

THE NEW PROVINCE
OF
EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM,
1905-1911

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with some aspects of the development of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, which was created in 1905 during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. It covers the period from 1905 to 1911.

No research work has previously been done on the growth of the province, although most of the works on twentieth-century Indian nationalism refer to or devote some pages to its creation. Contemporary and recent studies -- Fraser's India Under Curzon and After, Ronaldshay's Life of Lord Curzon, Wasti's Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905-1911, and various London University theses, such as Ahmed's Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912), McLane's The Development of Nationalist Ideas and Tactics ...: 1897-1905 and Zaidi's The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment -- give accounts of the partition and the agitation that followed it or the politics involved in it. However, they have not analysed the social and economic development that took place in the new province after the partition.

The present work is a humble attempt to construct the history of the province: it gives in brief the

circumstances leading to the emergence of the province, and discusses the progress of the province in transport and trade, indigenous industry and education. An attempt is also made to study some Bengali historical writings of both Hindus and Muslims in order to see the reasons stimulating them to write; two Muslim journals are examined to discover the Muslim attitude to the changes taking place and to social problems.

This thesis is mainly based on the proceedings of the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the private papers of relevant administrators and the records of the government of India. Government reports, various journals, newspapers and printed books have also been consulted.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- I.O.L. India Office Library.
- P.P. Parliamentary Papers.
- S.H.L. Senate House Library.
- U.L.C. University Library, Cambridge.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND : THE CREATION OF THE NEW PROVINCE

The new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam came into being on 16 October 1905. Before its creation it formed a part of Bengal which grew gradually too vast for efficient administration. From time to time, efforts were made to detach its distant areas from Bengal in order to form them into separate administrative units. The idea was to ensure a better local administration of those outlying areas and, at the same time, to offer relief to Bengal. In 1836, the Upper Provinces were separated from Bengal and were put under a lieutenant-governor. In 1854, for administrative convenience, Bengal, which had so long been under the governor-general in council, was provided with a lieutenant governorship. In 1874, Assam was taken away from Bengal to be formed into a chief commissionership; in 1898 Lushai Hills were added to it. In 1903, proposals were first considered for partitioning Bengal and consequently, in 1905, the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was created. There is very little reason to doubt that Curzon's partition scheme of 1903 was based on grounds of administrative efficiency.

"There seems to be no ground whatsoever for the charge that Curzon, in 1903, hoped to divide the Bengal[i] speaking people in order to reduce their political strength. ... The political argument had little influence (and it may not have even occurred to him) on his decision to partition Bengal in 1903. ... It was only during the protests against the original plan that officials first saw the possible political benefits of a divided Bengal."¹

The name Bengal is derived from the ancient Vanga,² a kingdom conterminous with the delta of Bengal to the south of the Ganges and to the east of the "heavenly Bhagirathi".³ Under Muslim rule the name applied specifically to the Gangetic delta, although the conquests to the east of the Brahmaputra, were eventually included within it. After the establishment of the British power in India, the name assumed different significance at different times. All

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1. MacLane, J.R., The Development of Nationalist Ideas and Tactics and the Policies of the Government of India: 1897-1905 (London Ph.D. Thesis, 1961), pp.333 and 363.
 2. Bourdillon, S.J., "The Partition of Bengal", Journal of the Society of Arts, London, vol. LIV, 1905-6, p.102. Also Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 3, under "Bengal", pp. 404-405.
 3. Mazumdar, N.G., Inscriptions of Bengal, vol. III, p.74.

the north-eastern factories of the East India Company from Balassore on the Orissa coast, to Patna, in the heart of Bihar, belonged to the Bengal establishment, as distinct from Bombay or Madras.¹ As British conquests extended higher up the river, the term came to be used much more loosely and was applied to the whole of northern India. Eventually, the official designation "Presidency of Fort William in Bengal", covered all the British territories north of the Central Provinces, from the mouths of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra to the Himalayas and the Panjab.² This was undoubtedly a big tract. It was "a sprawling, ill-assorted and populous province", a "curious conglomeration of territories".³ The boundaries of Bengal like those of

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1. The East India Company acquired territories in Bengal gradually. It purchased the zamindari of Calcutta in 1698. The presidency of Fort William was first established in 1699, with Sir Charles Eyre as its President. Ilbert, S.C., The Government of India, p.42. The victory at Plassey brought in 1757 the district of 24-Parganas. The districts of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur were ceded in 1760 by Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, as a part of conditions for his accession to the throne of Murshidabad. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company, p.17. The grant of Diwani in 1765 invested the Company with the virtual sovereignty of the three presidencies of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. To these were added Benares and Ghazipur in 1775, Cuttack in 1803, parts of modern Uttarpradesh in 1801 and 1803. Baden Powell, Land Systems of British India, vol.I, pp. 63-65.
 2. Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol.3, under "Bengal", pp.404-05.
 3. Robert, P.E., "The Early Administration of Warren Hastings in Bengal", The Cambridge History of India, vol.V, p.206.

other provinces "were not carved on any rational basis but were the outcome of historical accidents and administrative expediency."¹

The presidency of Bengal, like those of Madras and Bombay, was administered in the pre-Regulating Act period by a council. The council consisted of superior servants of the company and varied in size from 12 to 16.² This form of government had been designed primarily to serve a trading corporation not a political power; "the exercise of a territorial function had never formed a part of its original intention."³ The system continued until its defects and inefficiency combined with some other factors to occasion the passing of the Regulating Act of 1773. The Act instituted for the first time a supreme government with a governor-general and four councillors.⁴ The governor-general and his council were to be responsible for the local administration of the presidency of Fort William in Bengal, in addition to their general supervision of all Indian affairs. It was,

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1. Zaidi, S.Z.H., The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment, (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964), p.6.
 2. Ilbert, S.C., The Government of India, p.42. Misra argued that the number varied from 10 to 16. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company, p.17.
 3. Ibid.
 4. The first governor-general was Warren Hastings and his first councillors were Clavering, Monson, Barwell and Philip Francis.

indeed, a heavy task. It meant that the supreme government would find itself with much more work to do than could be done by any one set of men. As a result, Bengal did not receive adequate attention and sufficient care of the government. As early as 1773, Warren Hastings informed the court of directors of the large size of Bengal.¹ He wrote that the extent of Bengal was equal to that of most states in Europe and he emphasized Bengal's need for an efficient administration.²

Realising the situation the home government, when renewing the Charter Act of 1793, made provision for a deputy governor at Fort William. The governor-general was

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1. Hastings, Warren (1732-1818). Born at Churchill in Oxfordshire on 6 December 1732. Passed his early years at Daylesford in the rectory. First King's scholar at Westminster, 1747. Went to India, 1750. When member of council at Kasim-Bazar imprisoned by Nawab of Bengal, 1756. Resident of Murshidabad, 1757-60. Member of Calcutta Council, 1761. Returned to England, 1764. Gave evidence on Indian affairs before parliamentary committee, 1766. Sent out as second in council at Madras, 1769. Governor of Bengal, 1772. Created governor-general by the Regulating Act, 1773. Founded Asiatic Society of Bengal and Calcutta Madrasa, 1784. Left India, 1785. His impeachment on ground "of corruption and cruelty in his Indian administration", began, 1788, and ended, 1795, resulted, after a trial of 145 days, in an acquittal. Created privy councillor and D.C.L. of Oxford.
 2. Hastings to the Court of Directors, 11 November 1773: Muir, R., The Making of British India, p.111.

empowered to nominate from among the members of his council a deputy governor when he "shall be absent from his own government of Bengal".¹ But this proved no permanent relief to Bengal and the necessity for efficient administration became all the more pressing in subsequent times. Wellesley's conquests brought under the direct administration of the supreme government vast territories.² In consequence, the pressure of business increased. To secure a proper discharge of works, Wellesley, in his letter to Dundas,³

1. 33 Geo. 3. C.52, S.53.

2. Wellesley, Richard Colley, Marquis Wellesley (1760-1842). Eldest son of Garret Wellesley, first earl of Mornington. Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Succeeded to Irish earldom, 1781. M.P., Beeralston, 1789, Windsor, 1790, Old Sarum, 1796. Member of India Board, 1793. Appointed governor-general of India, and created Baron Wellesley in British peerage, 1793. Recalled from India, 1805, in panic caused by defeat of colonel William Monson. Ambassador to Spain, 1809. Foreign Secretary in Percival's cabinet, 1809-12. Lord lieutenant of Ireland, 1821-8, and 1833-4. Lord Chamberlain, 1835. Retired from public life, 1835.

3. Dundas, Henry, first Viscount Melville (1742-1811). Son of Robert Dundas, Lord Arniston the elder. Educated at Edinburgh High School and university. Member of the Faculty of Advocates, 1763. Solicitor general for Scotland, 1766. M.P. for Midlothian, 1774-90, except for some months in 1782 when he sat for Newtown, Isle-of-Wight. Lord advocate, 1775-83. Privy councillor and treasurer of the navy, 1782-3 and 1784-1800. President of the Board of Control, 1793-1801. Created Viscount Melville of Melville, and Baron Dunira, 1802. First Lord of the Admiralty, 1804-5. Erased from the roll of the privy council, 1805, and impeached, 1806, for malversation. Restored to the privy council, 1807.

recommended to add to each presidency a lieutenant-governor.¹ But Dundas did not approve of this recommendation and no provision was made for such appointments.

The issue was reopened after further expansion of territories under the governments of Lord Moira² and his successor Lord Amherst.³ The war with Nepal brought under the administration of the supreme government the districts of Garhwal and Kumaun. Nagpur entered into subordinate alliance with the British in 1816 and gave in security an area of about 300 miles above the Narbada river. The defeat of the Pindaris⁴ drove the Maratha leaders Sindhia and

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1. Wellesley to Dundas, 25 January 1800: Add.MSS. 37275, f.106. B.M.
 2. Hastings, Francis Rawdon, first Marquis of Hastings and second Earl of Moira (1754-1826). Educated at Harrow and University College, Oxford. Served in the British army. Created Baron Rawdon, 1783. Assumed additional name of Hastings, 1790. Succeeded as Irish Earl of Moira, 1793. Commanded expedition to Brittany, 1793, and reinforcements for Duke of York in Flanders, 1794. Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, 1803. Master of the Ordnance, 1806-7. Active in support of Prince of Wales, 1810-11. Governor-General of India, 1813-22. Named governor of Malta, 1824.
 3. Amherst, William Pitt, Earl Amherst of Arracan (1773-1857). Statesman. Envoy to Peking to represent to the emperor wrongs suffered under his rule by British subjects, 1816. Returned to England, 1817. Governor-General of India, 1823-8. Created Earl of Amherst, 1826. Returned to England, 1828, and retired from public life.
 4. B. Ghose has done a work on The British Policy Towards the Pathans and Pindaris in Central India, 1805-18. (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964).

Holkar into a subordinate alliance; the former gave away Ajmeer and the latter his possessions lying south of the Narbada. In 1817, the Peshwar likewise renounced his leadership of the Maratha confederacy and surrendered to the British the Konkon and a few strongholds.¹ Nagpur was confiscated and the entire territory annexed to the central administration of the company at Fort William under the name of Sagar and Narbada territories.² Again, the Burmese war of 1824 extended the territorial limit of Bengal by bringing under the administration of the supreme government Arakan, Tenasserim, Assam, Kacar, Jaintia and Manipur.³ The Dutch possessions of Fulta, Chinsura, Kalkapur and Dacca were added to Bengal in 1824, after being surrendered to Britain by Holland.⁴ All these linked up the supreme government at Fort William with the outlying parts of the country. As pointed out, the supreme government was vested with the direct charge of local administration for Bengal and with a general controlling authority over Madras and Bombay. The combination of local and general duties hampered

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1. Administration Report of the Central Provinces, 1882-83, p.11.
 2. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company, pp. 53-54.
 3. Ibid., p. 54.
 4. Lovett, V.H., "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, vol. VI, p.20.

efficiency in the execution of either. When the governor-general was exercising his powers of control in the presidencies, "the administration of Bengal would often fall into confusion."¹ "That Bengal was under-administered", said Verney Lovett, "and that its conditions demanded continuous and thoughtful care, if abuses were not to grow and multiply, was doubtless true". "But what of this", he continued, "when the responsible government was pre-occupied with French intrigue in the peninsula or a Maratha war or trouble with Sikhs and Afghans...?"² It indicates how the governor-general's pre-occupation with imperial affairs could hold him back from doing properly Bengal duties.

In 1826, Sir John Malcolm had urged the advisability of separating the local duties of Bengal from those of the governor-general.³ Four years later, the Calcutta

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1. Lovett, V.H., "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.21.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Malcolm, S.J., The Political History of India, vol.II, pp.134-8. Also Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, vol.I, p.xv. Malcolm, Sir John (1769-1833). Entered the service of the East India Company, 1782. Appointed Persian interpreter to the Nizam of the Deccan, 1792. Commander-in-Chief, 1795-97. Assistant resident at Hyderabad, 1798. Envoy to Persia, 1799-1801. Private Secretary to Wellesley, 1801-2. Political agent to General Wellesley during the Maratha War, 1803-4. On a mission to Teheran, 1808-9, and 1810. Brigadier in the Deccan army, 1817-18. Returned to England, 1822. Governor of Bombay, 1826-30. M.P., Launceston, 1831-2.

finance committee, instituted by Bentinck in 1830 to harmonise the finances of the three presidencies, emphasized the need for separating the local administration from the governor-general's charge.¹ The governor-general's task would be to superintend, control and direct the proceedings of the subordinate governments. At the same time, the committee recommended to cut down the territorial burden of Bengal by separating the Upper Provinces from it. "The Upper Provinces should be separated from the Lower Provinces, either by establishing a distinct government or by appointing a Lieutenant-Governor."² It was difficult to control from Calcutta, and in addition, inconveniences arose from their

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1. The Calcutta Civil Finance Committee to Governor-General of India, 2 August 1830: Papers Relating to the Constitution of Indian Governments, I.O. Records Department, No. 19, 1085, para. 2, p.2. The president of the committee was Holt MacKenzie, Secretary to Bengal Government in Territorial Department, 1831. Other members on the committee were Bax and Hill, representatives of Bombay and Madras respectively. Bentinck, Lord William Cavendish (1774-1839). Second son of William Henry, third Duke of Portland. Captain 1792. Lieutenant-Colonel, 24th Light Dragoons, 1794. Served in campaigns of 1799. With Austrian forces, 1801. Governor of Madras, 1803. Recalled after the mutiny at Velore. Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Sicily, 1811. Served in Spain, 1813. Governor-General of Bengal, 1827. First governor-general of India, 1833. Returned to England, 1835. Liberal M.P. for Glasgow, 1837.
 2. The Calcutta Civil Finance Committee to Governor-General of India, 2 August 1830: Papers Relating to the Constitution of Indian Governments, I.O. Records Department, No. 19, 1085, para.2, p.2.

linguistic and cultural differences.¹ Moreover, these areas included the imperial city of Delhi adjacent to the powerful state of Ranjit Singh in the Panjab. Need, therefore, existed for a strong and vigilant authority.

On the score of economy, Bentinck, however, rejected the separation of the Upper Provinces from Bengal and thus opposed the creation of a new lieutenant-governorship. Nor did he support the committee to sever the local connexion of the supreme government with Bengal.² Perhaps he felt that this severance might lessen his effective power over Bengal.³ He suggested instead the transfer of the seat of government from Calcutta to Allahabad, the appointment of a deputy governor in the absence of the governor-general from Bengal and the imposition of greater control over subordinate presidencies of Bombay and Madras.⁴

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1. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company, p.56. Councillors Metcalfe and Boyle both agreed with the committee and recommended the separation of the local responsibility of any separate presidency from the supreme government. Minutes of Metcalfe and Fayle, 18 October and 9 November 1830: Papers Relating to the Constitution of Indian Governments, I.O. Records Department, No. 19, 1085, pp.37-47.
 2. Bentinck's Minute, 14 September 1831, P.P. 1833, vol.25, p.237.
 3. Stokes, E., The English Utilitarians in India, p.174.
 4. Bentinck's Minute, 14 September 1831: P.P. 1833, vol.25, p.237.

These discussions had considerably influenced the home authorities in passing the Act of 1833. Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control, wrote to Bentinck that "the papers written by the members of the Civil Committee ... and the members of your Council, and your own Minutes, have furnished invaluable materials of which we have availed ourselves..."¹ The Act of 1833 had, in fact, incorporated views of both Mackenzie and Bentinck. The supreme government was to have "a more efficient control" over the subordinate governments. As Bentinck desired, the governor-general of India should continue to act as the governor of Bengal.² As the committee recommended, the Upper Provinces of Bengal should form a separate province to be known as the Presidency of Agra. But as Bentinck did not like this division, the operation of the provision was suspended till 1835, when an act was passed authorising the supreme government to appoint a lieutenant-governor for the new province. Thus was created the entity of the North Western Provinces.³

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1. Charles Grant to Bentinck, 25 December 1833, Bentinck Manuscripts: Stokes, E., The English Utilitarians in India, p.175.
 2. Summary of Provisions of Proposed Bill: P.P. 1833, vol. 25, p.143.
 3. In 1877, the offices of the lieutenant-governor of the North Western Provinces and chief commissioner of Oudh were united in the same person. In 1902, the provinces were named the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh in order to avoid all confusion between their title and that of the then newly created North Western Frontier Province (1901). Baden Powell, Land Systems of British India, vol.I, p.42. Also Administration Report of North Western Provinces 1882-83, p.34.

This reduced the extent of Bengal and paved the way for the better administration of the detached areas.¹

The presidency of Bengal continued to be administered by the governor-general in council. He remained responsible for the general administration and policy of the whole of British India as well as for the particular administration of Bengal. The Bengal government had a number of functions including the entire control "of the Civil, Magisterial and Police branches of the administration; of the Land Revenues; of the salt and opium monopolies; of the Abkari or Excise on spirits; of the Ecclesiastical, Marine and Steam Departments, as well as that of the Public institution and the Post Office."² It was also charged with the management of the ultra-Gangetic settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. These onerous duties, which were thus thrown on the Government of Bengal, had been supposed to

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1. The local government launched a programme to dig the Upper Ganges canal in 1836, one year after the creation of the North Western Provinces; the canal was completed in 1854; its total length was over 3800 miles; in 1919-20, it irrigated over one and a third million acres. Triennial Review of Irrigation in India, 1922, pp.25-30. Other developments in the North-Western Provinces are to be found in Administration Report of North Western Provinces 1882-83.
 2. Marshman, J.C., "Bengal As It Is": Calcutta Review, January 1845, vol.III, p.169.

exceed those "which devolve on the united Governments of Madras and Bombay in which the responsibility of deliberation is shared by two distinct councils, and the labour of action is distributed among several bureaux."¹ All the duties had hitherto been left to the governor-general who was also in charge of the whole management of the empire.

As years rolled on, British India expanded and functions of the governor-general increased and multiplied. In 1852, in a letter to Sir George Cowper, Lord Dalhousie stated the amount of work he had to do: "I reckon that not less than 20,000 to 25,000 papers are submitted for the order of the G.G. in the course of each year ... I repeat, the labour is incessant and my performance of it unsatisfactory to myself."² The duties of the governor-general, very often took him away from Bengal. The administration of Bengal passed more and more into the hands of deputy governors whom the governor-general selected from among the senior members of council.³ As a result the Bengal administration changed hands frequently; no man was long responsible

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1. Marshman, J.C., "Bengal As It is": Calcutta Review, January 1845, vol. III, p.169.
 2. "Private Letters", p.227: Lord Curzon, The British Government in India, Vol.11, p.121.
 3. Persons might be "civil or military, fit or unfit". Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, vol. I, p. xiv.

for the good government of the province. In 12 years up to 1850, the reins had been held by nine successive governors or deputy governors.¹ Lord Curzon² called it an "astonishing system or lack of system".³ The deputy governor, observed F.J. Halliday,⁴ was looked on by everybody "as a secondary person entirely; a person who is here today and may be gone tomorrow; who is exercising such powers today, but which powers may be taken away from him tomorrow, and the eye of

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1. Campbell, G., Modern India: A Sketch of the System of Civil Government, p.228. Between 20 October 1837 and 9 December 1853, the following persons had been appointed deputy governors as occasions required: Alexander Ross, 20 October 1837; Colonel William Morison, 15 October 1838; Thomas Campbell Robertson, 17 June 1839; Sir Thomas Herbert Maddock, 20 September 1845 and 11 October 1848; Major General Sir J.H. Littler, 12 March 1849; Hon'ble J.A. Dorris, 9 December 1853. Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, vol.I, p.xi. Also Lovett, V.H., "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.22.
 2. Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925). Educated at Eton, and Balliol College, Oxford. Under Secretary for India, 1891. Parliamentary Under Secretary for foreign affairs, 1895-8. Viceroy of India, 1898-1905. Returned to England, 1905. Chancellor of Oxford University, 1907. Entered House of Lords as Irish representative peer, 1908. President of Air Board, 1916. In inner war cabinet, 1916. Foreign secretary, 1919-24.
 3. Lord Curzon, British Government in India, Vol. II, p.74.
 4. Halliday, Sir Frederick James (1806-1901). Joined Bengal civil service, 1825. Judicial and Revenue secretary in Bengal, 1838. Secretary in the home department, 1849-53. First lieutenant-governor of Bengal, 1854-9. Member of council of India, 1868-86.

the community and of the servants of the Government is directed rather to the person who is above him, than to him. That creates weakness; and also it is the case that the person himself, in a great number of instances, has not been selected for any particular fitness on his part."¹

Writing in 1852, George Campbell stated that the existing deputy governor of Bengal had served in the army with credit for 52 years, but had never had any experience of any kind in civil affairs and at this stage of his life, being suddenly promoted into the office of deputy-governor, he was called on to perform multifarious duties with which he had been hardly acquainted.² "It is no wonder", added

1. F.J. Halliday's evidence before the Select Committee, 18 April 1853, Report from Select Committee: P.P. 1853, vol. I, p.396. [S.H.L.]
2. Referring to it W.S. Seton Karr [of the Bengal Civil Service, 1842-70] said; "... when the administration was presided over by a soldier, who was not unjustly supposed to know more about platoon firing and advancing in echelon than about the Excise Code and the Decennial Settlement, the Government of Bengal was assailed by considerable obloquy.... There is no doubt, however, that it is an anomalous and unjust to hand over the Government of such a presidency as Bengal to a man who ... may be inexperienced, who though a good Councillor, may not be the fittest man for such a Post." "The Administration of Lord Dalhousie": Calcutta Review, March 1854, vol.43, p.34. Campbell, Sir George (1824-1892). Educated at Edinburgh New Academy, Madras College, St. Andrews, St. Andrews University and Haileybury. Went to India, 1842. Collector at Badaon and Rohillakhand, 1843. In England, 1851-4. Magistrate and Collector of Azinghur, 1854. Commissioner of Cis-Sutlej States, 1855. Employed by Lord Canning,

continued:

Campbell, "that such a Government is inefficient, that nothing has generally been done beyond mere routine, and that Bengal has suffered in consequence."¹

The details of Bengal administration came to be relegated to subordinate authorities. The administration was entrusted to the district officers or collectors. The existence of the Permanent Settlement in the greater part of Bengal intervened to prevent the growth of close knowledge and mutual understanding between the district officer and the people. Under this system, the government had no anxiety about the collection of its land revenue. The whole responsibility for punctual payment fell upon the zamindars who very often granted leases to middlemen. In village after village layers of middlemen interposed between the cultivators and the zamindars.² This led to the development of what is called patni tenures in Bengal, which were founded

Governor-General, to write official account of mutiny for the home authorities, 1857. Second civil commissioner of Oudh, Judge of high court of Bengal, 1862. Head of commission to enquire into causes of famine in Bengal, 1866. Chief Commissioner of Central provinces, 1867. D.C.L. Oxford, 1870. Lieutenant-governor of Bengal, 1871-4. Liberal M.P. for Kirkcaldy, 1875-92.

1. Campbell, G., Modern India: A Sketch of the System of Civil Government, p. 228.
2. Lovett, V.H., "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, Vol. VI, p.30.

on the principle of sub-infeudation.¹ In consequence, the executive government was out of touch with the interior of a Bengal district. All orders from administrative headquarters to distant parts of the district travelled through "the corrupt and oppressive police".² "Thus in the province where personal rule is perhaps most required, there is least of it, and where the officers know least of the people, the Government knows least of its officers."³

While this was the state of affairs, Lord Dalhousie in a minute of 6 December 1853, stated that there should be a lieutenant/^{-governor}for Bengal.⁴ On the one hand, this would provide Bengal with a local government of its own. On the other hand, this would give the governor-general much more

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1. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company, p.195.
 2. Lovett, V.H., "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, Vol. VI, p.29.
 3. Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903, No.3678, Calcutta: P.P. 1905, vol.58. Cd. 2658.
 4. Ramsay, Sir James Andrew Brown, tenth Earl and first Marquis of Dalhousie (1812-1860). Educated at Harrow and Christ Church, Oxford. Conservative M.P., Haddingtonshire, 1837. Succeeded his father as tenth Earl, and entered the House of Lords as second Baron Dalhousie, 1838. Became president of the board of trade, 1845, and governor-general of India, 1847. Returned to England, 1856, after protesting against the rashness of reducing the European garrison in order to reinforce the Crimean army.

freedom to superintend all Indian affairs, by shifting from his shoulders a heavy "burden which, in its present mass, is more than mortal man can fitly bear."¹ Already select committees, appointed by the House of Commons to enquire into the operation of the government of India, had brought to light the necessity of a separate government for Bengal. J.C. Marshman told the Committee on 3 May 1853 that there ought to be a government of Bengal distinct from that of India.² "I think", he continued, "that opinion is universal in Bengal, both among the Europeans and the natives and among the official and non-official community: it is considered universally to be the one great desideratum for the Lower Provinces that we should have a separate Governor.... It is utterly impossible for a Governor General, when he is in Calcutta, to be able to attend to the general concerns of the empire, and at the same time

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1. Dalhousie's Minute, 6 December 1853, quoted in Government of India to Brodrick, Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: P.P. 1906, vol. 81, Cd. 2746. Also Risley's Minute, 6 December 1904: Curzon Collection, vol. 247, p. 38.
 2. Marshman, John Clark (1794-1877). Son of Joshua Marshman. Accompanied his father to Serampur, 1800, and directed mission. Started first paper-mill in India, and first paper in Bengali (1818), and first English weekly, the 'Friend of India', 1821. Established Serampur College for education of Indians. Official Bengali translator, 1840-52. Published his 'History of India', 1842, the 'History of Bengal', 1848.

to regulate the administration of Bengal."¹ Charles Wood,² President, Board of Control, in his speech in the House of Commons on 3 June 1853, echoed this view: "It appears from the whole of the evidence, that, entrusted as he [G.G.] is both with the Government of India and the Government of Bengal, he has more duties to attend to than he can fairly discharge. We propose, therefore, to relieve him of the administration of the province of Bengal. ... The evidence is uniformly in favour of the establishment of a permanent Lieutenant-Governor in Bengal."³ Accordingly when the company's charter was renewed in 1853, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam became the charge of a lieutenant-governor. Lord Dalhousie regarded this change as the remedy of a great deficiency. He wrote; "Parliament has lately supplied

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1. J.C. Marshman's evidence, 3 May 1853, No.5169, Select Committee Report: P.P. 1853, vol.5, p.581 (S.H.L.).
 2. Wood, Sir Charles, First Viscount Halifax (1800-1885), of Eton and Oriel College, Oxford. Liberal M.P. for Grimsby, 1826, Wareham, 1831, Halifax, 1832-65. Joint Secretary to treasury, 1832. Secretary to admiralty, 1835. Chancellor of exchequer, 1846. Privy councillor, 1846. Succeeded his father in baronetcy, 1846. President of the board of control, 1852. First lord of admiralty, 1855. Secretary of State for India, 1859-66. M.P. for Ripon, 1885. Created Viscount Halifax of Monk Bretton, 1866. Lord Privy Seal, 1870-4.
 3. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, vol. CXXVII, 10 May 1853 - 10 June 1853. pp. 1159-1161.

a remedy for that great deficiency the effects of which pervaded the entire system and were felt in every department of the administration — namely the want of a Lieutenant governor, who should be able to devote the whole of his time and capacity to these lower provinces alone."¹ On 28 April 1854, J.F. Halliday took over the new charge. A contemporary writer described the new arrangement as "a boon" to Bengal. The change, observed Dalhousie two years later, had finally liberated the governor-general "from the obligation of performing an impossible task."²

In addition to this change, some other measures were taken to give relief to Bengal and to improve its administration. Some outlying areas like Tenasserim and Arakan were taken away from Bengal and were placed under the governor-general in council. In 1862, a legislative council was established and a high court founded.³ But Bengal remained a heavy charge with wide territories. Government of Bengal meant administering a country 750

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1. Dalhousie's Minute, 28 April 1854: Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, p.xx.
 2. Dalhousie's Minute, 28 February 1856: P.P. 1856, vol.45, Paper No. 245, para. 31, p.107.
 3. The Calcutta high court commenced to sit on 1 July 1862. It consisted of a chief justice and as many judges not exceeding 15 as Her Majesty might think fit to appoint. Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, pp. 278-9.

miles from north to south and 800 miles from west to east with an area of 246,786 square miles. Bengal was seven times as large and forty times as populous as all the British West Indian possessions. To govern such a country was "a task not inferior to that of governing a large nation in Europe."¹

When facing a serious emergency, the inherent defects of governing such a big area became conspicuous. The fearful Orissa famine of 1866 could be brought forward as a forcible argument to demonstrate the necessity of a great change in the administration of Bengal. The famine had affected an area of about 12,000 square miles with a population of about 4,000,000.² It was thought that the administrative weakness made the situation much graver and calamitous.³ Sir C. Beadon, Lieutenant-Governor of the province, was not kept properly informed; he was not sure about the nature of the famine; he thought that the situation was not alarming.⁴ When he was later censored for "an

1. Sir Barth Frere's Memorandum, 2 December 1867: P.P. 1867-68, vol. 49, Paper No. 256. pp.44.
2. Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, p.329.
3. Ibid., p.378.
4. Beadon, Sir Cecil (1816-1881). Educated at Eton and Shrewsbury. Entered Bengal civil service, 1836. Under secretary to Bengal Government, 1843. Represented Bengal presidency on commission on Indian postal system, 1850. Successively secretary to Bengal government, home and foreign secretary to Indian government, member of governor-general's council. Lieutenant governor of Bengal, 1862-67.

incapacity to believe in disaster",¹ Sir Stafford Northcote, Secretary of State for India, defended him on the score that the position of the lieutenant-governor of Bengal was, in many respects, a very difficult one.² He was entrusted with the administration of an extensive and highly important presidency, and had to attend to a vast amount and a great variety of business, "without being allowed the assistance of a Council, such as is attached to the Governments of the other Presidencies, or of a Secretariat equal to those of Madras and Bombay. He is, therefore, necessarily overburdened with the details of daily work, and must have less time and less energy to devote to questions which are not absolutely forced upon his attention than the Governors of the other Presidencies are able to command."³ The commissioners appointed to enquire into the Orissa catastrophe

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 1867, vol. CLXXXIX, 24 July to 21 August 1867, p. 771.
 2. Northcote, Sir Stafford Henry, first Earl of Iddesleigh (1818-1887). Educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Private secretary to William Ewart Gladstone, 1842. Conservative M.P., Dudley, 1855, Stamford, 1858. President of the board of trade, 1866. Secretary for India, 1867. M.P. for North Devon, 1866. Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1869-74. Chancellor of the exchequer, 1874-80. Leader of the opposition to Gladstone's government in the House of Commons, 1880-85. Foreign Secretary, 1886.
 3. Secretary of State for India, to Government of India, 25 July 1867: Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, p. 380.

laid much emphasis upon the "peculiarities" of the Bengal administration.¹ Thereupon, Northcote appointed a special committee of his council, on 16 September 1867, to recommend measures "for the improvement of the system of Government in Bengal."² Realising that the transfer of the seat of the supreme government from Calcutta was a remote possibility the committee recommended: "we are satisfied that the existence of a separate Government of Bengal, with an Executive and Legislative Council on the system of Madras and Bombay, is incompatible with the presence of the Supreme Government in Calcutta".³ Two members of the committee, Arbuthnot and Frere, however, did not agree with this view;⁴

1. Bengal and Orissa Famine Report, 1866, vol.I, p.127.
2. Northcote's Memorandum, 16 September 1867: P.P. 1867-68, vol.49, Paper No. 256, p.161.
3. Report of the Special Committee, 14 November 1867: P.P. 1867-68, vol.49, Paper No. 256, p.35. The members of the committee were F. Currie, E. Perry, Ross, D. Mangles, H.G.Montgomery, W.U.Arbuthnot and H.B.Frere; the chairman was F. Currie.
4. Frere, Sir Henry Bartle Edward, commonly called Sir Bartle Frere, first baronet (1815-1884). Educated at Bath and Haileybury. Entered Bombay civil service, 1834. Resident at Sattara, 1846, and commissioner upon its annexation, 1847. Chief commissioner of Sind, 1850-9. Appointed to the Viceroy's council 1859. Governor of Bombay, 1862-7. Returned to England as member of the council of India, 1867. D.C.L. Oxford; LL.D. Cambridge; president of the Geographical Society, 1873. Sent to Zanzibar to negotiate suppression of slave trade, 1872. Governor of the Cape and first high commissioner of South Africa, 1877.

they advocated that the administration of Bengal should be entrusted to a governor and council on a footing of equality with the governments of Madras and Bombay.¹ Northcote himself thought on this line. He wrote to Sir F. Currie, Chairman of the special committee; "... if the constitution of Governor and Council is good for Madras and Bombay, it would be good for Bengal; and if it be good for Bengal, I think we ought not to refuse it to her for Imperial reasons."²

Northcote, therefore, asked the government of India to comment on this point and invited their views on whether the local administration of Bengal should be placed in the same hands as the general administration of India or the existing form of government should be maintained. He also asked them to discuss whether the territories of Bengal

1. Memorandum by Arbuthnot and Bartle Frere, 15 September 1867
P.P. 1867, Vol. 49, P. 37.

2. Northcote to Currie, 14 November 1867: P.P. 1867-68, vol.49, p.38. Currie, Sir Frederick, first baronet (1799-1875). Educated at Charterhouse and the East India Company's College, Haileybury. Cadet, Bengal civil service, 1817. Judge of Sudder adalat, North Western Frontier Provinces, 1840-2. Foreign secretary to the Indian government, 1842-9. Created baronet, 1847. Member of the supreme council, 1849-53. Chairman of the East India Company, 1857. Vice-president of the council of India. Honorary D.C.L. Oxford, 1866.

should be reduced by putting Assam and possibly Orissa under the governor-general or subordinate governments.¹

These proposals were very thoroughly examined by a number of experts on Indian administration.² Finally, John Lawrence,

1. Secretary of State for India to Governor-General, 16 January 1868: Public Despatches, 1868, vol.II, para.10-20.
2. The suggestion to convert Bengal into a governorship with an executive council was put forward by H.Maine (1822-1888, legal member of the council of India 1862-9), W.R. Mansfield (1819-1876, Commander-in-chief) and G.N.Taylor. Maine argued that if a council be good for Madras and Bombay, "I venture to think it much more urgently needed for the Governor or Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Proper". Maine's Minute, 16 March 1868, Enclosure No.8 in No.11: P.P. 1867-68, vol.49, Paper No.256, p.100. Mansfield wrote that Bengal should have a governor-in-council: "To place the local administration of Bengal in the hands of the Governor-General in Council is a reactionary step, which would interfere with the efficiency of the Governor General for the purposes of the empire at large, and that it would serve to retard progress in the administration of Bengal... I rather imagine that it is better to leave that province [Assam] under the Government of Bengal." Mansfield's Minute, 24 February 1868, Enclosure No.2 in No.11: Ibid. Taylor observed: "For a country so extensive, so populous, and of such varied society, and representing the social and commercial interests of a vast proportion of the Empire, the Governor will always require the weight of other opinions to aid his own, and such effective support could only be afforded by the presence of independent colleagues in council. For these reasons I am in favour of giving Bengal a strong Government in the form of a Governor and Council. ... As regards Assam and Cachar, I should be in favour of their transfer to the immediate control of the Government of India under a Chief Commissioner, if Bengal remained a Lieutenant Governorship." Taylor's Minute, 27 February 1868, Enclosure No.6 in 11: Ibid., pp.94-96. (Taylor was a member of the Viceroy's council). They represented the legalists' points of view. John Lawrence contested their arguments in toto and threw the whole weight of his authority on the need of a strong central government "for the wielding of the national strength of India in all emergencies". Memorandum by Governor-General, 20 January 1868. Also Minute by Governor-General, 19 February 1868 and Minute of 23 March 1868: Ibid., pp.66-73, and 122-28. An advocate of the Panjab School, John Lawrence would like to maintain the paternal system of administration.

of India,
 the Governor-General/ recommended that the administration of Bengal should remain as it was, that is, under a lieutenant governor without a council.¹ He rejected the suggestion to reproduce the Bombay and Madras constitution in Bengal. He said: "I can perceive no necessity for the change; I anticipate no advantage from it; I rather apprehend inconvenience arising from it."² To him, the best form of government in India "is personal administration by a single head, without a Council. Hereby are secured the momentum of improvement, the exaction of responsibility, the exercise of vigilance in the highest degree ordinarily attainable."³ He approached the problem of giving relief to

1. Lawrence, John Laird Mair, first Baron Lawrence (1811-1879). Educated at Bristol, Londonderry, Bath, and Haileybury. Took up his appointment under the East India Company first at Calcutta, 1830. Assistant magistrate and collector at Delhi, 1830-4. In charge of the Gurgaon division, 1837. Magistrate and collector of the districts of Panipat and Delhi, 1844. Administrator of the newly constituted district, the Jullundur Doab, 1846-1848. Member of the board of administration for the Punjab, 1848-52. Chief commissioner for the Panjab, 1853-7. Created baronet, 1858. In England at the India Office, 1859-62. Viceroy of India, 1863-9. Chairman of the London School board, 1870-3.
2. Governor-General's Memorandum, 20 January 1868: P.P. 1867-68, vol.49, Paper No.250, p.70.
3. Ibid. Stokes suggested that the issue possibly touched upon his (John Lawrence) own position as governor-general. The reproduction of the Bombay and Madras constitution in Bengal and its repetition in some other provinces later on, "implied a devolution of authority from the Centre". Because the governor-general's authority over a lieutenant governor was much greater than that of the governors. Stokes, E., The English Utilitarians in India, p.271. This was not new to Lawrence; this was one of the considerations which led Bentinck to decline to cut his relation with Bengal and to minimise his controlling power over Bombay and Madras.

Bengal from another front. He recommended that the administrative burden of Bengal could be reduced by the promotion of Assam into a chief commissionership directly under the government of India. Orissa, he argued, should be retained under Bengal because of its proximity to Calcutta.¹ The discussion was reported to the secretary of state on 28 March 1868.² Northcote did not try to impose his own views on the Viceroy, and hence Bengal remained a lieutenant governorship without council.

The Viceroy's recommendation to put Assam under a chief commissioner was strengthened by the repeated raids of the neighbouring tribes of Assam on British subjects.³

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1. Governor-General's Minute, 19 February 1868: P.P. 1867-68, vol.49, Paper No. 256, p.68.
 2. Governor-General of India to Secretary of State for India, 28 March 1868: Public Letters, 1868, vol.12, Letter No.50.
 3. The Nagas committed a series of raids in the Sibsagar district in 1867-68, and attacked the Tripura Raja's Territory and Sylhet in the cold weather of 1870-71. In the same year, the Chittagong Hill Tracts frontier and Kacar were looted. A tea garden was destroyed, the resident planter, Winchester, was killed and his little girl carried off. Several other tea gardens and coolie lines were attacked and more or less injured. Again in 1872, the Daflas attacked British territories along the Darrang and North Lakhimpur borders of Assam, killed 2 persons and took away 44 with their property. Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, pp.457-60 and 541-2. As early as 1869, referring to this type of inhuman tribal raids, Lord Mayo, the then governor-general of India, commented: "These savages must be taught that they cannot attack British territory & murder our subjects with impunity." Mayo to Argyll, Secretary of State for India, 1 February 1869: Mayo Papers, U.L.C., vol. 34.

These attacks revealed the necessity for a strong local government. Assam was far from Calcutta. The absence of proper road and railway communications and the wildness of the country made effective control of hill men extremely difficult. The military expeditions of 1868-69 against the Lushais failed in their principal objects of bringing the tribes under the British power.¹ The presence of a vigilant local authority was, therefore, needed to cope with the local situation. Moreover, if Assam was separated, it would lighten the task of the Bengal government; by ^{the} 1870s, the scope of the Bengal government had increased to such an extent that "it is totally impossible that any man can properly perform single handed the work of this great Government."² So, Assam together with Sylhet was formed into a chief commissionership in 1874.³ This resulted in a considerable reduction in the size of Bengal.

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1. Buckland, C.E., Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, p.458.
 2. This was stated by Sir George Campbell, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, in his well known Administration Report for 1871-72. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.
 3. The Assam commissionership included the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Silassagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills, Kacar and Goalpara. Subsequently, on 12 September 1874, Sylhet was also annexed to Assam. These districts comprised an area of 41,798 square miles with a population of 4,132,019.

Even after the separation of Assam, Bengal remained a big and populous province. It embraced Bengal proper, Bihar, ChotaNagpur and Orissa.³ Altogether Bengal contained, prior to 1905, 48 districts, "an area of 189,000 square miles with a population of 78,000,000 and a gross revenue of £7,5000,000."¹ So the question of Bengal's territorial burden remained an issue for discussion.

In 1890s, the question of giving further relief was raised repeatedly. In 1891, a conference of two chief commissioners of Assam and Burma and a few top ranking military experts, was held to consider the defense question of the North Eastern Frontier.² The conference proposed the inclusion of the Lushai Hills in Assam for administrative convenience. It was then thought that the Chittagong district should also be transferred to Assam as soon as the

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1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.369. It may be easier to appreciate the dimension of this great province if it is remembered that it was almost the same size as Spain, little smaller than France, and nearly 40 per cent. larger than the whole of the British Isles. Bengal proper was half as large again as England and Wales, and exceeded in area the aggregate of five European states - Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Greece. Bourdillon, S.J., "The Partition of Bengal": Journal of the Society of Arts, London, vol.LIV, 1905-06, pp.102-5.
 2. Government of India to Government of Bengal and Chief Commissioner of Assam, 18 January 1896: India Home Public Proceedings, 1896, vol.4858.
 3. Map, p. 422.

settlement operation then in progress had been completed. These suggestions were not, however, implemented.

In 1896, the issue was reopened when the settlement operation in Chittagong was nearing completion. It was referred to the government of Bengal and Assam for their opinion in January 1896.¹ W.B. Oldham, Commissioner of the Chittagong division, supported the inclusion of his division and parts of the Dacca division in Assam as a measure which "would unite the most important parts of the Muhammadan population of Eastern India under a system, the benefits of which for Muhammadans have, in the case of Sylhet and elsewhere, been proved."² Some members of the Bengal board of revenue supported the proposed transfer of Chittagong to Assam as a step minimising the administrative burden of Bengal.³ With his five and a half years of experience as the chief commissioner of Assam, Sir William Ward⁴ suggested

1. All About Partition, I.O.T. No.1037, p.75. Also Ghose, P.C., The Development of the Indian National Congress 1892-1909, p.102.
2. Oldham to Government of Bengal, 7 February 1896: Public Letters, 1897, Letter No. 722G. para.17.
3. Members like C.C. Stevens and D.R. Lyall. Lyall's Memo, 20 February 1896. Public Letters, 1897, Enclosure in Secretary to Board of Revenue, Bengal, to Government of Bengal, 17 April 1896, Letter No.323A. Stevens' Memo, 7 April 1896: Ibid.
4. Ward, Sir William Erskine (1838-). Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. Went to Bengal in the civil service, 1861. Judicial Commissioner of Lower Burma, 1888-91. Chief Commissioner of Assam, officiating 1883 and 1885, and substantively, 1891-6.

the amalgamation of Dacca, Mymensingh, and Chittagong with Assam. For, he argued, the enlargement of the province of Assam would make possible the creation of separate services for the province.¹

But the next chief commissioner Sir Henry Cotton² opposed the scheme mainly on the grounds that Assam was a backward province and Chittagong would not gain by being transferred to Assam, that the plan involved huge expenditure and would excite public protests, and that even with the Chittagong division attached Assam would be too small a province to support a self-contained service.³ Cotton made this statement when he had been the chief commissioner of Assam for only two months and it was likely that he spoke as a Bengal officer and not as an Assam officer. Moreover, his line of reasoning against the scheme seemed to be

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1. The enlargement would make the area of Assam 80,950 square miles and its population would be 15,579,756. Chief Commissioner of Assam to Government of India, 25 November 1896: Public Letters, 1897, No.583/4930P., paras. 2-19.
 2. Cotton, Henry John Stedman (1845-1915). Entered Indian civil service, 1867. Chief commissioner of Assam, 1896-1902. Retired, 1902. President of the Indian National Congress, 1904. M.P. 1906-10.
 3. Cotton's Note, 26 January 1897: Public Letters, 1897, Enclosure in Officiating Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Assam, to Government of India, 5 February 1897, Letter No.45 For/366, para. 8.: Ibid.

influenced by the arguments of those Bengalis who had opposed the transfer of Chittagong to Assam. Already the Bengali newspapers like the Sanjivani had opposed the transfer of Chittagong to a non-regulation province¹ and the Dacca Gazettee had predicted that the transfer would cause "the social and spiritual degradation of the people of Chittagong".² Surendranath Banerjea,³ as the honorary Secretary to the Indian Association, had sent a protest to the government of India against such a move which, he felt, would do no good either to Chittagong or to Assam and which would go against the public opinion.⁴ In view of this fact, Cotton seemed to be the advocate of an interested party rather than an impartial judge of the issue.

The controversy, however, was suspended during the viceroyalty of Lord Elgin⁵ and the lieutenant governorship

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1. The Sanjivani, 9 April 1892: Bengal Native News Paper Reports, No.16, 1892.
 2. The Dacca Gazettee, 18 April 1892: Ibid., No.17, 1892.
 3. Banerjea, Surendranath (1848-1925). Entered Indian civil service, 1871. Dismissed from Indian civil service, 1874. Teacher and journalist at Calcutta. President of the Indian National Congress, 1895 and 1902. Minister in the Bengal government, 1921-3.
 4. Surendranath Banerjea to Government of India, 21 February 1896: Public Letters, 1897, vol.24, para.3.
 5. Bruce, Victor Alexander, ninth Earl of Elgin and thirteenth Earl of Kincardine (1849-1917). Born in Canada. Educated at Glenalmond, Eton, and Balliol College, Oxford. Succeeded father, 1863. Held office in liberal government, 1886. Viceroy of India, 1893-8. Chairman of royal commission which inquired into military preparations for South African War, 1902. Colonial secretary in Campbell-Bannerman's government, 1905-8.

of Sir Alexander Mackenzie.¹ It was decided on military and administrative grounds that South Lushai Hills should be transferred from Bengal to Assam,² and this was effected on 1 April 1898.³ The expediency of the transfer of the whole Chittagong division was held over until the completion of the Assam Bengal railway line, and the finish of the settlement operation in Chittagong. In fact, the plan was abandoned. Elgin wrote to Hamilton⁴ that the transfer of the Chittagong district from Bengal to Assam, "from the more organised to the less organised province was so bitterly opposed that we have abandoned it."⁵

The boundary question of Bengal, though shelved

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1. Mackenzie, Sir Alexander (1842-1902). Joined Indian civil service, 1862. Under Secretary to local government, Bengal, 1866. Home secretary to government of India, 1882. Chief commissioner of Central Province, 1887-90, and of Burma, 1890-95. Lieutenant-governor of Bengal, 1895-8.
 2. Governor-General to Secretary of State, 14 July 1897: Public Letters, 1897, Letter No.39.
 3. Governor-General to Secretary of State, 21 September 1899. Judicial and Public Department, File No.1921, vol.521, 1899, Letter No. 178.
 4. Hamilton, Lord George Francis (1845-1927). Son of first Duke of Abercorn. Conservative M.P., Middlesex, 1868-84; for Ealing division of country, 1885-1906. Under secretary for India, 1876-80. Secretary of State for India, 1895-1903. Resigned as free trader, 1903. Chairman of royal commissions on poor law and unemployment, and on Mesopotamian campaign, 1916-17.
 5. Elgin to Hamilton, 2 December 1897: Elgin Papers, vol.15.

for a while, was raised again. Four years later, the border problem of Orissa also arose. In February 1901, Sir Andrew Fraser,¹ Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, wrote a letter about the substitution of Hindi for Uriya as the language of the law courts of the district of Sambalpur. In the course of his letter, he casually suggested the severance of Orissa from Bengal and its addition to the Central Provinces.²

Meanwhile the government of India had acquired administrative control over Berar. Curzon, while writing to Hamilton on the Berar affair, referred to the vastness and complexity of Bengal.³ This was on 30 April 1902. Twenty-four days after this letter to Hamilton, Curzon received Fraser's note with other officers' views on it⁴

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1. Fraser, Sir Andrew Henderson Leith (1848-1919). Entered Indian civil service, 1869. Served in Central Provinces, 1871-98. Secretary in home department and later chief commissioner of Central Provinces, 1898. President of Indian police commission, 1901. Lieutenant-general of Bengal, 1903. Retired, 1908.
 2. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.317.
 3. Curzon to Hamilton, 30 April 1902. Hamilton Collection, vol.13. Also Curzon's Minute, 19 May 1903: Curzon Collection, vol.247, p.49.
 4. B. Fuller, Secretary, Revenue and Agriculture Department, Government of India and J.P. Hewett, Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, did not like to transfer Orissa to the Central Provinces. C.M. Rivaz, Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, supported Fuller and Hewett but wanted to keep the question open. Fuller's Note, 23 January 1902; Hewett's Note, 29 January 1902: Curzon Collection, vol.247.

and remarked that officers were "calmly carving about and rearranging provinces on paper ... in the manner that appealed most to their fancy...." He added; "I really feel disposed to ask is there no such thing as a Head of the Government, and what are secretaries for but to keep him acquainted with the administration.... For 14 months it never occurred to a single human being in the Department to mention the matter or to suggest that it should be mentioned. Round and round like the diurnal revolution of the earth went the file, stately, solemn, sure and slow, and now in due season it has completed its orbit and I am invited to register the concluding stage."¹ At the end of his note, Curzon referred to the approaching incorporation of Berar into British territories which provided an occasion for a more general consideration of existing boundaries of all provinces including Bengal.² Then on his suggestion, there were held high level discussions from which partition ultimately emerged.

From the above discussion, it appears that it was Fraser not Curzon who first, at the beginning of the present century, raised the boundary question of Bengal. The

1. Curzon's Minute, 24 May 1902: Curzon Collection, vol.247.

2. Ibid.

incorporation of Berar into British India brought the issue to a head. Fraser's note as well as the Berar affair, therefore, jointly pressed upon Curzon's attention the immediate necessity of initiating official deliberations from which partition finally came out.

According to Lovat Fraser,¹ partition emerged out of the casual suggestion of Andrew Fraser,² and this view has been accepted by a number of writers like P.C.Ghose,³ A.C. Majumdar,⁴ Sufia Ahmed,⁵ Haridas and Uma Mukherjee⁶ and A.R. Mallick.⁷ But it seems wrong to regard Fraser's suggestion as the sole consideration which prompted Curzon to hold discussions from which partition issued. Had it been so, Curzon, who was in touch with Fraser verbally and in correspondence on the border question of Bengal,⁸ would

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1. Fraser, Lovat (1871-1926). Editor of the Times of India for several years. On the editorial staff of The Times 1907-22.
 2. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, pp.376-7.
 3. Ghose, P.C., The Development of the Indian National Congress 1892-1909, pp.100-2.
 4. Majumdar, A.C., Indian National Evolution, p.201.
 5. Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p.325.
 6. Mukherjee, Haridas and Uma, India's Fight for Freedom or the Swadeshi Movement 1905-1906, p.5.
 7. Mallick, A.R., "The Muslims and the Partition of Bengal": A History of the Freedom Movement. vol.III, part I, p.3.
 8. Curzon's Minute, 24 May 1902: Curzon Collection, vol.247.

have initiated discussions earlier. Instead, he waited for some time. Again Zaidi's recent observation that "it was the incorporation of Berar in British India, not the language problem of Sambalpur, which prompted the general discussion from which partition issued",¹ does not seem to speak the whole truth. Had the Berar problem been the only consideration, Curzon would have started the deliberation on 30 April 1902 when he wrote to Hamilton on that matter. Instead, on 24 May 1902, when he received Fraser's official note and other officers' comments on it, he prepared a minute which provided the basis of discussions from which partition emerged in the end. It was likely that Fraser's note and other officers' observations on it helped Curzon to understand the nature of the issue in question while the incorporation of Berar widened the scope of consideration.

While these discussions, however, were in progress, the population of Bengal rose from 62 millions in 1871 to 78½ millions in 1903.² If these figures are compared with those of the next two largest provinces in India (The United Provinces = 48½ million; Madras = nearly 42½ million),

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1. The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964) p.51.
 2. Secretary, Government of India to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903, Calcutta, No.3678: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd. 2658.

it is clear that Bengal had almost as many inhabitants as the two others combined.¹ The demands on the Bengal secretariat had increased; the letters issued and received by it, for instance, rose from 1,16,634 in 1892 to 1,53,012 in 1902.² The administrative responsibilities of the lieutenant governor had been multiplied. The growth and improvement of the port and city of Calcutta,³ the larger number of municipalities⁴ and the demand for water supply, drainage and improved sanitation both in town and country, "all contribute to swell the array of important questions which claim the Lieutenant Governor's attention."⁵ While he was at

1. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: Public Letters, 1905. Also P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.
2. Statement illustrating the work of the Bengal Secretariat: P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.
3. The census of 1871 showed a population of 633,009 within the area then administered by the corporation of Calcutta and Fort William. In 1905, the population amounted to 847,796, that is, an increase of 34 per cent. as compared with the enumeration of 1872 and of 24 per cent. as compared with that of 1891. If the population of the suburbs of Cossipur, Chitpur, Maniktola and Garden Reach, and that of Howrah on the opposite bank of the Hughli were added, the total amounted to 1,106,738. With these areas Calcutta ranked among the twelve largest cities of the world and the population of Calcutta proper was more numerous than that of any other city in the British Empire except London. Government of India to Secretary of State, 2 February 1905: Public Letters, 1905.
4. In 1905, it was estimated that there were 158 municipalities in Bengal while in Madras and the United Province their numbers were 61 and 104 respectively. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: Ibid.
5. Ibid.

Calcutta, he was taken up not only by official or ceremonial functions but by onerous social duties, and personal interviews occupied a large portion of his time.¹ The Bengal administration was dominated by the city of Calcutta. Calcutta "absorbs the attention of the Administration even in the season, destroys its sense of balance, and leads it to regard the affairs of distant districts as of minor importance."² The lieutenant governor had to make hurried and necessarily incomplete tours through his province. "A Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, if he spent the whole of the available season of the year in touring, could yet only succeed, during his term of office, in visiting a portion of his vast charge."³ Places so important as Chittagong, Dacca, Cuttack and Ranchi received not more than a single visit within his term of office (five years).⁴ As a result, the head of the province was completely out of touch with the rural population.

So also was the case with the district officers.

As already stated, the existence of the Permanent Settlement

1. Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903, Calcutta, No.3678: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd.2658.
2. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.370.
3. Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903, Calcutta, No.3678: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd. 2658.
4. Ibid.

tended to obstruct free communication between district officers and the rural population of Bengal. In other provinces, the district officers were brought into close contact with the village population through their land revenue duties. In Bombay, Madras and the North Western Provinces, the district officers presided over a large revenue and land-records establishment of their districts; they devoted careful attention to the works of officials responsible for the collection of revenue and the proper maintenance of village accounts and registers. In the North Western Provinces, through the tahsildars or sub-collectors of revenue, the district officer "was kept in constant touch with the rural affairs",¹ whereas in Bengal, the gulf between the higher authorities and the people was very wide.

The defective administration had its serious consequences upon Eastern Bengal. Its officers were few, and the central authority left them very much to themselves. Lack of proper supervision bred insufficiency and sometimes defalcation of public money by subordinates. For instance, in 1906, it was discovered that Akhilchandra, the head clerk in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, had been embezzling

1. Lovett, H.V., "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, Vol. VI, p.29.

public money since 1895. Altogether he had misappropriated Rs.13,312.¹ Eastern Bengal was a lonely and unhealthy place for the Europeans. Its unpopularity encouraged a tacit assumption that "this rich and fertile area with its teeming population required no more than a meagre official establishment."² Mymensingh, for example, with an area of 6,000 square miles and a population of four millions was often in charge of a single European officer,³ while Orissa, containing approximately the same number of inhabitants in British territory, possessed one commissioner, three collectors, and other officers in proportion.⁴ Lack of proper

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1. H. Luson, Commission, Chittagong Division, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 5 November 1906, No.86H., Chittagong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Finance Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Lovett, H.V. "District Administration in Bengal 1818-58": The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.252.
 3. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, pp.370-71. Since 1905, there had usually been an additional magistrate, three European police men and civilian officers in most of the subdivision. Sachse, F.A., Bengal District Gazetteer, Mymensingh, p.118. Also Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1960) p.339.
 4. Curzon's speech at Mymensingh, 20 February 1904: P.P. 1906, vol.81, p.229. Curzon said that it was a commonplace that "the officers in Eastern Bengal are so undermanned and so overworked that it is the object of nearly every one among them to get away as soon as possible to some higher and more agreeable charge."

administration had stimulated crime. Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant Governor of pre-partition Bengal, had admitted that "it had been growing increasingly difficult until it had become practically impossible to conduct efficiently the administration of this great province." "It was", he added, "not a matter only of the burden of work laid on the Lieutenant Governor, but rather the impossibility of efficient working of the various departments of the Government. No head of a department was able to deal efficiently with the great charge committed to him."¹ Therefore, the stage was set for a great change and the time had come "when the relief of the Bengal Government must be regarded as an administrative necessity of the first order."²

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1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, pp.372-73. "It is", wrote Lord Crewe, Secretary of State, to Governor-General, "universally admitted that up to the year 1905 the task which the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and his subordinates had to perform having regard to the extent of the Presidency, to its population, and the difficulties of communication in many districts, was one with which no energy or capacity could completely cope." 1 November 1911: Hardinge Papers, vol.113.
 2. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 3 December 1903, No.3678: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd. 2658.

To give the Bengal government some relief by making an organic change, that is, to provide it with a governor and council on the model of Bombay or Madras, was thought neither possible nor desirable. As stated, the suggestion to make an organic change in the Bengal government was made earlier in 1867; it was then discussed and rejected. When the proposal was raised again in 1904 as an alternative to the reconstitution of territories,¹ it was re-examined in the light of the existing situation and was regarded by the government of India as "a retrograde measure, instead of a step in advance."² The reasons which convinced the government of India to set aside the idea of giving Bengal a lieutenant governor and council on the pattern of Bombay and Madras were as follows:

(I) "that an Executive Council exists in Madras and Bombay for the guidance of a Governor who has no experience of India.

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1. Raja Peary Mohun Mookherjee, Chairman of the Public Meeting, Calcutta, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, 5 October 1904, Enclosure No.15 in the Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746. Also Public Letters, 1905.
 2. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: Public Letters, 1905. Also P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.

(II) "that in the case of a Lieutenant Governor who has such knowledge — and we consider it impossible for Bengal to be properly administered by a Governor who has not — the association of a Council with the Lieutenant Governor would lead to constant dissension, if he were able to overrule his colleagues, and to impotence and stagnation if he were not.

(III) "that the establishment of Executive Council in Bengal would divide, and therefore weaken, both the responsibility and authority of the Government.

(IV) "that personal methods of government are better suited to circumstances of India, and produce superior results.

(V) "that the introduction of a Council, in so far as it involved the maintenance of the present territorial limits of Bengal, would establish a permanent obstacle to the further development of Assam and would perpetuate intolerable defects in its system of recruitment."¹

Since organic change was neither possible nor desirable, it was believed that partition of the territories was the best solution. The first concrete scheme of partition appeared in the famous letter of Risley to the govern-

1. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: Public Letters, 1905. Also P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.

ments of Bengal, Bombay and Madras;¹ in it, he contemplated the transfer of some territories from Madras to Bengal, and of the greater part of Chota-Nagpur from Bengal to the Central Provinces; the object was to bring all the Uriya-speaking population under a single government. At the same time, it proposed to add to Assam the Chittagong division, Hill Tripura, Dacca and Mymensingh. The effect of the scheme would have been to reduce the population of Bengal from 78½ to 60½ millions and to add to Assam an area of 24,884 square miles with a population of 11,475,646. Charles Denzil Ibbetson,² a member of the Viceroy's council, noted that if Bengal had been suffering from being too vast, Assam had been suffering no less from being too small.³ Assam required a maritime outlet in order to develop its industries in tea,

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1. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903, Calcutta, No.3678: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd.2658.
 2. Ibbetson, Sir Denzil Charles Jelf (1847-1908). Joined the Indian civil service, 1868. Assistant settlement officer at Karnal, 1871. Worked in various capacities. Chief commissioner of Central Provinces, 1898. Member of the viceroy's council, 1902. Carried Co-operative Credit Act, 1904. Lieutenant governor of the Panjab, 1907-8.
 3. Ibbetson's Note, 23 April 1903: Curzon Collection, vol.247. Also Chief Commissioner of Assam to Government of India, 30 January 1903: Ibid. Assam's gross revenue was only Rs.1,28,43,24, an amount smaller than that of the Central Provinces or Sind.

oil and coal. It had to depend for its service upon Bengal; in other words, it borrowed civil servants from Bengal. "A province that can only offer the prize of one commissioner-ship, that is remote in locality and backward in development and organisation, will not attract the highest type of civilians to its employ."¹ It was thought that Assam with an enlarged area might have independent services. A "self-contained and independent service", said Curzon, was the secret of efficient and vigorous administration.²

The publication of these proposals aroused an immense amount of public discussion and press comment.³ The memorial submitted to the government by the public meeting held in Calcutta on 18 March 1904 stated; "No measure of Government had previously moved the people of this country so powerfully on sentimental grounds as the proposed partition of Bengal has done. ... the entire intelligent portion of the population of Bengal were strongly

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1. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd. 2658.
 2. Curzon's Minute, 1 June 1902: Curzon Collection, vol.247.
 3. Details are to be found in Bengal Native Newspaper Reports, 1903, 1904; I.O.L.; Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1960), pp.344-51; MacLane, J.R., The Development of Nationalist Ideas and Tactics and the Policies of the Government of India: 1897-1905 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1961) pp.332-340; Zaidi, S.Z.H., The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964), pp.78-85.

of opinion that a greater calamity could not befall the country than the dismemberment of any portion of it."¹ The Bengalee saw in the scheme a political device to split up the Bengalis,² and accused Curzon of adopting a policy of divide and rule. The Amrita Bazar Patrika condemned the measure as an attempt at improving the port of Chittagong in order to pander to the interests of the European tea traders in Assam desiring the nearest sea outlet.³ Some Assamese feared a lessening of their chances of official jobs by the presence of the more educated Bengalis and predicted a setback for Assam's progress. To take Assam back and thrust it on Bengal "will bring its progress to a standstill, and nullify the good that has been derived owing to its having received increased and undivided attention at the hands of the Chief Commissioner."⁴

While the scheme was, thus, being criticised and condemned, the Viceroy set off on a tour of Eastern Bengal

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1. Enclosure No.15 in Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: Public Letters, 1905. Also P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.
 2. The Bengalee, 19 December 1903.
 3. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 14 December 1903: Bengal Native News Paper Report, 1903, No.51.
 4. Manikchandra Barua's Note on the question of the proposed amalgamation of Assam with a portion of Bengal, 27 February 1904: Public Letters, 1905.

in order to study the local situation because, he wrote, "The row about the dismemberment of Eastern Bengal continues in every accent of agony and denunciation. But so far no argument."¹ He visited Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensingh. His trip to these places "convinced him of the case for a change."² In a series of speeches he declared that the government of India had no conceivable object in view but the administrative advantage of the country as a whole. "Let it be remembered by all parties", he said at Mymensingh, "that the true and only criterion is better government for you in your own areas; for Bengal as a province and therefore, as a consequence, for British India as a whole."³ He foreshadowed a wider scheme involving the creation of an entirely new province; it would give the people of the new province nearer administration and thereby the closer protection that they would like to enjoy.⁴ The province would have a lieutenant governor with a legislative council and

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1. Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, vol.II, p.321. Also Aziz, K.K., Britain and Muslim India, p.36. To government officials like Ibbetson, the opposition to the scheme seemed sentimental and based on interested motives. Ibbetson's Note, 8 February 1904: Curzon Collection, vol. 247.
 2. Aziz, K.K., Britain and Muslim India, p.36.
 3. Speech at Mymensingh, 20 February 1904: Speeches by Curzon, vol.III, p.284.
 4. Speech at Dacca, 18 February 1904: Ibid., p.279.

an independent revenue authority. It would involve the transfer to Assam of a tract of country extensive enough to justify this larger project.

The idea was carried a stage further by Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.¹ He argued for the amalgamation with Assam of the Chittagong and Dacca divisions, and the districts of Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur. At the same time, he deprecated the transfer of any of the British districts of ChotaNagpur to the Central Provinces, while he accepted the additions of territory from Madras. The proposal did not sound acceptable as it was. It did not ensure an adequate reduction of Bengal's area and responsibility. It would leave the province with a population of about $62\frac{1}{4}$ millions or practically the same as that ascertained by the census of 1871. Even if the transfer of certain territories from Madras were not carried out the population would amount to 59,384,000. So Bengal would still be too large. Accordingly, the government of India thought to increase the transferred area by the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Malda and the state of

1. W.C. Macpherson, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, 6 April 1904: P.P. 1906. vol.81, Cd.2746, p.47.

Cooch Bihar.¹

The effect of the extension would be, first, to give the new province a population of over 31 millions, leaving Bengal with a little more than 54 millions. A reduction of 24½ millions would undoubtedly give substantial relief to the over-burdened administration of Bengal. Second, the province would have a well-defined river boundary for almost the entire length of its western frontier. Starting from the Bay of Bengal, on the west of the Backerganj district, the border would follow the river Madhumati up to its junction with the Ganges, along which it would run to Shahibganj. Thence it would go along the Western border of the Malda, Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri districts to the foot of the Himalayas, where it would strike the frontier of Bhutan. While running from Malda to the Himalayas, it would mark the point where Bengali ceased to be spoken and Hindi began. Third, it would bring together the Muslims of Eastern Bengal. Fourth, the new province would be of much commercial importance containing nearly the whole of the tea and jute producing areas of north eastern India. Moreover, the coalmines of Margharita and

1. H.H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Commissioner of Assam, Simla, 13 September 1904, No. 1903, Home Department (Public): P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd. 2658.

the tea plantations of the Upper Brahmaputra would be directly connected by rail with the Bay of Bengal; Chittagong would be the port of the new province.

The enlarged scheme was accepted by the local governments of Assam and Bengal. Supporting the scheme, the chief commissioner of Assam pointed out that the proposed province would include the whole of the area inhabited by the Tibeto-Burman tribes known collectively as Bodos.¹ The new province would consist of the State of Hill Tripura, the districts of Malda and the Chittagong, Dacca and Rajshahi divisions excluding Darjeeling. Bengal would cede not only these large territories on the east but also surrender to the Central Provinces the five Hindi-speaking states.² On the west it would gain Sambalpur and a minor tract of five Uriya speaking states from Central Provinces. Bengal would be left with an area of 141,580 square miles and a population of 54 millions.³ The new province would comprise an area of 106,540 square miles and a population of 31 millions.⁴

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1. F.J. Monahan, Secretary, Chief Commissioner, Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, 24 September 1904, No. 144-4247-P. Home Department: P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd.2746, pp.208-9.
 2. Jashpur, Saraguza, Udaipur, Korea and Chan Bhakar.
 3. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1905: Public Letters, 1905. Also P.P. 1906, vol.81, Cd. 2746.
 4. Ibid.

The government of India suggested that the new province might be called "The North-Eastern Provinces", and the secretary of state for India accepted the scheme. He wrote back to the governor-general: "Being, therefore, of opinion that a measure of relief is absolutely necessary and that there is no practicable alternative, I give my sanction in Council to the general principles involved in your proposals."¹ But he suggested a change in the name of the new province. He explained: "I have reason to think that the important commercial interests represented by the tea industry would complain if the name of Assam, now so widely known in the markets of the world as the chief source of Indian tea, were to disappear from the list of Indian provinces; and I should be disposed to prefer 'Eastern Bengal and Assam' as the name of the new Lieutenant Governorship."² Accordingly, the proposed name of the province was changed. The scheme received the royal sanction and the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam came into being on 16 October 1905.³

1. Secretary of State for India to Governor-General, 9 June 1905: Public Despatches, 1905, vol.26. Also P.P. 1906, vol.81. Cd. 2746, p.243.

2. Ibid.

3. Secretary of State for India to Governor-General, 11 October 1905, Telegram: Curzon Collection, vol.175.

Thus the new province seemed to owe its origin to administrative considerations. As mentioned earlier, "there seems to be no ground whatsoever for the charge that Curzon, in 1903, hoped to divide the Bengal[i] speaking people in order to reduce their political strength. ... The political argument had little influence (and it may not have even occurred to him) on his decision to partition Bengal in 1903. ... It was only during the protests against the original plan that officials first saw the possible political benefits of a divided Bengal."¹ Zaidi has tried to disagree with this observation but he has not produced any convincing evidence to show that the first proposal of 3 December 1903, to partition Bengal originated in political reasons. He has referred to Curzon's three letters as throwing light on the political aspects of the scheme.² But these letters do not show political considerations behind Curzon's plan to partition Bengal. The letters explain what the agitators saw in the scheme. For example, in his letter

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1. MacLane, J.R., The Development of National Ideas and Tactics and the Policies of the Government of India: 1897-1905 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1961) pp.333 and 363.
 2. Zaidi, S.Z.H., The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964) pp.69-70. Three letters were as follows:
 - (1) Curzon to Brodrick, 17 February 1904.
 - (2) Curzon to Godley, 5 January 1905.
 - (3) Governor-General to Secretary of State, 24 May 1905, Telegram.

of 5 January 1905, Curzon wrote that the partition was acceptable to all "except the Congress party who saw in the subdivision of Bengal - a weakening of Bengali influence in the future..." It clearly indicates what the Congress people found in the scheme; but it does not explain Curzon's motives. Moreover, these letters were written at a time when the publication of the first scheme of partition was under public criticism. So, even if they contain anything political, it is reasonable to suggest as MacLane has done that a political consideration was an afterthought. "It was only an additional or incidental justification for the partition which would have been carried out regardless of the political consequences."¹

The creation of the new province was supported by the Muslims in general; they accepted "the matter with good grace".² On the partition day, the Muslim leaders of the province founded at Dacca a socio-political organisation called the Mohammadan Provincial Union.³ The main object of this association was to develop the political consciousness of the people of the new province. The Muslims of other parts of India supported the creation of the province and sympathised with their co-religionists. On 25 November 1906, a Mohammadan Vigilance Association was founded in

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1. MacLane, J.R., The Development of Nationalist Ideas and Tactics and the Policies of the Government of India: 1897-1905 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1961), p.365.
 2. Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p.352.
 3. The Muslim Chronicle, 21 October 1905.

Calcutta (at 51, Wellesley Street) under the presidentship of Nawab Bahadur Syed Ameer Hossain with Moulvi Sirajul Islam Khan Bahadur, formerly a member of the Bengal legislative council, as its secretary. The object of the association was "to prevent by all lawful means the unfortunate effects" of the anti-partition agitation, "on the Muhammadan community at large."¹

But there were some Muslims who opposed the partition, of whom the most prominent were Khaja Atiqullah, the step-brother of Nawab Salimolla, Alimuzzaman Chowdhury of Faridpur, Ismail Shiraji of Sirajganj and Liakat Hossain of Noakhali. Atiqullah's opposition to the partition was due to a temporary rift with his brother Salimolla over the family property and not to any firm political belief."² Later on, when the two brothers were reconciled, "Atiqullah was an enthusiastic supporter of the partition, being a patriotic Muslim who would not willingly go against the best interests of the Muslims of Bengal."³ Alimuzzaman Chowdhury was said to have requested the government to re-

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1. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 29 November 1906: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 231.
 2. Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884-1912 (London, Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p. 358.
 3. Khwaja Nazimuddin, a nephew of Atiqullah to S. Ahmed, 7 November 1959: Ibid.

consider the partition¹ but his "memorial was not adopted at any public meeting, and it has not been found possible to ascertain by whom it was promoted or circulated for signature. The evidence points to its having originated in Calcutta, and it is significant that of the first four signatories, two were heavily in debt to the Faridpur Loan Office — a concern managed by Hindu pleaders, — and a third is a young man of dissipated habits on account of which his own community looked down upon him."²

Another Muslim who spread the anti-partition propaganda was Ismail Hossain Shiraji who held meetings which were very often attended by people of ill fame and questionable callings. Once in the course of his lecture, he exhorted "the prostitutes present to give up drinking foreign liquor and not to allow men indulging in the same to visit them."³ At one public meeting he addressed Nawab Syed Ali as Kukur (Dog).⁴ The agitators praised him as a patriot for

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1. Government of India to Secretary of State, 28 February 1907: Public Letters, 1907.
 2. Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Government of India, 29 April 1907: Public Letters, 1907.
 3. Extract from the Eastern Bengal and Assam Police Abstract, 5 January 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 231.
 4. Ibid., 16 March 1907: Ibid.

preaching such sedition.¹

Liakat Hossain of Noakhali was another propagandist of the same nature. He was represented in the agitators' press as "a sincere patriot and a thoroughly pious man"² and as a leading member of the Muslim community who opposed the partition. It, however, appears that the agitators paid him a monthly allowance of Rs.40 for speaking against the creation of the new province.³ Some other Muslims who were paid by the agitators for propagating against the partition were Abdul Gaffar, Abul Hossain and Din Mohammad.⁴ Possibly they were recruited to serve mainly two purposes, first, to show the government that the Muslims were also supporting

1. LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No. 243, 16 May 1907, Shillong: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No.231.
2. The Sri Sri Vishnu Priyao-Anauda Bazar Patrika, 7 November 1907: Bengal Native News Paper Reports, No.45, 1907, p.1277.
3. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No. 328 T. 24 January 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 231.
4. Ibid. In 1906, Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant Governor of the new province, while speaking of the Muslims who supported the agitation, said: "The Mohammedans who ... took part in the agitation are in many cases the paid agents of the Hindu leaders, while others are under the thumbs of the same men, owing to financial embarrassments, and to the fact that they are under Hindu landlords. There are practically none who carry any real weight or who can be called representative. Hare to Dunlop Smith, 19 September 1906: Morley Papers, vol.3: Also Das, M.N., India Under Morley and Minto, p.44.

the swadeshi movement and the agitation against the partition, and second, to influence other Muslims. Referring to Liaquat Hossain, the Bengalee observed; "He is a Muhammadan and is therefore bound to exercise an influence upon the Muhammadan masses which the average Hindu preacher may not be able to do."¹

The Hindus in general opposed the creation of the new province.² To Surrendranath Banerjea, it was the product

1. The Bengalee, 31 October 1907.

2. It may be mentioned that not all Hindus supported agitation. According to a Hindu writer 50,000 people including Hindus and Muslims assembled on the bank of the river Buriganga to receive J.B. Fuller, First Lieutenant Governor of the new province. Datta, S.N., Bangalir Birambana (Bad Fortune) of the Bengalis), p.21. The low caste Hindus like the Namasudras of Bakarganj supported the partition. At a meeting held at Orakandi in Bakarganj, on 2 October 1906, they declared that they "are indebted to the Secretary of State for India for his declaring the partition of Bengal a settled fact and admissible of no amendment." Public Letters, 1906. Also Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community of Bengal, 1884-1912 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p.362. Also there were some caste Hindus who welcomed the creation of the new province. For example, Raneudra Narayan Chowdhury, the zamindar of Bhawal and a conservative Hindu called on the lieutenant governor to express his good will. Datta, S.N., Bangalir Birambana, p.22. Again, J.D. Rees stated that there were some Hindu Brahmins who abused and cursed the anti-partitionists in Eastern Bengal. Rees, J.D., The Real India, pp. 204-7.

of a scheme "conceived in secret, discussed in secret and settled in secret;"¹ to him the partition news fell "like a bombshell".² People like Ananda Mohan Bose, a former president of the congress and Rabindranath Tagore,³ the famous Bengali poet, took vows to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of Bengal.⁴ It was opposed mainly by Hindus who had interests in united Bengal.⁵ The traders of Calcutta foresaw a shift of trade from Calcutta to Chittagong which, being nearer to Eastern Bengal and Assam, would be the cheaper port.⁶ The lawyers feared the establishment of a high court at Dacca and thus the loss of

1. Banerjea, S.N., A Nation in Making, p.204.
2. Ibid., p.186.
3. Tagore, Sir Rabindranath (1861-1941). Born in Calcutta into intellectual Hindu family. Remarkable lyrical poet. Sought synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures by founding at Santiniketan, Bolpur, a school (1901), agricultural school (1914), and international university (1921). Obtained Nobel prize, 1913. Knighted, 1915.
4. Bagal, J.C., History of Indian Association, pp.164-72.
5. "It is from there [Calcutta]", Minto wrote to Morley, "that the machinery of sedition is worked, not only in Eastern Bengal, but in the Punjab and in the frontier." Minto to Morley, 26 September 1907: Morley Papers, vol.6.
6. Srinath Roy, Secretary, Bengal Chamber of Commerce, to Government of Bengal, 3 February 1904: Public Letters, 1905, vol.33. Also Fraser to Curzon, 8 October 1905: Curzon Collection, vol.211.

clients.¹ The newspaper agencies apprehended the start of new papers at Dacca and thus a decrease in their own circulation.² The zamindars who had their estates both in West Bengal and East Bengal feared the necessity of maintaining separate establishments at Dacca involving greater expense and thus material losses.³ The politicians thought that their power and influence would be weakened by the transfer of Bengalis to the new province.⁴

Brodrick's⁵ half-hearted support of partition led people to think that "the Home Government were not at one with Lord Curzon about the partition."⁶ Agitators interpreted Curzon's resignation in the midst of controversy as his

1. Minto to Morley, 5 February 1906: Minto Papers M.1005.
2. The Bengalee, 15 September 1905.
3. Prodyat Kumar Tagore, Secretary, British Indian Association, to Government of Bengal, 19 February 1904: Public Letters, 1905, vol.33.
4. Minto to Morley, 3 February 1906: Minto Papers M.1005.
5. Brodrick (William) St. John (Fremantle), ninth Viscount Midleton and first Earl of Midleton (1856-1942). Educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Conservative M.P., West Surrey (1880-85), Guildford division (1885-1906). Financial secretary to the War Office, 1886-92. Under-secretary for war, 1895-8; for foreign affairs, 1898-1900. Secretary of State for war, 1900-3; for India, 1903-5. Succeeded father, 1907. Leader of southern unionists in Ireland. Earl, 1920.
6. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.387. Also Zaidi, S.Z.H., The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964), pp.161-75.

discredit and dismissal.¹ And they regarded Fuller's² resignation on the Sirajganj-school issue as another success for their agitation.³ The change of ministry in Britain in December 1905 and the coming of Morley⁴ with his party stamp of liberalism, in the place of the secretary of state for India, again allowed the agitators to harbour fresh hopes.⁵

The congress took up the partition question and passed resolutions demanding the cancellation or modification of partition; this sanctioned the carrying out of the

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1. Curzon to Balfour, 11 December 1908: Balfour Papers, No.49, 733.
 2. Fuller, Sir (Joseph) Bampfylde (1854-1935). Indian administrator and author. Educated at Marlborough. Served in North-West and Central provinces. Chief commissioner, Assam. Lieutenant-governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905. His "resignation" accepted, 1906. A temporary major in the Army Ordnance Department, 1915-17. Director of timber supplies at the War Office, February 1917.
 3. Fuller's resignation, his administration, and agitators' reaction to it are to be found in (S.R.) Wasti's Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905-1910, pp.35-51.
 4. Morley, John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn (1838-1923). Statesman and man of letters. Educated at Cheltenham College and Lincoln College, Oxford. Chief secretary for Ireland, 1872-5. M.P., Montrose Burghs, 1896-1908. Secretary of state for India, 1905-10. Resigned from Cabinet on government's decision to intervene in European war, 1914.
 5. The Sanjibani, 4 January 1906: Bengal Native News Paper Reports, No.2, 1906.

swadeshi and boycott movements which had already been adopted by the Bengal agitators.¹ The congress, however, did not seem unanimous on these resolutions. Referring, in particular, to the resolution regarding the boycott of goods, a confidential report observed: "Many delegates and some of the Moderate congress journals allege that if a count had been made, it would have been found that the majority was against the resolution."² The resolution was never voted on again, either in the next session of the congress, which ended in fiasco at Surat, or in subsequent sessions, because there seemed to be apprehension of losing the resolution if it was moved. Surendranath Banerjea was reported to have said: "To move and have the Resolution lost would be disastrous, as then it would mean that the Congress did not sanction or approve of the boycott and if they kept silent that would mean that the old resolution was in tact and in force and they could go on with the work of the boycott in Bengal."³ It indicates that the Bengali congressmen

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1. Report of the Indian National Congress, 1906, Resolutions VI-VIII & XI.
 2. Abstract of Police Report from Bengal, 29 January 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, vol.792, File No. 231.
 3. Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, to Godley, Secretary of State, 7 January 1909: Judicial and Public Department, 1909, File No. 264, vol.913.

were not sure about the support of other Congressites to the agitation. There was a feeling that the Bengalis were selfish and that they were connecting a regional issue with a national organisation. Gokhale observed that ninety per cent. of the educated people of India had not the slightest concern about the partition of Bengal.¹ The fact was that "the feeling against the partition had started to wane in Bengal; it had never provoked any strong reaction elsewhere."²

At this time Keir Hardie,³ a British Labour M.P., visited Eastern Bengal. He was there for five days. His motives, as he had explained in an interview with the representative of the Empire newspaper at Calcutta on 25 September 1907, were "to find out [the] extent and causes of unrest and to ascertain what the agitators sought to accomplish."⁴ He intended "to lay his experience before the

1. Dunlop Smith's Note (Private Secretary to Minto), 29 September 1907, Enclosure in Minto to Morley, 29 October 1907: Morley Papers, vol.13.
2. Zaidi, S.Z.H., The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964), pp.207-208.
3. Hardie, James Keir (1856-1915). Socialist and labour leader. Miner in Lanarkshire, 1866. Dismissed as agitator, 1878. Secretary of Scottish miners' federation, 1886. Left liberals and became chairman of newly formed Scottish labour party, 1888. Founded Labour Leader, 1889. Independent labour M.P., South West Ham, 1892-5. First leader of labour party in Parliament, 1906-7.
4. Viceroy to Secretary of State, Simla, 7 October 1907 (Telegram): Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.

labour party and to discuss possible action at next session of Parliament."¹ He visited Pabna, Mymensingh, Dacca and Barisal. Throughout his tour, Keir Hardie was accompanied by J. Chowdhury, a principal Calcutta agitator and the son-in-law of Surendranath Banerjea.² He acted as Hardie's private secretary and generally arranged his tour. Everywhere he was surrounded by the anti-partition agitators and in the words of Hughes Buller, District Magistrate, Barisal, led "by the nose by the Hindu agitators" who were "making every endeavour to persuade him that Bengali Babudom alone can rule India."³ When he arrived at the Siraganj steamer ghat in Pabna on 26 October 1907, he was received by the local agitators, like Shosidhur Neogi, Babu Makhallal Shah, Bankimcandra Roy and Ismail Shiraji. There was a procession of gaily decorated boats and at Hardie's request "Bandematram" was sung.⁴ At the Mymensingh railway station,

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1. Viceroy to Secretary of State, Simla, 7 October 1907 (Telegram): Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.
 2. Report of S. Datta, Inspector, Criminal Investigation Department, 27 September 1907: Ibid.
 3. Keir Hardie's conversation with Hughes Buller, Enclosure in LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, No.597, Shillong, 12 October 1907: Ibid.
 4. F.F. Ainslie, Subdivisional Officer, Sirajganj, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 26 September 1907: Ibid.

Hardie was met by Babu Srinath Roy, an officer of the local zamindar Surja Kanta Acharji. Similarly at Dacca and Barisal, he first met agitators like Anandacandra Roy and Aswani Kumar Dutt.¹

Hardie's movements and utterances gave some hope to the agitators. At Sirajganj, Hardie found fault with Ainslie, the local subdivisional officer, for not allowing J. Chowdhury and a number of Indians to see the jail with him. When Chowdhury left in fury, Hardie also refused to visit the prison and accused Ainslie of disgraceful behaviour.² Subsequently Ainslie was relieved of his appointment and transferred, which, the agitators thought, showed that Hardie was very influential and had strong sympathy for them. At Mymensingh, seeing the police in the street, Hardie

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1. It may be mentioned that while Hardie was going to Mymensingh, Surendranath Banerjea wrote to Anath Babu, the principal local agitator: "Mr. Keir Hardie is a very powerful Member of Parliament; he is very sympathetic towards us. Represent to him that the partition of Bengal is the root of this unrest, that the Government is setting up the Mahomedans against the Hindus, and that the partition is the only cause of the present tension and feeling between Hindus and Mahomedans." Report by S. Datta, 27 and 28 September 1907, Enclosure in LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, No.574, Shillong, 8 October 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.
 2. Subdivisional Officer, Sirajganj, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 26 April 1907: Ibid.

remarked that it reminded him of a city in a state of siege. In an interview with the correspondent of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, he observed that the facts which he had learnt showed "that the Russian methods of administration were being closely followed in the district; whilst some of the atrocities recently committed would, if known in England, rouse as much indignation as did the Turkish horrors in Armenia."¹ Again, speaking at a public meeting at Barisal Hardie assured his audience that on his return to England he would urge the government to grant self-government to India. "You require better justice", he added, "and I will tell this to my friends after I return home."² He also mentioned that he did not notice any ill feeling between the Hindus and Muslims.

Hardie visited a village named Kawarchar on the opposite side of the Barisal river. The agitators' press later laid some stress on this visit claiming it convinced Hardie that the Muslims as a body were in sympathy with the

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1. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 28 September 1907: Bengal Native News Paper Reports, 1907.
 2. Note on Mr. Keir Hardie's visit to the Dacca Division, Enclosure in H. LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.694, 12 November 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.

political agitation. The Bengalee reporter said that Hardie "found the Muhammadans joining the Hindus in crying Bande-matram and found them earnest Swadeshi."¹ But the event looked very different to a government official.² Hardie went to Kawarchar, he reported, accompanied by Aswani Babu, Nibarancandra Das and J. Chowdhury. The Muslims who met the party consisted of 11 men and seven boys. Of 11 men, two were tenants of Nibarancandra Das, three took frequent loans from him, two were petty cultivators and the rest were cart-bearers, fan-pullers and milk-sellers. This village was the home of many of the labouring classes in Barisal. The tenants of Nibarancandra were the leaders, and boys shouted Bandematram, because they were told that the school boys had done so on the other side of the river and they would probably get a reward from the saheb who was coming. Hardie paid two rupees to these boys for the ovation which he received. The Muslims who took part were reported afterwards to be thoroughly ashamed of the business.³

1. The Bengalee, 30 September 1907.

2. Hughes-Buller's (District Magistrate, Barisal) Report, Enclosure in H. LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.694, 12 November 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.

3. Ibid.

From the above analysis of Hardie's fact-finding tour of Eastern Bengal, it appears that he became unduly impressed by the agitators. He was convinced that the Muslims were favoured by the government and felt sorry for the Hindus whom he saw loyal and submissive.¹ Hardie, who, in Morley's opinion, was "full of vehement pre-conceptions, specially on all the most delicate and dubious parts of politics",² entered Eastern Bengal with a biased mind, and failed to observe things impartially. He had very little contact with the Muslims. At Mymensingh, Hardie was reported not to have conversed with any one who was not an agitator, except on the occasion of his visit to the district magistrate. "He", the reporter stated, "did not see any Muhammadans except one or two who are in the camp of the agitators and who do not in any sense represent the views of any section of the Muhammadans of the Mymensingh District."³ Again, where Hardie saw representative Muslims he showed bias towards the agitators. While writing to Salimolla

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1. Hardie, K., India: Impressions and Suggestions, pp.xv-xvi.
 2. Morley to Minto, 23 August 1907: Morley, Recollections, vol.II, p.235.
 3. Note on Mr. Keir Hardie's visit to the Dacca Division, Enclosure in H. LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.694, 12 November 1907: Judicial and Public Department 1907, File No.3476.

Hardie stated he understood that the Muslims were supporting the partition in return for government assistance in securing for the Muslims a stronger representation in the public service.¹ He repeated all the stock allegations to Nawab Ali Chowdhury who declined them all. Chowdhury protested against Hardie's statement to a representative of the Englishman that educated Hindus and Muslims of Eastern Bengal were unhappy with the creation of the new province.² He accused Hardie of "making the best of a bad cause" and of swallowing "a large dose of untruth without the usual grain of salt."³ On 30 October 1907, Nawab Salimolla wrote to Hardie telling him that he was wrong to assume that the Muslims supported the partition to get larger shares in the civil service. "We support the partition", he continued, "because it is, without the least doubt, beneficial to our cause, — it has united us the Muhammadans in one vast body and has, in consequence, brought us to some prominence — under it, our interests will be more carefully looked after — it has given us impetus to social and political advancement — it has created in us a thirst for education, has

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1. Keir Hardie to Salimolla, 1 October 1907, Calcutta: Judicial and Public Department 1907, File No. 3476.
 2. The Englishman, 3 October 1907.
 3. Nawab Ali Chowdhury to R. Nathan, Commissioner, Dacca Division, Nalgola, Dacca, 27 October 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.

given us scopes for higher ambitions and, above all, has stimulated the rapid local developments of the districts separated and placed under a district administration, which failed under the old system to attract the amount of attention to local needs, commensurate with their importance."¹

The general effect of Keir Hardie's visit, however, was that the agitators began to entertain new hope; they thought that Hardie was the leader of a strong party at home and that all their grievances would be heard in Parliament as soon as Hardie would go back. Also they believed that "the present Liberal Government will shortly be replaced in power by a Labourite and Socialist Ministry, which will be as sympathetic to their aspirations as Mr. Keir Hardie has been."²

Despite Hardie's encouragement, the agitation against the partition was dying down,³ and the new province was gradually recovering from what was later called a

1. Salimolla to Keir Hardie, Dilkush, Dacca, 30 October 1907: Judicial and Public Department, 1907, File No. 3476.
2. Note on Mr. Keir Hardie's visit to the Dacca Division, Enclosure in H. LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.694, 12 November 1907: Ibid.
3. In November 1907, Minto wrote to Morley that according to the information received by the government, the partition was dead. Minto to Morley, 5 November 1907: Morley Papers, vol.13.

"state of stagnation".¹

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1. Hardinge to Crewe, 22 February 1911: Hardinge Papers
vol. 113.

The New Province

Thus, the new province, consisting of Eastern Bengal (Eastern Bengal forms today East Pakistan) and Assam (Assam is now a state of the Indian Union), and covering an area of 106,540 square miles, was created on 16 October 1905. It was bounded on the north by the eastern ranges of the Himalayan mountains which separated the province from the Kingdom of Bhutan and the territories of the hill tribes of the Mishmis, Niris, Daflas, Abors and Akas. On the east, it was separated from Burma by the Patkoi Hills. On the south, the boundary was the north-eastern corner of the Bay of Bengal. The coast line was about 200 miles in length, and was limited to the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali and Barisal. On the west, the province was separated from Bengal by the Ganges and its tributaries. The province was almost a level expanse, well-watered by numerous rivers, with a rise of level here and there.

Like North Western Provinces and the Panjab, Eastern Bengal and Assam formed a Muslim majority province. As stated, it had a population of 31 millions, of which 18 millions were Muslims, 12 millions Hindus

and the rest Animists, Christians and Buddhists. There were more Muslims in the new province than in other Muslim majority provinces of India.

The new province was backward: its economic and social conditions were far from satisfactory. There were agrarian troubles in the province. The landlords were few; they were mostly Hindus and lived in and around Calcutta leaving the management of the estates to their agents. The majority of the people consisted of Muslim tenants, landless workers and weavers. The land revenue administration, particularly of the unsettled areas,¹ was

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1. In 1907, it was estimated that the distribution of land (with which the land records department was concerned) in the new province was as follows:

	Eastern Bengal	Assam
Permanently settled	34,000 sq. miles	6,000 sq. miles
Temporarily settled	4,000 " "	6,000 " "
Unsettled	6,000 " "	20,000 " "

Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907, p. 1.

"persistently neglected."¹ The permanently settled districts had not yet been surveyed completely,² and as such the tenants had no record of rights and no security of tenancy. By contrast, a tenant in the North Western Provinces³ and the Panjab,⁴ on proving twelve years' continuous occupation of his holding, was admitted to a permanent and heritable tenure at a "judiciously fixed" rent. In Eastern Bengal, the tenancies had sunk

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1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.371.
 2. Since the partition the following areas were surveyed in the new province:

Years	Surveyed areas in sq. miles
1907	1,022
1908	2,694
1909	2,434
1910	2,169
1911	2,321

3. Reports on the Survey and Settlement Operations in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1911, p.1 (of each vol.)
Fagan, S.P., "District Administration in the United Provinces, Central Provinces and the Panjab 1818-1857": The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.83. Also Moreland, The Revenue Administration of the United Provinces, pp.55-56; Selections from Revenue Records of North Western Provinces, 1822-33.
4. Baden Powell, Land Systems of British India, vol.II, pp. 568-72.

to the status of a precarious occupancy, dependent for their continuance on the whims of the landlords. The relation between the landlords and the tenants was not good. The landlords generally regarded their rai-yats merely as a source of income from which "it is their business to squeeze all that can be squeezed."¹ The rai-yats usually considered the landlords and their agents oppressors. After the partition, N.D. Beatson Bell, Director of Land Records, Eastern Bengal and Assam, found out that in Eastern Bengal there were sometimes 50 or 60 different landlords or groups of landlords immediately above a single tenant. Each of these landlords or groups of landlords maintained a separate rent-roll and made separate collections from the tenants.²

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1. F.N. Fischer, Officiating Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue Department, No. 1538. R. Jalpaiguri, 8 October 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Beatson Bell to Secretary, Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 782-15 T. Shillong, 10 November 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1909.

Industrially the new province was most backward. There were no jute mills, no paper mills or glass factories in the province. This was partly due to the lack of capital and adequate means of communications and partly due to the lack of initiative on the part of the government. Handloom cotton weaving, which was the main indigenous industry of the province, was declining largely because of the increasing importation of European cotton goods.

Communications of the province were very poor: roads and waterways were not developed, and the railways were insufficient and were not linked with the interior. Many rivers were silting up. Many roads became muddy and even impassable during the rains causing a damage to the business of the areas concerned. Railways of the province were Calcutta-oriented, as if they were constructed not to serve the whole population but "to meet the requirements of the city on the Hooghly."¹ This was so largely because of Calcutta's development as the

1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.371.

capital city and as the largest port of Bengal. There were very few places in Eastern Bengal which could be reached without first travelling half-way to Calcutta. In order to get to Dacca from Naogaon one had to journey via Iswardi, a station which was almost halfway to Calcutta; a shorter way would have been via Bogra but Bogra lacked a direct link with Dacca.¹

Trade and commerce of the province were under-developed. Its only port of Chittagong had failed to develop as a competitor to Calcutta within Bengal; Chittagong's harbour facilities were inadequate and trade meagre, although Chittagong was the nearest sea outlet of Eastern Bengal and Assam; it was engaged in coastal trade with Calcutta and its international trade was carried on through the latter.

The maladministration had stimulated lawlessness and crime. Attempts at wrecking goods trains were frequent.² The waterways of Eastern Bengal and Assam were not safe; they had become "the scene of operations

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1. Naogaon is a subdivision in Rajshahi; it is very near to Bogra which is nearer to Dacca while Iswardi is away from Naogaon.
 2. History of Obstruction Cases by E.C. Ryland, Assistant Inspector General, Government Railway Police, Sealdah, 19 June 1905, Enclosure in his letter to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, No.3126, Sealdah, 23 June 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Police Proceedings, 1905.

of the largest system of organised piracy in the world."¹ There were organised bands of robbers and thugs in Eastern Bengal and Assam.² "Any one", wrote Fraser, "who is inclined to doubt the necessity for the partition of Bengal may be recommended to study the four solid volumes of reports on 'Trade Conditions and Crime on Navigable Waterways in Bengal, Assam and the United Provinces in 1904-05' issued by Mr. P.B. Bramley in 1907". Though he was dealing with crime in three provinces, it is clear that "the bulk of the crime" was in the areas of the new province.³

Since the Muslims were last to take to English education and the new province consisted mostly of Muslims it was backward educationally. Most of the important colleges and schools were in and around Calcutta. This was partly due to Calcutta's important position as the largest city of Bengal and partly due to the desire of Hindus, who formed the dominant majority in the area, for English education. The first engineering college of Bengal was

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1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.372.
 2. Bramley, P.B., Report on River Crime and River Police Reorganisation Scheme, Part I, p.16.
 3. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, pp.372-3.

established in Sibpur near Howrah in 1879-80 during the lieutenant-governorship of Sir Ashley Eden.¹ The lieutenant governors paid much more attention to these institutions. The colleges and schools of the new province were understaffed and had no proper buildings; their financial condition was far from satisfactory and they were badly managed. Primary education was not properly looked after. Female education was not actively encouraged; there was no institution in the province to train female teachers. The Muslims' backwardness in education partly accounted for their small share in government appointments. The government of the new province reported in 1905 that in the police department while the Hindus held 92.6 per cent of the post of inspectors, the Muslims' share was only 7.4 per cent. In Mymensingh the Muslims, who formed 71.36 per cent of the total population, held only 9.4 per cent of ministerial posts.²

Against this background, we will discuss in the following chapters the progress that the new province made in the fields of trade and transport, indigenous industry (particularly handloom weaving), education and literary activity.

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1. Eden, Sir Ashley (1831-1887). Educated at Rugby and Winchester. Magistrate at Murshidabad, 1856. Secretary to the governor of Bengal, 1860-71. Envoy to Bhutan, where he was constrained to sign a disadvantageous treaty, 1865. Chief-commissioner of British Burma, 1871. Lieutenant-governor of Bengal, 1877-82. Member of the secretary of state's council, 1882.
 2. Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Inspector General of Police, No.19, 12 December 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Judicial Proceedings, 1906.

CHAPTER II

TRANSPORT AND TRADE

After the partition, Dacca and Shillong became the headquarters of Eastern Bengal and Assam respectively. Chittagong was the only seaport of the new province. In view of the altered circumstances, it was eminently desirable that the means of communications between Dacca and Chittagong, and Dacca and Shillong and other parts of the province, should be improved. Existing communications between Dacca and Chittagong and Dacca and Shillong were very inadequate. A letter posted at Dacca in the evening, did not reach Chittagong till the morning of the third day¹ and took 72 hours to reach Shillong.² The absence of railway lines between Bonarpara and Fulcharie on the right bank of the Brahmaputra river and Jamalpur and Bahadurabad on the left bank, had made communication very difficult between Mymensingh and Dacca and north Bengal districts of the new province.

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1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, Shillong, No. 11, File 1R 3, 11 July 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Proceedings, 1906.
 2. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, to Director General, Post Office, India, No. 9739J. Shillong. 16 August 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam General Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1906.

Transport facilities between the port of Chittagong and Dacca, Bogra, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Rajshahi Malda were poor due to the insufficiency of steamer service on the Brahmaputra and the lack of railways in certain places, for example, in an area between Tangi and Akhaura. The pattern of the existing railways was Calcutta-oriented. The establishment of Calcutta as a premier port and seat of administration influenced its development out of proportion to its geographical situation.¹ The Assam-Bengal railway, which was opened in 1895, was designed to transport tea, jute and rice to the ports of Calcutta and Chittagong. But being a minor port with less harbour facilities Chittagong failed to attract the traffic and left Calcutta alone to enjoy the benefit. From Chandpur goods were moved by steamer to Goalando and from there by the Eastern-Bengal railway to Calcutta. The Eastern-Bengal railway which was opened in 1860s had no feeder lines in the interior and catered only for the industrial and suburban areas of Calcutta on the eastern side of the Hooghly.²

When the new province was created, attempts were made to improve its communications and thereby to develop

1. Ahmad, N., An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, pp. 238-39.

2. Malik, M.B.K., Hundred Years of Pakistan Railways, p. 18.

its trade. Some roads were made and others were repaired. A number of rail lines were opened, and new steamer services were strated.³ Chittagong developed into a thriving trade centre of much commercial importance and its communications with the interior were much enhanced. In a letter, Lancelot Hare,¹ Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, while praising the progress and development made by the province, wrote that the means of transport, which had been sadly neglected in the past, were now fairly developed and the improvement of Chittagong port was receiving the constant attention of the government.²

Roads

There was a need to improve the condition of road transport in the new province. The road facilities were required to connect many rural areas with trade centres because lorries or cow carts, handling a much smaller unit load than the goods train or large boats, could serve remote areas more frequently.

In many parts of the province, there were no

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1. Lancelot Hare (1851-1922). Born on 7 January 1851. Son of Thomas Hare Hook, Surrey. Served in Bengal and Assam from 1873. Member of Board of Revenue, Bengal. Member of governor-general's council 1905-06. Officiating lieutenant-governor of Bengal, 1906. Lieutenant-governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1906-11.
 2. Hare to Viceroy's Private Secretary, 20 February 1911: Hardinge Papers, vol.113.
 3. MAP, P. 422.

adequate roads. In the Chittagong Hill Districts, the rich valley of the Chengri river had no road connection either with Rangamati or with Mahalseri. There was no highway between Chandraghona and Bandarban. Most of the existing roads were Katcha or unmetalled and their conditions were far from satisfactory. Where the unmetalled ways passed over the red or white sticky soil, specially in tea districts of Assam, and where the cart traffic was heavy in the rains, the situation became worse. After rain, the soil turned to mud and stuck in lumps to the wheels of carts, increasing the load which the bullocks had to carry. As a result, the road became pocked with craters, which then filled with water. This in turn saturated the lower strata of the soil and made the track practically impassable.¹ The Kathiatoli-Amlaki roadway, vital to the tea industry of the area, for example, became unfit for traffic.² In some parts of Assam, these thoroughfares were matted with bamboo. This was an old system, but was of little effect. Within a year rain rotted the expensive

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1. "Treatment of Katcha Roads in Assam 16 June 1907", Enclosure in C.A. White, Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle, to Chief Engineer, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 6717, Tezpur, 18 July 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. A. Cahrystall, Manager, Amlaki Tea Company, to Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, Assam, 14 June 1907:
Ibid.

bamboo,¹ making the highway even more impassable.² "My committee", wrote the chairman of the Nowgong sub-committee, Assam branch of the Indian Tea Association, "consider it an absolute waste of time, labour and money to put down bamboo matting at great expense — say Rs. 13,00 to 16,00 per mile — year after year."³

It was thought that the shortage of all weather ^{the} roads was hindering/economic developments of the area. The government, therefore, adopted two measures to improve the condition of roads. First, some of the old roads were to be metalled and new ones constructed, and, second, steps were to be taken to keep the unmetalled tracks in a good condition during the rains.

Metalling commenced on the Silchar-Manipur highway which connected many important villages, markets and tea gardens, and the hill path between Fulartalaghat and Manipur.⁴ Its Silchar-Lakhimpur section, which served the

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1. Extract from Inspection Note of the Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle, File 1-1-13, 6 October 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. C.A. White, Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle to Chief Engineer, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 6717, 18 July 1906: Ibid.
 3. Extract from John Henderson to Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, 2 September 1906: Ibid.
 4. Report of A.T. Duguid, Executive Engineer, Kacar Division, Annexure in H.W. Rushton, Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department No. 14486 1910-1911, Shillong, File ¹⁴~~23~~ 17, 17 November ^{C.66} 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1912.

Kacar district, had been breached entirely in one place and partially at another, near Chandrapur.¹ During the rainy season, it became impassable for cart and other wheel traffic, and dangerous for horses and bullocks. This was thought to have had economic consequences on the local areas, causing great inconvenience and loss to all living in the district. The executive engineer of the Kacar division wrote that the surface of the road could not be kept in a satisfactory condition until it had been metalled throughout.² The government, therefore, sanctioned over Rs. 82,000 for the purpose, and thereby to meet the needs of the people and tea-gardens of Kacar.³

Another road to be improved was the Hili-Bahurghat road. It was the most important artery in Dinajpur connecting Bahurghat, capital of the subdivision, with the nearest railway station of Hili, on the Eastern Bengal railway.⁴

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1. Resolution No. 15 of the Silchar Local Board Meeting, 30 June 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1912.
 2. A.T. Duguid, Executive Engineer, Kacar Division, to Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle, No. 2515, 2 March 1911: Ibid.
 3. F. St. G. Manners Smith, Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle, No. 732C., Shillong, File 1R 18, 2 December 1911: Ibid.
 4. R.S.P. Matadin Sukul, Executive Engineer, Rajshahi Division, to Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, No. 2879, Rajshahi, 25 May 1911: Ibid.

It was the only approach from the railway to the sub-divisional station of Balurghat and at the same time, Balurghat had become more dependent on the railway for its trade. Its export of rice and jute was conveyed to the railway with difficulty by carts over this unmetalled route which required considerable development.¹ Previously, it was maintained by the district boards of Dinajpur and Bogra. It had become channel-shaped and water-logged, with muddy holes in almost every mile and became practically unfit for passage during the rains. The soil over it was stiff clay.² If metalled, it might well add to the healthy growth of Balurghat. The government, therefore, took over its management in 1907,³ a portion of it was re-sectioned and surfaced with Siliguri stone at a cost of Rs. 34,813.⁴ Again, in 1911, the government sanctioned Rs. 36,880 for repairing five miles of the road.⁵ Its development made

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1. Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 634-P.W., Jalpaiguri, 9 February 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Executive Engineer, Rajshahi Division, to Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, No. 726, Rajshahi, 5 February 1909: Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Report by Matadin Sukul, Executive Engineer, Rajshahi Division, 5 February 1909: Ibid.
 5. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Superintending Engineer, Western Circle, No. 780 C., 2 December 1911: Ibid.

the Eastern Bengal railway accessible to the interior of this area.

Besides improving the existing main roads, the government opened some new ones. In the Dacca division, there were two important jute markets of Kudda and Kashimpur on the bank of the Toorag river. During the jute season of 1908, about 72,000 maunds of jute were sold at these two markets.¹ It was thought that a street connecting these two markets might be of great help to the traders of the area. Accordingly, the government sanctioned Rs. 22,555 for the construction of an embanked lane from Kudda to Kashimpur.² This was not all. Snyed Hutchinson, an Indian police official, wrote in 1909 that two important highways — the Rangamati - Mahalseri and Chandraghona - Bandarban — were recently opened in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.³ The Rangamati - Mahalseri road was 32 miles long and ran through the rich valley of the Chengri river, a

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1. H.L. Salkeld, Magistrate, Dacca, to Commissioner, Dacca Division, No. 1298, Dacca, 2 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Commissioner, Dacca Division, No. 324 T.C. Shillong, 2 December 1908: Ibid.
 3. Hutchinson, S., Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Chittagong Hill Tracts, p. 91.

tract which had previously been unconnected with Rangamati by a good thoroughfare. Rangamati was the headquarter of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and was on the bank of the Karnafuli river. The road had skirted the Chakma region which contained over 48,000 people,¹ and had brought certain areas in direct contact with Rangamati. There were held two big markets at Rangamati on Monday and Thursday when large crowds flocked in from the surrounding villages to dispose of their country produce and purchase household necessities.² The Chandraghona-Bandarban roadway was 25 miles long. It had connected Chandraghona with Bandarban running through Bangaldhalia and Krowpara. Chandraghona was on the bank of the Karnafuli and was the centre of trade for timber, bamboo, boats, cotton, sesamum and sun grass (a kind of grass used for roofing the cottages). The interior areas could be well served by this highway. Should goods be sent from Chandraghona to the areas like Ruma and Satkania, this was the only possible direct route; goods could be easily carted down at Bandarban on the bank of the Sungu river, and could be sent by boats to Ruma and Satkania.³ Otherwise, the commodities had to move via the

1. Hutchinson, S., Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Chittagong Hill Tracts, p. 102.

2. Ibid., p. 103.

3. Ibid., p. 101.

Bay of Bengal or the Bash-Kali channel which had connected the Karnafuli with the Sungu river very near the ocean. This involved time and greater expense, causing a rise in the price of goods. Moreover, the road had connected the police stations of two important towns. The police officials could avoid the long journey by boat by using this newly opened passage. The road was well graded with stopping-places at Bangaldhalia and Krowpara, each at ten miles; unfurnished rest houses were opened at each place, while Chandraghona and Bandarban possessed excellent furnished bungalows.¹ Both the roads, the Rangamati-Mahalsiri and the Chandraghona-Bandarban, could, however, be used throughout the year and provided an easy means of communications.

In addition, the government sanctioned Rs. 41,136 for the construction of a bridge over the Dikhu river near Saitang in the Surma Valley and Hill Districts.² The purpose was to link up the adjoining villages with a market and thereby to encourage local trade.

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1. Hutchinson, S., Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Chittagong Hill Tracts, p. 91.
 2. S.K. Sawday, Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, No. 59, P. Dacca, 3 February 1912: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1912.

Some special measures were taken to keep the unmetalled roads open to traffic during the monsoons. First, roads were kept to "a reasonable width", otherwise it was difficult to get rid of all water that fell on them. All roads of greater width than 16 feet were reduced to 16 feet.¹ Second, labourers were employed to drain off any water that lodged on the road, and to scoop out the slush from hollows and ruts.² Third, coarse river sand was collected during the dry season and spread on the road during the rains.³ Finally, the cattle were kept off roads as much as possible because wandering herds did more damage than ordinary cart traffic.⁴

Railways

As stated at the beginning, there was much need of additional railway facilities in the new province. The

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1. W.E. Night, Executive Engineer, Upper Assam Division, to Superintending Engineer, Assam Circle, No. 1599, Dibrugarh, 23 February 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. McM. Sweet, Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, to Chief Engineer, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 59 2TB; Dacca 24 August 1907: Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.

opening of light-feeder lines or tramways connected outlying districts with the existing railway system. And in many cases, such lines, if laid through populous districts, not only were of very great service in opening up the country, and thus bringing its produce into the larger markets, but also yielded a fair return on their initial cost.¹ The lieutenant-governor realised the importance of developing the railway system by providing additional branch lines. He felt it essential to construct a railway joining Nowgong with Silghat for the development of these areas, and the government sanctioned Rs. 10,000 for the survey of the line.² Although the planning and the surveying of the line was completed in 1909, its construction was delayed possibly because the annulment of the partition slowed down the progress of works.³ The construction of such a line had been a pressing need in the Nowgong

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1. Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, to Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, No.2235, Sylhet, 20 June 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1911.
 2. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, No. 769, Rly. Shillong, File $\frac{95}{9}$ 3, 5 July 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1910.
 3. The line was opened to traffic in 1915. Goswami, P.C., The Economic Development of Assam, pp.185-6.

district for many years and would be of immense benefit both to the industrial interests as well as to the residents of Nowgong. Nowgong was an important district but its headquarter had hitherto been much isolated.¹ The railway line was to run from Kampur to Silghat via Nowgong and was intended to connect Nowgong town with the Kampur railway station on the Assam Bengal railway and thus to link up that railway and Nowgong town with the Brahmaputra river near Silghat, tapping as many tea gardens as possible. Its length would be 50 miles.² This would be a direct line to Nowgong and would be five miles shorter than the alternative route from Kampur to Nowgong via Kothiatoli.³ It would pass through an

1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, Shillong, File $\frac{98}{9}$ 3, Rly. 15 July 1908:
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1910.
2. Major A.A. Howell, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, to Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts, No.283 G., Nowgong, 29 May 1908: Ibid.
3. Proceedings of a special meeting of Nowgong Local Board at Nowgong, 22 April 1908: Ibid.

area with a population of more than 78,000.¹ In addition to passenger traffic, this line would obtain not only the bulk of the tea trade but also a fair amount of country produce. It would capture the import and export trade of the area. About 500 maunds of kerosene oil, required for use mainly in lamps, sugar, piecegoods and hard-ware were imported into Nowgong from Silghat, and the same amount of oil, seeds, cotton, jute and hides were exported from Nowgong to Silghat by the steamers.² Also the tea gardens, which began at Silghat and extended along the foot of the Mikir Hills in an almost unbroken chain for about 20 miles, could use the line. Tea production from these gardens averaged annually about 44,000 maunds.³ The consumption of coal, it is reported,

1. J.W. De Tivoli's "Report on a reconnaissance survey for a Steamer Tramway from Silghat to Samaguri Hat", Appendix II, to A.A. Howell, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, to Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts, No. 108 G., Nowgong, 25 April 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.

2. Ibid.

had hitherto been comparatively small owing to the difficulty of transport, but all gardens would be using coal if the railway was made available, because firewood was distant and costly to cut and bring in.¹ It was calculated that about one and a half maunds of coal were required to prepare a maund of tea and hence coal transport by rail might be "safely" estimated at 66,000 maunds.² The average quantity of rice imported annually by these gardens had been during the last few years about 30,000 maunds.³

Some branch lines were constructed in the eastern and northern Bengal districts of the new province. Sir Lancelot Hare proposed in 1907 to open a railway from Jamalpur on the Dacca-Mymensingh-Jagannathganj railway to

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1. J.W. De Tivoli's "Report on reconnaissance survey for a Steamer Tramway from Silghat to Samaguri Hat in Nowgong", Appendix II, to A.A. Howell, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, to Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts, No. 108 G., Nowgong, 25 April 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1910.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.

a point on the Brahmaputra opposite Fulchari.¹ This would be of much use to the people of the region. Politically speaking, the line would be of great importance; with the aid of a ferry service across the river at Fulchari, the line would bring Dacca within 24 hours of Shillong via Dhubri and Gauhati. Also it would provide the Rajshahi side of the Brahmaputra river with speedier means of communications via Bogra and would connect Dacca with Calcutta via Fulchari and Santahar.² Construction was soon under way and

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1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, No.1211 R., Shillong, File $\frac{1}{5}$ R 5, 21
September 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, No. 205 T.R. Camp, Chittagong, 6 August 1908: Ibid.

by 1912, the line from Jamalpur to Bahadurabad was completed. At the same time, the railway from Bonarpara to Fulchari, on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra, was opened to connect the Dacca line with a ferry across the river. Their total length was only 26 miles,¹ but they had brought Eastern Bengal much closer to Assam.

1. Administration Report on the Railways in India 1913-14, vol.II, Appendix 1, p.47: P.P. 1914-16, vol. 48, Cd. 7656.

The railway from Mymensingh to Netrokona was necessary for the development of the northern half of the Mymensingh district and would serve a rich area like Shumbhuganj and Hailakandi.¹ The plan was mooted but the line was not opened to traffic until 1917.² It ran from Mymensingh to Netrokona via Gouripur, a length of over 26 miles.³ By 1907, the Kalaura-Sylhet branch railway via Fenehuganj had been surveyed and the preparation of survey-records completed,⁴ at a cost amounting to Rs. 27,504.⁵ The total length of the line was 30 miles.⁶ The river Kusiayara was to be bridged in order to avoid delays to the ferry service and to ensure the efficient transport of goods and passengers. The lieutenant-governor was very much in favour of opening this line, He observed that in time this line would be prolonged to the foot of the Khasi

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1. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, No. 205 T.R., Camp Chittagong, File 1 B 11, 6 August 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Malik, M.B.K., Hundred Years of Pakistan Railways, p. 214.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, to Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, No. 1055, Sylhet, 13 May 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1907.
 5. V. Woods, Agent, Assam Bengal Railway to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 305-1-4190, Chittagong, 20 May 1907: Ibid.
 6. Ibid.

Hills, meeting there the railway which would connect the foot of these hills with Dacca via Mymensingh, skirting the coal fields of the Garo Hills.¹ He felt that this line was essential to tap the trade of Baliganj.² The mercantile community of Balaganj supported the project strongly.³ By 1912, the Kalaura-Fenchuganj section of the line was opened to traffic and the river Kusiara was bridged within three years.⁴

To connect the interior of the Assam Valley with the river side, a 67 mile railway was opened from Sorbhog to Amingaon on the right bank of the Brahmaputra river on 1 April 1909.⁵ Sorbhog was already connected to the

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1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Railway Board, No.11, Shillong, File 1R₁₀₃, 11 July 1906:
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1906.
 2. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, No. 1327 R. Shillong, 22 October 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1907.
 3. Extract from Mr. Henderson's remarks in Legislative Council, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 15 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings (Railway), 1907.
 4. Administration Report on the Railways in India, 1913-14, vol. II, Appendix 1, p. 148: P.P. 1914-16, vol. 48, Cd. 7656. The length of this section was over 15 miles; the construction of the remaining portion was started during this period.
 5. Ibid., p. 46.

Golakganj-Kokrajhar line, which was opened on 1 February 1906,¹ by the Kokrajhar-Sorbhog line. The Kokrajhar-Sorbhog railway was about 40 miles long. It was opened to traffic on 1 March 1909 to facilitate the trade of the region and to establish a direct railway communication with Eastern Bengal. By / a ferry across the Brahmaputra river, the Sorbhog-Amingnon line was extended to Gauhati via Pandu on 15 December 1909,² and opened to traffic on 1 January 1910.³ Its length was five miles. The line had brought the Eastern Bengal railway system into contact with the Assam Bengal railway system at Gauhati. As a result, Dacca was connected with Gauhati and Shillong via both northern and eastern Bengal. Again, the line opened out the entire region from Golakganj to Pandu — an area which had no railways before. A little later, a 24 mile tract from Rangiya to Tangla in the Assam Valley, was opened up with the completion of the Rangiya-Tangla line

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1. Administration Report on the Railways in India, 1913-14, vol. II, Appendix 1, p. 148: P.P. 1914-16, vol. 48, Cd. 7656. The length of the Golakganj-Kokrajhar line was nearly 36 miles (35.75 miles).
 2. Post-Master-General, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Judicial Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Telegram, No. 0645, 10 December 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam General and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1910.
 3. Administration Report on the Railways in India 1913-14, vol. II, Appendix 1, p. 46: P.P. 1914-16, vol. 48, Cd. 7656.

on 1 March 1912.¹ After the opening of the Gauhati extension, however, Dalgoma post office was connected with Goalpara by a runner's line. The post office of Goalpara was, similarly, connected with the nearest railway station at Abtayapuri. The mails for Polasbari were exchanged at Pandughat. The subdivision of Mangaldai was served twice a day by runners, the mails being taken off at the Baihata railway station near Amingnon. The mails for the subdivision of Tezpur travelled by rail to Chaparmukh.² The extension had, thus, facilitated the conveyance of mails from Calcutta to Gauhati, Shillong, Nowgong, Tezpur and places in Upper Assam north of Luming.

On 1 April 1910, another new line of over 19 miles was opened, running from Akhaura to Ashuganj on the left bank of the Meghna.³ It was an important step to bring Dacca and Mymensingh in railway communications with Chittagong. By means of a ferry the line had to be linked with Bhairab Bazar on the right bank of the Meghna river. The

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1. Administration Report on the Railways in India, 1913-14, Appendix 1, vol. II, p. 46: P.P. 1914-16, vol. 48, Cd. 7656.
 2. Bank Gwyther's Reply to Manik Chandra on "Communication": Proceedings of the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 14 March 1910, p. 43.
 3. Administration Report on the Railways in India, 1910, Appendix 1, pp. 18-20: P.P. 1911, vol. 56, Cd. 5756.

construction of the 30-mile Bhairab Bazar-Tangi line commenced during 1910 and its subsequent completion brought the port and town of Chittagong much closer to Dacca and Mymensingh.¹

Further, the government had sanctioned over Rs. 20,000 for the extension of four miles of tramway in the district of Goalpara, for developing the local timber industry.² The annual output of the area, to which tramway was to be extended, was estimated to be 5,000 mature trees and a considerable quantity of dead wood and inferior stems. Their value was estimated at Rs. 50,000.³ A half-lakh of rupees could, therefore, be realised from timber located in a waterless tract which could not be worked by other means. Moreover, the removal of mature trees would make room for the younger plants, thereby increasing the forest production. Thus, otherwise inaccessible parts of

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1. Administrative Report on the Railways in India, 1910, Appendix I, pp. 18-20: P.P. 1911, vol. 56. Cd. 5756.
 2. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Revenue and Agriculture Department, No. 2870 F. Shillong, 31 March 1908; Vide Secretary, Government of India, Revenue and Agriculture Department, to Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 467 F. Telegram, 16 April 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Forest Proceedings, 1908.
 3. Extra Assistant Conservator of Forest, Goalpara Division, to Conservator of Forest, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 203 A. 21 October 1907: Ibid.

the district were to be opened up for the timber trade.

The Eastern Bengal and Assam Bengal railways, however, opened more than 200 miles of railways in the new province during 1906-1912. And over 140 miles of branch line were under construction;¹ some of them were completed a little later, for example, the Mymensingh-Netrokona line was opened in 1917. Progress in the opening of railways by the Eastern Bengal railway in the new province was not matched by similar progress in Bengal. While the Eastern Bengal railway had opened over 200 miles of branch line in the new province, it had completed the construction of only 35 miles in the old Bengal.² The opening of these lines had, however, improved the trade and transport facilities of the new province; goods could easily be moved from one place to another and could be sold in a better market; people could save time in journeys by train.

Waterways

In spite of railway extensions, the waterways remained the most common means of communications in the new

1. See Appendix.

2. Administration Report on the Railways in India 1913-14, Vol. II, Appendix 1, pp. 43-44; P.P. 1914-16, vol.48, Cd. 7656.

province. The province was intersected by many rivers and channels. It was estimated that there were about 24,000 miles of natural waterways in Bengal and Assam. The new province had about 35 main rivers and tributaries, for example, the Ganges, Surma, Brahmaputra, Karnafuli and others.¹ The major waterways of Bengal belonged to Eastern Bengal which was rich in potentially navigable rivers. Many of these had long been silting up and needed to be deepened and widened; for example, a great shoal had formed in the old Padma near Nuria causing serious trouble to inland transport.² The Boral river, which had many important markets like Ekdanta, Ataikola and others on its both sides, was not navigable except during the rains and its flow was barely perceptible.³ The Dhunsiri river, which

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1. Messrs. Kilburn and Co. Managing Agent, India General Navigation and Railway Company Limited, to Secretary to Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 3900, Calcutta, File $\frac{3N}{2}$ 1, 11 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Managing Agent, India General Navigation and Railway Company Limited, to W. Banks Gwyther, Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 11290, Calcutta, 19 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Marine Proceedings, 1909.
 3. A.H.W. Bentinck, Magistrate of Rajshahi, to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, No. 1656 J., Rampur Boalia, 23 October 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Irrigation) Proceedings, 1908.

rose in the Naga Hills and fell into the main river to the north of the Mikir Hills, required dredging even for light draft stern wheelers.¹ The Madaripur Bil which was a shorter route for the steamer traffic between Calcutta and the new province practically dried up in the hot weather.² On some rivers, there was a high incidence of serious crimes, such as dakaity (raids) and robbery, particularly on the Padma Meghna, Arial Khan and the Kusiya. The Kusiya was a well-known river on which the most thrilling piracies occurred, and nearby villages were said to be "the haunts of thieves and dakaits [raiders] who solely maintain themselves by constantly dakaiting [raiding] boats plying up and down this river ... dakaits are of frequent occurrences and a source of danger to the public."³ Evidence was obtained in the course of

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1. A List of Rivers in Eastern Bengal and Assam, Enclosure in Managing Agent, Indian General Navigation and Railway Company Limited, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 3900, Calcutta, File 3N 1, 11 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Irrigation) Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Note on the Improvement of Waterways in Bengal by O.C. Lees, Enclosure in W.A. Inglis, Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Public Works Department, No. 405 T. Darjeeling, 20 September 1905. Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Irrigation) Proceedings, 1907.
 3. Proceedings of Conference held at Sylhet, 15 April 1909, Appendix XXXVII, Enclosure in N. Bonham Carter, Inspector General of Police, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 1870, Shillong, 25-31 January 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Police Proceedings, 1910.

Bramley's enquiries of the mysterious disappearance of boats with their entire crews. Sometimes in 1906, on the river near Faridpur, a whole family was apparently done to death one dark night within a short distance of the residence of the steamer Company's officers, who actually heard the cries and went down to the rescue, but found nothing but an empty boat.¹ The river pirates used sip boats which were narrow and could be rowed swiftly away by a minimum crew. In short, observed Bramley, "life and property on the rivers was unsafe to a degree which could not be tolerated by the Government of any civilised country."²

The waterways of the new province had, thus, been suffering from various defects. Their improvement was, in the opinion of the lieutenant-governor, "of the first importance" to the development of the province.³ Improved

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1. The Report on Inter Provincial Crime: Bramley, P.B., Trade Conditions and Crime on Navigable Waterways in Bengal, Assam, and the United Provinces in 1904-06, Part I, p. 22.
 2. Bramley, P.B., Trade Conditions and Crime on Navigable Waterways in Bengal, Assam and the United Provinces, 1904-1906 (A Paper read on 1 September 1905 before Bengal Chamber of Commerce), p. 48.
 3. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Government of India, No. 1371, Shillong, File $\frac{3N}{2}$ 2, 26 June 1907 :
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings (Irrigation), 1908.

channels and rivers meant cheaper transport, quicker voyages and more regular running. The government wanted to form a separate branch in the department of public works.¹ This branch was to report and recommend which rivers had to be dredged and deepened, but information is lacking on the question of whether this branch was ever established during our period. But there is no denying that the dredging of the rivers was of practical necessity in the province. For instance, if the river Subansiri was made navigable, it would facilitate the communications of Rangamati with north Lakhimpur and would open up a large track which grew oil seeds.² The opening of the Singla river in Kacar and Sylhet for steamer traffic all the year round, would be of great benefit to the important tea gardens in those valleys which were very far off the railways.³ If obstructions were removed from the Kanks river and if it was made

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1. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Public Works Department No. 282 T.I., Camp Dacca, File $\frac{3N}{2}$ 32, 23 November 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings (Irrigation), 1908.
 2. Report on the Subansiri by A. Bentinck, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, Enclosure in Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Government of India, Public Works Department, No. 282 T.I., Camp Dacca, File $\frac{3N}{3}$ 32, 23 November 1908: Ibid.
 3. Report on Singla, Throri Nullah and Manu by H.A.C. Colquhoun, Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet: Ibid.

navigable to small steamers, it would open out a great portion of the Mymensingh district and be of use to the jute trade of the Netrokona subdivision.¹

From 1906, however, the government had started to dredge the Madaripur Bil which lies between the Madhumati and Kumar rivers.² It is an important inland waterway, some 16 miles in length. It was connected with the two rivers by several small channels which ran in tortuous courses into and through it. It was necessary to make it navigable because this would provide not only an alternative but a much shorter route for the steamer traffic between Bengal and the new province. The existing steamer service between the two provinces, through the Sundarbans via Barisal, was difficult and dangerous.³ In some places, the

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1. The Kanks river by H. Luson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings (Irrigation) 1908.
 2. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Government of Bengal, No. 39, Irrig. Shillong, File 5C 28 August 1906:
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Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings (Irrigation) 1907.
 3. Note on the Improvement of Waterways in Bengal by O.C. Lees, Enclosure in W.A. Inglis, Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Public Works Department, No. 405 T. Darjeeling, File 5C 1, 20 September 1905: Ibid.

channels were so narrow and uneven that vessels could pass each other only with great difficulty.¹ In others, the danger of vessels fouling hidden snags, was ever present. In 1904, a large ship was said to be completely wrecked near the Sundarbans causing a loss of two and a half lakh of rupees to the steam navigation company.² The adoption of the Bil route and its improvement would not only avoid this dangerous water passage but also would shorten very considerably the distance to be traversed. For example, a distance of 135 miles would be saved between Calcutta and Goalandu.³ Similarly, the space between Khulna and Chandpur and Khulna and Madaripur would be shortened by 100 and 89 miles, respectively.⁴

But to make the inland waters navigable was not enough if they were not also made safe for use by the country boats which carried local trade.⁵ The people were

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1. Note on the Improvement of Waterways in Bengal by O.C. Lees, Enclosure in W.A. Inglis, Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Public Works Department, No. 405 T. Darjeeling, File 5C 1, 20 September 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Irrigation) Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Some of the country boats were capacious enough to hold 1,100 maunds of goods and some could accommodate 800 maunds. H.L. Salkeld, Magistrate, Dacca, to Commissioner, Dacca Division, 27 August 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.

afraid of river pirates who were "as desperate, as ruthless, and as bloodthirsty as the Cantonese pirates on the West River in China".¹ There was no river police in the new province. At the time of the transfer of the Eastern Bengal districts to the new province a force of 75, intended for the river police, was handed over to the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam. No detailed scheme was, however, worked out, and the transferred group was, therefore, absorbed into the district police to fill vacancies in the establishment.² The lieutenant-governor, however, felt the need of checking crimes on the waterways. He considered that 27 river police stations should be established in different parts of the province. The staff of these stations consisted of five inspectors, 34 sub-inspectors, 34 head-constables and 266 constables.³ An adequate watch and patrol, and a readily available means of pursuit, could hardly fail to hamper and curtail the movements of criminals so as to render their calling almost

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1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p. 373.
 2. R. Nathan, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No. 3308 J., Shillong, 15 October 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Judicial Department Police Proceedings, 1910.
 3. Ibid. The Total river police force, thus, consisted of 339 members.

impossible. The river police station would form a secure refuge around which traders and others would moor their boats at night. The duty of the station staff was to keep a close watch over these and other boats and to gain intelligence regarding the nature of the craft which passed or stayed. A boat capable of accommodating five or six persons should be attached to each floating station. The initial expenditure for this project, however, was estimated at Rs. 11,24,000 in 1910.¹

In addition to these arrangements to ensure the safety of the country boats on rivers, attempts were made to open some new steamer services in the province in order to render the means of communications easy. A new mail and passenger service between Chandpur and Narayanganj was started from the year 1906.² The steamer should not take more than four hours on the journey from Chandpur to Narayanganj and three and a half hours on the journey from

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1. R. Nathan, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No. 3308 J., Shillong, 15 October 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Judicial Department Police Proceedings, 1910.
 2. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, to Director General, Post Office, India, Simla, No. 236, R.G. Shillong, 18 June 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1907.

Narayanganj to Chandpur.¹ The steamer would carry free of charge mail and the postal officials in charge of it but the steamer company "shall be entitled to charge fares not exceeding Rs. 3-4-6 for the first class, Rs. 1-1-6 for the second class and Rs. 8-9 for the third class, for each other passenger carried in the steamer."² This route via Narayanganj and Chandpur was the shortest for passengers and mail between Dacca and Mymensingh on the one side, and the Chittagon division, Surma Valley, Upper Assam and Shillong on the other. Formerly, Chittagong had been practically cut off from Dacca for want of proper ferry service between Chandpur and Narayanganj.³ The transmission of letters from Dacca to Shillong was slow and took, as pointed out above, 72 hours. According to the new arrangement, mail from Dacca to Shillong would take only 46 hours

1. The vessel would leave Chandpur after 3 to reach Narayanganj by 7-30 and would leave Narayanganj after 15 to arrive at Chandpur by 18-45.
2. Agreement Enclosure in Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 3233-39 G., Shillong, 13 August 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1907.
3. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, to Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, No. 3503-4 J. Shillong, 30 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam General Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1906.

and from Shillong to Dacca 48 hours.¹

In 1907, another steamer service was opened on the Brahmaputra river to run between Dhubri and Gauhati for the conveyance of mail.² The steamer took not more than 21 hours on the up-voyage from Dhubri to Gauhati and 13 hours on the down voyage from Gauhati to Dhubri, calling at ten stations on both its upward and downward journeys.³

1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, to Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, No. 3503-4 J., Shillong, 30 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam General Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1906.
2. Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, to Chairman, Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, Bindukuri, Assam, No. 2140 G., Shillong, 6 June 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1907.
3. Contract for a daily service on the Brahmaputra, 8 April 1907, Schedule A., Enclosure in G.R. Clarke, Deputy Director General, Post Office, India, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, General Department, Miscellaneous, No. 705. R.S., Simla, 22 May 1907: Ibid. Names of stations are given below; the time of arrival and departure of the steamer is also cited:

Upward Voyage			Downward Voyage		
Stations	Arr:	Dep:	Stations	Arr:	Dep:
Dhubri	-	10-0	Tezpur	-	8-40
Bilashipara	13-0	13-5	Singri	10-30	10-35
Goalpara	17-0	17-10	Rangamati	14-0	14-5
Dalgoma	18-50	18-55	Gauhati	18-0	20-0
Kholaband	22-5	22-10	Sualkuchi	20-45	20-50
Polasbari	2-25	2-30	Polasbari	21-10	21-25
Sualkuchi	2-50	2-55	Kholaband	0-30	0-35
Gauhati	7-0	8-0	Dalgoma	2-0	2-5
Rangamati	13-0	13-10	Goalpara	3-15	3-25
Singri	16-0	16-5	Bilashipara	5-15	5-25
Tezpur	19-0	-	Dhubri	9-0	-

Thus, a prompt postal communication was established between Dhubrighat and Gauhati via ten places. Many of these had never been in direct communication with either Gauhati or Dhubrighat before, and previously their despatches were carried by runners which involved considerable delay.

The Port of Chittagong

Chittagong, on the bank of the Karnafuli river, was the natural sea outlet of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and the most convenient by reason of its proximity. The Karnafuli rose near Lungleh in the Lushai Hills, and following a most round-about course past Demagiri, Thegakhal, Harinkhal, Barkhal and Rangamati, emerged into the plains of Chittagong at Chandraghona. Its total length was 170 miles. About 11 miles below Chittagong it joined the Bay of Bengal. Thus Chittagong was very near to the sea and well situated for ocean-going trade. It had difficulty, nevertheless, in developing its trade. First, the insufficient depth of water, about two feet, on the two bars of the Karnafuli, had deterred many steam ship companies from using the port.¹ The river at

1. J. Stuart, Acting Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department: No. 18-2K, Rev. - 4496, Chittagong, File $\frac{4D}{2}$ 9, 9 June 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

the mouth of Chaktai had been studded with many chars (heaps of sand).¹ This made navigation for ships with deep draught very unsafe. Second, the rapid erosion, 55 feet a year on the average,² on the right bank, had been keeping the Karnafuli river ^{unreliable} below the jetties. This caused immense trouble to incoming ships at the harbour. As far back as 1893, J.H. Apjohn recommended that the right bank of the river from Double Mornings to Gupt Point should be effectively revetted.³ Otherwise, he argued, the river might cut through into the Sandip channel of the Bay of Bengal causing the shifting of the navigable channel to the other bank of the river from that on which Chittagong was situated.⁴ But no effective measures were taken and erosion continued unchecked. Third, inadequate docking facilities at the port discouraged steamer companies from sending their vessels to the harbour and thus failed to encourage sufficient trade. Before 1900,

1. Joint Secretary, Chittagong Association, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, Chittagong, File 6R 4, 5 June 1906:

Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department
(Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

2. Proceedings of 24 Special Meeting of Port Commissioners, 24 June Friday, 1904: Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

the port of Chittagong had no jetty;¹ by 1904, it had only two, which were always busy with coastal trade with Bengal and hence could not help to develop the overseas trade. Generally speaking, Chittagong's international trade was conducted through Calcutta. Goods were brought by steamer from Chittagong to Calcutta; thence they were unloaded and re-shipped into other steamers for export overseas. In the same way the port's import trade was carried on, goods from foreign countries being brought into Calcutta and then re-shipped to Chittagong in coasting steamers.²

as stated

After the emergence of the new province, Chittagong, / became the principal port of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The development of the harbour of Chittagong, particularly for foreign trade, was, therefore, one of great importance to the province.

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1. Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, to Chairman, Port Commissioners, Chittagong, No. 9352, Chittagong, File 1J 19, 2 November 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Executive Engineer, Chittagong Division, to Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, No. 1851, Chittagong, 18 April 1907: ibid.

The dredging of the Karnafuli involved the purchase of a dredger from Simsons of Scotland at Rs. 600,000.¹ Up to 31 March 1907, more than Rs. 584,000 were spent for its maintenance and operation.² The result was quite satisfactory, as the dredger was found capable of dealing with the hard substance of the river's ring bars and dredged more than six million cubic feet in the outer and inner bars of the river in 132 days.³ This had considerably improved the approaches to the port. The lieutenant-governor sanctioned in 1907 for five years an annual grant of Rs. 54,000⁴ which the following year was raised to Rs.

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1. Calcutta, Works (Government of India, P.W.D.) to Shillong (Government of E.B.A.) Telegram, No.1538 W. 29 November 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.
 2. Administration Report of the Port of Chittagong 1906-07, Enclosure in H. Lusson, Chairman, Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 814, Chittagong, 9 July 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Railway) Proceedings, 1907.
 3. To be specific, it had dredged 65,2800 cubic feet. Report on Dredging for the year 1907-08, Enclosure in H. Lusson, Chairman, Commissioners, Chittagong Port, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 1054, Chittagong, 14 August 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1909.
 4. Administration Report of the Port of Chittagong 1906-07, Enclosure in H. Lusson, Chairman, Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 814; Chittagong, 9 July 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Railway) Proceedings, 1907.

92,000.¹ The dredger, however, needed a subsidiary sludge apparatus to pump the mud on to the shore to reclaim low lands. "There can be no question", J.R. Bell, the port engineer, pointed out, "that raising the land in rear of revetments in that way, will prove extremely beneficial and remunerative."² In the mid-1906, the government, therefore, approved the purchase of this implement at Rs. 47,000.³

No doubt, the dredger was making the river navigable by removing the eroded mud from its bars. But the strong revetment of the bank was necessary to keep the river stable below the terminal jetties which were situated about one and a half miles away from where the river flowed at the time of the first British occupation

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1. Resolution on the Administration Report of the Commissioners of the Port of Chittagong 1907-08, No. 1690, Marine, File 5R 3, 3 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Note by J.R. Bell, on subsidiary dredger plant for land reclamation, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 1429, Chittagong, 29 December 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.
 3. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Chairman, Port Commissioners, Chittagong, No. 766 Mne. File 9P 14, Shillong, 5 July 1906: Ibid.

of Chittagong.¹

As already pointed out, the revetment of the Karnafuli's bank was a long felt need of the port of Chittagong. There had been regular erosion of the river and by 1905, they had threatened the port with serious damage. It was pointed out that the revetment of the river down to the "oil installation" some two thousand feet above the Gupt point was "practically imperative".² It was arranged to construct a railway from Double Moorings to Kumarkhal to start reveting the bank. In 1906, a bridge was built over the Maheskhal and rails were laid along the sloped bank to Kunalkhal.³ The Assam-Bengal railway helped considerably with construction of this siding, remitting a 24½ per cent. charge on cash expenditure. As regards the maintenance of the siding, they charged only

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1. H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Finance Department, No. 2082, Chittagong, 28 November 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Inspection Note by J.R. Bell, on the Revetment Work, Chittagong Port, 17 November and 29 December 1905, Enclosures B and C in H. Luson, Chairman, Port Commissioners of Chittagong, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 1469, Chittagong, 9 January 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.
 3. Chairman, Port Commissioners of Chittagong, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, Telegram, 5 February 1906: Ibid.

"actual expenses".¹ The motive behind such concessions for a side railway which was away from the main line, was probably the realisation that to help developing the port of Chittagong meant helping the expansion of the port's trade. If the port developed, goods from different parts of the province could be sent to Chittagong for direct export to foreign countries. And overseas goods could be directly imported into Chittagong. From Chittagong they could easily be sent to the interior of the new province. The port of Chittagong being nearer to Eastern Bengal and Assam, the journey involved less expense and little trouble. This meant heavier traffic on the railways, the other means of transport being less advanced, and thus increased profit for the railway.

Up to 31 March 1906, however, over Rs. 264,000 were spent for the revetment.² Another amount of over

1. Directors, Assam Bengal Railway, to Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, No. 9B, 30 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

2. The estimate of the amount:

Work	= Rs.	73,824	-	6	-	2
Land	= "	39,990	-	2	-	3
Establishment	= "	24,276	-	5	-	4
Tools and Plants	= "	1,25,766	-	11	-	1
Contingencies	= "	5,81	-	15	-	8

Total

Rs. 264,439 - 8 - 6

H. Luson, Chairman of Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 79, Chittagong, File $\frac{9P}{2}$ 18, 11 April 1906: Ibid.

Rs. 200,000 was spent for the same purpose in 1906-07.¹ The work continued and in 1909 the government granted Rs. 125,000 for expenditure on the revetment during the year 1909-1910.² The stones required for reveting the bank were brought from Rajmahal and Jettinga Valley. By 1906, a little over three lakh cubic feet of stone had been placed on the bank.³ The result of the revetment, however, was quite promising. During 1906-1907, a length of about 5,700 feet of the right bank of the Karnafuli below the terminal jetties, was revetted. This was reported to have successfully resisted the erosion of the river.⁴

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1. Administration Report of the Port of Chittagong 1906-07: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Assistant Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Finance Department, to Accountant General, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 2377, F., Shillong, 2 April 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Financial Proceedings, 1910.
 3. The Rajmahal and Jettinga stone was costly - Rs. 28 and Rs. 21 per hundred cubic feet, respectively. Port Engineers Note on Collection for Revetment, 13 December 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906. Stone was also quarried near Chittagong in the Rampahar hill; in 1906, over 42,000 cubic feet of stone was brought from there by boat. Of the total stones laid in, nearly one lakh was from the Rajmahal and the rest from the Jettinga Valley, Rampahar and nullas. Administration Report of the Port of Chittagong, 1905-06, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 545, Chittagong, 1 October 1906: Ibid.
 4. Administration Report of the Port of Chittagong 1906-07: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1908.

At the same time that the Karnafuli was being dredged and revetted, the construction of a new jetty was being completed. And the commissioners of the port considered that more quays were needed. They framed a scheme which made provisions for the eventual erection of seven jetties.¹ The three completed piers were to be mainly engaged in foreign trade. The building of the fourth jetty was, therefore, needed immediately for the accommodation of the coastal trade.² A suitable site was selected for it, at the up-stream end of the three-jetty strip, that is, at a distance of some 390 feet from the block of existing jetties.³ J. Stuart, Agent, Assam Bengal railway, explaining the reasons for choosing this site, noted that this place was nearer to both the railways and

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1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Commissioner, Chittagong Division, No. 292 T. 4 March 1906, cited in H. Luson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 601 C, Chittagong, File J 1 1, 10 August 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam
Public Works Department (Railway) Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, File 1J 9, 4 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public
Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

and the block of three jetties, providing convenient communications.¹ The length of the jetty would be 600 feet so that it could accommodate two coasting steamers,² and to carry out the work the government sanctioned nearly two million rupees in the early March 1907.³

While arrangements were being made for the construction of a new jetty, measures were being taken to protect the existing jetties from the danger of fire. Two fires — on 12 October and 24 December 1907 — had revealed how insufficient were the protective measures.

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1. J. Stuart, Acting Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.274-3 B-2087, Chittagong, File 1J 11, 15 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.
 2. Report and Specification for Jetty No. IV by G.H. Ormerod, Enclosure in V. Woods, Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, Chittagong, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 274-3F-1725, Chittagong, File 15 17, 21 February 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Railway) Proceedings, 1907.
 3. Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, No. 214, Shillong, File 1J 18, 13 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam (Marine Proceedings, 1907.

There were no modern sprinkler plants; the transit sheds had no fireproof doors and partitions; and the entrances to the jetty yard were not adequately guarded. This was perhaps because Chittagong had never been designed as an international port and hence there was little chance of its jetties being used for goods in bulk. The fire of 12 October had destroyed jute worth over ten lakhs of rupees while damage to the sheds and jetties was estimated at one and a half lakhs of rupees.¹ The fire of 24 December had completely ruined about 21,000 bales of jute, and 451 chests of tea, together with some hundreds of wooden sleepers used as flooring. The jetty itself sustained damage to the deck and deck-beams.²

This disastrous fire was reportedly lit on purpose.³ Among possible motives for incendiarism were, first, concealment of a deficit in stock, arising from thefts of

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1. H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, Chittagong, No. 1998, File 1J 4, 18 November 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Proceedings of a Joint Enquiry held at Chittagong on 28 and 30 December 1907 to enquire into the fire of 24: Ibid.
 3. Memorandum by Commissioners, Chittagong Division, on the Chittagong Jetty Fire of 24 December 1907. Chittagong, 20 January 1908: Ibid.

goods from the transit sheds of the jetty yard by or on behalf of the jetty darwans (guards), and, second, damage to the port's reputation by firms or persons interested in the maintenance of Calcutta as a port of export for jute and tea.

Whatever the motives were, sufficient measures were taken to ensure the future safety of the port. First, entrances were to be guarded by police in order to prevent unauthorised persons from entering the dock yards. Arrangements were made for a special corps of darwans at the jetties and the recruiting of darwan through the jamadar (guards' captain) was stopped. A high wall was also built around the jetty yard to check thefts.¹ Second, no jute was to be received in a transit shed except for named steamers, and then only seven days ahead of the vessel's expected arrival; all jute for which ocean freights were

1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, No. 493 Mne. File 1J 15, 12 March 1908.
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And Proceedings of the Special Meeting of the Port Commissioners for managing the affairs of the Port of Chittagong held on Saturday, 25 January 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1909.

not fixed, or for late steamers, should go to the storage sheds at the back of the jetty.¹ This was done to ease the congestion of goods in the jetties. Third, the transit sheds were to be separated by fireproof doors and partitions so that if fire occurred, it could be isolated.² Fourth, the jetties were provided with water sprinklers and an extensive hydrant service was set up around the sheds for immediate action.

In addition to these measures to improve the port's security, the port commissioners attempted to foster direct overseas trade. In doing so, they had to contend with the discontent of the mercantile community of Calcutta, which objected to the development of Chittagong into a sea port with direct trade abroad. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce advised the Calcutta port trust to use all "legitimate means" in its power to capture the ocean trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, so as not to allow

1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, No. 493 Mnē. File 1J 15, 12 March 1908.
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And Proceedings of the Special Meeting of the Port Commissioners for managing the affairs of the Port of Chittagong held on Saturday, 25 January 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1909.

2. Ibid.

Chittagong to rise in status over that of a coasting port.¹ They particularly emphasized that everything should be done to attract tea, brought by rail to Chittagong, to the sales in Calcutta instead of being shipped direct from Chittagong to London. They further pointed out; "there is no saying what the position will be in 20 years if Calcutta does not take steps to intercept the growth of the direct trade from Chittagong to the United Kingdom".² The Bengal Chamber of Commerce suggested that "an endeavour be made to organise in concert with the Liner's Conference, the Hansa line, and other responsible steamship owners for a through trade between the United Kingdom and Chittagong via Calcutta."³ It was desired that in such arrangements, freights to and from Europe should be fixed so that it would be as cheap to trade with Chittagong via Calcutta, as direct. In this way, the merchants of Calcutta hoped to monopolise the trade between the new province and Europe, and exerted their influence upon the port commissioners of Calcutta. The port commissioners accordingly proposed

1. The Proceedings of 214 Ordinary Meeting of the Port Commissioners for managing the affairs of the Port of Chittagong, 4 May 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

to reduce the river dues at Calcutta from four annas to one anna a ton on all goods to and from Chittagong; and to reduce all the round rate from four to three annas a bale for unloading and reshipment of jute brought by steamers from Chittagong to the Kidderpore docks, and reshipped into other steamers.¹

These proposals demanded serious consideration. They meant, to all intents and purposes, encouraging the development of the coasting trade of Calcutta to the detriment of ^{the} direct trade of the port of Chittagong with Europe and America. In the opinion of the Chittagong port commissioners "the proposed reduction or concession at Calcutta would tend eventually to act deleteriously upon the trade of this port and the proposals are designed to secure the objects of the Calcutta chamber of commerce".² Also such reductions in the port charges at Calcutta meant the concentration of the export trade of Eastern

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1. W.A. Inglis, Secretary, Government of Bengal, Marine Department, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 632, Mne. Calcutta, File $\frac{4D}{2}$ 1, 6 April 1906:
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.
 2. The Proceedings of 214 Ordinary Meeting of the Port Commissioners for managing the affairs of the Port of Chittagong, 4 May 1906: Ibid.

Bengal and Assam at Calcutta. The port of Chittagong would be merely a supplier to Calcutta, and this would inevitably retard the growth of Chittagong by jeopardising its international trade. The government of the new province, therefore, did not approve of these proposals.¹

There were other considerations. The prevailing feeling was that the freight charges from England to Chittagong direct were greater than those from England to Chittagong via Calcutta. But this was not true. The chairman of the Chittagong port commissioners wrote, on 7 May 1906, to the secretary to the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, that much had been made of the fact that the costs from England to Chittagong via Calcutta were less than those to Chittagong direct. But "when I was in England last year I was informed that the freight from the United Kingdom (a) to Chittagong direct, (b) to Chittagong via Calcutta was then the same, viz., 25 shillings a ton. In fact, I had my own goods brought out at that rate via

1. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, to Secretary, Government of Bengal, Marine Department, No. 541 Mne. File $\frac{4D}{2}$ 6, 22 May 1906:
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

Calcutta, as I could not obtain direct shipment to Chittagong. I am informed that some line's freight from this port to the United Kingdom is 2s 6d a ton more via Calcutta than from this direct."¹ While thus sea-freights to the ports of Calcutta and Chittagong were equal, the charges for land-carriage to Assam were lower from Chittagong than from Calcutta. This was obviously so because, compared with Calcutta, Chittagong is nearer to Assam.²

In addition to the question of charges, there was the disadvantage of indirect shipment. As already mentioned, the imports for Chittagong were brought from overseas via Calcutta; from there, all goods were transhipped at Hooghly into coasting steamers. The process involved sometimes higher freight rates³ whilst delays and damage.

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1. No. 240 File $\frac{4D}{2}$ 5, Chittagong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.
 2. Also Dacca was nearer to Chittagong but 264 miles distant from Calcutta. Sita Nath Roy on "Railway Communication", Proceedings of the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 18 December 1906.
 3. J. Stuart, Acting Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 18-2K, Rev - 4496, File No. $\frac{4D}{2}$ 9, 9 June 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1906.

were considerable. To illustrate the duration of delays, the executive engineer of the Chittagong division wrote to the superintending engineer of Eastern Bengal Circle on 18 April 1907, that the stores shipped from London in S.S. Dilwara, a vessel of the British India Company, on 9 November 1906, had not yet reached Chittagong.¹ Then he detailed what could happen to these stores after arrival at Calcutta. The stores would be transhipped into one of the weekly mail steamers of the same company calling at coast ports on its way to Rangoon in Burma. To quote the engineer, "the result will possibly be that the stores may not all be received from Calcutta in the same vessel, and that if the vessel which carries the mails, is pressed for line on arrival in Chittagong, the stores may be over-carried and delivered on the way back from Rangoon or may even be wrongly unloaded in Rangoon..."²

As a result of the public attention given to such incidents, the director general of stores, India Office,

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1. No. 1851, Chittagong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Executive Engineer, Chittagong Division, to Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, No. 1851, Chittagong, 18 April 1907, Ibid.

London, informed the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that whenever practicable he would dispatch stores for Chittagong direct to that port.¹ The steamers of the Clan line sailed for Chittagong at intervals of about two months from Glasgow and Birkenhead, and occasionally extra sailings were arranged. These steamers were available for the stores. The Assam-Bengal Railway undertook all the agency work free of charge in connection with the forwarding of stores from Chittagong to various parts of the province. The railway had requested the home authority even to hold back stores at home for direct sailings to Chittagong. This would save the railway from extra-expenses incurred in carrying materials from Calcutta for use in Eastern Bengal and Assam.

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1. No. 11074S, 27 June 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings, 1908.
 2. V. Woods, Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, to Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, Chittagong, No.6483, 29 July 1907: Ibid.

Trade

All these measures had some impact upon the trade of the port of Chittagong. Its exports and imports had increased. The principal exports of the port were jute and tea. Whereas in 1905-1906 Chittagong exported 68,919 tons of jute to foreign countries in 1911-1912 it sent 70,272½

tons overseas. The increase in the export of jute though not very great was nevertheless said to have abroad / contributed towards the rise in the price of jute at home. The average price of jute per hundredweight went up from over Rs. 14 in 1907-1908¹ to Rs. 18 in 1911-1912.² In the Pabna market, the cost of a maund of jute was five rupees on 15 February 1909,³ while in the same market, on the same date of 1911, the value of a maund of jute was estimated to be seven rupees.⁴ The main countries which imported jute from the new province were Britain,

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1. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-1909, p.10.
 2. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1909-1910, p.10.
 3. Report on the Season Crops of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1909, Statement No.VI, p.27.
 4. Report on the Season Crops of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, Statement No. VI, p.28.

the United States, France and Germany.¹ In 1909-1910, so far as it can be ascertained, Chittagong for the first time, since the opening of the jetties there, exported to Russia 223 tons of jute worth Rs. 78,750.²

The export of tea from the port of Chittagong grew rapidly during our period. While in 1905-1906, Chittagong exported only 35,774,580 pounds of tea, in 1911-1912, it sent a total of 55,555,705 pounds to foreign countries.³ The production of tea in the province went up from 210,907,000 pounds in 1907⁴ to

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1. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade and Navigation of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, Part I, No.18-3, p.80.
 2. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, p.93.
 3. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1911-1912, p.6.
 4. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol.55, Paper No. 179.

223,836,000 in 1910.¹ In 1910, the aggregate output of tea in India was 261,927,000 pounds;² it shows that Eastern Bengal and Assam produced more than 85 per cent. of India's total crop. The rest -- less than 15 per cent. -- was grown in Bengal, Madras, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Travancore and Cochin including Burma.³ The rise in the export of tea from Chittagong, however, was due, to a great

1. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910-1911: P.P. 1912-13, vol.61, Paper No. 147.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. These provinces' production of tea in 1910:

Bengal	-	14,412,000
Madras	-	5,645,000
U.P.	-	2,045,000
Panjab	-	1,419,000
Travancore and Cochin	-	14,323,000
Burma	-	247,000

Total		<u>38,091,000</u>
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extent, to the additional transport facilities. This might have provided an important stimulus for the extension of tea cultivation. The area under tea increased in the province from 428,000 acres in 1907¹ to 443,000 in 1910.² It may be noted that the expansion of tea cultivation in the new province had not been paralleled by similar expansion in its neighbouring provinces. In Bengal, for example, the area under tea declined from 54,000 acres in

1. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol.55. Paper No.147.
2. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910-11: P.P. 1912-13, vol. 61. Paper No. 147.

1907¹ to 53,000 in 1910.² In the United Provinces, the area remained the same as it was, that is, 8,000 acres, throughout the period, but the produce declined from 2,295,000 pounds in 1907³ to 2,045,000 in 1910.⁴

1. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol.55. Paper No.179.
2. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910-11: P.P. 1912-13, vol. 61. Paper No. 147.
3. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol. 55. Paper No. 179.
4. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910-11: P.P. 1912-13, vol. 61. Paper No. 147.

In addition to transport facilities, there were some other factors. The encouragement given to the free emigration of labourers to tea gardens of Assam helped the expansion in the cultivation of tea. On 2 January 1907, the representatives of the railway boards had agreed to inaugurate the system of credit notes and to reduce fares for labourers proceeding to the tea districts of Assam.¹ The labourers were provided with through tickets on credit, for which they were charged one and a half pies per mile. Closely following this measure, there came the reduction of land revenues in some areas of Assam; in the Pathrughat region, the government reduced the land revenue by 16.45 per cent.² This might have been a factor stimulating the immigrant tea-garden workers to settle down; their number went up from 25,000 in 1906-1907 to 39,000 in 1909-1910 and to over 40,000 in 1910-1911.³

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1. Messrs. Sanderoon, Adkin, Lee and Eddis, 46, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C., to the Tea Company Limited, 12 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Immigration Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Resolution of Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Enclosure in Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Board of Revenue Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 14012C. Shillong, 31 December 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1908.
 3. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Era, 17 February 1912, p.4.

Moreover, Assam tea was in demand in foreign markets. In London, Assam tea won universal commendation. Its quality was so high that in spite of a generally lower market in 1908-1909, it gained a half-penny per pound.¹ The demand for tea abroad caused a rise in its price in local markets; the average price went up from six annas and five pies per pound in 1908-1909 to seven annas and eleven pies in 1911-1912.² Also more tea was being drunk at home, probably owing to the enhancement of liquor duties. Retail liquor licenses were reduced from 135 in 1905 to less than 100 in 1908-1909.³ On the average, per capita tea consumption increased from 6.18 pounds in 1908 to 6.42 pounds in 1909,⁴ but increasing local use did not deter the expansion of exports when production was higher. While the trade in tea was, thus, flourishing in the new province, tea exports from Calcutta were languishing; compared with those of 1906-1907, Calcutta's

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1. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1908-1909, p.6.
 2. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1911-1912, p.6.
 3. L.J. Kershaw, Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, No.7686 M. Shillong, 11 November 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1908.
 4. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-1909, p.6.

tea exports decreased by 598,4000 pounds in 1908-1909.¹

Chittagong's primary imports were railway materials, iron and tea-chests. The quantity of railway materials arriving at the port rose from over 11 lakhs of rupees in 1906-1907² to 19 lakhs in 1908-1909.³ This was caused by the extension of railway works in the province. In 1910-1911, this fell by over five lakhs of rupees, probably because the Assam Bengal railway curtailed its purchases on financial grounds.⁴ In 1911-1912, when the railway company recommenced buying materials for construction, the import shot up by nearly four lakhs of rupees.⁵ These commodities were brought mainly from England and New South Wales; in 1907-1908, England sent railway goods worth Rs. 910,656⁶ and in 1908-1909, New South Wales sent materials to the value of Rs. 11,891.⁷

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1. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade and Navigation of the Bengal Presidency, 1910-1911, p.26.
 2. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1906-1907, p.2.
 3. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-1909, p.4.
 4. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1909-1910, p.10.
Also Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, p.5.
 5. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1911-1912, p.4.
 6. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, p.92.
 7. Ibid., p. 74.

The import of iron rose continuously during this period; it was 9426 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons in 1911-1912 as compared with 8814 $\frac{7}{20}$ in 1910-1911, with 5986 $\frac{19}{20}$ in 1909-1910, with 4552 $\frac{9}{10}$ in 1908-1909 and with 3849 $\frac{7}{20}$ in 1907-1908.¹ This metal was brought in bulk principally because of the low price of corrugated iron sheets, which tempted the builders to purchase large quantities.² There was considerable progress in building; a number of houses were built at the headquarter station in Dacca. In his financial report for the year 1910-1911, W. Banks Gwyther stated that in Dacca 17 official residences were built, leaving an equal number or more to be yet constructed. The erection of a government house was expected to be completed the following year. The new secretariat had made rapid progress and would be brought into use in the next cold season. The building of the new government press had begun and was to be completed

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1. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1911-1912, p.4. Also Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-1909, p.4.
The varieties of iron imported were: Wrought - Angle, Anchors, Bolt and Rod; Bar, Beams, Pillars, Girders and Bridge Works. Bolts, Rivets and Filling Casts; Pipes and Tubes; Sheets and Plates. Other manufactures of wrought or cast iron or of iron mixed with steel. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, Part I, No. 180, p.72.
 2. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1909-1910, p.5.

within a year. All this, he observed, "presents the outlines of a city that will eventually rank in interests and character with any other in India and perhaps in some respects take a foremost place."¹

These construction works had hugely increased the expenditure of the public works department. Since the creation of the new province, the budget for its public works expenditure had been on the increase, and, starting at 32 lakhs of rupees for 1905-1906, it stood at 52 lakhs in 1907-1908 and at nearly 53½ lakhs during 1909-1910.²

The increasing export of tea had augmented the importation of tea chests. Strong chests for safe packing were not usually made in the new province. There was a gradual rise in the import of tea chests during our period except in the year 1910-1911.³ As mentioned above, the

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1. Proceedings of the Council of the Lieutenant Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 14 March 1910, p.410.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1911-1912, p.4. Also Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-1909, p.4. The number of tea chests rose from 172,361 in 1906-1907 to 197,208 in 1907-1908 to 262,300 in 1908-1909 to 332,820 in 1909-1910 and to 370,520 in 1911-1912.

increase was due to a larger demand for tea abroad. The maritime trade in this commodity advanced from Rs.155,78,512 in 1905-1906 to Rs. 277,78,604 in 1911-1912.¹ In 1910-1911, 283,310 tea chests were imported to the province. Compared with the figure of 1909-1910, it shows a decrease of 49,510 chests, apparently because of surplus stocks from the previous year.² This seems true since there was no fall in the volume of tea exports either in 1910-1911 or in 1911-1912. Rather there was a continuous increase; in 1911-1912, foreign countries took 55,555,705 pounds of tea compared with 53,259,774 pounds in 1910-1911 and with 51,906,844 pounds in 1909-1910.³ Almost two-thirds of the chests, however, were brought from the United Kingdom; in 1909-1910, out of 332,820 chests 212,510 were from the United Kingdom.⁴

Thus the foreign seaborne trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam increased during this period.

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1. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1911-1912, p.4.
 2. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, p.5.
 3. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1909-1910, p.6. Also Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, p.6.
 4. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-1911, No. 18(1) Part I, p.78.

It may be noted that this increase in the foreign seaborne trade of the port of Chittagong was not paralleled by similar increase in Calcutta.

On the contrary, it was reported that Calcutta's trade decreased.¹ Chittagong's development seems to have greatly contributed to this decrease.

This was perhaps anticipated by Sita Nath Roy, Honorary Secretary of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, who rightly observed: " Chittagong as a port has some undoubted natural advantages over Calcutta; but if over and above these

1. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1911-1912, PaperNo . 220, p. 294: P.P.1913, vol. 46.

natural advantages Government creates advantages and facilities for and forces them upon the former ... Calcutta will suffer."¹

Internal Trade

While foreign trade developed, internal commerce also rose considerably, particularly between the two parts of the province. Some goods were sent to Assam from Eastern Bengal and some were brought into Eastern Bengal from Assam.

Some of the principal exports from East Bengal to Assam were tobacco, chillies, grain and pulse. The trade in East Bengal tobacco grew during this period. In 1904-1905, Dacca, Mymensingh, Tripura, Chittagong, Noakhali, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Hill Tripura exported to the rest of Bengal 456 maunds of tobacco.² In 1906-1907, Bakarganj, Rajshahi, Dacca and the Tripura block of East Bengal sent to Assam 22,867 maunds of tobacco.³ The export

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1. Sita Nath Roy to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 3 February 1904; Public Letters, 1905, vol.33.
 2. Report on the Trade carried by Rail and River in Bengal, 1904-1905. Table V, p. 201.
 3. Report on the Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 31 March 1907, Table V, p. lxxxvi.

continued to multiply and in 1910-1911, Upper Assam, Lower Assam and Surma Valley imported 59,550 maunds from Eastern Bengal. The increase in the consumption of tobacco in Assam was partly due to the progress of the tea industry during our period, because the tea garden labourers, who were, as observed, increasing in number, were strongly addicted to tobacco. Moreover, people were taking much more interest in the cultivation of jute than in that of tobacco; the deputy commissioner of Kamrup wrote to the commissioner of Assam Valley districts that much attention was directed to the cultivation of jute in different parts of this division, and many cultivators had taken it up.¹ People's growing interest in jute rather than in tobacco was due to the fact that the former was a better export commodity than the latter, and the facilities for exporting jute increased with the development of the port of Chittagong.

Like tobacco, chillies, grain and pulse were exported to Assam; their quantity increased from 18,106 maunds in 1906-1907 to 26,032 in 1910-1911.² This was due

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1. No. 2582, 14 November 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Rail and River borne Trade Report of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 31 March 1911. Table V, p. lxxxvi.

partly to the growth of population and partly to the miserably small areas under the cultivation of these products in Assam. For example, the total tract under grain in the province was 69,732 acres in 1907-1908. Of this Assam had only 32 acres — 22 in Kacar, eight in Darrang, one in Nowgong and one in Sibsagar.¹ East Bengal produced more gram; in 1907-1908, the districts of Pabna and Dinajpur grew 9,797 tons.

While East Bengal found in Assam a consumer of its products, Assam saw in East Bengal a market for its goods. The principal exports of Assam to East Bengal were coal, tea and stone. East Bengal had no coal field of any importance. It had to get coal from Assam to run the railways, steamers and other machines in Chittagong. The import of coal in East Bengal went up from 269,504 maunds in 1906-1907 to 428,709 in 1907-1908.² Assam was rich in the production of coal. It had 27 major coal fields — two in

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1. Report on the Season and Crops of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, pp. 12-17.
 2. Report on the Trade Carried by Rail and River in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, Table 1, p.11.

Lakhimpur,¹ two in Sibsagar and Naga Hills,² two in Garo Hills³ and twenty-one in Khasi Hills.⁴ The Barapani seam in the Khasi Hills extended over an area of about 38 million square feet, with an average thickness of five feet. It gave, after fair deduction for wastage, a supply of 470,000 tons of coal per year. The Mausynram seam extended over a tract of 857,000 square feet with an average thickness of more than two feet. It gave a total quantity of 63,000 tons of coal a year.⁵ In addition to these main fields, there were some other coal mines in the sides of the hills near Mawphlang, a British village. The annual output of these mines was 1,000 maunds.⁶ Having seen the

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1. Major Albert E. Woods, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 4372 R-X-11, Dibrugarh, 6 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1907.
 2. W.J. Reid, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, to Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 1635 G., Kohima, 1 March 1907: Ibid.
 3. Major A. Playfair, Deputy Commissioner, Garo Hills, to Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 516 R. Tura, 25 February 1907: Ibid.
 4. Coal Fields and Coal Areas in Assam by H. LeMesurier, Enclosure in Extract from the Proceedings of the Legislative Council in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 18 December 1906: Ibid.
 5. F.E. Jackson, Deputy Commissioner, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue Department, No. 43, Shillong, 8 January 1907: Ibid.
 6. Extract from Tour Diary of Major P.R.T. Gurdon, Deputy Commissioner, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, from 11 November to 5 December 1905: Ibid.

increasing demand for coal, the government, however, issued licenses to many firms and individuals to prospect for coal. On 13 November 1906, a license was granted to a firm of Marwaris at Jaipur to search for coal over an area of 15 square miles.¹ In the same year, Babu Nanda Kishore Beria of Dibrugarh obtained a license to prospect for coal on the Hapjan Parbat Tea Estate in Lakhimpur.²

Assam tea was brought to Chittagong for shipment to foreign countries. As observed earlier, tea exports developed considerably during our period mainly because the port of Chittagong was improved with the result that its harbour facilities for overseas trade increased.

The next important article to be imported from Assam to East Bengal was stone. Almost the whole of this was sent to Chittagong for reveting the banks of the Karnafuli river. In 1906, over three lakhs cubic feet of

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts, No. 11679 C. Shillong, 13 November 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Ibid.

stone were brought to the site of the revetment.¹ The supply increased in 1907 when over five lakhs cubic feet of stone were placed on the revetment. The Jettinga Valley alone supplied 114,832 and 484,805 cubic feet in 1906 and 1907, respectively. Stone was carried by rail.

Another commodity, the trade in which developed in the province during the period under review, was oil cakes. Oil cakes were mainly used for cultivating tea plants. The increasing plantation of tea created larger demands for oilcakes in the new province. The importation of oil cakes from Calcutta by rail and river increased from 76,340 maunds in 1906-1907 to 135,849 in 1909-1910.² Out of 135,849 maunds imported in 1909-1910, Upper Assam took 51,893 maunds and Lower Assam 13,406.³ Formerly the price of oil cakes in the interior of the country was one rupee

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1. Administration Report of the Port of Chittagong 1905-1906, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Public Works Department, No. 545, Chittagong, File $\frac{5R}{6}$ 1, 1 October 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1906.
 2. A Note on the use of oilcake in Eastern Bengal and Assam by B.C. Allen, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 11 April 1911, Enclosure in Memo by Director, Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 5624, G. Dacca, 9 May 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.
 3. Ibid.

per maund; during this period, their cost varied from one rupee and eight annas to three rupees per maund.¹

In conclusion, it can be said that particular attention was paid to the development of transport facilities which, in the past, had "been sadly neglected".² Railways were extended by the opening of new lines and surveys were made for considerable number of feeder lines. Roads and waterways were developed and steamer services improved. Much work was undertaken for the improvement of the Chittagong port, including several miles of revetment of the Karnafuli bank, the deepening of the river channel and the building of jetties. The port, which had been formerly in an "anaemic condition"³ and which failed to develop as a competitor to Calcutta within Bengal,⁴ began to prosper; its export and import trade increased and

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1. A Note on the use of oilcake in Eastern Bengal and Assam by B.C. Allen, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 11 April 1911, Enclosure in Memo by Director, Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 5624, G., Dacca, 9 May 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.
 2. Hare to Viceroy, 20 February 1911: Hardinge Papers, vol. 113, p. 21.
 3. Curzon's Minute, 1 June 1903, para. 42: Curzon Collection, vol. 247.
 4. Chief Commissioner, Assam, to Government of India, 30 January 1903: Curzon Collection, vol. 247.

internal trade started to expand. To quote a contemporary, "Since 1905, our province [Eastern Bengal and Assam] has taken a serious turn in prosperity, has become inflated with trade."¹

1. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Era, 24 January 1912.

CHAPTER IIIINDIGENOUS INDUSTRIES

The term 'indigenous industries' is used here to include those forms of industries which were dependent upon local raw materials, skill and capital. Since the partition, the indigenous industries of the province got stimulus for revival and growth. During the period under review, feelings of the people underwent considerable changes. Prejudices of the past were weakening.¹ The young men of the province began seeking their livelihood and fortune in industries.² This tendency had shown itself in many ways. People began to take interests in industrial matters.³ Rai Sita Nath, a

1. By 'prejudices', we mean in this context, the disliking of the aristocrats for works like weaving and business. In Jorhat 5 young men (who formerly looked down upon weaving) expressed their liking for, and acquired a certain amount of skill in, weaving in 1907; Report of the Development of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1908, p.14.
2. In the Bogra district town a graduate settled down as a dealer in rice and jute; Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.104.
3. In Dinajpur, a local zamindar came forward and established a weaving school and generously granted the students free board and lodging, and offered scholarships to those who did well. The school was maintained for some years and some weavers were trained in the use of fly-shuttle. A note on measures taken in Eastern Bengal and Assam for the improvement of handloom weaving, 4 February 1907, Enclosure No.8 in S.G. Hart, Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary to Government, Eastern Bengal and Assam. 18 February 1908, No.105 2G. Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1908; A gentleman of Goalpara town brought two Japanese looms and started weaving cotton cloth. Ibid.

member of the legislative council of the new province, in his budget speech, raised the question of reviving the weaving industry which once supported "thousands and thousands of weavers" and their families in Eastern Bengal and Assam. The province, he said, contained large numbers of weavers, and, anything done "to resuscitate and improve" the weaving would earn for the government the lasting gratitude of the people of the province.¹

Local capital was beginning to seek investment in industrial enterprises. The old-fashioned merchants and money-lending classes, the middle class lawyers and others, whose savings had hitherto been invested in the purchase of land, found new avenues for enterprise and investment of their capital. In Pabna, for example, some gentlemen were reported to have imported eight improved handlooms from Serampur and distributed them to their tenants.² The ginning factory of Chittagong was opened by the old firm of Nityananda Das.³ The Silchar Stock enterprise, the Dacca Leather Company, the Gauhati Tezpur-Assam Valley Trading Company,

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1. Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 15 April 1907, p.9.
 2. Report on the operations of the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1909, para.35, p.13.
 3. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, pp.104-105.

the tea gardens in Jalpaiguri were all initiated by the enterprise chiefly of the middle class during the period.¹

Capital organisation on a joint-stock basis was started. Some directors of the local loan offices like the Dacca Loan Office and the Munshiganj Loan Office had already begun investing the banks' capital in industrial enterprises. The Kacar Native Joint Stock Company which financed three tea gardens, the Jalpaiguri Joint Stock companies which were utilising their capital for a similar object and the Pabna Town Bank which started a brick manufacturing industry were all examples of the new industrial enterprises. Feeling free from the frontal competition of big capitalists and merchants of Calcutta, the middle class investors became more hopeful of the success of their industrial undertakings.

The ardent desire of the people to improve the condition of the slackening industry, however, received much sympathy from the government. The government expressed its deep concern to advance the growth of indigenous industries in general. In his opening speech at the second industrial conference held in Calcutta in 1906, Lord Minto said "I see around me the results of their [those who work

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, pp.104-105.

in home industries] labours, and ... I cannot tell you how heartily I sympathise in their endeavours to develop industrial resources."¹ The lieutenant-governor of the new province realised the necessity and importance of doing something beneficial to the revitalisation of the local industries. He asked the people to assist the government with their advice "as to the best method of developing the industries of this province."²

All these intentions of the government found sympathetic realisation in the undertaking of some positive steps. In 1908, G.N. Gupta of the Indian civil service was commissioned to make a preliminary survey of the industries and resources of the province. He completed his report by the end of the year and the lieutenant-governor convened a representative conference in 1909 at Dacca to advise on the action which the government might take upon the problem of indigenous industries.³ The conference was attended by the

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1. The Calcutta Congress and Conferences, Madras, 1907, p.144.
 2. Inaugural Address of the Lieutenant-Governor at first Industrial Conference held at Dacca, 25 February 1909: Judicial and Public Department 1911, File No.4519.
 3. The conference commenced its sittings on 25 February and concluded them on 3 March. R. Nathan, President of the Industrial Conference, to Secretary to the Government, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Municipal Department, 5 March 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Municipal and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1909.

leading and enlightened landholders, representative Europeans and Indians engaged in commerce and industry, and representatives of the middle class.¹ Also the conference benefitted from the advice of some experts from outside the province, such as Thomas Holland, Director of the Geological Survey, J.G. Cumming who had made a special study of the industries of Bengal, and Heaton, Principal of the Sibpur Engineering College. The conference directed its

1. Members present at the conference:

Dacca Division

Nawab Ali Chowdhury,
Raja Srinath Roy,
Rai Sitanath Roy,
R. Glen,
E.R. Watson,
Ananda Chandu Roy,
Jadunath Basak.

Assam Valley Division

Manik Chandra Barua,
A.B. Hawkins,
J.W. de Tivoli,
Nabinchandra,
Mammohan Lahiri.

Rajshahi Division

Girijanath Rai Bahadur,
Nilmani Ghalak,
Ashutosh Lahiri,
Jagudandon Dev,

Surma Valley Division

W.T. Cathcart,
Saiyid Abdul Majid,
Gobind Chaudhury.

Chittagong Division

J. Stuart,
Upendralal Roy,
Durgadas Datta,
Makbul Hossain,
Jatra Mohan,
Satischandra Roy.

Officials

H. Sharp, Director of Public
Instruction, Eastern
Bengal and Assam;

K.C. De, Registrar, Co-
operative Credit Societies;

S.G. Hart, Director,
Agriculture.

G.N. Gupta, Member & Secretary.

attention to the development of industries on a smaller scale which could fittingly be conducted with local capital and raw materials.¹ It gave a prominent place to the better organisation of the home industries which employed the bulk of the industrial population of the province,² and proposed the establishment of a department of industry for the province. But these recommendations were not fully implemented during the period under review; nevertheless they helped to stimulate the development of indigenous industries and showed the government's interest in them.

The willingness of the government to help the indigenous industries was apparent in other directions too. At the beginning of 1906, four students, three from Sylhet and one from Khasi Hills, were sent to Chinsura to learn the use of the fly-shuttle-loom at the firm of Messrs. P.N. De & Co. Each student was granted a scholarship of Rs.15 per month for a period of three months, and travelling expenses both ways.³ In Dacca, Malda and Mymensingh, temporary classes were opened to teach the weavers the use of improved

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1. In this respect, the small scale industry is advantageous. The scarcity of capital makes it desirable to encourage industries requiring small capital.
 2. Gupta, M., The Cottage Industries of Bengal and What the Government is doing to encourage them, pp.1-3.
 3. Report on the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1907, para.54, pp.12-14.

looms.¹ Two trained weavers were obtained from Calcutta to demonstrate the use of the improved looms at the Flower show held at Shillong on 27 May 1906.² In July 1907 they were sent to Jorhat where they worked for over six months. Their main object was to teach Assamese women the use of improved looms.³ In that year, the north Sylhet local board employed a weaving instructor on a salary of Rs.45 per month. His duties were to visit, in succession, 3 weaving centres in the subdivision and to train the weavers in the use of the fly-shuttles. He soon evoked enthusiasm among the weaving classes and nine fly-shuttles had been set up by them at their own cost.⁴ This encouraged the government to secure the services of another weaving instructor, Narayan Pillay of Ludhiana. He worked at the Dhubri exhibition for about a month and then he came to Pabna to teach the weavers the use of improved looms.⁵ His endeavour was

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1. A note on measures taken in Eastern Bengal and Assam for the improvement of handloom weaving, 4 February 1907, Enclosure No.8, S.G. Head, Director, Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1052 G.Shillong, 18 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1908: The Faridpur district board engaged a weaver at Rs.30 per month to demonstrate a fly-shuttle loom.
 2. Report on the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1907, para.54, pp.12-14.
 3. Ibid., p.14.
 4. Report of the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1909, p.10.
 5. Report of the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1910, para.39, p.14.

to introduce certain improvements in the ordinary fly-shuttle looms to which the weavers were accustomed and in this attempt, he was very successful. He prepared many new accessories locally and succeeded in persuading the weavers to adopt them. The Pabna weavers were reported to have derived great benefit from his instruction, learning to weave twills, checks and other materials, for which there was a strong local demand.¹ Also the process of weaving ordinary plain cloth was greatly improved.

In addition, the government granted loans to cultivators who were, in fact, weavers but carried on cultivation as a part time work.² That the amount of loan was considerable may be judged from the fact that in 1907 the district of Dacca got Rs.22,000, Barisal Rs.34,000, Mymensingh Rs.25,000 and Faridpur Rs.27,000.³ This proved to be an indirect assistance to the revival of the weaving industry.

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1. Report of the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 30 June 1911, para.69, p.18.
 2. Hunter, W.W., Indian Empire, vol.III, p.2.
 3. Officiating Commissioner, Dacca Division, to Secretary, Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam No.107 L.R. Dacca, 22 November 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1908. Also Collector, Mymensingh, to Commissioner, Dacca Division, No.2488, Mymensingh, 9 November 1907: Ibid.

As the economy of the new province was agrarian and more than 85 per cent. of the population depended on agriculture, the government wanted to improve the industries dependent on agricultural products. And the government's efforts in this direction were substantial. A department of agriculture was set up by Sir Bampflyde Fuller, first Lieutenant-Governor of the province, and was later put on a firmer footing. The secretary of state for India sanctioned in 1906 the appointment of an agricultural botanist and an agricultural chemist for Eastern Bengal and Assam.¹ To carry on experiments with agricultural crops like jute and tobacco, a laboratory was established in Dacca in 1910, at a capital cost, exceeding one and a half lakhs of rupees, including fittings and water installations;² the lieutenant-governor said that its "design and construction are excellent and probably no building more suitable for scientific research work is to be found in India."³

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1. Secretary of State for India to Government of India, India Office, London, No.226 (Revenue Department) 14 December: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Memorandum on the work of the Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, by Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, 22 August 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.
 3. Ibid.

Further, a service of district agricultural officers was constituted under the district boards in Eastern Bengal and local boards in Assam.¹ Its object was to spread knowledge of improved agricultural methods among the people by organising and supervising demonstrations which would show in a practical manner the beneficial results of the improved agriculture.² For the same purpose of improving agriculture in the province, the government started giving scholarships to the students of the province for higher studies in agriculture.³ All these measures of the government together with the increasing willingness of the people to use their own manufactures encouraged the revival and growth of indigenous industries of the province.

In order to trace this revival and growth of indigenous industries since 1905, it seems necessary first to

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1. B.C.Allen, Officiating Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and General Department, to Director, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.716: Agri. Shillong, 5 October 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Fazlul Haq obtained a diploma in agriculture from Poona and Benode Lal Mukherjee and Benoda Behari Das were deputed to Pusa, for a post graduate course in agriculture. Principal, Agricultural College, Poona, to Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.4212, Poona, 21 March 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.

describe the state of such industries at the time of the creation of the province. Industrially, the province was the least advanced of all the larger provinces of India. Agriculture was of such overwhelming importance that all other industries were insignificant, in comparison. There were no large centralised industries in the province; there were no cotton weaving mills worthy of the name, no cotton spinning mills, no jute manufacturing mills, no wool or paper mills or glass factories, and there was no capital to finance large-scale industries. In 1905-1906, there were 1,728 joint stock companies in India.¹ Of these, this province had 84 only while its sister province Bengal had 387, and the other provinces like the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Bombay and Madras had 107, 390 and 528 respectively. The paid-up capital of these companies in Eastern Bengal and Assam was Rs.3,942,488 while in Bengal the amount was Rs.169,636,657.³ Out of 62 larger towns of India, it possessed only one, Dacca with a population of over 50,000.⁴ The number of inhabitants exceeded 20,000 in only 4 other towns, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Narayanganj and

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1. Statistics of British India (Second Issue), Calcutta, 1909, part II, Table Nos. 1-2, p.49.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India, 1907, p.9.

Chittagong. The majority of the people lived in villages. The villagers' indebtedness was very great. In villages, there "was scarcely any one who was not either a money lender or a labourer."¹ The greater portion of the villagers' earnings was spent in meeting the demands of his creditors.

Compared with Eastern Bengal, Assam remained in a backward condition. It had hardly any large industrial enterprise; its industries were in a very rudimentary state. Its indigenous manufactures, especially cloth-making, had been in a poor condition.² Out of 70,000 people of the weaving caste in Sylhet, only 4,000 followed the profession of spinning and weaving.³ The increasing import of European

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1. K.C. De, Officiating Registrar, Co-operative Credit Societies, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Board of Revenue; Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1300, Camp Shillong, 9 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Secretary to Sunamganj Hita sadhini Sabah, Sunamganj, to Chief Commissioner, Assam (through Subdivisional Officer, Sunamganj and Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet), No.5 of 1905, Sunamganj, 8 September 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1906.
 3. Address by Dwarkanath and others of Sunamganj to J.B. Fuller, Chief Commissioner, Assam, 30 August 1904. Enclosure in Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Assam, to Director, Department of Land Records and Agriculture, Assam, No.662 P.1-7 G, Shillong, 19 September 1904: Ibid.

piece-goods had put the weavers in a worse position. The volume of imports to Assam was considerable; the import of European piece-goods, in bales and boxes, in the last quarter of 1886, was 18,433 maunds while in the same period of 1887, it was 26,454 maunds,¹ an increase of more than 43 per cent.

In addition, there were very few well-to-do people in Assam to encourage the development of any indigenous industries.² In Assam proper, excluding Goalpara, there were no zamindars, and there was not a growing plutocracy of Assamese lawyers as there was in Eastern Bengal. Nor were there any local merchants and traders with considerable capital. There was no regular banking establishment which could support commercial enterprises, and local money-lenders were very usurious. The loans on personal security (that is, without mortgaging any property) were lent at the interest of 75 per cent. per annum.³ Such, in brief, was

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1. Report on the Riverborne Trade of Assam for the quarter ending 31 December 1887, Statement No.1, p.1.
 2. H.C.Barnes, Officiating Director, Department of Land Records and Agriculture, Assam, to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, Assam, No.3271, Shillong, 26 August 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1905.
 3. Hunter, W.W., Statistical Account of Assam, vol.II, p.202.

the general industrial condition of the province before the partition; against this background we shall attempt to trace the growth of certain major and minor industries after the partition.

Among the indigenous industries the cotton weaving occupied the most prominent position. In fact, it was the main industry of the new province. We shall, therefore, first examine its growth and expansion during our period and then mention briefly the growth of minor industries like cigar and soap.

The Cotton Weaving Industry

Hand-loom cotton weaving was one of the oldest industries of India. In old scriptures and ancient literatures there are numerous references to many varieties of cotton goods made in homes and used by people.¹ All religious books in India bear ample allusions to this industry being carried on by men and women. In the RigVeda there is a reference to a woman weaving a garment² and to colour

1. The art of sewing was known to the ancient Indians and "women are often depicted weaving jackets or bodices (Colaka, Kañcuka)". Basham, A.L., The Wonder That was India, p.210.

2. The RigVeda, Bk. II, 3804, Translation of Ralph T.H. Griffith, vol.I, p.396.

used in dyeing cloth.¹ In ancient times, the excellence of cotton fabrics manufactured in eastern India had gained a world-wide reputation. The best muslin and mixed clothes were mentioned by the writers of the Periplus,² and earlier by Kantilya in his Arthasastra.³ Pliny's Natural History while dealing with the imports from the east mentioned the muslin fabrics which presumably came from the northern part of Dacca.⁴ Also the cotton clothes of this area were said to be mentioned in the list of goods charged with duties in Justinian's Digest of the Laws.⁵ Ibn Khurdadbih, the Arab geographer, and Sulaiman, the Arab merchant, spoke very highly of the cotton fabrics of ^{the} Dacca area.⁶ Sulaiman said that the cloths of the area were unequalled anywhere else and the material was so fine that a garment made of it could be

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1. The Rigveda, Bk.X, 136:2, vol.IV, p.377: The Mahabharat Ramayana and the Puranas contain references to cotton goods. During the Buddhist period, the export of Indian cotton fabrics was of considerable importance. Shah, P.G., "History of the Indian Cotton Industry during the Nineteenth Century", Modern Review (1912), vol.XI, No.4, p.382.
 2. Schoof, The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, p.47.
 3. Kantilya, Arthasastra, Bk.II, XI, 80-81, edited by R. Sharma Sastry, Bangalore 1915, pp.93-94.
 4. Taylor, A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca, p.163.
 5. Shah, P.G., "History of the Indian Cotton Industry during the Nineteenth Century", Modern Review, April 1912, vol.XI, No.4, p.382.
 6. Ahmad, N., An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, p.91.

passed through a signet ring.¹

During mediaeval times, north Bogra, southeast Dinajpur and Rangpur, southeast Dacca, western Tripura and northern Noakhali were remarkable for the production of fine cotton fabrics and sack-cloth.² The famous muslin industry of Dacca catered largely for the taste and needs of the imperial court, nobles and the élite who were the chief customers for excellent fabrics.³ As for its fineness, an English writer remarked; "With all our appliances we could not surpass in fineness the Muslin of the East."⁴

In the seventeenth century, the Dutch and English East India Companies imported the cotton goods of the

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1. Ahmad, N., An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, p.91. Marco Polo spoke of cotton goods. Also Mahuan, the Chinese visitor, had referred to the royal muslin of Bengal. Phillips, "Mahuan's Account of the Kingdom of Bangala", Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, New Series, vol. XX, VII, p.530; That Assam manufactured the Ksuma fabrics, was mentioned by K.L. Barna. Journal of Assam Research Society, vol. VII, pp.78-82. Also Choudhury, P.C., The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century, A.D., pp.366-367.
 2. Ain-i-Akbari, vol. II, pp.122-3, (Blochman's Translation).
 3. Sarkar, J., "Industries of Mughal India: Seventeenth Century", Modern Review, vol. XXXI, No.6, June 1922, p.675.
 4. Mann, J., The Cotton Trade of Great Britain, p.20.

new province areas, in large quantities. They became highly fashionable for ladies and children's dresses.¹ Queen Mary^{of England} had "a passion for coloured East India calicoes, which speedily spread through all classes of the community."²

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the elegant cotton fabrics of Eastern Bengal had a distinct place in the trade abroad, and the predominant importance of handloom products was very clear.³ The magnificent court of the Bourbons of France and the French nobility were important customers of finer fabrics of Eastern Bengal and provided a lucrative market. In the bill of lading for 5 vessels that arrived in France from Bengal in 1742, there were, among a large variety of cotton goods, 12,680 pieces of muslin, 1,252 pieces of different embroideries of Dacca and 110 jamdani saris.⁴ The English, Dutch and French trading companies carried on an extensive trade in the cotton goods of Eastern Bengal.

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1. Daniel Defoe, Weekly Review, 31 January 1708, quoted by Baner in History of British Cotton Manufacture, p.79.
 2. Lecky, History of England in the Eighteenth Century, vol.II, p.158.
 3. The muslin fabrics were also produced in other parts of India, Malwa, Western United Provinces, and Gujrat, but "the East Bengal materials were the finest and had the largest export", said N. Ahmad, An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, p.99.
 4. Sinha, J.C., Economic Annals of Bengal, p.21.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, the picture began to change, influenced by both internal and external factors. The disturbed political conditions which followed the rise of Marathas in Central and Northern India during the middle of the eighteenth century had affected the internal trade of India. To escape the raids and incursions of the Mughls and the Portuguese pirates, many weavers of Bengal left their work and fled to distant places.¹ In 1770 even more harm was done by famine, which caused the death of a large number of people including the weavers, and drove many others to farming. A further change came with the Permanent Settlement in 1793. The estates of many old zamindars who failed to conform to the rules of the settlement and could not pay their revenue in time were put to sale.³ The wealthy men whose money could be used in loans to weavers and in commercial and industrial pursuits invested their capital in the purchase of land.⁴ Thus the Permanent

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1. Datta, K.K., Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah, vol.I, p.436.
 2. Ghosal, H.R., Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833, p.27.
 3. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company 1773-1834, p.192; In the Supplement to the Calcutta Gazetteer of 19 June 1794, for instance, there was an advertisement for the sale of 150 mahals in the district of Dacca on account of the arrears of government revenue; Ghosal, H.R., Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833, p.34.
 4. Misra, B.B., The Central Administration of the East India Company 1793-1833, p.193. Also Majumdar, R.C. and others: An Advance History of India, p.809.

Settlement gave an impetus to investment of capital in land, and there was little left to finance the weaving industry.

In addition, there was another factor which dealt a heavy blow to the weaving industry. The servants and officials of the East India Company entered into contracts with the weavers to supply stipulated quantities of cloth by fixed dates. The weavers were paid for their goods much less than the market price, sometimes even less than the cost of materials. Further they were not allowed to work for any other party while so employed.¹ Many weavers, in utter disgust, gave up weaving, wholly took to cultivation, and "refrained from initiating their sons into their hereditary business."² This had discouraged the development of the weaving industry, to a great extent.

These internal factors combined with external factors to accelerate the decline of weaving. The Seven Years War in 1756-1763 had already shaken the French market where the cotton goods of the new province areas were very much in demand.³ The American War of Independence in 1776 and the involvement of France in 1779 had "an adverse effect"

1. Sinha, J.C., Economic Annals of Bengal, pp.80-81.

2. Ghosal, H.R., Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833, p.27.

3. Sinha, J.C., Economic Annals of Bengal, p.78.

upon the trade of Eastern Bengal.¹ The outbreak of Revolutionary and the Napoleonic wars, and the accompanying trouble in Europe had disturbed the normal trend of India's trade. Britain's re-export of Indian cotton goods to European countries suffered a severe setback. This proved harmful to the trade and industrial interests of the new-province areas. These were one of the main suppliers of cotton goods to Britain.

Meanwhile, in England a series of revolutionary inventions were made by Watt, Arkwright, Hargreaves, Crompton and others heralding the advent of the Industrial Revolution in Britain and enabling it to produce cheaper cotton fabrics.² The "mushroom growth" of cotton-spinning mills during the next few years led to a huge production of cotton goods in England, which "easily ousted the hand-made fabrics of Bengal and other parts of India from the market."³

The increasing use of the powerloom and the founding of weaving factories in England in the nineteenth century gave a new twist to the British cotton industry. Further,

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1. Ahmad, N., An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, p.100.
 2. Price, L.L., A Short History of English Commerce and Industry, pp.192-5.
 3. Ghosal, H.R., Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency, 1793-1833, p.38. Also Hamilton, C.J., Trade Relations between England and India, pp.170-171.

the end of the war in 1815 soon enabled the British manufacturers to devote their entire attention to it.¹ As a result, vast quantities of cotton fabrics were produced. The total export of cotton piecegoods from Bengal to the United Kingdom fell from 46 lakhs of rupees in 1813-1814 to 21 lakhs in 1818-1819 and to 3 lakhs in 1827-1828.² On the other hand, the importation of Manchester goods had in Bengal "elbowed" indigenous goods out of the market.³ Sir W. Hunter witnessed a gradual decline of the indigenous weaving in almost all the districts of Eastern Bengal and

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1. This had been preceded by a further imposition of a duty of more than 44 per cent. in 1813, on imports from Eastern Bengal. Sinha, "The Dacca Muslin Industry", Modern Review XXXVII, No.VI, January 1925, p.405; The eighteen per cent duty levied on muslins in 1797 rose to more than 35 per cent in 1805. Hamilton, C.J., Trade Relation between England and India, pp.255-56; also, Ghosal, H.R., Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833, p.37.
 2. Wilson, H.H., A Review of the External Commerce of Bengal, pp.65-66.
 3. Chinnaswami, P., "The Economic Condition of Weavers", The Indian Review, 1909. vol.X, No.11, p.48. While in 1813-1814 the total value of British cotton fabrics "imported into Bengal was Rs.91,800 (Sicca), in 1822-23, it was Rs. 67,77,279. Ghosal, H.R., Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833, p.43. Also the American traders brought into Bengal "a portion of those excessive supplies of British manufactured goods, which inundated their own markets." Prinsep, G.A., Remarks on the External Commerce and Exchange of Bengal, p.39.

Assam. For example, the muslin trade of Dacca, he quoted, was estimated to be less than a fourth of what it used to be in former days.¹ Formerly, a large amount of cloth was manufactured in Noakhali, and the East India Company established several large factories here; but this trade, Hunter observed, died out when brought into competition with imported Manchester goods.²

But by then the vitality of the industry was not entirely eaten up; it was struggling hard to survive the inroads of the European machine-made goods. Statistics of 1906 show that it was competing with the powerlooms of Lancashire and Bombay. Out of an approximate total consumption of 442 crores of yards of cloth in India, 223 crores were imported chiefly from England, 55 crores of yards were made by the Indian mills and 164 crores of yards were supplied by the hand-looms of India. From these figures it seems that the handloom cotton-weaving industry was not completely destroyed still possessing the potentiality required for genuine revival: it needed the general support

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1. Hunter, W.W., A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol.V, p.109.
 2. Ibid., p.321. Vera Anstey remarked; "The outstanding industrial events of the nineteenth century were the decline of the indigenous industries". The Economic Development of India, p.207.
 3. Ghosh, H., "The Truth About the Handloom": The Indian Review, vol.VII, 1906, July, p.448.

of the people and governmental encouragement for its revival and growth, and since the partition both these factors came into play to protect the decaying industry of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

The creation of the new province aroused a sense of provincial patriotism among the people. The weavers of the province, who were mostly Muslims, found in it an opportunity to develop their professions and a relief from the frontal competition of the Calcutta mills. This contributed to the development of weaving, which had very little connection, if any, with the swadeshi and boycott movements.

The swadeshi movement, started with a view to improving India's industries, was connected in 1905, amid considerable doubts and misgivings, with the anti-partition movement. Along with these went the boycott movement which was started by the supporters of the anti-partition agitation; it aimed at boycotting British manufactures in order to put pressure upon the English mercantile community and thus to "influence English public opinion [so] as to secure a revocation of the partition."¹ To make these movements much

1. Zaidi, S.Z.H., The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment, (London Ph.D. thesis, 1965) p.190. Also Ghose, P.C., The Development of the Indian National Congress, pp.130-31.

"more effective", a religious element was introduced into them. As the Hindu Patriot argued at that time, this might serve as a powerful incentive, for "nothing catches so easily in this country as religious fervour."¹ Mantras were recited and the mother goddess Kali/^{was}worshipped for the success of these movements. Vows were administered to a large crowd at the Kali temple at Kalighat. Vows ran; "We swear, in the Holy presence of the goddess Kali in this sacred place, that we will not use foreign goods as far as practicable."² "No vow", the Bengalee remarked, "is more sacred or more binding than a vow taken before the Goddess at Kalighat."³ The movement thus assumed the form of a Hindu agitation against the partition. Being a movement to undo the partition, it antagonised the Muslims on the one hand politically, while on the other hand, bearing the stamp of Hindu religious practices, it also offended Muslim religious feelings. S. Ahmed argued; "As the movement was used as a weapon against the Partition ... and as it ...

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1. The Hindu Patriot, 22 September 1905; Bengal Native News Paper Reports No.38. Also The Bengalee, 3 October 1905 and Zaidi's The Partition of Bengal and its Annulment, (London Ph.D. thesis, 1964) pp.191-93.
 2. The Times, 30 September 1905; also Ghose, P.C., The Development of the Indian National Congress 1892-1909, p.132.
 3. The Bengalee, 30 October 1905: Also see The Bangavas, 2 September 1905; Bengal Native News Paper Reports 1905, No.36.

had a religious colouring added to it, it antagonised Muslim minds."¹ In view of this fact, the movement was very unlikely to lead to the growth of the weaving industry which was carried on mostly by the Muslims in the province. But it seems difficult to say what would have been the reaction of the Muslims, at least of the Muslim weavers, to the swadeshi movement, had not it been connected with the anti-partition agitation and the Hindu religious practices.

The press and government officials of the province were, however, reporting that the swadeshi movement was moribund. Two days after the partition, the Bengal Times predicted its fall too soon. "All it needs", the paper remarked, "is sufficient rope to hang itself, and that it will have more than abundantly, so its demise is as certain as sunrise."² In fact, the prediction was becoming true; the swadeshi movement was dying down in the new province. The Collector of Faridpur reported that the mass of the people "took little or no interest" in the swadeshi movement.³ They

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1. Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (London Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p.364.
 2. The Bengal Times, 18 October 1905, p.4.
 3. Miscellaneous Annual Report of Dacca Division, Enclosure in H. LeMesurier, Commissioner, Dacca Division, to Chief Secretary, Government, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 790 L.R. Dacca, 30 June 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1909.

thought that it was aimed at destroying the partition which was to do them good. A similar note came from the collector of Mymensingh, who wrote that the movement was "dying a natural death".

A steady improvement of the handloom cotton weaving was, however, visible everywhere in the new province. The people were using more country-made cloth and the demand for home-made cloth was rising causing a stimulus to the revival of handloom weaving. The volume of indigenous-cloth production began to increase and the import of European piecegoods began to decrease considerably. The import of European piecegoods in Barisal fell from 93,059 maunds in 1908-1909¹ to 41,732 in 1910-1911,² and in the Chittagong division there was a net decrease in imports of 5,493 maunds in 1907-1908.³

Not only the import of European piecegoods but also the import of European yarns showed a decrease. The import of European yarns, for instance, decreased in Barisal from

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1. Rail and Riverborne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 31 March 1909, Table I, p.iii.
 2. Rail and Riverborne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 31 March 1911, Table I, p.iii.
 3. H. Luson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam. No.872 M. Chittagong, 29 July 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Department Proceedings, 1908.

35,891 maunds in 1906-1907¹ to 13,926 in 1910-1911.² The import fell in the Dacca division from 14,385 maunds in 1906 to 13,286 in 1908.³ In the Chittagong division, the commissioner reported, there was a decrease of 5,726 maunds in the import of European yarns in 1908.⁴ This was partly due to the increasing willingness of the people to use country-made cloth and partly to the comparative cheapness of local yarns. While ten pounds of indigenous black yarns cost Rs.7-8-0, ten pounds of English yarns were sold at Rs.9.⁵ Moreover, indigenous rather than European yarns were more suitable for weaving coarser cloth. Since the weavers were producing coarser cloth in large quantities, they preferred indigenous to European yarns. It may be mentioned here that the import duty on cotton goods in this period remained the same as it was in 1896; it did not appear to cause a general fall in the import of European piecegoods and yarns. Since 1882, there were no import duties on cotton

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1. Rail and River borne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 31 March 1907. Table I, p.111.
 2. Rail and River borne Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 31 March 1907, Table I, p.111.
 3. Commissioner, Dacca Division, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1266 L.R. Dacca, 19 August 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Department Proceedings, 1908.
 4. H. Luson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam. No.872, M. Chittagong, 29 July 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Department Proceedings, 1908.
 5. Sukul, S.K., Swadesi Baname Bidesi (Indigenous Versus Foreign), p.2.

goods,¹ but in 1894, on account of financial difficulties, the government of India re-imposed a general import duty at the rate of 5 per cent. ad valorem. At the same time, "as the result of an outcry from the Lancashire cotton interests", an equivalent excise duty was imposed on the cotton goods manufactured in Indian mills.² Both duties were reduced to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in 1896.³

There were, however, improvements in various branches of the industry. The development was considerable in the production of coarse cotton fabrics. For example, the cotton-weaving industry seemed to have made immense progress in Pabna, Noakhali and Comilla, for these districts manufactured a large quantity of coarse cloth suitable for common use.

The weaving of cotton cloth on handlooms was an old industry in Pabna. The Pabna fabrics had earned a fair reputation on account of their fine texture and, it is

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1. Majumdar, R.C. and Datta, K.K., "The Administrative Organisation", British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part I, edited by R.C. Majumdar and others, p.804.
 2. Spear, P., India, A Modern History, p.313.
 3. Ibid., Also Tripathi, A., "Industry", British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part I, edited by R.C. Majumdar and others, p.1106; Annual Report, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 1896, p.1; Redford, A., Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade, vol.II, p.32.

claimed, that they "challenge comparison with the products of Dacca and other historic seats of the weaving industry."¹ They had survived the competition of mills, both Indian and European, in the home markets and had made Pabna an important centre of the weaving industry in the new province.² Pabna produced large quantities of coarse clothes, such as lungi and gamcha³, to supply the needs of the agricultural population. A farmer while ploughing his lands required a lungi and gamcha only. He cared more for durability than for fineness of clothes. The handloom products were more durable than the machine made ones.

The main centres of this industry were a number of villages, mostly situated on the banks of the Ichamati and Boral rivers. In some of the villages such as Ekdaula, Ataikula and Chatmohar, there were regular markets for cotton goods. These were supplied by boats during the rainy season and by carts in other months.⁴ The fine cloth known

1. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer, Pabna, p.62.

2. Ibid.

3. Lungi is a kind of wearing apparel and gamchas serve the purpose of towels.

4. Report about the traffic on the Ichamati and Boral rivers by Madak, District Engineer, Camp. Sirajganj, 21 November 1907; Enclosure in S.C. Mukherjee, Magistrate, Pabna to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, No.1642 J. Pabna, 6 December 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department Proceedings, 1908.

as Pabna par cloth¹ was manufactured at Sadullapur and Delna. Of all villages, Delua had the greatest number of looms. It produced large quantities of coarse cloth as well as fine cloth which was in demand among the upper classes; the yarn used was mainly English, though Japanese threads were also used to a small extent. Japan could not export its yarns and threads to India in large quantities because it was, during our period, in keen competition with England for capturing Chinese markets.² In Pabna, however, the thread was supplied from Calcutta and sometimes from Kushtia, a subdivision of the district of Nadia, by big yarn dealers, mainly marwaris, a section of indigenous business men. From these middlemen the weavers purchased the yarn on credit paying a high interest. The Pabna made cloths were in demand in Calcutta and large quantities of cloths found their way to different districts of Bengal from the cotton markets of Pabna. The weavers were hardly able to meet the growing demand of the local markets. It is said that the number of handlooms had increased in Pabna and members of the weaving class, who had taken to other pursuits, had

1. Banerjee, N.N., Monograph on the Cotton Fabrics of Bengal, p.26.

2. The Japanese had made great strides in the cotton industry. Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Monthly Record, 31 August 1911, No.8, p.215.

returned to their caste profession during this period.¹ The chief centres of the trade in coarse cloth were and still are Delmar, Sohagpur, Shahzadpur and Koizuri in the Sirajganj subdivision and Mathura, Singail, Pailanpur, Bhangura and Demra in the sadar subdivision.

Besides the usual saris (long wearing apparel for women) and dhutis (long wearing apparel for men), the district of Comilla turned out in our period a very large quantity of checks which were suitable for the making of coats, shirts, panjabis (collarless loose shirts) and other garments. It had manufactured as many as 28 varieties of checks. The Maynamati checks were to be found in large quantities in every cloth shop of the new province. Their prices ranged from about Rs.2-8-0 to Rs.7 a piece according to the quality of cloth. The pieces were 22 inches wide and 13 yards long. In Comilla, the increase in the volume of production was fully 30 per cent. in 1908, for whereas the total export to other parts of Bengal amounted hardly to a lakh of rupees before, in 1908 the exports had come to

1. F. N. Fisher, Officiating Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue Department, No.1538 R. 8 October 1906: Julpaiguri: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Department Proceedings, 1907.

over a lakh and a half.¹ At each Thursday hat (market)² material to the value of Rs.2000 was bought up chiefly for export.³ To meet the increasing demand for cotton fabrics some new methods of weaving were tried; twill-weaving and cross warp-weaving were introduced. The weft in some cases was composed of two, four and even six separate threads twisted together. This gave thickness and substance to the stuff woven. Some new patterns were introduced by the enterprise of Sarat Nath, the largest dealer in this class of goods in Comilla, and by the skill of one Maheshnath who learnt weaving at Serampur at the expense of the district board.⁴

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1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.10.
 2. The markets of this type were attended by a large number of villagers (the number of people varied from 200 to 10,000 according to the importance of the markets and the season when they were held) and were usually held in an open space. A good volume of business was done in these markets; the villagers sold their jute, rice, pulse and the products of their cottage industries like country-made clothes and hand-towels in these markets. Ghose, D.N., Handloom Cotton Weaving Industry in Bengal, p.42.
 3. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.10.
 4. The Serampur Weaving school was established in West Bengal in 1909 with the object of giving technical instruction in the best and latest methods of hand-weaving. Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of Bengal, General Department, No.7795 M. Shillong, 2 November 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Municipal and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1909.

The cotton carpets of Rangpur, like its silk in ancient times,¹ had become a speciality in the province. The carpets were of large size and made on coloured patterns. The variety known as pilpaiya (elephants' leg) was special to Rangpur. The carpet making industry alone supported about 100 families, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Nisbetganj near Rangpur. The weavers were all Muslims. A special kind of rope and sacks, made of jute and cotton yarns, was also manufactured near Dimla.

The stimuli for producing cotton cloth were felt in Mymensingh too. A large number of weavers lived in the neighbourhood of the Tangail town. The principal weaving centres were Bazitpur, Gharinda and Karatia. The products of these places were mainly saris and dhutis with muga and jari borders. They enjoyed a reputation throughout Bengal for their finish, fine borders and designs. The Kishoreganj tanzeba was as famous as the Dacca muslin, and "the finer dhutis and saris manufactured at Pathrail and Bazitpur are palmed off on unsuspecting purchasers as Dacca saris."² Such articles fetched a price about 30 per cent. higher than

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1. Salim, G.W., Riyazus -Salatin (Translation of Abdus Salam) p.42.
 2. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, p.12.

the equivalent Manchester cloth.¹

Also in Noakhali there was some revival of the cotton industry. The import of European piece-goods fell and the export of locally manufactured clothes increased during this period.² Besides the ordinary coarse saris and dhutis of white cotton, coloured clothes and lungis of many varieties were manufactured. The lungis of the district were of first grade and were competing successfully with those imported from Holland and Burma. They soon gained so much popularity in the province that the import of the lungis and dhutis from Holland fell by almost half, from 919,898 yards in 1909-1910 to 515,762 in 1910-1911.³

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1. A Note on measures taken in Eastern Bengal and Assam for the improvement of hand-loom weaving; 4 February 1907, Enclosure in S.G. Hart, Director, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1052 G., Shillong, 18 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.
 2. The import of European piecegoods fell from 2,856 bales in 1905 to 942 in 1908. In 1911-1912, Noakhali exported 870 maunds of locally manufactured clothes to the neighbouring districts. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, p.11.
 3. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade and Navigation of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Foreign Countries and Indian Ports, 1910-1911, part I, Table No.18-3, p.102.

The jam saris were in use especially among the Muslim women. It is said that about Rs.1000 worth of these saris was sold on every market day at Chaumuhani.¹

Also the mosquito nets of Chaumuhani, white and coloured, had a great reputation.² In fact, there was a very good market for all these products, as they were coarse and cheap.³ The demand for these articles was far greater than the supply. Assam, Tripura, and Chittagong were the principal markets for the cotton goods of the district. On a similar level was the district of Faridpur where 4,200 families depended on the weaving industry.⁴

1. Chaumuhani was a large cotton weaving centre of the district of Noakhali.
2. The average size of certain products was as follows:
Sari = 10 yards x 44 inches; Lungi = 5 cubits x 2½ cubits;
Mosquito nets = 24 cubits.
3. Notes on Handloom weaving by K.C. De, 25 May 1907, Enclosure in S.G. Hart, Director, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam No.1052 G. Shillong, 18 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.
4. Jack, J.C., The Economic Life of a Bengal District, p.92.

The bulk of Dacca's weavers inhabited the Baburhat area, because Baburhat was on the bank of the river Buriganga, providing the easy means of communications for the disposal of the produce, and had traditionally been the weavers' residence. The articles manufactured here were cheap and durable and commanded a ready sale. The price of a sari ranged from Rs. 1-8-0 to annas 12, of a lungi from Rs. 1-0-0 to annas eight, and of a dhuti of six yards long from Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 12. The handkerchiefs of 24 inches square were prepared and sold at Rs. 3 to Rs. 8 per dozen.¹ Besides these products, gamchas and bedsheets were also manufactured.

Of all fabrics, the fine muslins of Dacca were the most attractive. To attain their fineness, both the spinners and weavers displayed an incredible amount of patience, perseverance and skill. Dr. Taylor stated that he saw specimens of threads spun in Dacca on the scale of 160

1. Allen, B.C., Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer, Dacca, p.169.

miles to a pound of the staple.¹ The weaving of the renowned Dacca muslin, however, had almost ceased, for there was no demand for these articles although the art was not altogether lost. Comparatively coarse muslins with yarns of 350's and 400's count could be woven. The special yarn necessary for muslins was spun locally in Dacca.

Next in order of importance is Kasida, a speciality of embroidered cotton fabrics. Generally the groundwork of the Kasida cloth was done by the weavers of villages like Shanora and Matail. The ornamentation was completed in the suburb of the Dacca town. The ornamentation on Kasida might be done either with the plain muga silk thread or with the twisted silk thread. In the latter case, the work was known as chikkan (fine) work for which there was some demand in Europe.² The ornamental work for which the Kasida cloth was so famous, was knitted by hand on a pattern which was stamped on the cloth. This was done entirely by Muslim women. There were 50 or 60 sorts of Kasida cloth. Their prices varied according to quality from Rs.50 to Rs.80. The total value of the Kasida cloth, exported annually from Dacca to Basra, Jeddah, Constantinople and Aden where it

1. Taylor, Topography of Dacca, p.169.

2. Allen, B.C., Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer, Dacca, p.114.

commanded a fair sale, came to about two lakhs.¹ Also the volume of exports to other districts was said to be considerable.

There was another type of embroidered cloth in Dacca called jamdanisari. The embroidery of these saris was done in the process of weaving with needles made of bamboo or tamarind wood by the help of a pattern on paper which was pinned beneath. The artistic beauty of the jamdani saris lay in their ornamental borders of gold and silver thread with large gold corner pieces. The jamdani saris had a fair sale in the new province. Their price ranged from Rs. 8 to Rs. 100.² They were

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.11. The export of Kasidas had greatly diminished since the decline of the Turkish power. Previously every Turkish soldier used to wear a Kasida pagree (a kind of head dress), but nowadays only the high military officials wore such pagrees whereas the common soldiers fez caps only. Again, large quantities of Kasida were also woven in Aleppo and Baghdad where Dacca Kasidas were much in demand.
2. Allen, B.C., Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer, Dacca, p. 114.

woven very largely in the interior of the district, in villages like Nanti and Dhamrai where the weavers could combine agriculture with their caste occupation. Consequently they could sell these fabrics slightly cheaper than the weavers of Dacca town itself. The ordinary Dacca saris also suffered by competition with the products of villages like Abdullapur and Kagmiri for the same reason.

In Assam, as in Eastern Bengal, the cotton weaving developed considerably. With the governmental encouragement two other factors combined to stimulate the indigenous cotton industry. First, "the Assamese women wear peculiar kinds of dress" -- the mekhala for the lower part of the body, the rhia for the upper, and the khania as a sort of wrapper for the body. These dresses were not manufactured to any extent outside Assam. Second, among the hill tribes not only did some tribes have peculiar "national" dresses of their own but even amongst the same tribe different communities had different dresses.¹ The

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.1.

dress of a Naga "varies from zero" to a common piece of cloth.¹ Amongst them each village or group of villages was distinguished by the colour of its cloth. Accordingly the foreign manufactured articles could not suit their requirements. This paved the way for the growth of a local weaving industry.² The hill tribes had a great deal to contribute towards the development of weaving. Even today they produce in plenty and supply the needs of their neighbours.³

Moreover, in contrast with Eastern Bengal, in Assam almost every girl was familiar with the art

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1. Allen, B.C., District Gazetteer of Naga Hills and Manipur, p.49.
 2. Gurdon, Khasis, p.39.
 3. Playfair, Garos, p.35. Also Shakespeare, Lughai Kukis, p.15. Goswami, P.C., The Economic Development of Assam, p.167, and also Choudhury, P.C., The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D., p.364.

of weaving.¹ They were taught this art at home by their mothers or other female relatives.² They had to attain skill in this handicraft which "is an indispensable accomplishment taken into account at the

1. S.D. Barna, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Jorhat, to Inspector of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 18, Jorhat, 8 April 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.

Also Goswami, P.C., The Economic Development of Assam, p.166.

If we compare the figures of 1911 with those of 1901, since the figures of 1905 or 1906 are not available, we find that the number of weavers was increasing in Assam. The total population supported by industries in 1911 was 216,624 compared with 200,284 a decade before. McSwiney, J., Census of India, 1911, vol.III, Assam, Part 1, p.174. It shows an increase of 8.2 per cent. This was, to a certain extent, due to a general increase in population and lack of alternative occupation, but to a great extent due to the revival of the weaving industry.

2. Srijut Kamala Kanta Barna, Deputy Inspectress of Schools, Gauhati, to Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1333, Gauhati, 28 March 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.

time of marriage."¹ In 1908, out of 46,708 weavers 44,936 were females.²

In the whole of Assam, the weaving was done as before with hand-loom.³ The handlooms were of the plainest description. The successive

1. B.N. Das, M.A., Deputy Inspector of Schools, Goalpara, to Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 214, Goalpara, 21 March 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
2. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p. 2.
3. Hamilton, W., East India Gazetteer, vol. I, pp.40-42.

process of cleaning, bowing, spinning, sizing and finally warping and weaving together with the instruments used at different stages have been minutely and graphically described by Durrah¹ and Samman.² The different local varieties of spinning and weaving machines used in different parts of Assam have also been clearly explained. There was a distinct difference between the comparatively more complex posted looms in use in the plains and

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1. Durrah, H.Z., Cotton in Assam, 16 September 1885, pp.4-12.
 2. Samman, H.F., Monograph on the Cotton Fabrics of Assam, pp. 5-10, 15-17.

the looms with much simpler apparatus of the Bhutias, and other hill tribes. The latter loom was probably the simplest form of weaving known in Assam,¹ But it was not suited for the production of fine fabrics even of small size, because the method of working this loom caused a considerable strain on the warp. In fact, the process in the plains was distinctly in advance of that in the hills. Since the partition, the productivity of these handlooms increased owing to the increased demand for country cloth.

1. Darrah, H.Z., Cotton in Assam, 16 Sept. 1885, pp. 4-12.

It was estimated by a Gauhati farm in the late 1907 that eri and muga cloth to the value of over Rs.2000 were manufactured in and exported from the district of Kamrup alone. These cloths were exported not only to Bengal and elsewhere in India but also, it is said, for the first time, to Australia.¹ The principal articles made in Kamrup were large sheets or shawls worn as wraps and called chadar, and smaller shawls called chelengs. A kind of shawl called paridia kapor was finely made, and was enriched with a beautifully embroidered border. Its price was about Rs.200. Also there were clothes of very low prices. The hawking and selling of all these manufactures kept the markets and melas (temporary gatherings of the country people) of the province engaged. There were ten weekly and bi-weekly markets in the district of Kamrup.² The most important of them was held at Beltola on every Sunday and Wednesday. In addition, there were three fairs which were attended by about 5,000 people.³ They were held either quarterly or monthly. The cloth manufactures were marketed at these fairs.

1. Major Gurdon, Offg. Commissioner, Assam Valley, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and Miscellaneous Department, No.4068 G. Gauhati, 17 July 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.

2. Frile, R., District Gazetteer of Kamrup, Supplement to vol.IV, Statement D, pp.16-17.

3. Ibid.

The locally made cloths were in demand in the markets of the Brahmaputra Valley, Nowgong and Goalpara. In North Lakhimpur, the Kacaris of the Kadam Mouza were considered the best weavers. The Miris of Jorhat and Golaghat were famous for weaving a kind of rug called Mirigin. On the whole, indigenous products found a best patron in the people of Jorhat where an exhibition was held in February 1908 for displaying local manufactures.¹ The display was intended to encourage the people in weaving.

In Goalpara, Kacari women wore cotton clothes elaborately decorated with flowered borders. In the Surma Valley the Manipuri settlers of Rupari made fanek,² than,³ and those of Ambikapur and Ramnagar mosquito curtains. In the Sunamganj subdivision in Sylhet, gelap (warm wrapper)

1. Miscellaneous Report of the Assam Valley Districts, 1907-1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Miscellaneous and Revenue Proceedings, 1908.
2. The fanek was a garment worn by Manipuri women. It was fastened under the arms above the bust and reached to a little below the knee. It was made of green or dark blue thread with red and yellow stripes, and the border was sometimes embroidered with flowers in cotton or silk. The price varied from Rs.2 to Rs.7. Assam District Gazetteer, vol.I, Cachar, p.94.
3. The than was a large stout cloth made of white cotton thread, and used in the cold weather as a warm wrapper. The ordinary size was 9 by 4'6" but it was sometimes 18" in length and was woven double. The price ranged from 8 annas to Rs.3. Ibid.

was made. Badhrail was also famous for this kind of manufacture. Amongst the cotton fabrics of Assam, embroidered and ornamented cloths were famous. The ornamentation was either knitted by needles on the fabric after the weaving or worked along with the weaving. The ornamental designs were of various kinds. In addition, there were other fabrics made of mixed materials, for example, cotton was mixed with silk. The cotton was very often combined with muga.¹ The endi was sometimes woven with cotton.²

In the final analysis, there is found a revival in three types of indigenous cotton productions - cotton cloths of the Assamese in general; cloths of the hill tribes and those of the professional weavers of the Surma Valley. During the period under review, plain cloth was becoming predominant both in production and consumption. The professional weavers were supplying coarse cloth and the trade was brisker. Many of the products of the hill tribes were unequalled for durability and careful weaving. The honey-combed towels of the Manipuris had no equal among the woven fabrics of the Assamese or the professional weavers of the

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1. An account of muga silk is to be found in Stack, Silk in Assam 29 February 1884, pp.7-9.
 2. Darrah, Endi Silk of Assam (Notes on some industries of Assam), pp.77-78.

Surma Valley. Bark cloths¹ of excellent designs are made by the most hill tribes of Assam even today.²

On the whole, in Eastern Bengal and Assam, the production of indigenous cotton goods was considerable. And in 1908-1909, the new province was in a position to export to Spain wearing apparels worth Rs. 1100.³

1. Bark cloths were made of fibres of trees and plants. The hill tribes excel in this art of manufacturing bark cloths. This is an old Assamese process. Choudhury, P.C., The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D. p.364. Also Robinson, Account of Assam, p.415.
2. Walker, The Garo Manufacture of Bark Cloth, pp.15-6. Also Hutton, Angami Nagus, pp.60-72.
3. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade and Navigation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Foreign Countries and Indian Ports, 1910-1911, Part I, Table No. 18-3, p.102.

Hosiery Industry

There was no hosiery industry in the pre-1905 Eastern Bengal and Assam. Till the last part of the nineteenth century, all the hosiery articles were imported from abroad, and their prices were generally high and beyond the means of the average consumer.¹ In 1890 the industry was, however, taken up in Bengal and the first hosiery factory that came into being was the Oriental Hosiery Limited. Kidderpore, Calcutta. It had a capital of two lakhs of rupees.² After 1905, the hosiery industry developed in the

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1. Mukherjee, B., The Hooghly and its Region, (London Ph.D. thesis, 1948) p.211.
 2. Ibid.

new province to an appreciable extent. Several hosiery factories sprang to life in different parts of the province for the manufacture of socks and sweaters. In Pabna, the Silpa Sanjibani Company was established in 1905 with a registered capital of two lakhs.¹ From that time a phenomenal success had been achieved in the hosiery industry for some years until 1930, when it was very badly hit by the general trade depression and Japanese competition. The Pabna Silpa Sanjibani Company could employ 70 men to produce an annual output of 7,000 dozens of vests, 300 dozens of socks and 100 dozens of sweaters.² These products became extremely popular not only in Bengal but also in other provinces of India, Bihar and Bombay. The Pabna quality earned such a reputation for durability and finish that the hosiery factories lately started in Calcutta and other places were endeavouring to turn out products similar to those of Pabna and even Japan was trying to exploit the good name of Pabna by sending out huge quantities of cheap hosiery products with a seal having 'PABNA' in big type and that 'JAPAN' in small type.³

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1. O'Malley, L.S.S., Bengal District Gazetteers, Pabna, p.61.
 2. O'Malley, Pabna, pp.62-64.
 3. Guha, K.D., Report on the Industrial Survey of the District of Pabna, p.15.

Dacca, the capital city of the new province, was situated on the bank of the river Buriganga; it was the old mart of cotton goods of eastern districts; its commercial importance increased after the partition when its communications with the neighbouring areas started to develop. In addition, as observed earlier, people with small capital, feeling free from the frontal competition of the Calcutta merchants, were hopefully investing their money in small business concerns. The seven hand driven factories of Dacca began to make rapid strides in both volume and value of production. The first one of these was Gupta and Company's hosiery factory at Patuatully. It was managed by a respectable graduate, Sudhir Sen. By 1908, Rs.15,000 had been laid out in the business. The firm had several Foster's hand machines accommodated in the factory and it was, thus, possible to sell the socks slightly cheaper than could the other firms which used to buy dyed yarns.¹ Thus Dacca made a promising start to revive its cotton industries and thereby to regain its lost epithet "a city of great trade".²

Krishna Das, a local businessman, started in 1907, a ginning factory at Chittagong. This was opened by Sir

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1. The other firms were: Das Brothers Company; De Darkar and Company and Ganguli and Company.
 2. Tavernier, Travels in India, part II, Book I, p.55.

Lancelot Hare. In the address presented to the lieutenant-governor, it was stated that at present the number of gins in work was 20 to ^{operate} ~~work~~ which 50 horse power was needed. The engine was capable of 150 horse power; so there was a wide margin for extension if results were encouraging. Buildings and machinery apart from land had cost roughly Rs.75000. The situation of the mill gave both river and rail communications, and every effort was to be made to ensure its success. Success, the address read, was to encourage further developments of the business.¹ This shows that, feeling free from the frontal competition of big merchants of Calcutta, the local business men became more hopeful of the success of their enterprises.

This cotton-machine~~of~~ Chittagong was by far the most important power mill set up by indigenous enterprise and capital in the province. There was sufficient stock of cotton and the firm was trying to ship ginned cotton direct to Europe, where the short-stapled hill cotton was in demand.

Mention could be made of several hand driven machines set up at Rajshahi and of a ginning factory established at Chandpur by Messrs. B.N. De of Calcutta. At

1. Quoted in Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, p.5.

Narayanganj Messrs. Ralli Brothers had a ginning mill. They ginned annually 4,000 to 7,000 bales of cotton of four hundred pounds gross. Some of the Calcutta merchants, thus, became interested in investing capital in business concerns in the new province. Perhaps, they anticipated the development of the port of Chittagong after the partition and started shifting a certain portion of their business from Calcutta to the new province. Or possibly they hoped for better prospects in the new province by avoiding the keen competition of their fellow businessmen in Calcutta.

The Assam Valley Trading Company started developing a hosiery mill at Tezpur. The company bought an automatic knitting machine and a small oil engine in 1906.¹ The work of the machine had been satisfactory and the company had in 1908 five body machines with accessories.² The hose could be manufactured by the machines in stock. About 20 employees including females worked in this small factory. The factory manufactured cheaper goods in increasing number. For example, the output of the factory in 1907-1908 was 1,153 dozens of socks against 584 in the previous year. The socks and stockings, both of wool and cotton, with special

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.13.

2. Ibid.

heels and toes, were made for general consumption. The price of cotton socks varied from Rs.2 to Rs.4 a dozen while the price of woollen socks varied from Rs.4 to Rs.12 per dozen.¹

There was not a single spinning mill in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam prior to 1905. After the partition, a small weaving mill known as the Pioneer Weaving Mill was started in Jalpaiguri in 1906; its capital was Rs.50,000.² It was purely an indigenous concern.

Indigenous Art of Dyeing

With the indigenous cotton industry is connected the art of indigenous dyeing. The threads were either dyed before their use in the loom or the entire garments were dyed when they were finished. Dyes were prepared from various roots, leaves and bark of trees which made "fast" and "dazzling colours".³ Blue dye was obtained from indigo leaves⁴ which underwent several processes before "yielding

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1. Officiating Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.4068G. Gauhati 17 July 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.6.
 3. Duncan, Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing in Assam, p.5.
 4. Hutchinson, R.H., Chittagon Hill Tracts, pp.85-87.

the requisite shade of blue". The indigo leaves were kept in an earthen pot of water. After two days, the leaves were taken out and the water was mixed with lime. This mixed water was "stirred" until it became "frothy". When the froth became thicker, it was left for an hour or so, and the water was very carefully "drained out" while "the colour sediment" remained at the bottom of the vessel. This sediment was "strained" through a piece of fine cloth and then dried in the sun in small cakes. The ash of bamboo was mixed with the water and "strained". Again this was mixed with "the colour cake" and exposed to the sunshine for about fifteen days. The yarn was "steeped in it" for half an hour, then taken out and dried in the sun. This was repeated four or five times to get the blue shade.¹ The black dye was prepared from the boiled bark of a special kind of tree which bore black fruits called kala gabe.² The red dye was obtained from the root of a tree called by the hillmen rang gach or the tree of colour. The other ingredients required for the preparation of this colour were water and the burnt ash of the tamarind wood.³ The yellow and green dyes were also prepared on the spot, the former by mixing turmeric and the

1. Hutchinson, R.H., Chittagong Hill Tracts, pp.85-87.

2. Banerjee, N.N., Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing in Bengal, Appendix No.1.

3. Hutchinson, R.H., Chittagong Hill Tracts, pp.85-87.

bark of the mango tree. A combination of indigo and turmeric made an excellent green colour.¹ The cotton yarn was put in the selected dyes and was dried in the sun.² The colours were so fast that no amount of wear and wash would affect them in the least.

Raw Materials

Having got some idea of the volume of the indigenous industry, it may seem appropriate to consider the quality and quantity of raw materials available for the cotton weaving industry. Since the territorial readjustment in 1905, there was an increasing development in the cultivation of raw cotton in the new province. The area under cotton cultivation increased from 76,000 acres in 1906-1907³ to 101,000 in 1910-1911.⁴ This was not part of a general rise in the cultivation of cotton, which decreased in some other provinces of India. The area under cotton decreased in Bengal from 75,000 acres in 1906-1907⁵ to 64,000 in 1908-1909,⁶ in

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1. Hutchinson, R.H., Chittagong Hill Tracts, pp.85-87.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1907-1908: P.P. 1909, vol.62, Paper No.156.
 4. Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910-1911: P.P. 1912-13, vol.61, Paper No.147.
 5. Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1907-08: P.P. 1909, vol.62, Paper No. 156.
 6. Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol.55, Paper No. 179.

the United Provinces from 1,489,000¹ to 1,241,000 in 1909-1910,² and in Bombay (the Native States being included), Sind and Baroda, from 7,633,000 to 6,269,000.³ These figures emphasize an overall decrease in the cultivation of raw cotton in the other provinces of India whilst it has been shown above that there was an increase in the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The cause of the increase in the new province was, to a great extent, indigenous because the domestic population was consuming more fabrics made of local cotton, local cotton being usually of 20's and 30's count was suitable for manufacturing coarse fabrics which served the need of the masses. This resulted in the extension of internal trade in cotton. The trade was

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1. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1907-08: P.P. 1909, vol.62, Paper No. 156.
 2. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol.55, Paper No. 179.
 3. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-10: P.P. 1911, vol.55, Paper No.179.

flourishing especially in the district of Chittagong Hill Tracts where the area under cotton extended. Of all Eastern Bengal districts, Chittagong Hill Tracts had by 1911 the record of having the biggest area —28,000 acres—under cotton cultivation and the credit of producing the largest output.¹ The principal cotton trade centres of the district were Chandroghona, Rangamati, Shiblong, Bandarban and Ajodya. During the winter, the respective river ghats of these places were crowded with varieties of boats while on the banks there were piles of baskets full of cotton. These were all brought in by the hillmen to be taken away by the Bengali trader. The value of cotton exports of the district since 1906 began to shoot up. For instance, the trade statistics of the district showed that the value of cotton exports in 1904-1905, was Rs.28,375, while in 1905-1906, it was estimated at Rs.137,818. In 1906-1907 there was a slight decrease and the amount was Rs.133,335.²

In the Garo Hills, the cotton cultivation was conducted on the so-called jhum system. The method was to cut the jungle, chiefly bamboos, and leave it to dry for about two months, and then at the beginning of April, the dried

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1. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Era, Dacca, 1911, Aug.26, p.4.
 2. Sheyde, R.H.S., Chittagong Hill Tracts, p.85.

jungle was burnt to ashes, providing fertilisers for the soil, enabling the crops to grow.¹ About 80 per cent. of the jhum cotton, however, was sold in the uncleaned state.² A small quantity was ginned by the women with the help of old ginning machines. Cotton was sold at Tura and at more than 30 markets on the borders of Mymensingh and Goalpara. From there it was carried to the various Brahmaputra ghats for shipment, either in large flats or in country boats, to Calcutta and Narayanganj. The prices fluctuated and ranged from Rs.6 to Rs.9 per maund for uncleaned cotton, and from Rs.25 to Rs.29 for cleaned cotton.

All the varieties of cotton grown in Assam had a short coarse staple, but were very rich in lint, and were valued in Europe for mixing with wool. The only other foreign country which could produce this kind of cotton was China. Some of the raw cotton was exported unginned to Europe, chiefly from the port of Chittagong. The firms of Abdul Guffur, a local merchant, had started sending unginned

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1. Commissioner, Chittagong Division, to Secretary, Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.813G. 2 August 1908, Enclosure B(2) in J.T. Rankin, Secretary to Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1708, Shillong, 28 September 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.
 2. When seed is not separated from cotton.

cotton to Calcutta.¹ Mallick Anlak was shipping unginced cotton to Calcutta where he had a ginning factory.² On the whole, the new province was making progress in cotton production by leaps and bounds. In 1909-1910, it yielded 17,000 bales of cotton, (the weight of each bale being 400 pounds)³ and in 1910-1911 31,000 bales, an increase of more than 82 per cent.⁴

Weavers

Underlying this increase in the production and the demand of raw cotton and cotton fabrics of the new province, was the insolvency of the weaving class. The weavers were poor and had no capital to invest in their business. For this reason they could not undertake any experiments in producing other types of garments. Such enterprises required much more money than the weavers had. Again it was due to the lack of capital that the weavers could not store their products in order to take advantage of a better market.

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1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.5.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909-1910, Paper No.179: P.P. 1911, vol.55.
 4. Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910-1911: P.P. 1912-13, vol.LXI, No.147, p.897.

They were even forced to sell their goods at the lowest price either to meet the demands of the mahajans or to buy their daily provisions. Moreover, very often, they had to solicit the assistance of the mahajans and money lenders who made them loans to carry on the weaving.¹

In consequence there had emerged two groups of workers -- independent and dependent weavers. The independent weavers were free from the mahajans and managed their finances and marketing themselves. The dependent weavers were virtual wage earners. The mahajans provided them with funds to buy equipment, supplied them with raw materials like yarns, took their finished products in repayment and marketed these articles on their own account.² The weavers received a sort of bani (wages) on time basis or according to the quality and quantity of goods produced. So for the want of capital and credit these weavers bought their thread and sold their fabrics at a great disadvantage.³ And when

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1. Note on Handloom Weaving, Enclosure in W.L. Harvey, Secretary, Government of India to all Local Governments, No.8423-84-36-7. Department of Commerce and Industry, Simla, 24 October 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Miscellaneous and Revenue Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Swan, J.A.L., Report on the Industrial Development of Bengal, p.5.
 3. S.G. Hart, Director, Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1052 G., Shillong, 18 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.

the weavers were so dependent on the mahajans, the latter were in a position to secure for themselves the lion's share of any increase in profits.

A weaver had to purchase appliances like looms and other equipment. He had to buy yarns and other materials such as dyes and dyeing instruments. He had to pay wages to hired assistants, if any, and had to support his family, consisting of usually four or five members. The number belonging to either class of the weavers varied in different parts of the province, but roughly for the whole province it might be said that about 75 per cent. of the weavers were dependent on the mahajans.¹ The rest were in a position to carry on production independent of the help and interference of the mahajans. The independent weavers produced articles and disposed of them themselves. They sold their goods either in the local markets or hawked them from door to door as quickly as they could. Those who were so dependent on the mahajan received a remuneration, small in comparison with their labour. They worked from morning till evening and got, on an average, Rs.8 a month in Eastern Bengal and Rs.4 in Assam.² This was hopelessly inadequate for their livelihood

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.14.

2. Ibid.

and they lived from hand to mouth throughout the whole year. And the manner in which they received advances from the mahajans, either in the shape of funds or raw materials, entangled them more and more in the arms of "the octopus like Mahajans".¹ The mahajans did not always pay the weavers in cash the full amount of their remuneration; they deducted certain charges on account of interest on loans or of the quality of the finished products not being up to the requisite standard.

From the above it is evident that the weavers working within the nexus of the "unrelenting" mahajans were comparatively poorer. In the case of the former the possibility of profits was larger. When there were occasions like the pujas of the Hindus and the annual Idd festivals of the Muslims, the demand for handloom products increased to some extent and during such times only the independent weavers were able to earn higher profits. On the other hand, the dependent weavers had no such possibility, for the bani rates did not vary much with the demand. The government, however, attempted to ameliorate the position of the weavers by granting them loans and financial assistance. It was

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.14.

proposed in 1907 to establish a company at each district headquarters to help the weavers of the province. The company would raise capital by shares subscribed by the members and by negotiable debentures, raised on the security of the liability of the members. It would buy the looms and yarns best suited to the requirements of the weavers of the district concerned. Also it might help the weavers in the disposal of the produce, either by acting as their agent on a commission or by buying the finished goods outright from them and selling these articles at the best market at a profit. It would sell the looms and yarns to the weavers either for cash or credit, and also lend them money for maintenance, till the produce was sold. The rate of interest charged on the loans might be $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. This was to be a great relief to the weavers who usually paid up to 150 per cent. on their debts.¹ The wages of the dependent weavers in the province, however, were reported to have risen from Rs.8 to Rs.9 a month, an increase of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent;

1. Note on Handloom weaving by K.C.De, 25 May 1907. Enclosure in S.G. Hart, Director, Department of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1052, Shillong, 18 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue and Miscellaneous Proceedings, 1908.

the independent weavers could earn on an average from Rs. 15 to Rs.20.¹ This shows that the weavers' condition was improving.

Some Minor Indigenous Industries

Among the minor indigenous industries the cigar and soap industries deserve a brief mention for their steady growth and expansion during this period.

Of the total 98,760 square miles area of the province, 562 square miles were being used for the cultivation of tobacco.² The chief tobacco areas were the Rajshahi and Dacca divisions. Rangpur had 172,000 acres under the cultivation of tobacco in 1906,³ and after the partition appeared

1. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.14. H.L. Salkeld, Collector of Dacca wrote in 1908 that "able bodied" weavers earned Rs.30 per month. H.L. Salkeld to Commissioner, Dacca Division, Enclosure in J.T. Rankin, Secretary, Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.515, Agri. T., Shillong, 8 June 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1910.
2. Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India, 1909, p.9.
3. The total area of Jalpaiguri was 2,962 square miles and of Rangpur 3,493 square miles, The area under tobacco in Jalpaiguri was 119,600 acres. Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India 1909, p.9.

to be the experimental centre of the cigar and cigarette industry. Perhaps this district was the foremost tobacco growing area in the whole of India,¹ both the climate and soil conditions in the district being admirably suited to the cultivation of this crop.² But the tobacco leaves produced in the district were extremely coarse and contained a high percentage of nicotine. They were, thus, suitable for smoking in the hookah³ but unfit for the manufacture of cigars and cigarettes acceptable to European smokers. The coarse quality of Rangpur tobacco arose not so much from any apparent defect in the soil or climate of the place as from the method of cultivation pursued by the local agriculturists. The criteria of a tobacco leaf for the local market was that it should be large, thick, strong and of a bright colour. Aroma or even combustibility was held as of

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1. Annual Report of the Rangpur Agricultural Station, 30 June 1907, para. 2, p. 2.
 2. J. McSwiney, Officiating Collector, Rangpur, to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, Jalpaiguri, No. 629 G., Rangpur, 10 June 1910, Enclosure in F.W. Strong, Officiating Director, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and General Department, No. 10087, G., Shillong, 19 August 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.
 3. The manufacture of hookah tobacco was carried out generally by the consumers themselves. The tobacco leaves were first dried and then powdered. Powdered tobaccos were mixed with molasses and made into balls or cakes for use in the hookah.

little account. The cultivators tried to attain this ideal by cultivating the crop on a sandy soil which favoured the production of a good colour. They fertilized the soil by using heavy doses of cow dung and available organic refuse, and they kept a small number of leaves on the plant. When the leaves became yellowish, they were cut and allowed to wither on the field; afterwards they were tied in bundles for curing in the shade. The Burmese merchants, who visited the district at the time of harvest, exported this tobacco to Burma where it was made up into big cigars for local consumption.¹

The department of agriculture of Eastern Bengal and Assam thought that good cigar and cigarette tobacco could be produced here in the district by adopting improved methods of cultivation and curing of the crop. If the people were taught how to grow good tobacco, the cigar and cigarette industry might thrive in this part of the province. Accordingly, the department of agriculture attempted to carry on

1. Note on tobacco curing in Rangpur and Jalpaiguri by J.N. Chakravarty, 20 May 1908, Enclosure in S.G. Hart, Director, Department, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.6110 G., Shillong, 6 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1909.

experiments in the Rangpur farm at Burirhat.¹ The object was to grow tobacco of a quality suitable for the manufacture of good class cigars and cigarettes.² The varieties grown on the farm under the initiative of the government were Sumatra, Grecian, Turkish, Havana, American and Bhengi (local variety). The sample of Sumatra wrapper consisted of a single hand of large, uniformly coloured medium brown leaves of good soft texture. The midribs of veins were prominent and bright coloured. The length of the leaves was 20 inches and the width six and a half. The thickness at midrib at base was $\frac{1}{5}$ of an inch.³ The leaf was considered to be "of considerable commercial value. The burning and the flavour of the tobacco are both partly satisfactory and the wrapper intended for cigars of medium

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1. The farm at Burirhat was situated about 5 miles north of Rangpur town and was about 52 acres in area. It was intended principally for experimental tobacco cultivation. Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1909, para.2, p.1.
 2. Memorandum by Sir Lancelot Hare on the work of the Department of Agriculture, 17 August 1911, Enclosure in S.G. Hart, Director, Department of Agriculture, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and General Department No.111. Dacca, 23 September 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911. 16777
 3. Report, from Indian Trade Enquiry Office, Imperial Institute, London, on tobacco from Rangpur, Appendix to Agricultural Report of Burirhat, 30 June 1910, p.56.



Taken from J. N. Gupta's Rangpur Today, P. 62.

quality is good. The leaf is fairly well and would sell in the market"[London].¹

The tobacco of Turkish stock did not possess the characteristic aroma or appearance of Turkish tobacco. The leaves were nine inches long and five inches wide. The thickness of the midrib at base was one sixth of an inch.² The tobacco held fire well, though it left a dark grey ash edged with black. The aroma of the smoke could recall that of a mild cigar leaf rather than that of Turkish tobacco.³

The Bhengi tobacco of Rangpur was free from blemishes. The leaves were of "fairly even dull brown colour". The mid-ribs were rather prominent, but not winged. The tobacco burnt well, but left a dark grey ash edged with black.⁴ The samples of Bhengi seeds were suggested as cigarette tobacco, presumably as substitutes for Virginian cigarette.⁵ This

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1. Report of Messrs. Edgar P. Bidwell and Company, Bush-Lane House, Cannon Street, London, on "Sumatra Tobacco", quoted in Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1910, para.16, p.76.
 2. Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1910, p.56.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Report of Professor Dunston, Director, Imperial Institute, London, on result of examination of Rangpur tobacco, Appendix to Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1911, p.51.
 5. Ibid.

tobacco, it is reported, could be sold at 13 annas a seer in England.¹ All other tobaccos were also satisfactory in their composition. The results of a chemical analysis of some cigarette tobacco from the Rangpur farm are given below:²

Cigarette Tobacco	Moisture	Ordinary matter	Soluble alkalis	Total Nitrogen	Nicotine	Pure ash	Remarks
Scented leaf	4.16	75.84	4.231	1.905	0.665	19.36	good for first class cigarettes
Sari	5.55	74.85	5.156	1.888	0.604	18.62	mild and aromatic and fit for cigarettes
Cavalla	4.22	71.32	4.363	1.993	0.514	20.55	pretty mild for cigarettes

It appears from the above table that the tobaccos of the Rangpur farm were capable of producing the cigars and cigarettes consumable in countries abroad. In composition these tobaccos were all satisfactory; the nicotine was

1. Biswas, J.K., Tamaker Cas (Tobacco Cultivation), p.133.

2. The government chemist of the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau, Tokyo, Japan, made this analysis in November 1907. Annual Report on Rangpur Agricultural Station, 30 June 1908, p.25.

low as was also the total nitrogen. The amount of moisture was sufficient to keep the tobacco in good condition. The ash was rich in potash and consequently the tobacco burnt well. The superior grades of tobacco produced here found a ready sale in the Indian markets. The cultivation of Sumatra tobacco developed considerably and excellent results were obtained where the soil was in a fairly good condition.¹ The Sumatra variety gave in 1911 a yield of 1,404 maunds of leaf. The quality of the leaf improved; it was distinctly superior to any tobacco previously produced in the province² and the director of agriculture wrote; "In my opinion it is better than the American tobacco".³ The texture of the leaf was "elastic, simply lovely and beautifully venated."⁴ The leaf was sorted into three top grades according to its size and quality and was sold to a Madras firm. The first grade was sold at Rs.1-4-0 per pound, the

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1. Enclosure in H.K. Briscoe, Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Inspector General, Agriculture, India, Pusa, No.571. Agri.Shillong, 28 August 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1911.
 2. S.G. Hart, Director, Department, Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue and General Department, No.2278 G. Dacca, 14 March 1911: Ibid.
 3. Memo by Director of Agriculture. Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.375, Shillong 25 May 1910, as cited in Biswas, J.K., Tamaker Cas (Tobacco Cultivation), p.13.
 4. Extract from Capital, 9 February 1911, p.304 as cited in Biswas, J.K., Tamaker Cas, p.14.

second grade^{at} Rs.1-0-0 and the third grade at 12 annas.¹
 The total amount realised from the sale was Rs.1,555-8-0;
 the total area cultivated was 1.10 acres.² Against this,
 the total cost of cultivation and curing was only Rs.246-9-
 9.³ The Turkish tobacco was cultivated very successfully
 in 1911 and was sold for the first time to a Bombay firm.
 The rate of first class tobacco was Rs.81-4-0 per maund
 and that of second class Rs.50-0-0.⁴

To make use of various grades of tobacco produced
 on the farm, a professional cigar-roller was appointed
 during this period to make cigars and cigarettes. The
 production began in 1906 and since then there was a gradual
 increase in the production of cigars and cigarettes. During
 1906-1907, 9,868 cigars and 2,112 cigarettes were made on
 the farm⁵ while in 1907-1908, more than 29,266 cigars

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1. Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1911, para.12, p.40.
 2. The quantity of each grade of tobacco and its price:

1st grade	862 lb.	Rs.	1077-8
2nd "	286 "	" "	286-0-0
3rd "	256 "	" "	192-0-0
 3. Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1911, para.12, p.41.
 4. The total amount of production was 47 seers: 1st quality = 19: 2nd quality = 28 seers. Annual Report of Burirhat Agricultural Station, 30 June 1911, para.12, p.41.
 5. Annual Report of Rangpur Agricultural Station, 30 June 1907, para.17, p.20.

were made.¹ The amount realised from the sale of cigars and cigarettes in 1906-1907 amounted to Rs. 86-15-6 and in 1907-1908 Rs.166-0-0. There were four brands of cigarettes; their length varied from four and a half inches to three and a half.²

In addition, cigars were made in the Egyptian shape and sold at two and a half annas per packet of ten. The leaf was cut by a hand-chopper and was rolled by a tiny hand-machine known as "the Conconium".³ The cigars were packed in boxes bearing labels giving the brand size. They were well spoken of by both European and Indian smokers, as they burnt well and possessed "a sweet and mild fragrance". They were distinctly better than the commoner brands and altogether offered an agreeable smoke.⁴ On the whole, a promising start was made in the cultivation of good varieties of tobacco for making cigars and cigarettes.⁵

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1. Annual Report of Rangpur Agricultural Station, 30 June 1908, para. 15, p.29.
 2. The price of 100 cigarettes of each variety varied from Rs.2-8-0 to 12 annas. Ibid. The first three brands were torpedo shaped while the fourth one was Manilla shaped.
 3. Annual Report of Rangpur Agricultural Station, 30 June 1908, para. 15, p.29.
 4. Annual Report of Rangpur Agricultural Station, 30 June 1907, para.17, p.20.
 5. The cultivation continued thereafter. In 1917, 300 pounds of Sumatra tobacco were sold from the Burirhat farm. In 1918 a shed for curing tobacco leaves was built at the farm at a cost of Rs.400. In the same year, Marco Polo and Co. offered Rs.82 per maund for the Turkish tobacco grown at the Burirhat farm. Gupt, J.N., Rangpur Today - A Study in Local Problems of a Bengal District, pp.61-62. After India was partitioned in 1947, Rangpur went to East Pakistan. Now there is a government experimental farm at Burirhat, and the Pakistan Tobacco Co.Ltd. have their research establishment near it. Ahmad, N., An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, p.148.

Dacca was famous for the manufacture of toilet soaps. The soap industry was introduced from Italy and Germany to England in the fourteenth century.¹ The process and extent of the manufacture of soap were revolutionised during the first half of the nineteenth century as a result of Chevreul's chemical researches on the constitution of oils and fats, and by the introduction of "The Leblanc process for the manufacture of soda from brine".² The industry began to develop on a small scale in India during the second half of the nineteenth century. It was started in the Hooghly and its neighbourhood between 1881-1890, when several small concerns were established in Calcutta.³ At about this time, a factory called Bul Bul soap factory was started at Gandaria, Dacca. The factory was awarded the first and special gold medal at the Indian industrial exhibition held at Calcutta in 1906-1907, for making good soaps. This was the only soap factory in the province.

After the partition, another factory was started at Nimitola by M.W. Takadar, a Japanese. He was himself a

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1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Under "Soap", p.858.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Mukherjee, B., The Hooghly and its Region, p.223 (London Ph.D. thesis, 1948) p.223.

soap-maker and was attached to the BulBul factory. His capital was Rs.1700. The soaps were made by hand. Possibly Takadar foresaw an expansion of trade in the province and felt that the single factory might not be enough to meet the demands.

Besides these factories, skilled men were engaged in making washing soaps. More than 100 artisans, all Muslims, lived by this trade and each earned from Rs.10 to Rs.12 per month.¹ Til oil, animal fat and chalk powder were used for the preparation of these soaps. They were boiled in big cauldrons and sold in lumps at six to seven annas a seer. The most important of all the ingredients was the til oil. The production of til was in abundance, for example, in 1906-1907, the new province, after meeting its local demands, exported to Bengal and Calcutta 12,702 maunds of til worth Rs.97,077. The absence of relevant data prevents our estimating what amount of soap was produced by the Nimitola factory and individual efforts.

The locally manufactured soaps, however, were in great demand amongst the poor and were exported in large quantities to Assam and Mymensingh. This contributed to the

1. Some of the artisans were Ali Mian, Munshi Munir Hossain and Mukdum Bir. Gupta, G.N., A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908, p.46.

fall in the import of English soaps in the province from 95 cwt. in 1907-1908 to 86 cwt. in 1908-1909.¹ The commissioner of the Dacca division reported that the hand-made soaps of Dacca had nearly "driven out the European soap used for similar purposes, from the market."²

In conclusion, it can be said that there was some development of the cotton weaving industry in the province, but progress was confined mainly to the production of coarse fabrics. In spite of this development, the weavers' economic position did not improve much; and they still had to depend on the mahajans and moneylenders. The co-operative credit societies,³ organised since 1904 by the government

1. Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade and Navigation of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Foreign Countries and Indian Ports 1911-1912, Table No.18(A) Part I, p.65.
2. Commissioner, Dacca, to Secretary, Government, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1266 L.R. Dacca, 19 August 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Agriculture Proceedings, 1908.
3. The Co-operative Credit Societies Act was passed in 1904. The principle underlying this Act was that "an isolated and powerless individual can, by association with others, and by moral development and mutual support, obtain in his own degree the material advances available to wealthy or powerful persons, and thereby develop himself to the fullest extent of his natural ability." Report on Co-operation in India, p.1. The fundamental objects of the societies were to teach the people the principles of co-operation and thrift and to provide facilities for the provision of loans on personal credit at a cheaper rate. For a fuller discussion on this topic, Anstey, V, The Economic Development of India, pp.185-206. Also Pillai, P.P., Economic Conditions in India, pp.145-46.

to solve the problems, particularly of rural indebtedness, were in their infancy and could not help the weavers to improve their material conditions. Again, the recommendations of the industrial conference held at Dacca in 1909, containing a proposal for the establishment of a department of industry for the province, which could have helped the weavers financially, were not fully implemented. The government did not pursue a systematic policy in reviving the cotton-weaving industry though it made some substantial contributions, such as sending trained men to teach the weavers improved methods of weaving, to stimulate the development of the cotton-weaving industry. Experiments in producing good tobacco for cigars and cigarettes were successful on the Rangpur farm. But neither were the experiments carried out on a large scale nor did the government make systematic efforts to spread among the masses the improved methods of producing good cigar and cigarette tobacco acceptable to European smokers. Two soap factories of the province were private concerns and worked well during this period.

CHAPTER IVTHE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

When the British went to India they found the old system of education among both Hindus and Muslims. Useful information on this subject is contained in William Adam's reports on education in Bengal and Bihar; the conditions in the principal province were roughly similar to those in the other provinces.

Education was either imparted at home to boys and rarely to girls, or imparted to boys alone in schools which were supported and managed by the people themselves.¹ In Bengal and Bihar elementary education was given in patshalas, village schools of a humbler sort, by school masters who were generally kayasthas or people belonging to the caste of writers. The pupils were generally kayasthas or brahmans but sometimes belonged to the other castes. Very few of them were Muslims. The remuneration of teachers was derived partly from presents and partly from fees and perquisites; those who received food as a perquisite either lived in the house of one of the principal supporters of the school or

1. Lovett, S.H.V., "Education and Mission to 1858", The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.100.

at meal times visited the houses of different parents by turns.³

All forms of higher education were given in Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit. The Persian schools, called maktabs, were attended by both Muslims and Hindus. The Hindus learnt Persian, mostly for government employment. Adam wrote that the Hindu landlords of Natore, Rajshahi, "have expressed to me a desire to have Persian instruction for their children, but they apparently had no other object than to qualify them to engage in the business of life, which is for the most part identical with the business of the courts."¹ Instruction was given in Persian literature, grammar and arithmetic.

The Arabic schools were of two kinds. The formal Arabic schools were intended for instruction "in the formal or ceremonial reading of certain passages of the Koran."² The learned Arabic schools, called madrassas, were closely connected with the Persian schools. The course of study in the Arabic schools had a much wider range including logic, rhetoric, Muslim jurisprudence, Euclid, Ptolemy and the

1. Adam, W., Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar, 1835, 1836 and 1838 (edited by A. Basu) p.108.

2. Ibid., p.105.

3. Adam, W., Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar, 1835, 1836 and 1838 (edited by A. Basu) p.94. Their total income varied from three to five rupees per month.

perusal of treatises on metaphysics.¹ The average duration both of Persian and Arabic study was about 11 or 12 years.²

In the Sanskrit schools, called tols, the Hindu religion, philosophies, logic and law were taught to students who were mostly brahmins, and medicine and grammar to those belonging to the other castes.³ Some tols were endowed, for example, in Rangpur a tol had 25 bighas of land for its maintenance,⁴ but most were founded by individual brahmins who were known as gurus (teachers). There were larger tols to offer studies in astrology, medicine, mythology and tantra.⁵

There were no schools for girls. In Rangpur, it was considered highly improper to bestow any education on women and no man would marry a literate girl.⁶ Adam wrote

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1. Adam, W., Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal, 1838, p.77. He wrote, "Perhaps we shall not err widely if we suppose that the state of learning amongst the Mussalmans of India resembles that which existed among the nations of Europe before the invention of printing."
 2. Ibid., it may be mentioned here that the average monthly income of a teacher was Rs.8.
 3. Ibid., p.60. Adam wrote that Hindu religious subjects, logic, law and philosophies were "the peculiar inheritance of the brahman caste."
 4. Adam, W., Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar 1835, 1836 and 1838 (edited by A.Basu) p.72.
 5. Ibid. The average annual income of a tol teacher was Rs. 63-4-5. William Adam's Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal 1838, p.49.
 6. Adam, W., Report on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar 1835, 1836 and 1838 (edited by A.Basu) p.72.

that a superstitious feeling was alleged to exist in the majority of Hindu females that a girl taught to read and write would, soon after marriage, become a widow, an event which was regarded as nearly the worst misfortune that could befall the sex. The Muslims shared all the prejudices of Hindus against female education, besides that a large number of them were very poor, and were thus unable, ^{even} if they were willing to give education to their children.¹

The first instinct of British rulers was, however, to leave the existing modes of "instruction undisturbed and to continue the support which they had been accustomed to receive from Indian rulers."² They attempted to revive Indian learning rather than to import English education. Warren Hastings founded the Calcutta Madrasa in 1782 for the purpose of studying Muslim law and such other sciences as were taught in Muslim schools.³ Jonathan Duncan,⁴

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1. Adam, W., Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar 1835, 1836 and 1838 (edited by A. Basu) p. 131.
 2. Resolution of the Government of India, 11. March 1904, para. 3: P.P. 1904, vol. 65, p. 457.
 3. Sharp, H., Selections from Educational Records, Part I, pp. 7-9.
 4. Duncan, Jonathan, the elder (1756-1811). Son of Alexander Duncan, Jonathan Duncan was born at Wardhouse, Forfarshire on 15 May 1756. Entered the East India Company's Service and reached Calcutta, 1772. Held various subordinate appointments. Selected to fill the important office of resident, and superintendent at Benares by Lord Cornwallis, 1788. Governor of Bombay, 1795-1811. Died at Bombay on 11 August 1811.

Resident at Benares, established in 1792 the Benares College for the cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of the Hindus.¹ Provision was made for giving regular assistance to education from public funds. The Charter Act of 1813 empowered the governor-general to direct that one lakh of rupees in each year should be "set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."² The grant was applied to the encouragement of oriental learning rather than to the introduction of western education.³ The process of non-interference with Indian

1. Sharp, H., Selections from Educational Records, Part I, p.10.

2. Ibid., p.24.

3. When the committee of public instruction (appointed by the government of India in 1823 for the control of education. The first principle of the committee was "an endeavour to win the confidence of the educated and influential classes, by encouraging the learning and literature that they respected." Report of the Indian Education Commission 1882: East India Papers 1883) was entrusted with the disbursement of the greater portion of the annual one lakh grant, it prepared to organise a Sanskrit college which the government had decided to open in Calcutta. Lovett, S.H.V., "Education and Missions to 1858", The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.105. Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras from 1819 to 1827, wrote in 1822; "It is not my intention to recommend any interference whatever in the native schools. Everything of this kind ought to be carefully avoided, and the people should be left to manage their schools in their own way. All that we ought to do is to facilitate the operations of these schools by restoring any funds that may have been diverted from them, perhaps granting additional ones

education continued until some changes occurred both in England and India. In England, the Utilitarians and the Evangelicals, who had been influential with the company for many years, were trying to exert pressure upon the home government to bring about the use of English language in India.¹ "'The great end of Government'", wrote James Mill,² a Utilitarian, "should not be to teach Hindu or Muhammadan learning; but useful learning."³ So considerable was their influence that it has been said that "it is to England rather than to India that we must look for the decisive change over in Indian educational policy."⁴ In India, there grew a small group of educated people who were "pressing", at this time, "for English education".⁵ Many of them spoke

where it may appear adviseable." Munroe's Minute 25 June 1822. Extract from Fort St. George Revenue Consultations: Adam, W., Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal 1838, p.47.

1. Spear, P., "Bentinck and Education", The Cambridge Historical Journal, vol.VI, 1938-1940, pp.83-84.
2. Mill, James (1773-1836). Educated at Montrose academy and Edinburgh university. Appointed to the India Office in 1819 as an assistant examiner of correspondence and by 1830 was at the head of the office. Had great influence with his official superiors.
3. Spear, P., "Bentinck and Education", The Cambridge Historical Journal, vol.VI, 1938-1940, p.83.
4. Ibid., p.83.
5. Ballhatchet, K.A., "The Home Government and Bentinck's Educational Policy", The Cambridge Historical Journal, vol.X, 1950, p.228.

English fluently and were "tolerably" read in English literature.¹ Ram Mohan Roy,² a brahman, reacted to the decision of the government to establish a sanskrit college and wrote to Lord Amherst, Governor-General; "The Sanskrit language ... is well known to have been for ages a lamentable check on the diffusion of knowledge; and the learning concealed under this almost impervious veil is far from sufficient to reward the labour of acquiring it." "The Sanskrit system of education", he continued, "would be the best calculated to keep the country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British legislature."³ There were, in addition, two other sources from which the impulse to change came. First, there was the growing need for public

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1. Lovell, S.H.V., "Education and Missions to 1858", The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI, p.106. Also Herber, B., Narrative and Letters, II, pp.306-7.
 2. Roy, Raja Ram Mohan (1772-1833). Son of Rankanta Roy, who was manager of some estates of the Maharaja of Burdwan. Studied Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Commenced the study of English at the age of 21. Employed in the collectorate at Rangpur and soon became saristadar, but retired from government service, 1813. Founded the Brahma Samaj 1828. Received the title of Raja from the ex-emperor of Delhi, 1830. Wrote a letter to Lord Amherst on the comparative merits of English and Sanskrit education, 1823. Went to England and died on 27 September 1833 at Stapleton Grove, Bristol.
 3. Sharp, H., Selections from the Education Records, pp. 99-101.

servants with a knowledge of English. Second, there was "the influence in favour both of English and of Vernacular education which was exercised by the missionaries in the early years of the nineteenth century."¹

The ideas finally found expression in the resolution of 7 March 1835 after a vigorous controversy between the Anglicists and Orientalists.² It became the policy of the government to promote "European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed

1. Resolution of the Government of India, 11 March 1904: P.P. 1904, vol.65, para.4, p.458.
2. The former urged that higher education should be given through English and should be in accordance with modern ideas. The latter, while admitting that what was then thought as science had no right to that title, wished to maintain the study of Oriental classics in accordance with the indigenous methods. Among the Orientalists were many distinguished persons like H.H. Wilson and Prinsep, two members on the committee of public instruction. The Anglicists gradually became more and more powerful; and when in 1835 the two parties were so evenly balanced that things had come to a deadlock, it was Macaulay's advocacy of English education that turned the scale against the Orientalists. His Minute was immediately followed by a resolution of the governor-general, which clearly declared for English as against Oriental education. A few years later the Orientalists made several efforts to rescind this resolution and to revert to the previous policy in favour of the classical language of India. But they received no encouragement. Report of the Indian Education Commission 1882: East India Papers, 1883, p.9. Also Trevelyan, Education of the People of India, pp.10-30; and Maythew, A., The Education of India, pp.11-23.

on English education alone."¹ Then followed a period of attempts, differing in different provinces, to extend English education by the establishment of government schools and colleges and by strengthening the indigenous schools. In their despatch of 1854, the court of directors announced that the government should "actively assist in the more extended and systematic promotion of general education in India. They regarded it as a sacred duty to confer upon the people of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge." They sought by means of education to create a supply of faithful public servants for offices of responsibility.²

The policy laid down in 1854 was re-affirmed in 1859 when the administration had been transferred to the crown. Schools and colleges grew rapidly. In 1882 a commission was held to report on the existing state of education. The commission made a careful inquiry into the measures

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1. Sharp, H., Selections from the Educational Records, Part I, p.130.
 2. Resolution of the Government of India, 11 March 1904: P.P. 1904, vol.65, para.5, p.458. This despatch "became known to three generations of Anglo-Indians as 'the Magna Charta of English Education in India', 'the intellectual Charter of India' or, simply, as 'Wood's Education Despatch'." Moore, R.J., Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, 1853-1866, p.175. (London University Ph.D. thesis 1964).

which had been taken in pursuance of the despatch of 1854, and submitted further detailed proposals for carrying out the principles of that despatch. (They advised ^{an} increased reliance upon, and systematic encouragement of, private efforts; the government of India approved of their recommendations. As a result a large number of private institutions grew ^{up} in different parts of the country. This contributed to the development of the theory of control and quality. One section of educationists, mostly the officials, believed that the quality of education had materially deteriorated since the growth of private institutions on large scale. Hence they liked to control this growth and to improve the existing ones. The other section of thinkers, mostly the educated Indians, argued that private enterprise ought to be given full freedom to grow and that "a policy of control and improvement would be suicidal to the best interests of the country."¹ Finally, the latter gave way to the former. The conflict between these two schools, however, became apparent on the question of university education.)

A commission was held in 1902 to enquire into the matter and the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904. The Act

1. Nurullah, S., and Naik, J.P., A History of Education in India, p.xxi.

empowered the universities of India to control and supervise higher education in accordance with the principles and policy approved by the government of India.¹

During this period, in Bengal, as in other parts of India, there was a spread of English education. This was particularly true of Calcutta and its neighbourhood. These were the Hindu-majority areas. The Hindus, in general, accepted the British rule and English education without hesitation. Because, to them, the English and their language were no more foreign than the Muslims and their language, Persian. "Just as, in Muslim times, the Hindu desirous of government employment was compelled to learn Persian, so now he had to learn English."² Middle class Hindus began to

1. Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition during the year 1903-04: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Paper No.180, p.157. It may be noted here that the despatch of 1854 prescribed the establishment of universities, and in 1857 the three universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were incorporated by Acts of the Indian Legislature. The university of the Panjab was established in 1882 and that of Allahabad in 1887. Their sole duty was "to hold examinations and confer degrees". Nurullah, S., and Naik, S.P., A Student's History of Education in India, p.155. Since 1904, they got much more power to supervise effectively higher education.
2. Basham, A.L., The Wonder that was India, pp.481-82. Some of the Hindus, as stated earlier, were opposed to the continuation of Sanskrit learning and advocated a change over in education current in India. They liked to learn "useful sciences which the nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world." Sharp, H., Selection from the Educational Records, Part I, pp.99-100.

send their sons to European schools.¹ Attempts, however, were made to raise the standard and methods of primary schools. Many government secondary schools were opened. Colleges were established for higher education. The first college established for English education in Bengal was in Calcutta. The best educational institutions like the Scottish Missionary and the Presidency colleges were in Calcutta.² Thus from the very start, the western part of Bengal was well ahead of the eastern part in education.

Eastern Bengal was a Muslim majority area. The Muslims in general regarded the British as their political supplanters and withdrew from English education as far as possible. This was detrimental to their interests and they failed to take advantage "of the new education planted by the conqueror".³ The lack of interest on the part of the

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1. Basham, A.L., The Wonder that was India, p.82.
 2. The Scottish Missionary and Presidency colleges were established in 1830 and 1855 respectively. The Bhawani-pur college was established in the suburbs of Calcutta in 1838. Progress of Education in India 1897-98 to 1901-1902. vol.I: P.P. 1904, vol.65, Cd. 2181, pp.43-44.
 3. Farquhar, I.N., Modern Religious Movements in India, p.91.

majority was a great contributory factor to the government's becoming less attentive to the educational needs of the area. Moreover, the area being far away from the seat of the government at Calcutta, its needs and problems — educational and otherwise — remained almost unnoticed. The development of education had suffered most. It is stated that while money was poured in and around Calcutta, little attention was paid to the education of this distant part of the country.¹ This seemed true. The total amount spent on education in Eastern Bengal was less than was spent in Calcutta areas. In 1902 while Rs.99,735 were spent on primary education in the Muslim majority division of Chittagong, Rs. 153,069 were spent in the Presidency and Rs. 133,449 in the Burdwan divisions.²

One of the purposes of the partition was to improve the educational condition of the new province. In his speech at Mymensingh, Lord Curzon observed that the ideal of educational advancement was "the multiplication of centres of tuition and learning, so that boys and young men may be well taught in reasonable proximity to their homes. It

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1. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon and After, p.371.
 2. General Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, 1902-1903, Appendix VIII, p.v.

cannot be doubted that, if a new province were created, there would be an immense development of local institutions, and that this would be a source of untold benefit to the people."¹ Every one, he continued, knew that under the present system, "the Dacca College has been starved, the professors have been few and underpaid, and progress has languished." One of the main advantages of the suggested change [the creation of the new province], he added, "will be the great impulse that it must give to Education."²

The government of Bengal wrote on the same point on 6 April 1904 and stated that the excellence and efficiency of educational institutions "depend on two things, namely, on the interest of the Local Government and on local effort... it may be regarded as certain that the Government of the new province will have more leisure to take an interest in the development of educational institutions", and there "can be little doubt that education of all grades will greatly improve."³

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1. Addresses at Mymensingh, 20 February 1904: P.P. 1906, vol.81, Paper No. 2746 Cd. p.227.
 2. Ibid.
 3. W.C. Macpherson, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department 6 April 1904: P.P. vol.81, Paper No. Cd.2746, p.69.

It became the policy of the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, however, to raise the educational status of this area. The expenditure on education was increased by 57.1 per cent.¹ The new province got an education department of its own. It was separate from, and independent of, that of Bengal.² The development in education took place at all levels -- collegiate, secondary and primary.

Collegiate Education

There were two grades of colleges in the province, first and second. A first grade college taught the full graduate course, a course of four years from matriculation, and sometimes carried instruction further to the M.A. or M.Sc. degree. A second grade college taught only the

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1. Progress of Education in India 1907-1912: P.P. 1914 vol. 62, Cd. 7485, p.16.
 2. The department consisted of a director of public instruction, a number of inspectors with their staff, professors of colleges and teachers in schools. The director organised the department.

intermediate standard; such institutions resembled schools rather than colleges. The life history of the college was generally one of growth from the high school into the second grade and thence into the first grade college. Colleges were managed either by the government or by private proprietors.

The provision for collegiate education was more scanty in Eastern Bengal and Assam than in the other provinces of India. For example, in 1906, whereas Madras had 36 arts colleges and Bengal 34, the new province had only 11.¹ Again, the number of first grade colleges was low: it had three -- two government and one private -- first grade colleges while its sister province Bengal had 26.² Eastern Bengal and Assam had four government colleges and the rest were private.³ Only

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1. Progress of Education in India 1902-1907, vol.I: P.P. 1909, vol.63, Cd. 4635, p.29.
 2. Progress of Education in India 1902-1907, vol.I: Ibid. Cd. 4635, p.39.
 3. Sharp, H., General Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-1906, p.12. Private colleges were managed by private efforts.

Dacca and Rajshahi colleges taught up to the M.A. standard.¹ The remaining colleges were second grade institutions and taught up to the intermediate standard. Further, those maintained by the government were inadequately housed, badly equipped and under-staffed. Private colleges were in a worse condition and with difficulty managed to continue. Not a single private college had received a capital subvention from the government. Nor were any of them in receipt of state aid. On the other hand, 30 colleges in Madras and seven in Bengal received state aid.² Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, summed up the condition of collegiate education in the province thus: "Collegiate education was in a miserable condition. The state of the Government institution was bad and the private colleges were deplorable."³

The new province inherited this state of collegiate education from old Bengal and Assam. If this was allowed to continue, the University regulations of 1905 would

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1. The Dacca College was opened in 1841; it was originally a government English school which was opened in 1835. Allen, B.C., Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers, Dacca p.29.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education in India, 1901-1902: P.P. 1904, vol.65, Cd. 2181, p.51 (Table 7).
 3. Hare to Viceroy, 20 February 1911 (Private and Confidential): Hardinge Papers, vol.113, p.23.

speed up the decline of most of the existing colleges of Eastern Bengal and Assam. This was because the regulations were opposed, in principle, to the granting of affiliation to those colleges which had not proper buildings of their own and which had no adequate staff. Their operation would lead to a decline in the number of colleges. With the diminution of colleges, higher education would be more centralised with the result that a great number of students would not be able to obtain it. Eastern Bengal and Assam would suffer educationally. This meant the loss of one of the objects for the achievement of which the new province was created. Students would migrate to Bengal to study in the improved and better staffed colleges. While 2 colleges could teach M.A. courses in the new province, there were in Bengal 9 colleges for this purpose.¹ With few exceptions, there was no honours course in any of the colleges of the province. While there were 3 colleges in Bengal to teach science, there was none in the new province.² No private college except the Braja Mohan Institution taught the

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1. Presidency College, Scottish College, Patna College, Ravenshaw College, Victoria College, Krishnanath College, Metropolitan College, Krishnanagar College and City College.
 2. Sharp, H., General Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907.-1908, p.17.

graduate course.¹ It seemed very likely that the students of the new province would go for higher degrees to the nearest colleges in Bengal. This would reduce the educational institutions of Eastern Bengal and Assam to the position of mere feeders to the colleges of Bengal. And the educational status of the province would be that of an appanage to Bengal. Some idea of the subordinate position in which the colleges of Eastern Bengal and Assam were placed might be gathered from the fact that an inhabitant of the province would be unable to obtain within it the education ordinarily required of a candidate for either the executive or the provincial judicial services of his own province.²

Expansion of collegiate education was argued on political grounds as well. To allow young men to study in Calcutta, where they were subject to the constant influence of political agitators, was thought to be one of the greatest

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1. The Braja Mohan College was founded in 1884 as an English high school and raised to the status of a first grade college in 1898. It was named after its founder, Babu Braja Mohan Dutt, Small Court Judge, Nadia, who was an inhabitant of Barisal. The college was maintained by his son Babu Aswani Kumar Dutt. Jack, J.C., Bengal District Gazetteers; Bakarganj, p.117. Also Dr. Chatterjee, Officer on Special Duty, to Director of Public Instruction, East Bengal and Assam, No.1, Dacca, 5 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Calcutta, No.348E. T. Shillong, 16 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.

political evils and dangers of the time.¹ This danger, in the opinion of the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, must necessarily be greatly increased if all facilities for higher education were to be confined to Bengal.² The lieutenant-governor considered that hardly anything was more essential for the future peace of the province than that it should train its youths within its own boundaries and under adequate control. In this opinion, he said, he was supported by the constant representations that had been made to him by individual parents and guardians who dreaded the effect of the political atmosphere of Calcutta on the youths for whose welfare they were responsible.³ Some guardians were not willing to send their wards to West Bengal for education, possibly because the people there "loftily aver" that the East Bengalis had no culture⁴ and that the Assamese were savage;⁵ they would not like their

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Calcutta, No.348 E.T. Shillong, 16 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Extract No.B, in Hare to DuBoulay ? February 1911, No.158: Hardinge Papers, vol.81, p.171.
 5. The Hitabadi, Calcutta, 3 January 1896: Bengal Native News Paper Reports, No.2, 1896.

wards to suffer from an inferiority complex of this type. Also the lieutenant-governor was supported by addresses from influential public bodies who cared for the interests of the province. This "sensible and loyal element imbibed high hopes from the educational aspect of the creation of the new province."¹ They expected from the government adequate facilities for the education of their boys within the province. Proper collegiate education was to be welcomed by the people. Adequate control and supervision would improve education in private colleges. Proprietors and principals of these institutions very often encouraged students to take part in politics.² But the government's

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Calcutta, No.348E.T. Shillong, 16 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Some of these institutions were called "semi military associations" wherein sword and dagger were practised. Students were taught agitation. Sharp, H., General Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, p.62.

attention to these colleges would improve their quality. On ^{the} one hand, it would give to the young the educational advantages, on the other hand, it would "satisfy their local patriotism and advance the interest of the province as a whole."¹ It was possible that the young men would be happy to see colleges in their province because they would not have to go for higher education to Bengal where, as mentioned, the people looked down upon the East Bengalis as Bangals² (fools) and the Assamese as primitive people.³ These were the considerations "which no local Government can afford to overlook, and to which, indeed, it is its duty to give the foremost place."⁴

The government educational policy was to develop the colleges and thus to improve collegiate education. The Chittagong and Ganhaty colleges were provided with facilities

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Calcutta, No.348E.T. Shillong, 16 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Extract on B. in Hare to Duboulay ? February 1911, No.158: Hardinge Papers, vol.81, p.171.
 3. The Hitabadi, Calcutta, 3 January 1896: Bengal Native News Paper Reports, 1896, No.2. Also The Sri Sri Vishnu Priya-o- Anada Bazar Patrika, 30 December 1903: Bengal Native News Paper Reports 1903, No.2.
 4. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Calcutta, No.348 E.T. Shillong, 16 December 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings 1909.

to teach the degree course and the rest were completely remodelled. In 1907, Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant-Governor, eastern Bengal and Assam, appointed a representative committee to find out certain measures for the improvement of the Chittagong College.¹ The committee, among other things, recommended that the status of the college should be raised to ~~the~~ first grade. J.A. Cunningham, University Inspector, visited the college on 15 January 1908 and recorded that "the scheme for a first grade college developing step by step according to a well-thought out plan, at Chittagong, seems to me in every respect an admirable one."²

Besides these official recommendations, there were some other considerations. First, the Chittagong division was backward in collegiate education. It possessed no first grade college of its own, although it had some 34 high schools. These schools passed out 98 students in 1906, 186 in 1907 and 217 in 1908 at the entrance examinations. Those who desired higher education had to seek admission in

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1. The Chittagong college was originally opened in 1836 by the government as a zila school but in 1869 it was raised to the status of a second grade college. O'Malley, L.S.S., Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers, Chittagong, p.169.
 2. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India. Home Department, Shillong, 27 August 1908, No.2142 E.: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings 1909.

colleges outside their district, which only very few could afford. Second, after the partition the town of Chittagong was every day increasing in commercial importance. And as such it was attracting an increasing number of persons of all varieties from all parts of the province and Bengal. The college inspection commission of the university visited the Chittagong College in September 1906 and noted: "Having regard to the large number of Government and Railway officers now stationed at Chittagong, there can be little doubt that there should be a college teaching the full course for the degrees of the University."¹ Third, Chittagong had some facilities for intercommunications. With the exception of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, all the districts in the division were connected with it by railways. Chittagong could also be reached by boats and carts and thus occupied an easily accessible part of the division. Fourth, the demand for collegiate education was growing in Chittagong. When J.B. Fuller visited Chittagong in December 1905, its Muslim and Buddhist inhabitants raised, among other things, the question of improving the college.² A second

1. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Shillong, 27 August 1908, No.2142 E.: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings 1909.

2. Ibid.

popular representation was made to this effect when Sir Lancelot Hare visited Chittagong in December 1906.¹ They pointed out the increasing eagerness of the local students to obtain higher education and said that they were greater in number in the college. This was true. The university commission of 1906 found that out of 96 students in the college, 77 belonged to the district of Chittagong.² As in the other parts of India, the demand for English education was increasing here too; ^{and} a degree college would stimulate this. The commissioner of the division, however, was sanguine of the success of a first grade college in Chittagong. He argued that as soon as a first grade college was established here, the number of students would rise from 95 in the two intermediate classes, to 200 in all the classes taken together.³ These factors were considered and the government undertook to provide the college with buildings and staff required to teach the graduate course; the college was raised to the first grade from June 1910.

1. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Shillong, 27 August 1908, No. 2142 E.: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings 1909.

2. Ibid.

3. Commissioner, Chittagong Division, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam No. 44C. 28 January 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings 1908.

Also the government decided to open the degree course in the Cotton College at Gauhati from the commencement of ^{the} 1909-1910 session. Previously Assam had had no first grade college. The need was greatly felt by the people. They argued that they were the most backward in the province in respect of education. Moreover, parents, in general, were very reluctant to send their sons outside for education. This aversion was, to a large extent, due to economics. They wanted collegiate education for their children within their division. The government came to sympathise with their cause; "We consider it very undesirable", wrote the governor-general, "that students in Assam should be compelled to leave their province in order to prosecute an advanced course of study."¹ Hence the need to open the graduate course in the college.

Besides these two, there were two other government colleges, one each at Rajshahi and Dacca. Now all government colleges were provided with facilities to teach the degree course. They underwent significant changes during the period. Their staffs had been increased and their buildings and equipment greatly improved.

1. Governor-General of India in Council to Secretary of State for India. No.142, Simla, 9 June 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1910.

The staff at the Dacca College was increased from 12 in 1906¹ to 30 in 1911,² of whom 12 had European qualifications.³ The number of teachers at the Chittagong College was raised from five in 1906⁴ to 14 in 1912,⁵ and at the Gauhati College from five to 16.⁶ While the Rajshahi College

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1906-1907, vol.I, p.31.
2. N.L. Hallwood, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.700 T. - 925. Shillong, 28 September 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
3. The Principal, Mr. Archibold was English. He was appointed permanently to the post in 1910 after the death of Browning, the permanent principal of the college; Secretary of State for India to Governor-General in Council No.157, India Office, London, 18 November 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911. A. Macdonald, M.A., B.Sc., and D.B. Meek, M.A., B.Sc., of Glasgow University taught physics, Secretary of State to Governor-General in Council No.167, (Public), India Office, London, 9 December 1910: Ibid. J.M. Bottomley, B.A. of Oxford University was a teacher in Mathematics. M.C. Seton, Assistant Secretary, Judicial and Public Department, to Secretary, Government of India No.4121. J & P. India Office, London, 2 December 1910: Ibid.
4. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol.I, p.33.
5. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.28.
6. Ibid., p.29. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, p.33. The appointment of eight teachers was sanctioned in 1910 - one was in the Indian Educational Service at Rs. 500-50-1000, four in the Provincial Educational Service at Rs.350, Rs.300 and Rs.250 and three in Subordinate Educational Service at Rs.100, Rs.75 and Rs.50 per month, respectively. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy (Finance Department) Telegram, London, 24 August 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1910.

had 8 teachers in 1906, it had 20 in 1911;¹ some of them, such as Panchanan Nyogi and Kumudini Kanta, were distinguished scholars.²

These institutions were provided with suitable buildings. Prior to the partition, the government colleges were accommodated in buildings insufficient for their needs and were incapable of receiving large numbers. The Chittagong College was "the most inadequately housed and equipped of the Government institutions."³ During our period, its old building was enlarged and made suitable for its purpose; its science building was remodelled and a new arts building constructed. The new arts building contained two class rooms which "might be taken as a model for educational buildings throughout India."⁴ A fine common

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1. N.L. Hallward, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.700T.-925, Shillong, 28 September 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. The Principal, Babu Kumudini Kanta had a first class M.A. in Physical science. Professor Panchanan Niyogi won the Premchand and Roychand scholarship in 1906. After that he published several works in chemistry in the journal of the Chemical Society, London, and in the journal of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. Kuchler, G.W., and Cunningham, J.A., "Science at Rajshahi" (10 March 1908): Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 3. Sharp, H., General Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, p.18.
 4. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.28.

room was built for students at Rajshahi.¹ Two new buildings were constructed for the Cotton College which, formerly, had only one building. The Dacca College which was "the premier college"² in Eastern Bengal and Assam, was provided with a group of "architecturally harmonious buildings, nobly planned and executed".³ The group consisted of laboratories, hostels for 200 students, quarters for professors, a library building and a hall. The hall, named Curzon Hall, was capable of accommodating 3,000 persons.⁴ Every effort was made to make the institution "the grandest residential college under the Calcutta University".⁵

Subjects taught in the colleges were Persian, Sanskrit, mathematics, physics, chemistry, English,

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1. It was built at a cost of Rs.14,000. It consisted of a large central room, with verandahs on all sides. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.27. The college area was extended by the addition of 8 bighas of land (purchased by the government at Rs.15,759-7-1) in 1911. R. Nathan, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.89E. Shillong, 26 June 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911.
 2. Governor-General of India in Council to Secretary of State for India No.137, Simla, 2 June 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1910.
 3. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.26.
 4. Ibid., p.27.
 5. Ibid.

philosophy, logic, economics and history. History as a subject of study in the degree class was given special importance. In view of the present political conditions, the lieutenant-governor thought it desirable to encourage students to read history. The study of history, he felt, "will tend them to take a saner view of current events and of the position of their country."¹ Honours courses were offered in most of the subjects at the Dacca and Rajshahi colleges which had greater facilities. Also M.A. classes were held at these two institutions in both arts and science subjects.²

The college libraries were improved. The necessity of good libraries was intensified by the growth of graduate study. Considerable additions were made to all libraries. While in 1906 the Cotton College had 2,000 books, Dacca 7,000 and Rajshahi 6,000, in 1911 the Cotton College

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department No.483 E. Shillong, 12 May 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1910.
 2. Extract from Minutes of the Syndicate, Calcutta University, 12 June 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, pp.27-28.

contained 3,000, Dacca over 8,000 and Rajshahi 7,000.¹
 A librarian was appointed for the first time at Rajshahi.²
 The government gave the Rajshahi College a recurring grant of Rs.1400 a year to finance its library,³ where previously it could get only Rs.300.⁴ Current journals, newspapers and periodicals were subscribed to for the use of students in the common room.⁵ A study of these journals reveals that some of them like the Hindu Patrika, Bangadarsan and the Statesman contained anti-partition views while others like the Mussalman, Review of Reviews and Moslem Institute contained pro-partition views and showed the progress made or the programme of the progress to be made in the new province. Students could form independent opinions by studying different views on the creation of the new province. At Dacca college-clubs, including a literary and debating society, were started to foster collegiate life among the students. H.R. James, Principal, Presidency College,

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1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, pp.27-29. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol.1, pp.32-33.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.29.
 3. Das, B.N. and Roy, P.K., "Rajshahi College": Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.27.

Calcutta, remarked: "It has been a great pleasure to me coming back to Dacca after five years to see the wonderful transformation which has been effected in the Dacca college. ... I saw during my short visit here much pleasant evidence of healthy and harmonious college life. The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam are to be congratulated on the liberality with which they have planned and the thoroughness with which they have carried out the design for a residential college on the great scale."¹

While steady progress was, thus, being made in government colleges, the needs of private colleges were not lost sight of.² Private colleges played a very important part in the educational system of this province by giving instruction to a number of students nearly equal to the number of students reading in government institutions.³ As stated, there were 7 private colleges in the province. After the partition, the government of India made a grant of Rs.105,000 for the improvement of collegiate education

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1. Quoted in Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I.
 2. Private colleges were non-government institutions managed by private efforts.
 3. R. Nathan, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of India, No.132E. Dacca, 7 February 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911.

in the new province.¹ No part of this grant was to be devoted to the improvement of government colleges. It was to "assist in the improvement of the efficiency" of private colleges in those respects in which an inspection by an appropriate authority showed them to be defective.² Accordingly, Dr. Purnananda Chatterjee, Inspector of schools, was deputed in 1906 to visit each of the seven private colleges, ^{to} ascertain their wants and wishes, and, if grants were desired, to see how ~~it~~ ^{these} could most usefully be spent.³ Dr. Chatterjee's findings revealed that the financial basis of all colleges was weak.⁴ Their accommodation, with very few exceptions, was extremely insufficient. All of them needed economic assistance and encouragement. In fact, three colleges, the Murarichand,⁵ Braja Mohan and Tangail,⁶ did

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1. The distribution of money was as follows: 1905-1906 = 45,000; 1906-1907 = 20,000; 1907-1908 = 20,000; 1908-1909 = 20,000. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.203, Shillong, 4 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. H.H. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.757, Calcutta, 6 December 1905: Ibid.
 3. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.221T. Camp. 22 December 1906: Ibid.
 4. Dr. Chatterjee to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1, Dacca, 5 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 5. The Murarichand College was originally a high school; it was raised to the status of a college in 1892; its founder was Mururichand Roy, an inhabitant of the district. Ibid.
 6. The Tangail College was founded in 1900 by a local Hindu zamindar. Ibid.

not share the grant. But why? The Murarichand College, which served the whole of the Surma Valley, received no assistance from the government until 1906. It was maintained by its own income plus an annual grant of Rs.6000 from Girish Roy, a zamindar of Sylhet. It was very inadequately housed. The college was offered the choice of a government grant or of being taken over by the government. The people of the Surma Valley appreciated the establishment of a government college, preferring to subscribe to it, rather than to an aided one. Their actions proved this. The government proposed in 1906 a grant of Rs. 50,000 for buildings and hostel accommodation for the college.¹ At once the news spread that the college was going to be taken over by the government. This encouraged the people of Sylhet to contribute a sum of Rs.1,276 in 1906 to the college fund.² The people of Silchar raised for the college an amount of Rs.218 at a meeting held on 21 April 1906.³ The popular willingness plus the economic insolvency of the college convinced the proprietor that he should hand over the college to the government under certain

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.8C: Shillong 13 January 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. J.C. Arbuthnot to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.129T., Camp, Sylhet, 25 February 1906: Ibid.
 3. F.C. French, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar to Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, No.530, Silchar, 3 May 1906: Ibid.

conditions.¹ These conditions, the director of public instruction thought, might be accepted.² The government, therefore, started making preparations to take over the college from 1911. So, in principle, the Murarichand College could not share the special imperial allotment, although, throughout the period, the college was shown in the list of private colleges.

The case was wholly different with two other colleges, the Braja Mohan and Tangail. They rejected the offer outright.

Of all private colleges, the first, in order of importance, and the only first grade college among them, was the Braja Mohan College. Its proprietor, Aswami Kumar Dutt, declined to accept the government's help on the ground that the college was able to "stand on its own legs".³ The underlying motive behind the refusal of the government's

1. The main condition was that the name of the college should remain as it was, that is Murarichand College. Principal, Murarichand College, Sylhet, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.260, 13 February 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
2. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.203, Shillong, 4 April 1907: Ibid.
3. Dr. Chatterjee, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1, Dacca, 5 March 1907: Ibid.

aid seemed not to allow the government to influence the administration of the college. At that time, many college-students, encouraged by the college-authority, were taking part in the anti-partition agitation at Barisal. The proprietor, who himself opposed the partition, did not want to see the agitation controlled and checked by the government.

Similar was the case with the college at Tangail in Mymensingh. The proprietor, Babu Santosh, a local zamindar, disliked the idea of receiving any aid from the government and suspected some political motives behind the help. Moreover, Dr. Chatterjee found no need for a college at Tangail. A few boys, he wrote, who were attending the college, were attracted chiefly by free-studentships they enjoyed. In fact, the college was almost a free college. Again, the town was an extremely inaccessible one, and there was very little chance of boys coming over here from other parts of the country.¹ Therefore, the college was amalgamated with the Mymensingh College in 1908.

Then there remained the Dacca Jagannath,² Comilla

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1. Dr. Chatterjee to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1, Dacca, 5 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. The Jagannath college was originally a high school but raised to the status of a second grade college in 1884; its proprietor was Kisarilal Roy. Ibid.

Victoria,¹ Mymensingh City² and Pabna colleges.³ All of these four colleges applied for grants.⁴ The Jagannath College was needy; it had no substantial subscription; it had to depend on the fees of students. An enquiry showed that there was always an excess of expenditure over fee receipts, say, Rs.2,300 a year.⁵ Its accommodation was very poor. All this went to explain why the proprietor wanted immediate help from the government.⁶ The financial condition of the Comilla College was distinctly bad. Expenditure exceeded income by some Rs.270 per month. The Pabna institution presented no better picture. Keeping these needs and requirements in view, the director of public instruction framed a scheme to allot the special grant to four colleges. The syndicate of the Calcutta University accepted the

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1. The Camilla Victoria College was founded in 1899 by Anandachandra Roy, a local zamindar. Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. The City college was established in 1901 at the instance of Ananda Mohan Bose, Ibid.
 3. The Pabna college was founded in 1898 by a local man Gopal Chandra Lahiti; it was originally a school. Ibid.
 4. Sharp, H., General Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908, p.18.
 5. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.203, Shillong, 4 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 6. Dr. Chatterjee to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1, Dacca, 5 March 1907: Ibid.

scheme¹ and the government approved of it.² According to the scheme, the Jagannath College was to get Rs.27,000, Mymensingh Rs.23,000, Comilla Rs.30,000 and Pabna 25,000. In turn, they had to fulfil certain conditions.

Two conditions were common to all colleges. First, each college had to appoint a Moulvi (a Muslim teacher to teach Arabic and Persian or Urdu) on Rs.75 a month at least. Second, every college had to reserve for Muslim students one third of the hostels to be constructed. This was because, in the past, the lieutenant-governor thought, the lack of hostel accommodation for Muslim students, had been largely responsible for their failure to get higher education.³ The whole arrangement seemed to indicate that the government had become much more conscious of the backwardness of the Muslim community in collegiate education in the province, and was trying to encourage Muslim students to get education at colleges which were receiving aid from the government. Again, since the colleges were run by the Hindu proprietors,

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1. G. Thibaut, Registrar, Calcutta University, to Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.2732, Calcutta, 29 May 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.7063 C, Shillong, 12 June 1907: Ibid.
 3. The Pioneer, Saturday, 1 December 1906, p.6.

the government might have thought it necessary to reserve some seats for Muslim students.

It may, however, be mentioned here that the proprietor of the Murarichand College, which did not share the imperial grants because of its prospect of being taken over by the government, sought aid from the local government. The government thought that internal peace could best be brought in the country by satisfying the educational aspirations of its people. A special grant of Rs. 3000 in each of the years 1907-1908 and 1908-1909 was given to the college for the purchase of apparatus, furniture and books.¹ In the latter year the college obtained a recurring grant of Rs. 500 per month to meet the general cost of maintenance.² This relieved the college of its most financial difficulties but much more money was required to improve the quality of the college.³ The government, therefore, raised the recurring

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No. 340 E.T. Camp, 30 January 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 1220E. 27 May 1908: Ibid.
 3. Colin Browning, Officiating Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 316-2421, Shillong, 6 May 1909: Ibid.

grant from Rs. 500 per month to Rs.800.¹

Thus aided and encouraged by the government at the start, the private colleges kept on improving. Their staffs were reorganised and their buildings, libraries and laboratories improved. While in 1906 the Mymensingh College had a staff of 3 members, in 1911 it had 9 professors and a laboratory assistant; one of them was a D.Sc. of Edinburgh.²

The number of teachers at the Jagannath College was raised from 7 in 1906 to 17 in 1911; one of them was a graduate from the Cornell University.³

The college buildings were extended. To give the Murarichand College a fairly spacious area, new plots of

1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1382E. Shillong, 21 May 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.

2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.33; Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1906-1907, vol.I, p.35.

3. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.31. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol.I, p.34.

The staff at the Murarichand college was strengthened. In 1909, Radha Gobinda was appointed principal and professor of chemistry on Rs.200 per mensem and Surendralal Kunda professor of logic on Rs.150. Colin Browning, Officiating Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.316-2421, Shillong, 6 May 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909. The staffs were raised from 3 in 1907 to 6 in 1911 and at the Comilla college from 3 to 5.

land were purchased at Rs.11,867.¹ The Mymensingh College was removed from "a too constricted site" to a more suitable site;² large buildings were constructed on a plot of 26 bighas of land³ at a cost of Rs.79,000;⁴ houses for the principal and professors and hostels for Hindu and Muslim students were built. At the time of partition, the Jagannath College was held in a dilapidated tin-roofed bungalow divided into class rooms by means of mat partitions. During this period, a spacious building was constructed for the college on a site of 7 bighas of land.⁵ The opening of the degree course in the college in 1908 brought the number of first grade colleges at Dacca to two; it was necessary

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1. Colin Browning, Officiating Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, M.D. No.445 C., Shillong, 5 July 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909. In 1910, the people of Pabna contributed Rs.25,000 and seven bighas of land worth Rs.700 to the construction of buildings for the college. Dunlop, District Magistrate of Pabna, to Registrar, Calcutta University, Pabna, 11 October 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911. 25
 2. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.382, Shillong, 2 June 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 3. R.Nathan, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1386E, Shillong, 23 November 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911.
 4. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.32.
 5. Ibid., p.30.

there because, of 218 entrance schools in the province, the Dacca division alone contained 110.¹

Some of the private colleges taught both arts and science subjects.² The Calcutta University permitted the Mururichand College in 1909 to teach chemistry and logic in the intermediate class.³ The Mymensingh College was permitted in 1908 to teach, in addition to vernacular subjects, English, history, logic and mathematics;⁴ previously it taught mostly vernacular subjects.

1. Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.278E. Shillong, 11 November 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909. A leisure room was built for the students of the Jagannath College. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.31.
2. The Comilla and Pabna colleges taught arts subjects only. H. Sharp, General Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-1906, p.15. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, pp.31-32.
3. G.B.H. Fell, Deputy Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, to Registrar, Calcutta University, No.201, Calcutta, 12 March 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
4. G. Thibant, Registrar, Calcutta University, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department (through the Rector), No.511, Calcutta, 25 July 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.

The college libraries and laboratories were greatly improved; whereas in 1906 the Jagannath College library had 800 books, in 1911 it contained 2,500.¹ A chemical laboratory, in which 50 students could work simultaneously, was built at Mymensingh. It was described by the principal as "one of the best we have got in the province".² A plant was set up at the Jagannath College for the manufacture of oil-gas.³ Magazines were started at many colleges -- such as Mymensingh -- and the innovation was much appreciated.

The change was even more marked at the Jagannath College. It is contended that "no private college in Bengal has been more completely transformed, morally and materially by the liberal policy of the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam ... than the Jagannath college."⁴

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1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911 to 1912, vol.1, pp.30-32. Formerly students were required to deposit Rs.5 for the privilege of borrowing books from the library of the Jagannath college. This restriction was abolished; now students could read books in the library and could borrow them for use at home, free of charge; Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol.1, p.34; Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.30.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. 1, p.33.
 3. Ibid., p.30. The government gave the college a monthly grant of Rs.100 to maintain the laboratory.
 4. Ibid.

The popularity of improved collegiate education, however, was evinced by a rise in the number of students. Students in the arts colleges increased from 1,197 in 1906-1907 to 2,989 in 1911-1912.¹

To sum up, the province was provided with liberal facilities for collegiate education. Government colleges were established in each of the five divisions. Each division was provided with facilities for collegiate education. Now no parent needed to send his son outside for higher education. Government colleges underwent a reform; their staff was strengthened and buildings improved. Of private colleges, the Mururichand College was to be taken over by the government from 1911. The Jagannath College was raised to the first grade. And the Braja Mohan College received a recurring

1. Progress of Education in India, 1907-1912, vol.II: P.P. 1914, vol.62, Cd. 7486, p.224.

grant from the government.¹

Secondary Education

The improvement made in the collegiate education would have failed to produce results without a proportionate expansion of secondary education. We may, therefore, turn to examine the growth of secondary education during our period.

The term "Secondary Education" is used here to mean a course of study lying in between primary and collegiate education. The course was imparted through institutions called secondary schools. There were two types of secondary schools in the province — high and middle. The latter might again be English or Vernacular. Middle schools gave instruction for four years beyond the lower primary course. High schools added another four years of instruction. Some of these schools were run and aided by the government, and some were managed and financed by the district boards and local enterprises. For instance, there were in 1906, 125 government and 186 private high schools, and 350 aided and

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. I, p. 30. The college received Rs. 80,000 capital and Rs. 1200 [?] a month recurring.

138 unaided middle English schools in the province.¹ Almost all these schools were in a poor condition. The teachers of government high schools had "regrettably low" qualifications.² Not more than 20 per cent of the teachers of English were B.A.s and nearly four per cent of them were M.A.s. Very few, indeed, were trained.³ H. Luson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division, was one of the few officials to first realise that the high schools needed a great deal of improvement.

The position of private high schools was worse.

"From a number of these schools", H. Luson wrote, "I have received applications for help to save them from extinction."⁵ R. Nathan, Officiating Commissioner, Dacca Division, spoke in the strongest terms of the low and inadequate standard of private high schools in that division. The majority of them, he contended, subsisted almost entirely on their fees.

1. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India. No.1137E, Shillong, 18 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, pp.38-43.
2. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.140, Shillong, 12 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
3. Ibid.
4. H. Luson to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.31, Chittagong, 3 September 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
5. Ibid.

The total aid derived from subscriptions and endowments was "infinitesimal". School buildings were unsuitable, equipment insufficient and surroundings sordid. "... The qualifications of the teachers", he continued, "are poor and they are themselves wretched and discontented. They turn out ill taught, ill mannered and discontented boys, many of whom, under the influence of pernicious lathi-playing and other similar associations, tend to become idle and mischievous 'hooligans'."¹ What was true in Dacca was true in the province as a whole. Two-thirds of all private high schools in the province received no aid from public funds. Endowments were rare and subscriptions small and uncertain. The average expenditure on a private high school in the province amounted to Rs.304 a month whereas it was Rs.711 in Madras, Rs.802 in the United Provinces and Rs.939 in Bombay.² This was not all. The most lamentable aspect of

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1. Nathan, R., "Note on Secondary Education, 19 October 1907": Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.1137E. 18 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

private high schools was the lack of qualified teachers. Almost half of the teachers of English had not even passed the intermediate examination.¹ Many pandits and moulvis had no recognised qualifications, and the great majority of them were without a knowledge of English.² Most of the graduate teachers were of average merit and even so were not contented with their profession. They left the school as soon as they found a better paid employment.³

Similarly, all middle schools financed by the government or private bodies were in a poor state. Their growth so far had been unplanned, unsystematic and ill-managed; they were incapable of affording a sound education.⁴ But why? The government of the new province, not being so far removed from the scene as the government of the undivided Bengal, was in a better position to diagonalise the causes of the poor condition of secondary education.

Absence of proper control and management,⁵ frequent

1. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, No.1137E. 18 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.273, Shillong, 25 April 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

5. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.273, Shillong, 25 April 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

changes in the staff, the prevalence of cramming and faulty methods of instruction,¹ and inadequate appliances² contributed very effectively to the inefficiency of private schools. Besides, the dearth of qualified teachers was a common feature. But the crux of the whole thing appeared to be the inadequate salary of teachers. Teachers in the government educational service were the most ill paid of public servants. "It is a matter to be regretted", said J.C. Arbuthnott, Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, "that the emoluments attached to the appointments in the educational service attract only the graduates of the average merit."³ The graduates, he continued, who could secure appointments in the provincial executive service, or in the subordinate judicial branch of the public service, began with a pay of Rs.200 a month rising to Rs.800 or Rs. 1000, and so these two services ordinarily attracted the "trancendentals" among the university graduates. Experience

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1. Officiating Inspector of Schools, Rajshahi Division, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.729, Jalpaignii, 22 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Officiating Inspector of Schools, Chittagong Division, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1575, Chittagong, 14 June 1907: Ibid.
 3. J.C. Arbuthnott to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1047T., Camp, Shillong, 29 June 1908: Ibid.

showed, he added, that with a very few honourable exceptions the graduates who failed to secure an appointment in the provincial executive or judicial service generally sought appointments in the educational service.¹ The headmasters of government high schools, who stood at the head of this branch of profession, could not rise above Rs.250 a month.² The maximum pay of a teacher of English or classical subjects varied from Rs.10 to Rs.30 a month. More than 70 per cent of high school teachers received less than Rs.30 a month.³ These salaries were inadequate.

The secondary education was, thus, beset with many defects. All these could not be remedied in a short time. The government gradually brought about certain reforms and tried to solve some of the most important problems. To remove the practice of cramming, the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, revised the existing

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1. J.C. Arbuthnott to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1047T., Camp. Shillong, 29 June 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Government of India, Home Department, No.1137E., Shillong, 18 May 1908: Ibid.
 3. Ibid.

curriculum. The new one depended rather on conversational methods than on the use of books. Object-lessons and drawing found a prominent place in it. The main features of the new curriculum were:

"that the book work of pupils has been reduced to a minimum by providing for oral teaching in some of the subjects, such as History and Geography:

"that object lessons find a prominent place in the curriculum, and

"that the conversational method of teaching English has been preferred as being the only known method of imparting a working knowledge of a foreign language without undue strain on the memory of the pupil."¹

Then to improve the method of instruction, the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, proposed to establish certain institutions for the purpose of training school teachers.² The scheme evinced popular support. F.C. Hennikar, Officiating Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, argued that the importance of training teachers

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.50.
2. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.140, Shillong 12 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

for secondary schools was probably greater than that of training teachers for primary schools.¹ This was because the success of university education depended almost entirely upon the efficiency of secondary schools.² The deputy commissioner of Cachar contended that the proposal to establish institutions for training the teachers of secondary schools was really excellent, for it paved the way for the rapid spread of higher education in the province.³

Prior to the partition, there was, however, no institution either in Eastern Bengal or in Assam for the purpose of training the teachers of English. After the partition, the government established a college in the new province for that purpose and made liberal grants for the smooth working of the institution.⁴ An amount of Rs.31,736 was spent for it in 1910 and Rs.44,523 in 1911.⁵ On 11 January 1912, it was stated that an additional amount of Rs.17,300 was to be spent on the institution during the

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1. Note by F.C. Henniker [undated]: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. B.B. Sen, Officiating Inspector of Schools, Rajshahi Division, to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, No.2730, Jalpaiguri, 4 July 1907: Ibid.
 3. Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, to Commissioner, Surma Valley & Hill Districts, No.1633, Silchar, 9 July 1907: Ibid.
 4. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.720.
 5. Ibid.

current year.¹ The institution was well equipped with furniture and apparatus, and had a library of 1,670 volumes and newspapers and periodicals were supplied in the students' leisure room. It offered a two year course for the Licentiate in teaching and one year for the Bachelor of teaching.² The staff consisted of the principal and a vice-principal, two professors and two lecturers, a drill master and a drawing master. Teachers were taking keen interest in the training. At the end of 1911, there were 37 students. Of them, 6 were teachers in private schools and the rest in government schools. Seventeen students were taking B.T. and 20 L.T. degrees. Nine students were Muslims and the other 28 Hindus.

To encourage the teachers to undertake the course of training, the government made some special arrangements. Government servants who were deputed to undergo training in this college received at first only three-quarters of their pay. But after August 1911, they were permitted to draw full pay. Stipends of Rs.15 and Rs.20 per month were

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1. Replies to Questions of Honourable Rai Ananga Mohan Nata Bahadar at the Council Meeting, 11 January 1912: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Henceforth we may use L.T. for Licentiate in teaching and B.T. for Bachelor of teaching.

granted to teachers coming from private schools.¹ The success of the college was appreciable: ten candidates appeared in 1910 at the B.T. examination of the Calcutta University and all of them passed; out of 29 students in 1911, 15 passed the B.T. and ten the L.T. examinations, securing the first and the fifth places in the university in the former and the second, third and fourth places in the latter.²

Besides the teachers of English, the teachers of Vernacular subjects were also trained. They were given lessons at the training centres in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dacca, Silchar and Jarhate. During the period of their training, they were not only lodged and taught free, but were given stipends too. Teachers of government schools got half of their pay together with an allowance equal to another quarter, and teachers of aided schools got a sum not less than three-fourths of their salary.³ They did not enjoy this opportunity before; in some cases, in fact, they had to resign their posts on the eve of their start for training.

Training itself, however, was of small importance

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.72.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.73.

if the trainees were not satisfied with their service and salaries. The government, therefore, wanted to raise the status, and to revise the pay-scale, of all school teachers. It was proposed that the headmasters of all government high schools should belong to the provincial educational service and that other teachers should be in the subordinate educational service.¹ Also it was proposed to create a separate service of five grades for teachers of vernacular subjects with a minimum pay of Rs.20 and a maximum pay of Rs.50 per month.² The headmasters of government high schools would get Rs.320 a month and of private high schools Rs.100. The pay of a teacher of English would be Rs.96 a month. The headmasters of middle English schools would get Rs.96 per month and of vernacular schools Rs.40.³ This revised scale of pay involved a recurring annual expenditure of Rs.10,46,000.⁴ The increase in the pay of teachers would remove a lot of defects at a time. It would stop the frequent change in the staff and it would give incentive to teachers to work and thereby improve the quality of teaching. Towards

1. P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, Shillong, No.1137E. 18 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

the end of our period, however, rates of salaries of teachers in government secondary schools varied from Rs.10 to Rs.400 a month.¹

The government, however, established certain secondary schools, took over the management of some and offered substantial assistance to others. In Dacca, all the educational institutions, teaching up to the university standard, were situated within a specified area in the eastern portion of the town. The pupils from the western and northern parts of the town experienced a considerable difficulty in walking long distances in the midday heat or during rains to attend the school.² The government, therefore, established in 1907 a high school in the Armenitola area, in the north-western part of Dacca. In the same year, the government sanctioned a grant of Rs.14,000 for the construction of a building for the Raj Kumar Jubilee school at Noakhali, because the school was "really miserably housed".³

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1. Progress of Education in India, 1907-1912, vol.II: P.P. 1914, vol.62, Cd. 7486, p.243.
 2. B.N.N. Chattopadhyya and others to H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Dacca, 11 March 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 3. Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.7723 C Shillong, 29 June 1907: Ibid.

"It is not right", remarked J.B. Fuller, Lieutenant-Governor, "that high school boys should be crowded together in dark little sheds."¹ Soon afterwards - in 1908 - the government took over the management and maintenance of the aided middle English school at Cox's Bazar in Chittagong.² For this there were several reasons: first, the whole subdivision of Cox's Bazar was inhabited by the backward Muslims and Maghs,³ who needed encouragement and help from the government for the improvement of their condition; Second, it was the only school which was above the primary grade in this subdivision;⁴ and, third, the school was inefficient and ill-managed.⁵ H. Luson, Commissioner, Surma Valley, who visited the school on 30 December 1906, was badly impressed by the state of affairs there. The headmaster, he wrote, had neglected his duties to the school. He had evidently been making his appointment there a

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1. Remarks recorded by the Lieutenant-Governor J.B. Fuller during his visit of the school, 12 January 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. R. Nathan, Special Officer, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.289E., Shillong, 4 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 3. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1041, Shillong, 27 November 1907: Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

stepping stone for joining the bar, and had devoted his time mainly to his legal studies. The boys in the first class which was in his immediate charge "fared very badly" at the last examination, and in the other classes the progress in English, which was the subject taught by the headmaster, was very unsatisfactory.¹ Necessity, therefore, demanded the direct intervention of the government for bettering the condition of the school. The local people came forward to assist the school, for their faith in management by the government was firmer than their faith in that of local proprietors. They raised a subscription of Rs.1,870 and promised a further sum of Rs.3,725.²

The government, however, granted many non-recurring allotments to secondary schools of the province to improve their economic condition. For instance, in 1911 a non-recurring grant of Rs.150,500 was to be spent for secondary education.³ As a rule, the government

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1. Inspection Remarks of H. Luson [?]: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1041, Shillong, 27 November 1907: Ibid.
 3. Government of India, E.D. to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam; Telegram, No.7, 13 January 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911.

assisted those private schools which fulfilled certain conditions. A private school, for example, to get aid must give instruction in drawing and gymnastics (for boys only) and employ trained teachers. The amount of aid did not ordinarily exceed double the sum subscribed locally. Sometimes these principles were not strictly adhered to when the people of a particular locality were not in a position to value education or to pay much towards its development. The system of grants-in-aid was intended to encourage the local people to take an interest in education and to foster a spirit of initiative and co-operation for local ends.¹

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1. It may be mentioned here that the system of sanctioning grants-in-aid in Eastern Bengal differed in some respects from that in West Bengal. The difference came into being during this period. In the new province the divisional inspector of schools could renew and sanction grants, whereas in West Bengal he could not do so. [He could sanction grants of not more than Rs.50 a month. For larger amounts, he had to recommend the case for consideration to the director of public instruction. The result was that the schools which were recommended by the divisional inspector for getting substantial aids might not receive their money in due time, because of some unavoidable delays involved in the correspondence between the divisional inspector and the director of public instruction who usually remained at the capital city]. No money limit was fixed to his power. The result was that the schools could get their aids promptly avoiding delays involved in the correspondence between the divisional inspector and the director, Progress of Education in India 1907-1912 vol.I: P.P. 1914, vol.62, Cd.7485, pp.112-113. Also Review of Progress of Education in India 1897 to 1901, vol.I: P.P. 1904, vol.65, Cd. 2181, p.4.

The grants, however, were used in providing the schools with good accommodation and proper appliances such as blackboards and maps. The extension of more grants to schools simultaneously served two important purposes: it strengthened their financial stability on the one hand, and on the other hand, it allowed the education department to exercise its proper control on them.

These reforms contributed to the improvement of secondary education. Secondary schools were developed; the aided schools, observed the inspector of the Chittagong division, received more substantial assistance than formerly. "The departmental control over them has increased, in consequence, the prospects and qualifications of the teachers have been bettered, and a decided advance has been made in the mode of instruction and the tone of discipline."¹ Middle English schools increased from 488 in 1906 to 738 in 1911 and their students from 41,973 to 88,219.² The number of high schools went up from 211 in 1906 to 224 in 1911,³ indicating the growing popularity of secondary education in the province. All the divisions of the province

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.43.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol.I, p.38.

shared this increase. Schools increased in the Dacca division by 8.4 per cent and pupils by 52 per cent in the Rajshahi division by 2.2 and 63.4 and in the Chittagong division by 6.2 and 83.4. In the Surma Valley and Assam divisions, although the number of schools remained unchanged, students increased in the former by 32.8 per cent and in the latter by 56.7 per cent.¹

Also government high schools made considerable progress during this period. Their number increased by 20 per cent from 25 in 1906 to 30 in 1911 and their students by more than 63 per cent.² It can be seen from this that the number of students was rising faster than schools. The number of students in secondary English schools in the province increased during 1907-1911 by 82.9 per cent.³ This was, to a great extent, due to the reforms introduced and the facilities extended for secondary education. Moreover, as in other parts of India, there was a growing demand for

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.73.

2. Ibid., p.41.

3. Progress of Education in India, 1907-1912, vol.I: P.P. 1914, vol.62, Cd. 7485, p.75.

English education among Muslims in the province. Muslims were becoming very conscious of their backwardness in English education. Many leading Muslims of the province awarded prizes and medals to Muslim students to encourage them to learn English. For example, Abdus Sobahan, Deputy Magistrate, Mymensingh, gave two silver medals to the best two students who passed higher and junior standard examinations of Madrasa, with the highest qualification in English.¹ Muslim students in high schools rose from 8,869 in 1906 to 20,729 in 1911 and in middle English schools from 14,100 to 38,702.²

Primary Education

The development of secondary education was preceded by the development of primary education in the new province. The course of primary instruction was divided into two stages, upper and lower. The former contained two classes and the latter five; the course in each class occupied, in general, one year. The course of instruction in a primary

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1. Memo by Under Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, E. No. 4977C, Shillong, 19 April 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, General Table III, p.150.

school attempted to teach the child how to read and write his own language and how to do easy sums. The condition of education in primary schools was far from satisfactory in the pre-partition days. Little attention was paid to the teaching: students could neither write nor read properly; the deputy commissioner of Garo Hills, while visiting a school at Dilma in 1905, remarked that three students in the third class read badly and knew no arithmetic or writing. The position, he observed, was worse in the Bamongiri School where two out of three students failed to "do correctly a simple sum in addition."¹ The pay of teachers was totally insufficient, with a monthly salary of Rs.5. To quote the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, "the post of teachers in a primary school is the resort of the destitute or is regarded as a stop-gap by aspirants after better things."² As for the teachers' qualifications, the great bulk of them were uncertificated

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1. Captain Playfair to Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Assam, No.60. G. Tiera, 29 April 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.
 2. H. Sharp, Director, Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam No.638, Shillong, 13 September 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

and had no special aptitude for teaching.¹ Nor did they conform to a desirable standard in discipline and assiduity.² The housing of primary schools was wretched. Very few of them had houses of their own. The district magistrate of Noakhali wrote that most of the primary school buildings in the district were the property of the head teachers who maintained the schools merely as a means of livelihood.³ During his tour of inspection, Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was much struck with the miserable character of mud-walled buildings and thatched houses of primary schools in the province. Rooms were cramped and dark, ill-ventilated and cheerless. Little boys were often crowded into verandahs opening on to the village street, exposed to the gaze of passers-by, to the dust from the road, and to the exhalations from the neighbouring drain. During the monsoons, the condition became more precarious.

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1. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.638, Shillong, 13 September 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. L.J. Kershaw, Officiating Secretary, to Chief Commissioner, Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Assam, No. 4684G., Shillong, 8 June 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.
 3. B.C. Sen to Commissioner, Chittagong Division, No.130, Camp Hatiya, 22 June 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

The verandahs were enclosed for the purpose of protection from the wind and rain, and they became dark and foetid. Bad sight and physical diseases of many young students were due in part to the wretched buildings in which they were educated.¹

Against this background, the government began to work towards improving the condition of primary education in the province. But the great obstacle on the way was the prevalence of two different systems of primary education in two parts of the province. In Eastern Bengal primary schools were under private management while in Assam they were controlled by the district boards. Of the two systems, one had sprung up in the thickly populated districts of Eastern Bengal, while the other had been evolved for the scattered and highly heterogeneous races of Assam. To quote the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, "The former is a largely spontaneous growth, decentralised, lightly controlled -- indeed by reason of the proportions it has attained, almost beyond control. The other is the result of a scheme devised for a small and

1. A. Earle, Secretary, Government of Bengal, G.D. to all Commissioners of Divisions, Circular No.2, Calcutta, 4 January 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

backward province, controlled by the state or by local Boards."¹ The government wanted to introduce a uniform system throughout the province. To achieve this end, it established a number of "1st class" primary schools in Eastern Bengal. As in Assam, these schools were to be owned and managed by the district boards. Out of the imperial grant of Rs.333,000, the government allotted in 1906 Rs. 150,930 to the district boards in Eastern Bengal for doing this work.² The committees of management were established. Such committees were to have no legal status as regards the school property, but would have a number of other duties. First, they should arrange and execute repairs to the building. Second, they should consider the fee rates in individual cases, and bring them to the notice of the sub-inspectors. Third, they should supervise the work of teachers. Fourth, they should determine what should be the working hours of the school. Fifth, they should grant casual

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1. Sharp, H., Report on Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-1906, p.3.
 2. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.9238C. Shillong, 10 August 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908. Also Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.2388, Calcutta, 27 February 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

leave to teachers up to a maximum of three days at a time and ten days in each period of twelve months.¹

When the scheme of establishing board primary schools in Eastern Bengal was, thus, put into operation, the government concentrated on the improvement of school houses. Large sums were placed at the disposal of the district boards for constructing a number of school buildings in every division of Eastern Bengal. In Dacca, for example, the boards spent Rs.398,400 and erected 557 school houses; in Chittagong they built 277 at a cost of Rs.212,654 and in Rajshahi they incurred an expenditure of Rs.290,826 for 541 buildings.² There were in 1911, 4,002 board schools in the province. The improvement was, therefore, very considerable.

This improvement was all round. In the matter of accommodation, the new buildings were superior to the old ones, being built on a standard plan which varied from district to district according to local needs. In the Dacca division they consisted of two rooms, measuring 25' x 15' and 15' x 15' or a little more, with a 5' verandah in front.

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1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.58.
 2. Ibid., p.63.

They had corrugated iron roofs resting on wooden posts or iron joists, walls of split bamboo, wooden doors and kutchha plinths (uncemented). Their cost varied from Rs.531 to Rs.1,000.¹ In the Rajshahi division the board schools were similarly constructed but the cost varied from Rs.450 to Rs.600. In the Chittagong division the usual size was 30' x 20'.² There was always a small compound attached to each school, in which a small garden was usually laid out.

In Assam, as in Eastern Bengal, the local boards built a number of school buildings for which a standard plan was followed. The area of a school designed to accommodate 30 boys was 18' x 12', for 50 boys 25' x 15', and for 75 to 100 boys 32' x 15'. In some districts the walls were of split bamboos, and in others they were of plastered ekra (a kind of bamboo like plant). Schools were provided with a good earthen plinth well above the flood level. In Assam Valley the boards erected 128 buildings at a cost of Rs. 67,409, and in Surma Valley 155 at Rs. 52,136.³

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1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.63.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., p.64.

The training of teachers was the next problem to be tackled. In 1906 there were in Eastern Bengal 115 classes and schools for the purpose of training teachers of primary schools. The number of men which they produced was quite insufficient to staff the existing primary schools.¹ In Assam, there were formerly certain guru training classes which were abolished prior to our period and the system of apprenticeship was substituted for them.²

Arrangements, however, were made on three fronts for the training of teachers of primary schools. First, the curriculum of the existing training schools was revised, for it subordinated the art and method of teaching to the subjects on science.³ The new curriculum cut out algebra and Euclid in order to introduce a paper on the method of teaching. Blackboard writing formed a part of the practical examinations. Each student was required to construct a

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1. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.638, Shillong, 13 September 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. The apprentice system consisted in placing of candidates for employ at selected vernacular middle schools where they could pursue their ordinary studies and also could obtain a certain amount of instruction in method and practical experience.
 3. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.584C, Shillong, 14 June 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

raised map of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the first year class.¹

Second, some training schools were established and the old ones extended. For example, in 1906 two normal schools were established at Silchar and Jorhat.² Normal schools trained those who passed the middle vernacular standard as assistant vernacular teachers in secondary schools and as headmasters of upper primary schools. Babu Aghar Nath Adhikari, Headmaster, Noakhali Zilla school, and Kamala Kanta Sarma, Sub-inspector of schools, North Gouhati, were appointed superintendents of Silchar and Jorhat schools, respectively. Another government institution was opened at Tura for the training of village school masters.³ The training school at Chittagong was extended; the government sanctioned Rs.4,520 in 1907 for the construction of new

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.584C, Shillong, 14 June 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906. Also H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.357, Shillong, 1 June 1906: Ibid.
 2. Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.5335C. Shillong, 29 May 1906: Ibid.
 3. Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.5584C, Shillong, 7 June 1906: Ibid.

buildings there.¹

Third, the government made provision for some new scholarships and raised the value of the existing ones to stimulate the training of teachers. There was great difficulty in procuring teachers for Mech schools in Dhubri. The Meches² were reluctant to attend a school staffed by either Hindu or Muslim teachers.³ So for the training of Meches as lower primary teachers, the government sanctioned the creation of six special scholarships of five rupees per month ; the scholarships were tenable for two years at the Bijan, Atergaon and Putimery middle vernacular schools.⁴ The value of stipends of teachers who were undergoing training in the existing institutions was raised from five

1. Assistant Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, M.D., to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1061 M., Shillong, 20 May 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
2. Mech is the name of an Animistic tribe. Census Report of India, 1911, vol.III, Assam Part I.
3. Chairman, Local Board, Dhubri, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1224, 24 January 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
4. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.7566C. Shillong, 25 June 1907: Ibid.

to seven rupees per month,¹ because the director of public instruction thought that the former amount was insufficient for the purpose.² The government sanctioned 185 such new stipends.³

The next question to attract the attention of the government, however, was the raising of the pay of teachers. Though the government could not afford as great an increase as was really needed, some improvement was made in this field. In Eastern Bengal a teacher in a board school, if trained, had a fixed income of Rs.7. If there were fifty pupils under him, he secured additional monthly fees of Rs. 6. If, however, the teacher was untrained, his guaranteed salary was Rs.5. Thus, now, a teacher got Rs.11 or Rs.13.⁴ In Assam a teacher had a fixed pay of Rs.8 and a capitation allowance of Rs.6 a month. The capitation grant was part and parcel of the pay. The rate for each boy in

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1. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.13209C., Shillong, 30 November 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam No.922, Shillong, 26 October 1907: Ibid.
 3. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.1158E., Shillong, 20 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 4. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.65.

the first, second and third classes were six, five and three annas per month, respectively. The monthly amount of capitation grant was limited to a maximum of four rupees if the numbers of boys in the three upper classes were less than 20, to five rupees if under 30, and to six rupees if over 30.¹

A new curriculum was introduced to replace the old curriculum which taxed the memory of children very much. According to the new curriculum the full primary course extended over a period of 5 years instead of 7 years, and consisted of four lower primary classes and a single upper primary class. It was designed to teach the pupils to think for themselves, to train their power of observation and to impart practical knowledge that would be of use to them in their everyday life.²

Urdu was introduced as an optional subject in primary schools. After the formation of the new province, a muslim educational conference was held at Barisal, on 19 December 1905, under the presidentship of the lieutenant-governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to discuss the position

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1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.66.
 2. Ibid., p.3.

of Muslims in the field of education.¹ The discussion may be summarised in a single sentence — was it desirable to make Urdu an optional subject in primary schools in order to encourage Muslims to give their boys a secular education? "It is a deplorable fact", wrote P.C. Lyon, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, "that the Mohammadan community of Eastern Bengal benefits very little indeed from our education."² The Hindus, he said, while treating pretty fully of their religious subjects in schools, were - at best - silent on the religious history of Muslims; so the introduction of Urdu in primary schools was thought to be worth trying.³ It would enable Muslim students to read religious books written in Mussalmani Bengali and thus it might popularise education among Muslims.⁴ This might partly account for the increase in the number of Muslim students in primary schools. Muslim students in primary schools increased from 317,699 in 1907 to 451,157 in 1912.⁵

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1. Proceedings of Muhammadan Educational Conference, 19 December 1905: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.
 2. P.C. Lyon to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 3538C, Shillong, 4 March 1906: Ibid.
 3. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.12670C. Shillong, 10 December 1906: Ibid.
 4. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam No.637, Shillong, 13 September 1906: Ibid.
 5. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.II, General Table III, p.150.

On the whole, however, primary education made some progress during the period. The curriculum was revised to suit the requirements of children. Steps were taken to facilitate and improve the training of village-school masters; their salaries were enhanced though not very considerably. Board schools were founded in Eastern Bengal; liberal grants were extended to them and new buildings built to provide them with better accommodation. No doubt, it was an advance upon the past, but less attention was paid to the buildings of aided and unaided primary schools. Further expansion was necessary to provide education to the children of the poorer classes of society. "The village schools", wrote LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, "are at present mainly used by the children of the more affluent tenants and cultivators who have arrived at the stage of desiring some teaching for their children. Further expansion must be among the poorer classes, the very small cultivators, the landless

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1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. I, p. 60. Also Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol. I, pp. 51-52.

labourers, the lowest castes, and the inhabitants of the most remote and backward localities, of whom, speaking generally, it may be said that their desire for education is as weak as their means are scanty."¹

Female Education

Some progress was made in the education of women. Female education in the provinces was in a regrettably backward condition",² and in 1906 only 2.7 per cent of the girls of school-going age were attending school.³ The majority of pupils in primary schools were not yet reading printed books.⁴ Again, the few pupils who followed the

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1. H. LeMesurier to Joint Secretary, Government of India, E.D. No.354E. 29 February 1912: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Extract from Proceedings, Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education Department, No.360E. 17 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 3. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam No.639, Shillong, 13 September 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.
 4. Resolution on the Report of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam 1905-1906, E.D. Shillong, No.897C, 29 January 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.

secondary course did not represent the general community, but were, with rare exceptions, either Brahmans or Indian Christians.¹

There were three high schools for girls in the Ceded districts, one in Dacca, one in Mymensingh and one in Chittagong. None of these was a government institution. There was not a single high school for girls in the pre-1905 Assam,² a province with 2,982,651 females.³ The condition of the three existing schools was far from satisfactory. During his visit to the Eden School in 1906, J.B. Fuller, Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, remarked, "it is miserably housed, and schooling which is associated with the dark and melancholy rooms cannot be expected to be popular ... the teaching appears to fall below the proper mark."⁴ At Chittagong, Dr. Kastagir's Girls' School presented no better picture. The standard of education was not of a high order and the departmental curriculum was

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1. Extract from Proceedings, Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education Department, No.360E. 17 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 2. Booth, W., General Report on Public Instruction in Assam, 1903-1904, p.26.
 3. Allen, B.C., General Report on Public Instruction in Assam, 1904-1905, Statistical Table I, p.20.
 4. Inspection Remarks of J.B. Fuller, 7 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

not carried out.¹ Alexander Girls' School of Mymensingh was of the same condition: it was managed by an inefficient committee and its staff was very weak.

This was the state of female education in Eastern Bengal and Assam when the new province came into being. Still the traditional obstacles to girls' education held good. The material considerations which contributed to the spread of boys' schools were inoperative in the case of girls. The system of early marriage among the Hindus and the prevalence of the purdah system among Muslims presented social difficulties to the progress of female education. The lack of trained female teachers and the absence of separate curriculum for girls were no less difficulties in the spread of girls' education.² The government of India, however, did not take up the subject of female education until 1849 when Lord Dalhousie informed the Bengal council of education that henceforth its functions were to include female education. Since then the government had been making efforts for the diffusion of female education but had not

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1. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.78, Shillong, 16 February 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Progress of Education in India, 1907-1912, vol.I: P.P. 1914, vol.62, Cd. 7485, p.211.

succeeded in overcoming the difficulties which beset the subject.¹

The government of the new province, however, wanted to do all in its power to encourage female education by affording "guidance and assistance on practical lines",² because female education formed a significant part of the broader question of the educational development in the new province. In order to appoint a committee to enquire into the problem of female education, the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, sent a number of questionnaires to some selected persons like Nawab Salimalla and Nawab Ali Choudhury who were known to be interested in the subject. Some of the important questions were:

"whether it is possible to open with success girls' schools in large towns, providing in some part conveyance and female servants for bringing the girls to the schools?

"whether it will assist the cause of female education to secure widows to be educated and trained?

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1. Review of Progress of Education in India, 1897-98 - 1901-1902: P.P. 1904, vol.65, Cd. 2181, p.298.
 2. Extract from Proceedings of the Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, E.D. No.360-E., 17 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.

"How far can the co-operation of ladies be secured and in what way?"¹

Answers which were received to these questions revealed that the time had come when the government should make an organised effort to spread female education. Nawab Salimolla wrote that he would welcome the opportunity of being helpful to the spread of female education in the province. Rai Dulal Chandra Dev, a Hindu zamindar, assured the government of the co-operation of women for this purpose. Consequently, a representative committee was constituted to consider and advise the government upon the whole question of female education.² The committee consisted of 17 members besides the president himself.³ The organisation

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1. LeMesurier, Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.5416 C., Shillong, 2 May 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Extract from Proceedings of Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, E.D. No.360-E. 17 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
 3. The president was R.Nathan, C.I.E., I.C.S.. Members were:
 - Commissioner, Dacca Division.
 - Nawab Salimolla.
 - The Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Rai Dulal Chandra Deb. (Assam.)
 - Nawab Ali Choudhury.
 - S.C. Mukherjee, District Magistrate, Pabna.
 - Moulvi Ahsan Ulla, Inspector of Schools, Chittagong.
 - G.Das Chakravarty, Dacca.
 - Ananda Chandra Roy.
 - Babu Jatin Mohan Sen, Chittagong.
 - Sister Frances, Catholic Convent, Dacca.
 - Miss E.L. Williamson, Baptist Zenana Mission, Dacca.
 - Miss E.M. Lloyd, Silchar Girls' Mission.
 - Mrs. P. Chatterjee.
 - Miss E. Moore, Baptist Zenana Mission, Barisal.
 - The Inspectress of Schools, (Secretary of the Committee).

was called the Female Education Committee. Henceforth the committee occupied itself in the inspection and survey of schools. It discussed and prescribed better methods for the improvement of individual institutions. It encouraged desire for studies among girls by forming ladies' committees. It introduced the zanana system of teaching among women.¹

To begin with, the committee published a new curriculum for girls in primary schools. This was different from the old one which had been designed for boys and had not included such subjects as sewing and physical exercise for girls. The new curriculum included reading, writing, geography, physical exercise and history.² The reading sheets were based on analytical methods of teaching. The advantage was that all the complicated Bengali alphabets were not to be learnt at once. Those words could be connected with pictures and things, so that they could live more in the minds of children. The writing slip, called Hater Lekha (Hand writing), was prepared by Miss Sunniti Chatterjee. This slip "can be moved up and down the page

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1. Zanana is a Persian word. It means 'concerning to female'. Here 'zanana system of teaching' is used to mean the method of imparting some education to elderly women at home.
 2. Note by Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, on Books Prescribed for Girls' Schools [? undated]: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.

or slate, so as to hide the bad writing, and place just above the child's eyes a perfect model.¹ A manual was written for teachers by Kazi Imdad ul-Huq under the direction of J.A. Taylor, Vice-Principal, Dacca Normal College.

On the recommendation of the committee, the government created more primary schools for girls in the province. Indeed, their number rose from 2,789 in 1906² to 4,956 in 1911³ and that of their pupils from 51,180 to 110,817. In the city of Dacca itself, there were 16 primary schools for girls. The number of students was 700 in 1910, as compared with a little over 500 in 1909.⁴ The increase of students was so progressive that M.E.A. Garrett, Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, remarked, "I tremble when I think that this 700 will probably rise to 1,000

1. Note by Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, on Books Prescribed for Girls' Schools [? undated]: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, vol. I, p. 84.
3. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. I, p. 97.
4. Report on Primary Girls' Schools in the City of Dacca, 1910-1911, Enclosure in S.B.A. Das, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Dacca, to Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 28 April 1911 No. 376 B-3: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.

during the coming year."¹ Not only the number of students was increasing but also the standard of teaching was improving. The teaching in the Ekrapur Lower Primary Girls' School was methodical and teachers took a great interest in their work.² From the Malitola Lower Primary Girls' School, two girls appeared at the special scholarship examinations of 1910 and one secured a scholarship. This progress was to a large extent due to the government encouragement.

Besides primary schools, the government established a number of secondary schools for girls. Their number increased from 13 in 1906 to 22 in 1911.³ Of these, four were high, five middle English and 13 middle vernacular schools. Students increased from 1,503 in 1906 to 2,480 in 1911.⁴

Of the four high schools in the province, one was

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1. Note by Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, on Books Prescribed for Girls' Schools [? undated]: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Miss S. Das, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Dacca, to Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 28 April 1911, No. 376 B-3; Ibid.
 3. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. II, Appendix Table cii, p.81.
 4. Ibid., Appendix Table cii, p.81.

at Shillong. The three government schools were the Eden female school at Dacca, the Alexander Girls' School at Mymensingh and Dr. Kastagir's Girls' School at Chittagong. All these three were taken up by the government during this period for better management.¹

The Eden female school, which was "miserably housed" before, "improved out of all knowledge".² The government sanctioned in 1906 Rs.64,550 for the construction of a new building for the school.³ In the same year training classes were opened in the school for the first time for the training of female teachers.⁴ Some stipends of Rs.15 and Rs.12 a month were awarded to candidates undergoing training in the school.

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1. The monthly cost of the Alexander Girls' School was Rs. 731-13-0 and of Dr. Kastagir's girls' school Rs.537-12-0. Report on Female Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1911, pp.27-29: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.94.
 3. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.75T., Camp. 11 November 1906. Also see H.Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.537, Shillong, 10 August 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906. A double storeyed building was constructed for the girls' school at Chittagong.
 4. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.639, Shillong, 13 September 1906. Also Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.160T. Camp. 3 December 1906: Ibid.,

continued:

As the scheme for the training of female teachers proved an "unexpected and remarkable success", the government granted a further sum of Rs.2,661 to the school.¹ The financial assistance helped to develop the school. Thus, the expansion of local facilities encouraged educated girls to undergo training to take up the teaching profession. The rush of candidates was so great that all the available stipends of Rs.15 and Rs.12 a month were finished, and the director of public instruction wrote to the chief secretary; "I beg to recommend that five additional stipends of each of the value of Rs.15, 12 and 10, and three of Rs.8 ... may be sanctioned at a very early date."² Miss Prativa Sen was

There were three classes, English, middle vernacular and upper primary. Pupils in the English class were allowed either to take their training along with the matriculation course, or to take a one year training course subsequent to matriculation. The middle and upper primary courses were for those who had passed the upper primary or lower standard. In all classes, the course included practical teaching, drawing, needlework, singing and school hygiene .

1. Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.12609C. Shillong, 13 November 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908.
2. H.E. Stapleton, Officiating Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 6 October 1909 No. 701-2644E. Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.

awarded in 1909 a one-year stipend of Rs.15 per month to pursue her training in the Eden School.¹

Progress of training classes was very satisfactory. Instruction was given on general subjects of education and teaching. In his inspection note, H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, remarked; "I examined the work on paper, drawing, brush work, map drawing and notes of lessons ... and the modelling Handwriting and neatness here receive due attention. I congratulate the whole staff on the admirable work which is now being done in the school."² Twenty-one ladies were undergoing training in 1912.³ Fifteen mistresses had already passed the course.⁴ All of them, wrote the inspectress, were doing very good work in various schools of the province.⁵

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1. Under Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.2533 E. Shillong, 13 September 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Inspection Remarks by Sharp, 3 January 1910, quoted in Appendix VII, Proceedings of Female Education Committee, Third Session, March 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911.
 3. Report on Training Classes at the Eden High School, Dacca, by L. Sorabji, Appendix VII: Ibid.
 4. Le Mesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Joint Secretary, Government of India, E.D. Calcutta, No.355E. Dacca, 29 February 1912: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912
 5. Ibid.

Largely due to these changes girls' schools became popular in the province. Students increased at the Eden School from 125 in 1906 to 244 in 1911 and at the Alexander School from 100 to 170.¹ While there were in 1906 121 Hindu and only 4 Muslim girls in the Eden School, in 1911 there were 1 Eurasian, 1 Parsi, 8 Indian Christians, 209 Hindus and 25 Muslims.²

The managing committees and staffs of girls' schools were reorganised and ladies placed on them. The Eden School which was formerly managed chiefly by men was put under the supervision of a committee consisting of five women and six men. The Alexander Girls' School was previously governed by a committee of men only. Now the committee consisted of five ladies and five men.³ There were in 1906 three young men on the staff at the Eden School -- a fact which J.B. Fuller noted with surprise. He remarked: "Three of the teachers are young men. I noted this with surprise and entirely disapprove of it."⁴ Six

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1. The number of students increased in Dr. Kastagir's Girls' School from 68 in 1906 to 110 in 1911. Report on Female Education 1911, pp.27-28: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Report of the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911 to 1912, vol.I, p.95.
 3. Report on Female Education, 1911, p.21: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 4. Inspection Remarks by J.B. Fuller, L., 7 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

years after, the school consisted of 11 well qualified women teachers. The Alexander Girls' School was provided with a trained headmistress, Miss Ghose.¹

Efforts of the government, thus, met with considerable success. While addressing students of the Eden School in 1910, the lieutenant-governor observed: "Your progress had been great and real. You have increased not only in numbers but also in education. You have gained success much in advance of anything you had done hitherto."²

Like high schools, middle English and middle vernacular schools for girls were improved. In 1905 there were three middle English schools in the province. None of them was a government school. By the end of 1911, the province had five middle English schools. Two of them were maintained by the government and the rest were aided. The government schools were the Faizunnessa Girls' School at Comilla and the girls' school at Sylhet.

Prior to and immediately after the partition, these schools were in a bad condition. The Faizunness School, for

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1. Report on Female Education, 1911, p.27: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Extract from the Speech of the Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam [?]: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings 1910, No.5, September 1910.

example, was "inefficient and ill financed."¹ Three-quarters of the girls were in the infant class, and "I found", remarked the lieutenant-governor, "only 4 above the Lower Primary standard.... The contributions of the Secretary were limited to annas eight a month."² In order to convert it into a good school for girls, and thereby to spread female education in this region, the government took over the management and maintenance of the school at an initial expenditure of Rs. 6,495 and a recurring charge of Rs. 344½ per month.³ Also the Sylhet school went under the government control.

Both were staffed by ladies. The Faizunnessa School had eight teachers. All of them, wrote the inspectress, were doing remarkably well. The fourth and fifth mistresses were highly trained and qualified. One of them was trained in the Eden School.⁴ The Sylhet school had five members on

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1. Remarks of the Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam in the Visitors' Book of Comilla Girls' School [?]; Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907, No.111, June 1907.
 2. Ibid.
 3. H. Colin Browning, Officiating Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.175E, Shillong, 15 March 1909: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1909.
 4. Report on the Female Education 1911, p.22: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.

the staff. The headmistress Miss S.K. Das, who had read up to the B.A., had long and wide teaching experience.¹ These two schools had 246 students in 1911.²

Two of the aided schools were better staffed. One of them was at Barisal, where the staff consisted of four members, of whom three were women. As the school was in need of money, the education department of the province proposed in 1911 to give Rs. 7500 for extending its accommodation.³

All middle vernacular schools for girls were more or less developed. One of the important schools was at Noakhali. The government paid much attention to the development of the Noakhali Girls' School, because it felt that "female education might exhibit some real progress in this town if encouraged by Government."⁴ The government took over the management and maintenance of the school in 1910 at an initial expenditure

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1. Report on the Female Education 1911, p.22: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.96.
 3. Report on Female Education, 1911, p.21: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 4. Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.604 T.C. Shillong, 14 January 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.

of Rs. 500 and a recurring expenditure of Rs.2,280.¹ It was now held in a well-ventilated and decently furnished building. Its staff was reorganised and consisted of four mistresses and a pandit.

Thus, during our period, considerable progress was made in the field of girls' education in the province. Training classes were opened for female teachers and scholarships were awarded to them. Attempts were made to reorganise and strengthen the staffs of schools and to provide schools with good accommodation. A report commented in 1911: "In spite of the fact that social customs still retard the progress of female education, the advance made during the last five years has exceeded all expectations."²

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1. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 243E-980, Shillong, 25 April 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1910.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.I, p.4. The proportion of girls at schools to those of school going age rose from 2.7 in 1906 to 5.7 in 1911. Ibid., p.92. This report stated that the proportion of girls at schools to those of school going age was 3.1 in 1906-1907 but it is not supported by the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, who put the proportion at 2.7. H. Sharp to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.639, Shillong, 13 September 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.

Besides the provision of education for girls through schools, education spread among women at home through the zanana system. The system aimed at giving education to women and widows at some centres organised and run by the government in co-operation with the local people.

The zanana system of education, started earlier by missionaries, had made some progress in Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces and the Panjab. There was a certain amount of zanana teaching in Bengal too, mostly in Calcutta, but so far as the new province was concerned there seemed to be very little organised effort, if any, to give education to housewives and widows.¹

Since 1907, however, organised attempts were made to spread zanana education in the new province. The director of public instruction and the inspectress of schools held a conference at Dacca on 21 January 1907 to discuss the subject of zanana education.² It was agreed that the scheme for zanana education would be a public boon; that in the first instance "schools" should not be attempted but only "family gatherings", and that so far as possible this sort

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1. Review of Progress of Education in India, 1897-98 to 1901-2, vol.I: P.P. 1904, vol.65, Cd.2181, pp.320-21.
 2. Inspectors' Conference, Third Day, 23 January 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.

of instruction should be started in quarters in which females did not receive any education.¹ The inspectress of schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, commented on the importance of the scheme thus; "I fell that it is the only way to reach the home life of India. The home is the foundation for the education of both boys and girls. I do not consider, therefore, that there can be a better investment of money than in that of supplying really good, and well qualified and enlightened teachers for the mothers of India's future sons and daughters."² Moreover, this type of education might be of some help to those widows and women who had no one to look after them. Consequently, the scheme for zanana teaching was supported by the female education committee and made some progress in Eastern Bengal and a promising start in certain districts of Assam.

In 1906 when J.B. Fuller, Lieutenant-Governor of the new province, visited the Eden ~~g~~irls' School he remarked that there was hardly any zanana instruction in Dacca.³ In

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1. Inspectors' Conference, Third Day, 23 January 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1907.
 2. Report on Zanana Classes by M.E.A. Garrett, Appendix 13, Proceedings of Female Education Committee, June 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1911.
 3. Inspection Remarks by J.B. Fuller, 7 March 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1906.

1911 there were four governesses in the Dacca town each having six centres to teach. All these 24 centres were opened during the period under review. In addition, there was one English governess who taught English and needlework. She was appointed in 1911 when the demand for English arose amongst the Dacca ladies.¹ The scheme to spread English education among women at home was becoming popular and the inspectress of schools hoped that "in a short time a great many more students will have joined ... English classes."²

To supervise and direct the work of the zanana governesses in the city of Dacca, a committee of women was formed in June 1910.³ The meetings of this committee were held at different places of the town. It was more or less like a social gathering wherein problems of zanana classes were discussed. Zanana education, however, spread in Dacca where, by 1911, on an average 300 housewives had learnt to read, write and keep accounts and had acquired good knowledge in needlework.⁴

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1. Report on Zanana Home Classes, Dacca, 1910-1911, pp.57-59: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. I, p.101.
 3. Report on Zanana Home Classes, Dacca, 1910-1911, p.57: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 4. Ibid.

At Gopalganj in Faridpur, zanana classes were started on 10 August 1910.¹ Up to that time, women of the Namasudra class had received practically no education whatsoever. Now they were showing considerable interest in, and willingness to avail themselves of, the opportunities given to them by the government. Work was carried on at 9 centres in 5 different villages, namely Rugunathpur, Khatia, Betigram, Katalbari and Borasee. The centres were selected chiefly in response to the eagerness of the people for zanana education. All these centres had 4 teachers who were paid by the government. Their salaries varied from Rs.8 to Rs.15 a month.² While in 1910 there were 30 students at the centres, in 1911 there were 77, of whom 47 were Hindus, 10 Muslims and the rest Indian Christians.³

In the Rajshahi division. zanana classes were started in Bogra and Jalpaiguri. Bogra had five centres, each of which was opened in 1910 when the local people

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1. Report on Zanana Home Class, Dacca, 1910-1911, p.57: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912, Appendix B, p.46.
 2. Miss Bose, Gopalganj Zanana Classes, 31 March 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 3. Ibid. Pupils were recruited almost entirely from the agricultural classes; their age varied from 13 to 40. They were taught reading, writing and simple arithmetic. The mistresses visited the centres after 20 days.

requested the district magistrate to do so.¹ These centres were under the supervision of two teachers who were paid by the government.² In 1911 the total number of pupils under regular instruction was 91, of whom 47 were Hindus and the rest Muslims;³ they were taught sewing, geography, simple arithmetic and hygiene. Some women made good progress. For example, it is stated that some women when admitted to the centres knew nothing or very little about sewing, but after a few months they learnt how to make sweaters, jackets, handkerchiefs and stockings.⁴

Also zanana centres were opened in Mymensingh, Chittagong, Noakhali and Comilla. At Comilla, out of 43 women students 33 were Muslims and; out of six centres four were in the houses of Muslims.⁵ This indicates that Muslims

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1. Note by the Inspectress, on Zanana Classes, Bogra, p.15, Proceedings of the Female Education Committee, June 1911, p.62: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. Mrs. Chatterjee and Mrs. Das were two teachers; they were paid Rs.50 and Rs.40 a month respectively; they drew Rs.20 per month as conveyance allowance. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid. A woman aged 36 years, and mother of 9 children was absolutely illiterate when she joined a centre of Bogra. After one year or so she could read and write fairly well. Ibid.
 5. Zenana Education in Comilla, Memo No.265-A-7, 1 May 1911, by E. Chamier, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Comilla: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.

were taking active part in spreading education among their women possibly because they recognised their backwardness in education in general — and possibly because they did not have to spend anything for such zanana education.

The success of these centres, however, encouraged people in Assam to open some centres for zanana education. When M.E.A. Garrett wanted to know whether it was possible to open zanana centres at Sibsagar and Silchar, the people of these two districts replied in the affirmative. The leading gentlemen of the Sibsagar town requested that "the zanana system of education by means of visiting governesses similar to that at Dacca, Bogra, Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong be introduced into Sibsagar district".¹ People of Silchar also liked zanana education. Babu Bihari Lal Dhar, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Silchar, wrote; "It is hoped that the scheme will remove the check of female education, which is witnessed in the case of grown up girls who are not allowed to attend public girls school."² There-

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1. Proceedings of a meeting of gentlemen at Sibsagar town, 19 March 1911, Appendix to Srijut Gopal Chandra Barua, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Sibsagar, to N.E.A. Garrett, 21 March 1911, No.1280: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. B.B.L. Dhar, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Silchar, to Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 2384, Silchar 31 March 1911: Ibid.

fore, six centres were opened at Silchar. Probably, the total number of students was about 100.¹ Subjects taught at these centres were hygiene, domestic economy and needlework.²

To summarise, there took place a reasonable amount of development of education among women. But it may be noted that the new province had no college for women. Again, facilities for the training of women teachers were inadequate,

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1. B.B.L. Dhar, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Silchar, to Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 2384, Silchar 31 March 1911: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912. Also Note by the Inspectress of Schools on New Schemes for Zenana Education by M.E.A. Garratt, Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Proceedings of the Female Education Committee, June 1911, pp.96-97: Ibid.
 2. Ibid.

the province having only one institution for the training of women teachers.

In conclusion, it can be said that the new province had made good progress in education during the period under review. Attempts were made to improve collegiate education. Some colleges offered the degree course while others provided honours and science courses for the first time. The government established more secondary and primary schools in the province and enhanced, to some extent, the pay of school-teachers. Female education was encouraged. For the first time special classes were started in the province to train female teachers. The zanana system of education was introduced in many parts of the province to educate housewives and widows. As a whole, the number of eligible children attending school increased from 17.8 per cent. in 1906 to 20.7 in 1911.¹ Impressed by the progress that the province had made in education, the government of India decided in 1912 to recommend to the secretary of state for India the establishment of a university at Dacca and the appointment of a special officer for education in Eastern

1. Report on the Progress of Education, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol.1, p.8.

Bengal.¹ "It should be a university open to all — a teaching and residential university."²

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1. The Pioneer Mail 9 February 1912; Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912), London Ph.D. thesis, 1960, p.424. Also Ali, S.N., A Year in the Imperial Legislative Council, pp.916-17.
 2. The Pioneer Mail, 23 February 1912. This official deliberation was followed by the creation of a committee which recommended in its reports the establishment of a teaching and residential university, on the model of Cambridge and Oxford, at Dacca. The university was established in 1921.

CHAPTER V

SOME ASPECTS OF LITERARY ACTIVITY

The territorial re-arrangement of 1905 provided a stimulus to the intellectual life of Eastern Bengal: Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong became the focii to which men's attention was turned, while throughout the new province private societies and government actively encouraged literature and learning. The literary achievement of the new province may be conveniently discussed under two headings -- Bengali Historical Writings¹ and Journalism.²

The development of historical writing in Bengali was mainly due to the growth of a modern Bengali prose literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The introduction of English in the educational institutions of Bengal and the consequent opening of the vast field of European literature to English-educated Bengalis gave

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1. It is proposed here to discuss historical writings in Bengali only. Writings in Assamese (during our period) available in the India Office Library and British Museum do not seem to contain anything worth putting under the head of historical writings. For example, Sri Dibakara Duara's Thupari Carit (Life of Thupari, Dibrugarh, 1910) is a dull fiction. Again, Sangit Kosh (Treasury of songs, 1909) compiled by Lakshimram Barua, contains some Assamese songs which neither say anything about the existing condition of society nor contain any new idea or aspiration.
 2. Only Muslim attempts in this field in our period will be indicated.

birth to an awakening in Bengal called "The Bengali Renaissance".¹ It inspired the western-educated Bengalis to write in Bengali prose in a new style following European models,² and "it is at this stage that we find the starting point of Bengali historiography".³

Modern Bengali prose began when the Fort William College was established in Calcutta in 1800. The college was "the seminary of western learning in an eastern dress; it helped to diffuse western ideas through the medium of the vernacular. At the same time, orientation was its principal feature, and it turned the attention of students and scholars to the cultivation of oriental languages, both classical and vernacular."⁴ It excited a general interest in oriental languages, literature and knowledge. From the college came works in Bengali prose which provided the foundation for creating "the all-important Bengali prose-of-all-work".⁵ In 1801, Ram Ram Basu, one of the teachers of this college, wrote the first modern historical work in

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1. Sen, A., Notes on the Bengali Renaissance, p.1.
 2. Sen, D.C., History of Bengali Language and Literature, p.913.
 3. Mallick, A.R., "Modern Historical Writing in Bengali", Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, edited by Phillips, C.H., p.446.
 4. De, S.K., Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, p.106.
 5. Ibid., p.107.

Bengali prose;¹ his book Raja Pratapaditya Carita (Biography of Pratapaditya, Serampur, 1801) was "composed from authentic documents".² His power of representing historical facts is neither dry nor discursive. The story is given in a connected and interesting manner, enlivened by "visual pictures" and descriptions, and his narrative is plain.

Since then, there has been a steady increase in historical writings. In the pre-partition days, according to A.R. Mallick's estimate, more than a dozen and a half historical works in Bengali were produced in Bengal.³ Some of them were of considerable merit and standard. For example, Mrtyunjay Bidyalankar's Rajavali (History of Kings, Serampur, 1808) gives, in a simple style, a close-up view of the rulers from the ancient times to the British occupation of the country. The account of King Bikramaditya (A.D. 455-467) is the longest and most entertaining, and there^{also} is some description of bygone rulers — Ballal Sen, Laksman Sen of Bengal and Prthu of Delhi and Jaycandra of Kanauj. Then follows a sketch of the Pathan and Mughal rulers of

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1. Mallick, A.R., "Modern Historical Writing in Bengali", Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon edited by Phillips, C.H., p.446.
 2. Buchanan, College of Fort William, quoted in De, S.K., Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, p.413.
 3. Mallick, A.R., "Modern Historical Writing in Bengali", Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, edited by Phillips, C.H., pp.446-451.

Delhi. Of these, the pen-portraits of Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and Aurangzeb (1659-1707) are interesting. Another work of merit was Rajani Kanta Gupta's Sipahi Yuddher Itihas (History of the Sepoy War, Calcutta, 1886). It is more critical than the Rajavali and a well thought-out work. Gupta conceived and wrote his book at a time when the call of Bankimcandra to write a critical history of India and Rabindra Nath Tagore's reminder, "You have the history and greatness of those days gone",¹ were resounding throughout the country. Bankimcandra explained the necessity of writing history thus: "In the past there were many Kings and heroes who fought with valour and distinction against foreign invaders; but their deeds are either not known or have been distorted because there were no Indian historians to record them."² Again, in one of his Bibidha Prabandha (Miscellaneous Essays) Bankim stated that India was a subject country because Indians were "weak and effeminate".³ "Indians", he pointed out, "are weak not

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1. Tagore, R.N., Balak (The Boy), B.S. 1292 [1885] p.3, quoted in Sen, P., Banglar Itihas Sadhana (A Study of the Histories of Bengal), p.20.
 2. Clark, T.W., "The Role of Bankimcandra in the Development of Nationalism", Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon edited by Phillips, C.H., p.437.
 3. Ibid., pp.435-36.

because of any inherent frailty but because they have no sense of unity or national pride; and there can be no sense of unity and national pride until Indian history is described and interpreted by Indian historians."¹ A tendency to write history critically was, therefore, reflected in Gupta's Sipahi Yuddher Itihas. Its main purpose is to defend and praise those who fought against the British in the mutiny of 1857 and to develop a feeling of pride among the Indians. The author criticised the territorial policy of Dalhousie and belauded the Rani of Jhansi, Kumar Singh and Nana Sahib. The English soldiers were condemned as brutal and ruthless. None of the works noted by A.R.Mallick, however, was published from East Bengal or any part of the new province.² Again, all the books were published from Calcutta and its neighbourhood, since Calcutta had long been the centre of learning and Western culture and the metropolis of commerce. So, it seems that no important historical works in Bengali were produced in the new province prior to the partition.

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1. Clark, T.W., "The Role of Bankimcandra in the Development of Nationalism", Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, edited by Phillips, C.H., p.436.
 2. De, S.K., Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, p.144. These writers were from West Bengal, for example, Ram Ram Basu was born at Chinsura towards the end of the eighteenth century and was educated at the village of Nimteh in the 24 Parganas. Mrtyunjay was born in 1762 at Midnapur and died in 1819 near Murshidabad.

After the partition some changes took place: the people of the new province, both Hindus and Muslims, interested themselves more in writing and publishing historical works. Some, if not all, of the educated Hindus found in the partition an important measure to benefit the people of this area. They wrote about some districts of the new province and about the new province as a whole, pointing out, whenever possible, the improvements made after 1905. Unlike their co-religionists in West Bengal, the Hindus in Eastern Bengal put emphasis on all that was good in the British rule and admired the British as good and impartial rulers. On the other hand, the Muslims in general thought that the partition, by concentrating a large number of their co-religionists in the new territory, "will tend to solidify them into a compact community with a territorial patriotism of their own for Eastern Provinces like what the Hindu Bengali feel for Bengal."¹ This gave them a spur which created what was called "the Muhammadan renaissance"², and

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1. H. Le Mesurier, Officiating Commissioner, Dacca Division, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue Department, Dacca, No.1160L.R. 12-16 July 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1906.
 2. Ibid. Nawab Ali Chowdhury, a member on the legislative council of the province told its president that the partition "has given the Muhammadan community an impetus for work and activity and has stirred up their dormant energies and created a general awakening." Legislative Proceedings of the Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, April 1909, p.23.

inspired their literate section to think over the formation of this territory in terms of their own community. This community-consciousness led them to write more about their own social problems; they mentioned the existing defects in their society and asked the Muslims to improve their condition and thereby to raise their status. They wrote about famous Muslims of the past in order to revive confidence in their brethren. Thus, while the Hindus wrote mostly, if not exclusively, about the province and its certain areas, the Muslims wrote about their social problems. Another feature of these writings is that while the Hindus did not show any hostile feeling towards the Muslims, the latter were very critical of the former. Light may be thrown on this point by an analysis of some of their available works.¹ It is proposed here to discuss some 22 works which may be considered under the two main headings of regional and social histories. The section on social history includes writings on social affairs and biographical studies.

Regional History

All regional histories discussed here were written, as pointed out, by the Hindus. But it may be noted here that

1. The works are extant in the British Museum and India Office Libraries.

one Shaikh Fazlul Karim wrote a history of Afghanistan during our period. It may be apposite to say a few words about his choice of a region lying outside India. He was prompted to write the Afghanistaner Itihas (History of Afghanistan, Dacca, 1909) by the desire to place before the Bengali-reading Muslims the condition of a Muslim country abroad and to provide them with the biography of Ameer Habibullah, the ruler of Afghanistan. He wrote in the preface; "It is sad that no book on Afghanistan has yet been written in Bengali".¹ He gave an exhaustive account of Ameer Habibullah's visit to India in 1907 and spoke of him very highly. He found in him a man of high moral and religious fervour. The Ameer, he stated, had refused to dine in the company of English women at Peshawar on the ground that Islam did not allow one to dine with unfamiliar women.² He was a kind-hearted and considerate man whose warm feelings for his brethren were known to all. The author, who was an inhabitant of Eastern Bengal, might have thought that if the government of India attempted to alter the partition of Bengal, the Ameer might intervene.³ Whatever his motives, Karim's work

1. Preface, p.1. (My translation).

2. Afghanistan Itihas (History of Afghanistan), p.92.

3. Shaikh Fazlul Karim (1882-1936) was born in the Kakina village in Rangpur, Eastern Bengal. Haq, M.E., Muslim Bengali Literature, p.207.

has historical value. He had collected data from contemporary newspapers and old historical writings and had arranged events chronologically, tabulating them under successive years. In ease and charm of style, this work is one of the most attractive of historical writings in Bengali.

Apart from this, all other works dealt with in this section are concerned with the new province. The Purvavanga O Assam Pradeser Sankhipta Vivaran (A Brief Account of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Dacca, 1909) of Krishna Mohan Dhar is a valuable contribution to Bengali historical writings during this period.¹ His book gives a brief account of the new province, dealing with its geographical features, agricultural crops, administrative systems and industrial resources. This is a historico-geographical work. The writer appears to have been an earnest supporter of the partition which, according to him, was an administrative necessity. Because of its historical value and since it is the only Bengali work on the new province, the government recommended the book for use in libraries of all schools in the province. It may be stated here that there seems to be no connection between the fact that Dhar supported the 1905 partition and

1. Krishna Mohan Dhar was an inhabitant of the district of Silchar in Assam.

that he secured the approval of the government for the use of his book in all educational institutions. Nor can it be ascertained whether he was a government official/ ^{or not;} and, if he was, whether he was stimulated to write approvingly of the partition to further his career.

S.N. Bhadra's Banga O Assam ([History of] Bengal and Assam, Dacca, 1909) is not exclusively devoted to the new province. It includes West Bengal and gives a fairly interesting account of the different parts of the new province. Bhadra appears to have been moved by the existing political events which had created animosity between the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. This, he apprehended, might bring disaster upon both the Hindus and Muslims. In view of the circumstances, he wrote, "We need to know our past. By studying the events of history, we become careful and we understand and love each other." His main object, however, was to show the progress the province had made. He made it clear that the partition of Bengal was good for the people of Eastern Bengal and Assam and that Sir Bampflyde Fuller was an able administrator.¹ People were pleased specially

1. It may be mentioned here that Sir Bampflyde Fuller was described as a "... fearless, brilliant, capable and resolute Lieutenant Governor". "It is owing to his untiring zeal irrepressible genius, and his matchless talent and foresight that the administrative machinery of our new government is doing so admirably and is working so smoothly, in spite of machinations of certain spiteful Hindoos who are trying their utmost to injure and to mar our Lieutenant Governor's reputation as a first class administrator." Editorial, The Eastern Bengal and Assam Era, 8 August and 28 July 1906, p.4.

with Sir Lancelot Hare who took active interest in the spread of education. "Many educational institutions", he remarked, "would have died out without the economic assistance of the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam."¹ Then he summarised the government's activities in the new province. "The administrators are busy to improve the new province. The government have promised to grant 3 lakhs of rupees to install new pipe wells in the province. A meeting was held in Dacca in 1909 to discuss the development of the industry of the new province. An industrial exhibition was also held there. The city of Dacca is developing fast and beautiful buildings are being constructed in different parts of the city. A new house is being erected for the Dacca college. Suitable accommodation is being provided for both teachers and students. All this, we see, is the practical results of the creation of the new province. May God grant Sir Lancelot Hare long life."²

Pratapcandra Mukhopadhy's Kashipur Kusum (Flower of Kashipur, Barisal, 1909) gives the history of a village in the district of Barisal. It deals not only with village affairs but also with the transport, administrative^{on} and

1. Banga O Assam ([History of] Bengal and Assam), p.68.
(My translation).

2. Ibid., pp.68-69. (My translation).

religious life of Kashipur, and describes each famous family of that locality. Nowhere has the author stated his motive for undertaking this work. But it may be guessed from his writings that he wanted to praise the zamindar Pratap Babu and the people of Kashipur for not taking part in politics although the anti-partition agitation was alive in the district. He depicted Pratap Babu as a man interested in the municipal administration of Barisal and in the welfare of its inhabitants.

Next year Kedar Nath Majumdar's Dakar Vivaran (An Account of Dacca, Mymensingh, 1910) was brought out; it gives a geographical, historical and general survey of the district of Dacca. The underlying object of the author was to draw people's attention to various reforms carried out by the government in the district. In the concluding portion of his book, he laid special emphasis on some important aspects of the town of Dacca, its new system of transport, jails and post-offices. He also referred to the interest of the people of this district in politics and presented them as calm and quiet citizens. To prove this fact to the government, he quoted Clay, an English official: "As a political community they [the people of Dacca] are quite peaceable and inoffensive and have always been distinguished

for their obedience to their rulers."¹ The work, however, provides an important source for the history of Dacca. Majumdar stated that his findings were based on first hand materials such as published and unpublished government records, letters and the information supplied by the reliable aristocrats of the district and the government officials.² The book contains ample evidence of authoritative knowledge and its footnotes are laden with quotations. It was written in a simple and colloquial Bengali so that the common people could read and understand. Its price was less than a rupee.

Another important work was Upendra Nath Guha's Kacarar Itibritta (History of Kacar, Dacca, 1911). It manifests the author's attitude towards the British rule. Guha was born in Kacar and was a teacher in the Dacca training college. After five years laborious research, he wrote this book which is the first chronological account of Kacar from ancient times to the early twentieth century. His discussion on the socio-economic and ethnological aspect of the Kacaris is lively. The chapter on Kacar Karad Mittra Rajya (Feudatories of Kacar) lacks detail. But the contrast between the pre-British and post-British Kacar is

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1. Dakar Vivaran (An Account of Dacca), p.4.
 2. The government officers were:- H. LeMesurier, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam; R.Nathan, Commissioner, Dacca Division; A.J.Laine, District Magistrate, Dacca; R.Garlic, District Magistrate, Mymensingh. Ibid. Preface.

emphasized in the work. The author illustrated that before the advent of the English the residents of Kacar had been harassed and oppressed by the neighbouring hill tribes and Burmese soldiers. For instance, in 1824, the Burmese took possession of Kacar, plundered it and tortured its innocent people. They pinned the prisoners with iron rods in order to carry them to Burma; the hands of women and children who were unable to walk were cut off and they were left behind.¹ Then he observed that since the British had taken over the administration of Kacar in 1832, after the death of its ruler, people were living in peace. "They are free from the danger of attacks by the uncivilised tribal people like the Nagas, Kukis and Lushais. Tired of long prevailing chaos and confusion, the Kacaris expressed their strong desire to live under the powerful British government. Indeed, Kacar has made tremendous progress under the British administration... Kacar, which was almost a jungle, has now become an enlightened district full of men and wealth; its people have become more educated and civilised."²

It may be seen that some of the above works are based on considerable research. This spirit was not dampened

1. Kacarar Itibritta (History of Kacar, Dacca, 1911), p.192.
2. Ibid., p.208. (My translation).

by the obliteration of the new province but was kept alive by the Varendra Research Society which was established in 1910 at Rajshahi under the patronage of Sarat Kumar Roy, Zamindar of Dighapatia. The organisation was founded to explore the north-eastern regions of Bengal in order to collect materials — archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, numismatic and literary — for reconstructing the history of Bengal.¹ The active members of the Society were Hindus, largely from Rajshahi. The Society published a number of useful works, such as Ramaprasadcandra's Gaudarajmala (History of Bengal 1912) and Akshoy Kumar Maitra's Gaudalekhmala (Inscription of Bengal, 1912).² "It is an active organisation even today and has been doing monumental works in the field of Historiography."³

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1. Personal Correspondence with the Curator, Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, 23 January 1964.
 2. Of the important publications of the Society in recent years, one is Inscriptions of Bengal, vol. IV. It contains a corpus of inscriptions of the Muslim rulers of Bengal from 1233 to 1855 A.C. and was edited by Shamsuddin Ahmed, formerly Director of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan. Publications of the Varendra Research Museum, 1962, Rajshahi, p.1.
 3. Mallick, A.R., "Modern Historical Writing in Bengali", Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, edited by Phillips, C.H., p.446.

Social History

After the creation of the new province, the Muslims became, as observed earlier, more conscious of their decadent socio-economic conditions; such consciousness, although not completely absent in the pre-partition days, now received a fillip. The Muslim writers emphasized the urgent need for improvement of the existing condition of their community.

In his Islam Pradip¹ (The Lamp of Islam, Kalikapur, Rangpur, 1907), Shaikh Chakiuddin Ahmad depicted the social position of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal and reminded his co-religionists of their "glorious past". The Muslims, he said, had been the proudest nation of the world. Many nations had once respected the intellectual superiority of the Muslims and had learnt from them history, political science, literature, astrology, religious principles, discipline, rules of morality, trade, commerce, agriculture and industry, and had now become great powers. The Muslims had fallen from the pinnacle of glory to the depth of degradation and superstition. The Hindus, who had once worshipped

1. S. Ahmed has only referred to this book and has not examined its contents in full. Ahmed Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912), London Ph.D. thesis, p. 516.

the Muslim rulers of Delhi and who thought themselves fortunate to carry out the orders of the Mughals, were now disobeying their descendants. Nothing could be more discrediting and shameful to a glorious and civilised nation than this. "At this", he went on, "my heart breaks into a hundred pieces; your behaviour is constantly pinching me. My heart is not a transparent mirror, so I have expressed my feeling in the Islam Pradip."¹ He exhorted his brethren to realise their deplorable state and to build up their character, for, according to him, "the best decoration and excellence of a man is character."² Then he stressed the importance of women's education in society and added; "The home is the first and best schools. If we try to do our duty there we shall learn the spirit of love and duty; we shall learn self control, cheerfulness, patience and care for others."³ He quoted an English saying to this effect; "Until he finds a good and learned wife,
A man is only half of a whole life."⁴

A year later, Maniruddin Ahmad wrote the Samaj Citra (Social Picture, Brahmanbaria, 1908). Throughout the book,

1. Islam Pradip (The Lamp of Islam), pp.1-9. (My translation).

2. Ibid., p.44.

3. Ibid., pp.85-86.

4. Ibid., p.97.

the writer lamented the ignominious position of Muslim society and appealed to the people of his community to arise from their age-long inactivity. He enumerated the factors which, in his opinion, had gradually brought about the decline of the Muslim community and suggested some remedies.¹ He opposed early marriage and emphasized the need for better education. "Education," he argued, "is the root of all human knowledge and can surmount all sorts of difficulties."² He strongly advocated women's education and quoted John Herbert, an English poet; "One educated mother is worth a hundred school masters."³ He held; "Woman is not inferior to man. If God had designed woman as man's master He would have taken her from his head, if as his slave He would have taken her from his feet; but He took her from his side."⁴ Finally, he instructed the young people to be industrious and cited an old English saying to this effect;

"In works of labour or of skill

Let me be busy too,

For Satan finds some mischief still

For idle hands to do."⁵

1. Some of the factors were: (i) the Puthi reading, (ii) gatherings of singers, and (iii) the cow race. Samaj Citra (Social Picture), pp. 12-20 (My translation).

2. Ibid., p.6.

3. Ibid., p.39.

4. Ibid., p.40.

5. Ibid., p.23.

The Islam Citra O Samaj Citra¹ (Sketches of Islam and Muslim Society, Gaffargaon, Mymensingh, 1913) of Shaikh Abdul Jabbar is another work of similar quality. The author called on the Muslims to look into their past. "Do you not feel ashamed, considering what you had been and what you have made yourself now? Still you are ready to tolerate the kicks of the other community [Hindus]."² He advised them to improve their position and stressed the importance of education. "Careful attempts", he contended, "should be made to spread education. ... As far as possible, more girls' schools should be established. Higher education needed to be encouraged."³ He pointed out that the kind-hearted government had established schools in almost all the districts but "the number of Muslim students has not risen to a desirable point. It is an axiomatic truth that without education no nation can be successful in politics. If the Muslims remain indifferent to education in such a way, their political potentialities will be destroyed and they will never be able to raise their heads in future."⁴

While some wrote about the educational, commercial

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1. It seems that the author conceived and wrote the book during our period though it was published in 1913.
 2. Islam Citra O Samaj Citra (Sketches of Islam and Muslim Society), p.81.
 3. Ibid., (My translation).
 4. Ibid.

and industrial position of Muslim society others concentrated on its religious aspect. Possibly these works emerged as a reaction to Muslim liberal writings. With a view to seeing his co-religionists faithfully adhere to the religious principles of Islam and to condemn the unorthodox tendencies in society, Mohammad Harez Ali wrote the Tahfat-O-Salikin (Advice of God) and published it in Dacca in 1908.¹ In the forwarding note,² his associate Abdul Malek remarked that at that time people were living a superstitious life. They knew no manners and most of them were doing things quite opposite to the Shariat or the canon law of Islam. As a result, Muslim society was degenerating and the author was ashamed to see this course of events. His work was, therefore, brought out to provide the Muslims with moral guidance in life.³

Mohammad Shah in the Goljare Momenin O Halahale Mosrekin (Garden of Muslims and Poison to Infidels, 1911)

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1. The writer was born in the Baktapur village in the Dacca district.
 2. S. Ahmed has wrongly assigned this note to the author himself. Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912), London Ph.D. thesis, 1960, p.458.
 3. Tahafat O Salikin (Advice of God), p.1.

observed the same deteriorating condition of Muslim society.¹ He disapproved of the existing social evils and instructed the Muslims how to abolish them. He condemned usury as irreligious and impure, and counselled his brethren to take up trade and commerce. He was conservative in his approach to women and opposed social liberty for them. "Women", he wrote, "must be kept always content and under strong guidance. Otherwise they may prove faithless and go astray."² He insisted on the Muslims not maintaining any contact with the Hindus. "The Hindus", he said, "are too impure; if you touch them, you must clean your hands."³

Some authors made the peasants' lot the main theme of their works. The Unnati Sopan (The Stepping Stone to Improvement), written by M.I. Ahmadi, was published by the author at Bhaduria, Dinajpur, in 1910. Though the author preached the ideals of Islam, his study deals with the peasants. The work tells that at that time all the communities

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1. The author was born in the Saugaonkhola village in Dinajpur. His father Rabi Shaikh died when he was very young and was brought up by his uncle. He lived with his younger brother Zeyaretulla. Both of them were very religious minded and they tried to explain the beauties of Islam to the people of their area. Goljare Momenin O Halahale Mosrekin (Garden of Muslims and Poison to Infidels), p.82.
 2. Ibid., pp.59-60. (My translation).
 3. Ibid., p.36. (My translation).

were engaged in finding ways for their own improvement, but nothing was being done for the tillers of the soil. They were enduring all sorts of pain and punishment; hemmed in on all sides by hunger, dishonour, debts and despair, day by day, the ploughmen were being engulfed by poverty and illiteracy; their hopes and desires were being submerged in despair. Cut off from trade and commerce, the Muslims were heading towards downfall.¹ Ahmadi explained the reasons for undertaking his study thus: "The sense of justice and religious duties command me to place the Unnati Sopan before this falling society and particularly before my farmer friends. If it can do them a minimum of good, I will think that my labour has been well paid."²

An almost similar treatise dealing with the wants and grievances of the cultivators was written by Mohammad Mahsin Ulla in 1910. The work entitled Burir Suta (The Old Woman's Thread) was published by the author at the Natore subdivision in Rajshahi; its principal thesis is the peasants' fate. In order to draw the readers' attention to this purpose, the author, at the beginning, quoted Aristotle as having said "The history of civilisation is nothing but the history of the peasants", and noted Adam Smith's comment that "The

1. Unnati Sopan (The Stepping Stone to Improvement), p.1.
 2. Ibid., (My translation).

labour of peasants is at the root of a nation's wealth."¹ He charged that the zamindars and their oppressive officers were compelling the farmers to pay illegal rents. They demanded about eight annas in the rupee and collected it by force. The agriculturists had no money to go to court to redress their grievances. Many communities had their representatives on the legislative council of the government but there was no provision to include any representative of the peasants,² who had no education, and the author appealed to the government to introduce free primary schooling in the country as soon as possible. He also suggested that the peasants should be represented on the local, municipal and district boards so that they could have a say in the local administration. The government should ask the zamindars to improve cultivable lands. The rate of interest should be reduced and fixed, and the government should finance the poor cultivators who had to go to court to defend their legitimate rights against the landlords. Without the government's permission the zamindars should not raise rents or interfere with the tenants' record of rights. And the government should take over the management of the estates of those zamindars who took unlawful rents and should collect

1. Burir Suta (The Old Woman's Thread). Cover page.
2. Ibid., p.15.

the revenue directly from the farmers.¹

It may be noted that no government officials commented upon this book and the remedies it suggests, but the grievances the author enumerated had been pointed out earlier by such officers. In 1908, F.C. Henniker, Officiating Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, wrote; "If one can judge from the large number of petitions constantly received by the Executive officers from tenants against their landlords, then the Tenancy Act or the civil courts or both have failed to render adequate protection especially against illegal levies of cesses and abwabs."² In the same year, Moulvi Mohammad Coinuddin, Settlement Officer at Kandi, recorded; "The raiyats practically possess no safeguard against illegal enhancement of their rents. There are two classes of zamindars -- those who carry things with high-handedness and those who proceed constitutionally. The former haul up the tenants to their cutchery [revenue collection centre], subject them to all sorts of ignominious treatment and extort kabuliyats³ at the enhanced rents. The latter either

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1. Burir Suta (The Old Woman's Thread), p.15.
 2. To Secretary, Legislative Council, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Camp. Dinajpur, No.61 R.C.T., 10 February 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1909.
 3. A kabuliyat was the document in which payers of revenue, whether to the government or the zamindars, expressed their consent to pay the amount assessed on their land. Wilson, H.H., A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, p.224.

gain over the head raiyats and, through their instrumentality, the poorer ones, or harass them by repeated troublesome and expensive law-suits and ultimately succeed in tiring them down to accept the enhancements. It is often seen that in the civil court the man who commands the largest purse generally succeeds in the long run."¹

Mohammad Dad Ali's Samaj Sikkha (Social Teaching), published at Atigram in 1910 by Yusuf Ali and Mansur Ali, also referred to the plight of the husbandmen; but the main theme of the work is the fallen state of Muslim society.² The study demonstrates that the condition of the farmers had gradually become miserable. Because of their extreme poverty, the cultivators could not give their children sufficient education. So after receiving a preliminary vernacular education in the village schools, their children were properly trained neither to become field workers nor to hold clerical jobs. The author addressed himself to the

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1. Enclosure to Memo by Under Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue Department, No.1336-37 R, Shillong, 28 May 1908: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1909.
 2. Dad Ali was born in 1852 and died in 1936. His father Nad Ali was a police inspector. His was a respectable family. Saklain, G., "Kavi Dad Ali", Bangla Academy Patrika, 1958, First Issue, p.64. The book was dedicated to Nawab Ali Chowdhury of Mymensingh, who helped the author in many ways.

helpless Muslims at large, and exhorted them to improve their pecuniary condition by entering the field of trade and commerce. Surely, he argued, trade and commerce would provide better ways of earning a living than serving as officials.¹ For political purposes, he encouraged the Muslims to unite under a political leader and to follow his guidance, for, he said, without unity and leadership no nation could rise. "Islam teaches unity: there is but one God and there is but one book, the holy Quran", he wrote.²

From these works, it can be seen that all the writers had one point in view -- to urge the Muslims to ameliorate their social and economic position. To achieve that end, almost all of them had attempted to revive in the minds of their co-religionists the glories of their ancestors, the Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Pathans and Mughals. All of them felt the need for spreading English education widely amongst the Muslims. Some of them frequently quoted English sayings and the works of English poets. This tendency offered a contrast to that of some Muslims who wrote in Bengali in the pre-partition days in West Bengal. For

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1. Samaj Sikkha (Social Teaching), p.7: Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community of Bengal (1884-1912), London Ph.D. thesis, 1960, p.496.
 2. Samaj Sikkha, p.101 (My translation).

example, Abdul Jabbar's Islam Dharma Pari Caya (Instruction^{du} to the Religion of Islam, Calcutta, 1893) had vehemently opposed English education. So far as women's education is concerned, most people -- unlike the writer Mohammad Shah -- wanted to give women freedom equal to men. Another feature of their writings is that it shows no open bias against Christianity; in their writings they did not attack Christianity in any way while some of their brethren did so vigorously in West Bengal during our period; for example, the Khristiya Dharma Asarata (Hollowness of the Christian Religion, Jessore, 1909) of Munshi Mohammad Meher ulla (who hailed from Jessore) criticised Christianity scathingly. Possibly the reason was that Christian missionaries were more successful in West Bengal (especially in places like Jessore, Khulna and 24 Parganas) than in Eastern Bengal,¹ thus prompting the Muslims to write polemical works against Christianity.

Turning to the biographical writings, it can be said that the Muslims wrote about some famous men and women of their community hoping that these biographies might

1. Ali, I., "Islam Tatta", Mahenau, June 1954: Mannan, Q.A., Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana (Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature), p.153.

serve as a source of inspiration to their co-religionists. They felt that the Muslims were not as progressive as the Hindus. As early as 1900, one Ismail Hossain observed:

" Although the Hindus and Muslims are living in the same country and in the same village and are taking the same food when hungry, and drinking the same water when thirsty and though they are ruled by the same government, the Hindus, because of their education, have become richer than the Muslims. "¹

However, occasionally a Hindu wrote about a noble Muslim and called the people of all communities to follow his inspiring example, pointing out how dear he was to both Hindus and Muslims. A look into some works written by both Hindus and Muslims may further illustrate the difference in their attitude.

The Mohasin Carit (Life of Mahasin, Bogra, 1909), written by Hamed Ali, is a representative example of the Muslim point of view.² It is an important addition to

1. The Nurul Iman, 1900: Mannan, Q.A., Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana (Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature), p.153.
2. It may be mentioned that S. Ahmed is wrong to suppose that the book was published in 1908. Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912) p.499. The book's cover bears a well-known verse of an English poem, 'The Death of Sir John Moore at Coruna' composed by Charles Wolfe. The verse runs thus:
 "We carved not a line,
 and we raised not a stone,
 But we left him alone with his glory."

biographical works in Bengali. Its central point is that the Muslims were in a state of decline and needed to follow the ideal of a great man like Haji Mohammad Mohasin. The book is divided into seven chapters. The first three chapters are devoted to the parentage and early life of Mohasin. Other chapters discuss his benevolent and philanthropical activities. Haji Muhammad Mohasin was born in 1728 in Hooghly and died in 1812. He left his property worth Rs. 861,100 to public charity and Muslim education in Bengal.¹ Hamed Ali explained why he was writing about Mohasin: the Muslims of Bengal had forgotten most of their brethren who had done many socio-humanitarian works for them; this was very sad; the Muslims had neither courage nor education and they were hopelessly behind the times. The writer believed that without some lessons from the remarkable character and ideal life of a great man of their faith, the Muslims' hope of recovery seemed very remote. "Today, I am here to present before the readers the life of a great man Haji Muhammad Mohasin whose financial contributions have been responsible for the education of many Muslim boys but the details of whose life is almost unknown to the Bengalis."²

1. Mohasin Carit (Life of Mohasin), p.55.

2. Ibid., p.1. (My translation).

Another biographer of Haji Mohammad Mohasin was Amar Candra Datta, a Hindu resident of Mymensingh. His Haji Mohammad Mohasin (Dacca, 1912) was published three years after Hamed Ali had written Mohasin Carit. Datta had evidently read and used Hamed Ali's work, although nowhere in his book does he refer to it. Datta's purpose, however, was to evaluate Mohasin's contribution to the cause of education in general. He stated; "Both the Hindus and Muslims are indebted to Mohasin. It is our duty to write about him. The object of the book is to show respect to Mohasin and to persuade all to follow his example and ideals."¹ On the other hand, Hamed Ali, his Muslim biographer, had asked only the Muslims to follow Mohasin's example.

The Hindus were interested not only in the lives of noble Muslims but also in those of Muslim saints. Shah Jalal (Sylhet, 1911) by Rajani Ranjan Deb is an example of this. It is a biography of Shah Jalal, a Muslim saint of Sylhet. Deb, who was an inhabitant of Rainagar in Sylhet, was the first Hindu who wrote a connected and analytical history of Shah Jalal. Unlike other Muslim biographers of

1. Haji Mohammad Mohasin, p.1. (My translation).

Shah Jalal,¹ he used many English sources,² From his text and footnotes, it appears that he made extensive research and analysed his findings very clearly. He wrote that Shah Jalal was respected and honoured by both the Hindus and Muslims alike in the past. The Hindus gave offerings to the Lord Shiva and Shah Jalal together.³ Then he noted; "Shah Jalal is still very dear to the Hindus in Sylhet."⁴ Though the study is primarily a biography, the author also tried to show the existing harmonious relationship between the Hindus and Muslims in Sylhet.

There were two other biographical works written by Hindus during this period. But they were quite different, being based on the lives of Hindu kings and princes. The Birendra Kahini (The Story of Heroes, Chittagong, 1910) by Rajani Kanta De gives an account of the Kings of Tripura.⁵

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1. Muslim biographers of Shah Jalal were Mahammad Abdul Wahhab Choudhury who wrote the Srihatte Shah Jalal (Shah Julal at Sylhet, Sylhet, 1905) and Mohammad Abdur Rahim who wrote the Srihatte Nur (The Light at Sylhet, Sylhet, 1905).
 2. Shah Jalal, pp.1-5. To give one example, Blochman's translation of the Ain.
 3. Shah Jalal, pp.3-4.
 4. Ibid., (My translation).
 5. Dev was a lawyer in Commilla.

But the author's main aim was to praise the British. He wrote that while four princes were quarrelling among themselves the British intervened and settled the matter. "The British justice prevented the Tripura Kingdom from sure downfall," he commented.¹

Saratcandra Dhar's Rani Joyamati (The Queen Joyamati, Dacca, 1911) is a work of the same flavour. It is nominally a biography of the wife of a king of Assam, but in fact is an appreciation of the British administration in Assam. Dhar depicted the chaotic state of Assam in the past when bloody quarrels were very common. He wrote that there was terrible disorder in Assam and every royal family had its members murdered in the feuds that very often ensued; mothers wailed for their sons, sisters for brothers and wives for husbands.² He told how the King Godapani was expelled from his kingdom and his wife Joyamati was lashed to death by the usurping minister who, in the opinion of the author, was "cruel, oppressive, tyrannic and beastly."³ It appears that the underlying object of the author was to present a contrast between the past and present Assam.

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1. Birendra Kahini (The Story of Heroes), p.44. (My translation).
 2. Rani Joyamati (The Queen Joyamati), pp.8-9.
 3. Ibid., p.43. (My translation).

Muslim biographers were interested, as stated above, in the lives of famous Muslims. Abdul Wahab, Assistant Headmaster of the Noakhali Zilla School, wrote the Ahmad Carit (The Life of Ahmad, Noakhali, 1911). The book contains a biography of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875. Wahab particularly praised the system of residential schools adopted by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. During this period, the government of the new province was taking steps to improve the boarding houses of schools.¹ Teachers of educational institutions advocated the need for good hostels where students could learn discipline and acquire habits of self reliance. Without these qualities, contended S.N. Bhodra, a teacher of the Jagannath College, "... mere teaching in the class must miss [its object]."² The author, however,

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1. On 6 September 1907, a hostel, named the Dufferin Muslim Hostel, was opened in Dacca. It cost about Rs.50,000, of which Rs.23,000 were contributed by Nawab Salimolla, Rs. 7,500 by the people, and the rest by the government. H. Sharp, Director of public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.768, Shillong, 6-13 September 1907: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1908. In 1910, the director of public instruction framed a scheme which provided for the starting of 38 messes in the Dacca town, with accommodation for 739 students. H. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No.797, Shillong, 23 November 1910: Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, 1912.
 2. The Dacca Review, May 1911, vol.I, No.2, p.32.

wrote that the idea of residential schools was becoming popular in the new province and this was a testimony to the great achievement of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.¹ Wahab's purpose in writing this book was to encourage the Muslims by placing before them the career and achievement of a man who fought to raise the Muslim community from the depth of degradation. His study indicates that the Aligarh movement had an appeal to the educated Muslims of Eastern Bengal. The Muslims in this area, observed LeMesurier, after living for long "in intellectual tutelage to the Hindus", attempted after the partition "to create an esprit de corps with the advanced school of Aligarh."²

In the same year, Shaikh Mafizuddin translated into Bengali in two volumes, Syed Ameer Ali's A Short History of the Saracens, for the purpose of reviving in the minds of Muslims their splendid past. The work was published in Kakina in the district of Rangpur. The first volume contains a short description of the life of Mohammad,³

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1. Ahmad Carit (The Life of Ahmad), p.74. Also Ahmed, S., Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912), London Ph.D. thesis, 1960, p.509.
 2. Officiating Commissioner, Dacca Division, to Chief Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Revenue Department, No. 1160 L.R., Dacca, 12-16 July 1906: Eastern Bengal and Assam Revenue Proceedings, 1907.
 3. Mohammad (570-632). Son of Abdullah of the Hashimite tribe of Makkah. Began prophetic career, 612. Preached the One God, the Last Judgement, Alms, Prayers, and surrender to the will of God (Islam). Fought three battles with the people of Makkah and many of the Arab tribes were subjugated before his death.

Preacher of Islam, and the reign of the Umayyad Khalifs.¹ The second volume deals with the Abbasids², the Fatimids³ and the Muslims in Spain.⁴ The main theme of this work is to show how the Muslims rose to power, overcoming all difficulties by dint of their courage, bravery and steadfastness, and to record their cultural achievement. Ameer Ali stated in his preface; "How an army, almost always overmatched in numbers, collected from a congeries of warring tribes, divided by fierce tribal jealousies, who had never before united in common enterprise, shattered the seasoned cohorts of Chosroes and the disciplined and well-armed legions of Caesar is, as Professor Noldeke rightly remarks, a marvel. These soldiers of the desert relit the torch of knowledge and gave an impetus to civilisation which, without exaggeration, has few parallels in the history of

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1. The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750). The founder was Muiwiyah. The last ruler was Marwan II.
 2. The Abbasid Khaliphate (750-c.1100). Abu-l-Abbas al-Saffah was the first Abbasid Khalif. Baghdad became the centre of learning under the Abbasids.
 3. The Fatimid dynasty (968-1171). Under the Fatimids, Egypt became the most brilliant centre of Muslim culture. The Fatimids claimed to be descendants of the Khalif Ali, and of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet.
 4. The Umayyad dynasty ruled in Spain from 756-1031. Under the Umayyads, Cordova became the greatest intellectual centre of Europe, with a huge paper trade, great libraries and pre-eminent schools (in medicine, mathematics, philosophy, poetry, music).

mankind. The story of their work and achievements should be an inspiration to their descendants; and not only to them but to all nationalities who follow the Faith of Islam."¹ Ma^{fi}juddin's translation, however, removed a long and keenly felt want for an authentic history of the Arabs in Bengali, for until this work was brought out, no exhaustive treatise on the subject was available in the Bengali language.² Remarkably chaste and perspicuous in style the book was indeed a boon to the Bengali Muslim community.

In none of the books mentioned above/^{was}an independent attempt made to portray the character of an ideal Muslim woman. It is in Shaikh Abdul Jabbar's Adarsa Ramaⁿzi (Ideal Woman, Dacca, 1911) that we find a collection of short biographical sketches of 19 famous Muslim ladies of India. The book was published in two parts by the Ashutosh Library of Dacca. The first part contains seven biographies and two other articles and the second 12 biographies. The first part was recommended by the director of public instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, for use in all libraries of the province. In writing these biographies, the author did not strictly follow the principle of mentioning dates of

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1. Ali, A., A Short History of the Saracens, p.i. (Original).
 2. The Kohinur, Kartik Issue, B.S. 1318 (1911): Mafizuddin's translation. Ibid.

birth and death of the individual concerned. In the narrative of Rabia, a saint, no date of her birth was mentioned. Through these studies, the author intended to present before the women folk of his community the high morals and good qualities that a woman could acquire in her life.

From the biographical writings of the Hindus, however, it appears that they had two purposes in view. First, they had a feeling of cordiality towards the Muslims, which was apparent in their biographies of great or noble Muslims. Second, they praised the British and their actions, believing that whatever the British rulers had done was favourable and beneficial to the people of the country. This was, in fact, very important specially at a time when the Hindus of the other part of Bengal were very critical of the British attitude towards the Indians, particularly to the Bengali Hindus.

Journalism

Among the journals that were started by the people of the new province, some accounts only of the Journal of the Moslem Institute and Basana are available.¹ The former

1. While the journal itself is not available, it has been described by Q.A. Mannan (Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana, Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature, pp.288-295) from whom the details are taken for examination here.

deals mainly with the political problems of the time and the latter mainly with social aspects of the Muslim community. A study of these periodicals reveals the Muslim attitude to the changes taking place and to social problems.

The Journal of the Moslem Institute

The Journal of the Moslem Institute is chiefly devoted to subjects of oriental interest. The publication of this journal may be regarded as a gratifying indication of the awakening of Muslim thought and activity in Bengal, and is called the first Muslim venture of the kind.¹ The

1. The Reis and Rayyet, 11 and 18 November 1905: The Journal of the Moslem Institute, vol. I, October-December 1905. The journal appeared for the first time in 1905. It was edited by A.F.M. Abdul Ali, M.A. The executive committee consisted of the following members:

President and Treasurer: - J.A. Chapman.

Members:

- (1) Moulvi Walial Islam
- (2) " M.B. Zarif
- (3) " Aaur Rahman
- (4) " M. Rahman
- (5) " Ahmed

(2) Assistant Secretaries:

- (3)(1) Moulvi Raza Ali
- (2) " Abdulla Abu Sayid
- (3) Shaikh Ekramul Haq, B.A.

Librarian:

A.M. Fazhul Wahab.

Secretary:

Muhammad Hashim

The social status and professions of these people are not mentioned.

Statesman commented; "Among the many magazines of the kind that have lately come our way we have no hesitation in giving the first place, both for contents and format, to the admirable venture of the scholarly and enthusiastic young men of the Moslem Institute."¹ Usually it contains a dozen contributions in prose or verse, reaching a quite exceptional level of excellence. Articles are varied in character and are entirely free from all sectarian taint, several of them being either by Hindus or on Hindu subjects. All contributors to the journal were acknowledged authorities on the subjects with which they dealt. For example, Khuda Baksha, a London barrister, wrote on topics concerning law. Sir Roper Lethbridge wrote an article entitled "The Future of Eastern Bengal and Assam". "I am induced", he said, "to jot down a few thoughts on the most interesting of current topics in Bengal ... because I am one of those Anglo-Indian publicists who have been inclined, in warm sympathy with my numerous Bengali friends, rather to deprecate the administrative measure known as the partition of Bengal -- but who now feels in honour bound frankly and loyally to acknowledge that the reconstruction of these provinces is being carried through with a simple eye to the welfare of the various

1. The Statesman, 19 October 1905.

communities most nearly concerned, and who is constrained to acknowledge, while accepting 'the accomplished fact', that the future of the new province is full of promise for all its inhabitants, and specially for the great and loyal Mussalman community of Eastern Bengal."¹ "The Government of the new Province", he continued, "is spontaneously giving large facilities for acquiring the knowledge and the training that will equip the rising generation of Eastern Bengal for creditable competition in the great race of life."²

Then referring to the highly sympathetic speech in which Sir Bampfylde Fuller replied to the various addresses presented to him at Comilla on 13 January 1906, he commented: "I think it is impossible for an impartial person to read Sir Bampfylde Fuller's speech at Comilla without feeling that -- whatever views we may entertain about the recent reconstruction -- there can be no doubt about this, that the head of the local Government is filled by an ardent desire to make life better worth living, by all the people of the Province."³

Nawab Salimolla also wrote an article under the title "The New Province -- its Future Possibilities". He

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1. The Moslem Institute, vol.I, October to December, 1905, pp.109-110.
 2. Ibid., p.110.
 3. Ibid.

observed that the people "are now slowly but surely realising that Bengal has been partitioned solely for the benefit of the inhabitants of Eastern Bengal," and "the misguided agitation and consequent interest on account of the separation are giving place to sober consideration and undisguised satisfaction."¹ The separation, he continued, had offered the Muslims many facilities which they did not possess before. "No one can deny that the partition has roused the entire Mahommadan Community of Eastern Bengal."² "There are", he added, "many good things in store for us which will no doubt come to us by and by, and the Muhammadans being the largest in number in the new province, they will have the largest share. ... The leaders of our community have at last awakened and I am glad to say are taking a keen interest in the welfare of our community."³

Commenting on the Journal of the Moslem Institute, the editor of the Muhammadian wrote: "In Moulvi A.F.M. Abdul Ali, the boat has a trusty coxswain and if the crew he directs would pull a long stroke and a strong, the boat would be well placed in the race. ... The Journal affords

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1. The Moslem Institute, vol. I, April to June, 1906, pp. 408-12.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.

an hour's pleasant and instructive reading";¹ it helped, he added, to foster a spirit of research among the young and educated members of the Muslim community.

The Journal was published quarterly. In his introduction, the editor rightly observed, in justifying his decision to issue the journal quarterly, that "it is preferable to put in a decent appearance every quarter rather than to cut a sorry figure every month."²

The Basana

In the pre-partition days, as far as it can be ascertained, there were two Bengali journals in Eastern Bengal: the Akbare Islamia was a monthly and was edited by Naimuddin; the Ahmadi was a weekly and was edited by Abdul Hamid Khan Yusufzai. Both of them were published from Tangail. The former was started in 1883 and the latter in 1888.³ These journals dealt mainly with religious affairs and moved in a limited circle; both of them died before the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴

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1. The Muhammadan, Madras, 1 March 1906: The Journal of the Moslem Institute, April to June, p.10.
 2. The Journal of the Moslem Institute, April to June 1906, p.10.
 3. Mannan, Q.A., Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana, (Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature) pp. 148-51.
 4. Ibid., p.231.

The Basana, however, was published for the first time in 1908, and was edited by Shaikh Fazlul Karim from Kakina in the district of Rangpur. It bears on its front the name "Monthly Journal and Critic".¹ Possibly the journal had no regular publication, for it appears that in the first year the last three issues were published together in a single volume. Although organised from a village, it had a number of renowned contributors like Reazuddin Ahmad, Maniruzzaman Islamabadi and Taslimuddin.² In the journal there are useful articles on scientific, historical, philosophical, biographical and religious topics. It is essentially meant for the diffusion of useful knowledge on various subjects, and every article has claim to originality, artistic presentation and literary polish. The first number contains the following articles: "A brief history of the Holy Quran", "The philosophy of human birth in the Quran", "Aurangzeb",

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1. The Basana, 1908, First Issue, Cover Page: Mannan, Q.A., Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana (Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature), p.288.
 2. The Basana, 1908, First Issue: Ibid., p.289. Taslimuddin Ahmad was born and educated in Rangpur. He wrote a number of books on the life of the prophet Mohammad. Reazuddin Ahmad was a renowned Muslim writer. Maniruzzaman Islamabadi (1878-1950). Born in Chittagong. Appointed superintendent of a madrasa, Rangpur. Joined the Khilafat movement, 1920. A social worker and writer.

"The History of the Arabs" and the "Poet Amir". All these articles point to the one underlying object of the writers, namely, to speak of the glories of Islam and of the glorious past of the Muslims. The purpose was to foster among the Muslims a feeling of common heritage and thereby to arouse a national awakening among them.

The Basana ventilates the opinion of the educated people of Eastern Bengal on the existing state of the Muslim community. A writer, in an article entitled Maner Katha (Thoughts - literally, a word of mind), wrote about the dishonesty and insincerity of the so-called reformers of Islam who moved from one part of the country to another preaching the gospel of social upliftment. He argued that what these people expounded, they did not practise themselves. They had neither zeal nor genuine love for their works. They had chosen the profession of speech-maker, because they had neither education nor aptitude for any other work. The writer noted that, for the last 15 or 18 years, people of various grades -- Molla, Munshi and Moulvis -- were shouting for the amelioration of Muslim society. In the name of social advancement, they were leading the country to disrepute and vileness. "Behind this great betrayal, lay their

self-interest."¹ He went on and stated: "Education is necessary to make progress in any field. To get education with patience and to follow honest ideals are the main factors to assist^{to}/achieve success."² In the conclusion he wanted his co-religionists to lead an ideal life and asked them to follow the logic which helped find the truth.

The articles on social topics pertaining to religion are frequently found in it. An article reads that there was a bitter conflict between the Hindus and Muslims particularly in Bengal over the annual slaughter of cows. Many Hindus blamed the Muslims for observing this religious practice and did not hesitate to torture them when they occasionally killed even one or two cows in secret. The writer argued that in all parts of the world people were destroying animals in one way or other for their own safety. Therefore, the Muslims did not do anything wrong when they killed cows. In India, the Christians were slaying numerous cows and the beef was being openly sold in Calcutta markets every day. The Hindus did not object to this, for the Christians were the ruling class. Similarly when the Muslims were the

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1. The Basana: Mannan, Q.A., Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana (Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature), p.290. (My translation).
 2. Ibid., (My translation).
 3. Ibid.

emperors of India, the Hindus did not dare raise their voice against the slaughter of cows. Now, the writer observed, the Muslims had become so weak and their condition so miserable that the Hindus interfered in their religious affairs.¹

In summing up, it can be said that though both Hindu and Muslim authors and journalists were engaged in literary activity, there was a marked difference in their attitude and approach. While the Hindu writings were concerned with the development of both Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim writings displayed a growing consciousness among the Muslims that they formed a community separate from the Hindus.

1. The Basana: Mannan, Q.A., Adhunik Bangla Sahityea Muslim Sadhana (Muslim Contribution to Modern Bengali Literature) p.290.

CONCLUSION

The partition of Bengal in 1905 was opposed by the Hindus, mostly those of West Bengal, and the Indian National Congress, and since then this episode has been treated by both scholars and politicians as a highly controversial subject of Indian history. Some argued that the underlying motive of the plan was to weaken the national unity while others believed that it was solely an administrative reform. S.N. Banerjea, one of India's earliest nationalists and politicians, in his A Nation in Making, remarked that "it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengali-speaking population."¹ On the other hand, Lovat Fraser, who claimed to have viewed the event "from the position of a detached spectator", in his India Under Curzon And After, stated emphatically: "I believed the partition of Bengal to be the greatest and most beneficent of Lord Curzon's labours in India."² While differing in their interpretation of the objective of the partition, they had examined only the politics involved in it and its political significance. The event has been treated as a turning point in the history of the Indian

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1. Banerjea, S.N., A Nation in Making, p.173. (Reset and reprinted in 1963).
 2. Fraser, L., India Under Curzon And After, pp.395-6.

national movements. Commenting on the incident, S. Gopal, in his British Policy in India 1858-1905, records that national consciousness in Bengal had been tepid until 1905 when "a new robustness was stung into the politics of Bengal and of India ... Indian nationalism moved away from both mendicant resolutions and stray bomb outrages to ardent, broad-based revolutionary pressure."¹ No attempt, however, has been made to study the social and economic impact of the partition on the people who inhabited the new province. It was those people who were to suffer or gain from the consequences of the partition. This thesis attempts for the first time to examine and narrate economic and social changes that took place in the regions of Eastern Bengal and Assam as a result of their becoming a separate province.

At the time of the partition, the new province's communications were inadequate, and its trade and industry underdeveloped. Its own port of Chittagong had suffered seriously, the government's attention being focussed on the development of Calcutta as the major port, with the whole of the new province simply working as its hinterland. Railways,

1. Gopal, S., British Policy in India 1858-1905, p.275.

roads and waterways catered not for the whole population but for the industrial interests of Calcutta and the Hooghly regions. The province was educationally backward, and all the important colleges and schools were situated in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. Being far away from the seat of the government at Calcutta, its educational and other needs remained unnoticed and hence unfulfilled. Its educational institutions were under-staffed and badly housed; teachers were ill-paid.

After 1905 the province received closer attention from the local government at Dacca and made progress in trade, indigenous industry (particularly handloom weaving) and literary activity. The handloom cotton weaving industry developed, but this was confined to the production of coarse cloths which supplied the demands of the common people. Muslins were still woven in Dacca but their quality and quantity were low. The government's granting of loans to the weavers stimulated weaving. Some people with small capital started manufacturing soaps for local use. In order to draw the attention of people to the fact that good cigar and cigarette tobaccos could be produced in Eastern Bengal by adopting improved methods of cultivation and curing of the crop, the department of agriculture

of the new province attempted to carry on experiments on the Rangpur farm at Burirhat. Experiments were successful, and a promising start was made in the cultivation of good varieties of tobacco for making cigars and cigarettes. Since then Rangpur remained the largest centre for experimental tobacco cultivation in this part of India.

The most significant development took place in the fields of education and transport, the former leading to the rise of the Muslim middle class and the latter to the development of trade of the region. In the few years after the partition, the new province made impressive progress in education. An energetic educational policy, inaugurated by J.B. Fuller, the first Lieutenant Governor of the province, was being steadily followed. The administration had dealt with every stage of education. The new province acquired an educational department of its own; the department found a competent director in H. Sharp, who took keen interests in the province's educational development. Colleges and schools were improved: two government colleges were provided with facilities to teach the degree course; the existing curriculum of the schools was revised; the institutions were provided with better accommodation; attempts were made to strengthen their staffs, and teachers' pay was to

some extent enhanced. Many new educational institutions were built and facilities were extended for women's education; the zenana system was actively encouraged. The number of students had increased in both schools and colleges. The government became alive to the urgent need of spreading education widely in these areas. All this was a definite advance upon the past and marked a turning point in the history of education of these regions. Impressed by this progress the government of India decided in 1912 to recommend to the secretary of state the establishment of a university at Dacca, the capital of the new province, and the appointment of a special officer for education in Eastern Bengal. The Dacca University, which was established in 1921 on the basis of such recommendations, was the first university in this part of India and remained the only university of East Pakistan until 1955, when another university was established at Rajshahi.

Development on a similar line took place in transport. Communications of the province were improved, many feeder railways and roads being opened, and steamer services started. Although the natural sea-outlet of Eastern Bengal and Assam and the most convenient by reason

of its proximity, Chittagong failed to develop as a competitor to Calcutta within Bengal. Now it was developed into an international port. Its docking facilities were extended and new jetties built, and the Karnafuli river revetted. Overseas trade and internal commerce expanded. But in so developing Chittagong, the port commissioners and the government of the new province had to encounter the jealousy of the Calcutta merchants who disliked the development of Chittagong as a port with direct overseas trade because it meant a considerable loss of East Bengal - jute and Assam-tea trade to Calcutta. Again, compared with Calcutta, Chittagong, in spite of its progressive development, lacked many harbour facilities. Some tea and jute still found their way to foreign countries through Calcutta. In other words, by the end of our period, Chittagong had not yet become the sole port of its province with all facilities commensurate with its needs, although it had improved and its volume of trade had increased rapidly. This development of the port had a far reaching result in view of the fact that Chittagong became an international port and remained so in subsequent times. Today, Chittagong is one of the largest international ports of Pakistan and the biggest one of East Pakistan.

The reasons, which led to the development, were, briefly, as follows:

Firstly, the partition lessened the overwhelming influence of Calcutta over Eastern Bengal and Assam with the result that the latter two were left to use their resources in their development. No longer did Calcutta remain the nucleus of socio-economic activities of the whole of Bengal, Dacca, Chittagong and Shillong emerging as the centres of new enterprises. Eastern Bengal and Assam formed an entity the administration of which, although of the Bengal model, was separate from that of Bengal. The areas of the new province were no longer administered by an over-burdened government of Bengal at Calcutta. The new government at Dacca, being present on the spot, was better able to look after local problems and enabled greater contacts between the officials and the people. It is no wonder that the weakening of the Calcutta influence and the closer attention of the local government had stimulated development in the province.

Secondly, the early administrators of the new province, from the lieutenant-governor downwards, were very enthusiastic in carrying out the development works. And they tried to prove that administrative necessity alone had led to the

creation of the new province. This was because the anti-partitionists accused the government of dividing Bengal purely on political grounds. Officials like J.B. Fuller and L. Hare, who served the province as its lieutenant governors, were capable administrators. Fuller was much praised by the people for his administration. A contemporary remarked: "It is owing to his untiring zeal, irrepressible genius and his matchless talent and foresight that the administrative machinery of our new government is doing so admirably and is working so smoothly, in spite of machinations of certain spiteful Hindoos who are trying their utmost to injure and to mar our Lieutenant-Governor's reputation as a first class administrator."¹ S.N. Bhadra in his Bang O Assam spoke of Lancelot Hare's achievement and being impressed by his works he wrote: "May God grant Sir Lancelot Hare long life."² H. Luson, who was the Chairman of the Chittagong Port Commission, was first to bring to public notice that the freight charges from England to Chittagong direct were less than those from England to Chittagong via Calcutta and thus he paved the way for the growth of

1. "Editorial", The Eastern Bengal and Assam Era, 28 July 1906, p.4.

2. Bhadra, S.N., Bang O Assam, p.69.

Chittagong's overseas trade.

Thirdly, there was an upsurge of local interests and aspirations among the people of the new province. A new and independent provincial spirit sprang up. The creation of the province aroused among them hopes for the future and consequently a sense of initiative and enterprise. Assamese, in particular, felt that they now belonged to a self-contained province with larger and independent services. Assam, being small, so long, had no cadre of its own and had been failing to "attract the highest type of civilian to its employ."¹ The arrangement, in addition, had stimulated the rise of a mercantile community: feeling free from the frontal competition of Calcutta traders, the petty businessmen began to invest more capital in their enterprise; and in order to avoid the keen competition in Calcutta some merchants began to shift a certain portion of their capital in the new province where they found considerable expansion of trade and commerce.

The partition created an unprecedented enthusiasm among the Muslims of the new province. The fact that Dacca

1. Risley, Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 3 December 1903: P.P. 1905, vol.58, Cd. 2658.

became the capital of the new province filled them with joy and happy recollections of those days when Dacca was the provincial capital of the Mughals; to them, the new province had come to stay. It aroused, as evident from their writings, their self-confidence and made them more concerned with their socio-economic development, thus stimulating the rise of the Muslim middle class.¹ Writers like Shaikh Abdul Jabbar, Shaikh Chakiuddin Ahmad and Mohammad Dad Ali had repeatedly urged the Muslims to ameliorate their social and economic position. In his Islam Pradip, published from Rangpur in 1907, Chakiuddin Ahmad depicted the social condition of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal and reminded his co-religionists of their "glorious past". The Muslims, he said, had been the proudest nation of the world. Many nations had once respected the intellectual superiority of the Muslims and had learnt from them arts, science, commerce, trade and industry, and

1. A.H.M. Nooruzzaman argues: "The rise of the Muslim middle class has been almost simultaneous with the rise of the Muslim League. In the movement for Pakistan the main driving force has been the middle class, which is more than any other class identified with the country." Rise of the Muslim Middle Class as a Political Factor in India and Pakistan (1858-1947), London Ph.D. thesis, 1964, p.249.

had now become great powers. The Muslims had fallen from the pinnacle of glory to the depth of degradation and superstition. The Hindus, who had once worshipped the Muslim rulers of Delhi and who thought themselves fortunate to carry out the orders of the Mughals, were now disobeying their descendants. Nothing could be more discrediting and shameful to a glorious and civilised nation than this. Ahmad exhorted his brethren to realise their deplorable state and to improve their lot.¹ In the same way, Mohammad Dad Ali, in his Samaj Sikkha, asked his co-religionists to improve their pecuniary condition by entering the field of trade and commerce. The Muslims became more conscious that they formed a community separate from the Hindus. And so they seriously felt the need of unity when they thought that the Hindu agitation against the partition was in fact an anti-Muslim movement and as such a threat to the existence of the Muslims as a separate community. This community-consciousness and a sense of unity among them introduced a factor in the history of the new province which proved to be of far reaching consequences for the history of India as a whole. People began to take interest

1. Ahmad, C., Islam Pradip, pp.1-9.

in politics and men like Nawab Ali Chowdhury and Nawab Salimolla attempted to give them direction and drive by establishing organisations, such as the Mohammadan Provincial Union, and by helping the foundation of the Muslim League at Dacca in 1906. It was the League which became the largest political organisation of the Indian Muslims and, later on, under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, successfully demanded for them a separate state -Pakistan - when the 1947-partition of India was considered.

Judged by the progress that the new province had made during a period of six years, it can be said that the territorial rearrangement of 1905 was one of the best administrative measures undertaken during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. If it was so then it may be asked why it was annulled and more so when we find that the partition was declared by Morley in 1906 a "settled fact" and accepted by Minto as "very necessary". Even Lord Hardinge, during whose viceroyalty the partition was revoked, had admitted the prime utility of the measure, argued against its abrogation and called the suggestion to do so a "bomb shell". In answering to this question, it can be said that the partition was annulled purely on political grounds and no account was taken of the economic and educational progress the new province had made since partition under an efficient system of administration.

APPENDIXBranch Railway Lines Surveyed During our Period in
Eastern Bengal and Assam

Main Lines	Branch Lines Surveyed	Length in miles	Date of Survey	Estimated Cost. In Lakhs	Gauge
Assam Bengal and Burma railway	Chittagong - Taungup- frome	490	1908- 1909	Rs. 841.94	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Eastern Bengal railway	Shamganj to Darangiri coal field	54	1909	Rs. 75.76	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
"	Kurisgram to) Ulipur)	12	1910	?	2'6"
	Ulipur to) Chilman)	17			3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
"	Godagari extension, near Nachol, to Abdulpur	50	1907	Rs. 45.40	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
"	Natore to Godagari via Rajshahi	44	1910	Natore to Rajshahi (24 miles) surveyed. Estimated cost 11.15 lakhs.	5'6"

Main Lines	Branch Lines Surveyed	Length in miles	Date of Survey	Estimated Cost. In Lakhs	Gauge
Eastern Bengal railway	Natore to Sirajganj	55	1910	?	5'6"
"	Santahar to Malda	53	1910	?	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "

Source: Administration Report on the Railways in India, 1911, pp. 83-86: P.P. 1912-13, vol. 62, Cd. 6335.

APPENDIXBranch Railway Lines Projected but not Surveyed DuringOur Period in Eastern Bengal and Assam

Main Lines	Branch Lines Projected	Length in miles	Estimated Cost In Lakhs	Gauge
Eastern Bengal railway	Barisal to a point on the Khulsa branch of the Eastern Bengal railway	?	?	2'6"
Eastern Bengal railway and Assam Bengal railway.	(i) Bhairab Bazar to Netrokona via Iswarganj	70	Rs.73.55	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
	(ii) Iswarganj to opposite Mymensingh	15	Rs.13.82	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
	(iii) Bridge over the Brahmaputra at Mymensingh	?	Rs. 8.17	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
	(iv) Netrokona to Durgapar	17	Rs.16.37	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Eastern Bengal railway	Raiganj to Titalia via Ranisunkoil, Nekhmurd	?	?	3'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "

Main Lines	Branch Lines Pro- jected	Length in miles	Estimated Cost In Lakhs	Gauge
Assam Bengal railway	(i) Branch from Baitakhal Station to Dulamcherja	10	Rs. 4.82	
	(ii) Srimangul to Manimukh via Monhi Bazar	22	Rs. 8.82 [By 1912, this line had been surveyed]	2'6"
	(iii) Sutang to Madna	30	Rs. 11.54	2'6"

Source: Administration Report on the Railways in India,
1911, pp. 83-86: P.P. 1912-1913, vol. 62, Cd. 6336.

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16 October - December 1905	1672.
January - May 1906	7215.
June - July 1906	7216.
August - December 1906	7217.
January - April 1907	7487.
May - August 1907	7485.
September- December 1907	7486.
January - May 1908	7775.
June - September 1908	7776.
October - December 1908	7777.
January - May 1909	8053.
June - December 1909	8054.
January - June 1910	8331.
July - December 1910	8332.
January - April 1911	8614.
May - August 1911	8615.
September- December 1911	8620.
January - March 1912	8855.
" " "	8856.
" " "	8858.

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	<u>Year</u>	<u>Volume No.</u>
December	1905	6972.
	1906	7224, 7225.
	1907	7494, 7495.
	1908	7785, 7786.
	1909	8062, 8063.
	1910	8341, 8342.
January - May	1911	8622.
June - December	1911	8623, 8624.
January - March	1912	8862.

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	<u>Year</u>	<u>Volume No.</u>
January - May	1906	7215.
June - July	1906	7216.
August - December	1906	7218.
January - June	1907	7487.
July - December	1907	7488.
January - June	1908	7778.
July - December	1908	7779.
January - June	1909	8055.
July - December	1909	8056.
January - April	1910	8333.
May - September	1910	8334.
October - December	1910	8335.
January - April	1911	8614.
May - September	1911	8615.
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January	- June	1906
July	- December	1906 7221.
January	- June	1907 7489, 7490.
July	- December	1907 7491, 7493.
January	- June	1908 7780, 7781.
July	- December	1908 7782, 7784.
January	- June	1909 8057, 8058.
July	- December	1909 8059.
January	- July	1910 8336, 8337.
August	- December	1910 8338.
January	- June	1911 8617.
July	- December	1911 8618, 8619.
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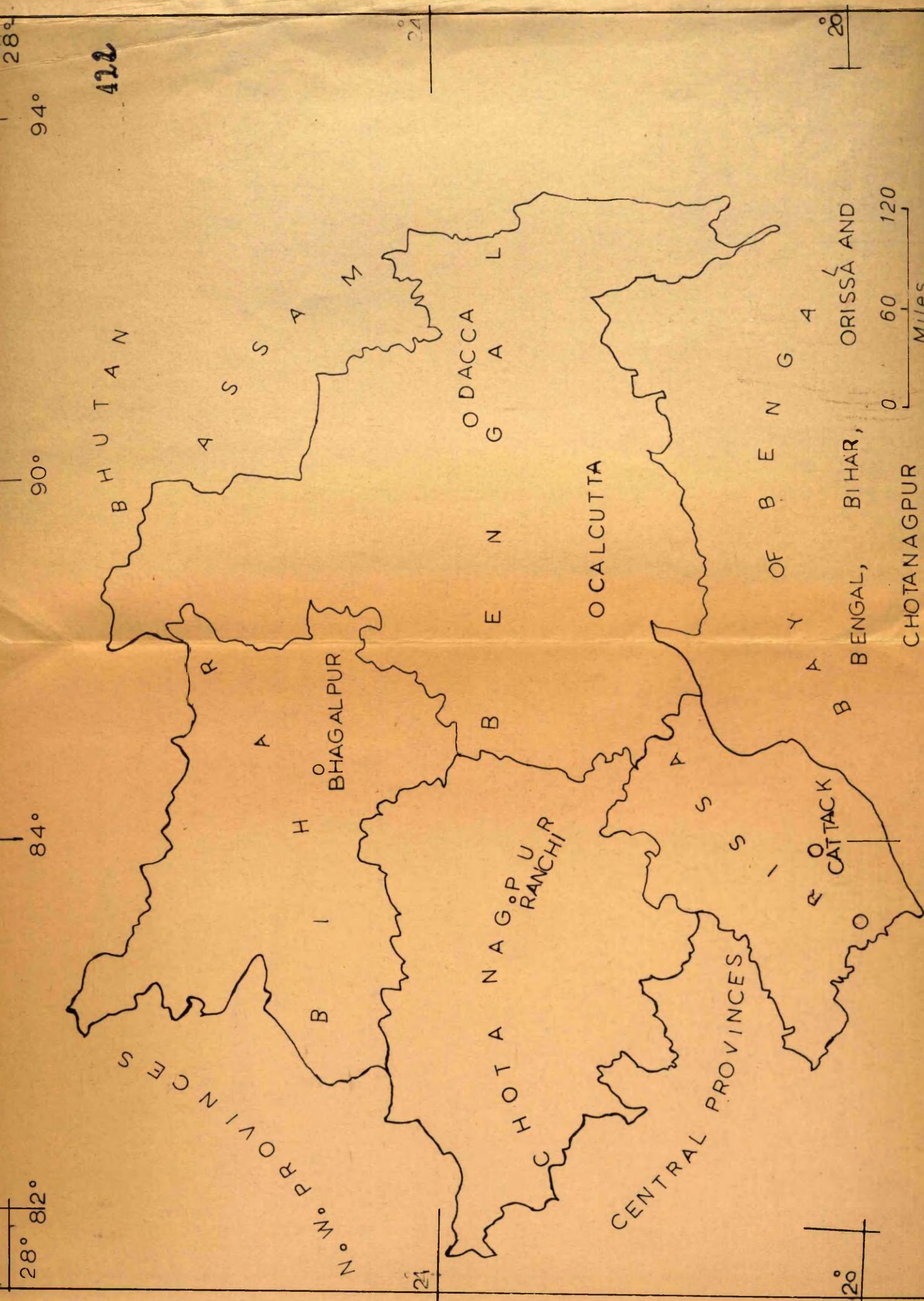
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THE NEW PROVINCE OF EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM

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28°



-  Provincial boundary
-  District boundary
-  Native states boundary

24°

24°

BENGAL

28°

28°

BHUTAN

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NAGATRIBES

DARRANG

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JALPAIGURI

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AND JAINTIA HILLS

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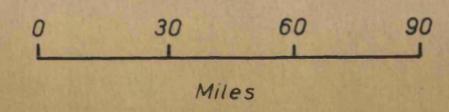
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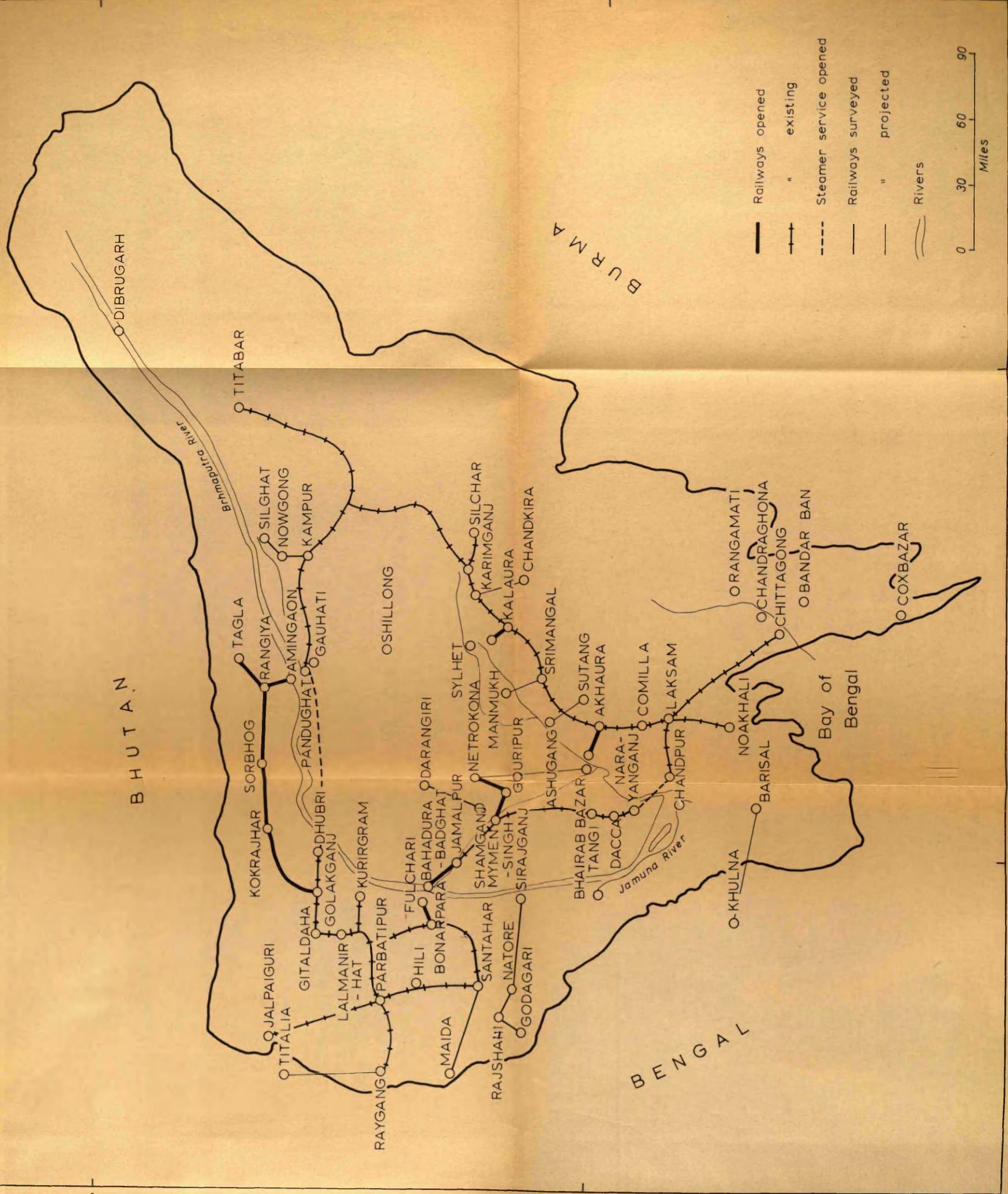
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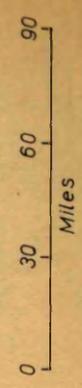
B H U T A N

B U R M A

B E N G A L

Bay of Bengal

- Railways opened
- + existing
- - - Steamer service opened
- Railways surveyed
- " projected
- ~~~~~ Rivers



DIBRUGARH

TITABAR

Brahmaputra River

SILGHAT
NOWGONG
KAMPUR

TAGLA
RANGIYA
AMINGAON
GAUHATI

OSHILLONG

SILCHAR
KARIMGANJ
KALAURA
CHANDKIRA

SYLHET
ONETROKONA
MANMUKH
SRIMANGAL

SUTANG
AKHAURA

COMILLA
LAKSAM

ORANGAMATI
CHANDRAGHONA
CHITTAGONG
OBANDAR BAN

COXBAZAR

KOKRAJHAR
SORBHOG

ODHUBRI
PANDUGHATO
GAUHATI

GITALDAHA
GOLAKGANJ
KURIRGRAM

PARBATIPUR
FULCHARI
BAHADURA
DARANGIRI

OHILI
BONARPARA
BADGHAT
JAMALPUR

SANTAHAR
MYMENSINGH
SIRAJGANJ
GOURIPUR

SHAMGANJ
SANTAHAR
NATORE
GODAGARI

MAIDA
RAJSHAHI

ASHUGANGO
BHAIKABAZAR
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Jamuna River