulation followed another to help the landlords till one finds the breath-taking Regulation that raiyats preferring litigation or groundless complaints against the Zamindar were to be punished with fine and imprisonment. The raiyats were the helpless victims of almost unrestricted harshness and so grave were the abuses that other remedies had to be devised to give relief to them.

Village Agencies and Kanungoes

Attempts were made to create an independent village agency to maintain village records of rights and by Regulation II of 1816, Kanungoes were appointed for each Parganah to supervise the work of Patwaris, who were made Government servants by Regulation XII of 1817. But they also failed to put a stop to zamindari *zoolums* and these Regulations soon became a dead letter.

Survey and Record of Rights

In 1824, the Court of Directors sanctioned a proposal to make a survey and record of rights of the permanently settled districts, to define, record and maintain the rights of raiyats. It did not materialise

and it was about a century later that the first systematic settlement operations began to embody the records of rights.

Patni Regulation

From the very beginning, Government attempted to stop subinfeudation by restricting sub-letting to a period of ten years and by making it null and void on sale of grantor's estate. Notwithstanding these restrictions, permanently subordinate estates were created in such large numbers, notably in the zamindary of the Maharajah of Burdwan, that Government was compelled to recognise and legalise these sub-lettings by the Patni Regulation of 1819. Once this was done, more subordinate taluks were created till a system of profit upon profits—one shifting the burden of rent-collection on to the next—created a complex hierarchy of subinfeudatories in the Bengal land system. Divested of all connection with their estates and the raiyats, middlemen and speculators came in to grind the tillers down to the bare subsistence level and to-day their profits are, in effect, squeezed out of the produce of the soil.

Subinfeudation

At a time when the province was not well organised, the productive capacity of lands was not definitely known, with no quick means of communication and transport, nor any system of well defined police control, but with a big zemindary spread over a wide tract of country, a landlord could not naturally collect his rents and he could not, therefore, meet his

revenue obligations. The landlord under the Patni Regulation of 1819 began to farm his estate to the Patnidar, the middleman, on a margin of profit. The Patnidar relegated his burden to the Darpatnidar, and thus began the chain with the Se-patnidar, the Chahar-patnidar and so on, each with his own margin of profit, till the man just above the cultivator had to collect, by means fair or foul, the profit for all grades of landholders and for his own self as well. In this process, the misery of the cultivations kept on piling, ruining the peasantry, and impoverishing them. It may be noted that every grade of subordinate landlord had, generally, to pay a Salami to his superior at the time of the creation of his tenure. But the raiyats have ultimately to pay for all.

Police and Judiciary No Protection

Against the exactions of these subinfeudatories, the raiyats were powerless and helpless, their voice did not often go beyond the village boundaries. Occasional riots and agrarian disturbances alone forcibly brought their grievances to the notice of the public. "Our judicial system has failed in the most important object of all law, the securing of the great body of the people from oppression. The heavy expense attending it put them out of the protection of law". Without even the rudiments of elementary education and steeped in ignorance, the raiyats were at the mercy of the landlords to whose demands there were no limits, against whose orders there was no protection. Laws and Regulations were no bar to acts

of oppression nor were there adequate safeguards to enable the people to stand against such excesses. Even the police was no remedy for the situation. On occasions more than one, the police authorities and Government recorded, in uncompromising language, their failure to check the misdeeds prevalent in the country-side: "These wealthy natives themselves are the greater obstacles to a good police."

Raiyats in a Train of Annihilation

The declarations of the Permanent Settlement and the intentions behind it were soon lost sight of. In the words of the Government of India: —

"Twenty years after the Permanent Settlement it was known that the class of 'village proprietors'—the resident raiyats of Bengal—was in a train of annihilation"*. In 1819 the Court of Directors owned with regret "the absolute subjection of the cultivators of the soil to the discretion of the zamindars."† In 1827 the Senior Judge of the Sadar Diwani Adalawt recorded that "in many parts of the country the resident cultivators are the actual slaves of the landholders and liable to be mortgaged, or let to hire, the same as his oxen and his goats, at his will and pleasure."‡

Feudalism and Serfdom

From 1799 to 1859, as the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal remarked in his speech on the introduction

* Lord Moira's Revenue Minute, dated the 21st September, 1815.

† Revenue Letter to Bengal, dated 15th January, 1819.

‡ Bengal Revenue Consultations, dated the 8th March, 1827.

of the Bill of 1859 in the Council, "feudalism on the one hand, serfdom on the other, were the principal characteristics of the land system of Bengal." Sir Frederick Halliday quoted with approval the following testimony of a District Officer as reflecting the condition of Bengal generally in the fifties in the last century: "The curse . . . is the insecure nature of the raiyats' land tenure. The cultivator though nominally protected by Regulations of all sorts has practically no rights in the soil. His rent is continually raised, he is oppressed and worried by every oppressive Tickadar, until he is actually forced out of his holding and driven to take shelter in the Nepal Terai."

The Government of India in 1882 frankly confessed: —

"We concur in Mr. Westmacott's remark that although at the time of the Permanent Settlement it was clearly laid down what the Government was to receive from the zamindar, there was, almost universally, an omission to perform the other half of the work and to declare what was to be paid by the raiyat. Such a declaration was made by Mr. Hatch in Dinajpur, and, perhaps, by a few other Collectors elsewhere ; as a rule it was neglected, and thus, whilst we protected the zamindar against ourselves by fixing the payment to be made by him in perpetuity, we gave the raiyat no adequate protection against the zamindar."*

* India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 21st March 1882.

Speaking of the rights of the raiyats or of the occupying cultivators, it was stated on behalf of the Government of India: —

"The legislation of 1793 left those rights outstanding and undefined, and, by so leaving them it tended to obscure them, to efface them and in too many cases, ultimately to destroy them."*

"Collections were raised by decreasing the standard of measurement and by imposing illegal cesses which were afterwards more or less consolidated with the rent.†

Swordsmen and Clubmen

The Government of India made reference to the "violent and lawless character of some of the zemindars and of the agents of others. There had been affrays in which men were killed by spear wounds. Swordsmen had been sent to make collections, and cases of attacks by clubmen and of kidnapping are mentioned in the reports."‡

Destruction of Tenancy Rights.

Speaking of the rapid extinguishment of the tenants' rights, including those created by the law of 1859, the Government of India remarked: —

"Mr. O'Kinealy remarks that twice in the course of the last 70 years have great attempts been made to

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* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 2nd March, 1883.

† India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1882.

‡ *Ibid.*

treat the raiyats of Bengal as tenants-at-will, and to reduce them to the position of *paikhasht* raiyats of the North-Western Provinces—first, after 1812, when the zamindars, admitting that they could not eject, sought to attain their object by claiming a right to enhance at discretion; and secondly, at the present time, when, though unable to enhance at discretion, they are seeking the same by dispossession after notice. Mr. Reynolds holds that it is now the avowed object of the zamindars to restrict and destroy the rights of occupancy."*

Loss of Every Vestige of Constitutional Claims

Speaking before the Indian Legislative Council in 1883, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal stated:—

"In that interval of 66 years, that is, between 1793 and 1859, while the proprietary body grew in strength and prospered in wealth, village communities perished, the parganah rates (by which the assessment of the resident cultivator's rent was limited) disappeared, and almost every vestige of the constitutional claims of the peasantry (if ever such existed beyond a small privileged class) was lost in the usurpations and encroachments of the landlords.

Reasons

"The zamindars were made every year more and more responsible for the peace and order of the districts in which their estates were situated. They had to supply provisions for the military expeditions

* *Ibid.*

and marches of troops passing through their properties; they had to maintain at their cost the rural constabulary required for the public tranquillity ; they were chargeable at their own expense for the performance of many duties which, if they relieved the Government, enhanced the zamindar's influence and independence and while the zamindar's power grew and strengthened, the rights of the cultivators of the soil gradually diminished, and almost disappeared.

State Interference

"The Government of the country never took any practical steps to act up to its earlier reservations of the rights of the cultivators. Indeed, such interference as it did exercise was in the direction of the right of the landlord to enhance rents (Regulation V of 1812), and by the Sale laws of 1841 and 1845 to declare his power of eviction of all but the settled resident cultivators. It was only when, some 25 years ago, the oppressions of the landlords threatened an agrarian revolution that the Government stepped in by a legislative enactment to arrest the natural increase of rent in Bengal, and the result was the land law of 1859."*

Emigration of Raiyats

Sir William Hunter gave a graphic description of the actual state of affairs: —

"Mr. Finucane shows that in a tract in which the rents were excessive, over one-fifth of the cultivators

* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 13th March, 1882.

absconded into Nepal in the course of two years; and that nearly a fifth of the arable land went out of cultivation. From another tract, in which the rents were still more excessive, one-third of the population absconded, and an almost similar proportion of the land became waste. Why did these British subjects, some 30,000 in number, I am told, fly across our frontier to Native territory? Mr. Finucane's report supplies an answer: 'I noticed people,' he says, 'by hundreds, sometimes digging in the field for roots which they gathered for the purpose of eating them. Every year people eke out the scanty meals that their means allow them to provide for themselves by digging for roots."*

Occupancy Raiyat a Creation of Statute in 1859

By 1859 it was found that the old parganah rates had been successfully annihilated and obliterated by the acts of landlords. The problem, therefore, in 1859 was how to rehabilitate and re-establish the tenants of Bengal in their ancient rights.

We have seen how, in Roman Law, *Occupatio* was a mode of the origin of tenancy. Here in India, in the days of the Permanent Settlement, it was mere occupation of land, whether with or without *Patta,* which determined the original rights and incidence of tenancy. The legislation of 1859, therefore, went to the basic principle behind the tenancy rights in Bengal and created what has since then been known

* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 2nd March, 1885.

as the *occupancy* raiyat and devised occupancy rights and the incidence of such tenancy. This was done in the spirit of the old law, custom and usage and in harmony with the origin of tenancy in this province.

Attempts were made, in 1859, to retrieve the situation and the occupancy raiyat was created by statute in 1859 with all the rights and incidence of such tenancies. Mr. Currie drafted the Tenancy Bill of 1859, on the basis that the Regulations recognised "the rights of all resident raiyats to the occupancy of the lands cultivated by them so long as they paid the established rent" and he provided in his original draft that "all raiyats and cultivators of lands (other than hereditary raiyats holding at fixed rates) were entitled to receive Pattas according to the rates of rent for the time being established in the Parganah in which the land was situated or if there were no known and recognised Parganah rates, then according to customary rates payable for land of a similar description in the places adjacent."

Customary and Fair Rent

But by that time, the landlords had succeeded in obliterating the Parganah rates and the Select Committee of the Bill of 1859, on the ground that the Parganah rates had been long lost, introduced Sections 17, 18 and another section providing enhancement of the rent of the occupancy raiyats up to customary and fair rent. This enhancement was intended to provide a substitute for the obliterated Parganah rate. It was hoped that in place of the old Parganah rate, the customary and fair rent would be

the limit of the general rent level. Prior to the enactment of 1859, there was no right recognised in law to enhance rent. But the zamindars illegally and forcibly enhanced rents, thereby succeeding in obliterating the Parganah rent. Their illegal acts were thus legalised, within limits, in 1859.

Other Provisions in 1859

The Act of 1859 revoked the power, previously possessed by the landlords, of compelling their raiyats to attend their *Cutcherries* or places of business—a power which was abused to levy enhanced rent, and to force enhancement and all sorts of illegal cesses upon the villagers; and it rescinded previous provisions under which a zamindar could sue any person on an allegation that he was his raiyat and have him arrested, even though he did not attempt to prove his case against him."*

Landlords' Success in Defeating Occupancy

The growth of occupancy rights was one of the cardinal features of the legislation of 1859. But such growth was then left subject to contract between the parties. It was also provided that one must have 12 years' continuous possession of the same land to acquire occupancy. The zamindar was immediately armed through these very provisions to defeat the growth of occupancy rights in land. The situation was thus described, in 1882, by the Government of India in their Despatch: "Such is the power of the zemindars,

* India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1882.

so numerous and effective are the means possessed by most of them for inducing raiyats to accept agreements which, if history, custom and expediency be regarded, are wrongful and contrary to good policy, that to uphold contracts in contravention of the main purpose of the Bill would be in our belief to condemn it to defeat and failure."

—And in Breaking up Holdings

"One of the most prevalent forms of oppression on the part of the landlords is their habit of breaking up the holdings of their tenants, and compelling them to change the field they cultivate, with a view to the destruction of occupancy rights, or rendering them indistinct where they exist, and preventing the accrual in the case of tenants-at-will."*

A Wrong Remedy

The Act of 1859 reduced some of the powers of the zamindars but a wrong remedy was for the first time provided, *viz.*, it increased the grounds of enhancement. While the beneficiary provisions of the Act were avoided by clever subterfuges, the enhancement provisions were fully taken advantage of in getting increased profits from successive enhancements.

Other Factors

In the meantime, other factors were coming into operation to make the land problem an acute one. Railway and other transport facilities, peace and

* India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1822.

freedom from war, urban development, were all having their influence. India was also slowly coming into the international market ; export of agricultural produce was raising prices and wages were going up. The growth of the middle classes earning money through non-agricultural pursuits was creating a new monied class with a tendency to invest capital in land. Population, so long sparse, was increasing year after year. Competition for land was increasing. The landlords tried every possible means to eject the old tenants with a view to getting enhanced rents from the new purchasers. Agrarian disputes began over enhancement, standards of measurement and other cognate matters, civil suits under Act X of 1859 became the usual method of harassing the raiyats by involving them in protracted civil litigation. There were grave agrarian riots in Pabna in 1872-73, followed by a severe famine in 1874. The great Pabna disturbances "originated in a case in which the landlord had attempted to obtain agreements from the tenants, admitting that he might eject them on his pleasure."*

Act of 1859 a Failure

A Rent Commission was appointed in 1880 but even then it was reported that "the zamindars are busy sending their dependents and clubmen about from village to village to take leases for limited periods from raiyats likely to be entitled to rights of

* India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1822.

occupancy under the provisions of the draft bill of the Rent Commission."*

It was found that the Act of 1859 came to be "regarded as a complete code in itself, and the effect of the statutory definition of the occupancy raiyat embodied in it has been to injure seriously the ancient rights of the *Khudkasht* raiyats, by putting them to proof of their having held for twelve years not merely in the village and the village lands or even in the estate, but in every one of the particular fields or plots in respect of which they claim to have rights of occupancy. The consequence is that landlords are able to break down the pre-existing rights of their raiyats, which can now only be established, if at all, by means of the twelve years' prescription; and this it is, unfortunately, in the landlord's power to interrupt. Moreover, Sec. 7 of the Act gives validity to contracts in defeat of the accrual of occupancy-rights, and is being utilised to divest the villagers of the old privileges attaching to their status."†

Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali

In the words of the Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali, "When it is borne in mind how frequently the twelve years' prescription is interrupted by a mere shifting of the fields sometimes by eviction within the term, in other cases by the grant of terminable leases for short periods with the option of renewal, it will

* India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1822.

† *Ibid.*

become apparent how difficult it is in general for the raiyat to acquire a right of occupancy, or to prove it when it is questioned.*

The Act in Actual Operation

In the words of the Government of India, "Plainly an Act intended to affirm the then existing occupancy-rights of the great mass of the settled cultivators is being deliberately defeated in practice; partly by the assumption, now usually impossible to controvert by judicial proof, that such rights did not exist antecedently to that Act, but were meant to accrue under its provisions; and partly by legal or illegal measures taken by the zamindars under colour of the law and consequence of that assumption to prevent the accrual of such rights. Whether the fields be changed or evidence be manufactured in the zamindari accounts, or written renunciations of permanent right be extorted from the ignorance or weakness of the peasantry, the object is one which is opposed to public policy. Even if no more decisive step were advisable, it would, we think, be imperatively necessary to provide that shifting occupancy within the same village or estate shall count as continuous occupancy; and to declare, as is proposed in the Bill of the Lieutenant Governor, that no contract shall in any case debar a raiyat from acquiring the occupancy right."†

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* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 2nd March, 1885.

† India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1882.

The power of distraint under the Act was used solely to compel raiyats to submit to unreasonable demands. According to the opinion of a judicial officer, "in Bengal much greater oppression is committed by distraint through Court than by private distraint, because landlords, when bent on oppression, try to give their proceedings a semblance of legality."*

Further Legislation

The Rent Commission, in the meantime, submitted its report by the end of May, 1880, and Sir Ashley Eden immediately put up, on the 15th July of the same year, his proposals with the intention "to see the Bengal raiyats, as a class, secured in the enjoyment of those rights which the ancient law and custom of the country intended them to have, protected against arbitrary eviction, left in the enjoyment of a reasonable proportion of the profits of cultivation, and, in short, placed in a position of substantial comfort, calculated to resist successfully the occasional pressure of bad times."

Act of 1885

It was not till 1885 that the Bill was passed after years of hesitancy and consideration. It was originally intended for the better defining of the rights of the raiyats and in certain respects to improve their status. As it emerged from the legislature a

* Opinion of the First Munsiff of Barisal, quoted by Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, Collector of Backergunge—Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 9th March, 1885, Speech of the Hon'ble Sir Stewart Bayley.

number of the beneficent provisions, originally proposed, were taken out. Human history is often unfortunately such that what is intended and proposed to be done in one manner is disposed of in another.

Criticisms of the Act of 1885

Some of the criticisms against the Bengal Tenancy Bill as it emerged from the Select Committee of 1885 and the Act as finally passed will appear from the following extract from the note of dissent as also from the speech of the Hon'ble Mr. H. J. Reynolds: —

"In the amended Bill, fixity of tenure is weakened by the limitation of the definition of a settled raiyat to the village alone ; fair rent is deprived of the safeguard (the only ultimate safeguard) of a maximum limit beyond which rent can never be enhanced ; and free sale has disappeared altogether from the Bill, or survives only in a section which saves customary rights. The non-occupancy raiyat has fared even worse, at the hands of the Select Committee than his occupancy brother. The gross produce limit of his rent is struck out ; he is declared liable to ejectment on the ground that the term of his lease has expired ; if he refuses to agree to any enhancement demanded of him, he cannot claim a judicial rent for a longer period than five years ; and he may be ejected at any time before he has acquired a right of occupancy without obtaining any compensation for disturbance.

"The legislature is not justified in putting one class of men at the mercy of another class, on the

chance that the latter will use their irresponsible power with moderation. And I must add that I feel no assurance that, as regards the accrual of the occupancy-right, these powers will be moderately used. I have already quoted the words in which the Hon'ble Member who introduced the Bill referred to 'the vigorous efforts now being made by landlords to prevent the natural growth of occupancy-rights.'

"There could be no greater misfortune to the country ; said the Famine Commissioners, in a passage whcih I have already quoted, 'than that the number of the occupancy class should decrease.' The provisions of the amended Bill seem to me to threaten the country with this misfortune."

Act of 1928

The exigencies and requirements of the times necessitated the creation of a further incidence of occupancy tenancy, *viz.*, that of transferability ; transfers were being freely made, without difficulty. The legislature in 1885 and the many Commissions and Committees that were appointed in connection with the Bill of 1885 had fully entred into and discussed this question and it was then proposed to create the right of free transferability without any other condition. The opposition from the landlords compelled Government to drop the proposal ultimately.

Power to Legislate

But there was absolutely no doubt on the point even then that whatever right was created, whatever

incidence was attached to the occupany-right, were creations of statutes, first devised to protect the tenancy and later modified or strengthened by further enactments, when the purpose behind the original enactment was being defeated. But, every time, law had to intervene, not because of any violation of the spirit of the Permanent Settlement by Government or the tenants, but because the landlords themselves violated the terms of the Permanent Settlement and annihilated the old rights of the tenants.

The question admits of no doubt that apart from the inherent right of the Sovereign to legislate for the people in the best interests of the State, the very regulations of the Permanent Settlement left sufficient reserve power in the Government of the country to devise what was and is considered best according to the exigencies and circumstances, and that Government is fully justified in promulgating any measure to give permanency to the tenancy rights and to devise other measures for the amelioration of the tenant. As the Hon'ble Mr. Evans said in 1885:—

"It is idle to go into a question like that because, if they once admit that the Government had the power, in 1859, to make these rules to regulate the rent, and to define the occupancy-right, they cannot deny that this Council has, in 1884, the right to amend the definition and the rules. If they rest on the argument that the legislation of 1859 was improper, we can only say that the question is long ago concluded by authority, and that it is useless to discuss it save as a forsenic exercise."

A Rêsumê

The story of the land system in Bengal for the last one hundred and sixty years makes a tragic tale. With the best of intentions, Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement to stabilise the administration, to get a prosperous and contented tenantry and to develop the agricultural resources of the country. One must not forget that India was then managed by the East India Company and inspite of their interest in monetary returns, they took the benevolent measure of relinquishing all future claims on the incremental value of land or its produce. The immediate task before the Government of the day was, then, to organise a system of administration and the successive wars that followed till the Mutiny added considerably to the difficulties of reconstruction. Having given up all claims to any incremental returns from land, in the hope that similar principles and intentions would guide the landlord in his relationship with the tenant, they took measures to secure the prompt and speedy collection of their revenues, but this placed in the hands of the landlords enormous power, primarily intended to facilitate collection of rents, but actually used for destroying all existing tenancy rights. Animated by a spirit under which human rights obtained little respect and where all the fruits of victory went to the strong, the rights of the tenantry received short shrift. Taking advantage of the reactions of the world markets, the increase of population, the establishment of security and order, and with better opportunities and

knowledge, the landlords did their best to get the maximum share of the produce till Parganah rates had no existence outside the records and annals of history. Land, in Bengal, became a subject of business speculation. The landlords took full advantage of this state of affairs and rents were forced up, by every legal and illegal means, to the maximum.

When the situation was reviewed in 1859, it was found that rents had been increased, and enhancements made without any vestige or show of right, that the customary Parganah rate had been effaced and was substituted by a rent according to the capricious will of the landlord. Law intervened by creating a legal right of tenancy known as occupancy right, but, along with it, the new legal right of enhancement was created to put a stop to the illegal practices of enhancement. The legislators laid down incidence of occupany-right and rules of fair and equitable rates of rent with a view to enlarging the class of occupancy raiyats. But once again the landlords succeeded in defeating the growth of occupancy-right by taking advantage of the defects in the law. Secure in the novel right of enhancement with reference to the direct increase in the value of produce, a right which they never had before 1859, they found that the new procedure was too costly and cumbrous. Deception, fraud and force thereupon played their part in exacting the last pie out of the tenant. Once again there were efforts to intervene in the eighties of the last century. A new doctrine of Prevailing rate was introduced in addition, by the law of 1885, to stabilise

the rent rates. But rents went on increasing, on the doctrine of average rate on grounds of higher prices, to the maximum from 1885 to 1928, years of progressive increase of price throughout India. Still unsatisfied, the landlord succeeded in getting a price for the recognition of all transfers which had been freely done hitherto. The result of discussions in tenancy legislation further opened his eyes to the defects in the law to his advantage.

Once again the law intervened in 1928, not to remedy but to legalise a "novel right," on the ground of practice only here and there, and gave the landlrod a *salami* on all transfers at 20% on the sale value, with the added novel right of pre-emption.

Abwabs were illegal ever since 1793. Enquiries in 1872 showed that *abwabs* were exacted throughout Bengal. But there was hesitation to take action and some illegal exactions were tacitly allowed to continue. Even today, illegal *abwabs* have not ceased. Every time the hungry wolf was given something by way of sop so that it might turn back. The wolf devoured what it got and with renewed hunger and brazen boldness pursued the victim further. That has been the sorry tale of tenancy laws and what the Administration Report of 1871-72 so graphically said was only too true: "It may be said that every point about which there could be any doubt has been allowed to settle itself in favour of the landholder and against the public." And yet the evils did not come to an end.

Cultivation for Subsistence and Not for Profit

Speaking of conditions in the eighties of the last century, the Rent Commission of 1880 stated that "the raiyats cultivate for subsistence, not with the immediate view to profit. There is no wages fund, there are no labourers paid from capital. There are practically no manufactures, no non-agricultural industries, no great cities of work where a surplus rural population can find employment." The situation is as true today as it was at the time the Commission wrote these words. Without using the technical language of the economists, rent today has long ceased to be customary rent, or even a reasonable share of gross produce. It includes the revenue share of the State, and a tax on the incremental value of land and of commodity prices and is often based on no principle except the will of the dominating party. It is not adjusted to meet occasions when nature in her fury devastates the crops. In periods of depression and economic crisis due to factors beyond the control of man, when, with low price level, the cultivators are reduced, inspite of hard months of toil, to the level of famine conditions and have to struggle for bare subsistence, the effective burden of rent is much more than when prices rule high.

Mass Education

Indian cultivators are conservative and are still ignorant of their civic, economic and political rights. But a certain amount of mass education has been going on through successive election campaigns for Municipal bodies, Union Boards, and Legislatures of the country. History records that where the masses

are denied their legitimate rights and treated in an unjust manner, it has the effect of exasperating them and when such people do get power in their hands their vision for just treatment becomes blurred.

Aim for the Future

Speaking of the Bengal Tenancy Bill of 1885 Sir Courtney Ilbert said: "Sufficient for the statesman if he can grapple with the problem of today: for the distant future he must leave posterity to provide. The India of today is a different country from the India of 1793, and requires different legislation. The utmost that we can endeavour to do, and what we have endeavoured by the present Bill to do, is so to legislate for her as to preserve whatever is best in the spirit of her ancient institutions." That is the true spirit which should inspire all public men in their outlook on all tenancy problems of today.

Treatment of Pledges by Representative Government

And Sir James Stephen, in his speech in 1871, on the Local Rates (North-Western Provinces) Bill, pointed out that it was specially to be borne in mind, in considering the moral justice of making any change in the terms of the Permanent Settlement, that the Government of India was not then a representative Government. "A really representative Government," he said, "may deal with the pledges of their predecessors in a very different way from a Government like ours." And he specially emphasised the need of taking into consideration "the gradual alteration produced by time and circumstance, and the influence of surrounding facts."

CHAPTER XVII

ENHANCEMENT AND CONTRACT

Parganah Rate—Mr. Hodgson—Regulations on Parganah Rate—Court of Directors—*Khudkasht* and *Paikasht*—Parganah Rates Obliterated—Enhancement—New Principles—Complex Procedure—Wheels of Law—Original Draft modified—This Novel Right—Legislation of the Eighties—Mr. Amir Ali's Protest—Mr. Reynold's Protest—Contract—Enhancement by Contract—Other Grounds of Enhancement—Amendment of 1928—Right of Reduction Existent on Paper—Enhancements by Landlords through Settlement Courts—Illegal Enhancements—Recent Instances—Nadia Agrarian Enquiry—Frequent and Harassing Rent Suits—Khulna Settlement Report—Nadia Report—Pabna-Bogra Report.

Parganah Rate

In promulgating the Permanent Settlement, Lord Cornwallis intended as much to stabilise the revenue conditions as to protect the raiyats in the secure enjoyment of their labour, subject to the payment of a fixed known rate, *viz.*, the established parganah rate of the locality. "Whoever cultivates the land, the zamindars can receive no more than the established rent," was the guiding principle behind. Neither was it contemplated that the landlord should be vested with the power of ejectment of any of his tenants. In his Minute, dated the 3rd February, 1790. Lord Cornwallis was definite in stating that to permit a landlord "to dispossess one cultivator, for the sole purpose of giving the land to another, would be vesting him with a power to commit a wanton act of oppression."

Mr. Hodgson

When Mr. Hodgson, Member of the Madras Board of Revenue, was discussing the introduction of a permanent settlement into the Northern Circars of the Madras Presidency, he recorded, on a study of the discussions on the subject between Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore, that the first principle of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal was to confirm and secure the rights of the cultivators of the soil. No new rights were granted nor was any doubt entertained regarding the following leading features of the rgihts then enjoyed by the raiyats: —

1st—That no zamindar was entitled by law, custom or usage to make demands for rent according to his convenience.

2nd—That the cultivators of the soil had the right from times immemorial of paying a defined rent, and no more, for the land they cultivated.

3rd—That the "proprietary right" of zamindars in the Regulations is no more than the right to collect the established customary rate from the cultivators.

Regulations on Parganah Rate

By Section 6 of Regulation IV of 1794, the Civil Courts were instructed to follow the "rates established in the Parganahs" in all cases of disputes. By Section 7, raiyats were not to pay any higher rate than the established Parganah rates even if their Pattahs might expire or become cancelled. Section 12 of

Regulation II of 1795 applied this to all *Khudkasht* or *Chukker-bund* or *Paikasht* Raiyats and Section 9 of Regulation XXX of 1803 reaffirmed the aforesaid provisions of Regulation IV of 1794. Waste lands which were admittedly given to the zamindars were no exception to the rule of the Parganah rate. Regulation IV of 1794 expressly enacted that, among others, the cultivators of waste lands also should receive a renewal of their Pattah at no more than the established Parganah rates. In January, 1819, the Court of Directors pointed out definitely that "on the leases of waste lands, the Parganah rates form a standard not to be exceeded." Whether raiyats were new or old, resident or non-resident, lands cultivated from the past or firstly settled, the Parganah rate was the limit of rent-assessment.

Court of Directors

The letter addressed by the Government of India to the Court of Directors, on the 7th October, 1815, unequivocally stated that the principle applicable to Bengal, and to the whole of India, was that the resident raiyats—and Sir John Shore defined resident raiyat as any one who cultivated the land in the village in which he lived—have "an established permanent hereditary right in the soil which they cultivate so long as they continue to pay the rent justly demandable from them with punctuality. We consider it equally a principle interwoven with the constitution of the different Governments of India, that the quantum of rent is not to be determined by the arbitrary will of the zamindar, but that it is to be regulated by specific

engagements, or in the absence of such engagements, by the established rates of the Parganahs or other local divisions," and the Court of Directors in their reply finally stated that all provisions in the Regulations must be taken subject to the constitution of the country itself.

Khud-kasht and Pa-i-kasht

It is, thus, clear that at the time of the Permanent Settlement the rent rate was governed by custom and usage and rental was not to exceed the established Parganah rate. There were two classes of tenants, the *khud-kasht* and *pa-i-kasht*. Bailey, in his "Land Tax on India," defines *khud-kasht* as "self-sown," derived from the Persian word *khud,* self and *kasht,* sown and *pa-i-kasht,* "on account of cultivation" derived from the Persian word *pai,* on account of and *kasht,* sown. Mr. Justice Field, in his "Introduction to the Bengal Regulations," gives another definition of the word *pai.* He thinks that the word is a corruption of *pahi* from *pah, pas,* meaning near. Whatever be the original derivation, it is clear that the *khud-kasht* tenant was a resident of the village and the *pa-i-kasht* one who merely cultivated the land of the village, but who was not necessarily a resident of it.

Parganah Rates Obliterated

We have seen, that by 1859, all traces of the old Parganah rates were lost and could not be discovered. As admitted by the Government of India, the landlords in practice "did enhance the rents, though they

had no legal claim to raise them with any direct reference to the increasing value of the produce. The practice of enhancement was sanctioned by the legislature," in 1859, "the admission being simultaneously made that the old Parganah rates were undiscoverable."

Enhancement

Instead of providing that the landlords were entitled to a rent no more than the Parganah rate or its equivalent devised, occupancy-raiyats were, under Section 17 of the Act of 1859, for the first time made liable to enhancement on grounds of prevailing rate. And for the first time, such enhancements could also be made on account of increase in the value of produce, or the productive power of the land. It was, further, provided by Section 5 that such raiyats were entitled to receive Pattahs at fair and equitable rates. Every raiyat cultivating or holding a land for 12 years was also to be deemed to have occupancy right by Section 6 of the Act.

New Principles

Three new principles were for the first time introduced in the law of 1859, *viz*: —

(1) Occupancy tenants were created in place of *khudkasht* tenants.

(2) Where there was no previous right of enhancement, such a right was created by which landlords became entitled to enhance the rent on account of all increase in the value of the produce, or all increase

in the productive power of the land, otherwise than by the agency or at the expense of the raiyats, or on the ground of the prevailing rate.

(3) In place of the old *Parganah* rate, a fair and equitable rate was to be the basis of rental.

Complex Procedure

The Courts were granted the power of adjudication of all rent disputes, but the procedure of enhancement was so complex that the zamindars found it convenient to take the law into their own hands. What had been done hitherto was illegal, but what they thereafter began to do was on the plea that they had a right to make enhancements.

Wheels of Law

The mistake was made in thinking that once a matter was left to the adjudication of Courts, everything would be settled satisfactorily. But as the Government of Bengal said in its Administration Report of 1871-72—

"It is the fashion among Englishmen to suppose that everything must be right which is done under the forms of law: but it may be that our Courts are sometimes Juggernauths, crushing those who fall under their relentless wheels, as they follow the course traced out by them by law and rule. The appetite for an excessive legal technicality grows rapidly in India and it may be that the rich man, with troops of lawyers at his back, still sometimes oppresses the poor as much as when he operated with troops of clubmen."

It was easy to put recalcitrant tenants under the wheels of law and thereby to bring them to submission and the new law gave enough power to the landlord to do this. The system was again so devised that it was difficult for judicial officers to adjudicate disputes in rent. As testified by the Bengal Government, a man must know about political economy, agricultural economy, trade routes and prices in Bengal and other things besides, before he was able to find out—and then too he could hardly know enough to be able to determine—what rent the raiyats should pay to the zamindars. No wonder that the system broke down, not because of any want of intention on the part of legislature or of the administration, but on account of the very system devised.

Original Draft Modified

The expression 'fair and equitable rate,' the twelve years' rule and the enhancement rules did not appear in the original draft of the Bill; they were introduced into it by the Select Committee. The Committee explained in their report that they had substituted for the phrase 'Parganah rates,' that is to say, rates current in the Parganah or locality, the phrase 'fair and equitable rates,' and 'prevailing rate' and that they had laid down some rules by which the fairness of the rate might be ascertained. In order to meet certain objections, the Select Committee dropped the phrase 'resident' and adopted as the test of occupancy, the holding of the same land for 12 years. The intention was evidently to enlarge the

class of occupancy-raiyats, and not to exclude any who, under the broad term 'resident raiyat', would have been included within it.

"This Novel Right"

In the history of tenancy law in India, a share in the incremental value of agricultural produce due to improvements or a higher price level was a new doctrine. Government had long relinquished its claim to any share in such incremental value and it was intended that the landlords would do the same in regard to the tenants. The Government of India admitted later on frankly that the zamindars never possessed before 1859 this novel right of enhancement with reference to the direct increase in the value of produce. We have seen that at the time of the Permanent Settlement, the zamindar had no right, under law, custom or usage, to demand rent according to his convenience and that the tenants were protected by what were then known as *Hakk-i-Riaya.* With elaborate rules governing every other matter the many Regulations, promulgated at the time of the Permanent Settlement or thereafter, contained no provision for any increase of rent, and the zamindars were not given, in the Regulations, any right of enhancement in any manner. Nothing beyond the Parganah rate, whether it was a new tenant or old, whether *khud-kasht* or *pai-i-kasht,* whether with Patta or without Patta, was the limit and basis of all rental and such rental could not be exceeded "under any pretence whatever." Sir George Campbell, in his judgment in

the Great Rent case said: "It is remarkable that throughout the whole litigation of the long period between 1793 and 1859 no principle of enhancement, other than a reference to existing pargannah or local rates, is anywhere to be found. There have been conflicting decisions as to the prescription by which right of occupancy was acquired, and great doubt was then thrown on that subject; but as regards any rule of enhancement, either at discretion, or by any other rule, save and except the standard of rates paid by the same class of raiyats in places adjacent, there is nothing. We have particularly drawn the attention of the counsel on both sides to this point; and it is clear that there is no such case."

Legislation of the Eighties

Attempts were made to legislate in the eighties of the last century, so that, first, the great body of the cultivators shall be restored to the position which they held under the ancient land law and custom of the country; and, secondly, that the beneficial interest of the settled raiyats, who form the mass of the cultivating classes of Bengal, shall be determined by establishing authoritatively renewed or revised rates on a system analogous to that of the old parganah rates. As the Government of India put it—

"On the other hand, we would maintain the zamindars in the novel right of enhancement with reference to the direct increase in the value of produce which they never had before 1859; and we wish to facilitate the exercise of this right, of which, by their

own admission, they cannot now effectually avail themselves, owing, again, to defects in the present law." Admitting that "it was the acknowledged right of the raiyat to hold at customary and fair rates," similar phrases were adopted and attempts were made to lay down rules by which the 'fairness" of the rate may be ascertained.

Mr. Amir Ali's Protest

But what was ultimately proposed was quite different from the declared intentions. The Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali raised his voice in protest as follows: —

"I consider the ground of enhancement on the basis of 'prevailing rates' as open to serious objection. It introduces, in the form it has now assumed in the Bill, an entirely novel principle into the law of Bengal. The law has hitherto not recognised enhancements up to the average of rates payable and it seems to me that the recognition of such a principle is not only dangerous, but, without any correlative ground of reduction, unjust. It will end in screwing up rents to the factitious average of a large number of rates, over the correctness or reality of which no individual raiyat has any control, and that average will furnish the basis for a fresh increase until the highest possible rate is reached. I cannot help thinking that the Select Committee have failed to realise the full effects of this ground of enhancement, and I would strongly urge that the old ground of enhancement on the basis of net values should be reverted to."

Mr. Reynolds' Protest

The Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds was no less emphatic in voicing his protest in the Indian Legislative Council: —

"To use the forcible language of an acute and experienced Judge, "the prevailing rate is as a rule manufactured by the aid of raiyats bought over to submit to enhancement, and the new rate thus introduced is made to spread over the country by the agency of the Courts.' This doctrine of an average rate is not only illegal but it is fraught with most mischievous consequences. I need hardly remind the Council that suits on the ground of prevailing rate are entirely one-sided; there are always cases of levelling up, never levelling down. The landlord may sue to enhance on the ground that a tenant's rent is below the prevailing rate, but the tenant cannot claim a reduction on the ground that he is paynig more than the prevailing rate. If the principle of an average rate is once introduced, the inevitable result must be that all rents will be levelled up to the maximum."

Contract

During the course of tenancy legislation, 'freedom of contract,' growth of custom and other principles were and are still brought in to blur the issues. But "when practical economy speaks of freedom of contract," in the memorable words of Sir Evelyn Baring in the Indian Legislative Council, "it means that free choice, dictated by intelligent self-interest, which is the most efficient agent in the production of wealth. Can any one, who is acquainted with the condition of the millions

of raiyats whose holdings do not average more than two or three acres, and who pay a rent of less than five rupees a year—can any one who knows the circumstances under which this vast mass of pauperised cottiers, living always on the verge of starvation, till the soil, say that these men can exercise a free and intelligent choice in their contracts? Can any one who is acquainted with the facts say, in respect to the majority of these tenants, that their education, their knowledge of law and the circumstances under which they till the soil are of a nature to admit of that free and intelligent choice which is the essence of the economical, as it is of the legal, theory of freedom of contract? I venture to think that any such contention cannot be maintained. Under these circumstances it is idle for the present generation to think of establishing freedom of contract as the economic basis on which the relations between landlord and tenant in Bengal can be made to rest. The legislature must recognise that fact with which it has to deal, and the leading fact with which it has to deal is that custom, and not contract, has in the main governed the relations between the zamindars and the raiyats in Bengal from time immemorial, and that custom, and not contract, must in the main continue in the future to govern those relations."

The reasons against such a course may be given in the words of the Despatch of the Government of India itself: —

"Such is the power of the zamindars, so numerous and effective are the means possessed by most of them

for inducing the raiyats to accept agreements which, if history, custom and expediency be regarded, are wrongful and contrary to good policy, that to uphold contracts in contravention of the main purpose of the Bill would be, in our belief, to condemn it to defeat and failure. It is absolutely necessary that such contracts should be disallowed and in this connection we have the support not only of the Bengal Government but also of the almost unanimous opinions of the Bengal officers."

Enhancement by Contract

Under the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, as modified by the Act of 1928, the money rent of an occupancy raiyat could be enhanced by contract between the landlord and tenant, provided that the instrument of agreement is registered and that the rent does not exceed two annas in the rupee, and further that the rent is not enhanced for another 15 years. Rent could again be enhanced to any limit on the ground of even a contingent petty improvement by landlord. But apart from their legitimate use, these powers are still abused.

Other Grounds of Enhancement

It is assumed in law that the money rent paid by a raiyat represents the value of a fixed proportion of the produce of the soil and that, accordingly, the raiyat is liable to pay an increased rent on account of an ascertained rise of prices in the proportion which the new scale of prices bears to the old scale. If the productive power of the soil is increased by fluvial

action, then also the landlords are entitled to enhancement.

Amendment of 1928

The amendment of 1928 in some respects worsened the lot of the raiyats. Formerly if any act of improvement by a landlord increased the productive powers of the land, he was entitled to enhancement; if it was not wholly done by the landlord, there was no cause for enhancement. Under the new law even if the improvement is mainly carried out by others, say a local body, and the zamindar contributes merely a small part, even then he is entitled to an enhancement.

Right of Reduction Exist on Paper

It is true that the raiyat has the corresponding right of getting reduction. But this is only a limited and restricted right and not as extensive as the landlord's power of enhancement. Moreover, the right exists only on paper. If the tenant is entitled to any reduction, he must prove that the fall in the average price level is not due to any temporary cause. But in the case fo any increment there is no such restriction. Thus experience shows that towards the concluding stage of district settlement operations, thousands and thousands of enhancement cases are instituted but not even a dozen for reduction of rent.

Enhancements by Landlords through Settlement Courts

To quote only a few instances, it appears from the report of Settlement operations in the district of Nadia that there were no less than 43,375 tenancies brought

under settlement proceedings mainly for enhancement purposes and the raiyats' original rents were increased by 17 per cent in these proceedings. It was 26 per cent over recorded rents in Bankura, involving about 50,000 tenancies.

In most of these cases, enhancements were granted on the ground of a rise in the average price level, but unfortunately once an increment is made, there is no quick machinery to adjust rent when price level goes down, even though the low prices may persist through successive years of depression. In law and theory, the raiyat may also have the corresponding right of reduction, but, in practice, while the right of enhancement was in fact exercised by the landlords during settlement operations almost in every district through the expeditious methods of revenue proceedings and at a time when price level was high, resulting in an all-round increase of rent, the raiyats could not enjoy such correspondingly expeditious methods during a fall in price level. Once the rents are enhanced on account of a rise in prices, they continue even when prices come down. The raiyat may go to a civil court but that will be entering into protracted civil proceedings and ruinous litigation against the landlord—always a powerful interest with the best legal aid which invariably contests any claim for reduction. Though there was thus a 17 per cent and a 26 per cent increase over recorded rents in Nadia and Bankura and a similar one in almost all other districts, when the price level came down abnormally during the depression, the rent as before continued to be at the enhanced rate.

Illegal Enhancements

But apart from such cases of legal enhancements in their thousands, the Bengal peasant has to suffer from the burden of illegal enhancements. Only some of the worst cases are noticed in the Settlement Reports, published so far. Unfortunately the total number of such illegal enhancements is not mentioned in these reports, and the reports of all the Settlement Operations have not yet been published.

Recent Instances

That these enhancements are still features of the zamindari system will appear from a few recent instances mentioned in the annual reports of Survey and Settlement operation in Bengal: —

> Rangpur.—There were 1,028 cases of illegal enhancements. The new interesting case is in . . . Wards Estate. The rents of the raiyats were enhanced above the legal limit in 1885, just after the passing of the Bengal Tenancy Act. (Survey and Settlement Report, 1935-36, page 20.)
>
> Howrah . . . . created about 140 *Mokarari Mourashi* tenancies in respect of their 8 Annas share in favour of a number of non-cultivating strangers, in return for a heavy Salami of about Rs. 75,000, ignoring the already existing tenants who have been holding the lands for generations. (Survey and Settlement Report, 1935-36, page 35.)

Rangpur.—"Three thousand four hundred and twenty-one rent disputes were dealt with in the year, of which 825 cases were of illegal enhancement." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1934-35, page 21.)

Rangpur.—"Illegal enhancements have been found in almost all big estates." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1931-32, page 27.)

Malda.—"Illegal enhancements were common." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1931-32, page 26.)

Malda.—"Cases of illegal enhancements were numerous, enhancements as high as annas eight in the rupee being found in the case of one landlord." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1930-31, page 25.)

Murshidabad-Birbhum.—"Illegal enhancements were not uncommon nad some bad cases came to light." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1927-28, page 24.)

Nadia Agrarian Enquiry

The extent of these illegal enhancements as well as their quantum are not fully available from the published reports, but it was in connection with a certain agrarian enquiry in the district of Nadia that it came to light that the rents of tenants were forcibly increased by registered documents on two successive occasions within a period of six or seven years. Table 78

gives only a few typical cases of such forcible enhancements. In each of these cases, tenants possessed rent receipts for a period lasting over 20 years at a uniform rate of rent which, under the law, entitled the tenants to a presumption of *Mokarari Mourashi* tenancy from before the Permanent Settlement: —

TABLE 78

ILLEGAL ENHANCEMENTS

Tenant	Rent receipt available from the Bengalee year	Rental as shown in rent receipts prior to 1315	First forcible increment in 1315	Second forcible increment in 1331-22
		RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.
A	1293	45 14 0	71 6 0	89 3 6
B	1278	28 4 3	43 12 3	54 11 6
C	1294	23 6 0	37 9 9	47 0 3
D	1293	7 12 1	16 2 3	19 4 5

Harassing Rent Suits

One of the methods by which the tenants were forced to execute the registered documents accepting illegally enhanced rents was to harass the tenants by instituting rent suits for every instalment due at the end of every three months even for ridiculously petty sums which varied between As. 8 to Rs. 2. Ordinarily, it is the custom to institute rent suits for four consecutive years, but the method which was applied in such cases was to institute them not merely at every *kist* but sometimes the tenants were sued twice for the same *kist*. In connection with the same agrarian enquiry the institution of many such rent suits came

to light, only a few showing the amounts for which the tenants were sued being mentioned below:—

TABLE 79

VALUATION IN HARASSING RENT SUITS

(Second Munsiff's Court, Kushtia)

Rent Suit No.	Rs.	A.	P.	Rent Suit No.	Rs.	A.	P.
2076 of 1917 ...	0	9	9	365 of 1917 ...	1	6	6
2094 of 1917 ...	0	7	3	1542 of 1916 ...	0	7	6
2080 of 1917 ...	1	9	1	1527 of 1916 ...	2	4	6
1508 of 1916 ...	1	4	6	1506 of 1916 ...	1	11	6
1553 of 1916 ...	2	2	0	1702 of 1916 ...	2	0	9
217 of 1917 ...	1	10	8	1439 of 1916 ...	1	12	6
1548 of 1916 ...	1	9	3	1718 of 1916 ...	1	10	9
218 of 1917 ...	2	8	0	1673 of 1916 ...	1	4	1
85 of 1918 ...	0	7	6	1543 of 1916 ...	1	11	6
1778 of 1916 ...	1	5	10	398 of 1917 ...	2	0	9
141 of 1918 ...	1	6	6	388 of 1917 ...	3	6	6

The following is a list of a few cases of tenants being sued twice for the same instalment:—

TABLE 80

RENT SUITS TWICE FOR SAME CLAIM

Tenant	Rent Suit No.	Kist	Amount Rs.	A.	P.
A	2082 of 1917 ...	Chait 1323 and Asar 1324 ...	2	8	3
A	49 of 1918 ...	Do.	2	8	4
B	193 of 1917 ...	Asar 1323 and including another Kist, 1323	29	5	3
B	90 of 1918 ...	Chait 1323 and Asar 1324 ...	30	0	0
B	1744 of 1916 ...	Asar 1323	2	11	3
B	399 of 1917 ...	Asar 1323 and another two Kists of 1323	8	2	6

In most of these cases the rents were not only forcibly enhanced but the tenants had to execute promissory notes on account of *salami*. These tenants were residents of Kushtia Sub-division and the promissory notes were executed in their own villages. But the headquarters of the landlords' office was within the Meherpur Sub-division and when suits were instituted, they were instituted against these tenants in the Meherpur Courts. The result was that most of these cases were decreed *ex-parte,* as the tenants were unable to go to Meherpur to contest these suits—the place being not easily accessible from the villages of these tenants. Most of these promissory notes were in printed forms and the tenants being mostly illiterate were forced to give their thumb impressions on these documents.

Khulna Settlement Report

It is not necessary to multiply instances that were brought to light in a non-official enquiry. But to quote from the Final Report of the Khulna Settlement operatons—

"Oppression by manipulation of accounts and chicanery in law suits is in its heyday. An evicted tenant means *Salami* for a fresh settlement, hence the grasping Naib endeavours to keep his pocket full by ensuring that a reasonable number of holdings is sold up during the year, and for this purpose he manipulates his accounts to show that his selected victims are in arrears. In order to succeed in this nefarious game, it is essential that rent receipts granted to

tenants should not serve to protect them; he, therefore, either grants no receipts or else grants receipts showing a sum of money paid, but with such an insufficiency of detail that if it is produced in Court, he can swear that it was a payment for old arrears or of a temporary loan taken by the tenant at some previous time. In all probability his trickery serves its purpose and as the suit has been brought at a time when the Naib knows that ready money is scarce, the holding is sold up and is either purchased by the landlord, or by some other tenant, in either case to the considerable profit of the Naib.

"In a few glaring cases, the provisions of Section 58 of the Bengal Tenancy Act were enforced during present operations but as the proceedings were usually keenly contested with the help of legal advice, it was impossible to find the time for systematic campaign against this abuse.

"As an alternative to the withholding of *dakhilas* a rascal Naib has another winged arrow in his quiver, which he uses when eviction of tenants on a large scale is his quarry. This consists of obtaining *ex-parte* rent decrees with the connivance of the low-paid process serving establishment of the local Civil Court; the whole transaction, including the auction sale of their property, is concealed from the victims whose first intimation is the arrival of a stranger, fortified by the Civil Court's decree and certificate of delivery of possession, to cultivate their lands. Not unnaturally a riot at times ensues, and in the subsequent criminal proceeding it is all Lombard Street to an orange in

favour of the claimant who is supported by the Civil Court documents."*

The reason for such a system still prevailing in the Bengal land system is best expressed in the following words of the above report:—

"The majority of the landlords pay far less than a subsistence wage to their local staff; this, of course, opens the door to abuse and oppression."†

The Report of Nadia Settlement also refers to the same story:—

"The landlord's staff are usually ill-paid and sometimes not paid at all, the lower grades specially subsist either upon recognized fees from the tenants whose lands they measure, or unrecognised bribes paid to secure favourable assessment."‡

Nadia Report

A similar state of affairs was reported from Nadia. During the Settlement operations it was found that in a certain *mouza* rents were illegally enhanced under proviso (2) of Section 29. After local enquiry by the Settlement Officer, it was found that "the so-called improvement (excavation of *khal*) in fact no longer produced its estimated effect."§ One zamindar was found to "have protected himself to some extent by having got registered *kabuliyats* from tenants

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* Khulna Settlement Report, page 77.

† *Ibid.*, page 77.

‡ Nadia Settlement Report, page 77.

§ *Ibid.*, page 84.

admitting the benefits of his improvement."* In one *mouza* a "*khal* was excavated as a relief measure by the District Board in 1905-06 and the landlord, on the ground that he had completed the work at his own expense, immediately enhanced rents."† In another *mouza,* "the same landlord enhanced rents in 1300. The tenants resisted. Finally a compromise was reached whereby the tenants agreed to pay an amount of Rs. 8,000 on condition that it was not treated as rent ; on the sum being paid in full, the old rates were to be restored. These terms were embodied in a letter produced before the attestation officer purporting to be in the landlord's own hand and which the attestation officer found to be genuine. But the stipulations were set at naught, the money was realised and a permanent addition was made to every raiyat's rent much in excess of Annas two in the Rupee so that even after 1308, when the whole of Rs. 8,000 had been paid in full, up to the time of Settlement operations, these illegal rents have been realised."‡

In another *mouza* a landlord "wanted to enhance rents in 1276. The rents existing then were not on an area basis. The landlord nevertheless had the lands measured and a *jamabandi* prepared which the tenants would not accept. But 30 years later, he exacted an acceptance, which resulted in gross enhancement. They were cut down and then came the landlord's fiat that no papers were to be produced

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* Nadia Settlement Report, page 77.

† *Ibid.*, page 84.

‡ *Ibid.*, pages 84, 85.

before the attestation officer."* In another *mouza*, "*kabuliyats* were taken from tenants agreeing to pay enhanced rents under proviso (3) of Section 29. It was found in a number of cases that tenants were homestead tenants only, who neither possessed nor ever had possessed cultivation."† The Settlement Report states that under the cloak of frequent re-measurements, rents are considerably increased, the measuring rod sometimes reduced, re-classifications introduced, fictional increase shown in area, frequent subtractions and additions of land resorted to with a view to increasing the rents. It was found in one *mouza* that three re-measurements were carried through within 15 years. In another *mouza* it was found that rents were enhanced without any show of legality.

Pabna-Bogra Report

The Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report mentions the institution of criminal and civil suits as a recognised method of securing submission, "since a compromise favourable to the weaker party often is less ruinous to him than a victory gained at the expense of the mortgage of his property."‡ As the Report states, "the fabrication of account books and other documents still goes on in the ordinary zamindari management and many such forged papers were produced before the settlement courts,"§ that 'progressive advancement of rent by inclusion of cesses and of

* Nadia Settlement Report, page 77.

† *Ibid.*, page 85.

‡ Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, page 55.

§ *Ibid.*, page 55.

abwabs for a few years as a lump rental, which was then taken as the rent without the cesses, was common and can seldom be checked." Cases were brought to light of zamindars forcibly getting the tenants to surrender their rent-receipts during Settlement operations with a view to destroying evidence of what the old rents had been. The shortening of standard of measurement for the purpose of rent enhancement was found universal and *kabuliyats* were taken from tenants denying the right of occupancy against express provisions of law.

It is not necessary to multiply instances from earlier Settlement reports. The Pabna-Bogra settlement operations took place in 1920-29, Nadia in 1918-26 and Khulna in 1920-26. These are, therefore, instances of recent times, added to those cited from the Survey and Settlement Reports of the last few years.

CHAPTER XVIII

TRANSFERABILITY

No Problem in 1859—Field's Digest—Recommendations of Rent Commission—Further Investigation—Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds—Statement of Objects and Reasons—Views of the Government of Bengal—Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali—Landlords' Opposition—Clog on Transfer—Infringement of Raiyats' Rights—Both Transferability and Pre-emption Abandoned—Reasons—"I have exhausted every argument"—Sir Stewart Bayley—Custom Checked—No Infringement of Landlords' Rights—Transfers Made—Legislation of 1928—Baneful Effects—Additional Annual Burden.

No Problem in 1859

When occupancy right was first created in 1859, transferability was not either thought of or specifically provided. At a time when land was abundant and easily available and population was sparse, when a resident or a non-resident cultivator was not liable to pay anything more than the parganah rate as his rent, transferability was not even a problem. With the conditions of the country changing, transferability came in its wake and a custom soon grew up in favour of transferability.

Field's Digest

As per the terms of reference given to the Rent Commission of 1880, Mr. Justice Field, a member of the Commission, prepared a Digest of Rent Laws under instructions from and on behalf of the Commission. In Article 41 of his Digest, Mr. Field stated that "under the existing law, the holding of an occupancy tenant is transferable by custom, and that in such cases no registration in the landlord's serishta is necessary."

The question was also fully and ably discussed by Mr. Justice Field in a note to his Digest, and his conclusion was in favour of declaring the occupancy right transferable. He found that the free transfer of occupancy-holdings was a recognised custom which had grown up throughout Bengal and he stated as follows: —

"Alienability is in every country, sooner or later, annexed to everything that is made the subject of property, and that here in Bengal, this tendency has spontaneously shown itself in a very marked manner."

Speaking before the Indian Legislative Council on the 13th of March, 1883, the Hon'ble Sir Courtney Ilbert said: "It is also clear that transferability is the only alternative to unlimited sub-letting, a practice which we cannot, in face of universal custom, forbid but which we should be very glad to discourage. Nor it can be really doubted, except by those who look upon human nature in Bengal as guided by quite other motives than those which influence human nature elsewhere, that the desire to acquire land can only have free play when there is a power to transfer, and that in the end the capacity for saving must thus be stimulated. But if, as I have shown, occupancy-rights are every day, and all over the country, put up for sale, surely the legal recognition of this fact gives the landlord the best security for and the best means of recovering his rent. The power to transfer gives a value to the right of occupancy which is always available as a means of enforcing payment to the landlord."

Recommendations of Rent Commission

After enquiring fully into the matter, the Rent Commissioners found that the transferability of occupancy-rights was in Bengal an absolute fact. It was stated then that the registers of the Courts showed it to be so in every district. The Commission recommended that occupancy tenancies shall be freely transferable without any consent on the part of the landlord to the validity of any such transfer. With a view to enable the landlords to know of such transfers, it was recommended that the landlords should get a fee of 2 per cent on annual rent, but not less than one rupee or more than Rs. 100 and the landlord was to be bound by law to recognise such transfers.

Further Investigation

Before rent legislation was introduced in 1883 the question was again fully investigated as to the extent of the growth of the custom of transfer and it was found that "there is ample testimony to the effect that the tendency to recognise occupancy tenures as transferable is increasing and the real question was whether the facts, as they stand, were to be ignored or recognised."

Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds

As the Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds then stated:—

"Of the incidence of the occupancy-right, the only one which calls for notice is that which makes the right transferable. It seems probable that the right was not originally transferable; but the custom of transfer has become common, and it is for the

advantage of both parties that the right of transfer should be formally legalized."

Statement of Objects and Reasons

The conclusions of the Government of India will appear from the following extracts from the statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill of 1883:—

"It would be unwise to oppose the growth of the very strong tendency towards transferability, which the prevailing customs show to existing rights of this class in almost all parts of the country. The existence of such tendency indicates—what those most concerned regard—the quality of transferability as an important incident of the right and it cannot be doubted that the enactment of a law absolutely forbidding transfer would, even if it saved existing customs, be regarded as a hardship."

Views of the Government of Bengal

The views of the Government of Bengal were as follows:—

"Having given the matter his most careful attention, the Lieutenant Governor believes that the weight of argument and fact is in favour of legislation in the direction indicated by the Bill; and he accordingly would recognise the transferability of the raiyat's occupancy-right throughout these Provinces. . . . . If he had to deal with the question as one of mere theory, Mr. Rivers Thompson would probably not remain uninfluenced by its historical aspect, and by the dangers of vesting a population with transferable rights of property before habits of thrift among

them had been fully confirmed. But the Lieutenant Governor has here to deal with a question, not of theory, but of actual practice. It is here not a matter of 'introducing a source of temporary prosperity,' and encouraging an 'increase of thriftiness on the one hand and of greed on the other,' as was the case in the Dekkhan, but of confirming and recognising a growing custom, to which the needs of the country have spontaneously given birth, and which has so far produced no evil results."*

The Government of Bengal in their Revenue letter to the Government of India, dated the 15th September, 1884, further stated: —

"The Lieutenant Governor was satisfied that the recognition of the right of transfer would create a direct interest in the improvement of soil, would stimulate cultivation, would tend to establish a substantial peasant proprietary, would give a valid security for the realisation of the landlords' rent, and, by increasing the marketable value of the land, would lower the rate of interest when the raiyat had to borrow."

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, in his speech before the Indian Legislative Council on the 5th of March, 1885, said: —

"The fact is that the practice obtains all over the country ; it extends to a considerable extent in Bihar ; it is in increasing operation in all parts of Bengal. The fact that such transfers are taking place daily in

* Bengal Revenue Letter to India, dated 27th September, 1883.

almost every district in Bengal is one which no one can dispute ; it comes before us on the unquestionable authority of the Registration Department and is admitted by the landholders themselves."

The Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali

The Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali, speaking before the Council the same day, said: "I believe it has been sufficiently established that the raiyats who possess the right of free transfer are more prosperous and better able to withstand the visitations of famine and scarcity than those who do not possess that right. And I believe it has also been sufficiently proved that the fears which are entertained by some people that, if the power of free transfer is given to occupancy-raiyats, the holdings will pass into the hands of money-lenders, are in the main groundless. The information collected at the instance of the Bengal Government, I think, has established conclusively that it is not the case that where the right of transfer is exercised by raiyats, their holdings pass into the hands of money-lenders ; that in the majority of instances the transfers are, as a matter of fact, made to *bona fide* cultivators ; and that wherever the right exists and is exercised, the raiyats hold with the utmost tenacity to their holdings ; that their cultivation is better and their standard of living superior to those of other raiyats."

Landlord's Opposition

The proposal was strenuously opposed on behalf of the landlords. To quote from the letter of Government of Bengal to India: "It will be in the recollection of the Government of India that, in the earlier

stages of these discussions, the landlords denied that free sale did exist in any portion of these Provinces. The correctness of that assertion was challenged in my letter of the 27th September last, and statistics adduced from the records of the Civil Courts and the Registration offices go to establish that, as a matter of fact, occupancy-rights were sold more or less freely in every district in Bengal. Those statistics exposed the fallacy of the objections that had been raised regarding the existence and prevalence of the custom of free sale ; but their significance was questioned by the landlords on one material point. It was said that the sales exhibited in them were dependent on the landlord's consent. This was a new contention, and if it were true, then obviously free sale was not prevalent in Bengal in the sense this Government had assumed. Further enquiries were, therefore, necessary. These enquiries have now been made, and, as the Government of India will perceive from the papers submitted, they have resulted in establishing, beyond further dispute, the position for which the Lieutenant Governor has contended. It can no longer be doubted that wherever throughout these Provinces the custom of free sale is well established, there occupancy-rights are bought and sold without interference on the part of the zamindar."*

Clog on Transfer

When the Government of India, in 1882, made their proposals to the Secretary of State, they first

* Para 27 of Bengal Revenue Letter to India, dated the 15th September, 1884.

proposed a clog on transfer by suggesting pre-emption in favour of landlords, on the following grounds:—

"Here our conclusions are that the landlord should have a right of pre-emption in all cases whether of sale or foreclosure; that it is undesirable that the occupancy holding should pass into the hands of the money-lending classes; and that it would be an advantage if mortgages to such classes should be restricted."

Infringement of Raiyats' Rights

That this was an infringement of the rights of the raiyats was frankly admitted by Lord Ripon in 1883 when the Bill was introduced:—

"Now with respect to the question of transferability, the evidence appears to me, I confess, to be overwhelming, that in the greater part of Bengal the practice of transfer exists under a custom which the Courts have recognised. The Government of Bengal in one of the papers—I think it is the letter of Sir Ashley Eden—says 'that the weight of opinion received is in favour of recognising in the law what is an almost universal custom of the Province,' that is, the custom of transfer. If it is an almost universal custom in the Province, it is only right that it should be recognised in the mode in which we propose to recognise it, because where this custom exists now, the landlord can put in no claim for pre-emption. If we are going to reduce the right of anybody in regard to transfers, we are going practically to limit the right of the tenant, and not of the landlord, by giving the latter a power

to come in and say: 'I claim to buy what you want to transfer,' and at a price to be settled by a Court instead of at the highest price which the tenant would otherwise obtain. There is a great deal to be said against giving the landlord this power, on the ground that the Court might adjudicate a price very much below the price which the tenant could get under the existing custom."*

Both Transferability and Pre-emption Abandoned

After a good deal of hesitation and vacillation, the pre-emption proposals were ultimately abandoned but with these was also abandoned the original proposal of free transferability and its legal recognition, due undoubtedly and largely to the influence of the opinions of landlords.

Reasons

The reasons for abandoning pre-emption will appear from the letter of the Government of Bengal, dated the 15th September, 1884, to the Government of India: —

"The pre-emption clauses of the Bill meet, as the Government of India will observe, with no approval and it is in the Lieutenant Governor's opinion essential that they should be abandoned. The evidence submitted is conclusive on the point that, as a general rule, occupancy-rights are now freely saleable in Bengal without any interference on the Zamindar's part. To introduce the novel right of pre-emption,

* Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 13th March, 1883.

therefore, would very seriously depreciate the value of well-established occupancy interests. This seems to Mr. Rivers Thompson to be on the papers indisputable ; while, even if that objection could be overcome, there is a consensus of opinion that the difficulties in working the procedure of the Bill as regards the pre-emption clauses are almost insuperable. As the Collecor of Backerganj says, 'a raiyat seldom sells his land except under sudden and pressing necessity.' To give the landlord the right of pre-emption under such circumstances, and to compel the vendor to comply with the dilatory procedure laid down in Section 32 would be virtually to stop the sale when the necessity is pressing."

"I have Exhausted Every Argument"

In his note of dissent the Hon'ble Mr. T. M. Gibbon remarked: "I dissent from the decision of the majority of the Select Committee to omit transferability from among the incidents attached to an occupancy-holding.

"I have already exhausted every argument I can think of to induce the Government and the Committee to legalize and control transfer and failed to gain their support. It is unnecessary to recapitulate them here ; I will, therefore, only record my dissent." The Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali was no less emphatic when he recorded his note of dissent on this point.

"Whilst agreeing to the advisability of leaving to custom the right of free transfer in Bihar, I consider that, as regards Bengal, it would have a mischievous

tendency. In every place, even where the right has been freely exercised, such as the Presidency, Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong Divisions, the custom will be disputed, with the result that a large portion of the consideration money will pass either into the hands of the landlords or their servants."

Sir Stewart Bayley

The Hon'ble Sir Stewart Bayley, in moving the consideration of the Report of the Select Committee, on 27th February, 1885, said: "Instead of legalising transferability and regulating it by law, we have left it everywhere to custom" and in announcing this decision, he said: "I sincerely regret the decision arrived at." He further stated: —

"I am at liberty to state that I personally adhere to the opinion I expressed in the first debate, to the effect that both in Bengal and in Bihar the custom has taken such deep root that it is desirable to legalise and regulate it and that in both provinces this course would, in the long run, if not in the immediate future, be attended by beneficial results both to the cultivators, and to the productiveness of the country. . . . I am bound to admit that the Committee found immense difficulty in devising any practical scheme of pre-emption, any satisfactory safeguard against the dreaded money-lender, any equitable method of securing to the landlord the fee which he now gets in some parts of the country without injuring the raiyats of other parts where they habitually transfer without payment of a fee and that in view of these difficulties, there is something to be said for leaving the custom to strengthen

itself, and crystallise into a shape which may hereafter render its regulation less difficult than it is at present. We have, moreover, made it clear that where the custom of transfer without the landlord's consent has grown up, it is not the intention of the legislature in any way to interfere with it."

Custom Checked

It was hoped that the custom of free transfer without the landlord's consent would strengthen itself and be crystallised into a shape which would make future legislation easy. But during the next forty-five years, the landlords succeeded in many places in obtaining exactions known as *Nazar* and *Salami* on transfers and in once again successfully obliterating every possible trace of free transferability by custom without hindrance.

No Infringement of Landlord's Rights

But throughout these discussions, one thing was made clear. The whole question of free transferability was discussed as not in any way infringing the rights of landlords nor of the terms, conditions or character of the Permanent Settlement, but on the plane of economic exigencies of the times. It was, on the other hand, admitted that any clog on transfer in any shape was an infringement of the rights of the raiyats, as stated by Lord Ripon.

Subsequent Years

But custom dies hard. The custom of transferability became more and more widely accepted in

subsequent years, while the invisible prestige and influence of the landlords were successful in utilising this as a fresh means for exacting new gains for themselves as the price of recognising a transferred tenancy, on the plea that a tenancy sold is a tenancy abandoned. Once again the force of economic circumstances—the phenomenal rise in prices, and especially in the value of jute—played their part and the raiyats had to accept the inevitable. But obscurities in law always bring in legal fictions. Even when the raiyat transferred his holding, keeping an insignificant fraction with him, it was no abandonment and the landlord had no option but to recognise the transfer. This was accepted by judicial decisions and was the state of law before the legislation of 1928.

Transfers Made

The number of transfers of occupancy tenancies which was 25,448 in 1881-82 gradually rose up to 250,000 in 1913 and to 314,000 in 1923.

Legislation of 1928

The Act of 1928 made occupancy rights fully transferable, but subject to a landlord's fee and pre-emption in favour of landlords, in the teeth of the opposition in the legislature as well as in the country. But even then whatever was done in 1928 was not to compensate landlords for the loss of a right in property but on grounds of expediency and on considerations of the practice of a few landlords.

Baneful Effects

The baneful effects of these provisions became immediately visible in the marked decrease in the number of transfers of occupancy holdings. The successive years of depression undoubtedly increased the number, but it was still below the figures for 1923, as will be seen from Table 81.

TABLE 81

NUMBER OF TRANSFERS OF OCCUPANCY-RIGHTS

1881-82	...	...	25,448
1913	...	...	250,000
1923	...	...	314,000
1929	...	...	85,361
1930	...	...	152,639
1931	...	...	176,249
1932	...	...	188,737
1933	...	...	192,892
1934	...	...	235,147
1935	...	...	261,297
1936	...	...	295,371

Additional Annual Burden

In estimating the permanent land revenue demand in 1793, 10 per cent of revenue demand was calculated to be the profits of the landlords. Calculated on the total revenue demand of to-day (Rs. 31,206,462 in 1936-37), their profits should have been roughly about Rs. 31 lacs. The raiyats to-day should thus have been liable to pay only about Rs. $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores (312 lacs *plus* 31 lacs) as their total rent liability. The burden which the raiyats of Bengal have to actually to bear to-day on land-tax is nearly 17 crores of rupees (Rs, 169,969,223).

The Permanent Settlement promised that there should be no additional burden on the tenants in any form whatsoever, beyond his customary Parganah rate ; where they should have paid only Rs. $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores they pay today Rs. 17 crores. The profits of land system are Rs. $13\frac{1}{2}$ crores instead of only Rs. 31 lacs. But *salami* brought in an additional income of Rs. 33 lacs (Table 82) annually for last eight years, payable by the raiyats who are compelled to sell in the last stage of dire necessity their only real property in the world and the only means of earning their livelihood. The controversies against *salami* and pre-emption in 1928, with the opinions recorded against them, are matters of very recent history and may safely be left out here ; they are recorded in full in the proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council and the papers published in connection with the Tenancy Legislation of 1928.

TABLE 82

AMOUNT OF LANDLORDS TRANSFER FEES

		Rs.	
1929-30	...	3,811,204	(Approximate)
1930-31	...	3,865,958	,,
1931-32	...	2,789,542	
1932-33	...	2,836,988	
1933-34	...	2,753,992	
1934-35	...	3,221,394	
1935-36	...	3,513,877	
1936-37	...	3,742,446	
Total Rs.		26,535,401	
Average Rs.		3,316,925	

CHAPTER XIX

SUMMARY PROCEDURE AND CERTIFICATE POWER

Give us *Haftum* and *Panjum*—Rent Commission—Retrogressive and Unsafe—No Royal Road to Discovery of Facts—Doubt and Delay—Negligence and Dishonesty—No Help—Root of the Dispute—Sir Stewart Bayley—Sir Ashley Eden—Certificate Cases.

"Give us Haftum and Panjum"

The landlords of Bengal have always contended that there should be a Summary Procedure for the recovery of arrear rents due from their tenants. The demand was characterised in forcible language by the Hon'ble Mr. Ilbert in 1885 in the following terms:—

"This was to be the be-all and end-all of all legislation on the subject of landlord and tenant. 'Give us back our *Huftum* and our *Punchum,*' said the zamindars, 'and all will be well. Or, at all events if you cannot do that, put the raiyat who is sued for rent in the same position as if he had signed a bill of exchange, that is to say, had agreed in writing to pay a specified sum of money to a specified person at a spcified time.' This was a form of 'facility' which was much discussed by the Rent Commission, and the conclusion to which they came about it was substantially the same as that which was subsequently arrived at by the Government of India."

Rent Commission

The question of Summary Procedure for recovery of rent was examined by the Rent Commission, who, in making proposals for an abbreviated procedure in rent-suits, recommended that certain portions of the Civil Procedure Code should not be extended to rent-suits at all; that the right of appeal in petty cases should be abolished, and that, in all cases, the summons should be for the final disposal of the suit. In making these recommendations, the Commission expressed their conviction of the extreme danger of summary methods of justice and their reluctance to propose a revival of the 'summary-suit' system of the old Regulations. "In order that justice may be done, truth must be elucidated; and the elucidation of truth, especially in this country, and for reasons which we need not here dwell upon in detail, requires time and patience. Any attempt to abridge judicial enquiry by arbitrary and abnormal presumptions in favour of either party, which, by precluding the production of evidence, may enable Judges to arrive at rapid conclusions, is, to our minds, retrogressive and unsafe. The history of the judicial administration of this country for the last half century is a continuous record of the abandonment of a system of procedure under which rights were hastily and perfunctorily adjudicated upon, the person defeated and dissatisfied being left a regular suit to right himself, if wronged by an irregular proceeding which too often saddled him with the burden of proof that should have been laid on the shoulders of his adversary, and

thus unfairly diminished his chance of ultimate success. We entirely agree in the wisdom which has abolished this system, we will not say, of administering justice, but of choking off litigation; and we cannot recommend the adoption of any summary procedure for rent-suits which would involve even a partial renewal of it."*

No Royal Road to Discovery of Facts

The Hon'ble Mr. Ilbert, in introducing the Bill, said:—

"I cannot express too emphatically my concurrence with the opinions expressed by the Rent Commission as to the extreme danger of summary methods of justice. . . . ."

"There is no royal road to the discovery of facts, and most short cuts are mere delusions. Let me illustrate this from an episode in the history of modern Roman law as practised in Germany. The ordinary procedure for determining rights of possession was found to be tedious, and another form of procedure was devised which was supposed to be more expeditious and was called *summarium*. This, again, was denounced as dilatory and was superseded by another still more summary form of procedure, which was christened *summarissimum*. The great jurist Savigny tells us that he once took part as judge in a trial which was being conducted according to the form of procedure known as *summarissimum*. At the time when he sat, this trial had lasted some twelve years. Several faculties of jurists had delivered

* Report of the Rent Commission, pages 86-87.

their opinion about it, and how much longer it was likely to last it was impossible to say.

Doubt and Delay

"The fallacy to which I refer is the fallacy of supposing that by shortening your code of procedure you shorten the procedure itself. The Code of Civil Procedure contains a number of provisions which may be useful in certain contingencies, but which are not required, and, therefore, are not applied in ordinary cases. By striking out these provisions from a code of procedure for any special subject, such as rent-suits, you may shorten your law, but you do not shorten by one jot the length of a trial in ordinary cases, and you create opportunities for doubt and delay in exceptional cases.

Negligence and Dishonesty

"In all matters relating to the service of legal notices and processes in this country, there is, I fear, a great deal of negligence and dishonesty, but there is no reason why we should assume that this negligence or dishonesty is always on the side of the defendant; and there is no sound reason why the rules as to the mode of effecting service, which have been found necessary and sufficient in other cases, should be dispensed with in the case of rent-suits.

No Help

"A summary form of procedure can scarcely help a plaintiff unless his case is of the simplest description, admitting of being answered only in the simplest way, and he comes into Court armed with documen-

tary evidence of so trustworthy a character that the presumption against any defence being possible is extremely strong.

Root of the Dispute

"The truth really is that facilities for recovering rents in Bengal should be sought for not so much in novel forms of procedure as in a trustworthy record of tenancies and their incidents, and a simple mode of adjusting rents; in other words, by going to the root of the disputes which, though they may not always come to the surface, are believed to underlie a very large portion of the contested rent-suits."

Sir Stewart Bayley

The Hon'ble Sir Stewart Bayley then said:—

"But it is not merely a shortened procedure; it is a summary procedure which is wanted—a procedure, in fact, which will give the landlord the benefit of the presumption in his favour, and place on the raiyat the onus of proving that the presumption is erroneous.

"Now there are only two forms of summary procedure—one through the intervention of our Courts, the other through executive authority, like the certificate or *patni* procedure.

"Summary procedure through the executive authorities have long been tried in India. There are numerous examples of failure. Up to 1859, a zamindar could enforce payment of rent either by distraint or summary suit before the Collector. This

was discontinued by the framers of Act X. The raiyat had no remedy but by a regular suit, and this, the framers of the Act declared, was 'almost tantamount to refusing him any remedy at all.' The abolition of these summary powers was objected to then by the British Indian Association, much on the same ground as those now put forward (as indeed were all the restrictions on the zamindar's powers including that of arresting their raiyat); but these objections were deliberately overruled. The question of a summary procedure through the executive authorities was then definitely settled in the negative, after an experience dating back to 1799. Nor has summary procedure through the Court been found more satisfactory.

"I think the objection is sufficient, and I wish no better justification for our refusal either to imperil justice by the adoption of a summary procedure without redress, or, by giving the redress of a regular suit, to open the way to additional expense, trouble and harassment."

Sir Ashley Eden

As Sir Ashley Eden wrote in his note to the Government of India:—

"Summary sale without decree after service of a notice, which however duly proved, the raiyat probably never saw, would mean to him utter ruin without warning and without remedy. The Lieutenant Governor would never consent to such procedure as of general or ordinary application."

Certificate Cases

It was on these grounds that the legislators and the Government, in 1885, refused the grant of any wide extension of Certificate Power. Prior to 1928, the landlords could be given such power but only in very exceptional circumstances. The law of 1928 brought a change in the outlook and Certificate powers were granted with greater freedom in favour of private landlords. The number of Certificate cases increased in large numbers in recent years. The hardships of these certificate cases have for some time past been very strongly emphasised, on the ground that the raiyats are suddenly confronted with forcible and summary sale of all their movables and chattels, cattle and implements, and that certificate cases are filed even without due care for payments already made, sometimes for the paltry sum of an anna or two, for which the raiyats are saddled with heavy costs in addition. The argument of delay in a civil suit will not bear scrutiny, when it is remembered that, in the year 1936-37, over a lac of certificate cases were pending over six months.

But in any case, the power of certificate was not the right of every landlord, even under the law of 1928, only a few privileged landlords were granted this right, and only 148 against many thousands had the certificate power granted to them by the end of 1936-37.

CHAPTER XX

ABWABS

Continued Existence of Abwabs--Enquiry in 1872—Tragic Details—Nadia Exactions—Pabna Report—Bogra—Court of Wards—Petty Oppressions—Civil Courts No Protection—1872 Methods Still Prevalent—Fabrication—Evidence Destroyed—Short Standard, etc.—Abwabs—Batta, etc.—Kaimi Nazar—Puja Parbani—Maricha—Mutation Fee on Succession—Special Levies—Khoka Bhiksha—Sairati—Annual Toll of Exactions—Recent Reports—1936-37.

Continued Existence of Abwabs

We have seen that the profits of land system are to-day about Rs. 13½ crores, instead of only Rs. 31 lacs as they should have been and that the very *Salami* provision introduced in 1928 brought an additional income of Rs. 33 lacs annually. With such an accretion to the profit of the landlords, one may very well enquire whether the Abwabs and the illegal exactions of the landlords have stopped to-day.

It is not necessary to go to the period from 1793 to the Mutiny. That story is too dismal to be raked up to-day and may well be left buried in the records of the past.

Enquiry in 1872

The question of the relationship between landlord and tenant was taken up immediately after the Mutiny and a thorough enquiry was made by the Government of Sir George Campbell in 1872 throughout the province. It was found that collections of

illegal exactions were rampant all over the province in defiance of all laws. The Commissioner of a Division reported the levy of not less than 27 illegal cesses in one district and the Administration Report of 1872 describes the situation in the following terms*: —

"The modern zamindar taxes his raiyats for every extravagance or necessity that circumstances may suggest. He will tax them for the support of his agents of various kinds and degrees; for the payment of his income-tax and his postal cess; for the purchase of an elephant for his own use; for the cost of the stationery of his establishment; for the cost of printing the forms of his rent receipts; for the payment of his lawyers. The milkman gives the milk; the oilman his oil; the weaver his clothes; the confectioner his sweetmeats; the fisherman his fish. The zamindar levies benevolences from his raiyats for a festival, for a religious ceremony, for a birth, for a marriage . . . . . he imposes a fine when he settles their petty disputes and the Police or the Magistrate visits his estates; he levies blackmail on them when social scandals transpire or when an offence or an affray is committed; he establishes his private pound near his kutchery and realises a fine for every head of cattle that is caught trespassing on the raiyats' crops. The Abwabs pervade the whole zamindary system."

Tragic Details

It was hoped that with better tenancy laws and with improved administration of the country, such a

* Administration Report, 1872-73, page 23.

state of things would die out. But the reports of Settlement operations in Bengal for the last thirty years bear painful testimony to their existence. To quote from the report of the Settlement operations in Nadia (1918-26), it was found that illegal exactions were prevalent throughout the district, though in varying degrees. One Circle Officer prepared a list of 20 such exactions and remarked that "the very list arouses indignation." To describe the situation, the Settlement Report quoted an extract from an account of conditions 70 years ago as follows: —

"Not a child can be born, not a head religiously shaved, not a son married, not a daughter given in marriage, not even one of the tyrannical fraternity dies without an immediate visitation of calamity upon the raiyat. Whether the occasion be joyful or whether it be sad, in its effects to the cultivator, it is alike mournful and calamitous."

Nadia Exactions

The report gives a list of the different forms of exactions prevalent in the district as follows: —

(1) *Hishabana* varying from 1 anna to 4 annas. (Accounts fee.)

(2) *Parbani* varying from 1 anna to 4 annas. (Contributions for ceremonies.)

(3) *Punyah Kharach,* 6 pies (Expenses for holding *Punyahs* or annual Darbar held by zamindar as the beginning of the annual collection.)

(4) *Pasta,* generally 1 anna.

(5) *Bhet* or *Marucha* on the occasion of the marriage of a tenant's son or daughter.

(6) *Mathat* on the occasion of an important event in the landlord's family.

(7) *Bhiksha* (literally alms) when the landlord performs the Sradh ceremony or any act of charity.

(8) The payment of a quantity of *ghee,* or, failing payment, its equivalent in cash.

(9) Fee on weaving looms and carts.

(10) Salutation fee from Re. 1 to Rs. 5 per head when any of the landlord's staff visits a village.

(11) *Piadar Roz* or a "Court fee" of 8 annas whenever a peon has to call on a man to pay his rent.

(12) Lump contribution for the purchase of elephants, carriages or even ponies for the landlord or for the building or repairs of offices.

"The landlord sometimes for a consideration confers on one man the exclusive right of weighing goods in any transaction in the village. The grantee recoups himself by levying two seers in every maund weighed.

"Another form of *bhiksha abwab* is still levied by ..... This is a dispensary cess of three pies and a school cess of six pies in the rupee for the maintenance

of the school and dispensary at..... A particularly offensive, but by no means unknown, device is to levy contribution for an improvement such as a *khal,* spend less than the whole amount and then appropriate the surplus."*

Pabna Report

The situation was described pathetically in the Report of the Pabna Settlement operations (1920-1929):—

"The law may be on his (tenant's) side. Security of tenure may be his by the Tenancy Act; he may be protected against arbitrary enhancement of rent, against *abwabs* and illegal demands, and he may be entitled to receive a clear statement of his accounts with every payment he makes towards the rent. Yet in practice, most of these safeguards are regularly set at naught by the landlord. Heritability is recognised only on the payment of a *nazar* (which varies according to the greed of the agent). *Abwabs* are still a most profitable source of income to the zamindar; *dakhilas* (rent receipts) are withheld or written up against the tenants' interests; and the rents are regularly enhanced in contravention of the Act. In operation, the law, however beneficent, is a feeble defence of the poor, illiterate, gullible peasants, who, with a long tradition behind them of subservience, meekly accept the oppression of the present, lest protests evoke the more terrible oppression of the future. Often and often when the officers of the Settlement

* Nadia Settlement Report, page 88.

tried to discover the actual demands made upon the people, they would refuse to listen to the questions put, because they feared that after the departure of the officers, the zamindars would have their revenge for any disclosures, and their last state would be worse than the first. One tenant, who produced old rent receipts to the kanungo to prove an illegal enhancement, incurred the wrath of the manager of the estate and was driven from his holding as a punishment. One petty landlord stated on oath that in all disputes with his tenants over rent or *salami* he never gave receipts for any payment made, until they had acceded to all his terms."*

Bogra

"When enquiries were made concerning *abwabs* in Bogra, information was forthcoming for a week or so, until the naibs and some mandals became aware of what was in progress ; afterwards, all questions were met with vague answers or a reference to the zamindar's representative whose interest it was to deny the existence of these illegal cesses, or to describe them as voluntary contributions of the raiyat. But the *abwabs* are a first charge on the tenant, and must be paid before ever anything is credited to the rent. Should he demur, his offer of rent is not accepted, and he lays himself open to a suit for arrears of rent. The realisation of these illegal cesses is the only means of subsistence of the horde of ill-paid servants kept by the zamindar for the management of the

* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, page 53.

property ; and few cultivators would dream of refusing to pay any demand they make, provided it be customary or moderate. They know well enough that, should they not comply, their lives will be made uncomfortable."*

Court of Wards

To quote from the same Report, "in one or two villages under the Court of Wards, remote from headquarters, threat of certificate procedure was generally employed to bring obstinate tenants to reason, *i.e.,* to make them satisfy the tahsildars' demands for *abwabs.*"†

Petty Oppressions

The Report continues: "Much petty oppression is still practised. One incident may speak for many. During the bujharat of a village in Police-station Sainthia, where a bitter rent dispute was in progress, the zamindar's man, with the object of cowing the opposition, attended the kanungo all day on an elephant, which did great damage to the growing crops. He was prosecuted and punished. Had not the kanungo, a responsible Government Officer, been present, he would have escaped scot free, no independent witness against him being forthcoming."‡

Civil Courts No Protection

"The Civil Courts, far from affording protection to the tenants are feared, and their legal machinery

* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, page 53.

† *Ibid.,* page 54.

‡ *Ibid.,* page 54.

for procrastination is utilised as the most effective weapon of intimidation. A landlord, who would never dream of making a reference to the civil courts for the settlement of a fair and equitable rent, because the results would not be proportionate to the worry involved or to the cost of the litigation, will seek their aid to consolidate his gains by suing for arrears of the illegally enhanced rents which the tenants have refused to pay, or for arrears of the former rent which was legally payable, but which he himself would not accept when it was offered. The expense of depositing rents under Section 61 of the Tenancy Act and the loss of time and money in fighting the cases, force the tenant to capitulate unless he has, as in the Eastern Alluvion, the backing of those influential and wealthy jotedars, who claim to be raiyats, but have their extensive possessions farmed in barga, or sublet at vexatious terms. One instance of this abuse of the civil courts may be quoted. In a certain case under Section 108, Bengal Tenancy Act, the landlord petitioned for the substitution of his name in place of the recorded tenants. He had, he said, brought a rent suit against the latter, in which he secured a decree, and the holding was sold up. A few years later, after the preparation of the record of rights but before final publication, he sued for possession and the removal of the huts of the tenant. This, too, was decreed ; and the civil court papers embodying these orders were produced. They were in order. The tenant, however, appeared to contest the case, because he was in possession. He admitted the rent suit ; he admitted the ejectment suit and the demolition of his house, but

declared that he had tried to pay off the original rent decree, and that he had been allowed to re-erect his huts after an arrangement with the landlord's son, to whom he had given a sum of money for which he had not a receipt. In the ejectment suit he had pleaded, at least, part payment of the decretal amount on compromise, and had produced two or three slips of paper acknowledging receipt of the money: but the munsiff had rejected them as evidence, and suggested they were forgeries. The tenant produced them again before the Settlement Court. The agents, whose signatures appeared on these rejected slips of paper, were present conducting the case for the landlord and, when questioned, had to admit that the signature was genuine and that the money had been received, but pressed that the civil court's second order must be maintained. They, also, had to admit the tenant to be now in possession, but said he was a trespasser. As to the money paid to the landlord's son, they knew nothing and believed the story to be a myth. The only witness of the payment was summoned, and on the first day did not attend, kept back by these very agents. On the second day he had to appear and confessed to have heard of the payment and nothing more. Finally, the landlord's son was summoned. After much delay, he came and confessed that the tenant's fantastic tale was true: that the money had been paid and had been with him for over a year without the tenant having any acknowledgment or receipt, and, that there had been an arrangement for continuing the tenancy in spite of the decrees."*

* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, pages 54, 55.

1872 Methods Still Prevalent

"The attestation enquiries revealed that the compendious report of the Subdivisional Officer of Serajganj on the methods employed by the zamindars, prior to the troubles of 1872, is as applicable to present day conditions as it was to the conditions of 50 years ago. The institution of false criminal and civil suits is still a recognised method of securing submission, since a compromise, unfavourable to the weaker party, often is less ruinous to him than a victory gained at the expense of mortgaging all his property."*

Fabrication

"The fabrication of account books and other documents still goes on in the ordinary way of zamindari management, and many such forged papers were produced before the settlement courts, but owing to the difficulty of fastening the guilt upon any particular individual, prosecution was usually out of the question, and a severe warning to suffice. The civil courts were found to have been slack in dealing with those who filed fabricated papers, and the case may be quoted where a document exhibited in a civil suit was held to be forged. This verdict was confirmed by the High Court, yet no action was taken against the culprit. The forged paper was returned in due course from the courts and was during settlement produced before the attestation and *bujharat* officers."†

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* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, page 55.

† *Ibid.*, page 55.

Evidence Destroyed

"There were many cases when the zamindar wishing to enhance the rent collected all the receipts from the tenants on some pretext or other and so destroyed all evidence of what the old rents had been. That the tenants were fool enough to surrender their papers, the only legal weapon they had, gives the measure of the law's inability to afford them protection.*

Short Standard, etc.

"The *kabuliyats* of . . . estate in Bogra contained a clause to the effect that the tenant would raise no opposition to the zamindar introducing at will a shorter standard of measurement for assessing his rent roll: and the stipulation was not, as alleged, an idle threat to keep the tenants from opposition.

"Most raiyati *kabuliyats* in Bogra denied the right of occupancy. The zamindar's men presented this also as a meaningless provision which would never be enforced and was inserted to keep the tenant in his proper place. (This assertion was, unfortunately, not the truth.) In one small estate, it was found that one of the co-sharers, setting up as a raiyat, had taken under-raiyati *kabuliyats* from all the settled raiyats, and was using these as an instrument for rack renting.†

Abwabs

"An account of the *abwabs* collected will illustrate, perhaps better than anything else, the real

* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, page 56.

† *Ibid.*, page 56.

position of the raiyats. One *abwab* is universal—*tahari* or *karacha*. It is accepted almost as part of the rent: and, as mentioned above, in many places tenants invariably mentioned as their rent a sum in excess of that entered in the *dakhila,* proving thereby that they regularly included the *tahari* in their estimate of the rent. In some of the more progressive estates where the collecting agency is strictly controlled, the rate of *tahari* is levied according to a fixed scale, which the villagers know, and is no more than the collection charge that *tahari* is supposed to be. It varies from 1 to 4 or 5 annas per rupee of rent and is lowest in the Eastern Alluvion and highest in the *Barind* (where the village *mandal* has his perquisites out of the *abwabs* collected). Cases, however, were discovered where *tahari* was as much as 50 per cent of the rent. In addition to *tahari,* a nominal charge for the rent receipt is generally made, but, when the co-sharers are numerous, it may amount to several annas. It is often called *faraquana.*

Batta etc.

"Many of the petty illegal cesses which find mention in the old papers have disappeared: but are occasionally met with, as in one village of Panchbibi, where to every rupee of rent the tenant had to pay—

	As.	P.
Batta	1	3
Izara	1	9
Road Cess	1	0
Dak Cess	3	0
Village Cess	6	0
Total As.	13	0

"*Batta* is a survival of the change from the *sicca* to the Company's rupee ; the *dak* cess was common, till, on the abolition of the zamindari *daks,* it was frequently incorporated in the rent. Village cess is probably what used to be called 'gramer karacha,' an imposition for all purposes connected with the village, from road improvement to the corruption of Government servants in the exercise of their duty, at least so it was alleged.

Kaimi Nazar

"In another village, a curious charge called *kaimi nazar* was found. It appears that the landlord determined to collect some funds by paying a personal visit to his estates and levying the *nazar* usually paid on such occasions. He, however, told the raiyats that as he intended to make an annual visit, he would not accept more than 4 annas. Next year he put the visit off from date to date and ultimately never came at all, yet the *nazar* was collected all the same and became permanent. *Nazar* on approaching the zamindar with any request or grievance is still the 'dustoor' and the *gomasthas* require similar attentions before listening to what a tenant has to say.

Puja Parbani

"*Puja parbani* is another of these old petty cesses and is collected annually at the time of the *Dole Puja.* But cases were found near Khetupara, police station Sainthia, where it was still realised and entered separately in the rent receipt: the proceeds being divided between the zamindar and his agent in the ratio of 5 to 3.

Maricha

"*Maricha* is another important *abwab,* collected when a raiyat celebrates his daughter's marriage. It varies from Re. 1 to Rs. 5 and, if the woman be already a widow, in some estates concessions are allowed, and in others extra levies taken. Sometimes, when there are several co-sharers, each collects a rupee. Refusal to conform to this custom would entail ostracism at the instance of the village *mandal,* and difficulty in securing a *mollah* to perform the ceremony. In some places a similar toll is taken when the tenant has to offer *sradh* to his parents.

Mutation Fee on Succession

"In spite of raiyati interests being heritable, a *salami* on succession, with an accompanying solatium for the *amlas,* is commonly charged for mutation of the heirs' names in the landlord's *sherista*: some landlords (and they were pleaders) went so far as to file a petition, asking that in place of the living tenants in possession being recorded, the *khatians* should be prepared according to their books, which contained the names of persons dead many years ago.

"Ordinarily this *salami* is nominal, but in the Barind (in Adamdighi and Dubchachia, Bogra and Kahaloo), the charge is high and varies from village to village, even within one estate. Daughters have to pay more than sons, and for more distant heirs the rate is higher still. Thus, in Adamdighi, the rate is one year's rent for the sons and two years' rent for the daughters; but near Dubchachia it is increased

to $3\frac{3}{4}$ times the annual rent for sons and $7\frac{1}{2}$ times for daughters.

Special Levies

"In addition to these regular *abwabs,* levies are taken on special occasions. The marriage of the landlord's daughter, the performance of a *sradh,* and the purchase of an elephant to uphold the landlord's dignity are considered of sufficient importance to warrant the imposition of these *mathats* or *bhiksyas* as they are called.

Khoka Bhiksha

"In the less progressive Sadar Subdivision of Pabna, one petty landlord took a 'Khoka Bhiksha' for the education of his children ; and it was accounted as a special mark of benevolence that the zamindar of . . . . refused all 'presents' from the tenants on the occasion of his daughter's marriage. This proprietor realised a school cess, which was ungrudgingly paid, to assist a school he had established. There is good reason to believe that many handsome donations by zamindars, in the cause of higher education, for the erection of schools reading up to the Matriculation standard, and bearing the name of the founders' or zamindars' family, had come directly from the pockets of their tenants.

Sairati

"Another *abwab,* which deserves special mention, is the *sairati* realised in the markets of Serajganj and Ullapara upon the more important articles of commerce. The impost in itself is not heavy, but from

the volume of the import into these two bazars is a very profitable one. It operates, however, to make handling charges high and to drive trade from the town. On jute this duty is four annas per 100 maunds. It is also levied on cotton and corrugated iron.

"*Sairati* seems first to have been levied on jute transactions as an extra charge by the Jute Company of Serajganj when it held large proprietary interests and controlled the local jute market. The cess thus remained in the industry. Its extension to other commodities and its adoption in Ullapara seem to be comparatively recent. The report of 1872 which officially recognised that in respect of *hat* dues, etc., the Regulation of 1790 abolishing *sayers* could no longer be applied . . . . made an exception of this *sairati,* and Government ordered that strict measures would be taken to secure its abolition. Unfortunately no action was taken and the zamindars now assert a prescriptive right to make the collection.*

Annual Toll of Exactions

"Taking everything into account, it will probably be safe to put the total income from *abwabs,* apart from *salami* and *nazar,* at $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the annual rent.

"The total income from *abwabs,* on all counts, will amount to not less than $\frac{1}{3}$, probably to more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the rent paid by the raiyats. On this estimate, in Pabna, something between Rs. 11,00,000 and Rs. 16,00,000 is annually realised as *abwab,* and in Bogra, between Rs. 7,50,000 and Rs. 11,00,000. The

* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, pages 56-58.

revenue for the two districts is Rs. 4,56,816 and Rs. 5,02,598, respectively."*

Recent Reports

But lest it may be thought that the reports are a few years old, the following extracts from the Annual Administration Reports of the Survey and Settlement operations will tell the tale for recent years:—

Malda.—"*Abwabs* are realised by most landlords. The rates varying from 1 anna 6 pies to 4 annas in the rupee." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1931-32, page 26.)

Rangpur.—"Illegal enhancements have been found in almost all big estates. *Abwabs* are realised as a general rule by most landlords in varying degrees." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1931-32, page 27.) "*Abwabs* such as *Tahari, Magan, Paikana* and *Khoraki* varying from one anna to 4 annas in the rupee are paid by the tenants without any opposition." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1932-33, page 16.)

Dinajpur.—"*Abwabs* are regularly collected of which the following may be mentioned:—

Chhapa Kharach.—An *abwab* at anna one a rupee to cover the cost of rent receipts.

Aday Kharach.—At annas two in the rupee as the cost of rent realisation.

Chuni.—Half anna in the rupee for the maintenance of the local staff.

* Pabna-Bogra Settlement Report, page 61.

Parabi.—At half anna in the rupee for local festivals." (Survey and Settlement Report, 1934-35, page 23.)

"*Abwabs* are regularly taken in almost every estate. The principal beneficiaries of this are the ill-paid amlas and gomasthas and naibs though special and extra exactions are made if the zamindar himself visits the estate. In some areas they are reported to amount to 50 per cent over and above the legal rent. The following are the 'mamuli' exactions at a fairly constant rate: —

(1) Fine on marriage of a tenant's daughter—Re. 1 to Rs. 4.

(2) If a marriage occurs at the landlord's house, contributions of produce are levied on all the tenants.

(3) *Mangan*—As. 4 in the rupee.

(4) *Farakana*—As. 2 in the rupee.

(5) *Tahari*—As. 2 in the rupee.

(6) *Chhapa Kharach* (where rent receipts are granted).

(7) Various *Kharach—patwari, kotwali, barkandaz* and *paikana*—which vary according to the power of the officers concerned.

"In addition to this there are the various illegal *nazars* taken on transfers of land. In the Court of Wards an additional cess known as 'Labhyakar' is also realised." (Survey-Settlement Report, 1935-36, p. 27.)

Howrah.—"Generally, however, *tahari* or charge of collection at the rate of 6 pies in the rupee is realised. But in the area referred to above *tahari* is charged at the rate of As. 2 in the rupee. Other *abwabs* that came to notice are—

(*a*) *Puja Kharach*—realised for the celebration of the *Saraswati Puja*. No rate known.

(*b*) *Huli* or *Mathat*—which, is a lump sum realised for every individual holding. The amount varies according to the circumstances of the tenant.

(*c*) School *Kharcha*—one anna per rupee of rent charged on tenants whose children are not at school.

(*d*) *Parabi*—realisation is made at 6 pies in the rupee of rent immediately before the *Durga Pujah*.

"Most of these realisations go to the ill-paid agents of the landlords and the total realisation will be about 25 per cent of the annual rent." (Survey-Settlement Report, 1935-36, page 32.)

1936-37

The story may be completed by the following extract from the Land Revenue Administration Report for 1936-37: "The levy of *Abwabs* (or illegal demands over and above the rent and Public Works and Road Cesses) by private landlords or their agents in the shape of a commission on collections, called *'Tahari'* or *'Parbani'* is again mentioned in the reports of nearly all the Collectors. In some districts *abwabs*

are also levied on special occasions, such as marriages or *sradh* ceremonies. The penal provisions of Section 75 of the Bengal Tenancy Act are never enforced, though in Birbhum one formal complaint against a tahsildar of the . . . . . Raj Estate was lodged. The criminal proceeding started against him is still pending.

"The process of getting rid of these exactions is likely to be speeded up by the growing solidarity of the tenants and their increasing inclination to assert themselves, but so long as the collecting staff of landlords continues to draw their present rates of pay, it is practically impossible to expect that they can refrain from finding some means of supplementing their income."

It is now over one hundred and fifty years that *abwabs* have been declared to be not permissible in law. The landlord or his agent is liable in law to penalty if he exacts them ; but in practice he has been able to break the law with impunity and the worst examples are those when facts are occasionally brought before the public gaze in cases of the Court of Wards estates managed by Government agencies. The evils of these pernicious exactions have struck deep roots into the Bengal land system and have to be speedily weeded out with an iron hand.

CHAPTER XXI

PROSPECT AND PERSPECTIVE

The Structure of India's Economy—The Heart of Bengal is corroded—Problem of *Dal-Bhat*—Background of All Planning and Programme—No One Solution—Market-needs to grow within the Province—New Deals in the World To-day—National Agricultural Policy—Domination of Urban Interests—Democracy and the Millions—They are Gallant Gentlemen.

The Structure of India's Economy

In a pamplet, "The Indian Peasant", the Marquess of Linlithgow, now the Viceroy and the Governor-General of India said: —

"Those who govern and those who aspire to govern India must never allow themselves to forget that India's wealth, in an overwhelming degree, is in her agriculture; and that upon the fields of her cultivators is founded the whole structure of India's economy. The peasant, now as ever, is the chief source and creator of both her wealth and her greatness, and of him it may with truth be said that he is India."*

The Heart of Bengal is Corroded

The earlier chapters of this book will show that the Bengal peasant generally lives in conditions of grinding poverty. Picturesque palaces in cities, macadamised roads for movement and transport, miles of Railways with modern comforts, fleets of steamers

* The Indian Peasant, page 18.

and flats to carry cargo and commodities, telephones, telegraphs and radios, laboratories and show rooms may create an image and an illusion ; but behind all these, the heart of Bengal is corroded. The din and bustle of the city life and the political excitement and passion of the day with its constant clash of personalities successfully drown the agonies of the rural millions existing on a bare subsistence level. But "the political problems, acute and sometimes baffling as they are, are as dust in the balance when weighed against the problem of the future food supply of the overgrowing milions."* It is only a tragic reality that debt is the curse of the Bengal farmer ; "it robs him of the full fruits of his labour, saps his initiative, destroys hope and with it ambition, and darkens the whole outlook of his life."†

Problem of *Dal-Bhat*

Is it, therefore, any wonder that there is chronic malaria in rural Bengal? Can it ever be hoped inspite of all what modern researches have done that the problem of malaria can be successfully attacked, where people are living, from year to year, on a bare subsistence level and often even below the level? Can merely heroic doses of Quinine and Plasmochine make a radical cure of the malaria-stricken patient, if he cannot get enough food all the year round to vitalise his system and if even what he gets has not much nutritional value? The dietaries of the Bengal

* The Indian Peasant, page 18.

† *Ibid*, page 31.

peasant* alone offer complete explanation for the high death rate, frequent illness, lack of energy, lowered resistance to infectious and contagious diseases, and child mortality in rural Bengal. Let us visualise the picture of the peasant just out of his humble bed, if bed can it be called, after a shivering attack of malaria, running to his field in sun, rain or storm, to plough, to weed, or to harvest, with very little sustaining food or diet and it is for the medical-research worker to answer, if he knows of any parallel where a human being in such conditions of life and labour can manage to live long in his struggle against and fight with nature.

How to save the man behind the plough from his grinding poverty is, therefore, the supreme problem for this Province. The problem of "Dal-Bhat" is not

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* The League of Nations' report on problems of nutrition in various countries shows that the average annual consumption of meat in various countries from 1930 to 1934 per head of population was 236 lb. in New Zealand, 202 lb. in Australia, 144 lb. in Canada, 140 lb. in Great Britain, 135 lb. in the United States, 125 lb. in Denmark, 110 lb. in Germany.

The average annual consumption of milk in the same period was 58 gallons per head in Switzerland, 39 gallons in the United States, 36 gallons in Denmark, 28 gallons in New Zealand, 23 gallons in Great Britain, France and Germany.

The consumption of egg was 172 per head in Great Britain, 284 in Canada, 236 in Belgium, 199 in the United States.

The same report shows that for 1934, the consumption per head of population in Great Britain was as follows :—

115 lbs. of fruit, 164 lb. of vegetables, 101 lb. of potatoes, 143 lbs. of butter, 133 lb. of margarine, 119 lb. of sugar, 106 lb. of meat, 93 lb. of wheat and 146 eggs.

The poor diet of the Bengal peasant stands no comparison with such scale.

a mere political phraseology ; it is *the* problem for the Province.

Background of All Planning and Programme

And the problem has to be courageously faced at once and once for all. Plans and programmes, schemes and proposals, surveys and enquiries that may attract fascination, and yet may take years, if not decades, before they can complete their orbit of revolution to return to the normal plane of practicality, have little value in any immediate solution of the problem. A little sense of proportion in our perspective and outlook is also the imperative need of the hour. With limited means at our disposal, we cannot very well indulge in extravagances and superfluities, hobbies and oddities. In any work of agricultural welfare the means proposed must be such that it may be possible for the average cultivator of humble means to adopt. The activities of the various departments of Government, and specially of the Agriculture and the Veterinary Departments, have to be tuned and tempered accordingly. The Neutral Ammonium Sulphate, the Ammophos and Diamonophos may be experimented for the production of better and more jute, if it is within the means of the average cultivator to purchase them. All manners of manurial experiments may still be carried on with Jute in the agricultural farms, if they are needed in the interest of the grower. Mango trees may be planted in their scores in farms of Eastern Districts to study the causes of mango-weevil, if the flooded lands of these districts can grow mangoes. Heavy bulls may be imported from foreign

countries if the benefit reaches the cultivator. The rab-furnace, the power-driven pug-mill and improved molasses-furnace may be further improved if they can be within the means of the average villager. The Rhode Island Reds and Orpingtons may merrily run about the poultry farm if they can spread through the rural areas of Bengal. The 'Meston' and other improved ploughs may be devised to replace the simple plough of the peasant, if they can be drawn by his weak cattle. Otherwise any research, experiment and demonstration that cannot be of direct and immediate benefit to the cultivator of humble means may await till the immediate problems are at least partially tackled. The peasant with his small holding must be the background of all planning and programme.

No one Solution

The problem facing Bengal to-day is complex in the extreme and requires tackling in many variety of its phases. The economic well-being of the peasant has no one solution. Let us not be under any delusion that the mere solution of the tenancy problem of Bengal is a panacea of all the evils. Even if the Permanent Settlement be totally abolished and the chain of intermediaries be wiped away by a stroke of the pen, we must have clear notion as to how far it will help the peasant to get two square meals a day. Reforms are no doubt urgently needed in the agrarian and land laws of the province. But that is only one of the many problems and does not exhaust all that has to be done.

Market-needs to Grow within the Province

The work has to be so planned and organised that the soil of Bengal may be made to yield all those that can be made to grow within the province. Calcutta and wider Calcutta have a large market. There are 77 markets including 7 Municipal markets within the limits of the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta. The revenues of the 7 Municipal markets fetch over 13 lacs of rupees annually. Near about a lac and half of sheep and over a lac and half of goats are slaughtered for the Calcutta markets every year. Potatoes, peas and tomatoes, pine apples, guavas and oranges, papyas, mangoes and leechies, poultry and eggs, goats and sheep are imported in huge quantity and number for Calcutta from outside the province. And yet most of them can be grown within the province.

New Deals in the World to-day

In any planning of agriculture, the trend of modern developments in other regions of the world may be profitably studied. The world to-day is not what it was even a few years back. Economic welfare of the rural masses is now the most prominent feature of all State activities. Higher interests of national life are rising above the egoism of classes and groups. Free play of competition is being rapidly abandoned in favour of planned production and distribution Integrity of property and sanctity of contracts stand as no serious obstacle in readjusting the terms of agricultural loans and in eliminating peasants' debt burden. Capitalism without being scrapped up is being levelled

down in the higher interests of the community. Economic theories are continuously giving way to economic policies evolved in the exigencies of difficulties. Here in India, men, even with the best of intentions, do not often realise the extent of the new deals in the world to-day. Appendix E is an attempt to enumerate some of the measures taken up by the Governments of other countries and will show the trend of developments abroad. Though neither full nor comprehensive nor even systematic, they are primarily intended to serve as mere indications of tendency and ideology abroad. The world abroad has a large fund of practical knowledge and scientific facts within the last decade ; numerous measures taken for agricultural welfare have added to the experience of the people and the experience of the Government, have affected economic forces and economic thinking of the people and have now woven into the development of life.

National Agricultural Policy

With our knowledge of the agrarian background in Bengal, we can evaluate conditions in terms of world experience and may guide ourselves in our future. The profitableness of world agriculture depends to-day on the intensity of farming, use of technical inventions, marketing organistaions and development of Co-operation. Bengal agriculture and agriculturist stand very much behind by comparison and contrast. The need of the hour is a national agricultural policy and planning, national in the true sense of the term, in which the Government and the

people may work together in taking up ameliorative measures to benefit the rural millions. Unfortunately, we in India too often suffer from frozen notions and chilled ideas. Dead theories still play their part, and orthodoxy and dogmatism often clamp our thoughts and prove a dead-weight to all dynamic actions. Let beaten track be finally abandoned and all of us, peasant, organisation and State, strive towards the betterment of the present conditions of rural agricultural life.

Domination of Urban Interests

The urban interest has been the dominant key-note of most of our activities in the past. We have been more anxious for the 'Bhadraloks' and the city-dwellers. Oftentimes only a few has been benefited at the cost of many. The emaciated, struggling peasant has grown jute and sugar-cane, but he has not always received full value for his crops. "The wonder is that the small farmer on his five-acre holding, weak and isolated as he is, should receive for his crop as much as he does, for as regards much of his produce he is confronted by a thoroughly organized body of distributors and by ultimate consumers no less well equipped, who are able to draw their supplies from every quarter of the globe".*

But let us not moan about the past, so long we can take care of the future. Let us not be hard on anybody; probably things did not shape well inspite of the best intentions behind. The resources of the

* The Indian Peasant, page 30.

State and the will of the people should now combine to build up a better Bengal. The nation building activities of the Government, the beneficent and ameliorative works of local bodies, the social services of the people and the parties should all be dominated by one note—are they for the benefit of the rural millions and to what extent they are so?

Democracy and the Millions

Let us realise that the vast population of the rural areas can no longer be kept content behind the plea of destiny or the inevitable. The peasant has come into contact with the world—he has seen the towns and the cities, their wealth and opulence, their luxuries and pleasures—and he can no longer be kept a mere dumb plodder in the field. To-day his demands are modest, two square meals for himself and his family, minimum literacy for his children, a little healthy and sanitary outlook in his surroundings. Who knows, he will not make radical demands tomorrow? Small reforms not done in time only succeed in demands of drastic nature.

Unless the entire economic outlook of the country is changed in the interest of the rural masses, the very foundations of our economic life may be trembling and shaking, and instead of a stable social order, we may have society disintegrated to atoms and let not Bengal be the storm centre of agrarian difficulties. A nation that neglects its agriculture soon loses its vitality and a bold peasantry when once destroyed can never be supplied. A few cannot live happily in a Democracy without taking the millions with them. Let

us realise that the dominance of the agricultural vote has changed the colour of the country and let something be done, before the political allegiance of the rural constituencies may perchance be allied with social disorders.

"They are Gallant Gentlemen"

Fortunately there are signs of hope, however faint they might be. Here and there men are growing to their senses, even though dark shadows are still around us. Let the Province only read the signs of the times and the dangers that threaten it. The sleeping village may still be sleeping but it will soon awake with its millions and when awake, let them not suffer from agonies and pangs of hunger, thirst, illness and illiteracy driving them to frenzied and mad acts. And we "should think kindly of them, for in truth they are very gallant gentlemen."*

* The Indian Peasant, page 32.

APPENDIX E

WORLD ABROAD*

Replanning of Agriculture—United Kingdom—Sugar—Sugar Industry Enquiry Committee—Sugar Industry Re-organization Act—Sugar Corporation and Sugar Commission—Sugar Subsidy—Agricultural Marketing Act—Hop Boards—Milk Boards—Attested Herds and Premiums—Milk Subsidy—Milk Industry Bill—Wheat Subsidy—Potato Boards—Pigs and Bacon—Land-fertility—Land Drainage—Poultry—Poultry Policy—Other Measures—Housing—Total subsidies—Holland—France—Spain—Italy—Switzerland—Germany — Austria — Hungary — Turkey — Russia — China — Japan—Australia—Newzealand—Canada—United States—Soil Conservation—Crop Subsidies—Housing—Voluntary Labour—Unfair Agricultural Practice—Recovery Relief and New Deals—Mexico —Brazil—St. Helena—South Africa—Egypt.

Replanning of Agriculture

Amidst the multitudes of plans and programmes for the economic reconstruction of the world after the Great War, the development of a new agricultural policy has been the most characteristic feature in almost every country. The shortage of food materials, economic isolation, food tickets and rationing schemes during the war period left bitter memories behind, and theories and doctrines clung to for decades were rapidly abandoned for a new orientation of economic and social policy. Economic sufficiency of every National State and production of more raw materials as a

* The materials for this Appendix had to be very hurriedly compiled in a week, while the book was in the press. It has not been possible to collect full materials and many measures undertaken by different countries had to be left out. The materials collected are merely in the nature of indications and are probably enough to show tendencies in other countries.

measure of national safety became the avowed object of every Government. The world-wide depression, with catastrophic collapse of agricultural prices, brought in newer problems of relief and reconstruction, while the menace of another world war has evolved newer methods of approach to the entire problem of agriculture and its allied industries.

United Kingdom

Nowhere in the world has there been such a phenomenal change in the attitude and outlook of the people and the Government as in the United Kingdom. The traditional policy of *laissez faire* tenaciously clung to for nearly a hundred years was abandoned for a newer planning in the production, distribution and organization of agriculture and agricultural industry. Tariff, subsidy, restriction of home production, restriction or even prohibition of imports, colonial preference and Quotas were all resorted to, to assist the farmer. Price-fixing, market organization, regulated market, planned distribution were deliberately designed and operated for the development of home agriculture and a protecting cover for home agricultural industry in all its manifestations has been the dominant key-note of British agricultural policy for the last decade.

Sugar

The first step towards national planning in the United Kingdom was taken in sugar. There was a very little cultivation of sugar beet in 1924. An Act was passed in 1925 (22 & 23 George V, C 24) by which

the manufactures of home-grown sugar was guaranteed a parliamentary subsidy for ten years. During the first four years of the subsidy, the factories were required to pay a minimum price for beet and thereafter it was a matter of collective bargaining between the Factory Companies and the National Farmers' Union. In ten years, near about £30 million was paid as a subsidy and the value of preference in lower excise rates on home-grown sugar as compared with full Customs duty on imported sugar amounted to a revenue abatement of over £9½ million in the said period. The crop expanded practically from nothing to more than 400,000 acres in the subsidy period and the total production of beet in 1934-35 was more than 4 million tons, amounting to 608,000 tons of sugar.

Sugar Industry Enquiry Committee

Towards the end of the subsidy period, a committee* was appointed, in April 1934, to recommend the future assistance to the sugar industry. While the Committee's report was awaited, the subsidy was continued first by 11 months, and then by another 12 months (British Sugar Subsidy Acts of 1934 and 1935). The Committee by majority (Report of the United Kingdom Sugar Industry Enquiry Committee, CMD 4871, 1935) rcommended the cessation of subsidy. The majority views were obviously influenced by the force of economic arguments against its continuance. The United Kingdom

* Mr. Wilfred Greene, K.C. (later Lord Justice Greene)—Chairman; and Sir Kenneth Lee and Mr. C. E. Lloyd—Members.

had still to import a huge quantity of sugar for the British consumers. It was about 48 million cwt. in 1932. The commodity was available in quantities almost unlimited at prices far below the cost of home production and it was the principal export of some of the British colonies and dependencies. To continue the subsidy was, therefore, to pay heavily from the public revenues for the production of only a limited quantity.

Sugar Industry Reorganization Act

The Government, however, decided on a wider issue in favour of the permanent continuance of the subsidy instead of dislocating a large section of arable farming. The Minister of Agriculture on the Second Reading of the Sugar Industry Reorganization Bill on February 10, 1936, stated that the fundamental reason why the Government had rejected the recommendation was that the Committee looked on sugar alone, but that the Government had to look at agriculture and indeed at employment as a whole. He maintained that an alternative crop was impracticable, as there was no alternative crop or alternative industry to which the farmers could turn and every industry now required and obtained protection against world competition.

So long the nation's liability was not limited, but hereafter the subsidy was restricted to a definite quantity of home-grown sugar with correlative restriction on the acreage of sugar beet—560,000 tons of white sugar, the estimated production of 375,000 acres.

Sugar Corporation and Sugar Commission

The Sugar Industry Enquiry Committee, however, recommended a new phase of industrial policy, if state assistance was to be continued, and following their recommendations the Sugar Industry Reorganization Act (26 George V & 1 Edward VIII) was passed in 1936 by which all the sugar factories were amalgamated into a single corporation, the British Sugar Corporation Ltd., under the supervision of a Sugar Commission to be permanently established. The Corporation was empowered to supplement its working capital by a Treasury Guarantee of Debentures issued by the Corporation up to £1,000,000. The Corporation was liable (1) to pay the growers a price fixed for each of following two years and thereafter as may be determined after consultation with the Sugar Commission, by negotiation between the Corporation and a Sugar Marketing Board, or if there be no such Board, representatives of the growers, (2) to comply with the proposals submitted to and approved by the Sugar Commission relating the production and marketing of white sugar and (3) to ensure purchase of machinery and plants, as far as possible, of British manufacture. The Corporation rate of dividend was not to exceed 7 per cent. per annum, except in special circumstances and with the prior approval of the Sugar Commission. The Corporation was empowered to make representations for increased financial assistance from Government, if the dividend falls below 4 per cent. to enable it to pay a dividend of 4 per cent. The Government was to have wide powers in the

management and administration of the Sugar Corporation. The Chairman and two other members of the Board of Directors were to be appointed by Government, other members of the Board to be approved by Government, future vacancies in the directorate not to be filled up without consulting the Sugar Commission, all higher appointments to be subject to prior consultation with the Sugar Commission, all original appointments subject to Treasury approval, and the Chairman of the Corporation to have suspensory veto on any proposal involving questions of public policy subject to approval of Government. The Sugar Commission will have the power to determine the beet prices and the other conditions of sale and will exercise a general supervision in matters affecting the public interest.

As a matter of fact, on the failure of the growers' representative and the Corporation to reach agreement on prices, the Sugar Commission determined the terms and conditions of the price of sugar beet of 1937 crop delivered at factories. The Commission also fixed price for 1938 crop.

Pending a special enquiry, growers in outgoing areas were paid to cover railway freights in excess of 7*s.* per ton on all sugar beet, so that they may not be at a disadvantage in comparison with the growers in the neighbouring areas.

Sugar Subsidy

The following Table will show the subsidy and revenue abatement on home-grown sugar: —

	Subsidy	Revenue abatement
	£	£
10 years—1924-25 to 1933-34	... 30,112,007	10,006,000
1934-35	... 4,429,565	3,092,000
1935-36	... 2,623,457	2,438,000
1936-37	... 2,576,031	2,675,000

Agricultural Marketing Act

But the most important measure in the evolution of national policy is the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1931. Giving effect to principle of "Compulsory co-operation in agriculture," "the Act has been variously described as the charter of economic planning" or "the charter of industrial self-government," and has become the central pivot of all subsequent agricultural policy. "Where a given percentage of the producers of a given commodity in a given area agreed to market that produce entirely through one single organization and to bind themselves by its regulations, then the Government would step in to compel the minority also to market the produce entirely through the single corporation and be bound by its regulations."

The Act at first provided for national or regional schemes for the marketing of agricultural produce and the organization of the home producers, but in 1933 power was taken under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1933 for restricting the importation of any class of produce provided the home producers

have taken steps to organise the industry under a Marketing Board.

Under the Act schemes are to be submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and after certain preliminaries the scheme in its final form has to be approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament. A Marketing Board is then set up under certain regulations.

Hop Marketing Board

Immediately after the passing of the Act, the hop growers were the first to organise a marketing scheme and a Hop Marketing Board was established in 1932. In 1934, the Hop Marketing Board applied to the Parliament for sanction of amendment of its original scheme so that every grower may be allowed a basic quota and that hops grown excess of it should take their chance of the market. This was sanctioned by the Parliament. In the meantime a committee was appointed to consider the schemes for securing closer co-operation between brewers and growers and an agreement was reached between the Hop Marketing Board by which Quota Hops were to be guaranteed a fixed price dependent on negotiations between the brewers and growers and Non-Quota hop-growers would depend on what they could get. Following the recommendations of the Committee, a Permanent Joint Committee was appointed in October, 1934, to control production and to determine prices and to recommend the regulation of importation of hops. A permanent levy fund was also established to be administered by the above committee, if necessary to

buy unsold balance of the total market demand, and to make up any deficiency, if the Brewers' payments are inadequate to pay the price on the estimated demand. The present Quota provision will end in July, 1939.

It is interesting to note that surplus hops were sold for manure at a nominal price.

Milk Boards

By the end of 1937, six marketing schemes* under the Agricultural Marketing Act were in operation in connection with milk marketing, covering the whole of the United Kingdom, except the countries of Elgin and Banff and parts of Argyll, in Scotland.

A Butter and Cream Marketing Board was also established for Northern Ireland on 5th May, 1936. The total volume of sales under the milk marketing schemes in 1935-36 was about 1,157 million gallons, of which 746 million gallons were used for liquid consumption.

The characteristic features of most of these schemes are that "all producers, except these selling only to their farm or domestic workers for consumption in the household of these workers, must be registered, and all milk with certain exceptions

* Milk Marketing Board, England & Wales—6 Oct., 1933.
Scottish Milk Marketing Board—1 December, 1933.
Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Board—1 August, 1934.
Milk Industry Council, Northern Ireland—16 Aug., 1934.
North of Scotland Milk Marketing Board—1 Oct., 1934.
Milk Marketing Association, Isle of Man—25 Oct., 1934.

including producer-retailers must be sold through the Board. Differential prices are fixed by the Marketing Boards according to the use to which the milk is put, the main distinction being between milk sold for liquid consumption and that sold for manufacturing purposes. Special efforts are made to increase liquid consumption and milk is supplied cheap to expectant and nursing mothers and to schools. Special levies are made on sales of different categories and utilised for various purposes. State subsidy is given to raise the returns for manufacturing milk and farm house cheese, to improve the quality of the milk supply, to increase the demand for milk, to provide cheap milk for school children, to finance an investigation into the nutritional value of milk and for publicity. Milk is now made available to children in most granted schools at $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per one-third of a pint. In England and Wales the Exchequer bears half the loss on the first 18 million gallons of milk sold each year and thereafter a quarter of the loss ; the loss being calculated on the differential prices between the school supply and wholesale prices. Milk bars are also being encouraged.

Attested Herds and Premiums

With a view to secure pure milk free from infection for home consumption, state assistance is also given to owners of attested herds after examination and test, and this is given in the form of an attested bonus at a flat rate. Different tests are also made to find out if cows are free from diseases and quality premiums are paid.

Milk Subsidies

Huge amount of subsidies on milk has been paid from public funds. And in a Parliamentary White Paper issued on July 29, 1937, Government announced its decision to offer nearly £2,000,000 a year over the next four years for the production of high-grade milk, the amount to be distributed as additional premiums to the contract wholesale prices and for other purposes.

Milk Industry Bill

The new Milk Industry Bill was published on November 17, 1938, to assist the milk industry to become "permanently self-supporting and profitable."

The object of the bill is to secure an increase in the consumption of liquid milk and to this end producers are to be offered increased inducements to provide cleaner and purer milk. The main provisions of the Bill are: —

The constitution of a Milk Commission, consisting of a Chairman and eight members, appointed directly by the Minister of Agriculture and the Secretary for Scotland; gradual rationalisation of the distributing side; substantial Exchequer contributions, estimated at £2,000,000 during 1938-39, £2,300,000 for 1939-40, and £1,700,000 for 1940-41, in addition to existing Exchequer commitments under the attested herds scheme; extension until September, 1943, of the period during which Exchequer assistance will be available for milk-in-schools schemes and schemes for providing milk at reduced prices to

nursing and expectant mothers and young children; safeguarding of producers against serious falls in butter and cheese prices; and the regulations of imports of milk and milk products.

Wheat Subsidy

A new method of subsidy was followed in the case of wheat. The funds from which the subsidy was paid was derived from a levy imposed on all wheat flours sold by the millers or importers of flours. Out of the fund the wheat producers as a whole were granted an average given price for all wheat of available quality. The farmer got its price from the open market and then got the deficiency payment. There was, however, a limit of 27,000,000 cwt. as the total amount of wheat upon which the average price was paid. The total amount of subsidy on wheat amounted to £4,511,000 in 1932-33, £7,180,000 in 1933-34, £6,810,000 in 1934-35, £5,640,000 in 1935-36. The whole general policy of wheat subsidy was considered in 1937 and it was decided to continue the subsidy, but the maximum amount of home-grown wheat on which full deficiency payments can be made was raised to 36,000,000 cwt. It may be noted that Great Britain has to import the bulk of the wheat required from abroad and barely 22 per cent was the quantity of home-grown wheat.

Potato Board

Potatoes came under the control of a marketing scheme during the year 1934-35. Registered growers were allotted acreage quotas but there was no

prohibition on new entrants into the industry, nor on extension of acreage by growers already registered. Instead a fine of £5 an acre is imposed on anything beyond the quota. There is, however, a restriction on the quantities of potatoes reaching the market, which operates by the regulation of the size of the riddle over which potatoes are sorted. In times of plenty the use of larger mesh is ordered by the Board, so as to eliminate more of the smaller potatoes. The Potato Marketing Board does not intervene between growers and merchants to control prices, but potato dealers must be licensed. The crop in 1934 was a bountiful one, and in the autumn the import of foreign main-crop potatoes was prohibited except under license. More than once in recent years the home market has been upset by the arrivals of main-crop potatoes from the Continent, not in very large quantities, but sufficient to exert a psychological effect upon buyers and detrimental to the home-producers. The prohibition is intended to protect them in times of plenty while the power to grant import licenses should secure the interests of the consumer in seasons of scarcity.

An interesting experiment in bulk distribution was organized by the Potato Marketing Board. By arrangements with the merchants and retailers in a depressed area, which secured to each their margins, potatoes were to be deposited in quantities in certain centres in the area, for sale at reduced prices to the unemployed. The object of the experiment is to find out whether demand is stimulated by price reduction, so it might be tried with advantage with other

commodities, particularly milk. In congested areas there might well be a big unexploited market for commodities which people could fetch themselves from public depots, thus escaping high retail distribution costs. Potatoes are controlled more rigidly than any other agricultural commodity except hops. Under the restriction of acreage implict in the Potato Marketing Board's acreage quota scheme and the prohibition of imports except under licence, prices for home-grown potatoes have been maintained at remunerative levels.

Pigs and Bacon

Pigs and bacon are also under the control of Marketing Boards. Emergency legislation* was passed to provide a subsidy not exceeding £3,000,000 to the producers of fat cattle during the last seven months of the year 1934-35. The provisions of this Act were extended from time to time, till the Live Stock Industry Act of 1937 was passed, by which a Live Stock Commission Advisory Committee were constituted, Cattle subsidy was to continue, imported cattle was to be marked, live stock, meat imports and live stock markets were to be regulated, and the cattle Fund was to receive an annual sum not exceeding £5,000,000 a year for payment of subsidies.

Land Fertility

Under the provisions of the Agriculture Act, 1937, a Land Fertility Committee has been constituted to administer a parliamentary Fund for the increase of

* Cattle Industry Emergency Provisions Act, 1934.

the fertility of agricultural land in the shape of contributions towards the cost incurred by farmers in adding lime or basic slag. The scheme provides for the payment of half the cost of buying and transporting lime and a quarter of the cost of buying and transporting basic slag produced in the United Kingdom. The scheme for the present is limited to costs incurred before 31st July, 1940, with possible extensions until 31st July, 1942. Up till the end of 1937, 67,300 applications for contributions had been received by the Land Fertility Committee for 383,000 tons of lime and 203,000 tons of basic slag, involving estimated contributions of £231,000 and £120,000 respectively.

Land Drainage

Parliamentary Funds are also available for contributing to the expenses of land drainage schemes incurred by certain drainage authorities. The scheme is operative till 31st July, 1940.

Poultry

A Poultry re-organization commission was appointed to consider the problems of the poultry industry and in accordance with its recommendations a Poultry Technical Committee was appointed on 17th September, 1935. It was found that the high mortality rate among poultry was having a serious effect upon the economic position of the poultry industry. A national service of Veterinary Inspectors has been established and available for the treatment of poultry diseases.

Poultry Policy

Mr. W. S. Morrison, Minister of Agriculture, made a statement in the House of Commons on July 11, 1938, about the Government's policy to help the poultry industry. Mr. Morrison said, it was proposed that a Poultry Commission for Great Britain should be set up with power to control the distribution of breeding stock, hatching eggs, and day-old chicks, and with the responsibility of conducting a stock improvement on voluntary lines, assisted by premiums from the Exchequer on a diminishing scale. The Government were also prepared to facilitate the establishment of a Research station for the investigation of the major disease problems of the industry.

The Minister indicated that the regulation of marketing under a producer's marketing scheme would present a formidable task, and that as an alternative the Government proposed that the Poultry Commission should be given power to regulate the marketing of eggs and of dead poultry up to the point of final sale to the consumer. He added that it was not proposed to give an Exchequer subsidy to the industry, but that the Government proposed to seek power to regulate imports of eggs and other poultry products to prevent possible dislocation of the market by abnormal oversea supplies.

Other Measures.

But apart from direct State assistance the agricultural population gets the benefits of schemes of public works, housing etc. both from the State and local bodies. During the year ending March 31, 1937,

the Ministry sanctioned the borrowing of £81,000,000 for Capital purposes by local authorities of which £33 million was for housing, £16 million for public Health including water supply and £10 million for Education.

Housing

The new Housing (Financial Provision) Bill issued on February 3, 1938, provides, among others, for the general needs of the agricultural population by proposing a subsidy of £10 a year for 40 years, with power to the Minister to increase the amount to a maximum of £12 in special cases, for housing purposes. An annual subsidy of £10 may be paid to the owner of the house for the time being in respect of houses provided by private persons for agricultural workers, if the district council considers that this is the most convenient method of providing the houses. The houses must be reserved for the agricultural population and must not be let at a rent exceeding a figure fixed by the local agricultural wages committee.

The Ministry of Health estimates that with the new scale of subsidies it should be possible to let cottages for the agricultural population at rents of 3s. to 4s. a week.

The financial memorandum attached to the Bill estimates that the ultimate annual charge for this part of the scheme, on a 40 years' basis, would be as follows: —

	Exchequer	Local Rates
	£	£
For 30,000 houses for the agricultural population ...	310,000	30,000

Total Subsidies

According to figures supplied by Sir John Simon in a written reply on July 16, 1938, the total amount of subsidies paid since October 1, 1931, and payable till the end of the year 1938 from public Fund was as follows: —

	£
Beet sugar	21,164,399
Cattle Industry (to producers) ...	18,218,859
Milk	5,764,297
Land Fertility Improvement ...	1,889,205
Oats and Barley	203,000
Tramp shipping	4,002,183
Light Horse Breeding ...	49,000
Herring Industry	130,157
Total £	51,421,100

Holland

From figures available, it appears that in 1931 there were 24 millions of hens in Holland and the annual production of eggs was 2 milliards. The total production of poultry farming was nearly £10,000,000 and the value of exports of eggs amounted to over £5,200,000. The number of dairy cattle increased so much in Holland that it was necessary to regulate the number in 1934 and to discourage unnecessary production.

France

In France a legislation was passed to prevent over-production of wheat and proposing the State

purchase of surplus wheats. In July, 1936, a programme of public works was announced costing £260,000,000 spreading over three years to provide among others for schemes for supply of drinking water, electricity and reafforestation to the countryside, and other agricultural and rural needs.

Spain

In August, 1931, the Spanish Government accepted the recommendation of the Committee for agrarian reform and a decree was published for the nationalisation of the large Estates which were grants by Royal Charters and were handed down in tact from generation to generation. This was an end of the long era of feudalism in Spain. The nationalised land will be given to the farmers to manage and will remain State property.

Italy

In Italy, debts have been settled according to plan and the Government has made grants for the payment of interest in certain province with a particularly heavy indebtedness or in specially difficult cases. From the beginning of the Fascist era, till July 1, 1933, 5,270 million lire were spent for the improvement of soil including cultivation of marshes. Eight Corporations were organised in 1934 to lay down economic principles for the organization and direction of production. Regulation of production and distribution has been resorted to.

In an Official Gazette published in January, 1935, imports were prohibited in Italy of wheat and wheat

flours, fresh or chilled meat, citrus fruits and certain other raw articles with a view to encouraging home production.

Switzerland

The Cereals Legislation guarantees the wheat price. The State takes over all cereals which can be used in baking and offered to the State.

The State and milk associations subsidize butter prices.

Imported feeds and green fodders are submitted to a heavy charge, the revenues of which are given by the State to the milk associations to help the prices of milk.

The State pays contributions towards the transport of cattle from the breeding districts to the plain and premiums for breeding cattle intended for export.

A quota is imposed on the import of eggs in order to protect home poultry farms.

It is contemplated to pay off debts exceeding the value of the yield.

The Swiss Diet increased imports duties heavily in November, 1934, on semi-tropical fruits to restrict imports with a view to promoting the sale of home-grown fruits.

Germany

By a decree issued in August, 1934, all prices in Germany were placed under Government control with a view to having uniformity of prices throughout Germany, specially of foodstuff. Every kind of association of traders was prohibited from fixing prices

without obtaining the consent of the price Controller and producers and wholesale dealers were similarly prohibited from fixing retail prices. The intervention of middlemen who cause difficulty, delay or an increase in the price of an article on its way from the producer to the consumer was also prohibited at the discretion of the Controller. Interests on mortgage bonds were reduced to $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in January, 1935. Action was taken in October, 1936, against all forms of profiteering and to prevent a rise in price. In January, 1937, a law was passed making it illegal to buy agricultural or forest lands with the exception of lots under 5 acres in extent, without a permit from Government, the object being to remove the food state of the German people from the arena of capitalistic bargaining.

Minimum prices for certain articles were officially fixed. State Purchases were resorted to. Producers in some cases have to compulsorily join producers' unions. Regulations were promulgated for the improvement of market conditions, and determination of grades for several products. Quotas were comprehensively planned for the production of margarine together with an imposition of a consumption tax. Imports are regulated in quality, price and quantity, corresponding to the requirements of the German market. Commodities of home production can be excluded from market and sale in certain areas can be prescribed. Thus the marketing channels and the fixing of prices for all the important agricultural products are regulated on a planned basis.

Austria

A decree passed in April, 1932, provided a long list of articles including bananas, vegetables, sugar, wheat, cotton etc. not to be imported without a permit in each individual case restricting import by about 25 per cent, with a view to increasing home production.

Hungary

A five-year programme of national equipment of Hungary was announced by the Prime Minister M. Daranyi, on March 6, 1938. Schemes to promote agriculture and the social welfare of the rural population were proposed to be taken up and £4,000,000 were earmarked to liquidate agricultural debts and restore normal credit condition. A capital levy, on private fortunes, exceeding £2,000,000 will be imposed.

Turkey

The industrialisation and modernisation of the Turkish Republic in a five-year plan was announced in September, 1937. This plan was mainly concerned with mining and electricity, and a number of power station producing current at low cost were under construction. Ambitious plans for the modernisation of the Eastern Provinces were formulated, chief among them being the breaking-up of the large landed estates and their distribution among the peasantry, thus putting an end to feudalism in this region. Factories will also be built here, together with a comprehensive public works programme of road, railway, bridge, hospital and school construction.

maximum quantity which may be owned by individuals or corporations.

The Kuomintang, as soon as it assumed office, ordered farmers' rents to be reduced by 25 per cent. This measure has been successfully enforced in the provinces of Kwangtung and Chekiang. In August, 1929, the Permanent Central Committee of the Kuomintang adopted provisional regulations as to the rent reduction of 25 per cent for the province of Chekiang. These provisional regulations fixed the rent payable to the owner of the land at 37·5 per cent of the principal crop (rice in the case of Chekiang), while the accessory products were retained by the farmers. Should the rate charged before the promulgation of the new regulations have been lower than the official rate, the old rate was to be maintained and could not be increased.

This measure, which protects the farmers' interests, is to be gradually extended to all the provinces.

Japan

The latest important move on the "economic front" in Japan is the announcement of a "four-year plan of national expansion" which will provide for: (1) expansion of heavy industries: (2) increase of light industries to swell the export trade: (3) joint development of Japanese Manchukuan and North Chinese economic resources: (4) systematisation of labour power: (5) rationalisation of the standard of living: (6) a "re-examination of science and culture in their application to expanding productive activity."

With effect from October 10, 1937, permits are required for the entry into Japan of some 300 categories of foreign goods. It is estimated that this will effect a reduction of £23,530,000 a year in the country's import bill, of which luxuries and semi-luxuries will account for £13,530,000 and will greatly encourage production of Japanese goods.

Australia

In November, 1932, the Prime Minister of Australia announced a fertilizer subsidy of £250,000 for primary producers other than wheat-growers and a remission of land tax by 30%; £2,000,000 was also provided for the relief of the wheat-growers. A flour tax was imposed in November, 1933, to yield a revenue of £1,600,000 and this supplemented by £1,400,000 from general revenues was voted for the relief of the wheat-growers. For the 1935 season, a wheat bounty of £4,000,000 was proposed. A conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers in December, 1934, proposed the establishment of a permanent Federal Rural Rehabilitation Fund to provide £12,000,000 as interest free advances to needy farmers to be given in three years.

Moratorium, reduction of interest and debt adjustment have been freely resorted to and direct subsidies have also been paid.

Speaking in the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia on May 27, 1938, Mr. Casey, said that Government assistance to primary industries in the past five years had amounted to

£21,292,978, of which wheat had required £11,054,263, farmers' debt adjustment £4,317,000, artificial manure £1,605,689, fruit £606,059, cotton £493,915, wine export £1,176,145, tobacco £75,000, cattle tick control £320,250, forestry £563,500, gold £97,528, mining £493,750, and sulphur £362,325. The estimate of such requirements in 1937-38 was £3,433,000. Bounties paid to the secondary industries in the past two years amounted to £1,875,816, of which £1,550,918 was for iron and steel.

Marketing Boards have also been established in States and producers of several categories are compelled to sell their output through that channel. As. Prof. G L. Wood of Melbourne University says: Collectivisation is in fact almost complete in Australia.

New Zealand

New Zealand provided a guaranteed-price plan to protect primary producers from market fluctuations and a bill was introduced in April, 1936, to acquire the produce for export and to acquire or control the produce for internal consumption. Market price will be fixed on the basis of the average price for the preceding eight to ten years period after considering other special factors and all produce exported will be the property of Government.

A system of State purchase of export produce at a fixed or "guaranteed" price has been introduced for the benefit of the small farmer. The scheme has only been applied to dairy produce as yet, though price control has also been extended to the internal market. A vigorous campaign of industrial development, public

works and housing programmes have been accompanied by control of prices, setting up of control boards. Farmers are supplied at the lowest rate. Goods required by farmers are carried in Railways at an unremunerative low rate, while lime required for fertility purposes is carried free up to distance of 100 miles.

The Primary Products Marketing Amendment Bill, empowering the Government to regulate the internal food market, was passed by the New Zealand House of Representatives on December 5, 1937. It will enable the Marketing Department to fix maximum and minimum prices for dairy produce, fruit, eggs and any other foodstuffs prescribed by Order in Council. The Government may also buy foodstuffs at fixed prices and export them.

Canada*

In Canada the budget of 1933 provided the establishment of an agricultural stabilization fund by which exporters to British markets of agricultural commodities excepting grain would be paid the difference between the Pound Sterling taken at 4 Dollars 60 cents and the price actually received.

A Fruit Control Board was established for regulating the export of fruits. A Wheat Board was similarly established in July, 1935.

The Albertan Government in April, 1937, introduced legislation for debt reduction providing for the principal of all debts incurred before January, 1932,

* A Pound-Sterling has been taken as equivalent to five Dollars.

to be halved and the remainder plus unpaid interest and less any sum paid since then, being paid in ten annual instalments.

Farmers are paid advances to carry over the surplus wheat for future sale. Direct bonuses are also paid to wheat growers. Empire preference and the Ottawa pact have secured better market for the Canadian farmers. Speaking in 1934, Prof. J. E. Lattimer of Quebec said, about £1,800,000 has been advanced from federal funds for the purchase of seed. Farm mortgages are now financed by the Canadian Farm Loan Board and in 1934, an appropriation of £6,000,000 was made for the extension of the operation of the Board. Natural Products Marketing Act* was passed to regulate the marketing of products.

The Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act has been passed for debt adjustment, involving considerable interference with money contracts. Marketing legislation has been passed by several States for the establishment of control boards. Purchasers have in some cases to pay a direct charge or a direct toll. Some of the marketing legislation has been challenged on the ground of the competency of the Dominion of State legislatures and a Royal Commission has been appointed to enquire into the economic and financial basis of confederation and the distribution of legislative powers.

The farmers get a subsidy from the Government with a maximum limit of £30 for a dam and £15 for

* The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council later decided the Act to be beyond the constitutional competence of the Dominion Government.

a small "dugout," provided the work is done according to specifications and under the supervision of Government engineers. A subsidy with a maximum limit of £70 is also available for small irrigation projects, undertaken by individual farmers to assure themselves of food for livestock and garden produce in dry years. About 10,000 applications were received by October, 1937.

United States*

Relief has been given in the United States of America by reductions in taxes and in interest burdens. By the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act of 1933, relief has been given to the farmers by the refinancing of indebtedness, reducing interest rates and deferring payments on the principle of loans. The Farm Credit Act of the same year provided a complete federal credit service for agriculture. In the first year of operation, the administration loaned on farm mortgages over £200 million to about 400,000 farmers throughout the country. Credit associations have been organised to make short-term credit loans on crop and chattel security. By the provisions of the Emergency Agricultural Relief Act, production has been curtailed, benefit payments have been paid. Acreages have been cut down and both wheat and cotton production has been restricted. Better marketings have been organised. Prices advanced and the price-advance was sufficient to do much more that offset the reduction

* Dollars have been converted to Pound-Sterling taking a Pound equivalent to five Dollars.

in marketings. The benefit payment was paid in the 1933 season alone to the extent of £19,720,000.

Soil Conservation

According to the figures of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration published on April 3, 1938, £75,218,365 had been paid to about 4,000,000 farmers for co-operating in the 1936 soil conservation programme. £4,421,701 was also spent in administering the programme.

In March, 1936, President Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act providing £100,000,000 annual farm benefits to develop a long-time programme for American agriculture.

Crops Subsidies

It was also announced on August 15, 1933, that the Administration would pay to wheat farmers a subsidy of from $5\frac{1}{8}$ to 6 shilling a bushel for compliance with planting restrictions of 1934 compared with $2\frac{2}{8}$ shilling under the 1933 programme. Increased rates were also promised for several other major crops, with funds totalling £142,400,000 expected to be available for payments.

In May, 1937, a new farm programme was announced employing compulsory control of production to ensure parity prices for certain agricultural commodities.

Housing

Housing programme is another means by which the recovery of national income has been attempted.

The Wagner-Steagall Housing Act authorising the Federal Government to lend to local authorities a total of £100,000,000 for slum clearance and the provision of modern dwellings for those in the lowest income class was signed by President Roosevelt on September 2, 1937. The money will be furnished by bond issue. In addition, the Government may make grants outright for the same purpose to the extent of £5,000,000.

A bill amending the Federal Housing Act, designed to stimulate a £16,000,000,000 nation-wide home-building programme for the purpose of halting the business recession through giving a fillip to the building trade and industries, was signed by President Roosevelt on February 4, 1938.

Voluntary Labour

Voluntary Labour Service has been organised on an elaborate scale in the United States. The voluntary labour camps set up during the depression for unemployed youths and men in various parts of the U. S. A. will, as announced by the Government in 1937, continue for a further period of three years. The number of entrants and trainees in the camps is to be limited to an aggregate of 3,000,000 which is 50,000 less than the total of 1936. To this must be added 10,000 Indians and 5,000 others in camps in Alaska, Porto Rico, Hawaii and the Virgin Islands. In the first quarter of the year 1937, 1849 camps existed. The inmates are engaged primarily in works of agriculture reafforestation.

Unfair Agricultural Practice

It was also proposed to make it an "unfair agricultural practice" for any farmer to exceed his marketing quota and penalty taxes were provided.

Recovery Relief and New Deal

The benefit payment on crop control programmes up till February, 1934, totalled the sum of £38,800,000.

An analysis of Treasury Department statistics of the United States shows that the Roosevelt administration has spent more than £4,062,400,000 for Recovery Relief and other New Deal projects from 1933 to 1938.

Following are some of the expenditures between March 4, 1933 and April 20, 1938:—

	£
Work Relief	1,408,000,000
Direct Relief	632,600,000
Agricultural Adjustment Programme	462,800,000
Agricultural Aid (Recovery Relief) ...	245,400,000
Highways	277,800,000
National Defence (Recovery Relief) ...	99,400,000
Reconstruction Finance Corporation ...	55,600,000
Home Owners' Loan Corporation ...	40,000,000
Low Cost Housing and Slum Clearance	24,600,000
	3,246,200,000

Mexico

The Mexican Government announced in April, 1938, the establishment of a national sugar co-operative organisation to handle all sugar refining, fix prices and generally control the industry.

Brazil

It has been a recognised policy in Brazil to burn surplus stocks of coffee. Planting of coffee was also prohibited for a period of 5 years in December, 1932, and coffee was destroyed to the extent of 35,121,000 bags up to September 30, 1935, since the inception of the scheme.

St. Helena

Comprehensive measures to restore prosperity to the colony of St. Helena were being considered by the Colonial Office in November, 1938, to remedy the acute economic distress afflicting St. Helena. Measures had been taken to rectify deficiencies in the diet of those of the 4,000 inhabitants who, living mainly on rice and fish, were suffering from malnutrition. Consignments of cod liver oil and various nutritive foods were sent out for free distribution.

Another measure under consideration was a scheme of land settlement to enable families to grow their own produce or to supplement their income in other ways.

South Africa

The South African budget provided a sum of £5,000,000 in 1933 for the relief of the farming industry.

Egypt

Although Egypt is predominantly an agricultural country, she has largely developed her industry in recent years to provide an outlet for a steadily

increasing population and to establish a better balanced national economy. Generally speaking, Egyptian industries are based on the agricultural and mineral products of the country and include conditioning and processing for export and manufacture for the home market. The import of raw cotton is prohibited. Egypt is now self-supporting in sugar. In 1936-37 some 1,425,000 tons of cane were pressed, which produced 137,000 tons of refined sugar for home consumption.

Egypt is now also practically self-supporting in food grains, and the milling industry is developing on modern lines. In 1936 the area under wheat was 1,400,000 acres and the crop was estimated to be 1,244,000 tons.

The Egyptian fishing industry is also of great importance. The Nile is rich in fish fauna of the African type and there are also delta lakes in communication both with the Nile system and the Mediterranean, a lagoon north of Senai, and, last but not the least, a coast of more than 1,000 miles bordering both the Red Sea and the Meditteranean. The seas along these coasts bring to Egypt an Indo-Pacific as well as a modified Atlantic fauna. The annual catch is about 40,000 tons of fish. It is valued at £1,000,000, and includes between 5,000 and 10,000 tons of sardines.

APPENDIX F

RECENT AGRARIAN REFORMS

Since this book has been through the Press, important changes have been made in the Tenancy Laws of the Province. They are briefly enumerated below: —

(*a*) The occupancy raiyats have been granted the free and unrestricted right of transfer of their holdings.

(*b*) Provisions about Selami and Pre-emption in favour of landlords on transfer of occupancy holdings have been abolished.

(*c*) Realisation of *Abwabs* has been made liable to civil penalties.

(*d*) All provisions relating to enhancement of rent of an occupancy raiyat, excepting on account of increase of area, has been suspended for ten years with effect from the 27th August, 1937.

(*e*) An amending Bill has been passed in the Assembly to ensure that enhancement of rent on account of increase of area can only be claimed on definite proof of increase of area, and only if the Court holds that a tenant possesses additional area outside the actual or original boundaries of the tenancy.

(*f*) Certificate powers in favour of private landlords have been abolished and issue of certificates in Court of Wards Estates has been suspended.

(g) Interest on arrears of rent has been reduced from 12½ per cent to 6¼ per cent per annum, while compensation, if claimed in lieu of interest on such arrears, has been reduced from 25 per cent to 12½ per cent on the aggregate total of the arrear claim.

Legislation has also been introduced for registration of money-lenders, control of money-lending, reduction of rates of interest and other incidental and ancillary matters. The bill has not yet been passed into law, but it is anticipated that rates of interest on loans may be substantially reduced.

A Commission has been appointed to enquire into the entire land system of Bengal, with a view to taking up future remedial measures.

A Committee has been appointed to consider the feasibility of restricting jute acreages by legislation and control of prices.

A few other Committees have been appointed to consider other necessary measures of reforms.

Government has recently announced its policy of giving effect to the provisions of the Bengal Primary Education Act which involves imposition of a primary Education Cess on rural population.

It is understood that the Agricultural Debtors Act which provides for voluntary and compulsory adjustment of accumulated debts is to be further amended.

The Co-operative Department has been further strengthened and reorganised to ensure better working of the Co-operative Societies and Banks and to extend the scope of the movement.