

HISTORY OF THE MUSLIMS OF BENGAL  
VOL. II A



KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
IMAM MUHAMMAD  
IBN SA'UD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY  
RESEARCH CENTRE



وَاللَّهُ وَبِكْرُكُمْ وَأُولُو  
رَبَابِكُمْ  
بِحَبْلِ الْحَمْدِ  
مركز البحوث

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# HISTORY OF THE MUSLIMS OF BENGAL

VOLUME II A  
BENGAL MUSLIMS DURING THE  
FIRST CENTURY OF BRITISH RULE  
(1757-1871)

BY  
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## FOREWORD

By

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. 'ABD ALLAH IBN 'ABD AL-MOHSIN AL-TURKĪ  
RECTOR, IMĀM MUḤAMMAD IBN SA'ŪD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

*In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent,  
the Most Merciful*

Praise be to Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds; and peace and blessings be on the noblest of prophets and the leader of messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and companions.

One of the objectives which the Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University strives to pursue and accomplish is to promote study and research in the various phases and periods of Islamic history. In so doing it aims at ascertaining academic truth and bringing to light the glorious history of Islam, the noble deeds and achievements of the Muslims, the splendid victories that attended the Muslim nation due to their adherence to Islam, as also the defeats and disasters that befell them on account of their drifting away from the correct ideals of Islam and their reliance, during some gloomy periods, on the enemies of Islam.

Bengal is one of those Islamic lands of which the history still continues to be in need of thorough investigation and intensive research. It is a land in which the sun of Islam once shone resplendently, guiding its people to the true path, providing good government to the country and spreading throughout it the benefits of justice and stability.

Professor Muhammad Mohar Ali submitted a project of research to the University for making a thorough study of the history of the Muslims of Bengal from the earliest contact of Islam with it till the present day. The University bestowed careful consideration on the project and was of the view that such a work, if carried out, would serve the interests of Islamic history and

would contribute to the enrichment of the library on Islam which falls short of a comprehensive research work on the history of the Muslims of Bengal. Hence the University approved the project and encouraged its initiator to proceed with the work by entrusting him exclusively with it. The University also provided him with the necessary academic and material facilities to enable him, with the help of Allah, to accomplish the project.

It is now a pleasure for me to present this work to those interested in Islamic history and to all the sincere well-wishers of Islam who desire for substantial research work. This is by way of the University's participation in the effort to fill the gaps in the library on Islamic history.

Such participation represents only one aspect of the University's concern, under the directives of our rightly-guided government, for the affairs of Muslims in general. This concern embraces various fields and assumes different forms such as sponsoring academic research work, like the present book, granting scholarships to Muslim students for prosecuting their studies, assisting Muslim peoples by providing them with religious scholars and guides, supplying them with useful books and advancing various other types of aid and assistance which, on the whole, demonstrate the extent of His Majesty the King's benevolence and generosity for promoting the cause of the Muslims, their progress and solidarity.

The book before us is the second volume of this rather extensive project. It deals with the history of the Muslims of Bengal during the first century of British rule, that is from the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century A.C. (12th-13th century H.). It is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the impact of the English East India Company's rule upon the different aspects of life and condition of the Muslims of Bengal; while the second and third parts deal with the impact of the *Salafiya* movement in Bengal and the south Asian subcontinent as a whole, noticing particularly the various efforts at reform and regeneration of the Muslims.

The book as a whole is not confined to a narration of the political history alone. It deals with the history of the people in its broad sense and treats the cultural, economic and social aspects as also the reform movements and the history of the educational developments. In its comprehensiveness the book is in fact a historical and cultural encyclopædia of the Muslims of Bengal.

Finally, I express my thanks to the author for his commendable performance and profound research work, and pray to Allah for his success and progress. I hope the Research Centre of the University would undertake other intensive research projects that would enrich the Islamic library and would serve as reference works, like this book, not only in the field of Islamic history but also in other Islamic and Arabic disciplines and humanities.

May Allah enable us all to do whatever is good and beneficial.

*Wassalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullahi.*

Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Moḥsin al-Turkī  
Rector, Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd  
Islamic University

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3. I am grateful to the authorities of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland for permission to reproduce in Chapter XIX of this work parts of an article of mine published in their *Journal* for 1980, No. 1.
4. I am also grateful to the authorities of the University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh, for permission to reproduce in Chapter XVIII of this work parts of an article of mine published in the *Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. XIX, June 1971, Part A;

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to the Mehrub Publications, Chittagong, for permission to reproduce in Chapter VIII and its appendix some materials from my book, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1837*, published by them in 1965.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على سوله سيدنا ونبينا محمد وآله أجمعين وبعد .

## PREFACE

The present volume deals with the history of the Muslims of Bengal broadly during the first century of British rule, i.e., from 1757 to 1871. In 1757 the British captured political power in Bengal after having defeated its last independent Nawwāb, Sirāj al-Daulah, in the battle of Plassey. Exactly after one hundred years of that event there took place widespread “mutiny” and revolts throughout the British Indian dominions. The narrative of this volume has been brought down, however, to 1871 because that year really marks a turning point in the history of the Muslims of Bengal under British rule. In that year the *jihād* waged by the Muslims against alien rule for about half a century was brought to a close partly on account of the investigations and prosecutions carried out by the British Indian authorities and partly by a change of attitude on the part of a large section of the Muslims, indicated in a formal declaration made by influential urban Muslim leaders on the status of the country and, by implication, of cessation of hostility to British rule and the advisability of adjustment with the new political situation. And largely as a sequel to these developments the British Indian authorities also adopted a resolution indicating some new moves in respect of the education of the Muslims. The year 1871 thus marks the end of the first phase of British rule in so far as the Muslims were concerned. In another sense the year is a centenary landmark; for although in 1757 the British became masters of Bengal for all practical purposes, it was only in 1772 that they openly and directly assumed responsibility for the administration, or “stood forth as the Dīwān”, as it is commonly called.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first part, consisting of eight chapters, deals with the salient aspects of the East India Company’s administrative policies and measures and

their effect upon the Muslims. The first two chapters analyze the successive steps taken by the conquerors to stabilize their authority in the land, the belated attempt of Nawwāb Mīr Qāsim to regain independence and the disastrous results of "power without responsibility." These are followed by a discussion in chapters III and IV of the risings and resistance on the part of the Muslim peasants and zamindars in a number of districts on the one hand, and the guerilla warfare against the foreign rulers conducted by the *Faqīrs* for over a quarter of a century. Their role has been brought into proper relief for the first time and it has been pointed out that the emphasis hitherto laid on the activities of the *Sannyāsīs* is more appropriately applicable to those of the *Faqīrs*. The role of the *Sannyāsīs* proper was in fact only that of mercenaries for rival factions in the war of succession in Kuch Bihar and for some north Bengal zamindars; whereas it was the *Faqīrs* who conducted the anti-British guerilla warfare for a long time and did never act as mercenaries for any one. It has also been shown that their role has been somewhat obscured by the Company's officials' indiscriminate use of the term "Sannyasi" even when clearly referring to the activities of the *Faqīrs*.

The fifth chapter deals with the "Permanent Settlement" of 1793, the indigo planting system and the resumption of rent-free lands, and is a follow-on to its two previous chapters. It has been indicated, also for the first time, that the extensive and extraordinary powers with which the newly created zamindars were invested were primarily intended to enable them to keep the countryside under control and to put down any recalcitrant tendencies as exhibited by the *Faqīrs* and the others. The effects of the indigo planting system upon the Muslim peasantry and the people in general and the implications of the resumption of rent-free (*lākharā*) lands have been indicated in the same chapter. The sixth and seventh chapters deal with the educational measures of the government and the attitude of the Muslims towards them. In their origin the government's educational measures were prompted by strong Christianizing considerations; and these were supplemented by the activities of the Christian missionaries. An account of the main features of these activities and the Muslims'

response to them have therefore been given in the eighth and last chapter of this part of the volume.

The second part, consisting of four chapters and a few appendices, is devoted to the Islamic reform movements in mid-nineteenth century Bengal, namely, the reform movement of Tītu Mīr in south-west Bengal and the *Farā'idī* movement in central and eastern Bengal. These have been related, on the one hand, to the wider spirit of reform in the world of Islam emanating from the reform movement initiated in Arabia by Shaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and, on the other, to the socio-economic condition in the land brought about by foreign rule. The first two chapters of this part, (i.e. chapters IX and X of the volume) are devoted to the reform movement of Tītu Mīr. An attempt has been made to dispel some misconceptions about the origin and background of Tītu Mīr and a systematic and chronological account has been given of the different phases of the movement by a critical and thorough examination of the contemporary records, particularly W.S. Alexander's report of 25 November 1831, J.R. Colvin's report of 8 March 1832 and the reports of the trials of Tītu Mīr's followers. These records have also been reproduced as appendices for perusal of the more serious and inquisitive readers and for verification of the correctness or otherwise of the conclusions arrived at in this work. I have also made use of a near-contemporary account of Tītu Mīr hitherto overlooked by scholars. This account is contained in Mawlawī Ja'far 'Alī Naqwī's *Manzūrat al-Su'adā' Fī Ahwāl al-Ghuzāt wa al-Shuhadā'* (*Tārīkh-i-Aḥmadiya*), an unpublished Persian MSS preserved in the Panjab University Library, Lahore. The author was a close associate of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd and received the account of Tītu Mīr from Mawlawī Hidāyat Aḥmad Gangohī who was present in Calcutta at the time and who, along with some other Muslims, attempted to prevent the sending of troops against Tītu Mīr. But though narrated by a contemporary of Tītu Mīr, the account is sketchy and obviously inaccurate in many respects. It is nevertheless the earliest available account of the episode from the Muslim side. Hence I have reproduced it as an appendix, with an English translation and comments in footnotes.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters deal with the *Farā'idī* movement. The present writer has traced and utilized a hitherto unused document regarding the movement, namely, a confidential report about the movement submitted to government by the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner, J.H. Dunbar, in March 1847. Also, the other government records relating to the movement including the proceedings of the trial of Dudu Miyān, the *Farā'idī* leader, and some of his followers in 1847 have been thoroughly examined. As a result some important and hitherto unnoticed facts have emerged. For instance, it has come to light that in 1843 Dudu Miyān went on a pilgrimage to Makka and that exactly at that point of time a number of the *jihād* leaders from the west went on a preaching tour in eastern Bengal to procure support for the *jihād* from that region which they succeeded in a large measure in doing, that in 1846 the zamindars and the indigo planters led an attack on Dudu Miyān's residence and killed a number of his servants, that the *Farā'idīs'* attack on the Pānch Char indigo factory in December of that year was a direct sequel to that outrageous attack on the *Farā'idī* leaders, and that as in the case of Tītu Mīr's movement so in that of the *Farā'idīs* the Divisional Commissioner, under the influence of the zamindars and the planters, suggested to government the necessity for militarily suppressing the movement. For various reasons, however, the government refrained from such military intervention in the matter. At least in this respect the present writer has raised and attempted to explain the question why, in spite of the fact that the *Farā'idī* movement was more widespread and openly hostile to the zamindars and indigo planters the government did not come forward to suppress it militarily as they had done in the case of Tītu Mīr's movement. In view of their importance, Dudu Miyān's statement before and application to the Sessions Court at Dhaka in 1847, together with the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner's report on the *Farā'idīs* have been reproduced as appendices to this part of the book.

The third part of the volume is devoted to the role of the Muslims of Bengal in the wider *jihād* movement, or the "Fifty years' struggle", as the *Times* of London characterized it in 1871.

There of course exists a number of works on this movement. Mention may be made in this connection of S. A. H. A. Nadawī's *Sīrat-i-Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd* (2 vols.), Ghulam Rasul Mehr's *Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd* in two volumes and two other companion volumes on the *mujāhids*, both in Urdu, and Q. Ahmad's *The Wahabi Movement in India*. Valuable though these works are, none of their authors has brought into proper relief the very significant role of the Bengal Muslims in the movement as a whole. Moreover they appear to have based their accounts primarily on the writings of some surviving companions of Sayyid Aḥmad and other participants in the movement; and though some use has been made by these scholars of isolated and unconnected files of the government records, the more complete and connected series of records available on the subject appear to have been generally left unconsulted. It may be mentioned in this connection that the records relating to the movement as it concerned the British Indian authorities are contained in the *Bengal Judicial Proceedings* in the first instance and the military and other proceedings of the supreme government. A complete run of these proceedings is preserved in the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office Library, London. It is also noteworthy that the few published selections of records, which, by their very nature, are incomplete, such as the Bengal government's *Selections* No. 42 (Papers Relating to the Trial of Maulavi Ahmedullah), M. A. Khan's *Selections from Bengal Government Records on Wahhabi Trials* (1863-1870), (Dacca, 1961), are taken from the *Bengal Judicial Proceedings*. So far as the period covered by the latter *Selections* is concerned, a far more complete and connected collection in fact exists in the *Mayo Papers* (Cambridge University Library) under the title: "Correspondence on the Wahabi Movement". This collection is also made from the *Judicial Proceedings*. The writers who have hitherto written on this subject do not appear to have consulted this last mentioned collection, nor of the very useful volume of *Parliamentary Papers* of 1864 (Vol. 43, Papers 58: "Paper Relating to the Late Disturbances in the north-west frontier"). The value of the writings of such participants in the movement as Ja'far

Thāneswarī and ‘Abd al-Rahīm cannot of course be overestimated; but it needs to be borne in mind that writing as they did under the full flash of the British Indian authorities and after their return from exile in the Andamans in consequence of a government proclamation of amnesty, these participants in the movement naturally tended to be apologetic at times and to belittle or obscure such aspects of the movement as were likely to involve them in further troubles. For instance, Ja‘far Thāneswarī attempted to convey an impression that the *jihād* movement was not directed against the British Indian government as such. It is therefore necessary to balance and collate such accounts by a reference to the records of the British Indian authorities.

The present writer, besides consulting the above mentioned records, may claim to have used at least three other series which no previous writer on the subject has done. These are: (a) the detailed proceedings of trials of the Bengal and Bihar leaders which appeared serially in the columns of the *Englishman* and the *Indian Daily News* (Calcutta), after each day’s proceedings in the court, during 1870 and 1871; (b) three detailed reports on the investigations and trials submitted to government by J.H. Reily, the officer in charge of the investigations, and (c) the *Mayo Papers*, including the above mentioned “Correspondence on the Wahabi Movement”. In the light of all these records the present writer has attempted to give for the first time a connected account of the role of Bengal Muslims in the fifty years’ armed struggle against foreign rule. There has been no intention to belittle the part played by the Muslims in the other parts of the subcontinent, which in any case has already received ample attention from the scholars. The attempt has only been to set the record right in so far as the Muslims of Bengal were concerned.

This third part of the volume consists of seven chapters. One of these chapters (Chapter XVI) has been devoted to the role of the *mujāhids* in general and the Bengal Muslims in particular in the intervening revolts of 1857-58. The last but one chapter of this part deals with the Bengal Muslims’ formal repudiation of the concept of British India as *dār al-ḥarb*, the theoretical foundation of the *jihād* movement. The last and final chapter takes into

account the British authorities' assessment of this newly declared attitude of the Muslims, with special reference to Hunter's *The Indian Musalmans*, which was published in 1871 and which has mistakenly been regarded by many a scholar as setting the pattern for the rulers' revised attitude to the Muslims and as providing a model for the latter's subsequent "separatist" apology. It has been shown that the work had no such role and that, far from providing the model for a "separatist" outlook it merely reflected in a very peculiar way the ideas and attitudes the Muslims themselves had been expressing for a long time prior to 1871. At the end J.H. Reily's reports on the investigations at Malda, Rajmahal and Patna have been appended.

As explained at the beginning of the first volume of this work, the term "Bengal" has been used to denote roughly the "Bengal Presidency" of the East India Company's administration, or, in other words, the areas covered by present-day Bangladesh, the Indian province of West Bengal and parts of Bihar. Since the present volume depends mainly on sources in English language, the use of diacritical marks even with regard to Arabic and Persian expressions have been minimized while they have been generally dispensed with in well-known and easily recognizable personal and place-names.

I am grateful to the authorities of the Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University, Riyadh, particularly to its Rector, Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Moḥsin al-Turkī, and to the director of its Research Centre, Dr. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Rubaiya, for their having sponsored the project. I am thankful to two of my colleagues, Professor Sayyid Rizwan Ali, who pointed out a number of typing errors, and Professor Fazlur Rahman, who went through the proofs of several chapters and helped me in other ways. My thanks are due also to Professor Muḥammad Aslam of Lahore who was kind enough to procure and send me the photocopy of the relevant portion of the *Manzūrat al-Su'adā'* mentioned above; and to my student and friend, Dr. A.S.M. Akhtar Hussain, who went through the proof of a chapter and all along showed a keen interest in the work.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor K.A.

Ballhatchet of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, without whose help and cooperation it would have been almost impossible for me to stay in the United Kingdom for working in the various libraries for the purpose of this project. He has ungrudgingly and cheerfully borne my frequent calls upon his time and attention. He has also seen some of the chapters and has helped me with valuable comments and suggestions.

In preparing this book I had to work in the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office Library, London, the British Museum, the Senate House Library of the University of London, the School of Oriental & African Studies Library, the Cambridge University Library, the Baptist Missionary Society Archives, the Church Missionary Society Archives, etc. Everywhere I received the best of attention and the most willing cooperation. My thanks are due to the staff of all these libraries and institutions. My thanks are due also to the staff of "Al-Harf", particularly to Mr. Faiq al-Bakri and Mr. Amanullah, for their care and cooperation in typesetting the book. Finally, my loving thanks are due to my sons, Manu (Manwar), who cheerfully typed a good deal of this volume and made photocopies of the typescript for the press; and Maaruf, who painstakingly went through the final proof of the entire volume and brought to my notice a number of errors that would otherwise have escaped scrutiny; and Mansoor, who helped me in correcting typing errors and in various other ways. Last but not least, I am especially indebted to my wife, Rosy (Razia), for constant help, both academic and otherwise, and for the much-needed encouragement to persevere in this project, especially at moments of difficulty and despondency which necessarily beset me at times during this prolonged and arduous literary pursuit, being away from home and having to work under not too enviable a situation.

Riyadh, 15 Rabi' II, 1408 H.  
(6 December 1987)

M.M. Ali



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MSS. (also B.M. Add. MSS)	British Museum Additional Manuscripts.
<i>B.I.A. Annual Report</i>	<i>Annual Report of the British Indian Association.</i>
<i>B.M.S. Report</i>	<i>Annual Report of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society.</i>
<i>Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.</i> (also <i>Prods.</i> )	<i>Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations (Proceedings).</i>
<i>Beng. Edn. Prods.</i>	<i>Bengal Education Proceedings.</i>
<i>Beng. Judl. Prods.</i>	<i>Bengal Judicial Proceedings.</i>
<i>Beng. Mil. Cons.</i>	<i>Bengal Military Consultations.</i>
<i>Beng. Pol. Cons.</i>	<i>Bengal Political Consultations.</i>
<i>Beng. Pub. Cons.</i>	<i>Bengal Public Consultations.</i>
<i>Beng. Rev. Cons.</i>	<i>Bengal Revenue Consultations.</i>
<i>Beng. Sec. Cons.</i>	<i>Bengal Secret Consultations.</i>
<i>Board of Rev. Cons.</i>	<i>Board of Revenue Consultations.</i>
C.C.A.	<i>Calcutta Christian Advocate, The</i>
C.C.C. of C.M.S.	<i>Calcutta Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society.</i>
C.C.H.	<i>Calcutta Christian Herald, The</i>
C.C.O.	<i>Calcutta Christian Observer, The</i>
C.H.I.	<i>Cambridge History of India.</i>
<i>Coll. to Edn. Despatches</i>	<i>Collections to Education Despatches.</i>
Com. of Rev.	Committee of Revenue.
<i>E.O.M.</i>	<i>Englishman's Overland Mail, The</i>
<i>Englishman</i>	<i>Englishman and Military Chronicle, The (Calcutta)</i>
G.C.P.I.	General Committee of Public Instruction.
G.R.P.I.	General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces
<i>H.M.S.</i>	<i>Home Miscellaneous Series</i> (Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office Records).
I.O.L.	India Office Library (London. Now renamed Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office Library).
<i>I.P.A. Proceedings</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Central Committee of the Indigo Planters Association.</i>
<i>Ind. Leg. Prods.</i> (also <i>Cons.</i> )	<i>India Legislative Proceedings (Consultations)</i>

## XXIV

<i>Ind. Pol. Cons.</i>	<i>India Political Consultations</i>
<i>Ind. Pub. Cons.</i> (also Prods.)	<i>India Public Consultations (Proceedings)</i>
<i>Ind. Sec. Cons.</i>	<i>India Secret Consultations</i>
<i>J.A.S.B.</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta).</i>
<i>J.A.S.P.</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan (Dacca).</i>
<i>J.R.A.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (London)</i>
<i>Malda Report</i>	<i>J.H. Reily's report on the Malda investigations dated 15 November 1870.</i>
<i>P.L.C.I.</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India.</i>
<i>Par.Pap. H/C.</i>	<i>Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons).</i>
<i>Patna Report</i>	<i>J.H. Reily's report on investigations and proceedings at Patna, dated 31 December 1871.</i>
<i>Rajmahal Report</i>	<i>J.H. Reily's report on his investigations at Rajmahal, dated 24 November 1871.</i>
<i>Riyād</i>	Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm, <i>Riyād al-Salātīn</i> , Eng. tr. by A. Salām, Calcutta, 1904.
<i>S.A.</i>	<i>Ja'far Aḥmad Thāneswarī, Sawānīḥ-i-Aḥmadī.</i>
<i>Siyar. II.</i>	Sayyid Ghulam Ḥusain Ṭabṭabāī, <i>Siyar al-Muta'kherīn</i> , Vol. II, tr. M. Raymond (Hājī Muṣṭafa), Calcutta, 1789.
<i>S.O.A.S.</i>	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
<i>S.R.B.G.</i>	<i>Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal.</i>
<i>T.P.</i>	<i>Tattvabodhinī Patrikā</i> (Bengali, organ of the <i>Tattvabodhinī Sabhā</i> of Calcutta).
<i>T.S.</i>	'Abd al-Raḥīm, <i>Taḍhkira-i-Ṣādiqa</i> , Allahabad, 1924.

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**PART I**  
**THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S RULE**  
**AND THE MUSLIMS**



CHAPTER I  
AFTERMATH OF PLASSEY

I: MĪR JA'FAR AS PUPPET NAWWĀB

The unexpected defeat of Sirāj al-Daulah at the battle of Plassey (23 June 1757) and his flight threw the capital city of Murshidabad into utter confusion and bewilderment. Mīr Ja'far, who had joined the English in overthrowing him, hurried to Murshidabad but did not ascend the *masnad* by himself in view of the tense situation and popular resentment against him. Accordingly he asked Clive to come to his assistance. The latter immediately sent Watts and Walsh with some troops to Murshidabad where they reached on 26 June. Three days afterwards Clive himself arrived with a contingent and the same evening conducted Mīr Ja'far to the *masnad* and proclaimed him Nawwāb. To "their utter astonishment", as one writer puts it, the people of Murshidabad "found the throne occupied by a Nawab, for the first time in the history of Bengal, under the protection of a foreign people".<sup>1</sup> A number of important men in the capital were still inclined to the deposed Nawwāb; but they were soon obliged to acquiesce in the new regime "for fear of being pointed at with the finger and of becoming objects of chastisement and oppression."<sup>2</sup> The accession of Mīr Ja'far being over Clive settled the matter of his financial obligations<sup>3</sup> to the English and, before leaving for Calcutta, advised him to write to the Delhi court for obtaining confirmation of his accession to the Bengal *masnad*. Clive also himself took steps through the Jagat Śeth and others for the same purpose. This confirmation was received in January 1758 on Mīr Ja'far's promise, backed by Clive's assurance, that a sum of rupees 52 lakhs would be annually transmitted to the Delhi court.

The victory at Plassey had indeed made the English masters of Bengal; but they found it practicable to maintain the mask of the Nawwāb's government for sometime because of the inadequacy of English personnel to undertake the direct

<sup>1</sup> A.C. Roy, *The Career of Mir Jafar Khan*, Calcutta, 1953, 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, II., 237.

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 11-14.

administration of the land and also because of the need to allay the misgivings and diplomatic clamours of other European nations. Behind the veil of Mīr Ja'far's *niyābat*, however, Clive and the Fort William Council exercised the real power of government in Bengal. To do so the more effectually and to reduce the Nawwāb into a mere tool and cipher in their hands, Clive and his council now further strengthened their ties with the Hindu *bania* group. Indeed the consummation of the alliance between the English and the *bania* faction is the most significant development in the internal politics of the country after Plassey and it illustrates emphatically the fact, alluded to at the end of the previous volume of this work,<sup>1</sup> that in forming an alliance with the English against Sirāj al-Daulah the *bania* group were not really actuated by a desire to replace a so-called "bad" ruler by a "good" one, but by their desire to put an end to Muslim rule on the one hand and, on the other, to further their own material interests by installing their principals, the English merchants, as rulers of the country. Hence after the deposition of Sirāj al-Daulah, Rai Durlabh, the Jagat Śeth and other members of the *bania* class did not stand by the new Nawwāb, nor did they do anything to prevent the country from passing under the foreigners. On the contrary the *bania* group did all that they could to strengthen the hands of the English. The policy of the latter in this respect is clearly reflected through their own records. "We were necessitated to strengthen ourselves", candidly records Clive's colleague Luke Scrafton, "by forming a party in his [Mīr Ja'far's] own court to be a continual check on him."<sup>2</sup> As part of this policy Mīr Ja'far was made to appoint as his *dīwān* Rai Durlabh, head of the *bania* group at Murshidabad.

It did not take long for Mīr Ja'far to realize his predicament and to see that his interests as also those of the country were at cross purposes with the interests of his *bania* and English allies. Therefore he attempted weakly, and from the point of view of his erstwhile allies, "treasonably", to extricate himself from their control. As a first step in that direction he sought to break the

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I., pp. 680-681.

<sup>2</sup> Luke Scrafton, *Reflections on the Government of Indostan, With a Short Sketch of the History of Bengal, etc.* London, 1770, 99.

power of the *bania* group in his administration. This only resulted in making Clive and his colleagues all the more firm in their policy of befriending and protecting the *bania* faction. The divergent attitudes of the two sides became clear through the events that shortly followed, particularly through some rebellions that took place against Mīr Ja'far. There are indications that Clive, in co-operation with Rai Durlabh, even instigated or fomented some of those troubles with a view to drawing the malcontents towards the English.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after his accession to the *masnad* Mīr Ja'far was confronted with three simultaneous rebellions: one at Midnapur headed by Raja Ram Singh; another at Purnia under the leadership of Hazyr 'Alī; and the third at Patna under Raja Ramnarain. These persons were attached to the deposed Nawwāb Sirāj al-Daulah, the last named person being his deputy in Bihar. They withheld their allegiance to the puppet Nawwāb Mīr Ja'far and began to make hostile preparations against him. The latter naturally intended to suppress them and to appoint his own men in their places. He decided first to deal with Raja Ram Singh of Midnapur who was asked to come to Murshidabad and to render an account of the revenues of his district. The Raja attempted to evade doing this and to gain time by sending his brother and nephew to Murshidabad and at the same time secretly established contact with Rai Durlabh and the English. Mīr Ja'far arrested the Raja's brother and nephew and sent an army towards Midnapur under the command of Khwāja Hādī. The Raja now appealed to Clive to intercede on his behalf with the Nawwāb.<sup>2</sup> Clive immediately took up the Raja's cause and on 2 October 1757 wrote a letter to Mīr Ja'far asking him to make up the matter with Raja Ram. Although he had already despatched his troops towards Midnapur, Mīr Ja'far found it prudent and necessary to accede to Clive's intercession.<sup>3</sup> Clive then summoned Raja Ram to Calcutta and proceeded with him to Murshidabad where on 25 November

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Clive's letter to the Secret Committee, 23 December 1757, *Orme MSS.* X, 25-31, quoted in A.C. Roy, *op.cit.*, 98-99.

<sup>2</sup> *H.M.S.*, Vol. 193, p.219.

<sup>3</sup> Letters of Mīr Ja'far and Miran to Clive, dated respectively 24 and 26 October, 1757, *ibid.*, pp.219 and 241.

Mīr Ja'far was induced to allow the Raja to retain his position in Midnapur on promise of continued loyalty and dismemberment of his newly recruited troops.

In the same letter of 2 October (1757) in which Mīr Ja'far was asked to accommodate matters with Raja Ram Singh, Clive also instructed the Nawwāb to suppress with energy and resolution Hazyr 'Alī's rebellion at Purnia, assuring English military assistance if necessary. Hazyr 'Alī's mistake seems to be that he was not in secret touch with Rai Durlabh, nor did he (Hazyr 'Alī) seek English protection and help. In consequence he had to go down before the wrath and retribution of both the Nawwāb and the English. On 6 October (1757) Mīr Ja'far sent an army of 6000 horse under the command of Khādīm Ḥusain to suppress Hazyr 'Alī and to take charge of Purnia as the *Faujdar* of that place. Mīr Ja'far also requested Clive for a military reinforcement. The latter despatched a contingent of 500 troops to join the expedition.<sup>1</sup> Another reinforcement under Mīr Kazim Khān was also sent towards Purnia. Before the arrival of these reinforcements, however, Khādīm Ḥusain Khān defeated and drove out Hazyr 'Alī and captured the city of Purnia on 9 December 1757.

Having dealt with the cases of Midnapur and Purnia Mīr Ja'far turned his attention to Raja Ramnarain of Patna. The latter had earlier somewhat displeased Clive by not co-operating with Major Coote who had been sent to Bihar for chasing down the French in that province. Finding that Mīr Ja'far was about to march against him, Ramnarain attempted to rally round him the zamindars of Bihar. They did not, however, support him. Hence he sent urgent protestations of loyalty to Clive and sought his protection. The latter saw in the situation an opportunity to win over, as he himself recorded it, the "most powerful and beloved Governor of Bihar."<sup>2</sup> In the meantime Mīr Ja'far also had written to Clive asking him to come down from Calcutta with an army to assist in the expedition against Ramnarain. Accordingly Clive marched from Calcutta with an army. His intention was not to

<sup>1</sup> Clive's letter to Mir Ja'far, 19 October 1757, *H.M.S.*, Vol. 193, p.217.

<sup>2</sup> Clive's letter to Pigot, 19 February 1758, quoted in A.C. Roy, *op.cit.*, 112, Craffton also writes (*op.cit.*, 103): "It would be a constant check on the Subah [Mīr Ja'far] to have [Deputy] Nawab of Patna devoted to us."

suppress Ramnarain but to see that he was confirmed in his position as a protégé of the English and also to put pressure upon Mīr Ja'far to discharge his debts to the English which had not yet been fully paid. Clive met Mīr Ja'far at Rajmahal on 3 December (1757) and pointed out to him the wisdom of confirming Ramnarain in his post on the ground that otherwise there was the danger of the latter's joining Nawwāb Shujā' al-Daulah of Oudh in a hostile combination against Mīr Ja'far. At the same time Clive also raised the question of payment of the Nawwāb's debts and had Rai Durlabh brought down from Murshidabad in order to settle the matter. The two armies of Clive and Mīr Ja'far then proceeded from Rajmahal towards Patna. During the march brisk negotiations went on between the two — Mīr Ja'far attempting to get rid of Ramnarain while Clive seeking to keep him in his post. Ultimately Clive's diplomacy, backed by his military strength, prevailed. On 23 February 1758 Mīr Ja'far formally pardoned Ramnarain and confirmed him in his post and returned to Murshidabad on 30 May 1758.

Throughout these months Rai Durlabh had been acting secretly against Mīr Ja'far's interests and in favour of the English. During the march to Bihar Rai Durlabh had remained in the English camp. He returned to Murshidabad also in the accompaniment of Clive. Mīr Ja'far was not unaware of his hostile attitude and was determined to get rid of him. So long as Clive remained at Murshidabad, however, neither Mīr Ja'far nor his son Mīran dared do anything to Rai Durlabh. After Clive's departure Mīran dismissed Rai Durlabh from his post of *dīwān* on 24 July 1758 and directed him to make over charge of his office to Rajballabh who was appointed *dīwān* in his place. Finding his position no longer tenable Rai Durlabh did so and, on Clive's intervention, was allowed to go with his family to Calcutta.

Although Mīr Ja'far thus got rid of Rai Durlabh the influence of the English was in no way minimized. The new *dīwān* Rajballabh also belonged to the *bania* class and was in secret understanding with the English. Also, in respect of the three rebellions at Midnapur, Purnia and Patna Clive had successfully carried out his policies. Both Raja Ram Singh of Midnapur and

Ramnarain of Patna were now his protégés and looked upon him as their protector and the real ruler of the country. And although Hazyr 'Alī was driven out of Purnia the ultimate outcome of the episode went in favour of the English in as much as the remnant of the Muslim elements were further divided amongst themselves and that Mīr Ja'far was obliged to transfer a substantial part of his army and a close associate, Khādīm Ḥusain Khān, from the capital to distant Purnia. Moreover, on the ground of military assistance rendered during the recent campaigns Clive extracted from Mīr Ja'far further amounts of money besides exerting pressures for the payment of the treaty money. The Nawwāb's position was also largely compromised by his having allegedly murdered Mirzā Mehdī, Sirāj al-Daulah's brother and an innocent prince, on suspicion that Rai Durlabh intended to make him Nawwāb.

Shortly after the Rai Durlabh episode there arose a situation which clearly demonstrated the English predominance in Bengal and Bihar as well as Mīr Ja'far's dependence on them. In 1759 the court politics at Delhi took a sudden turn when the *wazīr* Ghāzī al-Dīn arrested the Mughal emperor 'Ālamgīr II. In consequence the emperor's son, Shāhzāda 'Alī Gauhar, better known by his later title of Shāh 'Ālam II, fled towards the east and in concert with the Nawwāb of Oudh embarked upon a project of recovering for himself the provinces of Bengal and Bihar. The Shāhzāda in fact advanced with his forces into Bihar. Raja Ramnarain at first made a show of submission but later on resisted till the arrival of Clive. The latter realized that the success of the Shāhzāda would jeopardize the advantages gained by the English in the two provinces. Mīr Ja'far also saw the danger to his position. Hence he co-operated with Clive who marched with his forces into Bihar and obliged the Shāhzāda to retire into Oudh. The affair ultimately proved advantageous to Clive in two ways. It was now clear to all contemporary observers that his was the real power and government in Bengal and Bihar. Secondly, it won for him the goodwill of the Mughal *wazīr* who now sent a congratulatory letter to him praising him for what was called his "faithful services" and asking him to "continue to behave with the same fidelity" and "seize the rebel *Shāhzāda* and send him to



court.” Clive was of course in no mood to carry out this latter behest and was only glad that the danger to the English interests in Bengal and Bihar was warded off. He did not fail, however, to make personal gains out of the *wazīr*’s favourable attitude to him.<sup>1</sup>

The same year (1759) witnessed another victory of the English against their formidable rival, the Dutch, and also against Mīr Ja’far’s final attempt to extricate himself from the English tutelage. The Dutch had at that time their centre of power in Indonesia; but they viewed with envy and concern the establishment of English predominance in Bengal where they (the Dutch) had an extensive trade in the export of cotton piece-goods and also a secret monopoly of the export of opium. After the battle of Plassey this Dutch trade was threatened, particularly as the duties on the export of opium were considerably raised. The English authorities also subjected all European vessels coming up the river Hugli to a strict search. Moreover Clive had obtained for the English company a monopoly of the saltpetre produced in Bengal and Bihar. In the face of these developments the Dutch authorities at Batavia (Jakarta) resolved to increase their garrison in Bengal with a view to making a final trial of strength with the English there. Taking advantage of Mīr Ja’far’s intention to minimize the English influence the Dutch agents at Chinsurah, under instructions from their masters at Batavia, entered into a secret understanding with him for introducing a large force into Bengal. Accordingly in October 1759 a fleet of seven Dutch vessels with 300 Europeans and 600 Malay troops arrived at the mouth of the Hugli. The English opposed their entry into the river in the name of the Nawwāb. The Dutch were “simple enough”, as Dodwell puts it, “to attempt to induce the Nawab to withdraw his orders, which were, indeed, the orders of Clive.”<sup>2</sup> Ultimately towards the end of November they attempted to force their entry into Bengal but were completely routed by the English at Breda on 24–25 November. At that stage Mīran threateningly advanced against the Dutch with a contingent of the Nawwāb’s

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>2</sup> H.H. Dodwell, *C.H.I.*, V., Cambridge, 1929, 155.

forces if only to show that the latter was not in league with them. In their helplessness the Dutch surrendered to Clive and obtained peace by paying damages and promising never to keep more than 125 soldiers nor to fortify their settlements in Bengal.

Simultaneously with these developments in Bengal the English prosecuted the wars against the French in south India.<sup>1</sup> In 1760 Eyre Coote finally defeated the French general Lally at Wandiwash and in January 1761 Pondicery fell to the English. With this incident the Anglo-French conflict in that region practically came to an end. When Clive left Bengal for England on 25 February 1760 the English had emerged supreme over all their rivals in the subcontinent. They were "supreme in Bengal. The French and the Dutch were impoverished and reduced; their military and political power was gone. The titular Nawab of the province [Bengal] was little more than the creature and protégé of the Company. The British influence extended outwards from Calcutta through Bengal and Bihar to the southern boundary of Oudh. The possession of this rich country also completely altered the English position in Madras."<sup>2</sup>

## II. POWER WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY: THE "ENSUING PILLAGE"

Clive and his colleagues enjoyed absolute power in Bengal without any responsibility either to the titular Nawwāb or for the administration of the land. This position was rather officially confirmed during Clive's second term of office and it continued without any modification till at least 1772. The evil effects of such a situation were visible from the very beginning. Bengal was considered to be "an inexhaustible fund of riches" so that a "spirit of plunder" and a "passion for the rapid accumulation of wealth" actuated all ranks of the Company's servants including Clive. For more than fifteen years after Plassey the land was subjected to the worst kind of pillage and loot known to history. By the end of that period the inevitable consequences set in. The country was stricken with an unprecedented famine; the previous system of administration had completely broken down and disorder and

<sup>1</sup> See for details, *C.H.I.*, V., Chapter VIII.

<sup>2</sup> P.E. Roberts, *Historical Geography of India* (History of British India under the Company and the Crown), Third edition, London, 1958, 142.

chaos had overtaken all walks of life.

Broadly, the post-conquest pillage took place in three ways: (a) spoliation of the Nawwāb's treasury and extraction of huge amounts from him in the name of personal rewards to Clive and his colleagues and "compensation" to the Company and others; (b) obliging the new Nawwāb to make "persents" and reimbursements from time to time for "personal" and "military services"; and (c) plunder of the country's products and merchandise in the name of the Company's trade and the "private trade" of their servants.

It may be recalled that by the treaty of 5 June 1757 Mīr Ja'far had undertaken to pay the English, as consideration for their support in overthrowing Sirāj al-Daulah, an amount of rupees 229,00,000 under various heads.<sup>1</sup> This amount was in addition to secret and private promises for huge rewards to Clive and his associates which stipulated the payment of at least £550,000. On the eve of Mīr Ja'far's enthronement the question of payment of these various sums as well as the contents of the treasury naturally came up for consideration. The arrangements that Clive made with Mīr Ja'far for the discharge of his "public" debts to the English would be noted presently. It may be pointed out here however that for a long time after Plassey Clive did not disclose to his superior authorities in England anything about the secret transactions and the huge amounts "privately" received by him and his colleagues. On the other hand, writing to the Court of Directors three weeks after his victorious entry into Murshidabad he gave full details regarding Mīr Ja'far's commitments for payment of the various sums according to the public treaty and mentioned that the Nawwāb's treasury contained only rupees

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I., pp. 674-675. The different heads of payments were:

The Company	Rs.	100,00,000
European "sufferers"	"	50,00,000
Native "sufferers"	"	20,00,000
Armenian "sufferers"	"	7,00,000
The Co.'s army, navy & Committee"	"	52,00,000
Total		Rs. 229,00,000

It is to be noted that all these amounts were to be paid to Clive who would determine the mode of their disbursements to the various groups.

150,00,000, which would hardly meet the expenses of government, not to speak of paying the debts of the English.<sup>1</sup> This suppression of important facts relating to the secret financial transactions clearly throws doubts about Clive's statement about the state of the Nawwāb's treasury.

That the treasury was not so poor and that a good part of it had been made away with by those who surrounded Mīr Ja'far and controlled affairs at Murshidabad immediately after Sirāj al-Daulah's fall appears certain from allusions in other contemporary sources. Thus the translator of the *Siyar* (Raymond), for instance, informs us that Watts, Walsh and Lushington, who had preceded Clive to Murshidabad, themselves examined the treasury on their arrival at the capital and found it to contain "one hundred and seventysix lakhs in silver, thirtytwo lakhs in gold, two chests full of gold ingots, four chests of jewels set and two full of loose stones and gems." The translator adds that this was only the outer treasury. There was "the inner treasury, said to contain eight crores."<sup>2</sup> A similar account of the treasury is given by the *Tārīkh-i-Manṣūrī*.<sup>3</sup> The translator of the *Siyar* alleges that the inner treasury was made away with between Mīr Ja'far, Amīr Beg Khān, Ramchand and Nabakrishna. "This much is certain", asserts the translator, "that ten years afterwards, Ramchand, who in 1758 was only a writer at sixty rupees per month, died worth seventy-two lakhs in cash and bills, four hundred large water pots, eighty of which were of gold and the rest of silver, eighteen lakhs in landed property and twenty lakhs in jewels, in all a crore and a quarter."<sup>4</sup> This observation about Ramchand appears to be correct, supported as it is by concrete facts; but the allusion to Mīr Ja'far's having made away with a part of what was now his own treasury is contradicted by the well-known fact of his constant and dire want of money for which he had to borrow several times from the Śeths and also to sell his furniture and jewels in order to pay his debts to the English.

<sup>1</sup> Drake's letter to the Secret Committee, 14 July 1757, quoted in A.C. Roy, *op.cit.*, 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, II, 237, n.

<sup>3</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, No. II, 1867, 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, II., 237, n.

Nor was it likely on the part of Mīr Ja'far, who had not dared ascend the *masnad* before Clive's arrival in the city, to remove a portion of the treasures. It is also inconceivable that Clive would have allowed any one else to make away with the treasures. A good part of the treasury was definitely plundered and made away with during the confusion following Sirāj al-Daulah's flight; but this seems to have been done by the victors who surrounded Mīr Ja'far and who had the control of affairs in their hands. The testimony of the *Siyar's* translator shows that Clive's agents, Watts, Walsh and Lushington had examined the treasury on their arrival at Murshidabad. That Clive himself had also examined the treasury is evident from what he stated in 1772 in extenuation of his spectacular personal acquisitions. "Consider the situation", he stated,<sup>1</sup>

"in which the victory at Plassey had placed me ! A great prince was dependant on my pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels ! Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation !"

This statement of Clive's has sometimes been described as "rhetorical exaggeration" on the ground that he himself had made arrangements with Mīr Ja'far, in view of the deficit in the treasury, for the discharge of his *public* debts in instalments.<sup>2</sup> What has not hitherto been properly emphasized is that Clive had himself examined the treasury and that the story about its deficient state was given out after he and his associates had received all that was promised them according to the secret understanding and, understandably, after having divided the spoils amongst themselves. It cannot be assumed that the Parliamentary enquiry of 1772 brought to light *all* that Clive and his colleagues had done or obtained. According to what was revealed they extracted the following sums from the puppet Nawwāb, besides his payments under the public treaty.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and fulfilment of British Rule in India*, London, 1934, pp. 107-108.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108; also P.E. Roberts, *op.cit.*, 146.

<sup>3</sup> *First Report of the Select Committee, 1772*, quoted in A.C. Roy, *op.cit.*, 92.

Clive	Rs. 20,80,000
Governor Drake	Rs. 280,000
Watts	Rs. 10,80,000
Maj. Kilpatrick	Rs. 540,000
Manningham	Rs. 240,000
Beecher	Rs. 240,000
Walsh	Rs. 500,000
Scrafton	Rs. 200,000
Lushington	Rs. 50,000

Thus having gratified themselves Clive pressed Mīr Ja‘far for the discharge of his obligations under the public treaty (of 5 June 1757). In a conference of Clive, Mīr Ja‘far and the Jagat Śeth on 30 June it was settled that the Nawwāb should pay one half of the total English demand of 229,00,000 rupees immediately, two thirds of that half being in cash, and one third in jewels and plates; and that the other half should be paid in three equal annual payments. After borrowing an unspecified amount from the Jagat Śeth Mīr Ja‘far paid the half of the English demand, as agreed, immediately. Thus the puppet Nawwāb’s government, which had no real power but all the responsibility for the administration of the country, was not only financially crippled, but also saddled from the beginning with a continual debt which was further heightened by Clive’s recurrent claims for payments on account of personal and military services on the one hand, and by the drying up of the sources of revenue because of the rebellions and insubordination of the “zamindars” and the “free” and private trade of the Englishmen in Bengal, on the other. It goes to Mīr Ja‘far’s credit that in spite of his financial distress which obliged him even to keep his army unpaid driving them to the point of mutiny and to sell his personal furniture and jewels, he made the annual payments according to the settlement except a small balance of 3½ lakhs of rupees which remained unpaid at the time of his deposition in 1760.<sup>1</sup>

The treasures and spoils obtained by the English were placed, on 3 July 1757, on a fleet of 300 boats which sailed down the river “with music playing, drums beating, and colours flying...”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See for details *ibid.*, 262-294.

<sup>2</sup> Luke Scrafton, *op.cit.*, 93.

while, on the same day, the deposed Nawwāb Sirāj al-Daulah, who had been captured in the meantime, was murdered and paraded through the streets of Murshidabad.<sup>1</sup> “To engineer a revolution, had been revealed”, runs an observation, “as the most paying game in the world. A gold lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes’ and Pizzaro’s age filled the English mind. Bengal in particular was not to know peace again until it had been bled white.”<sup>2</sup> Within the space of five years after Clive’s departure in 1760 three more revolutions were engineered by his successors who “on each occasion dipped their hands deep into the treasury of the Nawab.”

An instance of how Clive exploited every situation to extract money from the Nawwāb is provided by what is known as the case of “Clive’s Jāgir.” At the time of his confirmation as Nawwāb by the Delhi emperor, Mīr Ja’far had obtained from the latter the title of Amīr (noble) for Clive with the rank (*mansad*) of 6000 horse. This rank was meant to be purely honorary. In 1759, shortly after the Shāhzāda’s flight and the defeat of the Dutch, Clive pointed out that his rank carried an annual salary of £ 30,000 and urged the Śeths to do something about it. The latter hit upon the plan of making over the quit-rent of the 24-Parganas district to Clive. That district had already been granted to the Company by Mīr Ja’far in lieu of an annual quit-rent of 300,000 rupees (£ 30,000). Now the Nawwāb, partly out of gratitude for the expulsion of the Shāhzāda from Bihar, and partly for fear that his (Mīr Ja’far’s) intrigues with the Dutch would be punished, made over the quit-rent of £ 30,000 for the district of 24-Parganas to Clive as his *jāgir*. Clive accepted this *jāgir* when, according to his own admission, the Nawwāb’s forces were mutinous for non-payment of their salaries and when the Nawwāb was selling his furniture and jewels by public auction in order to pay his treaty-debts to the English. Clive’s acceptance of the *jāgir* made him, in addition to his being the servant of the Company, also its landlord and it involved him subsequently in disputes with the latter body. Worse still, “his enormous greed” provided an

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II., pp. 241-243.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 91-92.

example for the others of his countrymen in Bengal. "For the monstrous financial immorality of English conduct in India for many a year after this, Clive was largely responsible."<sup>1</sup>

Far more ruinous than these exactions from the puppet Nawwāb were the "free" and "private" trade of the Englishmen in Bengal. Ever since 1717 the English East India Company had been allowed the privilege of custom-free trade in Bengal. Initially this privilege was meant for export trade only; but subsequently it came to cover the import trade as well. The matter was complicated, however, by the fact that the Company paid very low salaries to their employees and expected them to recoup themselves by trading privately in addition to conducting the Company's business. Such private trade of the Company's servants also was carried on under the privilege of the Company. *Dastakhs* or special permits were issued by the Company's officials in order to obtain exemption from payment of duties or customs on the goods specified and declared to be those of the Company or their servants. In course of time they began to abuse this privilege by selling *dastakhs* not only to other Englishmen or Europeans who were not the Company's employees but also to local Hindu merchants. It may be recalled that such abuse of *dastakhs* was one of the principal causes of Sirāj al-Daulah's conflicts with the English. From that time the Company's servants engaged themselves also in the internal trade of the country in competition with the local merchants, claiming freedom from all duties. It is not necessary to dilate on the technical position of the English or to analyze the terms and implications of the various grants made by different rulers at different times; for the East India Company itself subsequently acknowledged that its servants could not claim a privilege wider than that of its own and that no ruler could have granted foreigners to ruin his whole system by a monopoly of duty-free internal trade.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Court of Directors of the Company to Bengal Council, 26 April 1765, *Fourth Report*, 1773, p. 189. The Court wrote: "Is it ... possible to suppose that the Court of Delhi, by conferring the privilege of trading free of customs, could mean an internal trade in the commodities of their own country at that period unpractised or unthought of by the English, to the detriment of =



Be that as it may, the victory at Plassey and the installation of Mīr Ja'far as their puppet completely transformed the position and attitude of the English. They were now the actual masters of the country and they could do, and in fact did, whatever they liked to do with its trade and resources. Shortly after Mīr Ja'far's enthronement they obtained from him, on 15 July 1757, a new *sanad* confirming their complete freedom of trade. Needless to say this *sanad* was merely a matter of form or courtesy and was at its best a token of gratitude on the part of the Englishmen's own creature. Even then this *sanad* also did not specifically mention the subject of internal trade of the Company's servants. Nor did they bother themselves with such legal and semantic technicalities. The change of attitude was best reflected through the new investment policy of the Company. Henceforth it stopped sending any capital (called investment) for their trade, maintaining that their servants had acquired so much wealth and resources in Bengal that these were sufficient not only to meet the expenses of their commercial and military establishments in Bengal, Madras and Bombay, but also to carry on the whole trade of procuring goods from these three "Presidencies" for export to Europe and other places. In other words, the Company plainly satisfied itself that their servants had conquered a veritable el-dorado and that all trade, administration and further military adventures should henceforth be met out of its resources. The result was that there followed a period of unrestricted exploitation and ransacking of the country's resources, marked by a systematic oppression of its manufacturers, traders, artisans and cultivators. According to even an English authority, the period that followed the battle of Plassey "throws grave and unpardonable discredit on the English name."<sup>1</sup>

Briefly, (a) the Company's servants and agents used their newly acquired power and influence in conducting their "private trade" as also that of their masters. Often they used force to compel local merchants and manufacturers to supply goods to the

= their revenues and the ruin of their own merchants? We do not find such a construction was ever heard of until our own servants first invented it and afterwards supported it by violence."

<sup>1</sup> Sir Alfred Lyall, quoted in P.E. Roberts, *op.cit.*, 149.

English. Troops were sent along with the English and local agents of the Company (called *gomastāhs*) who forced the manufacturers, traders, artisans and cultivators to take advance for supplying their wares and products at nominal or no price at all. (b) The English merchants often established their monopoly over important inland trade-centres and markets (*ganjes*) and forcibly prevented local merchants from selling their goods or procuring their merchandise before the former completed their buying and selling. (c) The English merchants also extended their trade to such necessities of life as rice, betel-nut, salt and tobacco which had hitherto been excluded from the trade of the foreigners. (d) The abuse of *dastakhs* was now carried to its extreme. Many Englishmen did not even bother to procure *dastakhs*; they simply hoisted the English flag on their boats and refused to pay any duty. Often they defied the Nawwāb's officers, refused to show them any *dastakh*, and even forced them to allow the boats to pass.

The situation grew worse as time went on and it became intolerable in the sixties, particularly during and after Clive's second governorship. But even in 1758 it had become bad enough. For instance, on 12 December of that year Hastings, then resident at Murshidabad, noted as an illustration of the general practice that an English merchant named Chevalier had carried a "large cargo of salt" to Chilmari (Rangpur district) and had forcibly taken written bonds "from all other traders in the same article by which they are not allowed to sell any salt till his shall be disposed of."<sup>1</sup> Another English merchant, John Clark, violently took possession of two or three *ganjes* (trade-centres) in Barisal district and set up English flags there by way of asserting that those were his personal possessions.<sup>2</sup> In 1759 Sumner, the Company's agent at Dhaka, was found carrying on a large trade in salt and betel-nut and refusing to pay duties on those articles, which had encouraged others to do likewise.<sup>3</sup> It may be mentioned that not only the subordinate agents but also the senior servants of the Company including Clive and other members of

<sup>1</sup> Vansittart, *Narrative etc.*, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Hasting's letter (no date), *Add.MSS.* 29096, p. 108 quoted in A.C. Roy, *op.cit.*, 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

the Council engaged themselves in such private inland trade and used invalid *dastakhs* to pass their goods duty-free. A few more facts connected with this ruinous practice of the English in post-Plassey Bengal would be noted subsequently. It may be mentioned here however that while the English bound the puppet Nawwāb to make huge presents, heavy treaty-monies and inordinate subsidies for the use of the Company's forces for purposes connected at bottom with the maintenance of the English supremacy in Bengal (for instance the campaign against the Shāhzāda), they at the same time deprived him (the puppet Nawwāb) of his revenues and impoverished the people by their free and private inland trade and duty-free export trade at the cost of the country's capital. "The Nawab's revenue disappeared. So did the livelihood of the poorest and meanest classes; the English (who for so many years were to prove themselves the most expensive of all the invaders of India, and in so many ways) could 'undersell the native in his own market.'"<sup>1</sup>

### III. MĪR QĀSIM: THE BELATED ATTEMPT TO REGAIN INDEPENDENCE

Clive left Bengal for England on 25 February 1760. He was temporarily succeeded as governor by Holwell who was both "untruthful and unscrupulous." Immediately there was "a general rush of the Company's servants, and of Europeans of all classes, towards the interior trade of the three provinces" of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.<sup>2</sup> At the same time Holwell started work for bringing about another "revolution" in Bengal. Initially he advocated for the direct assumption of the administration of the country by doing away with the figurehead of the Nawwāb altogether; but later on he modified his attitude and favoured the move for replacing Mīr Ja'far by another puppet with a view to making personal gains, as Clive had done. Mīr Ja'far was now accused of having failed to pay the arrears of subsidy for the Company's troops, amounting to rupees three lakhs (300,000), of bad faith because of his past dealings with the Dutch (for which he had already atoned by conferring the *jāgir* of 24-Parganas on Clive)

<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Malcolm, *Life of Robert, Lord Clive*, III, London, 1836, 88.

and of cruelty towards the Begam of 'Alivardī Khān who was drowned in the Ganges about that time under suspicious circumstances. The question of succession came for serious consideration of the Council, however, because of the sudden death of Mīran, Mīr Ja'far's eldest son and heir-apparent. At the time of Clive's departure from Bengal Mīran had been away in Bihar at the head of a contingent of the Nawwāb's forces along with the English forces under the command of Caillaud in order to chase out the Shāhzāda who had once again marched into Bihar and Bengal. The Shāhzāda had been again forced to retire from Bihar; but in the course of subsidiary operations against some of the zamindars who had co-operated with him Mīran died on 3 July 1760, most probably struck by lightning. The Calcutta Council, now under the leadership of Holwell, thought of appointing Mīr Ja'far's son-in-law Mīr Qāsim heir-apparent. The subject was under consideration when on 27 July Henry Vansittart took over as new governor. He however adopted the suggestion made by Holwell. Accordingly Mīr Qāsim was invited to Calcutta and on 27 September an agreement was reached with him whereby he undertook to pay up Mīr Ja'far's debts and to cede to the Company the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong for the maintenance of the Company's troops, besides promises for personal rewards to the members of the Council. Accordingly on 14 October Vansittart and Caillaud reached Murshidabad with their forces and asked Mīr Ja'far to appoint Mīr Qāsim deputy-Nawwāb as well as heir-apparent. As Mīr Ja'far refused to do so Vansittart and Caillaud invested his palace and forced him to resign and retire to Calcutta under an English guard on a monthly allowance of rupees 15,000. On 20 October 1760 (10 Rabī I, 1174 H.) Mīr Qāsim was installed as the Nawwāb.

Thus was brought about the second "revolution" in Bengal. On his accession Mīr Qāsim found that the treasury did not contain even one *lakh* (100,000) rupees in ready cash.<sup>1</sup> Yet, by economising expenditure, making retrenchments in the services, confiscating the property of several persons who had been found

<sup>1</sup> Vansittart's letter to the Select Committee, 24 October 1760, Bengal Sel. Committee Proceedings, 26 October 1760, quoted in Nandalal Chatterji, *Mir Qasim*, Allahabad, 1435, 42.

guilty of embezzlement and by selling his personal jewels and belongings Mīr Qāsim met the English demands as follows:

- (a) He paid up the balance of ten lakhs of rupees, being the subsidy for the Company's troops for services rendered during Mīr Ja'far's time;<sup>1</sup>
- (b) He made a "donation" of five lakhs of rupees to the Company for their war with the French;<sup>2</sup>
- (c) He ceded to the Company the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong; and
- (d) He made presents to the members of the Council which amounted to at least rupees 2000,000 (£ 200,000).<sup>3</sup>

"A side-light is thrown upon the rapacity of the Company's servants at this time by the simple fact", as P.E. Roberts points out, "that Vansittart, the governor... received more than £ 50,000 though he had an allowance from the Company of £ 18,000 a year, and carried on trade on his account besides."<sup>4</sup>

Though he came to the *masnad* with the English help Mīr Qāsim "was a genuine patriot and an able ruler." In faithfully paying the promised amounts to the members of the Council and in ceding the districts to the Company he appears to have been actuated by a desire to set his house in order by getting rid of the interference of the English in the affairs of his government. The circumstances were however against him. The English power in Bengal had by this time been far too entrenched to be overthrown by such a belated attempt. Yet Mīr Qāsim made a last attempt for regaining independence and in doing so he neither exhibited the weakness and vacillation of Mīr Ja'far nor did he (Mīr Qāsim) place his own interests before the country's.

This attitude of his became clear shortly after his accession over the question of the Shāhzāda's presence in Bihar. The latter had by then assumed the title of emperor Shāh 'Ālam II because of the murder of his father the previous year. In the meantime an English army under Carnac had been sent against him. Carnac inflicted a defeat on Shāh 'Ālam II on 15 January 1761 and then opened negotiations with him for a settlement. The aims of the English were to obtain from the titular emperor a grant of the

<sup>1</sup> *Bengal Pub. Cons.*, 17 Nov. 1760, *ibid.*, 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Vansittart's Narrative*, I., 123.

<sup>3</sup> *First Report*, 1772, 164.

<sup>4</sup> *P.E. Roberts, op.cit.*, 151.

three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This latter idea was in fact given to them by their ally and protégé Rai Durlabh who had since his dismissal from the post of *dīwān* been living in Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> Mīr Qāsim saw through the game and set himself resolutely to thwart the English plan. Even when he was taken to Patna by the new English commander Coote apparently for obtaining the emperor's confirmation for Mīr Qāsim's accession to the Bengal *masnad*, the latter refused to proclaim Shāh 'Ālam emperor till after his departure from Bihar. Ultimately Mīr Qāsim was brought to acknowledge Shāh 'Ālam by Coote's threat of doing it himself if the Nawwāb delayed any longer. "When the emperor departed in June, the nawab evidently felt that he had narrowly escaped seeing power transferred over his head to the English by Shah 'Ālam."<sup>2</sup>

After Shah 'Ālam's departure from Bihar Mīr Qāsim took steps to consolidate his position in that province. He knew that in the event of a conflict with the English he would have to make his stand in Bihar. Hence he wanted to place that province under a trustworthy deputy instead of Raja Ramnarain who was a friend and secret ally of the English and who moreover assumed an attitude of independence.<sup>3</sup> At first the Calcutta Council were determined to support and maintain Ramnarain in his post; but the latter's activities and attitudes were so plainly against the interests of the Nawwāb who had so faithfully and promptly met all his obligations to the English that the new governor Vansittart agreed in mid-June to Ramnarain's suspension and also recalled Coote and Carnac from Patna. Ramnarain was found guilty of embezzlement and insubordination, was condemned to death and his properties were confiscated. Raja Rajballabh was appointed over the province. The abandonment of Raja Ranarain's cause by the Calcutta Council was a clear victory for Mīr Qāsim's diplomacy and, indirectly, a weakening of the English position in Bihar. Not unnaturally therefore a modern English historian has castigated Vansittart thus: "In this matter Vansittart had acted in

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, I., 130, quoted in *C.H.I.*, V., 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-70.

<sup>3</sup> Hastings's remarks, quoted in Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 101.

plain opposition to the policy of Clive. The latter had desired above everything to strengthen the English position; Vansittart desired to strengthen that of the nawab. The first had therefore made it a point of protecting the principal Hindu ministers; the second deliberately desisted from protecting them.”<sup>1</sup>

Having settled the affairs of Bihar Mīr Qāsim turned his attention to the vital issue of private inland trading of the Company’s servants which was then in full swing and in connection with which “infinite oppressions” were being committed. Mīr Qāsim at first confined himself to complaining to the Council and to protesting to that body against the high-handedness of the Company’s English servants and local Hindu *gomastahs*, particularly their employment of troops on the slightest pretexts, their arrest and torture of the Nawwāb’s officials who dared raise a voice against the oppressions, the use of invalid *dastakh* or no *dastakh* at all and, in general, the maltreatment of the local merchants, artisans and peasants.<sup>2</sup> When his protests failed to produce any effect Mīr Qāsim determined to make a strong stand. Towards the end of 1761 he moved his court to Sasaram, well inside Bihar. His attempt to regulate the private trade of the English was bound to involve him in a conflict with them. It was precipitated, however, by Ellis, “a man of violent temper, and bitter enemy of Vansittart” who took over as chief of the English factory at Patna in November 1761. He “insisted on the English privileges without any heed to appearances.”<sup>3</sup> Shortly after his arrival at Patna he got into quarrels with the Nawwāb’s officials there as well as at Malda and Monghyr, some of whom he arrested and sent down to Calcutta for punishment on account of

<sup>1</sup> H. Dodwell, *C.H.I.*, V. 170.

<sup>2</sup> In the well-known *Cambridge History of India* (Vo. V., 170-172) Professor H. Dodwell completely ignores the bad effects of the private trade of the English in Bengal and defends it by stating, somewhat incorrectly, that “the imperial farmans conferred on the English complete liberty of trade exempt from the imperial transit dues” (p. 170) and quotes in support of this statement portions of Mir Ja’far’s *sanad* of 1757 which, as mentioned above, did not in fact make any specific mention of the internal private trade of the English. In his laboured apology Dodwell lands himself in some inconsistencies as well. He says that under Clive’s government such private trade was “not in any great volume”; and then, after only 4 lines, states that “when Verelst arrived at Calcutta it was in full swing” (p. 171). It may be pointed out that only a few months intervened between Clive’s departure and Verelst’s assumption of office as governor.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

their allegedly having questioned the validity of the Company's *dastakh*.<sup>1</sup> Early in 1762 Ellis took a more aggressive step. He sent a sergeant with a company of troops to carry out a search of the Monghyr fort alleging that the Nawwāb had seduced a number of the Company's sepoys and harboured them in that fort. The commander of the fort, Shujan Singh, rightly refused to let the sergeant enter the fort. Mīr Qāsim also strongly protested against Ellis's action. In the meantime governor Vansittart, being urged by Ellis and his supporters in the Council, requested the Nawwāb to allow a search of the fort. The latter refused to allow Ellis or his sergeant to make the proposed search, but agreed to a visit of the fort by Warren Hastings, a member of the Council, and Lieutenant Ironside. The latter two persons visited the Monghyr fort on 27 April 1762 but, inspite of careful search, could not find any trace of a deserter there.<sup>2</sup>

It was in connection with this visit to Monghyr that Warren Hastings saw with his own eyes the nature and extent of the mischief of "private trade" of the Englishmen in the countryside. Writing to the Council during his journey he stated:<sup>3</sup>

"I have been surprised to meet with several English flags flying in places which I have passed; and on the river I do not believe that I passed a boat without one. By whatever title they have been assumed (for I would only trust to the information of my eyes, without stopping to ask questions), I am sure their frequency can bode no good to the Nawab's revenues, to the quiet of the country, or the honour of our nation, but evidently tend to lessen each of them. A party of sipahis, who were on the march before us, afforded us sufficient proof of the rapacious and insolent spirit of these people when they are left to their own discretion. Many complaints were made against them on the road, and most of the petty towns and sarais were deserted on our approach, and the shops shut up from the apprehensions of the same treatment from us."

On his way back from Monghyr Hastings visited the Nawwāb at Sasaram on 9 May 1762 and under instructions from the Council made certain proposals for regulating the private trade of the English, namely, that the Nawwāb's officers should insist on being shown a *dastakh* for every English boat, that if a boat with an English flag was found without a *dastakh*, the matter should be

<sup>1</sup> Vansittart *Narrative*, I., 297.

<sup>2</sup> Vansittart *Narrative*, I., 314; Gleig, *Memoir of Warren Hastings*, I., III.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 102.



referred to the nearest factory, etc.<sup>1</sup> Mīr Qāsim considered the proposals both inconsequential and unsatisfactory. He wanted something more tangible and also a clear statement from the Council about the exact privileges of the Company as well as the extent of his own authority in the matter.<sup>2</sup> He also spiritedly turned down the “unwarrantable demand” of 20 lakhs of rupees made by Hastings under instructions from the Council. This demand was made, it may be noted, inspite of Mīr Qāsim’s having paid up all that he had agreed to pay, and was evidently intended to embarrass him financially and thereby to weaken him in his opposition to the activities of the English.

Hastings’s negotiations thus came to nothing. In fact the point at issue was the respective jurisdictions of the Company and the Nawwāb. The English considered themselves the real masters of the land, although they did not openly declare that and preferred acting behind the facade of the Nawwāb’s government, and thought that since they had made Mīr Qāsim the Nawwāb, he should behave merely as a tool in their hands. Mīr Qāsim, on the other hand, thought that since he had paid the English whatever they had demanded for their help, he should now be left free to put an end to the chaotic condition of the country’s administration and trade and in general to act in the interests of the country as behoved an independent ruler. In the context of such irreconcilable attitudes the controversy over the issue of internal trade intensified.

Shortly after Hastings’s visit to Sasaram Mīr Qāsim moved his court from that place to Monghyr. He also relieved Rajballabh of his deputyship at Patna as he was found not only remiss in his duty and loyalty to the Nawwāb but also guilty of withholding a revenue of 40 lakhs of rupees.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of 1762 Vansittart visited the Nawwāb at Monghyr and made a new agreement with him to the effect that henceforth the English were to pay a duty of 9 percent, whereas the local merchants 40 percent,

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, *Memoir*, I., 117-120; Vansittart, *Narrative*, II., 90.

<sup>2</sup> See *Beng. Pub. Cons.*, 25 March 1762.

<sup>3</sup> *Abstract of Persian Letters Received, 1759-65*, p. 14, quoted in Nandalal Chatterji, *op.cit.*, 123. Raja Naubat Rai was made the new deputy at Patna.

on salt carried upto Patna; and that disputes were to be heard and settled by the Nawwāb's officers. Accordingly Mīr Qāsim issued instructions to his officers to enforce the agreement. On his return to Calcutta, however, Vansittart found the members of his Council in revolt against what they called his surrender of the English privileges. He then gave out that it was understood with Mīr Qāsim that the agreement should not be published or given effect to till ratified by the Council at Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> Whether this was really the case is a moot question. At any rate Vansittart appears to have himself considered the matter of the Council's ratification a mere routine formality, for he notes in his *Narrative*: "It was not till after my arrival in Calcutta that I suspected any objections could be made to the regulations which I had settled with the Nawab."<sup>2</sup> Vansittart's difficulty was caused also by the fact that he had been "impudent enough to accept seven lakhs from the nawab, in part as a refund of advances he had made, but in part as a present"; and everyone of the Council "declared that the money was the price of abandoning English rights."<sup>3</sup> The Council rejected his agreement and resolved that the English should continue to trade duty-free except for 2½ percent on their salt, and that their agents should be subject to none but English control.<sup>4</sup>

Mīr Qāsim was equally irritated. He wrote to the governor saying that at the time the latter made the written agreement it was understood that all the gentlemen would consent to it, "but it is amazing that not a single person has approved it." The Nawwāb further wrote that he would not negotiate with any person but the governor alone; "and therefore I plainly write, that if you intend to regard the agreement made between us, you should act in such a manner that the gentlemen may not make their objection to it."<sup>5</sup> Taunting Vansittart's failure to carry the Council with him the Nawwāb wrote: "Your order is absolute

<sup>1</sup> Vansittart, *Narrative*, ii., 201-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>3</sup> *C.H.I.*, V., 172.

<sup>4</sup> *Beng. Pub. Cons.*, 17 January 1763.

<sup>5</sup> *Translation of Persian Letters Received, Jan-Sept., 1763*, pp. 8, 23, 27, quoted in Nandalal Chatterji, *op.cit.*, 183-84.

with respect to my people, but you have not the least command over your own." Mīr Qāsim had also come to know by that time that Ellis and other members of the Council had been thinking in terms of replacing him by another Nawwāb. Hence he further wrote to the governor thus: "I understand that a number of the gentlemen are inclined to establish another Subahdar. Let them establish whom they please; it is of no consequence to me.... I wish not to be concerned in a charge of so much vexation; you may be pleased to find some other to undertake it. For my part I am heartily tired of those disputes and vexations."<sup>1</sup>

Clearly Mīr Qāsim had grown desperate. He did not care about his own position, but for the interests of the country. His remonstrances were, however, of no avail. The Calcutta Council, instead of ratifying their governor's agreement and consenting to paying the very reasonable duty of 9 per cent on salt only as against 40 per cent on the same commodity payable by the local merchants, formally resolved to have recourse to force which they had in fact all along been doing. On 22 February the Council sent instruction to their chiefs at different factories not only to oppose the Nawwāb's demand for duty but also to seize and punish the latter's officers who would make such demand.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly enough, Vansittart concurred in this step on the ground that it was better to fight the officers than to make a war "directly with the Nawab himself."<sup>3</sup> From this time a state of undeclared war existed between the Nawwāb's officers on the one hand and the Company's agents and troops, on the other.

Of the numerous incidents that took place in quick succession the most serious was that at Tajpur (Darbhanga district, Bihar). Early in March 1763 the Patna agent Ellis sent three companies of troops to Tajpur, which was occupied, and the officer at that place, Akbar 'Alī, was taken prisoner to Patna on the alleged ground that he had been interfering with the Company's saltpetre trade. A body of the Nawwāb's troops subsequently relieved Tajpur and drove out the forces stationed there by Ellis. In the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Beng. Pub. Cons.*, 22 Feb. 1763.

<sup>3</sup> *Narrative*, II., 314.

process four persons were killed. Mīr Qāsim sent strong protests against Ellis's high-handed action; but the Council justified the latter's conduct on the ground that he had acted in accordance with the Council's orders.<sup>1</sup>

As a last attempt to put an end to the state of undeclared war and to relieve his subjects and the local merchants Mīr Qāsim abolished, towards the end of March 1763, all duties and declared the trade of the country completely free for all, English as well as local merchants. But the English Council refused to accept that position either. They wanted that they should not only be allowed to trade free of duties, but also that the Nawwāb should at the same time force the local merchants to pay heavy duties. The Council sent a mission headed by Amyatt and Hay to the Nawwāb to press for such unreasonable preferential treatment. Mīr Qāsim resolutely refused to accede to that demand.

An open conflict became now inevitable. Already the Calcutta Council had been thinking in terms of deposing Mīr Qāsim. The latter also was making preparations to make a final stand against the English. On 10 June 1763 the English sent an expedition against Mīr Qāsim under the command of Major Adams who was accompanied by 1100 European and 4000 local recruits. Mīr Qāsim quickly sent an army from Monghyr towards Patna. The Patna agent Ellis attempted to seize that city, but after a temporary success was completely routed. On 10 July the Council at Calcutta formally deposed Mīr Qāsim and restored Mīr Ja'far to the *masnad*. He was forced to agree to limit his forces considerably, to receive a permanent English resident at his court, to allow the English complete freedom of inland trade except a nominal 2½ percent duty on salt, to make large presents to the members of the Council, and also to indemnify the Company and private English individuals for losses on account of the war with Mīr Qāsim whom, ironically enough, the Calcutta Council themselves had utilized in overthrowing Mīr Ja'far only three years ago. In all Mīr Ja'far undertook to pay a sum of £ 300,000 to the Company, £ 530,000 to the members of the Council, and

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Pub. Cons.*, 24 March 1763.

£ 250,000 to the army and navy.<sup>1</sup> Thus once again restoring Mīr Ja'far as their puppet the English prosecuted the war against Mīr Qāsim. Between July and September Major Adams defeated Mīr Qāsim's forces in a number of engagements and forced him to abandon Monghyr and retire to Patna. There in October (1763) he retaliated the violence "which the English councillors had already displayed" by condemning to death the English prisoners, numbering about 200.<sup>2</sup> He then withdrew to Oudh and entered into an alliance with the Nawwāb Wazīr Shujā' al-Daulah and the emperor Shāh 'Ālam II. During the first half of 1764 a series of indecisive battles took place between the two parties in Bihar and on the borders of Oudh. Ultimately on 23 October 1764 the English forces under Hector Munro completely defeated Mīr Qāsim and his allies after a fiercely contested battle at Baxar.<sup>3</sup> There was no more resistance. Mīr Qāsim escaped into obscurity, Nawwāb Shujā' al-Daulah fled into the Rohilla country, while the emperor Shāh 'Ālam II opened negotiations with the English.

Thus Mīr Qāsim's attempt to regain independence ended in failure. He was genuinely actuated by patriotic considerations and did not care about his personal interests. Even the troops whom he could hastily gather round him within the short period of two years were "animated by the strongest feelings of patriotism."<sup>4</sup> He failed because the circumstances of the time were against him. The English were already firmly established in Bengal. They had not only their strong fortifications at Calcutta backed by a strong navy and army, but also numerous commercial-cum-military stations throughout the length and breadth of the country. Since the battle of Plassey they had built up a regular army at each of their commercial stations and factories. In fact since Plassey there existed in the land not only two governments, but also two

<sup>1</sup> See *H.M.S.*, Vol. 196, pp. 39-81, 87-122, 221-9. In terms of rupees the English demands under the various heads which Mir Ja'far was forced to promise to pay amounted to rupees 133,00,000. Of this amount he actually managed to pay rupees 92,50,000. (See Nandalal Chatterji, *op.cit.*, 294.)

<sup>2</sup> The order was carried out by Walter Reinhard, nicknamed Sumroo, a European adventurer in Mīr Qāsim's employ.

<sup>3</sup> See *H.M.S.*, Vol. 198, pp. 31-36 for a contemporary description and plan of the battle. The loss on the English side was about 900, while on Mīr Qāsim's side about 2000 persons fell fighting.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 100.

armies, those of the Nawwāb and the English, the latter being better equipped, better paid and better trained. Moreover, the English were supported by the Hindu *baniyas* and *gomastahs* who did everything in their power to ensure the former's success. On the other hand Mīr Qāsim did not get full support of even his own men. Not only was there a division in the ranks of the Muslim nobility itself, his own kinsmen like Mīr Ja'far and his group were deadly opposed to him and were ever ready to work for his ruin. Under the situation it was impossible for Mīr Qāsim to build up an effective opposition to the foreigners, particularly as long as Mīr Ja'far and his sort were ready to play puppets at their hands. Mīr Qāsim had of course effected an alliance with the Nawwāb Wazīr of Oudh and the emperor Shāh 'Ālam II; but they themselves were not of much account. The emperor was no more than a titular head, in fact a wanderer in Oudh; while the Nawwāb Wazīr's forces were not well-organized.

It has sometimes been suggested that Mīr Qāsim's fall was due to his lack of wisdom and tact.<sup>1</sup> It may be pointed out that no amount of "tact" or "wisdom" short of being a complete tool in the hands of the English could have satisfied the latter. They were determined to exploit the resources of the country by holding it under an undeclared political domination and military occupation behind the shadow of the Nawwāb's government. That was a position which no person with the slightest consideration for his people and the country could accept. It goes to Mīr Qāsim's credit that he did not care for the deceptive *masnad* and, as it appears, used it only for the sake of safeguarding the interests of the people and the country. Considering the fact that almost from the beginning of his accession he sought to strengthen his government and began opposing the high-handedness of the English, it may be said that he managed to snatch the *masnad* from his father-in-law, Mīr Ja'far, not for the sake of becoming Nawwāb as such, nor for furthering his personal interests, but for making a final, though belated, attempt to regain the country's independence. His alliance with the Nawwāb Wazīr of Oudh and

<sup>1</sup> H. Dodwell in *C.H.I.*, V, 173; and following him Nandalal Chatterji, *op.cit.*, 187.

the titular emperor Shāh 'Ālam II points to the same conclusion. It is in the context of that attempt that the battle of Baxar is significant. It has sometimes been said that the battle deserves "far more than Plassey to be considered as the origin of the British power in India." The remark is justifiable only with reference to the attempt made by Mīr Qāsim to prevent the consummation of the outcome of Plassey. Had there been no Mīr Qāsim there would have been no Baxar. That Mīr Qāsim failed at Baxar was due to the cardinal fact that the battle of Plassey had made the English the real power in Bengal. Plassey was the real beginning, while Baxar was a reconfirmation, of the English political domination over Bengal.

## CHAPTER II

# DĪWĀNĪ, DUAL GOVERNMENT AND DESOLATION

### I. ACQUISITION OF DĪWĀNĪ AND THE SYSTEM OF DUAL GOVERNMENT

Four months after the battle of Baxar Mīr Ja'far died at Murshidabad (February 1765). The Calcutta Council then raised to the *masnad* his second son Najm al-Daulah. The succession was more or less natural; yet Najm al-Daulah was forced to make large presents to the governor and his colleagues amounting to £139,357. More important than this, they utilized the occasion to systematize their indirect control of the government. The new Nawwāb was compelled to leave the private trading rights of the English untouched and to appoint a Deputy Nawwāb who was to be nominated by them and who was not to be removed from his post without their approval. This Deputy Nawwāb was to run the administration of the country under the direction of the Calcutta Council. By this arrangement the "nawab survived as a figure-head, in whose name administration was conducted by a nominee of the English, but who of himself could do nothing."<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Reza Khān, a favourite of the Council, was appointed Deputy Nawwāb. The latter also was required to make handsome presents to the governor and members of the Council. Meanwhile the Board of Directors of the Company sent Clive for a second time as Governor of Bengal and commander-in-chief with powers to form a select committee of four, presided over by himself, to assist him if the existing Council at Calcutta did not cooperate with him. Clive had already with his Bengal plunders purchased considerable shares of the Company which enabled him to have a say in its Board of Directors, and also a number of "rotten boroughs" whereby he influenced Parliamentary elections and created a coterie of his own in Parliament. He arrived at Calcutta in May 1765 and only two days afterwards formed the select committee of four.<sup>2</sup> His second governorship

<sup>1</sup> C.H.I., V., 174.

<sup>2</sup> Two of the members, Colonel Carnac and H. Verelst, were already in Bengal. The other two, Sumnar and Sykes, arrived with Clive from England.



(1765-67) is noted for (a) the acquisition of the *dīwānī* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for the English and (b) the formalization of the system of dual government which had been in existence since the battle of Plassey.

When Clive reached Calcutta Oudh had been overrun by the English forces and negotiations had been in progress with the emperor Shah 'Ālam II. Some of Clive's colleagues now suggested to complete the conquest of northern India by marching upon Delhi. He however disregarded these suggestions as impracticable and continued the negotiations with the emperor which ended in the conclusion of the Treaty of Allahabad, August 1765. By this treaty the emperor was persuaded to grant to the Company the *dīwānī*, that is the office of revenue collection and civil administration, of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in lieu of an annual tribute of twenty-six lakhs of rupees and also the districts of Kora and Allahabad. These two districts were taken by the English from Oudh and made over to the emperor for the support of his imperial dignity. It was also agreed that out of the revenues of the three provinces the Nawwāb of Bengal would be paid a fixed annual sum of 53 lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup> Further, Clive made a settlement with Shujā' al-Daulah, the defeated Nawwāb Wazir of Oudh. He was reinstated in his former possessions except the districts of Kora and Allahabad on payment of a war-indemnity of 50 lakhs of rupees. He was also bound by a defensive alliance according to which the Company were to provide him with troops and military assistance for the defence of his dominions if he consented to pay the cost of such assistance.<sup>2</sup> By these arrangements the process of transposition of the British rule over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was completed. It may be recalled that the idea of obtaining a grant from the Mughal emperor had been originally given to the English by Rai Durlabh. His suggestion, and Mīr Qāsīm's genuine fears that power might be formally transferred to the English over the head of the Bengal Nawwāb, had at last come to pass. The acquisition of the *dīwānī* secured for

<sup>1</sup> This sum was reduced to 41 lakhs in 1766, and to 32 lakhs in 1769.

<sup>2</sup> This treaty with Shujā' al-Daulah, and that with Najm al-Daulah (Feb. 1765) were in fact the precursors of the famous "subsidiary alliances" by which Wellesley extended the English supremacy over other parts of the subcontinent early in the nineteenth century.

the English a recognized and constitutional position in the three provinces over which they had already established their complete military and practical political control. Also, the settlement with the Nawwāb Wazīr of Oudh transformed that territory into a buffer state between the Company's dominions and the Marathas. For about a century Oudh remained in that condition till its annexation by Lord Dalhousie in 1856.

The acquisition of the *dīwānī* by the English was a sequel to their military victory. They were now the masters of the three provinces in fact as well as in theory. Traditionally the Nawwāb of Bengal, as viceroy of the Mughal emperor, exercised two functions,<sup>1</sup> (i) the *dīwānī* i.e., revenue collection and civil administration and (ii) the *nizāmat*, i.e., military affairs, security and criminal administration. By the arrangements made with Nawwāb Najm al-Daulah in February 1765 the Company had virtually obtained the *nizāmat* in its favour. The treaty of Allahabad with the emperor, on the other hand, secured for it the *dīwānī*. The Company thus "held the *Diwani* from the emperor and the *Nizamat* from the Subadar." Technically as well as practically there remained nothing for the Nawwāb. Yet Clive did not directly take up the administration of the land and continued to use the mask of the Nawwāb's government for the same reasons that had shaped his policy after the battle of Plassey, namely, the limited number of the Company's servants and their lack of knowledge of local traditions and details of the administrative system, and a desire to avoid any complications with the other European powers. The official policy in this respect was clearly stated by Clive in his final address to his colleagues on 16 January 1767 as follows:<sup>2</sup>

"The first point of Politics which I offer to your Consideration is the Form of Government. We are sensible that since the Acquisition of the Dewanni, the Power formerly belonging to the Soubah [*Subahdar*] of these Provinces are Totally, in Fact, vested in the East India Company. Nothing remains to him but the Name and Shadow of Authority. This Name, however, this shadow, it is indispensably necessary we should

<sup>1</sup> These two functions were originally exercised by two distinct officers, namely, the *Sūbahdār* and the *Dīwān*. Gradually, however, the *Sūbahdār* or *Nawwāb* practically controlled both the functions, particularly since the beginning of the eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 105.

seem to venerate;... Under the Sanction of a Soubah every encroachment that may be attempted by Foreign Powers can effectually be crushed without any apparent Interposition of our own Authority;... Be it therefore always remembered, that there is a Soubah, that we have allotted him a Stipend,... and that though the Revenues belong to the Company, the territorial jurisdiction must still rest in the Chiefs of the Country acting under him and this Presidency in Conjunction."

The system which Clive thus evolved is known as his Dual Government. As already pointed out, it practically existed since the battle of Plassey. It was now only formalized and elaborated. The Nawwāb was left with the "Name" and "Shadow" of authority and was also publicly saddled with the responsibility of government, but he had no power and resources to carry out that responsibility. On the other hand the Company enjoyed all the powers and revenues, but did not have any responsibility for the administration of the land. In consequence the old evils of unrestricted oppressions and exploitation of the people at the hands of the Company's servants and agents continued in a worse form. Clive and his colleagues left the actual task of collection of revenues in the hands of two Deputy *Dīwāns* (*Nā'ib Dīwāns*), Muhammad Rezā Khān in Bengal and Shitab Roy in Bihar, who were to act under the former's control and direction. Similarly the *nizāmat* affairs were now left in charge of two *Nā'ib Nāzims*, Nandakumar at Murshidabad and Jasrat Khān at Dhaka. As the Company were mainly interested in the realization of the revenues, the *Nāib Nāzims* were left with very little initiative and resources to look after their branch of the administration. Lawlessness and confusion prevailed everywhere and the previous system of local administration in the districts broke down. Nor was the method of revenue collection conducive to the well-being of the people and the country. The *Nā'ib Dīwāns* collected the revenue mostly through the instrumentality of a number of contractors or farmers (*'uhdadārs*) who were appointed over and above the heads of traditional zamindars and local revenue officers. These *'uhdadārs* were all from among the Hindu *banias* and *gomastahs* of the Company. Backed by the support and influence of their English masters these *'uhdadārs* ushered in an era of organized oppression upon the people and intensified the evils of the private trade dealings of the Company's servants.

## II. ELIMINATION OF THE PRINCIPAL MUSLIM LANDHOLDERS

One result of the early phase of the Company's *dīwānī* and the active co-operation between the Company's servants and the *bania 'uhdadārs* was the elimination of the principal Muslim landholders and zamindars. It may be noted that although since the time of Murshid Qulī Khān there had come into existence a few big Hindu zamindarias like those of Rajshahi and Nadia, there still remained many Muslim zamindars and landholders in the country who were in no way less affluent and powerful. The most notable of them was Asad al-Zamān Khān of Birbhum, a descendant of the Pathan chief Asad Allah Khān.<sup>1</sup> Almost equally notable were the zamindars of Bakarganj (Barisal), the descendants of Aga Baker, who was "de-facto ruler of Bakarganj from 1741 until his death in 1753."<sup>2</sup> No less important were the Muslim zamindars of Sandip, the big island at the mouth of the Ganges. Since the later half of the seventeenth century the island was divided into three zamindarias, namely, Nimsuti, Musapur and Rampur. The former two were respectively under Bakhtiyār Muḥammad Ḥanīf and Muqīm Ḥusain, while Rampur was under Raja Ram Bijoy. When the Company obtained the *dīwānī* the greater part of Sandip was being held by the descendants of the two above mentioned Muslim zamindars, namely Muḥammad Nāif Chowdhury, Muhammad Ja'far Chowdhury, Muḥammad Wāsil, Muḥammad Akbar and Abū Torāb Chowdhury. The last named person, a great-grandson of Muqīm Ḥusain Khan,<sup>3</sup> was the most prominent among those Muslim zamindars. Another big Muslim zamindari existed in Tippera (Chakla Raushanabad and Mihirkul with parts of Hill Tippera). By the sixties of the eighteenth century Shamsheer Ghāzī had established himself as the zamindar of that region.<sup>4</sup> Besides these there were other Muslim zamindars in other districts, particularly in Rangpur and Sylhet.

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II., 393-394. See also *infra*, p.57.

<sup>2</sup> *Bakaraganj District Gazetteer*, 20. It was after the name of Aga Baker that the district came to be called Bakarganj. He is often mentioned in the East India Company's records as "Aga Bakar".

<sup>3</sup> Abū Torab Chowdhury was the son of Muhammad Reza Chowdhury, son of Chand Khan, son of Muqīm Ḥusain Khan.

<sup>4</sup> *Noakhali District Gazetteer*, 22-23. See also *infra*, pp.59-61.

These Muslim zamindars and chiefs were eliminated during the sixties. While the Birbhum zamindar and Shamsheer Ghāzī were suppressed mainly on account of their opposition to the Company's domination,<sup>1</sup> the others fell victims to the rapacity and machinations of the *bania* revenue farmers. Two of the most glaring examples of these latter cases were those of the Barisal and Sandip zamindars. The former, the successor of Aga Baker, were ousted by Mir Ja'far's erstwhile *dīwān* Rai Durlabh. He got possession of their estates in the name of his son by having recourse to a combination of force, deceit and undue influence.<sup>2</sup> The case of the Sandip zamindars was more pathetic. They were forcibly ousted by Gokul Ghosal, founder of the subsequently famous Bhukailas family of Khidirpur (Calcutta). He was the *bania* of Verelst, member of the Council and later on Governor of Bengal. As Verelst's *bania* at Chittagong Gokul Ghosal first obtained the sole ownership of the Noabād or newly-cultivated lands in that district. Next, through the influence of his master, he obtained the '*uhdadārī* (revenue contract) of Sandip and with the forces supplied by the latter established his authority in the island and compelled the zamindars by sheer force, illegal confinement and physical torture to execute deeds of sale of their estates in his favour.<sup>3</sup> Another person of Gokul Ghosal's sort was Devi Singh, the *bania* of Warren Hastings. Devi Singh got possession of the Muslim zamindari estates of Rangpur by similar methods.<sup>4</sup>

Thus within a few years of the Company's acquisition of the *dīwānī* most of the important Muslim zamindars were ousted from their estates and forced to recede into poverty and obscurity. This fact is clearly alluded to by Warren Hastings in a private communication in 1773 wherein he stated that the ancient families had been pulled down "to make room for the upstarts."<sup>5</sup> It may be indicated here that such wrongs and oppressions did not go totally unchallenged. Sandip and Rangpur in particular, as will be

<sup>1</sup> See below.

<sup>2</sup> *Bakarganj District Gazetteer*, 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Dacca*, Vol. IV., 3, Oct. to 28 Nov. 1772, pp. 58-59, 112-120.

<sup>4</sup> *Rangpur District Gazetteer*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Aldersey, 1 July 1773, *Add. MSS.* 29125, f. 225, quoted in A. Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal*, Cambridge, 1969, 246, n 7.

seen later on, continued to be trouble-spots for the Company and scenes of protracted resistance by Muslim zamindars and peasants.<sup>1</sup> It is fair to add that some Hindu families also suffered at the hands of persons like Gokul Ghosal and Devi Singh. The peculiarity of the situation, however, lay in the fact that while such Hindu families were more than replaced by the Hindu *bania* "upstarts", no new set of Muslim landholders came into being to take the place of the old aristocracy.

The process of elimination of the latter class was hastened also by the policy of resumption of *jāgīr* lands which was adopted even at that early period. The most notable instance in this respect was the resumption of the lands in Dhaka and Faridpur districts held in *jāgīr* by royal *sanads* by a number of families connected with the *Nawwāra* (river fleet) and *Topkhāna* (artillery) establishments. These *Nawwāra* and *Topkhāna* lands, yielding an annual revenue of about 50,000 rupees, were resumed by Francis Sykes, member of Clive's select Committee and resident at Murshidabad. The *jāgīradārs*, numbering more than 30, were all pensioned off at a total monthly pension of rupees 1,036 only.<sup>2</sup> Prominent among those who were thus deprived of their *jāgīr* lands were Ḥakīm Najauallah, Mīr 'Abdullah (*dārogha* of the *Nawwāra*), Dost Muhammad (a doctor in the *Nawwāra* department), Muhammad Sha'bān (*dārogha* of the *Imārat*, Lalbagh), Mīr Sayyid' Alī (holding a *jāgīr* on the *Topkhāna* lands), Ḥusain 'Alī (*Nā'ib Dārogha* of the treasury, holding a *jāgīr* on the *Topkhāna* lands), Muḥammad Bākīr (a learned man), Alla Yattahar (*Bakhshī* of the *Phīlkhāna*), Muḥammad Ḥusain (formerly *Bakhshī* of the *Barkandazes*), Shāh Bākīr (a religious man), Agā Nabī and Muḥammad Ja'far (old servants of Husain Qulī Khān, a former deputy governor of Dhaka during 'Alivardī Khān's time). Some of those persons had more than 100 dependants to maintain; but they were allowed pensions ranging between 60 and 70 rupees only a month.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Dacca*, 3 Oct. to 28 Nov., 1772, Vol. IV., pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

## III. RUINATION OF THE MASSES

While such was the incidence of the Company's *dīwānī* on the Muslim landed aristocracy, the economic backbone of the people in general was broken on account of the wholesale plunder and oppression carried out by the Company's English servants and local *gomastahs* in the name of private trade and investment for the Company. Clive, on his assumption of office for the second term, at first thundered against the "greed" and "rapacity" of his countrymen. He was however amply retorted by an out-spoken member of Council who pointed out: "We have the approved example of the President, Lord Clive himself." In the event Clive's reforming zeal was confined to the reduction of the field allowances of the army called "Double batta." With regard to the Englishmen's private trade and the people's sufferings on that account he did nothing. On the contrary, under his superintendence the evils reached their climax. He was instrumental in establishing a strict monopoly of salt trade for the senior servants of the Company, calling this "The Society of Trade." At the same time the private trade operations of all the Englishmen in Bengal and the investments for the Company, in both of which force and undue influence were employed without any scruple, continued in full swing. An idea of the nature of these activities may be obtained from the complaint which a zamindar of Buzurg Ummedpur (Barisal) made to the Council in 1764. He stated:

"By reason of the oppressions of the factories of the Company and many other English traders...all inhabitants are fled. The people of the factories take from the markets what they please at half price, cut down bamboos and trees belonging to the inhabitants and take them away by force. They press the inhabitants and carry them into the woods of Sundarban, paying them only half their wages. They take possession of lands in the Sundarban and make salt for which they pay no rents... They force inhabitants to take tobacco, salt and other articles, and refuse to pay the legal duties on the trade which they carry on. If we demand a sight of the Company's 'dastaks', they beat us with bamboos. Some of them pretend that they have been robbed and insist on our making restitution, placing peon upon us and putting us to great expense. They impose and exact fines.... Mr. Dobbins has established two factories within my 'parganah', committing every species of injury and oppressing and violating the women of the inhabitants, and erecting factories in places where none were ever before..."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Sec. Cons.*, 7 May 1764, quoted in A.C. Roy, *op.cit.* 313-314.

These were grave and undoubted charges; but they fell on deaf ears, because justice was sought from those very people who were the real authors of the wrongs complained of. In 1765 a group of “daring” zamindars remonstrated, of course fruitlessly, that the English traders and their *gomastahs* visited “every village almost throughout the province of Bengal” trading in “Linnen, Chunam, Mustardseed, Tobacco, Turmerick, Oil, Rice, Hemp, Gunnies, Wheat, in short in all Kinds of Goods and Whatever other Commodities are produced in the Country; Thus in order to purchase these Articles, they force their Money on the ryots [*ra'yats*], and having by these oppressive means bought their goods at a low Rate, they oblige the Inhabitants and shopkeepers to take them at an high price, exceeding what is paid in the Markets;..... There is now scarce anything worth left in the country.....”<sup>1</sup> In the same year Francis Sykes, the resident at Murshidabad, drew a similar picture of the private trade operations of the Englishmen in the interior districts. Four years later his successor at Murshidabad, Becher, mournfully observed that since the acquisition of the *dīwānī* the “first consideration” of the English had been “the raising of as large Sums from the Country as could be collected” and that the land was “verging towards its Ruin while the English have really so great a share in the Administration.” “Since the Hon. Company have been in possession of the Dewannee”, he further wrote, “the influence that has been used in providing their Investment and under their Name, Goods, on private Account, has proved such a monopoly, that Chassars, Manufacturers, etc., have been obliged to sell their Commodities at any price... I well remember this Country when Trade was free, and the flourishing State it was then in; with Concern I now see its present ruinous condition which I am convinced is greatly owing to the Monopoly that has been made of late years in the Company’s name of almost all the Manufactures in the Country....”<sup>2</sup>

Becher’s criticisms led to the appointment in the same year (1769) of Englishmen as “Supervisors” in the different districts to

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, 101-102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 102, 109.



superintend the collection of revenue. This measure, instead of improving the situation in any way, further aggravated it. The “Supervisors” were drawn from the same class of people who had been engaged in private trade. They now got an opportunity to redouble their trade operations by residing in the interior of the country and used their official powers in furthering their private gains. In league with their *gomastahs* and *bania-‘uhdadārs* the Supervisors established their tight monopoly of all articles of trade and also exacted as much money as possible from the people in the name of revenue. These officers also engaged themselves in profiteering in rice and other foodgrains, hoarding them, thereby creating an artificial scarcity, and then selling them at an exorbitant price. They also exported the foodgrains out of the country for extra profit. Within a short time Supervisorships turned out to be so lucrative an assignment that the governor found it difficult to get an Englishman of abilities “to conduct the official business at the Presidency without violence”, for, as he himself admitted, “who would rest satisfied with a handsome salary of three or four hundred rupees a year to maintain him in Calcutta, who could get a lac or three lacs, which I believe have been acquired in that space, and live at no expense, in the districts?”<sup>1</sup>

The evils arising out of this combination of irresponsible ruling power and unbridled private commercial interests in the same hands are more graphically described by a contemporary observer as follows:<sup>2</sup>

“But for the better understanding of the nature of these oppressions, it may not be improper to explain the methods of providing an *investment* of piece goods, as conducted either by the Export-warehouse-keeper and the Company’s servants at the subordinate factories, on the Company’s account, or by the English gentlemen in the service of the Company, as their own private ventures. In either case, factors, or agents called *gomastahs* are engaged at monthly wages by the gentleman’s *Banyán*; there being generally, on each expedition into the country, one head *gomastah*, one *mohuree* or clerk, and one cash-keeper appointed, with some peons and *hircarahs*;... These are despatched, with a *Perwānah* from

<sup>1</sup> Warren Hastings’s address to the Council, 6 January 1773, quoted in *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>2</sup> William Bolts, *Considerations on Indian Affairs; Particularly Respecting the Present State of Bengal and its Dependencies, etc.*, London, 1772, pp. 192-193.

the Governor of Calcutta, or the chief of a subordinate to the Zemindár of the districts where the purchases are intended to be made; directing him not to impede their business, but to give them every assistance in his power... Upon the gomástah's arrival at the aurung, or manufacturing town, he fixes upon a habitation which he calls his *Cutcherry*; to which, by his peons and hircurahs, he summons the brokers, called Dalláls, and Pykars, together with the weavers; whom, after receipt of the money dispatched by his master, he makes to sign a bond for the delivery of a certain quantity of goods, at a certain time and price, and pays them a part of the money in advance. The assent of the poor weaver is in general not deemed necessary, for the gomástahs, when employed on the Company's investment, frequently make them sign what they please; and upon the weavers' refusing to take the money offered, it has been known they had it tied in their girdles, and they have been sent away with a flogging... A number of these weavers are generally also registered in the books of the Company's gomástahs, and not permitted to work for any others; being transferred from one to another as so many slaves, subject to the tyranny and roguery of every succeeding gomástah. The cloth, when made, is collected in a warehouse for the purpose, called *Khattah*; where it is kept marked with the weaver's name, till it is convenient for the gomástah to hold a *Khattah*, as the term is, for assorting, and fixing the price of each piece: on which business is employed an officer called the Company's *Jachendár*, or assorter. The roguery practised in this department is beyond imagination, but all terminates in the defrauding of the poor weaver; for the prices which the Company's gomástahs, and, in confederacy with them, the *Jachendárs*, fix upon the goods, are in all places at least fifteen per cent. and in some even forty per cent. less than the goods so manufactured would sell for in the public Bazar, or market, upon a free sale."

It is further noted that lest the weaver should attempt to sell his cloth privately to others, the Company's gomastah set his peons over the weaver to watch him, and not "unfrequently to cut the piece out of the loom when nearly finished." Weavers who dared sell their goods to others had, by the Company's agents, "been frequently seized and imprisoned, confined in irons, fined considerable sums of money" and flogged.<sup>1</sup> Those who were unable to perform such agreements as had been forced on them had their goods "seized and sold on the spot, to make good the deficiency." The winders of raw silk, called *Nagaads*, had been treated with such injustice "that instances have been known of their cutting off their thumbs, to prevent their being forced to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

wind silk” at ruinous loss.<sup>1</sup> This last kind of workmen were pursued with such rigour during Clive’s government

“that the most sacred laws of society were atrociously violated; for it was common thing for the Company’s sepoys to be sent by force of arms to break open the houses of the Armenian merchants established at Sydabād (who have, from time immemorial, been largely concerned in the silk trade) and forcibly take the *Nagaads* from their work, and carry them away to the English factory.”<sup>2</sup>

The observer lamentably recalls that even as late as the time of ‘Alīvardī Khān weavers manufactured their goods freely and that an Englishman, for instance, purchased in Dhaka on one morning “eight hundred pieces of muslin at his own door, as brought to him by the weavers of their own accord”, but that only a few years afterwards the same gentleman was witness to “the fact of above seven hundred families of weavers, in the districts round Jungulbarry, at once abandoning their country and their professions on account of the oppressions of this nature, which were then only commencing.”<sup>3</sup> It may be mentioned here that most of the silk manufacturers and traders, as also the vast majority of the weavers, were Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

#### IV. THE GREAT FAMINE OF 1770-71

As a result of such oppressions and exploitation the economic ruination of the people was complete by the end of the sixties. Indeed the appointment of “Supervisors” in 1769 was an over-drop in the cup of the people’s misery which was already full. Becher’s above mentioned observation that the country was on the verge of ruin was not a foreboding, but a statement of the situation that already prevailed. For, that very year (1769) was one of exceptional drought leading to a general failure of the December harvest. At last the ruling group’s inhuman spoliation and nature’s non-co-operation brought in the inevitable consequence. The country was visited by a dreadful famine which

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>4</sup> See Vol. I., p.810. It may further be noted that one of the main objects of the reform movement organized by Hājī Shari’at Allah in east Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century, known as the *Farā’idī* Movement (see *infra*, Chapter XI) was the regeneration of the large class of degraded and impoverished weavers in Dhaka and Faridpur districts. Also, the *Census Report* of 1891 (p. 225-35) records as many as 771,231 weavers in Bengal and Bihar.

raged in full fury during the whole period from the beginning of 1770 till the middle of 1771 (Bengali year 1176.) It was the worst in the country's history, before or since. It was caused not simply by the "failure of the December harvest of 1769, and intensified by a partial failure of the crops of the previous year and the following spring", as has sometimes been suggested,<sup>1</sup> but in fact by the system of power without responsibility that had ensued since 1757, and because of the systematic exploitation and exactions from the people continuously for more than ten years which had completely exhausted their savings, and because of extensive profiteering in foodgrains and their exportation by the Company's servants.

Nothing illustrates this fact more clearly than the attitude of the Calcutta Council during the famine. Alarming reports about scarcity of food grains and of famine from local officers and district authorities continued to reach the Council since the end of 1769 and throughout 1770. Still they viewed the question from considerations of realizing the revenue and thought only in terms of avoiding any fall in its collection.<sup>2</sup> No effective measure was taken to stop hoarding and exportation of grains even when the famine was in full swing. By the end of September the government had been fully aware that there was "very unusual scarcity of grain" in Bengal; yet they sent at that time large quantities of rice to Madras for the use of the government and troops there.<sup>3</sup> In November of the same year, being aware "that this distress will encrease, and a certainty that it cannot be alleviated for six months to come", the Council ordered "a stock of grain sufficient to serve our army for that period, to be laid up in proper store-houses..."<sup>4</sup> In May of the following year the

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Hunter, *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Vol. I., London, 1872, 31.

<sup>2</sup> While noting these facts, Hunter somewhat inconsistently apologises for the Council (p. 24) by stating that they could not appreciate the gravity of the situation because of what he calls "Bengali reticence"—the "native" officials' failure to inform the government properly. This is totally inconsistent not only with what he notes previously, but also with what he says at the following page (p. 25): "Every consultation is filled with their apprehensions and highly coloured accounts of the public distress, but it does not appear that the conviction entered the minds of the Council...that the question was not so much one of revenue as of depopulation."

<sup>3</sup> Letters to the Court of Directors, 25 Sept. and 30 Sept. 1769, paras 20-27 and 53 respectively, reproduced in *ibid.*, appendix B, p. 399.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to the Court of Directors, 23 Nov. 1769, para 9, *ibid.*

Supervisor of Bihar requested the Council to remove the brigade of the Company's army from Bankipur "to save the lives of many people who might be subsisted from what the brigade consumed." The Council rejected the representation, though according to their own admission: "Above one third of the inhabitants have perished in the once plentiful province of Purneah, and in other parts the misery is equal."<sup>1</sup> There were numerous appeals from zamindars and farmers for remissions of revenue; but only with regard to the farmers of Burdwan a temporary remission of 2½ lakhs of rupees was at first allowed, but ultimately that too was realized.<sup>2</sup>

It was only towards the end of the famine that some nominal attempt at relief was made—the Council fixing the Company's contribution at 40,000 rupees (£ 4,000) only for the subsistence of thirty millions of people during six months. To this amount the impoverished Nawwāb and his few nobles added an even larger amount of rupees 47,000. For this generosity, however, they were sternly reminded by the Council that they would be responsible for any extra expense that might be incurred in relief measures.<sup>3</sup> Consequently districts "in which men were dying at the rate of twenty thousand a month received allotments of a hundred and fifty rupees." As Hunter puts it: "A provincial Council gravely considers and magnanimously sanctions a grant of ten shillings worth of rice per diem for a starving population numbering four hundred thousand souls."<sup>4</sup> Even such painfully inadequate relief measures were more than counter-balanced by the rigorous and violent manner in which the revenue collections were not only kept up on their former level but also increased. At the beginning of the new revenue year in April 1770, when the famine was at its height, a new settlement was made with farmers making an increase of 10 percent on the previous year's assessment.<sup>5</sup> To

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Court of Directors, 9 May. 1770, para 3, *ibid.*, 400.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 403, 406.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Resident at Murshidabad (Becher), 24 Dec. 1770, *ibid.*, 419-420.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the Supervisor of Rangpur, 26 Sept. 1770 and *Consultation of the Provincial Council at Murshidabad*, 4 Oct. 1770, quoted in *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Court of Directors, 11 Sept., 1770, para 5, *ibid.*, 402. It is stated that the Resident at Murshidabad recommended this increase on the basis of the Deputy Dīwān's calculations; but it should be remembered that the Council were the deciding authority.

make up for any deficiency in revenue on account of the death or flight of cultivators, an unusual and inhuman tax, called "Najay", was imposed on the people. As described by the Company's governor himself, it was "an Assessment upon the actual inhabitants of every Inferior Description of the lands, to make up for the loss sustained in the Rents of their neighbours who are either dead or have fled the Country. The tax, not being levied on any Fixed Rate or standard, fell heaviest upon the Wretched Survivors of those Villages which had suffered the greatest Depopulation, and were of course the most entitled to the lenity of Government. It had also the additional Evil attending it, in common with every other variation from the regular Practice, that it afforded an opportunity to the Farmers and Shicdars to levy other Contributions on the People under color of it, and even to encrease this to whatever magnitude they pleased, since they were in course the Judges of the Loss sustained, and of the Proportion which the Inhabitants were to pay to replace it."<sup>1</sup>

Thus while the famine was the result of a decade of continuous exploitation and impoverishment of the people, climaxed by a year of drought and general failure of crops, the human loss and miseries were immensely multiplied by the policies of a government acting on the premise of power without responsibility and concerned only with realizing ever-increasing revenues,<sup>2</sup> while their individual members bent upon turning the public distress into a source of private profit. Throughout the year 1770 people continued dying in huge numbers. As early as

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Hastings and Council to Court of Directors, 3 Nov. 1772, para 7, *ibid.*, Appendix A, 381-82. Hastings's observation in the same letter that the "Najay" was a recognized and traditional cess, being "a kind of security against Desertion", is not supported by any specific instance in the Sultanat and Mughal periods of Bengal's history. Equally erroneous is the statement of Thompson and Garratt (*op. cit.*, 110) that the *Najay* cess was the same as the 10 percent increase made at the suggestion of Reza Khān. Hastings's above quoted statement clearly shows that the *Najay* cess had no fixed rate and that it was imposed not in the ordinary course of farming the revenue at an increase but to make up for the deficiency due to famine and the death or desertion of the population.

<sup>2</sup> The net revenue collections for the years of drought and famine, from 1769 to 1772, show continual increase as follows:

1769-70 ... ..	Rs. 1,31,49,148
1770-71 ... ..	Rs. 1,40,06,030
1771-72 ... ..	Rs. 1,53,33,660

—Letter of Hastings and Council to Court of Directors, 3 Nov. 1772, *op. cit.*, 381.

January of that year the Supervisor of Patna reported that about fifty to sixty persons were dying every day at Patna alone; "the interior of the country must be in a deplorable condition."<sup>1</sup> According to a subsequent communication from the same officer the daily deaths at Patna rose to an average of 150 people.<sup>2</sup> By April (1770) reports from such distant districts as Purnia and Jessore stated that the cultivators sold their cattle and agricultural implements, devoured their seed-grains, and sold their sons and daughters, till at last no buyer of children could be found. They ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field.<sup>3</sup> About that time a secret communication of the Council noted: "Above one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the once-plentiful province of Purneah, and in other parts the misery is equal." In June the Resident at Murshidabad sent in even more awful a picture. "The scene of misery that intervened, and still continues", he wrote, "shocks humanity too much to bear description. Certain it is, that in several parts the living have fed on the dead, and the number that has perished in those provinces that have most suffered is calculated to have been, within these few months, as six is to sixteen of the whole inhabitants" (i.e.,  $\frac{3}{8}$  ths).<sup>4</sup> In March smallpox broke out in Murshidabad which carried away a large number of people. As the famine raged on, streams of dying and famished population poured into the principal cities in hopeless search for subsistence. Streets "were blocked up with the promiscuous heaps of the dying and the dead. Internment could not do its work quick enough; even the dogs and jackals, the public scavengers of the East, became unable to accomplish their revolting work, and the multitude of mangled and feltering corpses at length threatened the existence of the citizens."<sup>5</sup>

According to the most conservative official and non-official estimates, at least one-third of the total population of the province

<sup>1</sup> Consultation of 28 January 1770, Hunter, *op.cit.*, Appendix B., 415.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>3</sup> Petitions of Muhammad Ali, Faujdār of Purnia, and of Ajagar Mal, 'Āmil of Jessore, Consultation of 28 April, 1770, *ibid.*, 417.

<sup>4</sup> Consultation of 9 June 1770, *ibid.*, 418. It may be noted that in the records of the time districts, and sometimes well-known divisions, of Bengal are referred to as "provinces."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

was carried away by the famine.<sup>1</sup> As the year of the famine drew to its close, the depopulation of the country became evident. In the following year the government discovered that the remaining population would not suffice to till the land. Speaking about the effects of famine in his district the Supervisor of Purnia (Ducarel) wrote in December 1770 that the principal port-town of the district, Alamganj, had “declined greatly by reason of the considerable decrease of inhabitants during the last famine, a great part of the town having become jungle, and literally a refuge for wild beasts... there have perished near two lacks [200,000] of people in this district.”<sup>2</sup> A similar report was sent early in 1771 by the Supervisor of Birbhum (Higginson) who stated that the effects of the famine on his district were dreadful “beyond description.” “Many hundreds of villages are entirely depopulated; and even in large towns there are not a fourth part of the houses inhabited. For want of ryots to cultivate the ground, there are immense tracts of fine open country which remain wholly waste and unimproved.”<sup>3</sup> A large part of the district stretching over 120 miles turned into dense forests abounding in tigers, bears and other wild animals.<sup>4</sup> Such was the state of many parts of the country. The commissioners appointed in 1772 to make revenue settlements by touring the various districts found the finest parts of the province “desolated by famine” and the lands “abandoned.”<sup>5</sup> The worst affected areas were the districts of Purnia, Rajmahal, Rajshahi and Birbhum; whereas the least affected areas were Dhaka and the south-eastern districts, “where the rivers have overflowed and fertilized the lands even this remarkable dry season.”<sup>6</sup> Even then Bengal as a whole could not for three generations recover from the ravages and desolation caused by the famine although good harvests followed in 1772 and the succeeding years. That “she failed to do so, the records of the next thirty years mournfully attest.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Hastings and Council to Court of Directors, 3 Nov. 1772, *op.cit.*, 381

<sup>2</sup> Consultation of 13 December, 1770. *ibid.*, 411.

<sup>3</sup> *Birbhum District Gazetteer*, 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. Also *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, 29 April 1780, quoted in Hunter, *op.cit.*, 64-65.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Hastings and Council to Court of Directors, 5 Sept. 1772, para 10, *ibid.*, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Consultation of 28 April, 1770, *ibid.*, 416.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



## V. THE COMPANY STANDS FORTH AS DĪWĀN

Even during the famine the Court of Directors came to know that their servants had been profiteering on human misery by not merely “monopolizing grain” but “compelling the poor ryots to sell even the seed requisite for the next harvest.”<sup>1</sup> The Court were not quite happy about it and were moreover dismayed by the fact that while their servants were returning to England with immense fortunes, the Company itself was in financial difficulty. It was also suspected that the “native” *Nā’ib Dīwāns* had been intercepting a great part of the revenue. Hence towards the end of 1771 the Court of Directors appointed Warren Hastings, then second in Council at Madras, governor of Bengal with instructions to “stand forth” as *Diwan*, that is to make arrangements for collecting the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa through the agency of the Company’s own servants, and not through the instrumentality of the native Deputy *Dīwāns*.

Hastings assumed charge of his new assignment on 13 April 1772. As a first step towards carrying out the Court of Directors’ instructions he removed the two *Nā’ib Dīwāns*, Muhammad Reza Khān and Shitab Roy, from office and abolished their posts. They were next put on trial for alleged peculation. The trial continued for more than a year and resulted in the acquittal of both the persons. The “least reputable” feature of it was that Hastings utilized in this trial the abilities and “active malignity” of Reza Khān’s adversary Nandakumar to attack the former. Nandakumar had subsequently to pay dearly for thus playing a tool in Hastings’s hands. The post of *Nā’ib Dīwāns* having been abolished Hastings appointed English “Collectors” over the different districts to take charge of revenue collection. This was not in fact any new step; the English Supervisors appointed in 1769 were now redesignated as “Collectors” and some former districts were subdivided into smaller districts with a Collector for each of them. Formerly the Supervisors were responsible to the Council of Revenue at Murshidabad, which had hitherto existed there to exercise control over the *Nā’ib Dīwāns*. Now that body

<sup>1</sup> Court of Director’s Letter to Bengal, 28 August 1771, paras 10-11, *ibid.*, 420-21.

was abolished and its functions were taken over by the Fort William Council which came to be called the Board or Committee of Revenue while dealing with revenue matters. The Collectors were made responsible to this latter Committee of Revenue. The Collectors, however, were to be assisted by "native" district *dīwāns*. For realizing the revenue from the districts the Committee of Revenue (Fort William Council) decided, on 14 May 1772, to let the lands throughout the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa "upon long and well-regulated Leases." Here again the method was only an extension of the system adopted, though on a limited scale and usually on an annual basis, since the acquisition of the *dīwānī*. It was now decided to adopt the method for the whole of the provinces and for a period of five years at a time. For carrying out this task of letting out the lands to the revenue contractors a Committee of Circuit was formed who were to tour the revenue divisions, receive proposals from contractors or to hold auctions and accept suitable bids from revenue farmers.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile other steps were taken to complete the process of standing forth as *dīwān*. In July 1772 the Nawwāb's allowance was further reduced from 32 lakhs to 16 lakhs. As the new Nawwāb was a minor, a guardian of Hastings's choice was put over him. Passing over the prince's mother's claim, Hastings appointed Mīr Ja'far's widow Munni Begam as the minor Nawwāb's guardian because, as the governor himself noted, her "interest must lead her to concur with all the designs of the Company, and to solicit their patronage."<sup>2</sup> Moreover the household affairs of the Nawwāb were placed in charge of another nominee of the English, Raja Gurdas, son of Raja Nandakumar. This process of rearrangement of the administrative system was completed on 30 August 1772 when Hastings transferred the seat of the revenue business and the treasury from Murshidabad to Calcutta. Henceforth the seat of government, as Hastings put it, was "most effectually and visibly transferred from Murshidabad to Calcutta."<sup>3</sup> "Another good consequence", he informed the

<sup>1</sup> The Committee consisted of the governor and Middleton, Dacres, Lawrell and Graham. The governor did not tour the province, but the other four members visited different places.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, I., 254. Munni Begam was divested of her guardianship in 1775 and Reza Khān was appointed in her place.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

Court of Directors, “will be the great Increase of Inhabitants, and of Wealth in Calcutta, which will not only add to the Consumption of our most Valuable Manufactures imported from home, but will be the means of conveying to the Natives a more intimate Knowledge of our Customs and Manners, and of conciliating them to our Policy and Government.”<sup>1</sup>

The Committee of Circuit formed in June 1772 for accomplishing the work of farming out the lands of the province toured its different revenue divisions from July 1772 to February 1773. They were instructed to accept, as far as possible, the proposals of existing zamindars and tālukdārs. In general, however, Hastings acted on the assumption that the zamindars and tālukdārs were not proprietors of the lands under their care and were only an intermediary class of people enjoying certain rights in connection with the collection of revenue and that it was the practice of the Mughal government to pension them out whenever such step was thought beneficial for the state. Acting on that principle he pensioned off a number of zamindars and tālukdārs of the 24-Parganas district who were divested of their possessions.<sup>2</sup>

The Committee of Circuit first visited Kishnagar (Nadia), and finding the proposals made by the existing zamindars and tālukdārs “very low and disadvantageous”, put up the lands at public auction and made five-yearly settlements with the highest bidders. Next they visited Rajshahi where the whole district was farmed out for five years to the existing zamindar, Rānī Bhavānī, because her proposals were found more advantageous than those made by the others. Next Murshidabad and the “Huzur Zillas” (district adjoining it) were similarly farmed out to the highest bidders. From early October 1772 till the middle of February 1773 the Committee proceeded, in order, to Dhaka, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Purnia and Rajmahal, and made the settlements in those and the adjoining districts. The settlements for the districts of Hugli, Midnapur, Birbhum, Jessore (with Mahmūdshāhī or Khulna) and the 24-Parganas were not dealt with by the Committee of Circuit,

<sup>1</sup> Letter of President and Council to Court of Directors, 3 Nov. 1772, *op.cit.*, 393.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

but by the remaining members of the Fort William Council. The lands in the district of Burdwan had already been let in farm in 1770 for a period of five years. Hence no new settlement was made for that district. The other districts were settled on a similar plan, "upon an increasing Revenue."<sup>1</sup> The revenue farmers were to transmit their amounts through the "Collectors" who were to administer civil justice in their respective districts; but criminal courts continued to be presided over by local judges. At a later stage Hastings established two courts of appeal at Calcutta, the *Şadr Dīwānī 'Adālat*, or Supreme Civil Court, presided over by the Governor-General and two members of Council, and the *Şadr Nizāmat 'Adālat*, or Supreme Criminal Court, presided over by a local judge.

These were the principal measures whereby Hastings modified the system of dual government established by Clive. These measures no doubt served to strengthen British hold over the land and were positive steps towards the assumption of responsibility for the entire administration. They did not however lessen the people's miseries and sufferings. The district "Collectors" were merely the previous "Supervisors" under a new name, with an addition to their functions. They continued, as before, to conduct private trade in the very area of their administrative jurisdiction, indulging in the same kinds of exactions, extortion and oppression. Warren Hastings seems to have realized this very soon; for in 1774 he temporarily withdrew the Collectors from the districts. Their places were taken by six Provincial Councils of Revenue, each consisting of four members, and stationed at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Dhaka, Burdwan, Purnia and Patna. This arrangement did not prove satisfactory either. Hence in 1781 the revenue administration was once again centralized, a Committee of Revenue (renamed Board of Revenue in 1786) at Calcutta replacing the six Provincial Councils of Revenue and the Collectors once again taking over in the districts. In 1786 the Directors of the Company definitely informed the Governor-

<sup>1</sup> At the end of the five-yearly settlements in 1777 annual settlements were made which continued till 1786 when a ten-yearly settlement was made. This latter settlement was declared permanent in 1792. See below, p. 114.

General-in-Council that the Collectorship was to be regarded as a permanent part of the structure of local administration on the consideration that the existence of such an officer would not only facilitate the work of revenue collection but would also strengthen the sovereignty of the Company and the power of the executive government in the interior of the land. Consequently the evils connected with the system of private traders being invested with the powers of administration and civil justice continued apace.

Indeed, when Lord Cornwallis assumed the office of Governor-General in 1786 he found that "nearly all the Collectors were engaged in private trade in a manner not merely injurious to the interest of the Company, but also oppressive to the people."<sup>1</sup> More than this, the revenue farmers, who were bound to pay fixed yearly amounts to the government, exacted from the people as much as they could, for no limit was set on the demands they could make on the latter. Worse still, most of the revenue farmers were in fact the *banias* (agents) of the Collectors, members of Council and of even the Governor himself. Hastings of course laid down a rule forbidding the *bania* of a Collector to farm lands or directly or indirectly to hold any concern in any farm; but it was respected more in its breach than in its observance. Hastings's own *bania* "was found, with his knowledge and consent, to be farming the revenues on a large scale."<sup>2</sup> Thus while the district Collector was not merely a revenue officer but also a trader on his own account, his trade agents as also those of the members of Council and the Governor were revenue farmers. It is not difficult to see how the people suffered under the control of a class of persons who were at the same time traders, administrators, revenue collectors and revenue farmers.

Even the so-called commercial reforms of Hastings were of no avail in alleviating the hardships of the people. He left the monopolies of salt and some other articles untouched. In 1775 he of course forbade the use of fraudulent *dastakhs* and reduced the number of custom-posts throughout the country, maintaining only five important ones at Calcutta, Hugli, Murshidabad, Patna

<sup>1</sup> A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, Manchester University Press, 1931, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *C.H.I.*, V., 213.

and Dhaka. He also imposed a uniform duty, payable by European and non-European traders alike, on all articles of trade except the monopolized ones like salt, betel-nut and tobacco. All these measures, it may be noted, related to the payment of customs; but since the revenue now belonged to the Company, the question of *dastakhs* or of numerous custom-posts had indeed lost their former significance. On the other hand, the European administrator-traders and their *baniyas* continued to force the artisans and manufacturers, specially of silk in north Bengal and of cotton-piece goods in Dhaka and the adjoining districts, to sell their goods at any price. Contracts were forced on them and they were physically tortured if they were unwilling or unable to carry out those forced contracts. As already indicated, salt, betel-nut and tobacco were monopolized by the English. Profiteering, fraudulent dealings, use of forced contracts and in general commercial immorality pervaded all ranks of the Company's servants, from the Governor to the Collectors. "In regard to contracts and commissions Hastings undoubtedly entangled himself in financial transactions of so questionable a nature", to quote a well-known scholar, "that it taxed the abilities of his counsel to the utmost to defend him at the impeachment."<sup>1</sup> By the end of his administration many of his supporters among the Company's servants "were enjoying emoluments entirely disproportionate to the services they rendered." The annual cost of the civil establishment of Bengal had risen from £ 251,533 in 1766 to £ 927,945 in 1784. "The chief of the board that controlled the salt office received £ 18,480 a year. The salaries of five other members ranged from £ 6,257 to £ 13,183. Again, salaries at the Board of Customs amounted to £ 23,070 among three persons, and at the Committee of Revenue to £ 47,300 among five persons."

All these increased emoluments and costs were derived from the people. Hastings himself admitted that in spite of huge commissions paid to their servants, the Company acquired a net revenue of £ 540,000 out of the salt monopoly during the five

<sup>1</sup> H. Dodwell, *C.H.I.*, V., 213.

years following 1780. "It may well be asked at what cost to the ryots were these enormous revenues derived from one of the prime necessities of life."<sup>1</sup> Upon his arrival in Bengal in 1786 Cornwallis found the sub-treasurer at Calcutta playing with deposits amounting to three or four lakhs. The collector of customs, whose monthly salary was only 150 rupees, was engaged in similar practices. The Company's resident at Benares, for instance, "had been utilizing his power to amass an annual income of nearly £ 40,000, exclusive of an official salary of Rs. 1,000 a month." Visiting the district in 1787 Lord Cornwallis found it "a scene of the grossest corruption and mismanagement", the whole district given to "the pillage of the friends and dependants of the Governor-General."<sup>2</sup> Such "pillage" had indeed been general in all the districts of Bengal and Bihar since the battle of Plassey and throughout a period of more than thirty years prior to the new Governor-General's arrival.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE: I. THE ZAMINDARS' AND PEASANTS' RISINGS

The oppressions and exactions noted in the previous chapter did not go totally unchallenged. Indeed they caused a series of popular revolts and insurrections at different places throughout the later part of the eighteenth century. Accounts of these events are of course not to be met with in the generally current histories of British rule in Bengal; but they are scattered in the early records of the Company's administration. Broadly, these acts of resistance may be classified under the following heads:

- (a) Revolts of some of the Muslim zamindars and chiefs who were either wrongfully dispossessed of their holdings or were threatened with such dispossession;
- (b) Insurrections of the oppressed peasantry in a number of districts; and
- (c) Armed resistance by a combined group of disbanded soldiers, impoverished artisan classes and uprooted peasants, generally referred to in the Company's records as "Faqir" and "Sannyāsi" "raiders."

For various reasons these risings were isolated, one from the other. This fact enabled the rulers in the long run to suppress and crush them one by one. Nevertheless they bring out two significant facts, namely, that the British did not get a peaceful possession of the land even after their victories at Plassey and Baxar, and that though the Muslim nobility connected with the Murshidabad ruling family were divided and degenerated, a number of spirited local Muslim leaders and zamindars and the Muslim population generally did not give up without a prolonged resistance. The first two categories of resistance are briefly noted in the present chapter; and the third category is dealt with in the following chapter.

#### I: REVOLTS OF MUSLIM ZAMINDARS AND CHIEFS

##### **(a) Resistance by Asad al-Zamān Khān of Birbhum-Bankura**

The earliest notable instance in this series was the resistance to the establishment of British domination offered by Asad al-Zamān Khān of Birbhum and Bishnupur (greater part of the modern district of Bankura). He is variously mentioned in the contemporary sources as the Rājā, or Zamindar, or Dīwānjī of



Birbhum. The locality of Birbhum-Bankura had been inhabited by a respectable Muslim population since the Sultanat period. During the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy in the sixteenth century a considerable number of Afghan-Pathans also settled there. Asad al-Zamān Khān was the scion of one such Pathan chief. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Birbhum-Bankura was held by a practically independent Pathan chief named Asad-Allah Khān who held sway over the region from 1697-1718. He was noted for his sincere attachment to Islam, his virtuous character and his open-hearted liberality. It is related that he dedicated a half of his total income to charitable purposes like supporting the religious and learned men, relieving the distressed and the poor and maintaining educational institutions. In consideration of this fact the Mughal viceroy Murshid Qulī Khān did not insist on his personal attendance at the Murshidabad court and left him in a state of semi-independence, being satisfied only with having received presents from him.<sup>1</sup>

Asad-Allah Khān was succeeded by his son Badī' al-Zamān Khān who was an equally virtuous and benevolent chief. He did not pull on well with the Nawwāb Shauja' al-Dīn Khān against whom he rose in rebellion, but was defeated and forced to pay a fine of three lakhs of rupees. In spite of this set-back his power steadily increased. Speaking about his position the *Siyar* writes: "Among the zamindars of the Kingdom of Bengal none was so near neighbour to the city of Murshidabad, its capital, as the Rājā of Birbhum, and none so powerful, whether by the number of his troops, or by his personal character for bravery. He likewise piqued himself upon a sense of honour and a delicacy of sentiments, qualifications very extraordinary in a zamindar..."<sup>2</sup> When advanced in years Badī' al-Zamān Khān retired from active life and made over charge of his estate to his eldest son 'Alī Naqī Khān. The latter died, however, in the prime of his life. Old Badī' al-Zamān then put his third son, Asad al-Zamān Khān, in charge of the estate. Under the latter's management the fortunes of the family were at their zenith so much so that before the battle of

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I., p. 549.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, II., 393.

Plassey Clive once thought of making an alliance with Asad al-Zamān Khān.<sup>1</sup> Such an alliance was not, however, ultimately made. On the contrary, after that battle a large number of Frenchmen escaped to Birbhum where they were allowed to remain unmolested. For this reason Asad al-Zamān Khān incurred the hostility of the British who soon sent an expedition against him in December 1757. Thereupon Asad al-Zamān, in order to avoid a military confrontation with the British, handed over some of the Frenchmen to them while the others left the territory and withdrew towards Bihar.

Soon after the British expedition against him Asad al-Zamān could realize the fundamental change that had taken place in the political situation of the land as a result of the battle of Plassey. Hence he set himself to resist any further extension of the foreigners' power and made an alliance with some of the neighbouring zamindars. In 1759 he even established contact with the Shāhzāda 'Alī Gauhar (Shāh 'Ālam II), who was then in Oudh, and invited him to come to Bengal in order to free it from the English. As already mentioned in the first chapter, in 1760 the Shāhzāda actually advanced with his troops into west Bengal; but before he could effect a junction with Asad al-Zamān's forces, however, the English forces under Major Caillaud, assisted by a contingent under Mīr Ja'far's son Mīran, intercepted him at Mangalkot and forced him to withdraw from Bengal.

The English would have immediately proceeded against Asad al-Zamān; but they were then busy in deposing Mīr Ja'far and installing Mīr Qāsim instead on the *masnad* of Murshidabad. That affair being over a strong English force under Major Yorke and Captain Whyte, supported by another force under the newly installed and necessarily obliged Mīr Qāsim proceeded against Asad al-Zamān Khān towards the end of 1760. The latter was determined to make a firm stand against the invaders. Leaving his estate in charge of his old father, Badī' al-Zamān, Asad al-Zamān took the field with 5,000 horse and 20,000 foot. He entrenched himself in a very strategically advantageous and difficult part of

<sup>1</sup> See S.C. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, I., CXCVII, and II, 418.

the country near Kherwah. Seeing that he could not be dislodged from his position by a frontal attack, Major Yorke sent a contingent under Captain Whyte to take a circuitous route and fall upon the Birbhum army from the rear. This being done Asad al-Zamān and his forces were completely surprised and defeated after a hotly contested battle.<sup>1</sup> The defeat effectually broke the power of the Birbhum Rājā. He was forced to acknowledge British supremacy and was allowed to continue in his estate on condition of regular payment of revenue. The district was not however pacified so easily. The ra'yats, who had so long been prosperous and peaceful under the benvolent care of their Rājā, were the targets of special exactions and exploitation at the hands of the Company's agents and revenue farmers. As a result Birbhum was worst hit by the famine of 1770-71. Further oppressions and exactions spurred the peasantry to resume the struggle for resistance initiated by Asad al-Zamān Khān. As will be related presently the locality turned out to be the scene of one of the most protracted peasants' struggles during the period under review.

#### (b) Shamsheer Ghāzī's revolt in Tippera

Next in point of time but somewhat more significant was the revolt of Shamsheer Ghāzī of Tippera. His struggle at once illustrates the breakdown of the system of administration in the interior districts following the battle of Plassey on the one hand, and attempts by local Muslim leaders, not connected with the Murshidabad family, to resist the extension of the Company's power over the countryside, on the other. It is also distinguished by the support of the local population in general to his cause so that his struggle was in the nature of a resistance by the zamindar and the peasants at the same time. His rise to power and chiefship of the locality is interesting. Son of a poor peasant in the *chakla* of Raushanabad he rose to power and influence in the employ of the existing zamindar, Nāsir Muhammad, by sheer dint of personal character and merit. Shamsheer Ghāzī possessed uncommon physical strength, exceptional intelligence and above all a sincere sympathy for the people.

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II., 395-396.

On the eve of the battle of Plassey Nāṣir Muhammad had become subordinate to Rājā Bijoy Mānikya of Tripura (Hill Tippera) who originally paid allegiance to the Murshidabad Nawwāb but who now, after the battle of Plassey, rendered allegiance to the rising power. The revenue of the *chakla* of Raushanabad was only rupees 33,305 under both 'Alīvardī Khān and Sirāj al-Daulah. The Rājā now trebled it in 1761 and fixed it at rupees one lakh (100,000). After the acquisition of the *dīwānī* by the Company the revenue demand on the *chakla* was further raised to 105,000 rupees.<sup>1</sup> This increased demand was realised from the people by sheer force and coercion. As a result discontent grew in volume and intensity against the Tripura Rājā's agent Nāṣir Muhammad. Shamsheer Ghāzī put himself at the head of the popular movement which was directed nominally against Nāṣir Muhammad but really against the Tripura Rājā's authority and the Company's regime. Shamsheer Ghāzī organized the peasantry under his leadership and soon came into conflict with Nāṣir Muhammad.

The incident that precipitated the conflict has a touch of romance in it. It is stated that Shamsheer Ghāzī at first demanded the hand of Nāṣir Muhammad's daughter which was naturally refused. The infuriated zamindar then marshalled his forces to punish the insolence and insubordination of his erstwhile employee. Shamsheer Ghāzī thereupon betook himself to the nearby forest where he gathered his followers and then attacked Nāṣir Muhammad. The latter and his sons were all killed in the fight that ensued. Shamsheer Ghāzī married the deceased Nāṣir Muhammad's daughter and established himself as the chief of the locality. At this turn of the events Rājā Vijay Mānikya sent an expedition under his minister (*wazīr*) against Shamsheer Ghāzī. The Tripura forces were severely defeated and the *wazīr* was obliged to conclude a treaty whereby Shamsheer Ghāzī was recognized as zamindar of the greater part of Chakla Raushanabad consisting of Dakhin Shiq and Mihirkul.<sup>2</sup> Shortly afterwards Vijay Mānikya died, whereupon Shamsheer Ghāzī asserted his

<sup>1</sup> Kailash Chandra Sinha, *Rajmala*, (A History of Tripura), p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

independence and stopped sending any tribute to the Tripura court. The new Rājā Krishna Mānikya sent his forces several times to subjugate Shamsheer Ghāzī, but each time they were beaten back with heavy losses. Ultimately Shamsheer Ghāzī equipped an expedition of 6000 men and attacked the Tripura capital, Udaipur, and sacked it. Krishna Mānikya fled to Āgartalā which henceforth became his capital, while Udaipur gradually dwindled into jungles. From Āgartalā Krishna Mānikya attempted to organize and incite the hilly tribal people, the Kukīs, against Shamsheer Ghāzī, by distributing large sums amongst them. But the attempt recoiled upon the Rājā himself. The Kukīs realized soon enough the good intentions of Shamsheer Ghāzī and his championing of the cause of the oppressed peasantry. Hence they acknowledged him as their chief. For a time Shamsheer Ghāzī was practically ruler of the plains as well as of the hillsmen.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed Shamsheer Ghāzī's success lay in the support and co-operation of his people. He directed his whole energy and resources to their well-being. It is on record that he distributed lands among the landless peasants, abolished all sorts of oppressive imposts and excavated tanks at different parts of his dominions for supplying drinking water to the people and for irrigation.<sup>2</sup> He also took steps to ensure that they received the daily necessities of life at reasonable prices. For this purpose he fixed the prices of the main articles of food and clothing as follows:<sup>3</sup>

Rice	1 seer	at	1 pice	(1/64th of a rupee)
Chilli	1 seer	at	1 pice	(1/64th of a rupee)
Crude sugar	1 seer	at	2 pice	(1/32th of a rupee)
Salt	1 seer	at	2 pice	(1/32th of a rupee)
Cotton	1 seer	at	2 pice	(1/32th of a rupee)
Oil	1 seer	at	5 pice	(1/13th of a rupee)
Ghee	1 seer	at	12 pice	(3/16th of a rupee)
Cereals	1 seer	at	20 pice	(5/16th of a rupee)

He even raided and forced the oppressive revenue farmers of the neighbouring districts under British control to disgorge some of their wealth which he distributed among the poor people. In this

<sup>1</sup> *Noakhali District Gazetteer*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> K.C. Sinha, *op.cit.*, 125-126.

respect he seems to have initiated the method which was more widely adopted by the so-called "Faqīr raiders" and, more than a century afterwards, by the Bengal terrorists.

At last Rājā Krishna Mānikya of Tripura appealed to the British authorities for suppressing Shamsher Ghāzī. His rise and activities were indeed disturbing to the new regime. Hence the Calcutta Council readily intervened and sent a large force of their own, accompanied by a contingent of the puppet Nawwāb, against Shamsher Ghāzī. After a hard-fought battle his forces were defeated and he was captured and carried off to Murshidabad where towards the end of 1768 he was put to death by being blown up at the mouth of a cannon. Thus ended the meteoric career of Shamsher Ghāzī and his little independent state of Raushanābād. His territories were given partly to the Tripura Rājā and partly to *bania* revenue farmers of the Company. A strong contingent of the Company's forces was also stationed there. The locality did not know peace for a quarter of a century more.<sup>1</sup>

### (c) Revolt of Abū Torāb Chowdhury of Sandip

Almost simultaneously with Shamsher Ghāzī's revolt in Tippera a similar but more powerful resistance developed in Sandip, a large island at the mouth of the Meghna (Ganges). During the Sultanat period a large and prosperous Muslim population of Arab and Persian origins settled in the island. Their descendants, together with local converts to Islam, made up more than 80 percent of the island's population. The Portuguese records of the early sixteenth century speak of its prosperous trade and of its predominantly Muslim population. At the advance of the Mughals in the subsequent period many pre-Mughal Muslim nobles retreated into the interior parts of the country including Sandip where they found both security and prosperity. During the later eighteenth century a Muslim leader named Dilawar Khān (popularly known as Dilāl) established his supremacy over the island and practically remained independent of Mughal control for

<sup>1</sup> Faizunnisa Chowdhurani states in her *Rupjālāl* published in 1876 that her grandfather was a zamindar in Comilla in the 18th century and that he preferred committing suicide to submitting to the English.

about fifty years. After his death the Mughal authorities came to an understanding with his son-in-law, Chānd Khān, recognizing him as the zamindar of the island and entrusting him with the task of collecting its revenue. Chānd Khān shared this assignment with a relative of his, Bakhtiyār Muhammad Ḥanīf, and an officer of the Qanungo department named Ram Bijoy. In course of time the island came to be divided into three zamindaries, namely, Nimsuti, Musapur and Rampur. When the British established their power in Bengal, Chand Khān's great-grandson, Abū Torāb Chowdhury,<sup>1</sup> was in possession of the zamindari of Musapur, the largest of the three, while the descendants of the others were in possession of the other two. Abū Torāb was very popular and powerful and was allied with Malkam Singh, commander of a corps stationed in the island during Nawwāb 'Alivardī Khān's time for its protection against the Magh incursions.

Because of its agricultural and commercial prosperity, particularly its flourishing salt industry, the island attracted the early attention of the English merchants and their *banias*. In 1763 Gokul Ghosal, Governor Verelst's<sup>2</sup> *bania* surreptitiously obtained, through his principal's influence, the '*uhdadārī* or contract for collecting the revenue of the island. The '*uhdadārī* was taken nominally in the name of a company founded by Gokul Ghosal along with some of his creatures, namely two nephews, Bhawani Charan Das and Jai Narain Das, and an employee named Bishnu Charan Basu. This was about the time when Nawwāb Mīr Qāsim was coming into conflict with the English over their trade dealings in the land. It appears that Abū Torāb Chowdhury and Malkam Singh were in sympathy with Mīr Qāsim. At any rate, Gokul Ghosal intended not merely to collect the revenue of the island in a regular way, but really to grasp the zamindaries by means of his '*uhdadārī* and, as was the wont of the *bania* revenue farmers of the time, to extract as much money from the peasantry and artisan classes as possible. He knew well, however, that the

<sup>1</sup> Abū Torāb Chowdhury was the son of Muhammad Ridā (Reza) Chowdhury, son of Muqīm Husain, son of Chānd Khān. In the Company's records Abū Torāb is written mostly as "Abutrop" or "Abuthrop."

<sup>2</sup> Verelst was at that time chief of the English factory at Chittagong. He became governor in 1767.

zamindars of Sandip, particularly Abū Torāb Chowdhury, would not submit easily. Hence Gokul Ghosal persuaded his masters at Calcutta to despatch with his agent, Ramkrishna, a company of sepoys, and also got letters written to the English chiefs at Chittagong and Lakhipur (Noakhali) asking them to afford further military assistance in enforcing Gokul Ghosal's authority over the island.<sup>1</sup> These latter gentlemen supplied Ramkrishna with another party of sepoys. With these forces he arrived at Sandip in 1764 and, to quote the Company's records, "had a warm Encounter with Malkam Singh Abu Turāb & co who after having many of their people killed and not being able to make further Resistance were at last obliged to make their Escape..."<sup>2</sup> Ramkrishna then instituted a reign of terror in the island and laid it waste by his oppressions and exactions. He imprisoned the family members of Muhammad Nāif and Muhammad Ja'far Chowdhuries, zamindars of Nimsuti, and extorted from them bills of sale of their shares of the zamindari in favour of Gokul Ghosal.<sup>3</sup>

Soon, however, Abū Torāb Chowdhury and Malkam Singh, along with the other zamindars, collected a large force, ousted Gokul Ghosal's agent from the island, captured its treasury and set at defiance the Company's authority over the island. Thereupon, at Gokul Ghosal's representations, the Calcutta Council sent an expedition under Major Grant "with 2 Companys of Sepoys & some large guns" against Abū Torāb and his allies. In the encounter that followed in 1766 Major Grant was completely worsted, his whole party being killed and his guns seized.<sup>4</sup> A third expedition was accordingly sent against Abū Torāb in 1767. The chief at Chittagong, under instructions from the Calcutta Council, called Captain Ellerker from Tippera with two companies of sepoys to join the party under Captain Nollikins and another party of soldiers from Baminia, making a total of six companies. "With this Detachment & 2 Guns Captain Nollikins Captain Ellikar Mr. Mustel & Mr. Billard crossed the river at

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Dacca*, 14 Nov. 1772, (Vol. IV), 114

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.



Cher Bangeh [Char Bhanga] & being joined by the Adadars ['*uhdadār*'s] people arrived at the Capital Town of Sundeeep."<sup>1</sup> Abū Torāb and his allies offered a very tough resistance but were ultimately defeated. Malkam Singh escaped from the battle field. Abū Torāb appears to have made his last stand in his own house but was overpowered and killed.<sup>2</sup> Malkam Singh was soon afterwards captured and taken prisoner to Islamabad (Chittagong). The Calcutta Council sent him back to Sandip with orders to have him hanged and gibbeted there in order to strike terror in the minds of the recalcitrant people of the island.<sup>3</sup> Abū Torāb's zamindari was confiscated and given to Gokul Ghosal. The cost of the several expeditions and the loss of revenue during the period of troubles were estimated at 250,000 rupees which amount the latter was authorized to realize from the people of the island.<sup>4</sup> In the same year (1767) Gokul Ghosal forced the other zamindars of Sandip by means of putting them in irons and imprisoning their families and "treating them with the utmost cruelty" to give him *kabala* (bill of sale) of their properties in his favour.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the resistance of Abū Torāb Chowdhury and his allies was broken. His case illustrates the nature of partnership in oppression and exploitation that existed between the Company's principal employees in Bengal and their *banias*. Subsequently in 1771 two of the dispossessed zamindars succeeded in temporarily being reinstated to their property, but once again they were ousted by Gokul Ghosal with the support of the Supervisor at Dhaka, Thomas Kelsall.<sup>6</sup> Gokul Ghosal continued to enjoy the usurped zamindaires and to fleece the people of the island. His influence at Calcutta where his principal Verelst was now the governor prevented any complaints about his oppression from reaching the ear of the authorities. Some shareholders of the ousted zamindars, and the people in general, however, continued to create trouble for Gokul Ghosal. At last in 1778 the Board of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 119. See also p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 113, 116.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

Revenue deputed Jonathan Duncan to enquire into certain definite charges of murder, oppression and maltreatment committed by Gokul Ghosal's agents or at his instance and, in general, into the state of affairs of the island. Duncan submitted a very prolix report on 16 September 1779<sup>1</sup> which traced the history of the disturbances but failed to bring justice to the people. Sandip was not pacified till the end of the century.

## II. THE RA'YATS' REVOLTS

### (a) The Rangpur insurrection under "Nawwāb Naūr al-Dīn"

The Muslim chiefs' risings noted in the previous section were more or less a prelude to the more widespread insurrections of the peasants in various parts of the country. Of the several such uprisings<sup>2</sup> the most formidable and significant was that of Rangpur-Dinajpur in 1783.<sup>3</sup> Like Sandip, Rangpur-Dinajpur region also was an area where there was a large concentration of respectable Muslim population since the Sultanat period. This area fell a victim to the exactions and oppressions of Warren Hastings's *bania* Devi Singh. Originally from the vicinity of Panipat in northern India Devi Singh came to Bengal in search of trade and fortune and soon ingratiated himself with the Company's officials, particularly Warren Hastings. After the acquisition of the *dīwānī* by the Company in 1765 Devi Singh obtained a lease for collecting the revenue of the district of Purnia. As was the case with Verelst's *bania* Gokul Ghosal's *'uhdadārī* over Sandip, so was it with that of Devi Singh over Purnia. Like the former, the latter laid waste the district by his rapacity and

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 1 August 1780, (I.O.L. P/50/27)

<sup>2</sup> See for instance *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 21 January and 11 Nov. 1783 for peasants' insurrections in Burdwan, Nadia, Midnapur and Chittagong.

<sup>3</sup> The insurrection at Rangpur formed one of the main subjects of enquiry at Warren Hastings' impeachment because of his involvement in the oppressions and exactions there through his *bania* Devi Singh. Hence we have three valuable collections of records relating to the insurrection, *viz.*,

- (a) Extracts from Bengal Revenue Consultations containing proceedings relating to the Insurrection at Rangpur, 1783-86, 6 vols. B.M. *Add. MSS.* 9790-5 (Huskinson Papers.)
- (b) Extracts from the Committee of Revenue proceedings respecting (the disturbances at) Rangpur 6 February 1783 - 25 March 1784, with autograph marginal notes by Edmund Burke. Vol. II. B.M. *Add. MSS.* 24268 (Warren Hastings' Trial.)
- (c) Briefs of Dr. French Lawrence, in the Trial of Hastings, on the insurrection in Dinajpur and Rangpur, with special relation to Devi Shigh, 1783-5. Bodelian Library, Oxford, Lawrence Papers, MSS. Eng. hist. C. 15-27.

exactions in collaboration with the Company's officials and servants there so much so that Purnia, along with Birbhum, were the worst hit areas during the famine of 1770-71.

As early as 1771 the people of the locality, being driven to destitution and desperation, rose in revolt which necessitated the removal of Devi Singh from the district. He was appointed for sometime as assistant to the Council of Revenue at Murshidabad. After the dissolution of that body in 1772 and the introduction of five-yearly farming of the revenue Devi Singh established himself as the farmer of Rangpur and Dinajpur districts. He at once considerably increased the revenue demand in the areas and exacted it by sheer physical force, torture and imprisonment of the ra'yats and landholders, seizure of their movable and immovable property and even the carrying away of their women-folk. He became all the more oppressive after the introduction of the yearly farming of revenue in 1777 and the establishment of the Provincial Committees of Revenue. In May 1781 he renewed the farming of the district of Rangpur deceptively using the name of its rightful zamindar, Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain, at rupees 875,563, being an increase of 70,000 rupees over the previous year's sum.<sup>1</sup> In fact he exacted double the amount from the people by means of the most horrible atrocities and oppression.<sup>2</sup> His agents visited the villages with troops, tortured the ra'yats, plundered their houses, seized all their belongings, dragged their womenfolk into confinement and degradation, and burnt down those villages whose inhabitants fled into jungles to escape such oppressions.

Towards the end of 1782 Devi Singh divided the district into four divisions in order the more effectually to carry on his exactions. At last the inevitable reaction set in. Early in January 1783 the inhabitants of the three adjacent *parganas* of Kazirhat, Kakina and Tipa organized themselves for resistance, rose in revolt, drove out and killed the agents and employees of Devi Singh including one of his principal *gomastahs* named Gour

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 31 March 1784.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Mohan, and called upon the ra'yats of the neighbouring *parganas* to stop payment of revenue to the foreign government.<sup>1</sup> The Collector of the district, Goodlad, at the instance of Devi Singh, suspected that the troubles had been instigated by the rightful zamindar, Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain, and dismissed him from his zamindari. The Collector then sent out troops to suppress the uprising issuing at the same time a circular in which he expressed his readiness to hear any complaints and to do justice. In response to that circular the ra'yats presented their grievances detailing the oppressions of Devi Singh and praying for a suspension of all collections for a period of two months only. The Collector however rejected this prayer.<sup>2</sup> Thereupon the ra'yats reassembled in a more formidable body, declared an end to the Company's rule, and elected one of their leaders, Nūr al-Dīn, "Nawwāb" of the country and gathered round his banner to fight the oppressors and foreigners.<sup>3</sup>

The revolt soon spread throughout the district. "Nawwāb" Nūr al-Dīn sent "large parties" of his followers into the adjacent districts of Kuch Bihar and Dinajpur calling upon the people of those districts to rise in revolt which soon spread in several parts of those districts too.<sup>4</sup> The Collector then assumed extraordinary power far exceeding the military authority vested in him. Supported by Devi Singh and the Company's officials in northern Bengal, Goodlad sent a military force in "different detachments, to apprehend and disperse the insurgents", with orders to shoot any person who came in their way and to raze to the ground any village that showed the slightest signs of insubordination. By such ruthless and stern measures the further spread of the revolt in the neighbouring districts was prevented; but it continued to rage throughout Rangpur where Nawwāb Nūr al-Dīn's hold was complete for sometime. He had his headquarters at Mughalhat. For the expenses of the struggle he levied a contribution from the people called *dingkharchā* (expenses of the revolt). The

<sup>1</sup> *Committee of Revenue Proceedings*, 6 Feb. 1783.

<sup>2</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 11 April 1783. Also B.M. *Add. MSS.* 9790, pp. 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Committee of Revenue now called out additional forces to suppress the revolt, and sent "directions to Major Robertson commanding the militia at Moradbag to depute two Companies of Sepoys to Rungpore." The Committee further wrote to the Chief at Purnia to send "as large a Detachment of the force under him as he could spare."<sup>1</sup> These forces having arrived, a number of encounters took place between them and Nawwāb Nūr al-Dīn's forces. One of the severest battles was fought near Mughalhat in which Nūr al-Dīn was wounded and taken prisoner and his *dīwan*, Daya Sil, was killed along with a number of the others.<sup>2</sup> Nūr al-Dīn died of his wounds soon afterwards. Mughalhat was burnt down by the Company's troops.

After this disaster at Mughalhat Nūr al-Dīn's assistants and the remnant of their forces made Patgram their headquarters. Lieutenant Macdonald proceeded with a force against them. He disguised his troops by dressing them in white and plain clothes and sent them in small parties near the insurgents and then suddenly began his attack on them. A severe and decisive engagement took place there on 22 February 1783 in which the people's forces were utterly defeated; "sixty were left dead on the field, and many others were wounded and taken prisoners."<sup>3</sup> This defeat broke down the popular resistance and the independent *niyābat* established by Nūr al-Dīn. Under orders of Goodlad, the Collector, the military forces then meted out severe retribution upon the rebellious villages, killing and shooting the people at random, burning down houses and ransacking all hideouts of the locality. Even the Committee of Revenue recognized that it "was a very uncommon and extraordinary disturbance" and that it "was not suppressed without great opposition and the loss of many lives."<sup>4</sup> Goodlad's own extenuation is a sufficient indication of the extraordinary cruelty and indiscriminate killing committed by him. Writing to the Committee of Revenue on 15 March 1783 he stated:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Add. MSS.* 24268, Vol. II., p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Rangpur District Gazetteer*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 11 April, 1783.

<sup>5</sup> *Br. Mus. Add. MSS.*, 24268, Vol. II., p. 78.

"I had a Riot to quell, the most formidable that ever happened in Bengal, had I adhered solely to the little authority vested in me, everything fatal was to be expected. The officers of the Mofussil were murdered wherever they could be found and the whole authority of government was entirely annihilated. Impelled by necessity I have had to act entirely from the dictates of my own reason, the orders I have been obliged to issue, have been attended with the loss of many lives, this circumstance, tho' the consequence of absolute necessity, must still be repugnant to one's feelings, and when I come to consider the whole of which has happened in consequence of the authority I have been obliged to assume, the situation of my mind till such time as my conduct has undergone the most minute Investigation, can much better be conceived than expressed..."

The epilogue is no more relieving. The Committee of Revenue appointed one Patterson to "to make a particular enquiry into the cause and extent of this insurrection." His findings, though not free from partiality and Devi Singh's influence, nevertheless revealed the inhuman exactions and oppressions practised upon the people by the latter.<sup>1</sup> Devi Singh was, however, in the good book of the Governor-General Warren Hastings and members of his council who used to receive handsome shares of the plunder. At Hastings's instance, therefore, Patterson's report was declared unsatisfactory and a new commission was set up to investigate and report on the Rangpur disturbance.<sup>2</sup> The new commission of enquiry conducted its investigations for over two years<sup>3</sup> in the course of which Devi Singh paid huge bribes to its members<sup>4</sup> and succeeded in eliciting a report largely in exoneration of his conduct. Warren Hastings dittoed this finding and informed the authorities in England that Devi Singh was not to blame and that Patterson had made a prejudiced report about him. Subsequently, however, Lord Cornwallis removed Devi Singh from Rangpur. With his ill-gotten and huge wealth Devi Singh, like his compatriot Gokul

<sup>1</sup> See *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 31 March and 1-6 April, 1784.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 8 and 14 April 1784.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 21 April, 6 May, 26 May, 1 June, 16 and 29 July, and 2 Nov. 1784; 7 January, 21 January, 16 February, 3 March, 1, 15 & 28 April, 19 Aug., 30 Sept., 26 Oct., 9, 15 and 29 Nov. and 6 Dec., 1785; 15 & 23 Feb., 10 & 16 March, 25 April, 16 June and 7 Aug. 1786.

<sup>4</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 15 Feb. 1786.

Ghosal, founded another "Raj family", that of Nasipur in Murshidabad.

**(b) The revolt in Birbhum-Bankura (1785-1791)**

The embers of the revolt in northern Bengal were still smouldering when the peasants of the western Bengal districts of Birbhum-Bankura rose in revolt. The defeat and subjugation of the Rājā of Birbhum (Asad al-Zamān Khān) in 1760 was followed by a period of ever-increasing revenue demands from the locality and indiscriminate profiteering and exactions on the part of the Company's servants and *gomastahs* there. As already indicated, Birbhum-Bishnupur, like Purnia, suffered most and for similar reasons during the famine of 1770-71. Of the 6000 villages of the district only about 4000 remained after the famine; the rest, along with their inhabitants being completely ruined and a vast part of the district turned into jungles.<sup>1</sup> Even after such a catastrophe there was no remission or reduction in the revenue demands. On the contrary the ill-fated and vastly reduced survivors were subjected to ever-increasing demands. Being unable to meet these demands many of them abandoned their lands and houses and fled into the neighbouring jungles or thronged into the cities as uprooted crowd. As Hunter puts it:

"Even among those (villages) that were not altogether abandoned many square miles of the richest country lay untilled, and one set of revenue agents after another failed to wring the land-tax out of the people. In 1772, the old farmers having thrown up their task in despair were superseded and dragged down to the debtor's prison in Calcutta for arrears. At each adjustment of the revenue the same thing took place; the hereditary prince [Rājā of Birbhum] excusing himself from remitting the land-tax to the English treasury, on the grounds that the revenue agents could not collect it, and the revenue agents being cast without mercy into dungeon,... While the country every year became a total waste, the English government constantly demanded an increased land-tax. In 1771 more than one-third of the cultivable land was returned in the public accounts as 'Deserted'; in 1776 the entries in this column exceeded one-half of the whole tillage, four acres lying waste for every seven that remained under cultivation. On the other hand, the Company increased its demand from less than £100,000 sterling in 1772, to close on £112,000 in 1776."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W.W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, Vol. 1., 5th edn., London, 1872, 62; *Birbhum District Gazetteer*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, 64-65

The villagers were dragooned into paying the land-tax by troops sent by the English Collector nominally to assist the Rājā but actually to enforce the claims of the Company; but “notwithstanding the utmost severities” the poor ra’yats could not meet these demands.<sup>1</sup> Their properties and belongings were seized and they became homeless wanderers. The situation grew worse after the introduction of yearly farming since 1777. Each year there was an increased demand. The worse part of it was that the cultivators never knew at sowing time what would be exacted at harvest, for the fact of increase was usually concealed from them till they were fairly embarked in the cultivation of their lands. This led to further desertion of their fields by the ra’yats. By 1784 it was well known even to the members of Parliament that the agricultural classes in the Bengal districts were abandoning and relinquishing their holdings.<sup>2</sup>

By that time the endurance of the peasants reached its breaking point. Early in 1785 the storm that had been gathering behind the scene suddenly burst out.<sup>3</sup> The peasantry of the whole district, as it were, took up arms and rose in revolt. In May of that year the Collector of Murshidabad, at the extremity of whose jurisdiction Birbhum lay, frantically petitioned the Governor-General and Council for troops to face what he called the “armed multitude” who had rendered the civil authorities in the district “destitute of any force capable of making head” against them.<sup>4</sup> In the following month the insurgents grew to “near a thousand people”, and were reported to be preparing for an organized invasion of the lowlands.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly an officer named G.R.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 65,271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. Parliament ordered an enquiry into the causes of such desertion; but no such enquiry was made.

<sup>3</sup> Hunter, though he notes the disastrous effects of the famine and exactions and the fact of the peasants' abandonment of their lands and escape into the jungles, ignores the fact that the revolts were the direct result of that situation and characterizes them as raids by hereditary “Dacoits”, “banditti” and “plunderers” who, according to him, inhabited the jungle region and who were a legacy of what he calls “Mussalman misrule” (*op.cit.*, 69-70, 75-76). But even the facts and records quoted by him in different places of his work, if collated with a little care, make it clear that the uprisings were the work of the dispossessed and uprooted peasants (Cf. specially his texts at pp. 14-17, 79-85 and 268-273). In this section, therefore, I have referred to the records, as far as practicable, quoted by Hunter himself.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Edward Otto Ives, Magistrate of Murshidabad, to Governor General & Council, 26 May 1785, quoted in Hunter, *op.cit.*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Do to do, 30 June 1785, *ibid.*, 15.



Foley was sent with troops to "superintend" the district; but he found it impossible to cope with the situation. By the turn of the year the revolting peasants were in control of all the strong positions in the district. They even intercepted the amount of revenue that had been previously collected and was then being sent to Calcutta. The commercial operations of the Company in the district came to a standstill, many factories being altogether abandoned.

For about two years (May 1785 to March 1787) the revolting peasants remained in full control of the district. Towards the end of March 1787 the new Governor-General Lord Cornwallis separated Birbhum from the jurisdiction of the Murshidabad Collector and transferred it to the jurisdiction of the Bishnupur Collector, W. Pye.<sup>1</sup> The latter left his post, however, for another assignment only three weeks afterwards. Thereupon Sherbourne was sent as Collector of the two combined districts of Birbhum-Bishnupur. In order to deal effectively with the insurgents he transferred the headquarters from Bishnupur to Suri in the Birbhum district. He then followed a policy of conciliation with the milder section of the peasants, and of blood and iron with regard to those who were more militant. He rehabilitated about three hundred and twenty villages by settling the milder peasants in them on moderate terms;<sup>2</sup> while with regard to the others he led systematic campaigns to break their power. This policy only resulted in their dispersion into the adjoining jurisdictions and into the hilly tracts, now known as Santal Parganas, but then included in the Birbhum Rājā's territories.<sup>3</sup> Even by such stern measures for a year and a half Sherbourne could not restore peace in the district. Early in October 1788 a government "treasure party had been attacked on the south of the Adji, the military guard overpowered, five men slain, and more than three thousand pounds worth of silver carried off."<sup>4</sup>

Sherbourne's failure to restore peace in the district discredited him with the Governor-General who, only three weeks after the

<sup>1</sup> *The Calcutta Gazette*, 29 March 1787, quoted in *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>3</sup> Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, 208.

<sup>4</sup> *The Calcutta Gazette*, 16 October 1788, quoted in Hunter, *op.cit.*, 17.

above mentioned incident, transferred him to another district and appointed Christopher Keating Collector of Birbhum-Bankura with full military and civil powers. He was sent with a fresh company of troops, and shortly afterwards the detachment was doubled.<sup>1</sup> During his tenure of office Keating exercised, "under the style of Collector, the functions of Commander-in-Chief and Civil Governor within his jurisdictions." On the other hand the Governor-General and his council, even after 25 years of the acquisition of the *dīwānī* and the visible decline and misery of the people, acted on the assumption that "Bengal were an estate which yielded a large rental, but involved none of the responsibilities of government, and regarded its rural administrators as the land-stewards of a private property... It was a matter of the first importance, therefore, to get as much out of the district, and to spend as little upon it, as possible."<sup>2</sup> Acting under the impulse of such a policy Keating applied himself from the beginning to the realization of an increased revenue by any means. Hence he signalized his assumption of office by a fresh increase in the revenue demands and took steps to realize them.

The people were already in revolt. The new demands only intensified their resistance. The tactics adopted by them were to retire to the neighbouring jungles and hills as soon as cultivation of the lands was over and, during the harvesting season, to sweep down upon the plains to collect the harvest and to drive out the government's revenue agents, officers and forces. Keating tried to prevent this phenomenon by furnishing the officer at the head of his troops with a list of passes which the sepoys were to defend.<sup>3</sup> But this measure was of little avail. He had not been yet two months in the district when he was compelled to call out the troops against a band of insurgents, said to be five hundred strong, who "had made a descent" on a market town within two hours' ride from the Collector's headquarters and had captured "between thirty and forty villages."<sup>4</sup> Early in February 1789 the risings became more widespread. The people who had taken

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Keating to the Board of Revenue, 22 Nov. 1788, *ibid.*, 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>4</sup> Keating to Lt. J.F. Smith, 10 Jan. 1789, *ibid.*, 77.

shelter in the hills “broke through the cordon of outpost *en masse*”, and in parties of “three or four hundred men well found in arms” spread throughout the interior villages of the district.<sup>1</sup> On 13 February Keating had to report to the authorities at Calcutta that the whole district was in arms against the new assessment.<sup>2</sup> He hastily recalled the troops from the frontier outposts and, on 21 February, started levying a militia to act with the regulars against the insurgents. The forces thus hastily collected were however found to be “indisciplined, faint-hearted, more disposed to act with” the insurgents “than against them”.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile the Governor-General directed the Collectors of the several adjoining districts to unite their whole forces in order to suppress the revolt. As these combined government forces began their operation, a group of the insurgents retreated into the mountains, while the others crossed to the south of the Adji into Bishnupur.

By June 1789 the risings spread all over Bishnupur (Bankura and parts of Midnapur) where, as the British officials put it, “the inhabitants made common cause with the banditti to oppose the government.”<sup>4</sup> A government detachment was hurried there in the same month; but they were unable to prevent the revolting population from capturing and sacking the chief manufacturing town of Elambazar. As fresh government forces arrived in Bishnupur, the insurgents recrossed the Adji “in a large party armed with tulwars [swords] and matchlocks” and established themselves in Birbhum. For three months the entire Birbhum-Bishnupur region remained practically under the control of the revolutionaries. In November the Governor-General sent another large force into Birbhum with instructions to occupy the principal ferries on the river in order to prevent the insurgents from crossing and recrossing the river. Forces were also stationed on the six most important hill passes on the west of the district.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Keating to the President of the Board of Revenue (J. Shore), 13 Feb. 1789, *ibid.*, 271. It is noteworthy that these facts and records quoted by Hunter at so different places as p. 77 and p. 271 clearly show that the uprising was the work of the oppressed peasantry and not that of the “hereditary hill bandits.”

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

These measures, while they restored "comparative quiet" in Bishnupur, left Birbhum "defenceless." "Scarce a night passes", wrote the Collector (Keating), "without some daring robbery". The military forces, exhausted by constant marches and scattered in small groups, were unable to cope with the insurgents or even to hold the principal towns. By the end of November the commanding officer reported that "only four men remained to guard the government offices in the capital; and a few weeks later he declared himself unable to furnish an escort sufficient to ensure the safety of a treasure party through the district."<sup>1</sup> By the middle of the following year (June 1790) Rajnagar, "the ancient capital of the hereditary princes", fell into the hands of the revolutionaries.

The situation was indeed difficult for the British Collector. If he withdrew his troops from Bishnupur, that district passed into the hands of the insurgents; and if he recalled his forces from the western passes, the entire region, north and south, would be overrun by the insurgents. At last he decided to abandon Bishnupur and to concentrate his forces in Birbhum. But no sooner the forces were withdrawn from Bishnupur than it passed into the hands of the insurgents. The rebellion even spread into the adjoining jurisdictions where the Collectors began to accuse Keating with having sacrificed the peace of many districts for the sake of maintaining the outposts in his own. "The more strictly these passes were guarded, the greater the number of marauders who flocked by a circuitous route into the unprotected country on the south of the Adji."<sup>2</sup>

Keating's changed policy was however ultimately successful. As the forces were withdrawn from Bishnupur, a large number of fleeing peasants from Birbhum sought shelter in that district. Their prolonged stay there led to misunderstanding between them and the local peasants who being relieved of the presence and oppression of the government forces, were naturally eager to settle down in their own lands. They were also instigated against the refugee peasants by government agents. There were also some instances of excesses committed by the Birbhum peasants. All

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

these factors led to divisions, disunity and mutual conflicts resulting in seriously weakening the cause of the revolutionaries. On the other hand Keating, with his forces concentrated in Birbhum, ruthlessly suppressed those of the cultivators "who resided within the district"<sup>1</sup> and issued judicial process through the neighbouring Collectors against the numerous others who had fled beyond the boundary of the district. These latter proceedings caused some ill-feeling between Keating and the other Collectors. Even Keating's own assistant, Arbuthnot, seeing the injustice of thus hunting down the fleeing peasants, got himself transferred to another district, "and then hurried down to Calcutta to take the oaths without coming into headquarters to bid Mr. Keating good-bye."<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1790, however, the resistance of the peasants broke down. Keating succeeded in restoring the authority of the government over the district by a policy of blood and iron to which a large number of the people fell victims. The revolt lasted for five years, from 1785 to 1790.

**(c) The resistance in Barisal: Ḥayāt Muhammad and Balākī Shāh**

Somewhat less formidable but similar to the rising in Birbhum-Bankura was the resistance of the peasantry of south Barisal (Bakarganj) under the leadership of Ḥayāt Muhammad and Balākī Shāh. Barisal abounded in rice, cocoanut, betel-nut and had a very flourishing salt industry in its southern region. For this reason the English merchants and their *banias* thronged the district. It is on record that shortly after the acquisition of the *dīwānī* the English traders set up at least 52 large godowns in the southern part of the district alone for hoarding rice. Because of the profiteering and extortion of these people and the revenue farmers, even such a fertile district, which had generally escaped the ravages of the famine of 1770-71, fell a victim to a severe famine in 1787 which, according to the most conservative official estimates, carried away more than 60 thousand people and forced many peasant families to leave their lands and seek shelter and subsistence in forests.<sup>3</sup> Even after such a disaster the revenue-

<sup>1</sup> Keating to J. Shore, President of the Board of Revenue, 25 Oct. 1790, quoted in *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>3</sup> H. Beveridge, *The District of Bakarganj*, 312-13.

demand from the district was increased. As a result, like the peasantry of Birbhum-Bankura, many of those in southern Barisal adopted the same tactics and took shelter at other places including the Sundarbans.<sup>1</sup>

Being thus driven to destitution and desperation the uprooted peasants organized themselves under one Ḥayāt Muhammad Khān for a struggle for survival. Ḥayāt Khān and his people retreated into the Sundarbans wherefrom they made raids upon boats carrying cargoes of the English traders and their *banias* and also on government treasure parties and revenue agents. For such activities Ḥayāt Muhammad Khān and his men, like the revolting peasantry of Birbhum-Bankura, have been dubbed as “dacoits” in the government records of the time. Needless to add, they were *not* dacoits, nor did they prey on the peasants and the general people of the land.

The activities of Ḥayāt Muhammad and his followers caused great inconvenience to the English merchants and officers. Matters came to a head when the Collector of Sylhet was attacked while passing through the water route in the southern part of the district. For several days a severe river battle continued between Ḥayāt Muhammad’s men and the Collector’s party reinforced by government forces. Ultimately Ḥayāt Khān and his people were forced to retreat into the forests. A number of his followers, who had surrendered, were brought to Dhaka and were executed. Even after this set-back Ḥayāt Muhammad continued his struggle. At least the government despatched a powerful river fleet, accompanied by an army, to capture Ḥayāt Muhammad. In 1790 these forces succeeded in capturing him after hard fightings for several days. He was sentenced to imprisonment for life and deported to the Prince of Wales island in the Indian Ocean.<sup>2</sup> Ḥayāt Muhammad appears to be the first revolutionary leader and political prisoner to suffer deportation under British rule.

The deportation of Ḥayāt Muhammad Khān did not put an end to the popular resistance in Barisal. The leadership was now taken up by Balākī Shāh of south Shahbazzpur. He was the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

descendant of a famous *‘ālim* who had been granted a rent-free land in south Shahbazpur by the Mughal government and who thus settled near the locality of Subandia. Being thus descended from a pious personality, Balākī’s family was generally known by the appellation of “Faqīr” or “Shāh”; but he does not seem to have any connection with the “Faqīr insurrection” of the time.<sup>1</sup> We have no precise information about Balākī’s relationship with Ḥayāt Muhammad Khān; but almost immediately after the latter’s deportation Balākī Shāh assumed the leadership of the revolting peasantry in southern Barisal. He reorganized them for further resistance. For that purpose he built a fortress at Subandia and stocked in it arms and ammunitions including seven big cannons.<sup>2</sup> These cannons were brought from Nalchiti near Shujā‘ābād where they were left most probably by the Mughal forces employed by Shāh Shujā‘ to drive away the Magh pirates. An ordnance factory also was established within the fort to manufacture guns, swords, spears, bullets and gun-powders.<sup>3</sup> Soon Balākī’s men came into armed clashes with the government forces and the revenue farmers who were defeated in a series of engagements. The conflict took a serious turn in 1792 when Balākī Shāh issued a proclamation declaring an end to the foreign rule and calling upon the peasantry to stop paying any revenue to the Company’s revenue farmers and *gomastahs*. Several clashes followed between his men and those of the latter. A number of *gomastahs* of the revenue farmers were captured and confined within the fort at Subandia. Some of these *gomastahs* managed to escape from the fort and informed the authorities about Balākī Shāh’s defence and strategic secrets. Thus being informed the government sent a strong expedition against Balākī Shāh. For several days heavy fightings took place near and inside the Subandia fort. Ultimately Balākī’s forces were defeated and scattered and the fort was razed to the ground. Most probably Balākī Shah himself succeeded in escaping from the battle field; but many of his adherents were captured and put to death. Thus

<sup>1</sup> *Bakarganj District Gazetteer*, Vol. II., 26.

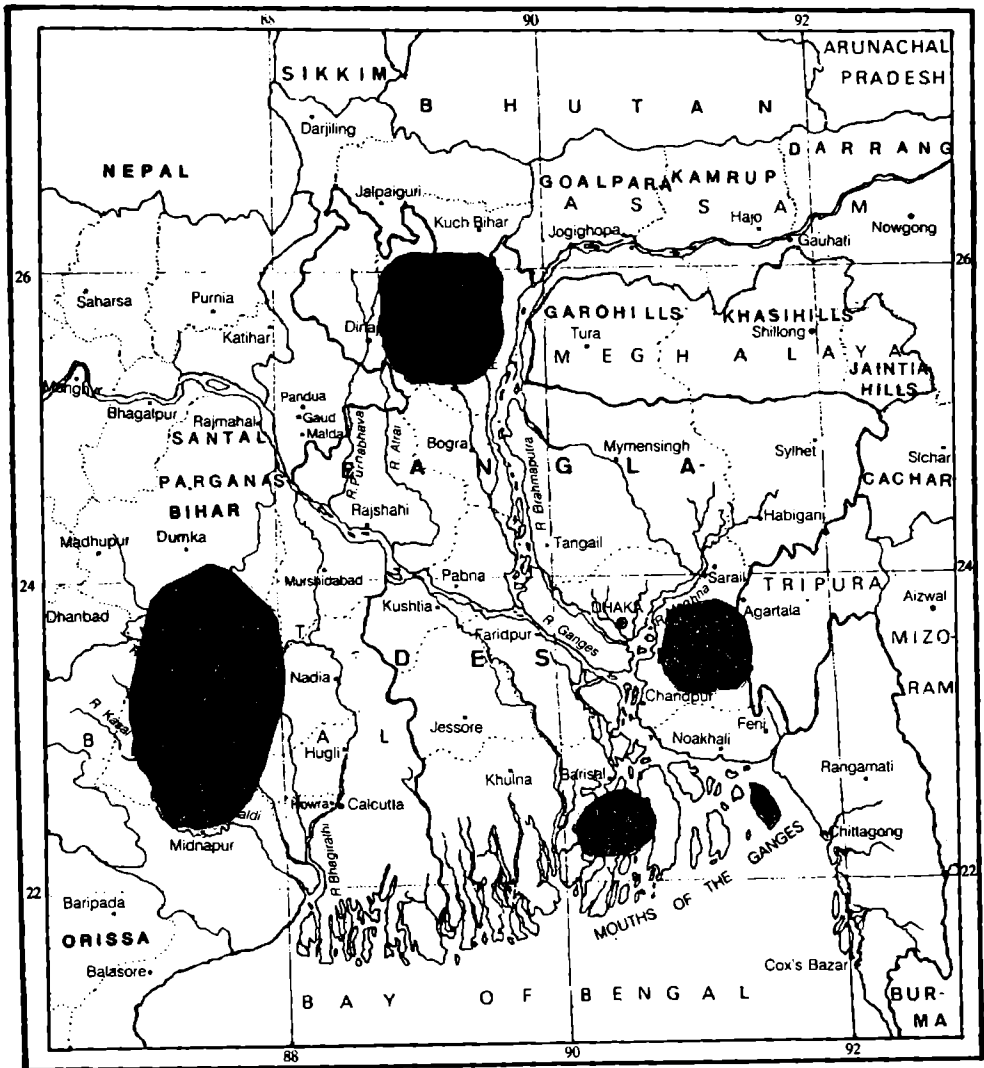
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

ended, just on the eve of the conclusion of the “permanent settlement”, a determined armed resistance put up by the people of southern Barisal.

MAP OF BANGLADESH AND THE NEIGHBOURING TERRITORIES  
Showing the extent of the zamindars' and peasants' risings

The extent shown thus: 





CHAPTER IV  
THE PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE:  
II. THE FAQĪR INSURGENCY

I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Far more protracted and organized was the "Faqīr" insurgency under the leadership of Majnu Shāh and his lieutenants which continued throughout the last three decades of the eighteenth century. The scene of their activities was mostly the same northern and eastern Bengal districts which had either suffered most during the famine of 1770-71 or had witnessed the Muslim chiefs' and peasants' revolts noted above. This fact is significant. It shows that the so-called Faqīr "raids" were not quite unconnected with the prevailing socio-economic and political situation. It also indicates that the British administrators' characterization of the Faqīrs as lawless bands of plunderers intruding into Bengal from outside is far from the truth. The activities of the Faqīrs indeed constitute another aspect of the people's resistance to the newly established British domination and the socio-economic changes that it entailed. Majnu Shāh and his lieutenants recruited their followers from the people of the locality where they operated and adopted the guerilla tactics of hit and run. When pursued by the government's military forces the leaders withdrew with their select bands to safer regions while the others dispersed among the people.

Etymologically the term "Faqīr" means an indigent person. It has been used as a special appellation, however, by various groups of people in various senses from time to time. More commonly it has been used by ṣūfī orders or persons of ṣūfistic leanings probably to emphasize their disinterestedness in worldly possessions or to indicate that every person, whatever may be his worldly situation, is in reality a *faqīr* in relation to Allah and is ever in need of His bounty and mercy. As thus used, there were naturally various groups and categories of Faqīrs. In Muslim Bengal history we come across the term also in relation to wandering immigrants and even political adventurers. The celebrated traveller Ibn Batūta, who visited eastern Bengal in the mid-fourteenth century A.C., noticed many such wandering

faqīrs of whom a group under one Shaida attempted an unsuccessful coup against Sulṭān Fakhr al-Dīn of Sonārgāon (Dhaka).<sup>1</sup> Subsequently prominent '*ulamā*' and *shaikhs* are found, in combination with *sūfi* orders, championing the cause of the people against oppressive rulers. The most notable instance is that of Shaikh Nūr Quṭb al-‘Ālam of Pandua who led a successful revolt against the usurper Rājā Kāns.<sup>2</sup> The tradition of political involvement on the part of an apparently religious group was thus not quite new and the activities of Majnu Shāh and his Faqīr bands fell in line with that tradition.

The Faqīr insurgency coincided with the incursions of a class of armed Hindu mercenaries bearing the appellation of Sannyāsīs (mendicants). Religious mendicancy has been known to Hinduism from very early times. In fact an orthodox view conceives four distinct stages in a true Hindu's life, the final stage being that of *Sannyās* or *Bānaprastha* in which he is expected to retire from worldly life and withdraw to forests or solitude. As with Faqīrs, there were different sects and groups among Sannyāsīs also. During the later Mughal period groups of armed Sannyāsīs are found as mercenary soldiers employed by various chiefs. Such mercenary Sannyāsīs were in the employ of the Marathas and accompanied them in their invasions of Orissa and western Bengal during the mid-eighteenth century. It may be recalled that the English in their warlike preparations against Sirāj al-Daulah were assured by some of their Hindu allies of the assistance of such a band of armed Sannyāsīs numbering a thousand under one Nimu Gosain.<sup>3</sup> After the establishment of British political power over Bengal, which coincided with a temporary eclipse of the Maratha confederacy as a result of the third battle of Panipat (1763 A.C.), such armed Sannyāsīs did indeed occasionally come into Bengal as mercenaries, being hired by rival princes in Kuch Bihar and Bhutan. It so happened that the East India Company's authorities in Bengal supported the cause of those princes of Bhutan and Kuch Bihar against whom the Sannyāsīs were

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I., pp. 127-128, 765.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I., pp. 153, 836-837.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. I., pp. 651.

employed by the rival princes. In the course of their march to Bhutan and Kuch Bihar the Sannyāsīs sometimes spilled into other districts on plundering sorties. Some of them even settled in several districts and set themselves up as moneylenders or revenue farmers.<sup>1</sup> These latter came to be known in course of time as resident Sannyāsīs.

This coincidence of Sannyāsī incursions with the Faqīr insurgency has been the cause of much confusion about the nature and object of the latter. The East India Company's officials in Bengal were generally either unable or unwilling to distinguish between the Sannyāsīs and the Faqīrs and frequently used the term Sannyāsī even with regard to the latter. Sometimes the peculiar phrase "Sannyāsī-Faqīrs" is used. One result of this confusion has been to obscure the proper role of the Faqīrs and to strengthen the allegation of plundering and raiding on their part. The confusion persists through later writings also. Thus writing in 1930 one author echoes the British official view and calls his work *Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*,<sup>2</sup> while a more recent writer entitles his work *The Sannyasi Rebellion*,<sup>3</sup> omitting altogether the term "Faqīr", though the major part of the work itself deals in its own way with Majnu Shāh and his Faqīr bands.

A little careful perusal of the records helps us to identify at least three main distinctions. In the first place, the Faqīrs are never found to have acted as mercenary soldiers on behalf of any prince or zamindar. They worked as a rather dedicated group more or less organized under the leadership of Majnu Shāh and his lieutenants. In contrast, the Sannyāsīs came to Bengal on each occasion as mercenary soldiers being hired by the Bhutan and Kuch Bihar princes. The so-called "resident Sannyasis" were merely those mercenary Sannyāsīs who had selected to settle in Bengal in the seventies of the eighteenth century. Even Bhavānī Pāthak, who once flashes into attention in north Bengal, seems to have been in the employ of a woman revenue farmer who had turned hostile to the government for some reason. Secondly,

<sup>1</sup> *H.M.S.*, Vol. 207, pp. 299-319; Vol. 351, pp. 280-300.

<sup>2</sup> Rai Sahib Jamini Mohan Ghosh, *Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> A.N. Chandra, *The Sannyasi Rebellion*, Calcutta, 1977.

although the Sannyāsīs sometimes visited the same localities as were the scenes of the Faqīrs' activities, there never was any real co-operation and collaboration between the two. Only on one or two occasions there was a very transient alliance of convenience between an isolated section of the Faqīrs and a faction of the Sannyāsīs. On the other hand there was undisguised enmity between the two from the very beginning which led to frequent clashes. It was the hostility of the Sannyāsīs which ultimately weakened the Faqīrs in a large measure. Thirdly, and this is the most important of all, the Faqīrs acted in close co-operation with the people. Majnu Shāh strictly forbade his followers to do any harm to the general inhabitants. His only targets of attack were the Company's trading stations, their oppressive revenue farmers and officials.

#### II. MAJNU SHAH AND THE FIRST PHASE OF FAQĪR ONSLAUGHTS, 1763

Practically nothing is known about the early life and antecedents of Majnu Shāh except that he hailed from Mākhanpur in Oudh and belonged to the *Mādāri* order of the Faqīrs. He appears to have left Mākhanpur almost immediately after Nawwāb Mīr Qāsim's final defeat at the hands of the English at the battle of Baxar (1764 A.C.) and established himself in the Morung country to the north of Purnia within the jurisdiction of Nepal. He built a chain of forts in the Morung forests which he used as a hinterland for withdrawal when pursued by the Company's forces. His chief field of operation was north Bengal where he established his headquarters at Pandua and Deotāla in Malda district and Mahasthan in Bogra district. These places had actually been important political and administrative centres during the Sultanat period and the area as a whole contained a large and respectable Muslim population since that time. Majnu and his associates used to assemble frequently in the historic mosques at those places, particularly at the famous Bara Sona Mosque at Pandua. He built a strong fort in the forest region of Mahasthan which came to be known as *Mastān-Garh* (fort of the *Mastāns* or *Faqīrs*).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mahasthan is evidently a modern corruption of *Mastān-Garh*. The locality of course contains an ancient Buddhist site.

During the period under review annual fairs accompanied by religious assemblages used to be held at the above mentioned places and also at Nekmard in Dinajpur in the winter season. Majnu and his associates visited these fairs for making contact with the people and for raising contributions for financing his campaigns. In fact he used the occasions of these fairs for facilitating the movement of his followers from place to place. Also the designation "Faqīr" seems to have been borne by them partly because they followed the lead of Majnu Shāh, a Faqīr, and partly as cover for their essentially anti-government activities. For, the followers of Majnu Shāh did not belong to any hereditary Faqīr families. They were composed largely of disbanded soldiers of the Nawwābs and Muslim chiefs, dispossessed and impoverished peasants and ruined artisans and manufacturers. Majnu Shāh moved from one district to another in northern and eastern Bengal, organizing the peasantry, recruiting his fighting force (Faqīrs) and, in general, building up a popular resistance to the Company's administration. It was this alliance with the people that rendered the Faqīrs under Majnu Shāh and his lieutenants a really formidable force and took it for the Company's authority in Bengal about a quarter of a century to suppress them.

The earliest specific reference to Faqīr attacks relates to 1763, the very year in which Nawwāb Mīr Qāsīm had openly fallen out with the English over their trading operations in Bengal and Bihar and had moved to Monghyr for a definite show-down. Significantly enough, all the three recorded attacks of that year were made on English factories or trading stations at different places. A body of Faqīrs appeared in the Bakarganj (Barisal) district in 1763, so runs an official account, and attacked and surrounded Kelly, Warren Hastings's commercial agent there. Kelly, though stated to be "in danger of life", was left unhurt and the Faqīrs soon "quitted the country."<sup>1</sup> In fact they moved on to Dhaka where the English factory came under their attack towards the end of that year. Ralph Leycester, Chief of the factory, hastily abandoned it taking with him the treasures, while "the sepoy in a body left the factory without any orders and fled to the few boats that were

<sup>1</sup> *Dacca District Gazetteer*, 40-42.

already come, in the utmost irregularity and confusion rendering their own retreat under such circumstances very precarious..." An English force under Captain H. Grant subsequently recovered the factory from the Faqīrs, some of whom were taken prisoners and employed as labourers for repairing the factory.<sup>1</sup> The third attack took place on the Rampur Boalia factory earlier in the same year. The attackers are called "Sannyasis"; but this has to be taken with caution in view of the indiscriminate use of the term by the Company's officials and also in view of the other facts connected with the incident. The attackers took the factory chief, Bennet, prisoner and sent him to Patna where he was killed in October of that year along with other English prisoners at Mīr Qāsim's orders.<sup>2</sup> This shows that the attack on the Rampur Boalia factory at least, if not the others, was not quite unconnected with Mīr Qāsim's conflict with the English and the acts of retaliation that had then commenced on both sides.

For three years after 1763 there was a lull in the Faqīrs' activities. During the interval, however, the mercenary Sannyāsīs were involved in the struggle for succession in Kuch Bihar. They were employed at the instance of the Bhutias on behalf of a rival prince and fought against the forces of the East India Company's government in Bengal who intervened in favour of the hereditary commander-in-chief, Nazir Deo Rudranarayan.<sup>3</sup> The struggle did not end at that time and erupted again in the seventies. It appears that in connection with the first phase of the struggle for succession in Kuch Bihar there was a considerable influx of Sannyāsīs during 1767.<sup>4</sup>

### III. THE SECOND PHASE OF MAJNU SHĀH'S CAMPAIGNS, 1767-1772

Since 1767 Faqīrs are mentioned more frequently in the records. In that year Captain Mackenzie was stationed at Rangpur with a company of sepoys to repel what was called "the ravages of the Fakirs and to maintain the peace of the country in general."

<sup>1</sup> Select Depts. Proceedings, 5 December 1763, J. Long, *Selections from Unpublished Records*, Calcutta, 1869, 342, 428.

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 37, quoting Laskarpur Collector's letter to the President and Council, 4 March, 1773.

<sup>3</sup> See Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 37-39.

<sup>4</sup> Select Committee Proceedings, 30 April 1767, Long, *op.cit.*, 526.

What “ravages” the Faqīrs were alleged to have committed are not mentioned; but it is pretty clear that the troubles arose out of unconscionable trade dealings by the Company’s servants. Even the sepoy employed under Captain Mackenzie “turned black-mailers and extorted large sums of money from [the] people, while the Captain himself lent money to zamindars at extortionate rates and enforced realization by confinement of zamindars and their agents.”<sup>1</sup> Matters came to a head over the exploitation of fir timber on the borders of Purnia and the Morung country. In 1766 Barwell, the Company’s resident at Malda, sent one Martyle to the Morung country to procure fir timber for the Company at “easy rates.” His activities soon enraged the people who cut him off in 1768. The official accounts state it to be the act of “Sanashy Facquirs” who had built a mud fort in Jalpaiguri district. The expression actually refers to the Faqīrs under Majnu Shāh who had settled there at that time and had built the fort under reference. Evidently the Faqīrs had made common cause with the people of the locality. Captain Mackenzie undertook an expedition against them early in 1769 whereupon the Faqīrs withdrew towards the interior of the Morung country. They reappeared however in the winter season when Lieutenant Keith was despatched against them with several detachments of troops. In an action with the Faqīrs on the borders of Morung in December 1769, Lieutenant Keith with his whole forces were killed.<sup>2</sup>

The destruction of Lt. Keith and his entire force naturally caused a panic among the newly appointed Supervisors of the northern districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Purnia who, during the early months of 1770, frantically asked for reinforcements.<sup>3</sup> Such reinforcements were indeed sent in the area, but that could not prevent the penetration of the Faqīrs. In October of the same year a body of some 500 Faqīrs, “armed with Matchlocks and other offensive weapons”, appeared near Kandua Ghāt (ferry) on the Kusi river in Purnia district. The Supervisor of the district (G.G. Ducarel) sent against them an army under the

<sup>1</sup> Secret Deptt. Proceedings, 6 May, 1773, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>3</sup> See *Letter Copy Book of the Supervisor at Nattore*, Calcutta, 1925, 2-3.

command of Lt. Sinclair. The latter succeeded in ambushing and capturing the entire group who were disarmed and brought to Purnia. It appears that this group were only a part of Majnu Shāh's followers and they succeeded in duping the Purnia Supervisor. They made protestations of peaceful intentions saying that they were going to "a Dargah near Malda and another ten koss from Ghoraghat (Dinajpur)" and that "they had come in large numbers and with arms owing to the quarrel with Sannyāsīs who lately put to death a number" of their people. Being convinced of the truth of this representation the Supervisor released them and allowed them to go wherever they liked, keeping their arms and five or six of them as hostages.<sup>1</sup> In communicating this incident to his superior authorities the Supervisor pointed out, without much effect, the mistake in calling these people Sannyāsīs. He wrote:<sup>2</sup>

"Upon Enquiry I find that they are neither Sinasseys nor Nag [aws] but Mussulmen called Modara [Madari], who were going to pay their Devo-[tion] at a Dargau near Malda & another ten Coss from Goragaut... The Head Man is well known to many People here having come regularly every year but never with so great a Number of them before, he [is] said always to have behaved peacefully & well, & that this Cast [sic] of Fakeers never have committed any Damages in Bengall, he now Accts [accounts] for their coming with so large a Body and Arms on the Score of their Quar [rels] with the Sinasses who have lately put to death a Number of his Ca [st].

"Had these people been Sinasses or Nagaws as first reported, I should have detained them here, 'till I received your Orders, but as they have submitted themselves quietly and it would distress both them & Us to keep so large a Body of People here till I could have your Answer I shall content myself with detaining their Arms & 5 or 6 of their head People as Hostages for their Good behaviour of the rest, with promise of restoring them when they leave the Country, & I now permit the rest to proceed to their Places of worship - In order to prevent their being molested under the name of Sinasses or Nagaars, I have given [them] Letters to the Supravisors of Dinagepore & Rungpore & to the Resident at Malda, acquainting those Gentlemen of their [sub] mission and peaceable Department."

The Faqīrs moved on to Dinajpur in the following month

<sup>1</sup> Purnia Supervisor's letters of 25 and 26 October 1770, to the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad, *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. I., Calcutta, 1919, 144-145.

<sup>2</sup> Purnia Supervisor's letter of 26 October, 1770, *op. cit.*



(November). Their number was now reported to have swelled to 5,000 and they were also equipped with "personal arms, besides 4 camels loaded with rockets." On receipt of this information the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad asked the Supervisors of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Purnia to draw on the military forces stationed at Rajmahal to intercept and disperse the Faqīrs. Consequently a party of sepoy's under Captain Mackenzie were sent from Rangpur, but they could not find any trace of the Faqīrs.<sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy that the districts of Purnia, Dinajpur and Rangpur, along with other places, were being ravaged by the famine of 1770 when the Faqīrs appeared on the scene. While it is easily understandable that none from outside the locality would have come in search of plunder in an area which was admittedly worst affected by the famine, it is also significant that the Faqīrs, even though disarmed at Purnia, were found in possession of arms and their number vastly increased when they were in Dinajpur and that, despite that fact, when the government forces arrived there, no trace was found of the Faqīrs. The only reasonable inference that can be drawn from these facts is that the Faqīrs were no ordinary plunderers, that they received the support and cooperation of the local people who evidently quartered and protected them and that many of the famine-stricken people indeed swelled their ranks.

The faqīrs were in fact being led by Majnu Shāh at that time. They traversed the districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Rajshahi and entered Pabna early in 1771. Captain Rennell, then engaged in the survey work near Sirajganj, noticed several of their detached parties in that part of the country where they were said to have been "laying all the principal towns under contribution." He also reported that a party of them, "about a thousand in number and tolerably well-armed", had passed through Sirajganj and entered Mymensingh district.<sup>2</sup> On receipt of this information the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad despatched from that

<sup>1</sup> Dinajpur Supervisor's letters of 22 November and 7 December 1771, *Proceeding of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. I., 253-254 and Vol. II, 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> Captain James Rennell's letter of 10 February 1771, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 44-45.

place two companies of sepoy's under Lt. Taylor to join Captain Rennell in order to chase the Faqīrs, while the Supervisor of Rangpur, under instructions, sent two other companies under Lt. Feltham towards Ghoraghat (Dinajpur) to intercept them if they proceeded to that quarter. Lt. Taylor joined Captain Rennell on 24 February 1771 and pursued the Faqīrs who retreated into Dinajpur. They were surprised at Qazipara near Govindaganj on the morning of 25 February. After a sharp engagement the Faqīrs were defeated, about ten of them being killed and 7 taken prisoners. "Their Chief Sheik Munjenoo [Majnu] fled on horseback to Mustan Gurr (a darga) where he was joined by about 150 of his followerrrs all disarmed and many of them wounded. The rest to the number of 2,500 are dispersed in such a manner that two of them cannot be found together that it is impossible to pursue them with sepoy's."<sup>1</sup> Lt. Taylor and Captain Rennell marched upon Mastan Garh but found the place empty. Majnu and his party disappeared among the people so that search parties sent by the former could not find any trace of them. Speaking about the natural strategic position of Mastan Garh and also about the support in arms and ammunition openly received by Majnu Shāh from the people Rennell wrote:<sup>2</sup>

"Having examined the Hill and Dirgah of Mustan Ghurr I think it my Duty to inform You that its natural Strength together with a small portion of Labour in the Side of the Fakeers will make it at any Time tenable against a Detachment, the Hill being in most places extremely steep and skirted with thick Woods. The Dirgah there affords a Pretence to the Fakeers to assemble and at the Fair which is held in December they are furnished with Arms of all kinds and commonly sally forth from thence 2000 strong. This in particular has been the case this Year."

Lt. Taylor remained stationed at Mastan Garh to prevent any "assemblage of Fakirs" there, while Lt. Feltham with his sepoy's returned to Rangpur. The Supervisors of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Purnia were instructed to keep watch on the retreat of the Faqīrs. The Dinajpur Supervisor arrested towards the end of March a party of one hundred Faqīrs, but they were found to be harmless people and were released by the Controlling Council of Revenue

<sup>1</sup> Rennell's letter, 1 March 1771, *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. 4, 58-59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

at Murshidabad.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Lt. Taylor seized a number of zamindars of Silberis (Bogra district) to discourage their giving protection to the Faqīrs. This action led to the arrest of only one Faqīr and a camel belonging to Majnu's party.<sup>2</sup>

Majnu moved with his followers from one place to another evading the notice of the authorities. In January 1772 he was in Rajshahi district with 2,000 followers.<sup>3</sup> Some of the Faqīrs were stated to have "taken up their residence" in the district. Further, it was reported that stragglers were "continually joining them."<sup>4</sup> Troops were once again moved from Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rangpur to apprehend Majnu and his party. He evaded all vigilance, however, and withdrew into Bogra. Majnu's presence in the region was utilized as a pretext by the zamindar of Rajshahi (Rānī Bhavānī) not to pay the revenue for that year on the ground that the Faqīrs had allegedly seized the amount ready for despatch to the government and that it was apprehended that they would take possession of the Pargana *Kāchhārī*. This allegation was contradicted by the Rajshahi Supervisor who stated that Majnu had "given injunctions to his followers to avoid all kind of oppression or severity and to take nothing but the voluntary contribution of the people by way of charity." The Supervisor also added that Majnu had with him "two camels, about 4 rockets, 400 match-lock men, a few swivels and altogether about 1000 men who carry arms." Majnu himself was "mounted on a very good horse and several of his attendants also have Tattoo horses."<sup>5</sup> He soon withdrew towards Morung and did not appear in Bengal for about two years.

#### IV. SANNYĀSĪ INCURSIONS OF 1772-73

Majnu's withdrawal from Bengal early in 1772 was shortly afterwards followed by the appearance of the Sannyāsīs. As in 1766-67, this time also they came to Bengal in the wake of the struggle over succession in Kuch Bihar. The old princely quarrel

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad*, Vol. V., 13-14

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 63, 86.

<sup>3</sup> Rajshahi Supervisor's letter, 22 January 1772, *ibid.*, Vol. IX, 78.

<sup>4</sup> Rajshahi Supervisor's letter, 24 January 1772, *ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>5</sup> Rajshahi Supervisor's letter, 25 January 1772, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 47-48.

still continued there. Raja Darpa Deb hired the services of the mercenary Sannyāsīs numbering over 5,000 and invited others to join them; while his rival, Nazir Deo, sought the help of his old patrons, the English.<sup>1</sup> In December 1772 bands of Sannyāsīs entered the district of Rangpur from the west, on their way towards Kuch Bihar, plundering the villages, according to British official communications, "and exacting contributions from the inhabitants." Captain Thomas, who was sent against them, attacked a party of the Sannyāsīs at Samganj, west of Rangpur town, on 30 December but was defeated and killed along with the entire body of his troops.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the Collector<sup>3</sup> of Rangpur (Charles Purling) had settled with Nazir Deo the terms for British help.<sup>4</sup> The defeat and death of Captain Thomas and the consequent need for retrieving English military reputation had added an element of urgency to the proceedings regarding Kuch Bihar. Hence late in January 1773 four battalions of troops were sent from four different directions towards Kuch Bihar and against the Sannyāsīs. The Collector of Rangpur, under instructions, directed Captain Stewart, commanding the battalion at Rajmahal, to proceed to Jalpaiguri where the Sannyāsīs hired by Darpa Deb were mainly concentrated. From Rangpur itself Captain Jones marched with his battalion towards Kuch Bihar. A third battalion from Bahrapur (modern Barhampur) in Murshidabad district marched northward to cooperate with Captain Stewart; and a fourth battalion was despatched from Dinapur (Bihar) through Tirhut and by the northern frontier of Purnia following the track of the Sannyāsīs.

On 28 January (1773) Captain Jones defeated a party of Sannyāsīs and Darpa Deb's men at Sibganj in Kuch Bihar.<sup>5</sup> This was followed by the defeat of Darpa Deb and the main body of his

<sup>1</sup> See for the background of the quarrel and the stages of English intervention *Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Rangpur*, 21, 23 and 25 December 1772, Vol. V., Calcutta, 1927, 23-48.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from President and Council to the Court of Directors, 15 January 1773, *H. M. S.*, Vol. 108, 35-40; also *Beng. Sec. Cons.*, 15 January 1773.

<sup>3</sup> The Supervisor was by this time renamed "Collector."

<sup>4</sup> *Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Rangpur*, 21 December 1772, Vol. V., 31-32.

<sup>5</sup> Captain Jones's letter to the Governor, 28 January 1773, G.W. Forrest, *Selections from Letters, Despatches, etc.*, Calcutta, 1901, 30.

Sannyāsī mercenaries in Jalpaiguri at the hands of Captain Stewart on 3 February.<sup>1</sup> Jalpaiguri was occupied by the British. In view of these reverses other bands of Sannyāsīs who had already entered Bengal changed their course into other districts. A party of them numbering about two thousand including “one hundred horses and eighty bullocks laden with ammunition” entered Bogra, “plundered the several villages which they passed through” and exacted money from the zamindars of the district. The government now sent Captain Edwards with three companies of sepoy to pursue the Sannyāsīs. The latter had in the meantime entered the Chilmari Pargana of Rangpur and had exacted various amounts from the zamindars there. Towards the end of January 1773 two bands of Sannyāsīs numbering about 5,000 and 6,000 and led respectively by Daria Giri and Moti Giri entered Mymensingh district. They passed through Madhupur forest and plundered the zamindars of Mymensingh, Alapsing, Atia and Kagmari.<sup>2</sup> Another group of Sannyāsīs under Ananta Giri advanced as far as Mirzapur (on the borders of Mymensingh near Dhaka district) and seized the gomastah of a zamindar at that place. For about two months Captain Edwards pursued the Sannyāsīs from one place to another. At last on 1 March he came up with a band of them numbering about 3,000 in Pargana Barabazu on the borders of Mymensingh and Bogra. The Captain was defeated and killed with all his troops except 12 sepoy.<sup>3</sup> For a couple of months more the Sannyāsīs hovered in northern and eastern Bengal districts. A number of them settled in Mymensingh and other places, while Moti Giri with his band settled in Tirhut on the western borders of Bengal. The others left the province. The last retreating party were defeated in Dinajpur by Lieutenant Williams on 23 December 1773. Thereupon they also quickly left Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Captain Stewart's letter of 3 February 1773, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Dhaka Collector's letter to Governor in Council, 26 January 1773, *Beng. Sec. Cons.*, 10 March 1773.

<sup>3</sup> Bogra Collector's letter to Governor in Council, 2 March 1773, *ibid.*, 31 March 1773. Also *H.M.S.*, Vol.108, 241-243.

<sup>4</sup> In February-March of the same year Sannyāsīs were reported to be present in the west Bengal districts of Midnapur, Birbhum and Burdwan, but they were found to be non-militant and peaceful pilgrims to Puri in Orissa.

The Sannyāsī incursions were really an epilogue to the Maratha invasions into Bengal during the previous period. As already indicated, the Sannyāsīs appeared in Bengal during an interval of a temporary eclipse of the Maratha confederacy after the third battle of Panipat. By 1774, however, the situation had changed. The Marathas recovered greatly from their shock and were by then divided into two rival camps, with Sindhia and Holkar on the one side, and the Gaikwar on the other. Both these groups now began once again recruiting the Sannyāsīs in their armies. Also the Nāga Sannyāsī leader Himmat Giri with a considerable number of his followers were about the same time engaged in a bid for power in Bundelkhand. On the other hand the subjugation of the Rohillas by the English in 1773, their creation of Oudh including Rohilkhand into a buffer state between Bengal and the Maratha dominions, and their alliance with Chait Singh of Benares who became a protégé maintaining a body of horse for the service of the English, made it very hard for the Sannyāsīs to pass through that region into Bengal. For these reasons Sannyāsī incursions into Bengal practically ceased after 1774. From that year onward Majnu Shāh and his Faqīr bands dominated the scene.

#### V. FURTHER CAMPAIGNS OF MAJNU SHĀH AND HIS FOLLOWERS, 1774-1787

Majnu Shāh reappeared in north Bengal towards the end of 1775 and took his position at Mastan Garh early in 1776. The Bogra Collector F. Gladwin accordingly informed the Provincial Council of Revenue at Dinajpur about Majnu's presence in the district and wrote as follows: "Shah Mojinoo with a body of Fakeers are now actually in possession of the Mosque at Mustangur; they have as yet levied only a small contribution from the Meela (fair) and my hircurrahs have brought me intelligence that they intend to move tomorrow towards Maldah."<sup>1</sup> Majnu did not however move towards Malda but into Rānī Bhavānī's zamindari in Rajshahi. What he did there is not known, but when he returned to Mastan Garh in June his followers were reported to

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Provincial Council of Revenue at Dinajpur*, 2 April 1776, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 71.

have increased greatly in number.<sup>1</sup> The Collector of Bogra repeatedly asked the Provincial Council of Revenue at Dinajpur to send a sufficient force to drive out Majnu Shāh. The Provincial Council did not however send any reinforcements because of the insufficiency of military forces at their command, stating: “the many accidents which have happened to the detachments formerly sent on this service have generally if not always arisen from the insufficiency of the force employed...”<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Majnu’s party continued to increase in number as a result of the accession of the oppressed peasantry. Even a number of sepoys from the Company’s forces deserted their posts and joined Majnu Shāh. At the end of October (1776) the Bogra Collector informed the Governor-General and Council that there were with Majnu at least 25 sepoys who had deserted from some of the government battalions.<sup>3</sup> The Governor-General-in-Council then directed the army commanders in Dinajpur and Murshidabad to “use every precaution to intercept” what was called “any party of Sunnasies that may attempt to enter the country by their stations and to march against any body of them that shall have actually entered the country and shall be so near as to enable them to attack them but not to send out small detachments or to hazard an unequal engagement with them.”<sup>4</sup> Accordingly Lieutenant Robertson proceeded from Barhampur with a large contingent and made a surprise attack on Majnu’s camp at Mastan Garh on the morning of 14 November 1776. Although attacked unawares, Majnu and his men “made a resistance”, wrote Robertson himself, “that I by no means expected.”<sup>5</sup> Majnu and his followers ultimately made an orderly retreat. Twenty of their men were killed at the first flash of attack, but several of the government troops including Lt. Robertson were wounded.

Robertson’s attack could not dislodge Majnu Shāh from north Bengal. He continued to traverse the several districts,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>3</sup> Gladwin’s letter of 30 October 1776, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 10 Dec. 1776, (Letter No. 916).

<sup>4</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 22 Oct. 1776, No. 2. (Governor General’s minute).

<sup>5</sup> Lt. Robertson’s letter to Gladwin, 14 November 1776, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 10 Dec. 1776 (Encl. to Letter No. 916).

specially during the winter season, opposing the oppressive zamindars and revenue agents of the government in the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Bogra and Mymensingh. In 1777 a band of resident Nāgā Sannyāsīs suddenly attacked the Faqīrs in Bogra and killed a number of them.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this set-back Majnu's power and influence continued to increase due to the support and co-operation of the people. It appears that the attack of the Sannyāsīs was instigated by the zamindars against whom Majnu and his men were arrayed. During each of the succeeding years of 1778 and 1779, however, Majnu and his party moved about in Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Mymensingh in the appropriate season to the terror of the zamindars of those places. In the winter of 1779-80 he made an attack on the zamindars of Alapsing (borders of Bogra and Mymensingh) and carried away Chandra Sekhar Acharya, a son of one of the zamindars.<sup>2</sup> The Provincial Council of Revenue at Purnia found themselves helpless against Majnu's operations and contented themselves with only writing a letter to the Dinajpur zamindar, Raja Baidyanath, to take steps for procuring the release of Chandra Sekhar Acharya. What steps were taken in this respect are not known. The Alapsing zamindars were however soon obliged to move their residence to Muktagacha near Mymensingh.

Majnu continued to visit the districts in the winter season of each year. In December 1782, while in Mymensingh, his party were attacked by the resident Sannyāsīs there. The latter were however severely defeated, about 40 of them being killed.<sup>3</sup> About the same time Majnu Shāh's lieutenant Mūsā Shāh and the Sannyāsī leader Mohan Giri were seized by Lieutenant Macdonald in Rangpur. They were alleged to have been engaged in creating "commotions" in that area.<sup>4</sup> They seem to have been released shortly afterwards. Majnu Shāh stayed on in Mymensingh moving from one pargana to another. The Company's Resident in the district, Henry Lodge, called upon the revenue farmers of

<sup>1</sup> *Bogra District Gazetteer*, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 75.

<sup>3</sup> Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Rangpur District Records*, Vol. II. (ed. W.K. Firminger), Calcutta, 1920, 297.



Atia, Kagmari and Bhawal to make their utmost efforts to apprehend Majnu who was then pushing on towards Bhawal.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Rānī Bhavānī, the revenue farmer of Rajshahi, sent a large party of her barkandazes against the Faqīrs.<sup>2</sup> Government forces were also sent against Majnu. On 14 January 1783 he had a skirmish with a party of the government troops near Innatpur in the Ran Bhawal pargana. He lost 25 or 30 of his men and retreated in the Bhawal forests. The sepoy did not dare pursue him. "Indeed the jungles are so immensely thick and of such an extent", wrote the Resident, "that there was little probability of the sepoy coming up with Mudgeenoo [Majnu] who has the advantage of having a bazar [market] with him whilst I was under the necessity of supplying the sepoy with rice & c. from hence."<sup>3</sup>

The last part of the above quotation shows that Majnu had the support of the common people behind him. Indeed all the attempts hitherto made to suppress him proved ineffective because of this popular support for him and because of his guerilla tactics of hit and run. The authorities had already come to realize this fact and had accordingly directed the different district Collectors not to hazard sending small and isolated parties of sepoy against the Faqīrs.<sup>4</sup> In April 1783 the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, expressed his weariness "of the annual inroads committed by Majnu", residing "peacefully on the other side of the Burrumpooter [Brahmaputra]" from where he entered "the Company's districts and lay them under contribution." Hastings therefore directed the Collector of Bogra and the Chief of Dhaka to exert themselves fully "to seize him." In reply to this directive the Dhaka Chief, while stating that Majnu had withdrawn from that district, clearly confessed that his strength lay in the people's support for him — "Majnu gets his recruits from the districts in which he carries on his depredation."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Lodge's letter to the Committee of Revenue, 7 Jan. 1783, *Comm. of Rev. Proceedings*, 16 January 1783.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Henry Lodge's letter (written from Baigunbari) to the Committee of Revenue, 14 January 1783, *Comm. Rev. Proceedings*, 23 January 1783.

<sup>4</sup> *Rangpur District Records*, Vol. II., 296.

<sup>5</sup> Revenue Deptt. Original Consultations, 27 May 1783, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 87.

In view of the increased alertness of the government's and zamindars' forces in Mymensingh and Rajshahi Majnu Shāh had moved to Malda district early in March of 1783. Writing on 6 March the Company's Resident there, Charles Grant, stated that the "country in the neighbourhood of Malda was being infested by several large bodies of Fakeers", all followers of Majnu Shāh. One party of them, numbering six or seven hundred, had plundered the revenue collector's office (*kāchāri*) at Shikārpur near Pokha Hat in the Thana of Bamangola and also the Company's *ārang* (trading station) at Nichindapur; while another party of about 500 were threateningly near another of the Company's *ārangs* at Kāligrām; and a yet another party "of six or seven hundred amongst whom are 80 horse" were "at Ookadantala [Hukādāntalā] within 4 koss of Malda." Majnu himself with "a greater force yet" was at Bādal on the borders of Purnia.<sup>1</sup> A couple of days afterwards Charles Grant wrote further details about the Faqīrs. "The party which was nearest to Malda" had proceeded to Muazzampur near Pātharghātā. It was about 600 in number including some "Hindu Barkandazes hired to accompany them" and was being led by Mūsā Shāh who had his "own place of residence at Seebpur Chowchatt which lies between Nischindpore and Buddaul [Bādal]", and that they intended "to go to Mestingur [Mastan Garh] in Ghoraghat or to Nekomurd near Malduar at both of which places there are soon to be meetings of Mussalman Fakeers." The other party which had plundered the *kāchāri* of Shikārpur, also of about 600, was commanded by another of Majnu Shāh's lieutenants named Burhān; while Majnu himself "was lately at Bydell [Bādal] with about 2,000 men", but had crossed the Atrai "with less than half that number on the 9th in his way to Mistangur."<sup>2</sup> Acting on this information the Collector of Bhagalpur sent six companies of sepoy's under Major Buchanon towards Mastan Garh (Bogra district) and the Collector of Rangpur sent four companies under Captain Alexander

<sup>1</sup> Charles Grant's letter to the Bhagalpur Collector (Augustus Cleveland), 6 March 1783, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 8 April 1783 (encl. to Letter No. 85).

<sup>2</sup> Charles Grant to Bhagalpur Collector, 12 March 1783, *ibid.*, (encl. to Letter No. 87).

towards Nekmard in Dinajpur district.<sup>1</sup> All the different parties of Majnu's men gave them a slip, however, and Majnu withdrew into the Morung country.

In spite of the vigilance of the Collectors the Faqīrs reappeared in the winter season of 1783-84. Mūsā Shāh with his band penetrated into Mymensingh while Majnu traversed both Malda and Bogra. In addition to the forces already deployed the government specially ordered a company of "Brigade Sepoys from Berhampore to be stationed at Silberries for the defence of the Company." Even that was of no avail. Majnu and his followers rather lingered their operations that year till the beginnings of the rainy season in June 1784, occasionally assembling at the famous mosque at Pandua for consultations and planning.<sup>2</sup> In their correspondence on the subject that year the authorities recognized two significant facts: (a) that the reports of the zamindars and revenue farmers alleging that the Faqīrs plundered the ra'yats were "false"; "none of the ryots as I can hear of here fled from their habitations", wrote the Collector of Dhaka, for instance;<sup>3</sup> (b) that it was difficult to punish Majnu because, on the one hand, many zamindars were "apprehensive of giving information respecting his motions" and, on the other, the people in general cooperated with him "as his followers are taught to disperse when pursued and unite again at appointed stations, it seldom happens that they can be apprehended", observed the Committee of Revenue.<sup>4</sup>

Majnu had however grown old and naturally exhausted as a result of rather two decades of continuous struggles and campaigns through the most difficult terrains of the country. Nevertheless he continued visiting the districts during the remaining two years of his life. In March 1785 lieutenant Crowe, who had been stationed at Silberis, succeeded in engaging Majnu

<sup>1</sup> Bhagalpur Collector's letter to the Council of Revenue, 13 March 1783, *ibid.* (Bhagalpur Letter No. 86).

<sup>2</sup> Bhagalpur Collector to Council of Revenue, 22 June 1784, *ibid.*, 20 July 1784 (Letter No. 241).

<sup>3</sup> Dhaka Collector's letter to Committee of Revenue, 16 February 1784, quoted in Ghosh, *op. cit.*, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Committee of Revenue to the Governor General in Council, 18 Oct. 1784, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 28 Oct. 1784, (Letter No. 371).

in a battle near Mastan Garh. Seven of his men were killed and about 30 wounded. As usual his followers dispersed among the people while he himself withdrew to a safer region. In the following year princely troubles once again erupted in Kuch Bihar resulting in the calling in by a rival prince of the mercenary Sannyāsīs residing in Mymensingh and other nearby parts, on the one hand, and the movement of the English forces into the region, on the other.<sup>1</sup> In course of their march to Kuch Bihar a group of the Sannyāsīs clashed with a party of Majnu's men in Bogra district killing a number of them.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this set-back Majnu and Mūsā Shāh traversed the districts of Rangpur and Mymensingh. On 18 August Lt. John Ainslie, proceeding from Dinajpur, attacked Majnu's party of about three thousand near Silberis and "after an engagement of two hours and a half" inflicted a defeat upon him.<sup>3</sup> He withdrew towards Dinajpur most probably to make a junction with Mūsā Shāh who had been there at that time. The Faqīrs were however closely pursued by the government forces. After traversing once again Bogra, Dinajpur and Rajshahi districts Majnu retreated in December 1786 towards the Morung country. He was already ill and died shortly afterwards in 1787.

#### VI. MŪSĀ SHĀH AND CONTINUATION OF THE STRUGGLE, 1787-1792

Majnu's death was a great blow to the struggle of the Faqīrs; but his work was continued by his followers, notably by Mūsā Shāh, said to be his brother or cousin. Already in February 1787 when Majnu was in his death-bed, a disciple of his named Mādār Bakhsh was in Dinajpur with a party of Faqīrs.<sup>4</sup> On the approach of a government detachment against him he had retired into the forests of Pandua (Malda district). In the middle of the year Mūsā Shāh himself appeared in that district with "a force consisting of upwards of five hundred men many of whom" were, according to the Murshidabad Collector's report, "dismissed Seapoys from the Different Brigades" and were "armed and dressed in the same

<sup>1</sup> See Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 76-82.

<sup>2</sup> Bogra Collector's letter to the Committee of Revenue, 2 March 1786, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 6 March 1786, No. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Bengal District Records, Dinajpur*, Vol. II, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Dinajpur Collector's letter to Major Dunn, 5 March 1787, *Bengal District Records, Dinajpur*, Vol. II, (ed. W.K. Firminger), Calcutta, 1924, 65.

manner as the English Troops.”<sup>1</sup> The government asked the Collectors of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Purnia, Bhagalpur and Rajshahi to act in concert with the zamindars of their respective districts for apprehending Mūsā Shāh.<sup>2</sup> The latter moved into Dinajpur where he defeated, early in September, a government force sent against him. Further forces under Major Maitland were now deployed against Mūsā Shāh. The Collector of Dinajpur also employed spies to obtain information about Mūsā Shāh’s movements. At the same time the government concluded agreements with Bhutan and Kuch Bihar in order to prevent the retreat of the Faqīrs into those territories. Mūsā Shāh did not however withdraw towards those quarters but entered Rajshahi. In March 1788 Rānī Bhavānī, the revenue farmer of that district, sent a detachment of her barkandazes against Mūsā Shāh. The Rānī’s forces were defeated and routed at Niamatpur in the Jaising Pargana. Mūsā Shāh next moved on to Dinajpur where, on 28 May (1788) he had a fight with the government forces in the Jahangirpur Pargana. The Dinajpur Collector regretted that Mūsā Shāh could have been captured if the villagers had given assistance— “The alertness of the villagers to seize upon what did not belong to them manifestly shows that mere timidity is not solely the cause of their flying or remaining inactive, as is their custom, upon these occasions... The villagers on these events became partisans of the Fakirs and restore to them in the hour of safety what they took charge of at the moment of their danger.”<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after this event Parāg ‘Alī Shāh (Parāgal Shāh), son of Majnu Shāh, and another disciple named Cherāg ‘Alī Shāh appeared in the heart of Dinajpur district with about 300 men (September 1788). This time they attempted to disrupt the government communications by intercepting and arresting the mail-runners and opening and searching the mail bags. The Collectors of Dinajpur, Murshidabad and Tajpur simultaneously sent forces from their respective directions to chase the Faqīrs.

<sup>1</sup> Murshidabad Collector’s letter of 12 July 1787, *Board of Rev. Cons.*, 20 July 1787, No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Dinajpur Collector’s letter to the Murshidabad Collector, 22 June 1788, quoted in Ghosh, *op.cit.*, 102

About that time Parāgal Shāh fell ill and was secreted by the village men in Pargana Kanchan Museda. This absence of the leader threw the Faqīr band out of gear and about twenty of them were arrested by the pursuing government forces in October 1788.<sup>1</sup>

In the following year (1789) a number of the important disciples of Majnu Shāh assembled in Malda obviously to concert measures and strengthen their operations. Writing to the commanding officer at Tajpur on 17 April the Dinajpur Collector stated that Shah Cherāg 'Alī, Pīr Akkel 'Alī and Shāh Zhunurī, all disciples of the deceased Majnu Shāh, were on their way towards Malda with about 500 followers, while Mūsā Shāh with about 400 followers were already encamped at Deotala near Pandua. The Collector asked the commanding officer to immediately despatch a sufficient force against the Faqīrs and also directed the zamindars of his district to assist the military force in every way.<sup>2</sup> As the military advanced against them Mūsā Shāh and his followers withdrew towards the borders of Dinajpur district.<sup>3</sup> During the winter season of 1789-90 Cherāg 'Alī with a large party of Faqīrs were active in Mymensingh district where a band of resident Sannyāsīs temporarily cooperated with him. The Mymensingh Collector estimated that their combined number was "at least 2,000" and that they were "armed with matchlocks, spears and talwars." He further stated that Cherāg 'Alī and the Faqīrs had "come through an unfrequented path from Mahastangarh to Jaffarshahy [Mymensingh] where they have erected their standard and are increasing their force by various emissaries who have been in the province for some time."<sup>4</sup> The last part of this report clearly shows that the Faqīrs' fighting corps were being raised from the people. An army under Captain Clayton advanced from Goalpara, Assam, into Mymensingh but they did not find any trace of the Faqīrs. The Captain thought that on hearing of the approach

<sup>1</sup> Do to Do, 20 October 1788, *Bengal District Records, Dinajpur*, Vol. II, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Dinajpur Collector to Captain Edmund Lambert, 17 April 1789, *Board of Rev. Cons.*, 23 April 1789.

<sup>3</sup> Do to Do, 13 May 1789, *ibid.*, 18 May 1789.

<sup>4</sup> Mymensingh Collector's letter to Captain Mackenzie, commanding at Dhaka, 13 January 1790, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 20 January, 1790, No. 61. See also Nos. 50-60, 62-64.

of the army the Faqīrs had withdrawn from Mymensingh; while the district Collector was of opinion that they had "only hid themselves in jungles and unfrequented parts of the country." It may be observed that since a considerable part of the Faqīr force consisted acknowledgedly of local recruits it is only likely that they simply dispersed among their respective villages without the least possibility of being traced as a separate body.

The Faqīr leaders continued to visit the districts of Rangpur, Rajshahi and Mymensingh throughout 1790 and 1791. In January 1792 Mūsā Shāh and Parāg 'Alī made a successful attack upon the Company's factory at Birtara in Mymensingh district. Government investigations into this incident revealed that "certain Burkundauzes [barkandazes], inhabitants of Pargana Cagmarry in the district of Mymensingh were very active in assisting the Fakirs to seize the people belonging to the Cooty [factory] and to collect the tribute claimed."<sup>1</sup> As usual, at the approach of the government troops the Faqīrs retired, "being too rapid in their motions to be overtaken by a pursuit."

The attack on the Birtara factory appears to be the last joint action by Mūsā Shāh and Parāg 'Alī Shāh. For sometime past a rivalry for leadership had been growing among the close disciples of Majnu Shāh. Towards the end of 1791 the Collector of Rangpur reported that Raushan 'Alī, a disciple of Majnu Shāh, had fallen out with Mūsā Shāh and Cherāg 'Alī.<sup>2</sup> It appears that a more serious rivalry was developing between Mūsā Shāh and Parāg 'Alī. The latter with his followers were present in Mymensingh till mid-February 1792; but shortly afterwards he moved to north Bengal. The details of his rivalry with Mūsā Shāh are not known. Early in March of that year, however, there was an armed clash between the two leaders somewhere in Dinajpur in which Mūsā Shāh was killed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rajshahi Magistrate's letter to Governor General, 5 March 1792, *Beng. Rev. Judl. Cons.*, 13 April 1792, No. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Rangpur Collector's letter to the Board of Revenue, 21 Dec. 1791, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 30 Dec. 1791, No. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Rajshahi Magistrate's letter to Governor-General-in-Council, 4 April 1792, *Beng. Rev. Judl. Cons.*, 13 April 1792, No. 11.

## VII. CHERĀG 'ALĪ TAKES UP THE BANNER, 1792-1794

Although Parāg 'Alī eliminated Mūsā Shāh, the latter's adherents actually emerged victorious in the struggle for leadership. Henceforth Parāg 'Alī disappears from the scene and Mūsā Shāh's close associates like Cherāg 'Alī, Subhān 'Alī (often called Subhānī), assisted by subordinate leaders like Ramzān Shāh, Jawhar Shāh, Karīm Shāh and others continued the attacks on the Company's trading stations and their revenue farmers till the end of the century. During this period, however, their activities were confined to the northern districts, namely, Purnia, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Malda, Bogra and Rangpur. As formerly, the Faqīr leaders had their permanent base in the Morung country, north of Purnia within the jurisdiction of the Nepalese government. The British authorities frequently remonstrated with the latter asking them to expel the Faqīrs from their territory. Every time thus approached the Nepalese authorities expressed friendship with the British and publicly denounced the Faqīrs, but did nothing effectual to expel them from the Morung country.

The winter season of 1792-93 (following the death of Mūsā Shāh) began with intensive inroads by the Faqīrs in the northern districts. In January 1793 Subhān 'Alī Shāh with a party of Faqīrs attacked several places on the frontier of Purnia and "carried off a revenue farmer" whom he did not release until he had extorted a considerable sum of money from him. The Faqīrs also made an attack on one of the frontier posts but were repulsed.<sup>1</sup> Subhān 'Alī next moved into Rajshahi district and on 28 February made a successful attack on the revenue farmer's office (*kāchārī*) in Pargana Museda, carried off the money and every thing it contained. From there the Faqīrs proceeded to a nearby trading station of the Company and forced the money-lenders of that place to disgorge their accumulations. About the same time another party of Faqīrs attacked the Company's trading posts at Nichindapur and Badal in Balda in Malda district. In view of these renewed attacks of the Faqīrs the government sent a reinforce-

<sup>1</sup> Purnia Collector's letter to the Board of Revenue, 14 January 1793, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 25 January 1793, No. 13.



ment of troops from Barhampur into Rajshahi and also stationed a detachment of the Corps of Hill Rangers at Deotala near Malda.<sup>1</sup> In spite of these reinforcements the Faqīrs moved about in the districts of Malda and Dinajpur. A party of them numbering about 300 under the command of Cherāg ‘Alī had an encounter with a party of the government forces in May at Nawgaon in the Barbakpur Pargana of Dinajpur district. About seven of the Faqīrs were reported to be wounded and one taken prisoner.<sup>2</sup> A week afterwards the main body of the Faqīrs under Cherāg ‘Alī “said to have been seven hundred strong” had another encounter with the government forces at Damdama in the same district. The government forces could not make much headway against Cherāg ‘Alī who withdrew to “the inner parts of the jungles where they could not with propriety be pursued by the sepoy.”<sup>3</sup> Cherāg ‘Alī and his followers next moved into Malda; while Subhān ‘Alī with a body of about four hundred pushed into Purniā inflicting a defeat upon the sepoy posted at Mundamala.<sup>4</sup>

During the rainy season of 1793 the Faqīrs appear to have retired into the Morung country. In the winter season however they reappeared. Subhān ‘Alī with a party of 300 entered the neighbourhood of Thākurgaon in Dinajpur, while Cherāg ‘Alī with about a thousand followers entered Malda and encamped at Deotala where he “bid defiance to the established Police Officers as well as a detachment of Sepoys and Burkandazes” stationed there.<sup>5</sup> In November both the leaders with their followers moved on to Rajshahi where they forced a number of *mandals* (petty revenue farmers) to make payments to the Faqīrs.<sup>6</sup> Next they proceeded towards Rangpur. In the meantime the district Magistrate of Dinajpur (J.H. Harrington) sent Lieutenant Ainslie with sufficient troops against them; but the Lieutenant, in spite of “good information and expedition” was “unable to come up with them.” The Magistrate further informed his superior authorities:

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Rev. Judl. Cons.*, 15 March 1793, No. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 14 June 1793, No. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Board of Rev. Cons.*, 6 August 1793, No. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 15 November 1793, No. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

“The two large bodies of Fakirs under Cheragali and Shobhany...are now gone northwards; and from information given to Lieutenant Ainslie appear to be pursuing each other in the route to Jilpigoory [Jalpaiguri] but will again return to the southward unless aware that a complete force is prepared to oppose them; and I have also received intelligence of two other large Bodies, one computed to be about a thousand, the other thirteen hundred, who were lately seen in Purnea advancing Eastward towards this District, though they must have since altered this course, and I apprehend will Soon be heard of in the neighbourhood of Malda, which has induced me to request Lieutenant Ainslie...to proceed to Poorsa [Pandua], agreeably to my letter of the 16th instant.”<sup>1</sup>

The Faqīrs did not however move towards Malda at that time but towards the borders of Kuch Bihar where also a body of mercenary Sannyāsīs, dismissed from Assam at the instance of the British authorities, appeared early in March 1794 under the leadership of Hazari Singh and Fatik Barua. There was no cooperation, nor any confrontation between the Faqīrs and the mercenary Sannyāsīs. It was specifically noted, however, that Cherāg ‘Alī was leading the Faqīrs.<sup>2</sup> Soon the latter left the borders of Kuch Bihar and passed into Purnia. Lieutenant Ainslie pursued them there but could do nothing because, it was alleged, the *Fauzdārī* and *Dīwanī* servants of the district “had been privy to the operations and schemes of Fakeers” and had “positively refused” to give any assistance to the government forces.<sup>3</sup> The Faqīrs continued to stay alternately in Purnia and Ragpur till the onset of the rainy season of 1794, although constantly pursued by Lieutenants Ainslie and Sloane. As late as 19 June Subhān ‘Alī with about 400 of his followers made a daring attack on the Company’s factory at Ramganj in Purnia district, carried away in cash and goods 6000 rupees, killed 2 sepoy and took 4 away. It was further alleged that a zamindar who lived near Ramganj “furnished the whole of the Fakir party...with provisions and secreted them during the day preceding the night” of their attack

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 20 December 1793, Nos. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 14 March 1794, No. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 12 May 1794, Nos. 1-2.

on the factory, while he refused food to the small party of sepoys.<sup>1</sup> At the same time it was observed that "the followers of Cherag Ally did not in the least molest any one in the Purnia district."<sup>2</sup> Shortly after this event, however, a quarrel ensued between Cherāg 'Alī and the Sannyāsī leader Moti Giri residing in Tirhut. The latter waylaid him one night in August 1794 and cut him off.<sup>3</sup>

VIII. THE FINAL PHASE: SUBHĀN 'ALĪ AND OTHERS' STRUGGLE,  
1794-1800

Cherāg 'Alī's death, only two years after Mūsā Shāh's death, seriously weakened the Faqīrs. Meanwhile the British authorities also took vigorous measures to suppress them. The Permanent Settlement of 1793<sup>4</sup> whereby the revenue farmers were declared proprietors of the estates under their respective charges, altered the rural situation in favour of the government. The zamindars, now bound more effectively with the government by ties of gold, enthusiastically cooperated with the latter in putting an end to the Faqīr opposition. In 1794, following the attack on Ramganj factory, the government rushed more troops into north Bengal and sent Lt. Colonel Stuart to take command of the troops in the districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Purnia.<sup>5</sup> At the same time renewed pressure was made on the Nepalese government to break up the rendezvous of the Faqīrs in the Morung country.<sup>6</sup> The hands of the government were also strengthened by the hostility of the Sannyāsīs towards the Faqīrs. The former, as already indicated, were essentially mercenaries and many of those who had settled in Bengal had by now established themselves as moneylenders or petty zamindars. Following the Permanent Settlement the government also established police stations (*thānās*) in every district to make their authority, in cooperation with the zamindars, effective over the rural areas.

The Faqīr opposition did not end all at once, however.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 July 1794, No. 11. See also Nos. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 19 Sept. 1794, No. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See *infra*, Chap. V.

<sup>5</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 31 October 1794, Nos. 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 October 1794, Nos. 1-4.

Cherāg 'Alī's colleague Subhān 'Alī carried on the guerilla operations for sometime more. In the winter of 1794 he in fact appeared with an even larger party of 1800, visited the districts of Rangpur and Dinajpur and put the zamindars under contribution. His most daring feat was an attack made early in December 1794 on the Nawabganj *kāchāri* in Dinajpur, the *jāgīr* of Rājā Rājballabh. The Faqīrs carried off about 5,000 rupees from that place.<sup>1</sup> This attack was followed in January 1795 by similar attacks on the revenue farmers of Purnia, two of whom were killed and a total of 60,000 rupees were stated to have been extracted from them.<sup>2</sup> In reporting about these incidents the Rangpur magistrate (Matthew Leslie) remarked that "the audacity" of the Faqīrs "seemed to increase in proportion to the military force sent against them." In consultations with the zamindars of the region the magistrate suggested to the government that "if a positive order was given to the landholders [the newly created zamindars] of every description to assemble their people on the first notice of the Fakirs having entered their pargana and drive them back by force of arms, that they would willingly undertake it; but at present they are fearful of attacking them lest in the skirmish any of the Fakirs should be killed and the landholders or their followers become liable to be tried for murder."<sup>3</sup>

Accepting this suggestion the Governor-General-in-Council passed a resolution on 19 December 1794 directing the magistrates of Purnia, Dinajpur and Rangpur to issue a written proclamation in Bengali, Persian and Hindustani (Urdu) languages notifying that all zamindars, *talukdars* and farmers of revenue and the inhabitants in general were at liberty to repel the attack of Faqīrs by force and that if in the process any Faqīr was killed none would be held accountable. The resolution further authorized the zamindars, *talukdārs* and farmers of revenue to seize the arms of the Faqīrs whether they committed depredations or not.<sup>4</sup> Thus

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 19 December 1794, No. 4 and, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 19 December 1794, No. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Purnia Collector's letter of 15 December 1794, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 16 January 1795, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rangpur Magistrate's letter of 12 December 1794, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 19 December 1794, No. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Resolution.

were the zamindars and revenue farmers formally and by a special resolution authorized to take the law in their own hands. The most extraordinary feature of the resolution was that not only the zamindars but also any one employed by them were absolved of the responsibility for murder if it was simply stated that the victim was a Faqīr. The last part of the resolution which authorized the seizure of arms whether any depredation took place or not shows that such arms, and indeed the Faqīr recruits were scattered among the local people. The armed retainers which the zamindars henceforth maintained under this legal cover proved in the long run to be a source of much mischief and oppression upon the ra'yats in general. Subsequently the government also passed a special regulation which provided for transportation for life to the Andaman islands of any Faqīr convicted of "robbing", wounding or murdering.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these extraordinary measures the Faqīr attacks continued for some time more. Subhān 'Alī's assistant, Karīm Shāh, who had a mud fort in *pargana* Motiria in Purnia district, issued from that place and carried on a series of campaigns against the zamindars of Tirhut and Darbhanga. During the winter season of 1795-96 the Faqīrs again appeared in north Bengal. Lt. Thomas Darrah, commanding a detachment stationed at the *darga* at Pandua (Malda) led a series of campaigns against the Faqīrs in that region. In a battle with them at the outskirts of Pachly Jungle near Malda early in February 1796 he inflicted a defeat on them and captured Jawhar 'Alī Shāh and Matiullah Shāh, two lieutenants of Subhān 'Alī.<sup>2</sup> Jawhar 'Alī and Matiullah were sentenced respectively to 18 years' and 10 years' imprisonment. After this incident the Faqīrs do not appear to have made further attacks till the end of 1797. Early in 1798 Subhān 'Alī and his associate Amudi Shāh appeared in Dinajpur district at the head of two large parties of Faqīrs. Captain Wroughton was immediately sent with an army in pursuit of them. He intercepted Subhān 'Alī's party in the Mohiganj Jungle in Malda district and defeated them in a battle on 30 March 1798. Their number "could not have been less than six

<sup>1</sup> Regulation IV of 1797, section 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 12 February 1796, No. 5.

hundred.” About 40 of them were killed and between sixty and seventy were wounded. Seven of them were taken prisoners.<sup>1</sup> They were subsequently convicted of the offences specified in Regulation IV of 1797 and transported to the Andamans.<sup>2</sup> Subhān ‘Alī Shāh and the remnant of his party retreated into Dinajpur and made a junction with Amudi Shāh’s party. They were however further chased by an army under Captain Charron who inflicted on them a crushing defeat on 2 April 1798 near Thakurgaon. The “action commenced at day light, and continued till afternoon”, wrote Captian Charron, “...The road for eight miles was covered with the Dead, the Dying and the wounded the numbers must have been very great, few of the Fakeers having been able to get away; Of prisoners I have the pleasure to send you seventyone. Amongst the prisoners is Undesa [Amudi Shāh] a sirdar of note and next in Rank to the Shaw [Subhān ‘Alī Shāh].”<sup>3</sup>

These defeats broke the backbone of Subhān ‘Alī Shāh and of the Faqīr resistance. To make matters worse for him the government offered a reward of 4000 rupees for his apprehension.<sup>4</sup> Henceforth he recedes into the background and is heard of no more. His followers and adherents, who were mostly local people of Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Bogra, kept up the resistance for sometime more. In 1799 they created trouble for the zamindar of Dinajpur. Their last notable activity was reported early in 1800. A party of “upwards of one thousand persons” assembled in the Khetlal (or Khetnol) *thānā* (then in Dinajpur district, now in Rajshahi district) and “twice proceeded to attack the Thana with a view to cutting off the Darogah and his officers.”<sup>5</sup> The party were led by Newāzī Shāh, Budhu Shah and Imām Bakhsh Shāh (also called Imāmbari Shāh). The *thānā* officers succeeded in withstanding the attack. The trouble originated in the arrest earlier of another Faqīr leader named Badr Shāh, and it spread quickly in the neighbouring district of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 April 1798, No. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, 20 February 1800, No. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 4 May 1798, No. 2 (Encl. 1 to Dinajpur Magistrate’s letter of 28 April 1798). See also Nos. 3–5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 20 Feb. 1800, No. 11

Rajshahi. Newāzī Shāh and Imām Bakhsh Shāh went to that district and assembled a large party in the village of Byrincha. The *dārogha* of Khetlal with a party of sepoy, made a raid on the village on 28 February 1800. He would have apprehended the whole party “had not the escape of the greater part been facilitated”, as the magistrate wrote, “by the opposition made to the police officers by the inhabitants of the village of Byrincha; the whole of whom armed with clubs attacked the Darogah’s party”, wounded one *paik* and carried off another. “In consequence of the opposition made by the inhabitants Imam Bux Shāh Newaz Shāh and their principal accomplices made their escape.” Sixteen of the inhabitants were apprehended and committed for trial. On the recommendation of the Dinajpur magistrate the government offered a prize of 300 rupees each for the apprehension of Newāzī Shāh and Imām Bakhsh Shāh.<sup>1</sup> What happened to them is not known.

The activities of the Faqīrs practically ceased with the turn of the century. The foregoing review of their activities shows that they were no ordinary “plunderers” as characterized by the British officials. The Faqīr insurgency has to be viewed against the background of the peasants’ and Muslim zamindars’ struggles against the expansion of the East India Company’s political power over the country. Majnu Shāh, Mūsā Shāh, Cherāg ‘Alī Shāh and Subhān ‘Alī Shāh recruited their following from the population of the districts in which they operated. Their only targets of attack were the Company’s trading stations and their revenue farmers (zamindars), the two principal instruments of exploitation and oppression on the people at that time. The Faqīr leaders did not do any harm to the general inhabitants, as occasionally admitted by their adversaries, the Company’s officials and military commanders. There were however obvious disadvantages against which the Faqīrs worked. They found themselves arrayed against a wealthy and powerful section, the *bānia* class, who had helped the English establish their rule and who had now established themselves as revenue farmers and zamindars. It is significant that

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 20 Feb. 1800, No. 11

the Faqir resistance was effectively suppressed only after the Permanent Settlement of 1793 and the arming of the zamindars in 1794 with extraordinary power to chase and kill any Faqīr. Also the enmity of the mercenary Sannyāsīs who appeared in the scene in the wake of the struggle for succession in Kuch Bihar handicapped the Faqīrs considerably. The struggle for leadership which ensued after Majnu's death also weakened their ranks. Above all, they were opposed to the incomparably superior forces of the English. Under the circumstances the Faqīrs' struggle was bound to collapse. Still they deserve a place in the history of the country not for what they succeeded in doing, but for what they attempted to do. They championed in their own way the grievance and opposition of the people against colonial rule and its socio-economic implications. It was from their ranks that the first political deportations, so to say were made to the Andamans. In their methods and tactics they were at least the forerunners of some subsequent organizations seeking to emancipate the country from British rule.



## CHAPTER V

# THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT, THE INDIGO PLANTING SYSTEM AND THE RESUMPTION OF RENT-FREE LANDS

### I: THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT 1793

Against the background of the protracted acts of popular resistance, noted in the last two chapters, was made the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The suggestion for a permanent arrangement for collecting the land revenue had been made as early as the late seventies.<sup>1</sup> It had also been recommended by Parliament in 1784. The time and method of doing so, however, were necessarily left to the discretion of the Company's government in Bengal. Since Lord Cornwallis's arrival as Governor-General in 1787 a good deal of discussions took place on the subject in the official circles.<sup>2</sup> From these discussions the intentions and expectations of the framers of the measure may be inferred. While the main and explicit intention was to systematize and stabilize the collection of the land revenue, a no less important underlying consideration was to secure the adhesion of an influential group of people who would be tied to the regime by ropes of gold and who would largely look after the task of local governance, particularly the maintenance of "peace" and "security" in their respective areas. This latter attitude was naturally strengthened by the uprisings of the peasantry and the "incursions" of the Faqīrs on the one hand, and the part played by the zamindars-revenue-farmers like Rānī Bhavānī of Rajshahi in opposing them, on the other. Nothing demonstrates this underlying policy more clearly than the extraordinary powers with which the newly created "permanent" zamindars were invested, particularly the powers given them for raising their private forces in order to arrest, disarm and even kill the Faqīrs and others allied with them, and for which latter act they, the zamindars and their men, were not to be held responsible for murder.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion was made principally by Philip Francis, Hastings's deadly enemy in Council. See Ranjit Guha, *A Rule of Property in Bengal*, S. Gravenhage, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> See *Fifth Report* (Parl. Paper, 1812, VII), Appendices. Also W. W. Hunter, *Bengal Ms. Records*, Vol. I., London, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, pp. 106-107.

Ever since the acquisition of the *dīwānī* by the Company the land revenue had been farmed out to the highest bidders either annually or for a term of years.<sup>1</sup> These farmers of revenue were generally the *baniyas* of the English merchants<sup>2</sup> who had some influence with their masters and were more or less conversant with the latter's policies and purposes. By the very nature of this arrangement the *bania* farmers were led by a desire to make as much profit as possible over and above the sum stipulated by the government and as such they did all that they could to extract the last farthing from the peasantry of their respective localities. In fact their exactions and extortions were largely responsible for the peoples' revolts. When Cornwallis took over charge of the Governor-Generalship in 1787 the rapacity of the farmers, often in alliance with the highest officials of the Company, had not in any way abated. Yet in 1790 the new Governor-General farmed out the revenue for a term of ten years, instead of five years which had hitherto been the maximum period of such farming. His intention was to make this ten-yearly settlement permanent should the Court of Directors of the Company accord its approval to the proposed measure. But that intention was not adequately publicized in 1790, nor did Cornwallis wait for seeing the effects of his farming for a longer period. In fact he did not wait even for five years. In 1793, with the approval of the Court of Directors, he declared the settlement of 1790 permanent and made a number of regulations connected with this matter.

This was the Permanent Settlement of 1793. It meant that the existing farmers of revenue were to do the job of collecting the revenue permanently, and not for any term of years, and were to remain in possession of their "estates" as long as they paid to the government the sum of revenue stipulated in 1790. It also meant that the sum they had engaged themselves to pay was fixed in perpetuity and it could not presumably be altered or enhanced. Further, it perpetuated the old and by then much too obvious evil that though the government's demands upon the zamindars

<sup>1</sup> See generally R.B. Ramsbotham, *Studies in the land revenue history of Bengal, 1769-1787*, London, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. I., London, 1892, 395.

(farmers) were fixed, the latter were free to realize whatever amount they could from the ra'yats; for no limit was even indicated in this respect. The only vague understanding on the part of government was that the zamindars would levy according to the rates prevailing in the *parganas* (former revenue divisions). In fact the government had no knowledge of such *pargana* rates, nor did they bother to prepare a record of such rates as a possible check upon their creatures' (the zamindars') unlimited claims. On the contrary Cornwallis even did away with the former class of *pargana* officials, called *qānungos*, who were supposed to possess the records, or a knowledge, of their respective *paragana* rates. Thus were the newly created zamindars given a blank cheque for revenue collection.

This lacunae made wide room for the zamindars' extravagant and oppressive claims upon the ra'yats. Indeed the measure only reveals an undue haste on the part of the government. It is perhaps not unaccountable. Having participated in the loss of American colonies just before his assumption of office in Bengal, and now involved in a costly war with Mysore, while England herself in the throes of the Napoleonic wars, Lord Cornwallis was naturally eager to ensure a regular supply of a fixed revenue and to divert the task of maintaining peace within the Company's dominions and suppressing popular uprisings largely to a set of people whose self-interest would be a sure guarantee of their loyalty to the government. Thus it was that the 1790-farming was declared permanent without any recording of rights, without any survey of land and without even the fixation of boundaries of estates. On the contrary the government, only eager to ensure a regular collection of the revenue, invested the zamindar, first by regulation XVII of 1793, then by regulation VII of 1799 (*Haftam* Regulation) and finally by regulation V of 1812 (*Panjam* Regulation) with summary powers to distrain and sell the personal and movable property of the ra'yat and to evict him from the land for arrears of "rent." The zamindar was also allowed to have control of the local police called *chowkidārs* and, as already indicated, to maintain large bodies of armed men called *lāthials* in order to maintain "peace" and to enforce his claims not only upon

the ra'yats but also upon a competing zamindar.<sup>1</sup>

The above mentioned extraordinary powers were given to the zamindars on the faulty assumption, and this was the worst feature of the permanent settlement, that the zamindars were the proprietors of the estates (though this was denied by the government in the later part of the nineteenth century and asserted with equal emphasis by the zamindars). Under the Muslim rule the cultivators and the ra'yats were the actual proprietors of the lands under their respective possessions,<sup>2</sup> excepting a vague and theoretical ownership of the state which is very much coterminous with the modern concept of "sovereignty." By a single stroke of pen Cornwallis expropriated the entire body of cultivators and inhabitants of the land and reduced them to the position of mere serfs; while the revenue farmers, who were no more than contractors for realizing the revenue from the people, were overnight transformed into proprietors of vast areas for which they had undertaken to collect the revenue. Only twenty-seven years after Cornwallis's dispensation Charles Metcalfe, one of the ablest of the Company's servants and a subsequent Governor-General of India, rightly characterized the settlement as "the most sweeping act of oppression ever committed in any country, by which the landed property of the country had been transferred from the class of people entitled to it, to a set of Baboos, who have made their wealth by bribery and corruption."<sup>3</sup> From the position of owners the people became all of a sudden mere "tenants" and the land tax payable by them came to be called "rents." The act of expropriation was all the more unjust because the people had henceforth not even the right of tenancy or occupancy in their lands.<sup>4</sup> They could be, and were in

<sup>1</sup> See for some idea about this aspect of the matter *Minute of the Honourable F.J. Halliday, Lt. Governor of Bengal, on the state of the Police, and of Criminal Justice in the Lower Province of Bengal, (dated 30th April 1856)* London, 1857. Also see "The Zamindar and the Ryot", *The Calcutta Review*, No. VI, July-December 1846. pp. 305-353.

<sup>2</sup> *The Zemindary Settlement of Bengal (2 Vols.)*, Vol. I., Calcutta, 1879, Ch. II. The book was written anonymously, but it was known at the time that the author was a high official of the government. In the India Office (London) copy of the book (V 3443) the author's name is written in pencil as R.H. Hollingbery.

<sup>3</sup> J.W. Kaye, *Selections from the Papers of Metcalfe*, London, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Sixty-five years after the permanent settlement the government gave some limited occupancy rights to the ra'yats by Regulation X of 1859. This was extended and a transferable occupancy right was created by the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885.

fact, evicted from their lands at the zamindar's sweet will. The evil increased with the passage of time; for as the growth of population exerted increased pressure on land the zamindar became all the more prone to using the method of eviction as a means of increasing his demands by settling a new set of tenants on the lands.

A justification of the newly created zamindar's position, and of Cornwallis's settlement generally, has often been sought in the fact that during the Muslim rule also there were a number of zamindars in the country. This attempted justification, even if proved correct, would at the best only show that the British authorities adopted and worsened a supposedly existing evil; for there is no denying the fact that the practical operation of the permanent settlement was ruinous for the people in general, the agricultural population of the country. The fact is, however, that the zamindars under Muslim rule substantially differed both in their nature and powers from their namesakes under the permanent settlement.<sup>1</sup> Excepting a few border "zamindars" like the Rājā of Birbhum with whom special relationship existed, the zamindars under the Muslim rule, particularly during the Murshidabad *niyābat*, were only subordinate revenue collectors working under a class of higher revenue officials. Those zamindars were never recognized as proprietors of the lands and were divested of their charge whenever found deficient in their duties or oppressive in their conduct. It may be recalled that even Warren Hastings, when he set up the Committee of Circuit to farm out lands to the highest bidders for purposes of revenue collection in 1772, avowedly acted on the assumption that the individuals known as zamindars had never been treated during Muslim rule as proprietors of lands.<sup>2</sup> A perusal of the Committee of Circuit's proceedings shows that the existing zamindars did not consider themselves in any way proprietors of lands and readily submitted proposals and tendered bids with the others for obtaining contracts for realizing the revenue from their respective areas. Secondly, the new zamindars were not the lineal descendants or

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I., p. 554-557.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 51.

natural successors of the old ones, but mostly a new class of mercantile speculators who had amassed wealth by working as agents and brokers of the English merchants and who had appeared in the arena of land-revenue collection as a form of business by replacing the old zamindars in successive auctions of land-revenue held between 1770 and 1790. But the most important distinction lay in the relationship of the new zamindars with the peasants and cultivators of the soil. The former zamindars had no power and no means to make arbitrary demands upon the ra'yats or to evict him from the land. During the Muslim rule we often hear of the eviction of zamindars, never of the ra'yats. The new zamindars thus differed from the old ones in origin, in the nature of the new proprietorship of land with which they were invested, in the extraordinary powers with which they were now endowed, and above all in their relationship with the generality of the people within their respective charges, who were reduced to the position of serfs and were made completely dependent on their will.

Ever since the permanent settlement, however, persons connected with the system and their protagonists have spoken about its "merits." That the new class of zamindars proved to be the most loyal and trustworthy of the Company's subjects is well known. They did their most, at least during the greater part of the nineteenth century, to make the Company's authority effective in the rural districts. During the revolts of 1857 they generally prevented the spread of the risings in the Bengal districts.<sup>1</sup> But the expectations of the framers of the measure that the zamindars would prove themselves improving landlords, if made permanent in their possessions and relieved of periodical revisions in the demands on them, turned out to be sad miscalculations. It was also soon recognized by the government that the powers and privileges given to the zamindars were ruinous for the people. The baneful effects of the permanent settlement upon the people and the government's disillusionment about its outcome are revealed through three broad sets of undisputed facts. First, from

<sup>1</sup> See for instance *The Mutinies and the People*, by a Hindu, Calcutta, 1858.

the very beginning of the nineteenth century when new and further territories were acquired the Company set their face resolutely against the extension of the system to those other areas. Thus on 1 February 1811 the Court of Directors firmly prohibited the extension of the permanent settlement "either in Cuttuck or any other unsettled Province."<sup>1</sup> The same prohibition was reiterated on 27 November of the same year with regard to "the Ceded and Conquered Provinces."<sup>2</sup> Throughout the later part of the nineteenth century the zamindars insisted in an organized way on extending the permanent settlement to the other parts of British India. The government discountenanced the proposal and by its famous resolution on the land revenue policy in 1902 categorically condemned the permanent settlement and refused to extend it to any other of the British Indian provinces.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, since at least the second quarter of the nineteenth century the ra'yats of different places, particularly the Muslim ra'yats, renewed their struggle against the zamindari system. These struggles sometimes took the form of revolts against specific oppressions and wrongs, and sometimes they found expression through socio-religious movements. Thirdly, and largely on account of repeated popular unrest and agrarian disturbances, the government came forward in the second half of the nineteenth century to pass some remedial enactments to mitigate the evils of the system to some extent. Act X of 1859 and the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 proclaim aloud the blunder of the permanent settlement on the one hand, and government's belated realization of this fact, on the other.

The evils of the system, particularly those arising from the absence of any limit on the zamindar's claims on the ra'yats, and his unscrupulous exercise of the summary power of distraint, arrest and eviction of the ra'yats, were evident right from the

<sup>1</sup> Extract Revenue Letter to Bengal, 1 Feb. 1811, paras 15-40, *Papers Relating to the Revenue, Police and Criminal Justice, etc.*, Vol. I., London, 1820, (S.O.A.S. Acc. No. 21442), pp.2-4.

<sup>2</sup> Extract Revenue Letter to Bengal, 27 Nov. 1811. paras 2-4, *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution of the Governor General of India in Council, No. 1, dated the 16th January 1902, *Gazette of India*, 18 Jan. 1902. Also reproduced as Chapter I of *Land Revenue Policy of the India Government*, published by order of the Governor General of India in Council, Calcutta, 1902. (Containing related reports from different provincial governments).

beginning of the nineteenth century. The zamindar's will to distrain and evict was sufficient; under the law no investigation into the merits of the case was necessary. How serious and widespread had become the practice even during the first decade of the nineteenth century may be glimpsed from reports of the district officials of the time. "The general nature of this evil has been aggravated", wrote the Judge and Magistrate of Dinajpur in 1811, "by the circumstance of the very lowest zemnidary officials acting as attaching agents, while the Zamindar, in some cases, is himself attending to give the appearance of all its rigour to the attachment of his agent, but keeping himself in the background, equally to avoid responsibility and to obviate the hopeless case of any appeal to his moderation."<sup>1</sup> The Judge-Magistrate further noted that in his district the daily prisoners numbered some five thousand, of whom he attributed one thousand "to the illegal duress" of money-lenders (*mahājans*) for debt, five hundred to the usurped restraint upon people on suspicion of criminal offences and the remaining three thousand prisoners "to the illegal duress of sundry kinds by the Zamindaree Amla upon the bodies of their Ryots, in order to compel some kind of engagement from them which may be hoped to give a shadow of justice to their future distraints."<sup>2</sup> He also observed that this duress was "not less irredressible than the distraint", for the victim was "obliged to sacrifice his pursuit of justice in search of his diurnal sustenance."

Similar gloomy pictures were drawn by the magistrates of other districts. "I have reason to believe that the Zemindars are guilty of great and heavy oppressions in their general transactions with the Ryots, and that the powers they possess of distraining the property of their tenants for alleged balances, is one of the principal sources of these oppressions", wrote the Collector of Burdwan on 10 September 1811.<sup>3</sup> "I have not the slightest doubt that considerable abuses and oppressions are committed by the Zemindars, & c. under the powers at present vested in them", ran

<sup>1</sup> Dinajpur Judge and Magistrate's (W. Leycester) letter to the Court of *Sadr Diwānī 'Adālat*, 29 March 1811, *Papers Relating to the Revenue and Police etc.*, *op.cit.*, 217-218.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-224.



the report of the Dhaka Collector dated 20 November 1811.<sup>1</sup> The Collector of Mymensingh wrote to the Board of Revenue on 20 September as follows: "The power the landholder possesses over his tenants, by virtue of his estate, renders them practically subject to many irregularities which the laws will not willingly notice, from its being necessary that a certain degree of subordination shall prevail: still, if that power be supported by the legal delegation of authority to dispose of the property of the individual, without reference to the Courts of Justice, we ought not to be surprised if it be made the ready instrument of abuse.... We can never know of all the crimes that are committed, and can seldom punish all we do know."<sup>2</sup> "The instances of extortion committed by the landholders, and that with impunity, are innumerable and well authenticated", wrote the Collector of Nadia.<sup>3</sup> A few graphic instances of how the powers given to the zamindars by the Regulations were exercised were mentioned by the Collector of Bhagalpur as follows:<sup>4</sup>

A Ryot is probably indebted to the Zemindar, ten, fifteen or twenty rupees. The Zemindar attaches, of his own authority, property to the amount of one or two hundred rupees (this often occurs). He gives in a list of this property to the officer empowered to sell, be he Commissioner, Cauzee, or any other: this latter, without any previous enquiry into the real state of the case, sells off the whole at a price infinitely below the real value; and though the surplus be refunded to the Ryot, still it is so little as to render him utterly incapable of setting himself up again. Nay, I believe that this vexatious sale (to call it by no harsher name) is sometimes converted into a source of emolument to the distrainer and to the seller, as it enables them, by a fictitious purchase, to buy things for their own use, at a price far below the real value: it may also serve as a vehicle for private resentment, on the part of a Zemindar, to a substantial Ryot, against whom he may entertain ill will. To this assumed position it may be objected, our established courts of justice offers redress. I admit this: but with this reservation, that all law-suits involve considerable risk at the best, and certainly great delay and expense, which, in my opinion, are equally destructive to the well-being of the Ryots.

Another, and a more grievous source of oppression, will be found in the following statement. A landholder possesses a estate compact in all its parts save one: this one part involves a boundary dispute with a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>3</sup> Nadia Collector's letter, 29 June 1811, *ibid.*, 235-236.

<sup>4</sup> Bhagalpur Collector's letter, 9 September 1811, *ibid.*, 222-223.

neighbouring landholder. Each party obtains and retains possession the best way he can. Each party looking upon himself as the rightful proprietor, engages his Ryot, under assurances of protection, to cultivate this disputed land. When the time comes for the collection of the rents, each party makes good his own demand upon the Ryots indiscriminately: hence the Ryots have to pay double rent. This is what comes under the vulgar denomination of screwing the Ryots....

A third case is this. A substantial Ryot engages with a Zemindar or proprietor, sometimes verbally, sometimes on a vague indefinite engagement, to cultivate some land for a fixed sum. He has done so for a year, probably two: he then finds that the produce is inadequate to his trouble and expense, and discontinues. Notwithstanding his declining it, the Zemindar, at the time of collecting the rents, still conceives this man to be his Ryot, because he had once cultivated his land, and on his refusing to pay the demand, his property is immediately distrained, and sold by the native officer, as before mentioned, without any previous enquiry.

These reports were submitted on the eve of passing the Regulation V of 1812 which, instead of providing any relief to the ra'yats, further strengthened the zamindar's hands and his means of distraining and oppressing them. This was so because the government were still eager to ensure the zamindars' attachment to the regime and felt that it was still "necessary", as the Collector of Mymensingh had candidly conceded, "that a certain degree of subordination shall prevail" among the populace through the instrumentality of the zamindars. In fact the government did not interfere with the arbitrary dealings of the zamindars till the second half of the nineteenth century when the mounting agrarian discontent and unrest rendered further indifference to the condition of the masses hazardous for the government. With the extraordinary powers at their disposal and with no restraint on their claims on the ra'yats, the zamindars continued to exact not only increasing "rents" but also numerous illegal cesses under every conceivable pretexts. An official enquiry conducted in 1871-72 revealed that the zamindars of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa used to collect, even after the legislation of 1859, illegal cesses and duties under twentyfive to thirty different heads and that the amount thus exacted from the ra'yats far exceeded the rent of the land.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. XLVI (Papers regarding the collection of illegal cesses and duties in Bengal), Calcutta, 1873.

Thus the permanent settlement introduced, by state legislation, a system of feudalism and serfdom hitherto unknown in Bengal's history. While by its very nature the system entailed hardships and misery for the people in general, the Muslims had to bear the brunt of it for a number of reasons. In the first place, the zamindars in the permanently settled areas were almost exclusively from among those *bania* Hindus who had cooperated with the English in overthrowing the Muslim rule, had participated in their work of exactions and exploitation for a period of at least quarter of a century after Plassey; and now, largely as rewards for such services, were recognized as owners of the vast landed estates over which they had merely obtained the contract in 1790 to collect the revenue. This very circumstance of their emergence and establishment at the top of the society meant a lot for the Muslim population as a whole. This was all the more so because the vast majority of the ra'yats, particularly in the eastern and more truly agricultural districts of Bengal, were Muslims. Thus even if they did not suffer as Muslims, they definitely fell victims to the evils of the system as the majority and subdued population.

The matter did not however stop there. It was not infrequently that the zamindar allowed his religious and communal sentiments to dominate his attitude towards his Muslim tenantry. Often they were the objects of ridicule and annoyances over the performance of their religious duties and rites. Generally the zamindar acted as the champion of his religion, organizing the Hindu *pūjas* in his locality, patronizing the Brahmans and Pandits, and furthering the cause of Hinduism in various other ways. Such activities on the zamindar's part had at least the effect of making the Hindu ra'yats within his zamindari look up to him as their patron and leader in religious matters. There was perhaps nothing wrong or unusual in it on the face of it; but the zamindar used to levy in the name of such a *pūja*, a *srādha*, a marriage and a host of other Hindu socio-religious ceremonies a number of extra taxes and cesses not only from the Hindus, but also from Muslims and even Christian converts who were invariably compelled to pay these taxes which were not only illegal and oppressive but

also irreligious from their point of view.<sup>1</sup> And as the Muslim ra'yats generally objected to these irreligious and oppressive imposts they became the special targets of the zamindar's wrath and vindictiveness. The official enquiry of 1871-72, alluded to above, further revealed that the zamindar's practice of exacting illegal and extra taxes from the tenantry was more extensive and extortionate in the Muslim majority districts of eastern Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

In the second place, the zamindar usually left the task of collection to various agents such as the *nā'ib*, the *gomastah*, the *hāldār*, etc., all of whom recruited from his own community. Frequently he also farmed out his estate to those who would pay him the maximum profit over and above the government dues; and the latter in turn often let out their assignment to others on similar terms, "till farm within farm became the order of the day each resembling a screw upon screw, the last coming down on the tenant with the pressure of them all."<sup>3</sup> These intermediary lease and sub-lease holders were also generally Hindus. They and the zamindar's agents had their offices and stations (*kāchhāris*) in almost every village, and together with their retinue of club-men (*lāthiāls*) subjected the Muslim tenantry to awe and abject subordination. They "squeezed out of the unfortunate cultivators" on various pretexts as much as they could, thus impoverishing them to the extreme.<sup>4</sup>

To meet the demands of these men as also those of the zamindar the poor ra'yat had often to borrow money from a class of money-lenders called *mahājans*, again Hindus, who had amassed money under the patronage of the Company' commercial residents in the different districts, the zamindars and their agents. The rate of interest charged by these *mahājans* was very extortionate, often as high as 50 to 75 percent in the case of cash loans and 100 to 150 percent in the case of advance of crops. Thus

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings of the General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries, September 4-7, 1855*, Calcutta, 1855, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. XLVI, Calcutta, 1873, pp. 215-219, 229-233, 237-244, 260-261.

<sup>3</sup> Baden-Powell, *op.cit.*, Vol. I., 407.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Select Committee* (House of Commons), 1832, Vol. III. (Minutes of Evidence), p. 23.

a large number of Hindus, either as zamindars, or as their agents and employees, or as intermediary lease and sub-lease holders, or as money-lenders were generally connected with the system itself. Even those who were not so connected were understandably treated with consideration as they had a community of religious and social bonds with the operators of the system. Such, however, was not at all the case with the Muslim ra'yats who stood helpless and ruined under the zamindari system.

There were of course a few Muslims who, out of sheer need to save themselves from utter ruin, had entered the zamindar's service; some established themselves as zamindars in the middle of the nineteenth century; but this did not much alter the general pattern of the situation. In fact, while Sirāj al-Daulah's fall was in a large measure the result of the Hindu mercantile group's alliance with the English, the permanent settlement marked the practical consummation of that alliance. The maintenance of the zamindar's absolute hold over his tenantry, and through it the government's power over the rural areas, was thus a settled policy with the Company's administration. It was therefore not just an accident that whenever there was a combination or rising of the ra'yats against the zamindari system, the Company's government stood in defence of the latter. The peculiar situation of the Muslim ra'yats indicated above also explains why it was they and not the others who spearheaded, in fact organized and conducted the various revolts against the system in the nineteenth century. The socio-religious movement organized by Titu Mir in southern Bengal and the *Farā'idi* movement of eastern Bengal were in some respects the Muslim ra'yats' struggle for emancipation from the oppressions of the zamindari and indigo planting systems.<sup>1</sup> Even the indigo revolts of the early sixties and the agrarian revolts of the seventies were largely the work of the Muslim ra'yats.

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, Chaps. VIII-X.

## II. THE INDIGO PLANTING SYSTEM

An equally disastrous by-product of the Company's rule was the indigo planting system. The British planters used to cultivate indigo in their American and West Indian colonies. When these were lost to them in the last quarter of the eighteenth century they turned their attention to their newly acquired dominion, Bengal and Bihar, which henceforth became their principal field of indigo cultivation. Initially the English planters established themselves in the country as lease-holders from the Hindu zamindars who, with a view to staying in Calcutta for undertaking commercial enterprises, were eager to farm out their zamindari to the English planters. The latter were however allowed to hold lands in the Company's dominions by an Act of 1837. Since then they began to hold zamindari in their own names.

From the very start the cultivation of indigo by the English planters was an exceedingly oppressive system forced upon the *ra'yats*. The planters adopted the investment methods developed earlier by the Company's commercial residents. Like the latter, the planters, through their agents and *gomastahs*, mostly Hindus, made advances to the peasants and bound them, often forcibly, to cultivate indigo plants on their lands and to supply these to the planters at a stipulated rate which was invariably far below the market price. Generally indigo was taken from the *ra'yats* at about rupees 4 a *maund* (approximately 90 pounds) while the market price varied from rupees ten to thirty. The planters forced the *ra'yats* to sow indigo on the very best lands possessed by them and marked for food crops. They were also compelled to cultivate indigo on a larger scale than that actually stipulated for, for in measuring and marking out the lands for the cultivation of indigo the planter used a standard of measurement which was usually one fourth to one half larger than the normal one. The *ra'yat* was also cheated by fraudulent and wrong measurement of the indigo bundles at the time of delivery. By such means the poor *ra'yat* was forced to cultivate indigo, often at the cost of abandoning the cultivation of food crops, and that too at a crushing loss, on a larger scale and on his best fields. Even then he did not actually get the amount that was promised him; for out of the nominal

amount that was his due he had to pay gratuities to the planter's gomastahs and other employees who had ample means of harassing him and of making false entries in the "contract book."

The evil was all the more crushing because there was no question of freedom of contract on the ra'yat's part. In general he was forced to accept an advance, and in case of refusal, false and forged entries were made against him in the contract book and his lands were forcibly ploughed up and sowed by the planter's men. He was not also allowed to make up his accounts and pay off his debts, real or forged. Every contrivance and trickery was employed for keeping the ra'yat under perpetual bondage and debt. Once a ra'yat took an advance of even a paltry amount he was never afterwards a free man, nor were his sons and grandsons, for the real or contrived obligation and debt was transferred to his son.<sup>1</sup> Speaking in 1830 about this practice of forced contract one of the Judges of the *Ṣadr Dīwānī 'Adālat* stated:<sup>2</sup>

The contract formed with the ryot is sometimes not in writing, is frequently insufficiently defined, and is generally extremely unfavourable to the ryot, rendering him, in fact, a slave to the establishment with which he has once engaged, and thereby preventing an open and fair competition to all, which could afford the only true and effectual remedy. Too much also, it is said, is entrusted to dewans, naibs, gomastahs, and numerous other employees by the planter, who, I fear, looks but little beyond the quantity of the land procured for him, and does not pay sufficient attention to the means by which it has been obtained.

The "greatest evil" of the system, wrote another equally responsible officer, was "the utter impracticability" on the part of the ra'yats to "free themselves should they once have the misfortune to receive indigo advances, either by their own free will or compulsion."<sup>3</sup> He further noted that even if the ra'yat had the means of paying off his balances, there was no legal process by which he could compel the planter to settle his account and give his discharge. "The planter will not receive the money, and the ryot generally finds himself reluctantly compelled to continue the cultivation."<sup>4</sup> Other evils to which the ra'yats were subjected,

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indigo Commission* (1860), para 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Papers Relating to the Settlement of Europeans in India*, Calcutta, 1854, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

further wrote the officer,<sup>1</sup>

are their being forced by threats and ill usage to enter into indigo engagements; their having other or more lands than those contracted for taken from them by the indigo servants, and being thus unable to raise other crops intended for the support of their families; their having entered into engagements, perhaps voluntarily, with one factory, and being obliged to execute engagements with another for the same lands, or although they have no concern with any factory, still having their lands forcibly sown without any pretence or colour of right. These are evils all of too common occurrence, and which it is not in the power of any magistrate to prevent.

This system of ruinous oppression and mass slavery, so to say, was maintained by sheer force. The East India Company's police and criminal administration, as already mentioned, were hopelessly inefficient and corrupt. The indigo planters, like the zamindars, used to maintain large bodies of armed men who were practically let loose on the helpless ra'yats. Often a recalcitrant ra'yat was seized, beaten, brought to the factory, confined and even put to death. His houses and belongings, and at times the whole village, were set on fire. His family members, including ladies and children, were not spared degradation and punishment. "The cases brought to our notice are so numerous and so well-authenticated", observed the Indigo Commission in 1860, "as to make us apprehend that the practice of imprisoning individuals in the factory or its out-houses is of common occurrence."<sup>2</sup> The indigo planters, as Englishmen, were precluded by law from the jurisdiction of the Company's criminal courts in the districts, and it was physically and financially impossible on the part of the ra'yat to bring an action against the planters in the Supreme Court at Calcutta which alone had jurisdiction over Englishmen for acts committed in the mufassal.

The melancholy facts noted by the Indigo Commission as of common occurrence did not relate only to the period immediately preceding the setting up of the Commission. Indeed the abuses and oppression connected with the indigo planting system had been in full swing since at least the beginning of the nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-118.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Indigo Commission*, para 94.



century. As early as 1810 it was officially recognized, of course without any remedial measures being then adopted, that the planters (a) illegally confined the ra'yats, specially in stocks, with a view to recovering the balances alleged to be due from them; (b) committed acts of violence occasioning the death of "natives"; (c) engaged, with armed men, in violent affrays and (d) inflicted illegal punishment on the ra'yats.<sup>1</sup> The same picture emerges from the official records of a decade later on. For instance, speaking about the evils the Chief Judge of the Dhaka Circuit Court wrote on 7 August 1823 as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Some of the indigo planters and their Native servants, with a view to enforce their advances to the ryots for cultivation of the indigo plant, frequently have recourse to the most violent measures, without the consent of the landed proprietors, to take forcible possession of their lands, and to seize and confine the cultivators according to their option, which generally produce affrays, assaults and homicides in the mofussil...

The same thing was confirmed by the Officiating Judge of Circuit in the following year. In his report of the first session of 1824 he, speaking about "Dacca-Jalalpur" (Fāridpur), stated that sets of *lāthiāls* (clubmen) were "attached to almost every indigo factory, for the purpose of protecting its property and cultivation, but more especially to enforce payment of outstanding balances from the ryots, to secure and hold in seisin their crops, and not infrequently to lay hold and carry off the produce of neighbouring cultivators."<sup>3</sup> The same state of affairs obtained in other districts also. In 1830 one of the Judges of the *Ṣadr Dīwānī 'Adālat* who had previously been magistrate of Nadia wrote thus:<sup>4</sup>

As magistrate of Nuddeah I had some opportunity of witnessing the scenes of contention and strife ensuing from the various and conflicting interests to which that competition gave rise. The orders which then prevailed in that and the neighbouring indigo districts have, I believe, nothing abated to the present day, and they are certainly such as to call for the serious interposition of Government. From the moment of ploughing the land and sowing the seed to the season of reaping the crop, the whole district is thrown into a state of ferment. The most daring breaches of the

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, J.P. Grant's minute.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Court of Director's Judicial letter to Governor-General-in-Council, 6 August 1828, *Papers Relating to the Settlement of Europeans in India*, Calcutta, 1854, 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in the Court of Director's Judicial Letter to India, 10 April 1832, *ibid.*, 120-121.

peace are committed in the face of our police officers, and even of the magistrate himself. In utter defiance of all law and authority, large bodies of armed men are avowedly entertained for the express purpose of taking or retaining forcible possession of lands or crops. Violent affrays, or rather pitched battles ensue, attended with bloodshed and homicide. Our police establishments are corrupted, and the darogahs are said notoriously to be in the pay of the planters, European or Native, to secure their good offices. Private assassinations occasionally occur, and forgery and perjury have their full sway; in short every species of crime is committed....

The evil was aggravated by the partiality often shown by magistrates and collectors towards the planters. Often the bias of an English magistrate was towards his countrymen, noted the Indigo Commission, "whom he asked to his own table or met in the hunting field, or whose houses he personally visited."<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 1828 the Court of Directors noted an occasion on which the acting magistrate of Dacca-Jalalpur "was manifestly chargeable with neglect of duty, in regard to complaints made to him against an indigo planter and his dependents; instead of instituting an immediate enquiry and preventing injustice, he contented himself with ordering that the petitions should be recorded."<sup>2</sup> The planters had also powerful patrons at Calcutta who could procure the direct interference of government in their favour. Thus in the early twenties when the Dhaka Court of Circuit gave certain orders on the indigo planters of that locality regarding the maintenance of law and order, an application on their behalf was made by Messrs Palmer and Co., and other principal mercantile houses in Calcutta, and the interference of government was readily obtained with no longer delay than three days. The Governor-General-in-Council directed the *Nizāmat 'Adālat* to give such immediate instructions to the magistrate as should prevent him from giving effect to his orders.<sup>3</sup>

The report of the Indigo Commission and the minutes of evidence recorded by them are replete with harrowing tales of injustice and oppression on the peasantry. On receipt of the

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indigo Commission*, para 119.

<sup>2</sup> Court of Director's Judicial Letter to India, 6 August 1828, para 16, *Papers Relating to the Settlement of Europeans in India*, *op.cit.*, 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63.

Commission's report the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir J.P. Grant, recorded a minute in which he put the state of affairs in a nutshell as follows:<sup>1</sup>

...it cannot be said that the character of the abuses to which the system of Bengal indigo manufacture is subject is essentially altered now from examples that have occurred within the last 18 months of each one of the 4 heads under which the offences connected with the indigo, as prevalent in 1810, are classified... Of the first head, the fatal case of Seetul Tarafdar is a very melancholy one. Of the 2nd head, the case of the men whom Mr. Bainbridge, the Acting Joint Magistrate of Backergunge, released from the godowns of a planter, is but one of many instances. Of the third head, the fatal attack on the village of Mullickpur, wherein one man was killed and 3 men were wounded, reported by the Commissioner of Nadia, (except that the attack was not made upon a rival factory) is a strong instance; the more remarkable as occurring long after the rapture between a planter and raiyat had attracted public attention to the indigo question, and when all police authorities were on the alert to repress disorder. Of the fourth head, the case which was made matter of complaint against the Magistrate, for sentencing a factory servant to imprisonment for one month, for dragging a man to the factory and flogging him severely, because he would not plough for the planter, will serve as an example. How frequently the peace of the country is still broken by offences connected with indigo, committed by one party or the other, will be seen from the long list of 54 such cases that occurred within the last five years in the single district of Nadia, and from the latter part of the list of serious cases given by the Honourable Mr. Eden, both of which will be found in the Appendix of the Report. The sole cause of all such offences is the system under which indigo plant is required by the manufacturer, without paying nearly the cost of its production to the raiyat. The evidence taken by the Commission fully proves that the "habit" denounced on the 22nd July 1810 was still the habit of 1859.

Under such a system "not a chest of indigo reached England", rightly observed E.W.L. Tower, once a district Magistrate in Faridpur, "without being stained with human blood."<sup>2</sup> "I adopt it in the fullest and broadest sense of its meaning", he further avowed before the Commission, "as the result of my experience as Magistrate in the Faridpur District. I have seen several ryots sent in to me as a Magistrate who have been speared through the body. I have had ryots before me who have been shot down by Mr. Forde (a planter). I have put on record, how others have been

<sup>1</sup> Minute by Sir J.P. Grant on the Report of the Indigo Commission, 1860, paras 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Indigo Commission (Evidence), 163.

first speared and then kidnapped, and such system of carrying on indigo, I consider to be a system of blood-shed.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus under the twin grinding machine of the zamindari and the indigo planting system the Bengal peasantry was crushed and ruined. Like the zamindari system, again, the brunt of the indigo planting system also fell upon the Muslims in particular, if only because the chief field of indigo cultivation were the districts of Dhaka, Faridpur, Bakarganj (including Khulna)<sup>2</sup>, Pabna, Nadia, Murshidabad and Rajshahi where, unfortunately, the vast majority of the cultivators were Muslims.

To worsen the situation, there was, since the twenties of the nineteenth century, a close cooperation between the Hindu zamindars and English indigo planters. This cooperation reached its climax in the thirties of the century so much so that even Raja Rammohan Roy and Dwarkanath Thakur, who are generally credited with having had “progressive” and “liberal” outlooks, advocated the settlement of English indigo planters in the country as landlords saying that this would advance the country’s “progress” and “enlightenment.”<sup>3</sup> It is surprising that these Hindu leaders made such unreserved recommendation on behalf of the planters notwithstanding the fact that the evils of the planting system and the plight of the rural population under it had by that time been too manifest to escape their notice. Needless to say that their community of interests, as landlords, with the indigo planters and the prospect of furthering those interests by a close cooperation with the latter transcended all other considerations including any show of sympathy for the suffering millions. It may be noted that it was in pursuance of such evidence tendered by Rammohan Roy and Dwarkanath Thakur that the government, by a legislation in 1837, permitted English indigo planters to own and possess landed estates in the country. In the following year (1838) the Hindu zamindars and the English indigo planters

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Khulna was made a separate district in 1884.

<sup>3</sup> See the evidence tendered by these leaders in the *Papers Relating to the Settlement of Europeans in India*, *op.cit.*

organized themselves into a "Landholders' Society."<sup>1</sup> Two years afterwards the planters themselves formed an association of their own. In 1843 the Landholders' Society was transformed into a sort of political organization under the name of "Bengal British India Society." This society and the Indigo Planters' Association continued to work in close cooperation. From 1843 to 1845 William Theobald, the president of the Indigo Planters' Association, was also the president of the Bengal British India Society.<sup>2</sup>

This alignment of the zamindars and the indigo planters vis-a-vis the ra'yats placed the latter in a peculiarly unfortunate situation. It removed at least one indirect source of relief for the ra'yats, namely, the mutual jealousy and quarrels among the planters and zamindars. Particularly, since the formation of the Indigo Planters' Association in 1840 the planters virtually portioned out the planting districts amongst themselves and ceased interfering with one another's "jurisdiction." The result was, as the Lieutenant-Governor observed, "anything but good for the raiyat as a grower of indigo plant. When he stood in the midst of rival manufacturers, many of them at feud with each other, he had some refuge from oppression or vexation under any one; and there was some check upon planters in their relation with raiyats."<sup>3</sup> This indirect relief now ceased to exist. It was the existence of this peculiar system of indigo feudalism which made it possible for the planters to establish their monopoly of indigo and to force the ra'yats to supply indigo plants at a ruinously nominal rate, when the prices of agricultural produce had "doubled or nearly doubled."<sup>4</sup>

Early in the fifties there was some estrangement between the zamindars and the English indigo planters over a proposed legislation for bringing European residents in the mufassal under the jurisdiction of the East India Company's criminal courts. The Hindu zamindars supported the proposed legislation because it

<sup>1</sup> "Prospectus of the Landholders' Society", *Friend of India*, 15 March 1838, Vol. IV., p. 105; also *Englishman*, 21 March 1838, Vol. VII., 548-549.

<sup>2</sup> See M.M. Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1857*, Chittagong, 1965, 170-178.

<sup>3</sup> Minute by Sir J.P. Grant, *op.cit.*, para 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

would place them at par with the planters in the mufassal courts.<sup>1</sup> The latter, on the other hand, opposed it on the ground of the acknowledged corruption and inefficiency of the mufassal courts and the indefinite nature of the law to be administered to the Englishmen.<sup>2</sup> In view of this opposition the legislation in question was postponed.<sup>3</sup> As a sequel to this so-called "Black Acts" controversy the Hindu zamindars formed in 1851 the "British Indian Association" from which Englishmen were excluded.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding this estrangement between the two classes of landholders, they continued to have one thing in common, namely, a cold apathy towards the ra'yats. This was illustrated soon enough, in 1854, when the government proposed a legislation for the more "effectual suppression of affrays concerning the possession of property." The bill sought to punish not only the actual participants in affrays, but also the employers of *lāthiāls*. As this would strike at the very root of the zamindars' and the planters' practice of maintaining and employing armed men, both of them combined to oppose the bill which was dropped.<sup>5</sup> Thus the rigours of the indigo planting system with all its attendant injustice and oppression upon the ra'yats continued unabated till the end of the fifties of the nineteenth century when a series of peasants' revolts against the system, known as the "Indigo Revolt", led to the appointment of a commission of enquiry and the adoption of certain measures which mitigated some of the worst evils connected with the system.

### III: THE RESUMPTION OF RENT-FREE LANDS

Another measure which was somewhat related to the Permanent Settlement and which had a particularly harmful effect

<sup>1</sup> See the zamindars' memorial in *Ind. Leg. Cons.*, 10 May 1850, No. 72; also Ramgopal Ghosh, *Remarks on the Black Acts etc.*, Calcutta, 1851.; M.M. Ali, *op.cit.*, 177-179., see also *infra*, chapter XVII.

<sup>2</sup> See Memorials of the British inhabitants, *Ind. Leg. Cons.*, 10 May 1850, Nos. 43-62.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos., 73-77; also 30 May 1850, No. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Friend of India*, 27 November 1851, Vol. XVIII, 755-756; also *Rules of the British Indian Association*, Calcutta, 1851.

<sup>5</sup> See *Petition of the British Indian Association on the Bill for the more effectual suppression of Affrays, etc.*, Calcutta, 1854; also *The Affray Bill and the Criminal Administration of Bengal*, by a Member of the British Indian Association, Calcutta, 1854. For the planters' opposition see *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India*, Vol. 1., 1854-1855, column 84.

upon the Muslims was the resumption and assessment of "rent-free" lands.<sup>1</sup> This was so not because they were singled out as its object, but because the ways and methods by which it was carried out affected them the more adversely under the circumstances. Since the beginning of Muslim rule in the land it had been the practice of the rulers to grant lands free of tax or any other demands on them to persons of religious and intellectual eminence, to other individuals for specific services to the state or society, and towards the establishment and maintenance of mosques, madrasas and similar institutions of public benefit. Such grants were obviously various in nature and they bore different appellations according to the purposes, individuals or institutions for which these were made.<sup>2</sup> Usually these grants were made by the rulers themselves or, subject to their authority and approval, by provincial governors, ministers or similar high officials. With the weakening of the central authority the power of making such grants was exercised by provincial governors and even by subordinate officials in the revenue department without any reference to the ruler.

The ruler had, consistently with his position as the granting authority, also the power to review or revoke a grant if the circumstances of the case justified such action. In the history of the Mughal period we have occasional instances of renewal or reduction in the size of a grant or even revocation of a particular grant by a succeeding ruler. In general, however, the grants were in the nature of trusts and were meant to be perpetual. Grants to charitable, religious and educational institutions were manifestly so; so were also those to learned and religious men whose descendants customarily continued to render educational and religious services to the society. It may be recalled that the educational system of the time in particular was based as much on

<sup>1</sup> The strictly correct rendering of the term *lakharaj*, by which these grants were known, should be "tax-free" lands, *kharaaj* meaning land-tax. Under the changed notion after the permanent settlement, as mentioned earlier, land-tax came to be termed "rent" and hence "rent-free" came to be generally used and understood as such.

<sup>2</sup> As late as the close of the nineteenth century Khundkar Fuzli Rubbee identified, on the basis of the *Ain-i-Akbari* and other sources some 15 kinds of grants made specifically to Muslims, 3 kinds to non-Muslims and 9 kinds commonly to both Muslims and non-Muslims. See his *Origin of the Musalmans of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1895, 59-60.

institutions as it centred round individual scholarly families. Grants to such people therefore continued to be enjoyed by their descendants from generation to generation without any interference by the state. Even Lord Cornwallis recognized at the time of making the permanent settlement that *Aima*, *Altamgha* and *Madad-i-Ma'āsh* grants were perpetual.<sup>1</sup> In Bengal a large number of Muslim educational establishments, mosques and scholarly families were supported by such grants of rent-free lands.

Shortly after the acquisition of the *dīwānī* in 1765 the East India Company's administrators turned their attention to the *jāgīr* and rent-free lands. As already noted a good deal of *jāgīr* lands in Dhaka and Faridpur districts belonging to a number of Muslim families connected with the *nawwāra* and *topkhāna* establishments were resumed in the late sixties.<sup>2</sup> In the seventies Warren Hastings took some steps to have an inventory of rent-free lands in Bengal and Bihar.<sup>3</sup> During the discussions preceding the conclusion of the permanent settlement the subject was not lost sight of; and at the time of making that settlement Lord Cornwallis specifically reserved the government's right to investigate the validity of rent-free holdings and to resume those that proved invalid. This shows not only that Cornwallis was aware of the existence of a considerable amount of rent-free lands in Bengal and Bihar, but also that what he was doing was essentially a revenue settlement based mainly on guess work rather than a land settlement based on proper survey, recording of rights and preparation of rent-rolls. Hence he was careful to keep the way open for the government to raise further revenue from lands hitherto not subject to assessment and therefore, understandably, not included in the zamindars' (revenue farmers') farms.

It was this policy of falling back on the rent-free lands as a means of augmenting the land revenue that distinguishes the new rulers' resumption proceedings from the occasional review or

<sup>1</sup> *Aima* grants were made to the *imāms* of mosques, *Altamgha* to distinguished persons for particular services and *Madad-i-Ma'āsh* grants were made as sustenance allowance for scholars and religious men.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 36, 38.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Amini Commission Report*, 1778, B.M. Add. Mss. 29086.



revocation of such grants by the rulers in the previous period. The British administrators did not undertake the proceedings with a view to ascertaining whether this or that particular trust had been diverted from its original purposes or was being misused, but primarily to finding faults with the titles of all the holders in general in order to create a *rationale* for resuming those lands. Beginning from Sir John Shore's famous minute of 18 June 1789 wherein he made the simple arithmetical calculation that even at the rate of half a rupee per *bighā* (approximately 2000 sq. yards) the assessment of rent-free lands in Bengal would fetch an annual revenue of some 35 lakhs of rupees (35,00,000),<sup>1</sup> down to the end of the resumption proceedings in the early fifties of the nineteenth century the one absorbing consideration of the government was the realization of a substantial amount of revenue from the resumed lands. For instance Holt Mackenzie, the framer of Regulation III of 1828 on the subject, anticipated from the "scheme" a "very considerable accession of revenue by means of the least exceptionable that could offer"; while the official "Notes respecting the resumption and assessment of rent-free lands" prepared in 1840 started with identifying the difficulties that had hitherto opposed the "right of the Bengal Government to derive revenue from lands liable to assessment."<sup>2</sup> The resumption proceedings were thus essentially a financial measure aimed at securing some compensation for the loss sustained on account of the permanent freezing of the land revenue in 1793, and to that extent they actually betrayed the government's regret over that fateful measure. Accordingly the resumption proceedings were naturally intensified whenever such regret and the need for more finance were keenly felt, such as at the opening of the nineteenth century after Lord Wellesley's costly Mysore wars, in the late teens after Lord Hastings's Maratha wars, in the late twenties because of Bentinck's drive for finance and in the late thirties and early forties of the nineteenth century consequent upon Auckland's Afghan wars.

<sup>1</sup> *Fifth Report*, Appendix I, 181.

<sup>2</sup> S.O.A.S. *India Papers*, 36412/1.

Such being the premise and purpose of the resumption proceedings, the rules and regulations that were framed in this respect from time to time were necessarily calculated rather to secure that object than to safeguard the legitimate rights of individuals. The matter was doubtless complicated by the fact that a large number of fraudulent *lākharāj* tenures were created by the zamindars between 1765 and 1790. Conscious of the fact that their position was nothing more than that of an intermediary between the higher revenue authorities and the ra'yats, and that as such their zamindari tenures could be terminated by the rulers at any time, the zamindars took advantage of the period of interregnum following the acquisition of the *dīwānī* by the Company and the new rulers' want of information to make fraudulent *lākharāj* grants of extensive and valuable portions of the estates under their charge in favour of their close relations and creatures ostensibly for religious services but really as provisions for something to fall back upon in case their zamindaries were terminated.<sup>1</sup> The practice of periodical farming of the revenue to the highest bidders adopted by the new rulers, particularly since the time of Warren Hastings, doubtless served to precipitate this trend towards fraudulent alienation of lands. By 1778 it came to the notice of the government that about three million *bighās* had been thus alienated in the different districts of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> For instance the Nadia zamindar Krishnachandra created *lākharāj* grants of 20,000 *bighās* of land in favour of his youngest wife and her son,<sup>3</sup> the Rajshahi zamindar (Rānī Bhavānī) made similar alienation of 429,149 *bighās* to her favourites and relations,<sup>4</sup> the Bankura (Bishnupur) zamindar did so in respect of 243,905 *bighās*<sup>5</sup> and the Burdwn zamindar a total of 568,736 *bighās*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As with regard to his treatment of the Birbhum peasants' risings (*supra*, p. 72) so also with regard to this matter W. W. Hunter puts the blame on the previous Muslim rulers by attributing this large-scale alienation to what he calls the indolence of the Dhaka and Murshidabad Nawwābs who, being indifferent to the details of administration, allowed the Hindu rent collectors to do as much as they liked, etc. *Indian Musalmans*, Calcutta, 1945, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Amini Commission Report*, 1778, B.M. *Add. Mss.*, 29086, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Diwan Kartikeyachandra Roy, *Kshitishavamsābalicharita* (Bengali text), Calcutta, 1932, pp. 11-12, quoted in Chittabrata Palit, *Tensions in Bengal Rural Society*, Calcutta, 1975, 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> *Fifth Report* (Parl. Pap. 1812, VII), Appendix V (Grant's "A View of the Revenues of Bengal"), 349.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 394-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 402-406.

The creation of such large-scale and fraudulent *lākaharāj* holdings by the zamindars placed the old and genuine *lākaharāj* landholders, mostly Muslims and Islamic institutions, in a peculiarly disadvantageous situation in two important respects. In the first place, the Muslim *lākaharāj*dārs generally derived their titles from very old grants, some of them dating back to the Sultanat period. The rights of quite a number of them were based rather on popularly respected traditions than on easily traceable documents. The original *sanads* of many others were either lost or destroyed due to the operation of time, climate and the course of succession and division of the estates from generation to generation. On the other hand the zamindars, who created the fraudulent holdings, were careful to have the proofs and papers duly prepared and preserved for them, often by means of forged and back-dated *sanads*. In the event of any investigation of validity of titles, therefore, the older *lākharāj*dārs were bound to suffer more in comparison with the others.

Secondly, as the government became aware of the large-scale alienation of lands as *lākharāj* holding, (their estimate being about one-third to one-fourth of the total cultivable land in each district), they became suspicious of the genuineness of the titles of all *lākharāj*dārs in general and consequently became all the more eager to adopt summary and arbitrary measures to resume those lands. This once again affected the Muslim *lākharāj*dārs the more heavily because they, being away from the government circles in Calcutta and generally unaware of the technicalities and provisions of the summary proceedings, easily fell victims to them. In many cases the victims came to know of the rules long after their properties had been confiscated and settled on others. The zamindars, on the other hand, were generally connected with the government circles in Calcutta, kept an eye on the latter's moves and intentions and took timely steps to protect their interests. In fact during the first quarter century of resumption proceedings almost all Muslim *lākharāj*dārs were divested of their possessions. When after that period the government began to get hold of the holders of really invalid grants, the creatures of the zamindars, the latter came forward in an organized and determined way to

oppose the government proceedings.

In the meantime the injustice done through summary and arbitrary proceedings to the genuine *lākharājdārs* proved to be an indirect blessing for the fraudulent holders. For, in view of the zamindars' opposition the authorities, particularly those in England, came to see the obvious irregularity and injustice of many of the proceedings. The Court of Directors in fact suggested at times the need for rectifying at least some of the procedural defects. Although the authorities in Calcutta did not carry out these suggestions mainly to save face and to avoid, as they said, "crying down all past proceedings and decisions",<sup>1</sup> they nonetheless became doubtful about the propriety of all that they had been doing in this respect and to that extent they lost their mental strength to push forward with the resumption operations in the same way as they had been doing in the past. This weakening of the administrators' mind on the one hand, and the continued opposition of the zamindars throughout the forties on the other, led to the abandonment of the proceedings in 1851. Thus it so came about that the genuine *lākharājdārs* were generally eliminated while the holders of fraudulent grants generally emerged unaffected.

The summary nature of the resumption proceedings may be understood from a brief review of the main regulations on the subject framed from time to time. At the start rent-free lands were broadly classified into two categories: (a) grants "by Zamindars, or other officers of Government, appointed to the temporary superintendence and collection of the revenue" and (b) grants held or stated to be held under royal *farmāns*.<sup>2</sup> These two categories were dealt with respectively by Regulations XIX and XXXVII of 1793 which were passed by Lord Cornwallis shortly after his announcement of the permanent settlement. All grants subsequent to 1765 were declared invalid (except royal grants that might have been confirmed by any British authority) and were to be resumed. With regard to those that were made and taken

<sup>1</sup> Governor-General's minute, 22 June 1839, para 4, *Ind. Leg. Cons.*, 15 July 1839, No. 48.

<sup>2</sup> A new description of lands subsequently brought under resumption proceedings were encroachments of zamindars and others on forests and large tracts of waste lands.

possession of before 1765, they were to be held valid only to the extent of the intentions of the grantors as ascertainable from the grant deeds. For this purpose the regulations required the *lākharāj dārs* in each district to register their deeds in the Collector's office within one year's time, failing which their deeds would be inadmissible as evidence of their titles and they would be liable to eviction from their lands without reference to any court of law. At the same time the Collectors were directed to institute proceedings in the ordinary district courts against any holder of *lākaharāj* land whose title should appear defective. As an inducement to exertion they were allowed a commission of 25% on the first year's revenue derived from any plot resumed. Further, in order to placate the zamindars and make them amenable to the resumption proceedings, they were allowed by a rule made under these regulations to resume lots under 100 *bighās* and to incorporate them in their estates.

It may be observed that people in the interior districts had very little opportunities of being acquainted with the requirements of these newly framed regulations. On the other hand the offer of commission to the Collectors on their work of resumption had the effect of encouraging them to be negligent in notifying the rules as also in carrying out the work of registration of deeds with the proper speed. In fact it was subsequently recognized by their higher authorities that the Collectors had been negligent in their work in this respect.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the newly established district Collectorate adequately equipped to cope with the increased work of registration. For instance, in Burdwan district 72000 deeds were presented for registration of which only some 5000 were dealt with within the time-limit; the rest were returned unregistered keeping only their copies in the Collector's office. Thereafter neither in Burdwan nor in any other district was the time-limit for registration extended. Yet, subsequently, many *lākharāj dārs* were evicted simply on the ground of non-registration of their deeds. Moreover, the rule allowing the zamindars to

<sup>1</sup> Revenue despatch No. 5 to India, dated 9 May 1838, paras 53-54, quoted in Mallick, *op. cit.*, 42.

resume lots under 100 *bighās* fell heavily on small and in most cases genuine *lākharājdhārs*. It was latter on officially acknowledged that this rule led to the absorption of the property of small *lākharājdhārs* by the zamindars.<sup>1</sup>

Even registration of deeds by itself did not mean the confirmation of the holders' titles. It was intended only to afford the government an opportunity to ascertain the exact "intentions" of the grantors. Needless to say that no pains were spared to discover such "intentions" in the deed as would justify resumption of the land. A convenient plea which was frequently made use of was that the grants were not intended to be hereditary or perpetual. Even grants like *Madad-i-Ma'āsh*, *Altamgha* and *'Aima*, which were specifically recognized in the above mentioned regulations as perpetual in nature, did not escape the onslaught of such intention-hunting.<sup>2</sup> As will be seen presently, even non-registration of succession to *lākharāj* property was made a ground for its resumption.

The provisions of the above mentioned regulations (XIX and XXXVII of 1793) were extended to the territories ceded by the Nawwāb Wazīr of Oudh by Regulations XXXI and XXXVI of 1803, and to the territories conquered from the Marathas by Regulation VIII of 1805. In 1811 the Collectors in the said "ceded" and "conquered" territories were empowered by Regulation VIII to institute as well as decide the resumption cases, that is, they were made "prosecutors" and "judges" at the same time. This extraordinary procedure was found to be "productive of great advantage" in asserting government's right to the revenue of lands "unjustly withheld." Hence by Regulation XI of 1817 the Collectors in the "provinces of Behar and Benares" were invested with similar powers; and two years afterwards these provisions were consolidated in Regulation II of 1819 which was made applicable to the whole of the Presidency of Bengal. The parties affected were left with the almost impossible remedy of appeal to ordinary courts of law within six months of the Collector's decision. The next notable legislation was Regulation III of 1828

<sup>1</sup> *Board's Collection*, Vol. 1861, Coll. No. 79055, pp. 67-70.

<sup>2</sup> See "Notes respecting the resumption and assessment etc.", *op.cit.*, p. 13.

which further tightened up the resumption proceedings. The extensive powers of the Collector as both prosecutor and judge were retained, but the provision for appeal to ordinary courts was withdrawn. Instead appeals could now be made to "Special Commissioners" appointed for the purpose. A section of this regulation made succession to *lākharāj* properties inadmissible and the successor liable to immediate and summary ejection if such succession was not notified to the Collector and his confirmation obtained within six months. Further, a rule made under this regulation transferred the reward of 25% on the first year's revenue, hitherto payable to the Collector, to "informers" who would assist in discovering defects in the titles of *lākharājdrs*. In 1834 "Special Deputy Collectors" were appointed to investigate "invalid" rent-free tenures. They had the same extraordinary powers as given to Collectors.

These were the main regulations made regarding resumption of rent-free lands till the mid-thirties of the nineteenth century. With the extensive and extraordinary powers under their command the Collectors indeed resumed a large number of *lākharāj* properties summarily and often arbitrarily. The absence of proper publicity of the rules, often intentional, worked hard against the Muslim *lākharāj dārs* in the interior of the country. Most of them came to know of the existence of the extraordinary rules, particularly those regarding succession, when their lands had actually been attached and settled on others.<sup>1</sup> A large number of cases were decided in favour of the government solely on the grounds of non-registration of *sanads*, even though in many instances the authorities recognized among themselves that the *sanads* of the properties resumed were genuine.<sup>2</sup> The lands of some Muslim *lākharāj dārs* held under royal grants and confirmed by the British authorities as late as 1783 were also resumed simply because at the time of enquiry long afterwards the descendants of the original grantees failed to produce the original deeds.<sup>3</sup> More

<sup>1</sup> See petition of Syed Khadim Husaim Khan and 120 other Muslims, *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 19 May 1829, No. 4. Seven years afterwards the government informed them that their plea was not acceptable.

<sup>2</sup> *Board's Collection*, Vol. 1861, Coll. No. 79055, pp. 424-425, 428-429.

<sup>3</sup> See "Notes respecting etc.", *op.cit.*, 21.

strangely, some over-enthusiastic Deputy Collectors resumed lands even in disregard of duly registered and genuine *sanads*.<sup>1</sup>

Equally remarkable was the speed with which the Collectors rushed through an unusually large number of cases *ex parte*, giving verdict in favour of government solely on the ground of non-attendance of the parties. For instance in Burdwan the Special Deputy Collector (W. Taylor) decided 429 cases *ex parte* in one day;<sup>2</sup> and in Chittagong a total of 14683 cases were one and all decided *ex parte* and in favour of the government. In the former instance Taylor shifted his court from Hugli to Burdwan only after hanging up a general notice on the court wall but without sending any notice individually to the parties concerned as required by the law; and then, far more extraordinarily, decided the cases actually a week before the date set by himself in the general wall-notification for the parties' attendance. Subsequently he even refused to give copies of his decision to the parties who intended to prefer appeals to the appropriate authorities.<sup>3</sup> With regard to the Chittagong cases not even any general notification was issued. Many of the titles thus resumed were acknowledged by government officials amongst themselves to be valid.<sup>4</sup> One of the parties affected by these large-scale *ex parte* decisions<sup>5</sup>, Syed Tufail Husain of Mandaran, Hugli, submitted a petition to the Special Commissioner of Calcutta and Murshidabad divisions, to whom normally appeal in his case lay, requesting him (the Commissioner) to direct the said Special Deputy Collector of Burdwan to grant the petitioner a copy of the judgement in his case so that he might "proceed on appeal to obtain justice."<sup>6</sup> This petition set in motion a series of correspondence resulting in the retrial of a few cases in which the Special Deputy Collector's judgements were reversed.<sup>7</sup> The hardships arising out of the resumption proceedings were immensely multiplied by the fact

<sup>1</sup> Board's Collection, Vol. 1861, Coll. No. 79050, p. 630.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 445-456.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1863, Coll. No. 89082, pp. 145-149.

<sup>4</sup> See *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 5 May 1840, Nos. 21, 23.

<sup>5</sup> See for a statement of *ex-parte* decisions during the period 1835-1841 *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 17 June 1846, No. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Board's Collection, Vol. 1863, Coll. No. 79082, pp. 149-152.

<sup>7</sup> *Ind. Rev. Cons.* 3 Feb. 1840, Nos. 1-7.



that more often than not the resumed lands were settled not on the dispossessed *lākharājdhārs* but on others. In a number of cases lands resumed from Muslim *lākharājdhārs* were settled on their under-tenants or lease-holders.<sup>1</sup>

Since the passing of the Regulation III of 1828 the zamindars came forward in an organized way to oppose the resumption proceedings obviously because these had now advanced far enough to threaten the many fraudulent grants that had been created in their interests. In 1829 they submitted two massive memorials to government protesting against the injustice of the resumption operations and raising the plea that those proceedings constituted a breach of the permanent settlement.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter their opposition crystallised. In 1838 was formed the Landholders' Society which had for its immediate object the nullification of the resumption measures.<sup>3</sup> It was to bring the "injustice" of the resumption of rent-free lands to the notice of the British public that the zamindars' representative Dwarkanath Thakur visited England in 1841-42 and returned to Calcutta with George Thompson who helped the transformation of the Landholders' Society into the Bengal British India Society in 1843.<sup>4</sup> Indeed it was the resumption question which had ushered in the era of the zamindari politics of petitions and associations in the mid-nineteenth century.

The government also soon came to realize, partly because of their consciousness of the obvious wrongs committed through the summary and arbitrary proceedings and partly because of the inadequacy of their machinery for local government, that they could not successfully proceed with the work of resumption in the face of the combined opposition of the zamindars in whose hands control (and therefore knowledge) of local affairs had been purposely left since the permanent settlement of 1793. Indeed any further progress in the work of resumption of rent-free lands presupposed a detailed survey of the whole country, which had

<sup>1</sup> *Board's Collection*, No. 99107, pp. 12-13, No. 99159, pp. 368-399.

<sup>2</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 19 May 1829, Nos. 3 and 9.

<sup>3</sup> See M.M. Ali, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-166. See also Chittabrata Palit, *Tensions in Bengal Rural Society, etc.*, Calcutta, 1975, 26-59.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

not yet been done,<sup>1</sup> or at least a fair knowledge of landed estates and holdings, which it was impossible to obtain without the zamindars' cooperation. That so much lands had hitherto been resumed was indeed due to the active or passive cooperation of the zamindars and their agents who were interested either to get the resumed land resettled on themselves or to eliminate the genuine *lākharāj dārs* who paid no revenue on their lands either to the government or to the zamindars. The latter's attitude changed when the resumption proceedings began to threaten those rent-free lands that were held directly or indirectly in their interests or from which they used to derive substantial revenue without having to pay anything for it to the government, (as was the case with regard to their encroachments on the Sundarban forests and other waste lands).<sup>2</sup> Hence they started withholding information about the rent-free lands from the government. By the late twenties the Collectors began to complain that their *amlas*<sup>3</sup> were being bribed to suppress information about *lākharāj* holdings. The provision made in pursuance of the Regulation III of 1828 for transferring the 25% commission on the first year's revenue from the resumed lands, hitherto payable to the Collectors, to "native" informers reflects this changed situation with which the government were confronted. But even that contrivance was of little avail and the government had to yield to the organized opposition of the zamindars and abandon the resumption proceedings in 1851.

Altogether the resumption of rent-free lands had obtained for government an additional annual revenue of about 38 lakhs (38,00,000) of rupees. This gain was made mainly at the cost of genuine Muslim *lākharāj dārs* who held their lands either as individuals or as trustees for mosques, madrasas and similar institutions of social service.

<sup>1</sup> The first regular survey work was only started in 1830 under Everest. It was not completed till late in the century.

<sup>2</sup> The first legislation to investigate the encroachment on the Sundarbans was Regulation XXIII of 1817 which applied to the districts of 24-Parganas, Nadia, Jessore (including Khulna), Dacca-Jalalpur (Faridpur) and Bakarganj.

<sup>3</sup> Subordinate officials. The word is a corruption of the Arabic word 'Ammāl.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

Letter of E.R. Barwell, Special Commissioner of the Calcutta and Murshidabad Divisions, forwarding Tufail Husain's petition and commenting on W. Taylor's resumption proceedings.<sup>1</sup>

From

E.R. Barwell Esq., Offg. Spl. Commissioner of the Calcutta and in charge of the Murshidabad Divisions.

To F.J. Halliday Esqr.,

Scey. to the Govt. of Bengal. Rev. Deptt., Fort William,

Dated the 8th June, 1838.

Sir,

I deem it a duty incumbent upon me to bring to the notice of the Hon'ble the Deputy Governor of Bengal, the following facts, which will be found, on perusal of the Papers submitted with this address and of which a list is annexed, to have been established before this Court in regard to the Proceedings of Mr. Wm. Taylor the Special Depy. Collr. of Burdwan.

2nd. That, that officer did on the transfer of resumption suits from the office of the Collector of Hooghly to his own, publish a general notification at his Sudder Cutcherry for the information of the parties to such suits bearing date 25th April 1837, requiring their attendance at his Court, after the expiration of 15 days from the date of such notice.

3dly, That, tho' it was incumbent upon him under the general rules of practice observed on such occasions to have issued a separate notice to each individual concerned, yet that not contented with the omission of this precautionary measure, he proceeded on the 3d, 4th and 5th May following, that is, one week previous to the expiration of the term allowed by his own Ishtehar Nameh, to decide ex-parte a vast number of Lakhiraj suits in favour of Govt., which are stated in the petitions presented to this Court to have amounted to, not less than three to four hundred, & against 120 of which Decisions, appeals have already been preferred to and admitted by the Court. 3dly that after with-holding from the parties those facilities to which they were clearly entitled in obtaining copies of his decrees, Mr. Taylor has in opposition to the orders of this Court and to the Provisions of Clause 1st Section 4 Regn. 3 of 1828 openly refused upon the most untenable and insufficient grounds assigned by him in a very objectionable Proceedings, to the address of the Court, bearing date 19th Ult., to admit of any more copies of his decrees being furnished to parties applying for them but upon Stamp Paper.

3d. As there is nothing more calculated to compromise the character of the Govt. than the appearance even of harshness or Precipitation on the part of its officers, in the enforcement of the resumption laws, (in themselves sufficiently unpopular) it is to be hoped His Honor will support the authority of this Court, by requiring from the Special Dy. Collr. of Burdwan a due obedience to its orders upon the present occasion & that, that officer may be cautioned against

<sup>1</sup> *Board's Collection*, Vol. 1863 (No. 79082), pp. 145-149.

the Repetition of irregularities in his judicial proceedings similar to those for which he has already been censured by Roobacaree of the 4th Inst.

Fort William  
the 8th June, 1838.

I have & c.  
Sd/E.R. Barwell  
Offg. Spl. Commissioner of the Cal.  
and in charge of the Moorshedabad  
Divisions

#### List of Papers

- 1st. Translate Petition of Syud Toofayel Hossain (being one out of 120 of a similar description) preferred to this Court with the order passed upon it by Mr. Commr. Maddock, bearing date 29th January 1838.  
[Five other official papers are listed here]

(No. 1)

Translate petition of Syud Toofyl Hossain inhabitant of  
Mouza Mundorun Pergunah Jahanabad, Zillah Hooghly  
d. 29th Jany. 1838.<sup>1</sup>

After address sheweth,

That a suit no. 154 was instituted on the part of Govt. in the Collectorate of Hooghly claiming 181 Beeghas 15 Biswas of Lakhiraj Lands as liable to assessment, and that the Collr. issued a notice & afterwards a Roobacaree to your Petitioner desiring him to explain by what right [he] held possession of the said lands.

That your petitioner attended at the Collectorate to file his answer, but was informed by the Collr. that the investigation of all the suits was transferred to the Special Deputy Collector; that the records were locked up, & consequently that your Petitioner's answer could not be received; but that the Special Deputy Collector would issue a regular notice when your petitioner might attend and submit his objection to the claim.

That your petitioner in consequence of this information returned to his house & remained in expectation of the notice from the Special Dy. Collector, but although notice never was served upon petitioner, decree was made in favour of Govt.

That your petitioner humbly submits that the decision without a regular notice can only be considered as a partial decree, resting upon the statement of one party, & in opposition to Clause 1 Sec. 6 Reg. 2 of 1819 C.E. extremely detrimental to the interests and property of Your petitioner.

That your petitioner understanding that a decree has been made in his case attended at the Special Dy. Collr's Court, in order to obtain a copy of the judgment, but was informed by the umlah that on the 3rd May and the other following dates 3 or 4 hundred cases were decided daily, & that the

<sup>1</sup> Board's Collection, Vol. 1863 No. 79082, pp. 149-152.

Roobacarees were not ready, so your petitioner by these evasions was detained at considerable expense & trouble to no purpose.

That under all these circumstances Your petitioner humbly submits his grievances to the Court & hopes on a review of the proceeding that justice will be done, & his wrongs redressed.

That your petitioner begs leave to state that the lands in dispute are inserted in different sunnuds and do not exceed 100 Beeghas in any single case, altho' in the aggregate they amount to 181 Beeghas 15 Biswas, each of the Sunnud is for less than 100 Beeghas, & the Saidad Kyfeut evidently show that the Sunnuds were granted previously to the British dominion; your petitioner therefore ventures to state that the decision of the special Dy. Collr. declaring these lands liable to resumption, is in direct opposition to Sec. 9 Reg. 19 of 1793 C.E. & Clause 1 Sec. 2 of the Regulation before mentioned- Your petitioner with confidence submits this case to your consideration & justice. Upon the information of Nuwaboodeen Sweeper No. 19 Lakhiraj Lukhapala with other lands granted by Shah Shooja were claimed by Government as Towfeer, or surplus lands under Reg. 2 of 1819 C.E. the Collector of Hooghly however dismissed the suit & the Rev. Commr. Confirmed his decision.

The decision passed by the Special Dy. Collr. is contrary to clause 1 Sec. 2 of Reg. 37 of 1793 C.E. & clause 2 Sec. 2 Reg. 31 of 1803 C.E. Your petitioner under these circumstances humbly solicits that the Special Dy. Collr. may be directed to grant him a Copy of his judgment in the case to enable your petitioner to proceed on appeal & obtain justice. Your petitioner shall therefore conclude with saying, You my Lord are Master and respect cannot pass that limit.

(On the back)

At the sitting of T.H. Maddock Esqr. Special Commr. of the Moorsheda-bad Division.

After perusal it is ordered that the original application be forwarded under an English cover to the special Dy. Collr. calling on him for a report & for the transmission of a copy of the decision dated 29th January 1838 C.E..

Sd/T.H. Maddock.  
Spl. Commr.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EDUCATION POLICY AND THE MUSLIMS: I. FORMULATION OF THE POLICY

#### I. THE INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS: FOUNDING OF THE CALCUTTA MADRASA

The economic dismemberment of both the aristocracy and the generality of the Muslims in consequence of the political and administrative changes, particularly the permanent settlement, the indigo planting system and resumption of *lākharāj* lands, was a major factor in their educational and social decline too. The process was however precipitated by some aspects of the education policy of the government.

Promotion of education had not as yet come to be regarded as a part of governmental activities in England as in many other European countries. Yet the Company's government in Bengal felt early enough the need for adopting some educational measures for three main reasons. In the first place, the Company's representatives in Bengal quickly recognized that it had been a general practice with the Muslim rulers to establish and patronize educational institutions and men of learning. And now that the Company had stepped into their shoes it was felt necessary to continue that tradition at least in some respects in order to ingratiate the new government with the people. Secondly, the authorities realized that for quite sometime to come it would be necessary to continue the existing legal system and to leave the details of judicial and criminal administration largely in the hands of subordinate local officials. Hence it was thought worthwhile to provide for the training of such officials in a government sponsored institution. Thirdly, there emerged an increasingly influential group in England who looked upon the establishment of British political power over Bengal and the adjoining region as an opportunity for propagating Christianity among the conquered population. These missionary enthusiasts pressed the Company for adopting a policy of "educating" the natives in "Christian knowledge" and otherwise for allowing Christian missionaries and "teachers" to go freely to the Company's

dominions. These people were soon joined by two other groups, the "free traders" and the "utilitarians." The former wanted that the Company's monopoly should be abolished and their dominions thrown open for all English traders; the latter, the utilitarians, advocated the need for communicating to the natives what was called "useful" knowledge. Many among the Company's high officials in both England and Bengal were imbued with missionary and utilitarian ideas. To them "useful" and "Christian knowledge" were coterminous.

The initial educational measures of the Company's administration in Bengal were the outcome of the first two considerations. In 1780 a recognized Muslim scholar named Majd al-Dīn was about to leave Calcutta for want of patronage for his scholarship. His intended departure was looked upon by the Muslims of the city as a great loss to the cause of education. Hence their leading members approached the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, with a request to retain Majd al-Dīn in the city by founding an educational institution and entrusting him with its superintendence. The Governor-General acceded to the proposal and established the Calcutta Madrasa in that year with Majd al-Dīn at its head.<sup>1</sup> In giving his reasons for this step Warren Hastings stated that "it had been the pride of every Political Court and the wisdom of every well-regulated Government both in India and Persia" to promote and maintain such educational institutions<sup>2</sup> and that as it was necessary "to continue the administration of the Criminal Courts of Judicature, and many of the most important branches of the Police in the hands of" Muslim officers, the Madrasa would be the training ground for such officials.<sup>3</sup> A building and necessary funds for the institution were therefore provided by the government. The details of the courses of studies followed in this initial period are not known; but judging from subsequent developments it appears that Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*, together with the standard works on *Fiqh* (Islamic

<sup>1</sup> This institution subsequently came to be known as the Madrasah-i-'Āliya of Calcutta. In 1947 it was transferred to Dhaka where it still exists.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings's minute, 17 April 1781, *Selections from Educational Records*, Vol. I. (ed. W.H. Sharp), Calcutta, 1920, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Beng. Rev. Cons.*, 21 January 1781.

law) and courses in Arabic and Persian languages were the main subjects of study. Eleven years afterwards Jonathan Duncan, the Company's resident at Benares, founded the Sanskrit College there on identical grounds: to popularize the government with the Hindus "by our exceeding in our attention towards them and their systems, the care shown even by their own native princes", and to provide an institution for training doctors of Hindu law "who would assist the European Judges in its administration."<sup>1</sup> Thus were two institutions founded, one for the Muslims and the other for the Hindus. In respect of each of them the intentions to imitate the tradition of the "native" rulers and to provide for the training of persons in Muslim and Hindu laws were the main reasons for the government's action.

## II. CHRISTIANIZING CONSIDERATIONS: THE EDUCATIONAL CLAUSE OF THE CHARTER ACT OF 1813

Soon, however, the Christianizing consideration became the predominant factor in the formulation of the education policy. In fact when Duncan had been establishing the Sanskrit College at Benares, the missionary enthusiasts in England had been organizing themselves, in view of the approaching renewal of the Company's charter in 1793 to exert pressure on Parliament for making the Company undertake some "educational" programme. The very year of the founding of the Sanskrit College (1791) witnessed also the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in England. In the following year Charles Grant, a man of great influence in the Company's circles and an ardent supporter of the missionaries, published an elaborate treatise entitled *Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to morals, and the means of improving it*,<sup>2</sup> in which he detailed what he conceived to be the "darkness", "corruption" and "vices" prevalent among the Asiatic subjects and advocated the introduction among them of "Christian knowledge" through English education the effects of which, he further stressed, would be both "honourable and advantageous

<sup>1</sup> Sharp. *op.cit.*, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1792; also reprinted as Appendix 1 to *Report of the Select Committee, House of Commons*, 1832.



for us.”<sup>1</sup> He was strongly supported by William Wilberforce, another influential person, who caused the treatise to be widely distributed. In spite of their earnest efforts, however, the missionaries and their friends could not carry Parliament with them in 1793 because the memories of the loss of American colonies were still fresh and Parliament did not like to take any hasty step which might cause commotion among the subject population of the new English dominions or which might even sow the seeds of “independence” among the Englishmen who would naturally throng there if the gates were thrown open to them. Moreover the Napoleonic wars were knocking at the doors; so Parliament was generally averse to making any encroachments on the Company’s monopolistic rights.

But though unsuccessful in 1793 the missionaries and their friends did not give up their efforts. In fact William Carey, a missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society, arrived in Bengal that very year via a Danish East Indiaman. He was subsequently joined by other missionaries. In the meantime their friends kept up their campaign and discussions in England. The result was that the House of Commons resolved itself into a committee in 1808, well ahead of time for the next renewal of the Company’s charter, to consider matters relating to the “great dependency”, particularly the question of education and the advisability of encouraging missionary enterprise therein. In Bengal also officials continued to express their views from time to time. On 6 March 1911 the Governor-General Lord Minto and the Secretary to the territorial Department, Holt Mackenzie, both recorded their views in two separate minutes. The former lamented over the decline of education in the land for lack of state patronage which was forthcoming in the previous period of the native rulers. Therefore he suggested the establishment of some more madrasas under the government’s patronage and control at such places as Bhagalpur and Jaunpur. The latter, on the other hand, suggested that the practicable course was to educate the “influential” classes among the subjects who would “themselves be teachers to their people.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Sharp. *op.cit.*, 59.

Minto's views foreshadowed the approaching "Orientalist" attitude; and Holt Mackenzie's minute turned out to be the basis for the "Downward filtration" theory of education.

In the final stage of the discussions in connection with the question of renewal of the Company's charter in 1813 the Free Traders threw in their whole weight with the advocates of the missionaries. Consequently the Charter Act of 1813 abolished the Company's trade monopoly with regard to India and asked its government to set apart annually, in the event of a surplus in the revenue, a sum of "not less than" one lakh of rupees (100,000) for 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."<sup>1</sup>

Thus was the Company's administration made to undertake some responsibility for "educating" the subjects. Two things in connection with this clause of the Charter Act of 1813 need special attention. In the first place, coming as it did in the wake of hesitant and controversial attitudes, the wording of the clause was not quite free from ambiguities. The proviso, "in the event of a surplus in the revenue" meant that nothing needed to be done if there was no surplus; and the stipulation, "not less than" one lakh of rupees, meant that at least that amount or any higher amount without limit could be spent on education. In practice, however, the clause was understood and applied for many years to come in exactly the reverse sense of one lakh of rupees as the maximum that could be devoted for the purpose of education. Secondly, the clause set two rather divergent purposes together, namely, the revival and improvement of literature (that is obviously Muslim and Hindu literature) and encouragement of the learned natives of India, on the one hand, and introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences, on the other. This latter phrase was meant to be understood in the sense the missionaries and their friends understood it and was in fact inserted in the Act to satisfy this latter group of people. Therefore, in practice once again, the former object was very soon relegated into the background and

<sup>1</sup> 53 Geo. III. Cap. 155 Clause XLIII.

from the twenties onwards the Company's directors began to emphasize in their despatches to India that the sole purpose of the government's educational policy should be the communication of "useful" (that is Christian and European) knowledge to the subjects. Such directives were clearly at variance with the wording and purport of the Charter Act of 1813, but they were surely in consonance with the motive and spirit that lay behind it and also reflected the growing influence of the utilitarians and Christianizing enthusiasts within the Company's circles. This Christianizing purpose behind the educational efforts of the government, however concealed behind guarded expressions and frequent pronouncements of "religious neutrality", made it hard for the Muslims to accept the state system of education without considerable reservation.

### III. THE "HINDU COLLEGE": ITS PATRONIZATION TO THE NEGLECT OF THE CALCUTTA MADRASA

In their first despatch on the subject of education after the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, sent to India on 3 June 1814, the Court of Directors naturally did not envisage any elaborate system of education but only gave some general instructions. In doing so, however, they spoke only about the Hindus and asked the government to encourage "them in the exercise and cultivation of their talents by the stimulus of honorary marks of distinction, and in some instances by grants of pecuniary assistance", and also to patronize the Sanskrit College at Benares.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, no mention was made of the Muslims in the despatch, nor was any reference made to the Calcutta Madrasa which was not only the earliest institution established by the government but also the one situated in the capital city itself. The oversight was not accidental; it really reflected a change of attitude on the part of the rulers. As Dr. A.R. Mallick points out: "Distrust of the Muslims, from whom power had been recently won, and the consequent indifferent and unsympathetic attitude towards them was natural. So was a desire to conciliate the Hindus who had cooperated in the overthrow of the Muslim

<sup>1</sup> Sharp. *op.cit.*, 22-24.

political authority.”<sup>1</sup> The discriminatory attitude thus inherent in the despatch found expression in the practical steps that followed. For a few years after 1814 the government could not of course pay any direct attention to the subject of education because of military undertakings against the Marathas and Nepal; but persons like David Hare and Dr. H.H. Wilson in their public zeal cooperated with the leading Hindu zamindars in Calcutta to establish there an institution in 1817 for English and general education called the “Hindu College” (first named Hindu Pathsala). In keeping with the spirit of the above-mentioned despatch, this institution soon became the object of the government’s special attention and financial assistance, on the one hand, and, on the other, it was kept hermetically sealed against all other communities, for none but Hindu students were admitted in the College.

The founding of the Hindu College symbolized as much the Hindus’ foresight of the shape of things to come as of the spirit of fraternity that had developed between them and the ruling community. Being in touch with the government, and often in close personal relationship with high state officials, the leading Hindus of Calcutta could often know well in advance of time the intentions and policies of government even though these were not publicly notified. On the other hand the Muslims found themselves in a peculiarly disadvantageous, even desperate, situation. Not that there were no well-to-do and intelligent Muslims in Calcutta at that time; there were indeed quite a few of them; but generally their position was that of a defeated and ousted party, out of favour with the ruling power. Hence they necessarily lacked the incentive and were certainly deprived of the encouragement to take such an initiative as the Hindus had done, the more so as there was already an institution for the Muslims’ education in the form of the Calcutta Madrasa which the government had not as yet publicly shown any indication to render ineffective or useless.

There were other reasons also for what has sometimes been regarded as the Muslims’ lack of foresight. For the Hindus it was

<sup>1</sup> A.R. Mallick *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal*, Dacca, 1961, 174.

sentimentally much easier to switch from the study of Persian over to the study of English language. It meant only the forsaking of one alien language for another, which was clearly in the ascendant. For the Muslims, particularly the aristocratic and urban sections of them who, in the nature of things, were to take the initiative in educational as in other matters, it meant the abandonment of what was their own language and literature for those of the foreigners who had turned the table on them. Secondly, the difference in the approach of the two communities really reflected the difference in their socio-religious systems. For the Hindus religious education was meant only for the priestly class, the Brahmans. The other "castes" were in fact religiously debarred from even touching their "sacred" books. Hence the generality of the Hindus could easily pursue English education even if it was divorced from any course of study relating to Hinduism. For the Muslims the situation was totally different. There is no priesthood in Islam. Every Muslim is required to acquire the essential knowledge of the teachings of Islam and its performances. Any education for him therefore must combine in it Islamic studies with other subjects. In their approach to the English education as it was offered by the state the Muslims were thus involved in such psychological and ethical tensions from which the Hindus were free. As will be seen presently, the Muslims were neither indifferent to the future advantages of studying the English language nor were they averse to it as such. They only wanted that the study of English should be properly combined with Islamic education.

This is clear from the affairs of the Calcutta Madrasa and the government's dealings with it. Early in the twenties of the nineteenth century the government, being free from military entanglements, turned their attention to the subject of education. At that time Dr. Lumsden was the Secretary of the Madrasa.<sup>1</sup> Like many other officials of the time he was also imbued with utilitarian and Christianizing sentiments. Early in 1823 he suggested a thorough change in the courses of study at the

<sup>1</sup> In the nineties of the eighteenth century a Committee had been appointed to look after the institution; and in 1819 a European Secretary had been appointed.

Madrasa, "retaining" as he said, "whatever is useful and rejecting whatever would be deemed superfluous, trifling, erroneous or objectionable according to European taste." He also recommended the translation of English works into Persian and Arabic because, he argued, that was the only effectual means of opening the eyes of the Muslims to what he called "the faults of their own system."<sup>1</sup> The government deferred, however, taking any immediate action in this respect pending the formation of the General Committee of Public Instruction which was to consider and look after educational measures as a whole. That Committee was formed in July 1823 with Dr. H.H. Wilson as its secretary. He was, as already indicated, a founding member of the Hindu College and was at the time Vice-President of its Managing Committee. Under his influence the attention of the General Committee of Public Instruction as also of the government was peculiarly drawn to the Hindu College which henceforth became almost the only institution on which the government's care and patronage was bestowed to the corresponding neglect of the Calcutta Madrasa. In the same year (1823) Dr. Wilson had persuaded the government to establish a Sanskrit College at Calcutta with an English class in it. On his recommendation the government granted substantial financial assistance to the Hindu College and also established a Professorship of experimental philosophy in it. In contrast, no step was taken to open an English class nor to appoint efficient teachers in the Madrasa.

Meanwhile utilitarian and missionary influences had gained hold of the Court of Directors. When therefore they were informed of the above-mentioned educational measures, particularly about the establishment of another Sanskrit College at Calcutta, they openly gave vent to their utilitarian sentiments. The Court did not even hesitate to characterize Muslim and Hindu learning as "frivolous" and "mischievous" and reminded the India government that "the great object should not have been to teach" Hindu or Muslim learning but "useful learning."<sup>2</sup> It is easy to see what a remarkable change had taken place in the

<sup>1</sup> Lumsden to Madrasah Committee, 30 May 1823, *Board's Collection*, No. 908, pp. 365-367.

<sup>2</sup> Despatch of 14 Feb. 1824, Sharp. *op.cit.*, 92.

Court's attitude since their despatch of 1814. Be that as it may, in view of this attitude of the Court, the India government attempted to explain its position, rather incorrectly and inconsistently with the policy actually pursued with regard to the Hindu College, that "almost all" that the government could do or "the people could accept" was "oriental" literature", Muslim or Hindu.<sup>1</sup> The Sanskrit College was therefore continued; but henceforth the members of the General Committee of Public Instruction were clearly divided into two groups, the "Orientalists" and the "Anglicists." The former favoured the use of the "oriental" languages as means of communicating "useful" and western knowledge; the latter advocating the use of English language instead.

Already the students of the Madrasa had shown genuine eagerness for learning the English language so much so that with the help of Dr. Lumsden they had privately arranged for its tuition, though in an unsystematic way. When therefore in 1825 Dr. Wilson made proposals for further financial assistance to the Hindu College and the appointment of an English teacher for the Sanskrit College, Dr. Lumsden also made a request for appointing an English teacher in the Calcutta Madrasa. In response to these proposals the General Committee recommended to the government the opening of preparatory English classes in all the three institutions (Hindu College, Sanskrit College and Calcutta Madrasa). They also recommended, mainly at the instance of J.H. Harrington, president of the Committee, and Holt Mackenzie, a member, the establishment of a "Central English College" in Calcutta for all communities at an estimated annual cost of rupees 21,600. As an alternative plan the Committee suggested the improvement of the Hindu College.<sup>2</sup> When these proposals finally came up for the Court of Directors' decision they discountenanced the idea of a "Central English College" mainly on the ground of economy but sanctioned the opening of English classes in the existing institutions. In this despatch of 1827 the Court also laid down two important principles of policy. In the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Board's Coll.* 908, pp. 896-906; Mallick, *op.cit.*, 183.

first place, they adopted the “downward filtration theory” and asked the India government to concentrate its efforts “at places of greatest importance” and among “the superior and middle classes of the natives” from whom local and subordinate officials for government service were to be drawn. The allusion was clearly to Calcutta and the Hindu zamindars of that place and the district headquarters. Secondly, the Court asked the India government to “give a very efficient stimulus to the cultivation of the English language and useful knowledge” among the natives by “a marked preference to successful candidates at College” in making appointments to subordinate posts.<sup>1</sup> Once again, the allusion was obviously to the Hindu College, for there was no other institution for English education and the Court of Directors themselves had negated the proposal for establishing a central English college in Calcutta. More significantly, the despatch foreshadowed the intention to discontinue Persian as the court language and to substitute English for it. It is noteworthy that this despatch was not published for general information, but its purport, as it appears, was known to the Hindu leaders of Calcutta presumably through such persons as Dr. Wilson.

The despatch was naturally understood by the government as an encouragement to pay more attention to the Hindu College. Hence shortly after the receipt of the despatch the government, acting on the recommendation of the General Committee of Public Instruction, made a monthly grant of rupees 300 to the College, and an amount of rupees 54,376 for supplying it with English books and primers, besides creating eight scholarships of rupees 15 per month to be granted only to the students of that college. At the same time an English teacher at a monthly salary of rupees 200 was sanctioned for the Sanskrit College. Henceforth the government’s financial assistance to the Hindu College went on increasing so that by 1840 it stood annually at rupees 30,000. This liberalism for an institution exclusively meant for the Hindus appears all the more strange in view of the fact that the government had not gone forward with the proposal for

<sup>1</sup> Despatch of 5 Sept. 1827, *Minutes of Evidence, Sel. Committee of the House of Commons, 1832, I Pub. Appendix I, pp. 489-92.*



establishing a central English college for all communities at an estimated annual cost of rupees 21,600 only. Moreover, although the Court of Directors had sanctioned the opening of English classes in the existing institutions, no immediate step was taken to open such a class in the Madrasa.

After two years of procrastination an English class was at last opened in the Madrasa in 1829; and it thrived immediately. About one hundred students took the first annual examination held in February 1830. The next annual examination in January 1831 showed a similarly satisfactory progress, many of the students showing signs of unusually rapid grasp of the language.<sup>1</sup> Similarly an institution for English education opened at Murshidabad in 1827 was resorted to by Muslim students. These facts show that the Muslims were willing and eager to study the English language if proper arrangements were made for them and if similar or even half the attention paid to the Hindu college was bestowed on them too.

#### IV. THE EDUCATIONAL RESOLUTION OF 1835: THE MUSLIM PROTEST

The good start thus made of English education at the Madrasa was however marred by the over-enthusiasm of the Madrasa sub-committee born of their Christianizing intentions. Indeed the "Anglicists" in both the General Committee and the Madrasa sub-committee were by then greatly influenced by the missionaries. Their influence specially increased with the arrival in 1830 of the Rev. Alexander Duff, a missionary of the General Assembly's Mission. Duff believed,<sup>2</sup> and his belief was shared by his colleagues of the other missionary societies,<sup>3</sup> that the ultimate Christianization of India was to be effected by a class of teachers and preachers raised from its own population. They also believed that this could be best done by instructing the "teachers" through the medium of English; for a knowledge of Christianity as well as Western ideas which were to pave the way for its reception could

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the G.C.P.I.*, 1831, p. 4, quoted in Mallick, *op.cit.*, 188.

<sup>2</sup> A. Duff, "Statement of the plan and objects of the General Assembly's Mission in India", *C.C.O.*, December 1835, Vol. IV., 651-656; also his *India and India Missions*, Edinburgh, 1839, 285-304, 506-518.

<sup>3</sup> "Missionary Conference and English language", [Proceedings of a conference of Calcutta missionaries held on 4 August 1840], *C.C.O.*, September 1840, Vol. IX, 531-535.

be effectively communicated, they thought, only through the medium of English, the local languages being undeveloped and there being a dearth of text-books in them.<sup>1</sup> The missionary attitude thus corresponded with the “downward filtration theory” as well as the view-points of the Anglicists.

Under such influences the Madrasa sub-committee adopted a resolution in 1833 requiring all the students of the Madrasa to attend the English class; and another resolution early in 1834 which laid down that no student of the institution would be entitled to a stipend or scholarship unless he studied English along with the Arabic studies.<sup>2</sup> This latter resolution was adopted in the absence of some members of the sub-committee among whom was H. T. Prinsep, an “Orientalist.” His strong objections to the resolution precipitated the “Anglicist-Orientalist” controversy. After some exchanges of notes between him and the other members the matter was referred to the General Committee of Public Instruction for its decision. At this particular juncture of time Macaulay, a strong “Anglicist” and an ardent sympathizer with the missionary cause, took over as president of the Committee. The discussions that followed in the Committee did not remain confined to the subject of teaching English language in the Madrasa but involved the question of the medium of instruction and government’s educational policy as a whole. Hence the matter was taken over to the Governor-General’s Council where the view-points of both the Anglicists and the Orientalists were hotly debated.<sup>3</sup> Macaulay strongly pressed the Anglicist view in the course of which he even suggested, in a minute written on 2 February 1835, the abolition of the Calcutta Madrasa and arrogantly castigated “the whole native literature of India and Arabia.” At the same time a memorial signed by Radhakant Banerji, Prasannakumar Thakur and a number of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> See *Selection from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. XIV (Papers Relating to the Presidency College), Appendix I.

<sup>3</sup> For documents see *Ind. Pub. Cons.*, 7 March 1835, Nos. 7-18. The Anglicists’ views are contained mainly in Macaulay’s minute of 2 Feb. 1835 (*ibid.*, No. 15) and the Orientalists’ views are represented in Prinsep’s minute of 15 Feb. 1835. The controversy has been summarised in M. F. Rahman, *Bengali Muslims and English Education*, unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1948, Chapter VI; and in Mallick, *op.cit.*, 194-202.

other Hindus was submitted to the government in support of the Anglicists. The memorialists stated that they had taken to English education in the belief that English was going to be the official language. They asked the government to replace Persian by English.<sup>1</sup> The Anglicists' views were also supported by the Governor-General, William Bentinck, and other officials like Trevelyan in whom "the Utilitarian and Evangelical approaches to the educational problem were combined" and who saw in the adoption of English the ultimate establishment of Christianity in India.<sup>2</sup> In the final stage of the discussion Duff also used his influence in favour of English.<sup>3</sup> The result was the famous resolution of 7 March 1835 which declared that the "great object" of the government "ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."<sup>4</sup>

The resolution marked a clear departure from the provision of the Charter Act of 1813 which, as noted earlier, laid down the principle of paying equal attention to the promotion of the learning and literature of the subject people and "the introduction of a knowledge of the sciences." The point whether a resolution of the government of India could override the provision of an Act of Parliament was not seriously considered. Macaulay simply brushed aside it by stating that the Act of 1813 contained nothing to bind any one; and his explanation seems to have satisfied the Governor-General and the majority of his Council.

The resolution was, however, a sad surprise for the Muslims. It appeared to them as though by showing some interest in the study of English language (as is evident from the record of the English class in the Madrasa) they had jeopardized their own system of learning as a whole. They were also very much distressed at the Christianizing intentions behind the resolution which had not remained concealed. Their surprise and protests

<sup>1</sup> *Ind. Publ. Cons.*, 10 Feb. 1835, No. 28.

<sup>2</sup> See K.A. Ballhatchet, "The Home Government and Bentinck's educational policy", *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. X., No. 2, 1951, 224-229.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mayhew, *Christianity and the Government of India*, London, 1929, 160-165.

<sup>4</sup> Sharp, *op.cit.*, 130.

were embodied in a memorial submitted to the government shortly after the publication of the resolution.<sup>1</sup> It was signed by 8312 Muslims of Calcutta and its vicinity. The memorialists stated that the students of the Madrasa were being instructed in “useful knowledge” for “high appointments in the cities and zillahs of Hindoostan” and that at that time nearly 200 persons, educated in the Madrasa, were “holding high offices.” Incidentally, this contention of the memorialists shows that they were even then unaware of the rulers’ intentions contained in the despatch of 1827 regarding state appointments. The main ground of objection of the memorialists was, however, religious. “From the time when the report of the abolition of the Mudrissa gained ground”, stated the memorialists, “all classes small and great of the people have taken up the idea that the object and end of this measure is to eradicate the literature and religious system of Islam, in order that the measure may tend to the dissemination of the religion of the proposers and originators of the measure itself, and so the subjects of the state may be caused to become Christians.” The memorialists prayed, therefore, that the government would, “from motives of justice” as well as “to ensure its own stability”, give orders “for the continuance of the Mudrissa, and the teaching and learning of the literature and science of Islam.”

It is noteworthy that the memorial was not directed against the study of English language as such; nor was it simply a protest against the rumoured abolition of the Madrasa. The Muslims’ protest was clearly and pointedly against the Christianizing intentions behind the resolution. They unequivocally expressed their apprehension that the aim of the resolution was the “dissemination of the religion of the proposers and originators” at the cost of the “religious system of Islam.” The memorialists were therefore “distressed and heart-broken, and bewildered and alarmed at the idea of the Government yielding to such a proposition.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ind. Pub. Cons.*, 13 March 1835, No. 5. The English translation of the petition was published in the *Friend of India*, 26 March 1835, Vol. I., 99-100. It has been reproduced in A.F.S. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1813-1835*, Leiden, 1964, Appendix VI. See also Appendix to this Chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The Muslims’ memorial, last para.

The government could of course visualize that their decision was sure to elicit such objection. Hence they took care to add to the resolution a sentence saying that the government had no intention to abolish the "institutions of oriental learning" so long as the native population would be inclined to "avail themselves of the advantages which it affords." The apparent contradiction in the declaration to devote all the funds to "English education alone" and at the same time to continue the "institutions of oriental learning" is indicative not only of the difference between the government's professions and actual intentions but also of their desire to take such further steps as would render the "oriental learning" devoid of any practical "advantage." In their reply to the Muslims' memorial, therefore, the government informed them of the purport of the above mentioned sentence in the resolution with a statement that the government had no intention to impose Christianity or destroy the religious system of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the receipt of the government's reply, the Muslims submitted a second memorial against that provision of the resolution of 7 March which envisaged the gradual abolition of the stipendiary system.<sup>2</sup> As the students of the Madrasa depended mainly upon government stipends for the prosecution of their studies, the memorialists stated that to abolish stipends would be practically to abolish the Madrasa. The Hindus also, despite their eagerness for English education, were not prepared to see all patronage withdrawn from their learning and literature. Hence a few months afterwards their leaders like Raja Radhakanta Deb and Ramkamal Sen, who were otherwise enthusiastic supporters of English education, submitted a memorial to the government signed by 8,909 persons. The memorialists condemned Bentinck's resolution as "most injurious, spiteful, subversive of our professions and religion and conducive to the ill-fame of the Government."<sup>3</sup> But though strong in their condemnation, the Hindus did not raise any objection to English education, but

<sup>1</sup> *Ind. Pub. Cons.*, 13 March 1835, No. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 August 1836, No. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ind. Pub. Cons.*, 28 Feb. 1838, No. 29. Ahmed, (*op. cit.*) has suggested that this petition was inspired by the orientalist like Wilson.

only prayed for (i) the maintenance of the Sanskrit College on the same footing as it was before, (ii) the encouragement and cultivation of the Sanskrit language and what they called "pure Bengali", (iii) the restoration of stipends to students and (iv) the publication of Sanskrit and Bengali translation of "works on European arts and science."

Meanwhile the Court of Directors, having been informed about the resolution and also about the Muslims' protests, sent a despatch on 14 April 1836 in which they condemned Bentinck's resolution and asked the India government to pursue a policy of "religious neutrality" and also prohibited any further changes of policy in matters of education without prior reference home.<sup>1</sup> A rescission of the resolution was averted, however, by Lord Auckland, Bentinck's successor as Governor-General who by private correspondence persuaded the Home Government not to revive by any new order "the controversy and irritation" which, he stated, had practically subsided.<sup>2</sup> He attributed the whole problem to the paucity of funds. Hence he granted more than a lakh of rupees (100,000) for the promotion of English education and at the same time allocated additional funds for the continuation of the "existing institutions of Oriental learning." He also substituted scholarships for stipends and envisaged a plan for establishing schools and colleges for English education in different districts.<sup>3</sup> His plans were generally confirmed by the Court of Directors in their education despatch No. 1 of 1841 which gave definite orders for the continuance of the institutions of "oriental learning" as long as they were to be taken advantage of by the people.

These arrangements, it may be noted, were only in line with the resolution of 7 March 1835 which, as already mentioned, had added that the institutions of oriental learning would not be abolished so long as the native population would be inclined to "avail themselves of the advantages which it affords." As a matter of fact, two years before Auckland's above-mentioned solution,

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches to India and Bengal*, Vol. III, 741-744. See also Ballhatchet, *op.cit.*, 224-225.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-227.

<sup>3</sup> See Auckland's minute of 24 Nov. 1859, Sharp. *op.cit.*, 147-170.

the government had done away with the practical advantage of the education in the Madrasa; for in 1837 Persian was abolished as the official language in the courts and was substituted by English. At the same time a Law Commission was at work to introduce fully the English legal system in the administration of justice. Once again, it may be observed, this abolition of Persian as the court language was effected without any prior warning, without allowing any reasonable time to elapse after the formal resolution in favour of English education and, also, without making any provision for English education worth the name, except the patronage of the exclusively communal institution of the Hindu College. Obviously to the government the progress of the Hindu College students in English education and the welfare of the Hindus generally was the criterion for judging the progress of English education and of the subject population as a whole.

It is also noteworthy that the principle of "religious neutrality" which the government henceforth avowed as the basis of its educational policy had at least three significant implications. In the first place, it meant allowing the missionaries, who never concealed that the aim of their educational work was to convert the students to Christianity, to do their "teaching" and "preaching" without any interference by the government; as it also meant that high English officials could, in their "private" capacities, aid the missionaries and otherwise carry on Christianizing activities among the subject population. Secondly, in pursuance of their concept of religious neutrality the government, instead of providing equal opportunities for education in the different religious systems of the subject population, divested the courses of studies in all government schools and colleges of any religious instruction. In other words, since the giving of instruction in Christianity in the government schools and colleges was bound to cause commotion among the subject population, they would have no religious education in them. Thirdly, as it was found not feasible to do away altogether with the institutions of "oriental learning", particularly the Calcutta Madrasa, the government made attempts to transform that institution into one for the study of Arabic *as language* and literature rather than of

### Islamic sciences.

It is easy to see how these consequences of the peculiarly conceived principle of religious neutrality affected the Muslims. The government's policy cleverly deprived them of the facility of receiving instruction in their religion in the state institutions; while their own educational institutions existing from the pre-British period rapidly declined because of the lack of state patronage, the resumption of rent-free lands attached to many of those institutions and also because of the poverty of the Muslims. They could not think of a system of education which was devoid of any instruction in Islam. Hence they found it very difficult to join the government educational institutions without first privately arranging for instruction in Islam. This situation in fact proved to be the major factor, along with their poverty, in the slowness of their progress in English education, though the available facts indicate that they were not at all indifferent to the usefulness of that education. Under the circumstances they began to attach increasing importance to the continuance of the Calcutta Madrasa as the only viable institution of Islamic education. Hence the attempts to secularize that institution were resisted with all ingenuity and persistence. In fact the story of those attempts and the Muslims' opposition to them occupies a significant place in the history of the evolution of the government's educational policy and the Muslims' attitude to it. It has therefore been dealt with separately in the following chapter. Before narrating that story, however, it is worthwhile to note briefly another immediate effect of the educational resolution of 1835, namely, the diversion of the Mohsin Trust Funds to English education, depriving the Muslims of their benefit to which they were clearly entitled.

#### V. DIVERSION OF THE MOHSIN TRUST FUNDS

True to the spirit of the resolution of 7 March 1835 the government diverted the Mohsin Trust funds to English education in a way which benefited the well-to-do section of the Hindu community only. Hājī Muhammad Mohsin was a *Shi'ī* Muslim of Persian origin settled at Hugli. He had made considerable fortunes by trade and commerce and also inherited vast landed estates from his sister, Munni Jan Begam, who died in 1803. Mohsin had



however no children, nor any other close relatives to inherit his properties. Hence on 20 April 1806 he executed a will creating a trust on his property. The deed of trust recites that from generation to generation in the testator's family certain expenses had been incurred and usages observed in connection with the "Imāmbārā" at Hugli. As he had no children by whom those duties could be performed he desired to make provision for their continued discharge. He therefore made over the said landed estates to two managers with the instructions that they should divide the net income of the property into nine equal shares, two of which they should keep for their own use, three they should devote to the expenses of celebrating the usages and festivals connected with the Imāmbārā, its repair and maintenance and also those of the attached burial ground; while the remaining four shares were to be spent in paying salaries and pensions to a list of persons who appear from the records to be officers and servants of the Imāmbārā.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, thus, the endowment was made for the support and maintenance of the Imāmbārā, its usages and ceremonies and the persons employed in it. The founder added the provision that "the managers after me will exercise their discretion and authority either to continue or discontinue" the allowances and pensions; but no direction was given as to what use should be made of any savings which might accrue from the discontinuance of salaries and pensions.

A year before the creation of the trust, however, one Mirza Banda-Ullah instituted a suit against the Ḥājī claiming the estates under a pretended will. This suit was prosecuted from Court to Court upto the Privy Council and lasted some thirty years, during the whole of which period it was uncertain whether the endowment was valid or not. Meanwhile Ḥājī Muhammad Mohsin died in 1813, and the managers whom he had appointed seem to have entered immediately into mismanagement and embezzlement. In 1817 the government intervened in the affairs of the endowment, dismissed the managers, and appointed an officer

<sup>1</sup> See copy of the *Waqf-nāma* together with its English translation in *Collection of Papers Relating to Hooghly Imambarah*, 1815-1910, Calcutta, 1914. Also *Report of the Muhammadan Educational Endowments Committee*, Calcutta, 1888, pp. 32-33 and XXII-XXIII of the Appendices.

to administer it under the orders of the Board of Revenue and some Local Agents. The son of one of the dismissed managers disputed the validity of the order of dismissal in the civil courts; but his suit, after experiencing some vicissitudes of fortune, was ultimately unsuccessful.

In the same year (1817) the Board of Revenue founded a Madrasa at Hugli out of the trust funds at an annual cost of rupees 6,060. In 1821, however, the government sold the endowment estates in *putni* tenures, that is subject to a quit-rent fixed in perpetuity, to some Hindu zamindars at a price of about six lakhs of rupees. As Mirza Banda-Ullah's suit was still pending in the Privy Council, it was made a condition of the sale that if the case were lost and the new owner refused to confirm the sale, the purchase-money should be returned with interest. To meet that possible charge, the proceeds of the sale were invested in government securities and a total of about ten lakhs of rupees was accumulated by 1835.

It so happened that about the time the Anglicists carried the day before them and the government adopted the educational resolution of 7 March 1835 the suit in the Privy Council terminated in favour of the deceased Ḥājī. The General Committee of Public Instruction had already fixed their eyes on the Mohsin Trust Funds. Now, on their recommendation, the Governor-General made a decision, on 28 October of the same year, about the application of these funds. In accordance with the wish of the testator three-ninths of the income from the property were reserved for the expenses and ceremonies connected with the Imāmbāra; but of the 2/9ths meant for the managers, only one *mutawalli* was to be appointed who was to receive 1/9th of the income. The remaining 1/9th together with the surplus accruing from the lapse and discontinuance of pensions and salaries for which 4/9ths of the income had been allocated by the deed of trust, were "appropriated to the purposes of education by the formation of a Collegiate institution imparting instruction of all kinds in the higher departments of education...."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly a

<sup>1</sup> Govt. of India's letter No. 282 of 28 October 1835, to the G.C.P.I., *Report of the Muhammadan Educational Endowments Committee, op.cit.*, p. 34.

college for higher English education was opened at Hugli on 1 August 1836. The existing Madrasa there was attached to the college under the designation of its "Oriental Department." Most of the funds and all the attention were however devoted to the "College" only. An amount of rupees 1,40,000 out of the accumulated capital of the Mohsin Trust Funds was laid out for the proposed college building, while an annual sum of rupees 54,000 was made available from the income of the trust property for the maintenance of the college.

It must be observed that the government did a good deed by saving the trust funds from the greed and mismanagement of the managers appointed by the late Hājī; but in applying the trust funds for higher English education the government were clearly swayed by their changed attitude regarding education. Granting that in their assumed role of trustees the government exercised the discretion given to the trustees by the testator, the substantial amount thus available from a Muslim trust should have been applied exclusively for the education of the Muslims, consistently with the implied intention of the testator as well as with the policy pursued by the government themselves in respect of the Hindu College, the more so as the Muslims had already shown a genuine desire for English education and as the proposal for further extending that education in the Calcutta Madrasa had precipitated the controversy which resulted in the resolution of 7 March 1835. The College was established not in the capital city of Calcutta where the need for a central English college for all the communities had been strongly felt since the mid-twenties, nor even in an area like Jessore where the trust estates were situated and where the proportion of Muslim and Hindu populations was fairly balanced, but at Hugli which was predominantly a Hindu area with Muslims numbering not more than 2-3 percent of the total population in the town and the whole district. It was extremely difficult, almost impossible, for the Muslims of the other districts, whose general poverty was by then an acknowledged fact, to send their wards to Hugli and maintain them there for study at the college.

Not that the point was not raised at that time. Dr. Wise, president of the Local Committee set for the purpose of establishing the college, did indeed suggest to offer stipends to Muslim students and to make some provision for their food and lodging at Hugli, but the proposal was turned down by Macaulay, president of the General Committee of Public Instruction, as "unacceptable" and "useless."<sup>1</sup> Not unnaturally, therefore, the attendance of Muslim students in the College did not exceed at any time 2 to 3 percent of the total number of its students.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, as there was a rush of students belonging to wealthy Hindu families who were both able and willing to pay fees, the principal, with the approval of the G.C.P.I., introduced in 1838 the system of payment of fees and also deposits of money for books etc. This measure also worked hard against the Muslims who were already at a disadvantage, geographically as also financially, in comparison with the Hindus. The records show that from time to time a number of Muslim students were obliged to withdraw from the college for not being able to pay the fees, or their names were struck off the rolls for non-payment of the fees. Nor "was the course of studies so arranged", as A.R. Mallick rightly points out, "as to be acceptable to the Muslims, for English and Bengali alone were taught", without any provision for integrating these with courses in Arabic and Islamic studies.<sup>3</sup>

The use of the Mohsin Trust funds almost solely for the college at Hugli appears all the more step-motherly in view of the fact that the Madrasa at that place as also the Calcutta Madrasa continued to languish in consequence of a lack of requisite finance and a remarkable apathy of the authorities. In the former institution the students were not grouped into specific classes, nor were the courses of studies systematized and defined. There was a lamentable dearth of efficient teachers. Even the existing teachers were heavily burdened. Every teacher had either too many subjects or too many students to teach. An English class attached

<sup>1</sup> See Mallick, *op.cit.*, 265.

<sup>2</sup> Of the 1013 students who took part in the first annual examination of the college, 31 were Muslims. *Report of the G.C.P.I.*, 1836, pp. 123-125, quoted in *ibid.*, 258.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

to the Madrasa was open to Hindu as well as Christian students. Proposals for reform and improvement had been made from time to time, but no effective step was taken in this regard, nor the necessary funds allowed for the purpose. Similarly the affairs of the Calcutta Madrasa, particularly its English department, continued to be most unsatisfactory. In 1837 there were as many as 155 students in the department; but the number gradually fell due to utter mismanagement and lack of efficient teachers. Proposals to provide good teachers were not accepted mainly on the ground of finance. Sometimes even good teachers were transferred from that institution to the Hindu College, and in the mid-forties the salary of the Headmaster was reduced to rupees 200 only. In 1847 an Anglo-Arabic department (class) was indeed opened for the benefit of the students of the Arabic department (the Madrasa proper); but even for doing that the government sought sanction of the Court of Directors for spending one hundred rupees per month. The sanction was reluctantly given, but the government was advised to economise and adjust expenses of the institution in other respects. As in the Hugli Madrasa, so also in the Calcutta Madrasa, the number of teachers was disproportionately inadequate or they were unreasonably burdened. Sometimes as many as 90 students studying at various levels were under one teacher only, and sometimes only three teachers had to attend to nearly a hundred boys divided into six classes.<sup>1</sup> Thus while the Mohsin trust funds were liberally bestowed on the Hugli College attended almost entirely by Hindu students, a few hundred rupees were not spared to make even the English classes at the Hugli and Calcutta Madrasas effective and useful.

<sup>1</sup> See for a summary of reports of the G.C.P.I., relating to the Madrasa and covering the period from 1837 to 1854 *ibid.*, 232-245.

## APPENDIX A TO CHAPTER VI

Petition of the Muslims of Bengal against the proposed  
abolition of the Calcutta Madrasa(Translation from Persian)<sup>1</sup>

The Sovereigns of former times, in all ages and of all religions, have made it a principle to encourage literature and the sciences, and to promote the cultivation of the languages of different tribes and nations, deeming their own credit and the character of their rule to be deperendant thereon; but more particularly have the rulers of the British nation of past times adopted this principle. — Further, it has been an object of the especial care of all kings, past and present, and of all rulers of cities and countries, to study the improvement of every class of their subjects, and to keep them contented and happy, deeming this course essential to the security and strengthening of their rule; they have never wilfully vexed the spirit of their people; nor have they thought it right to follow courses tending to break the hearts and hurt the feelings of those under their sway. Every one of them, in proportion as he has been actuated by these principles, has obtained the reward of fame and popularity; and the designs of their enemies have been confounded and utterly consumed like straw and stubble in the fire of their good intentions and good government. But more especially the rulers of Inglistan, from the very first commencement of their rule in Hindoostan and Bengal, studious of their good name amongst the people, have sought the affections of all classes of their subjects by showing kindness and consideration to all; and that the foundation of their dominion might settle deeply, it has been their principle especially to consult the feelings of the Moosulmans, and to avoid by all means giving them just cause of offence and vexation. In all ways they have endeavoured to gladden the hearts of this class of their subjects, because it was from them and through them that they derived their dominion. On this account in particular the reputation of the English Rulers has become resplendent as the sun at noonday, and the fame of their justice and equitable administration is on the tongues of the natives of all countries as a proverb and a by-word. In illustration of this, it will be sufficient to refer to the measures adopted for establishing the situation of *Kazee* and the practice of taking *Futwahs* in trials; but a stronger sample was in the establishment of the *Mudrissa* for conveying instruction in the languages and literature of Islam. Accordingly, when heretofore the mournful report of the dissolution of the *Mudrissa* was bruited abroad, we looking to the past line of conduct and principles of our Rulers treated this report at once as a falsity, deeming it opposed to the uniform policy of and preceding Governments; but as this matter is now confirmed to us from various quarters, and though contray to all expectation is yet what we have to apprehend and fear (for the intention to abolish the *Mudrissa* has been told to us over and over again and by many) we are confounded and beside ourselves at the intelligence. It is the duty of subjects and dependants to represent humbly what may occur to them

<sup>1</sup> *India Public Consultations*, 13 March 1835, No. 9.

calculated to promote the welfare and reputation of the Sovereign; we therefore presume to submit the following few reasons why this *Mudrissa* should be allowed to continue.

1st. On the grounds of general benevolence and charity, the promotion of which in the time of all past sovereigns and rulers has been an established motive of action, and the discarding which has been repugnant to all received principles of good policy.

2ndly. Through the foundation of the *Mudrissa* the English India Company, in all towns, and countries, from the East to the West, has obtained reputation, and credit for well-directed charity and the support of worthy objects, as well as for the cultivation of literature. The contrary course at this present moment would lead to loss of this character in all climates and all lands.

3rdly. Warren Hastings (who was well-acquainted with the excellencies of Arabic Literature, and with the extent of its science, and who appreciated intelligent and well informed persons, and was himself preeminent for intelligence and a highly cultivated mind) founded this *Mudrissa* of high repute out of his love for the people under his rule, (for in truth he was a Father of the People, and regarded them as his own children,) and more especially out of his regard, and high consideration for men of learning and elegant literature, who stood to him in the relation of respected dependants before a well-beloved superior.

His object was that we poor men or in the straightened circumstances, then wanting the adornments of learning and cultivated intellect, might through it attain the great blessing of these attainments; and that we helpless wanderers in the darkness and bewilderment of ignorance, might be clad in the bright garments of knowledge and enlightenment. From this cause especially has the reputation of this gentleman for philanthropy and tender consideration towards the poor spread far and wide in all countries and cities, and his name is high as a promoter of science, and encourager of learned men, no less than as a liberal protector of all under his rule. Every one is open-mouthed in singing praises and in offering prayers for this unparalleled statesman; and small and great, from the date of the founding of the *Mudrissa* to this day, are united in admiration of his high qualities. But now some men utterly ignorant of the literature and science of Arabia, and blind to its beauties and advantages, have conceived the project of destroying the *Mudrissa*, and causing the sciences of Arabia to cease; at which all men and all subjects of the state are in a ferment of agitation and despair at what may not come next.

4th. The British authorities who established and have supported the *Mudrissa*, had in view only the welfare of the people, the gratification of the poor, and the teaching of the children of those in narrow circumstances. The establishment of schools and hospitals has no other more beneficial end than this; to destroy this institution and restrain people from the acquisition of the knowledge it imparted, and the moral and religious principles it instilled, can only produce distress, vexation, and heartrending to all classes.

5th. Through the continuance of the *Mudrissa*, and the cultivation of the literature and science taught therein, the territory of the Company has derived lustre, and the credit of its Government stands high amongst nations; if it be

destroyed, and this knowledge-market be closed (that is, if the sources of instruction be dried up) and there be a dearth in consequence of men of learning and education, this bright reputation will be clouded, and the credit of the country ruined and destroyed.

6th. Through the establishment of the *Mudrissa* many, many students are annually instructed in useful knowledge, and thence proceeding into the interior obtain high appointments in the cities and zillahs of Hindoostan. There are at this time near two hundred (200) persons holding high offices who have received there their education, and from their intelligence and good conduct the administration of the country derive its character. By the demolition of the establishment which is the source of these benefits, nothing but evil and mal-administration will be engendered in each and every town and zillah.

7th. From the time when the report of the abolition of the *Mudrissa* first gained ground, all classes small and great of the people have taken up the idea that the object and end of this measure is to eradicate the literature and religious system of Islam, in order that the measure may tend to the dissemination of the religion of the proposers and originators of the measure itself, and so the subjects of the state may be caused to become Christians. It has never been the custom of past sovereigns of esteemed reputation, to endeavour to lead their subjects to their own religion by inflictions and injuries; therefore all persons are distressed and heartbroken, and bewildered and alarmed at the idea of the Government yielding to such proposition. We trust and hope that, in consideration of all that has been urged above, the Government will, from motives of justice, philanthropy, and general benevolence, and to ensure its own stability, give orders for the continuance of the *Mudrissa*, and of the teaching and learning of the literature and science of Islam (the benefits of which are so evident and widely disseminated) on the footing on which it has so long existed, and thus relieve us from the anxiety, and distress, and alarm, the bewilderment, the state of agitation into which we have been thrown by the report above referred to.

(Signed and sealed by 8,312 persons)



## APPENDIX B TO CHAPTER VI

Copy of Hājī Muhammad Mohsin's will together with the Registrar's endorsement<sup>1</sup>

(Endorsement)

No. 122. Registered by me at Hooghly, this 9th day of June 1806, at the hour of 3, under volume 122, page 80 of book containing Deeds of Leases and other temporary transfers.

(Sd.) J. Hodges,  
Registrar.

(Translation)<sup>2</sup>

Deed of appropriation of Hajee Muhammad Mohsin, dated 9th Bysakh 1213 B.E., corresponding with 20th April 1806 A.D.

"I, Hajee Mohammad Mohsin, son of Hajee Fyzollah, son of Agha Fuuzoollah, inhabitant of the port of Hooghly, in full possession of all my senses and faculties, with my own free will and accord, do make the following correct and legal declaration. That the Zamindaree of pergunnah Qismut Sydpore, & c., appendant to Zillah Jessore, and pergunnah Sobhnal, also appendant to the zillah aforesaid, and one house situated in Hooghly (known and distinguished as Imambarah) and Imambazar, and haut (market), also situated in Hooghly, and all the goods and chattels appertaining to the Imambarah aforesaid, agreeably to a separate list; the whole of which have devolved on me by inheritance, and the proprietary possession of which I have enjoyed upto the present time. As I have neither children nor grand-children, nor other relatives, who would become my legal heirs and as it is my earnest wish and desire to keep up and continue the usages and charitable expenditures (Murasum-o-Musarroof-i-husneh) of the nature of fatehah, and tuheeat {*Fateha* and *Tahiyyat*}, & c., of the Huzerat (on whome be blessings and rewards), which have been the established customs of this family, I therefore hereby give, purely for the sake of God, the whole of the above property, with all its rights, immunities, and privileges, whole and entire, little or much, in it with it, or from it, and whatever (by way of appendage) might arise from it, or relate or belong to it, as a permanent appropriation for the following expenditure; and I have hereby appointed Rujub Uli Khan, son of Shekh Mohammad Sadiq, and Shakur Uli Khan, son of Ahmad Khan, who have been tried and approved by me, as possessing understanding, knowledge, religion and probity, mootawullees (or trustees) of the said Wuqf or appropriation, which I have intrusted to the above two individuals, that aiding and assisting each other they may consult, advise, and agree together in all matters connected with the joint management of the business of the said appropriation, in the manner following. The aforesaid mootawullees, after paying the revenues of the Government,

<sup>1</sup> *Collection of Papers Relating to Hooghly Imambarah, 1815-1910, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 225-227.*

<sup>2</sup> It is a verbatim reproduction of that made in the case of *Wasiq Ali Khan Vs. the Government* and as contained in the above-mentioned *Collection of Papers etc.*

shall divide the remaining produce of the muhals aforementioned into nine shares, of which three shares, first of all, they shall disburse in the observance of the fateha of Huzerat Syud-i-Kayunat, (head of the creation) the last of the prophets; and of the sinless Imams (on all of whom be blessings and peace of God); -and in the expenditures appertaining to the Ushra of Moharram-ul-haram (10 days of the sacred Mohurram), and all other blessed days (of feasts and festivals); and in the repairs of the Imambarah and cemetery. Two shares, the mootawallees, in equal proportion, shall appropriate to themselves for their own expenses; and four shares shall be disbursed in the payment of the servants of the establishment, and of those whose names are inserted in a separate list signed and sealed by me. In regard to the daily expenses, monthly stipends of the stipendiaries, respectable men, peadas and other persons, who, at the present moment, stand appointed, the mootawullees aforementioned, after me have full power to retain, abolish or discharge as it may appear to them most fit and expedient. I have committed the mootawlleeship to the charge of the two above-named individuals as a common (aum) towlecut. In the event of a mootawullee finding himself unable to conduct the business of the endowment, he may appoint any one whom he may think most fit and most deserving, as mootawullee to act in his stead. Consequently this writing is executed as a deed, this 9th day of Bysakh in the year of the Hijree 1221, corresponding with the Bengal year 1213, that whenever it be required, it may prove a legal deed.

Seal of  
Mohammad Mohsin

CHAPTER VII  
THE EDUCATION POLICY AND THE MUSLIMS:  
II. SECULARIZATION OF THE MADRASAS

I. THE "REFORMS" OF 1854

The appropriation of the Mohsin Trust funds for general English education and the neglect of the Calcutta and Hugli Madrasas were the result of the government's changed attitude regarding education. It appears that the affairs of these institutions were deliberately allowed to deteriorate so as to create a situation in which their continuation with the existing courses of studies would be impracticable, thus making it both necessary and easy to "reorganize" them. Such a state was indeed reached by the end of the forties when the government, in pursuance of their concept of "religious neutrality", took steps to "reform" these institutions. Accordingly it was decided in 1850 that the Calcutta Madrasa should have a European "administrative" principal who would not take part in the work of teaching but who would reform and reorganize the institution and administer it. The desired principal was found in Dr. A. Sprenger, a person of deep Christianizing sympathies. He joined his post early in 1851 and was specially commissioned by the Council of Education<sup>1</sup> to make a complete reorganization of the institution. Accordingly he turned his immediate attention not to the task of providing it with good and efficient teachers nor to the other matters which would ensure its smooth running, but to its courses of studies. These latter consisted mainly of the study of Qur'ān and *Hadīth* and other subjects connected with Islamic law. These were indeed the objects for which the Madrasa had been established and these were the very subjects which the Muslims themselves valued most. Reflecting the government's changed attitude, however, Dr. Sprenger now found fault with these subjects, not with the system and method of their teaching. He pointed out that the teaching of these subjects was contrary to the "principle of religious neutrality" and suggested that the Madrasa should be a place for teaching

<sup>1</sup> The General Committee of Public Instruction had by that time been reorganized and redesignated as the "Council of Education."

Arabic and Persian as *languages* only and not as what he called "the vehicle" for religious instruction. Hence, with the approval of the Council of Education he made drastic changes in the curricula eliminating the study of Qur'ān (*Tafsīr*) and *Hadīth* and introducing new text books.<sup>1</sup>

These changes naturally excited the misgivings of the Muslim teachers of the institution as also of the students and their parents. Dr. Sprenger precipitated a crisis by forbidding at the same time the practice, which had long been in vogue, of bringing in of Muslim dead bodies in the Madrasa compound for funeral prayers. It may be noted that the Madrasa teachers and students had been in the habit of saying their daily prayers in congregation during their stay in the Madrasa and that Muslim dead bodies were occasionally brought in for funeral prayers not because the Madrasa was considered a peculiarly religious place for such a purpose but because of the availability of a congregation of persons, particularly at the time of the usual daily prayers, needed for a funeral prayer. Sprenger's orders agitated the Madrasa students so much that they went on a protest strike. The principal clearly showed a lack of tact in dealing with the matter and he used the incident to expel more than two-thirds of the students.<sup>2</sup> Thus having purged the Madrasa of the study of Qur'ān and *Hadīth* and also of the majority of the students he submitted to the government a report in 1852 detailing the "reform" of the institution. Briefly, he suggested the teaching of Arabic and Persian as languages only, the teaching of the sciences by means of English or Urdu text-books and the amalgamation of the existing English and Anglo-Arabic departments.<sup>3</sup>

This report and the "affairs" of the Calcutta Madrasa came before the government at a time when certain incidents in connection with the Hindu College had brought home to the latter the exclusive character of that institution and had induced them to reorganize that institution too. The incidents were briefly as follows. In 1849-50 a bitter controversy developed between

<sup>1</sup> See *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. XIV (Papers relating to the establishment of the Presidency College), VIII-XV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendices II & III.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix IV.

Raja Radhakanta Deb, a leading Hindu of the city and a member of the Hindu College Managing Committee, and J. E. D. Bethune, President of the Council of Education and also President of the Hindu College Managing Committee. The controversy developed over the expulsion from the College of Gorachand Singh, a Hindu student, because he had lately been converted to Christianity. The dispute resulted in Radhakanta Deb's resignation from the College Committee.<sup>1</sup> The incident made the government realize the bitter truth that their educational policy and their marked patronage of the Hindu College had hitherto really benefited only a section of the wealthy Hindus of Calcutta who would not even tolerate a Hindu convert to Christianity to remain in the Hindu College although the government had been maintaining and nourishing it at an annual grant of 30,000 rupees besides other direct and indirect help. It also illustrated the fact that excepting the missionary schools<sup>2</sup> the Calcutta Madrasa was the only institution to which the Muslims could look up even for all the English education that they wanted to have. The matter of the Hindu College came to a head, however, in 1853 when the Hindu members of the College Committee once again came in conflict with the Education Council over the admission of an outcaste, the son of a courtesan.<sup>3</sup> This time the government determined to reorganize the institution.

Thus the questions of reorganizing the Hindu College and the Calcutta Madrasa converged in point of time. Hence the two institutions were jointly dealt with. So far as the former institution was concerned the authorities consulted the views of all the leading members of the Hindu community every one of whom opposed the idea of throwing the College open to all communities on the ground that its original founders had intended it for Hindus only, thereby creating a trust, and that in taking charge of the institution the government had done so under

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix V. See also *G.R.P.I.*, 1849-50, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that the Muslims' desire for English education had grown so strong by 1850 that some parents had started sending their children even to missionary schools. For instance, at the beginning of 1852 the General Assembly's Institution, a missionary school, had on its roll 50 Muslim students. See *C.C.O.*, March 1852, Vol. XXI, 142.

<sup>3</sup> *C.C.A.*, 12 March and 9 April 1853.

an implied contract not to interfere with its character as such. The Council of Education did not however accept this view. The upshot was the reorganization of the Hindu College, or rather the establishment of a new one, under the name of the Presidency College, which was thrown open for all classes of the population.<sup>1</sup> So far as the Madrasa was concerned the Muslims' view-point was placed before the Education Council by 'Abdul Latīf, an ex-student of the Madrasa who had been appointed a Deputy Magistrate since 1849. He pointed out that the Muslims were not averse to the study of English as such, but that they wanted that such an education should be combined with a study of Arabic and Persian. He also pointed out that there were broadly two sections among the Muslims: the more pious and the more worldly. The former were deeply attached to Islamic studies, whereas the latter were inclined to have an English education provided it was combined with at least a study of Persian language which they still regarded as the language of culture and an attainment in it a mark of distinction. He therefore suggested the maintenance of the Madrasa with its former courses of studies for the more pious section of the Muslims, and the establishment of an Anglo-Persian Department in it for the more worldly section.<sup>2</sup>

On a consideration of these suggestions along with Dr. Sprenger's report and the views expressed by the different members of the Education Council it was decided to reorganize the existing English class and the Anglo-Arabic Department (class) of the Madrasa into an Anglo-Persian Department, which was to be in fact an independent English school providing for a study of English upto the Junior Scholarship (University Entrance) standard with an admixture of courses in Persian language and the vernaculars. A branch school of a little lower standard but on the same model was to be opened at Colinga... (Calcutta) for primary English education of the Muslim boys of that locality. So far as the Madrasa itself, or the Arabic Department (as it henceforth came to be called) was concerned, the principle that

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, op.cit., 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> A. Luteef, *A Short Account of my humble efforts to promote education*, etc., Calcutta, 1886, reproduced in M. M. Ali, *Autobiography and other writings of Nawab Abdul Lateef*, Dhaka, 1968, pp. 159-60.

Arabic and Persian should be studied as languages only was accepted by the Council. In this respect neither the views of Abdul Latif nor the general sentiments of the Muslims were allowed to influence the government's decision; but by way of making the transition less offensive Dr. Sprenger was removed from the Madrasa and the changes in respect of the course of studies were left to be worked out by a new principal, Captain William Nassau Lees, who joined the Madrasa shortly afterwards. It was further laid down that the students of the Anglo-Persian Department would have the option, after completing their studies there, either to join the "Arabic Department" for higher studies in what was called "Oriental learning", or the Presidency College for completing their English Education.<sup>1</sup>

These "reforms" were put into practice early in 1854. In the same year similar reforms were carried out at the Hugli Madrasa, creating an Anglo-Persian and an Arabic Department there with similar changes in the syllabus. Thus by a curious combination of circumstances and the intention of the government to facilitate the spread of Christianity through English education, though guarded carefully behind the plea of "religious neutrality", led to a simultaneous de-Islamization of the Calcutta Madrasa and a de-Hinduization of the Hindu College. The implication of these steps were not, however, similar for the two communities. The Hindu College was not an institution for Hindu religious education but for general English education. So its being thrown open to all communities could not in any way affect the religious education of the Hindus. Nor was the Sanskrit College, the nearest parallel to the Calcutta Madrasa, touched in any way. The transformation of the Calcutta Madrasa, on the other hand, directly affected the cause of Islamic studies and the religious sentiments of the Muslims. In fact, so far as the government's attitude towards the Muslims was concerned, it was marked by an element of self-contradiction. The government would not totally do away with the Madrasa because that would arouse, above all, the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims; yet the very thing that would set at rest those susceptibilities would not be allowed

<sup>1</sup> *Selections etc.*, op.cit., 29-68.

in the Madrasa and as if by way of an escape from that inherent contradiction it was unrealistically assumed that a provision for education in Arabic as language and literature would meet the requirements of the case. The authorities seem to have either avoided or overlooked the point that a people who were acknowledgedly in need of education just could not have love for any *literature* as such.

The measures adopted by the government for the reorganization of the Madrasas and the Hindu College were generally approved by the Court of Directors in their famous education despatch of 19 July 1854. The despatch was of course wider in its scope. Besides envisaging the establishment of universities with a gradation of schools and colleges, the despatch reiterated the principle of "religious neutrality" and confirmed the government's policy of supporting the study of Arabic as language and literature without any instruction being given in the tenets of Islam. It also expressed satisfaction at the "increasing desire" of the Muslims "to acquire European knowledge" and added that any proposition which might appear to the government "to be likely to supply the wants of so large a portion of the Natives of India" would be received by the Home government "with favour."<sup>1</sup> This part of the despatch is specially significant. It is the first notable official recognition of the fact that Muslims formed a large portion of the subject population. It is also an indirect acknowledgement of the need for some special arrangement, even within the framework of the general educational system, for the education of the Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

## II. MUSLIM OPPOSITION TO THE REFORMS

That the Muslims had started showing an increasing interest in English education if it was combined with a study at least of Arabic or Persian was demonstrated by the success of the Anglo-Persian Department of the Calcutta Madrasa. By 1856

<sup>1</sup> Despatch No. 19 of 1854, paras 8, 32 and 82.

<sup>2</sup> Some such special propositions for the Muslims' education were made in the seventies and eighties of the 19th century. These will be discussed in the third volume of the present work. Meanwhile it may be noted that the view of some writers that those special measures were the result of Hunter's advocacy for the Muslims is obviously incorrect. The measures of the seventies and the eighties were definitely foreshadowed in the education despatch of 1854.



there were as many as 158 students in this department. It yearly sent up successful candidates to the "Junior Scholarship" and subsequently "the University Entrance" examination.<sup>1</sup> The working out of the "reforms" in the Arabic Department, that is the exclusion of Qur'an and *Hadīth* and the introduction of text books relating solely to language and literature, continued however to be a difficult matter. In the first instance, the Muslim teachers set their face resolutely against the changes and continued to give preference in their course of instruction to the "subjects of their own choice" as far as they could.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the students did not co-operate with the scheme and, when given a choice between "Law" and "Literature", all of them declared in favour of the former obviously because that would give them some scope for studying the principles and laws of Islam (*sharī'at*). Moreover, partly because of the authority's insistence on the revised syllabus and partly because of the introduction at that time of the system of tuition fees, the number of students fell from 173 in April 1854 to only 59 in April 1856.<sup>3</sup>

The fact was that even for studying Arabic as language and literature and Islamic law in general it was necessary to have recourse to Qur'an and *Hadīth*. This was recognized by the principal before long. Thus, in his first report on the Madrasa submitted to the Director of Public Instruction on 26 June 1855, principal Lees observed that though the policy of religious neutrality demanded that "the study of religious law should be religiously excluded, it must not be forgotten that the whole system" of Islamic law, "whether civil, religious, criminal, or international, has for its basis the 'Koran' and the 'Hadees', or sayings of the Prophet." With religion itself then for its foundation, continued Lees, "the superstructure, or any portion of it, cannot wholly be secular", and the criminal and the civil law were so blended with the religious, that to separate the one from the other "would not be very practicable." He therefore observed

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix to this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Lees' "Special Report on the Calcutta Madrasa" 11 May 1858, *Collections to Education Despatches to India*, 1861, Vol. 9 (Coll. to Despatch No. 9 of 28 February 1861), paras 35-38.

<sup>3</sup> *General Report on Public Instruction*, 1855-56, Appendix A, p. 118, quoted in Mallick, *op.cit.*, 255.

that "what has been done, perhaps unwittingly, for 70 years, need not now cause unnecessary alarm."<sup>1</sup> Even from the point of view of studying Arabic as a language, stated Lees, the study of the Qur'an was necessary. On this point his remarks even excelled those which a Muslim himself could have made. Lees wrote:<sup>2</sup>

"In comparison with most of the Arabic works the style and language of the 'Koran' must certainly be considered not only elegant, but even beautiful. It is highly expressive..... Indeed, in parts the language is lofty, and in passages where the majesty and grandeur of the Deity are described, may be said to approach the sublime. It has been universally allowed by Arabs of all ages...to be written with the greatest elegance and in the purest language, and, as a composition, incomparable. It is the first principle of Mahomedan [Islamic] law; it is the basis upon which the whole system of Arabic grammar has been constructed, and from it almost all examples have been extracted. It is the test, the touchstone, by which every composition is tried, the standard to which the language of all must be applied; nay, it is part and parcel of Arabic literature itself, for I might almost, without hesitation, assert that no orthodox Moslem has ever written an Arabic work of any description that did not contain countless allusions to and frequent extracts from it, to understand and appreciate which an intimate knowledge of "The Book", as it is termed, is undoubtedly required. Nor is this peculiarity confined to Arabic literature alone; though such may exist, I have never seen a Persian book, of the smallest pretensions, to which these remarks will not as forcibly apply; and of the truth of this statement, the well-known 'Gulistan' furnishes us with a ready example, and one that is familiar to all."

In this connection Lees indicated that it was in this light that the Muslims themselves viewed the matter and stressed that it was advisable to devise such a course of studies for the Madrasa as would be "acceptable to learned" Muslims generally.<sup>3</sup>

Lees' remarks appear to have carried some weight with the Director of Public Instruction (W. Gordon Young) who, in forwarding the report to the government recognized the need for carrying "respectable and learned" Muslims "with us" and observed that literature and law would be taught in Arabic "upto the highest attainable standard, the Koran being necessarily made use of as a text book in these branches, not (of course) as a means

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, 20 Sept. 1855, No. 80a; also in *Parl. Pap.* H/C 1859, Session II, Paper 186, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 24 (*Parl. Pap. op.cit.*, p. 93).

of religious instruction.”<sup>1</sup> The Bengal government did not, however, agree with these views of the Director and the principal with regard to the use of the Qur’ān even for the study of literature in the Madrasa. They asserted, rather dogmatically, that for the acquisition of either law or literature it was not indispensably necessary to study the Qur’ān, and stated that since it had for some years ceased to be used in the tuition of the institution, it would not now be reintroduced. To do so, they further added, would be not only contrary to the principle of “religious neutrality” but also “an unnecessary offence to the majority of English people interested in Education.”<sup>2</sup> The allusion was obviously to the missionaries and the officials with Christianizing sympathies. Being thus alive to the sentiments of the latter class of people rather than of those whose education was sought to be furthered, the government asked the Director to instruct the principal to “take immediate steps for the preparation and publication” of the suggested text-books.<sup>3</sup>

On receipt of such instruction the principal submitted a proposition, on 21 December 1855, for publishing two Arabic texts, the *Ḥamāsah* and the *Hikāyat* of Qalūbī, one book on law, the *Jāmi’ al-Ramūz*, and a *Lives of the Caliphs*, to be edited by principal Lees himself, seeking financial support for carrying out the project.<sup>4</sup> This proposition was accepted by the government and an advance of Rs. 4,340 was sanctioned to the principal, on 28 February 1856, on the condition that the sale proceeds of the books would be credited to the government until the amount was fully liquidated.<sup>5</sup>

In thus trying to deprive the education in the Madrasa of

<sup>1</sup> D.P.I. to the Scy., Govt. Of Bengal, 30 July 1855, *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, 20 Sept. 1855, No. 80 (*Parl. Pap. op.cit.*, p. 88).

<sup>2</sup> Govt. of Bengal to D.P.I., 15 Sept. 1855 *ibid.*, No. 81 (*Parl. Pap., op.cit.*, p. 99).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, 28 February 1856, Nos. 116-121 (*Parl. Pap., op.cit.*, 99-105).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 122. The sums allocated for the various books were as follows:

For publishing 500 copies of	<i>Jāmi’ al-Ramūz</i>	... Rs. 2,559
For publishing 500 copies of	<i>Ḥamāsah</i>	... Rs. 731
For publishing 500 copies of	<i>Hikāyat Qalubi</i>	... Rs. 300
For publishing 500 copies of	<i>Lives of Caliphs</i>	... Rs. 750

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Total Rs. 4,340

every Islamic tinge and introducing new text-books for that purpose the principal had necessarily to contend with the continued opposition, above all, of the Muslim teachers who gave preference in their course of instruction to books and subjects of their own choice as far as they could. This opposition did not die out when the revolts of 1857 took place. The events of that year created a new situation and had their impact, among other things, on the subject of Muslim education too. Although this development belongs to a period subsequent to that which is dealt with in the present section of the book, it may be treated here briefly for the sake of continuity of the narrative.

### III. MUSLIM LOYALTY VIS-A-VIS MUSLIM EDUCATION

The revolts of 1857 created a general impression among the Anglo-Indians of the time that the Muslims were mainly at the roots of the risings. One of the upshots of this notion was that the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, F.J. Halliday, persuaded himself, of course incorrectly and in consonance with the prevailing Anglo-Indian's prejudice against Islam, that the Muslim disloyalty was an outcome of the teachings of Islam, particularly of the course of instruction pursued in the Calcutta and Hugli Madrasas. A similar view was entertained also by the principal, Lees, who had only two years previously shown some consideration at least for the literary merits of Qur'ān and *Hadīth*. These changed attitudes gave rise to a new series of proceedings for further secularizing the Madrasas or doing away with them altogether.

Early in April 1858, when the Lieutenant-Governor was somewhat free from other pressing matters, the subject of Muslim disloyalty and its connection with their education came up for consideration. The Lieutenant-Governor then called for a report on the Calcutta Madrasa with a view to considering, as he put it, whether there was "any advantage in maintaining this institution any longer at the cost of the state."<sup>1</sup> In the report which was prepared in compliance with this requisition principal Lees fully gave vent to his new ideas. Speaking from what he called his

<sup>1</sup> Govt. of Bengal to D.P.I., No. 644, 3 April 1858, *Collections to Education Despatches*, 1861, Vol. 9, *op.cit.*

personal knowledge obtained through the “opportunities” he had of “conversing familiarly with the most influential of their class”, Lees stated that the Muslims “of these provinces, as a body, or those at least of them who are competent to form any political opinions at all, are not only not well affected towards our Government, but that if not openly, they are in heart, decidedly hostile to British supremacy in India.”<sup>1</sup> He assigned this attitude partly to the teachings of Islam and partly to the fact that the Muslims had preceded the British as the rulers of the country, a position which, stressed Lees, they could not easily forget and which many of them aspired to regain.<sup>2</sup> There were also some administrative reasons. Of the latter he made specific reference to the proceedings regarding the resumption of *lākharāj* lands which were looked upon by the Muslims as “unjust and iniquitous to a degree” and which “rendered our Government very unpopular.” Another was the preference given in government employments to those who had received an English education, which had “virtually shut their class from the hitherto chief source of emoluments.” They felt this exclusion from government service “as a class”; but they had hitherto “more than passively resisted” the government system of education because, observed Lees, “they still cherished lingering hopes of once again wielding the sovereign power” and, secondly, it had been “the firm belief of a large portion” of the Muslims, rightly or wrongly, that “it was the Government intention at some future date authoritatively to interfere” with their religion.<sup>3</sup>

Thus stating the case Lees pointed out that the influence of the Muslims, though waning, was “still considerable” and it was “consequently of some importance politically that measures should be adopted to counteract that influence..., or to ensure a contrary result.” To attain that end he suggested strongly the need for changing the “nature of the instruction given” in the Calcutta Madrasa. All idea of maintaining “at the cost of the State a

<sup>1</sup> Lees' special report on the Calcutta Madrasa, 11 May 1858, *ibid.*, (Collection to Despatch No. 7 of 28 Feb. 1861), paras 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 14-19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 20.

Mahomedan Mudrussa properly so called", stated Lees, "should be at once abandoned, and if the Institution be kept up it should be simply as one for the special cultivation of the Arabic and cognate languages, in conjunction with English." The name might even be altered from Madrasa to "Arabic College" as "marking the change in the constitution of the institution." Admission to this "Arabic College" was to be granted only to those who had passed through the English or Anglo-Persian Department. To carry out these and the other necessary reforms the "head of the institution should be armed with almost supreme powers", for a "Bengal Moulvee will not abandon his system of teaching, except under strong pressure."<sup>1</sup>

The last remark really reflected Lees' bitterness of feeling engendered by the Muslim teachers' opposition to the secularizing process. Also, much of what Lees stated about the Muslims' political views was the outcome of the feelings generated by the outbreaks of 1857; but his observations about the harmful effects of some government measures upon the Muslims and their exclusion from state employment were correct and they foreshadowed a similar analysis contained in Hunter's *Indian Musalmans* published in 1871.<sup>2</sup> The idea of using the Madrasa, however, as a means of weaning the Muslims away from their supposed path of disloyalty was a faulty one based on an equally erroneous premise about their love for Arabic as language and about the teachings of Islam.

After having submitted the above mentioned report and without having waited for the government's decision on the matter, Lees proceeded to give effect to his views. By a notification in the form of "orders" he laid down, on 11 June 1858, strict courses of studies for the Junior and Senior Scholarship examinations of the Madrasa, fixing for each portion of the course a maximum number of marks. The study of Algebra,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 36-37, 39-41.

<sup>2</sup> I have elsewhere shown that Lees had in fact a large share in the preparation of Hunter's above mentioned literary production. See *J.R.A.S.*, 1980, No. 1, pp. 30-51. It also appears that Lees was the author of the tract, *What shall we do with the Musulmans?* by "A Friend to Muhammadans but not to Muhammadanism", Calcutta, 1858 (I.O.L. Tract, 542, (L) ), for the latter contains the same ideas as those in Lees' report under notice.

Euclid and Arithmetic, which had hitherto formed a part of the courses of studies, was discontinued, thus reducing the syllabus purely to a study of law, language and literature. The course of studies and books prescribed by Lees were as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*Senior Scholarship examination (First & Second Classes)*

Subjects	Text books	Marks	
Law			
1. Jurisprudence	<i>Jāmi' al-Ramūz</i>	50	
2. Principles of law	<i>Tawzih</i>	25	100
3. Inheritance	<i>Sharifah</i>	25	
Logic	<i>Shamsiah</i>	50	100
Rhetoric	<i>Mukhtasar</i>	50	
Literature:			
1. <i>Tārikh al-Khulafā'</i> (half)	Prose (Hist)	50	100
2. <i>Tārikh al-Taimūri</i> (half)	Prose (Hist)	50	
3. <i>Hamāsah</i> (half)	Poetry	50	100
4. Motanabbi	Poetry	50	
Language			
1. Arabic into Urdu		50	100
2. Urdu into Arabic		50	
		Total marks	400

*Junior Scholarship examination (Third & Fourth classes)*

Law: <i>Sharhi-Wiqāyah</i> (Second half)	50		
Grammar: 1. Sarf: <i>Fasuli-Akbari</i>	50		
2. Naho: <i>Hidayat al-Naho</i>	50		
Literature: <i>Nawadu al-Qalūbi</i>	50		
Language: 1. Arabic into Urdu	50		
2. Urdu into Arabic	50		
		Total marks	250

*Course of study for the 5th class*

- Grammar: 1. *Fasul-i-Akbari*  
 2. *Hidayat al-Naho*  
 Literature: 1. *Qalūbi*  
 2. *Nafhat al-Yaman*

This course of studies the Maulawīs (Muslim teachers) were left free to teach. They were plainly told that the object of the government in maintaining the Arabic Department of the

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, March 1864, No. 18, paras 9-10.

Madrassa was to teach the Arabic language and that a European principal was placed "at the head of this Institution to carry out the views of the Government with regard to it" and that if after repeated attempts the principal found all his efforts futile he would "most assuredly recommend to Government that the Arabic Department of this College be abolished as a useless encumbrance to the State."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the principle on which these orders were formulated, the number of the classes which was now reduced from eight to five and the text-books prescribed for them definitely lowered the standard of the institution. The change was not therefore well received by the Muslims of Calcutta. On behalf of them the Qāḍī of the city, Maulawī 'Abd al-Bārī, and the Head Professor of the Madrasa, Maulawī Muhammad Wajīh, unsuccessfully waited upon the Lieutenant-Governor to have the principal's orders revised. They complained that the latter had been destroying the ancient constitution of the college, that he had been depriving its courses of studies of all that was valuable and that by introducing works and studies for which "no one had any respect" he had been bringing the institution into contempt of all the men of learning.<sup>2</sup> Particular dissatisfaction was expressed at the exclusion from the courses of studies of the *Hidāyah*, a celebrated law book in four quarto volumes,<sup>3</sup> and of *Sharḥ Molla*, a book on Arabic grammar of about 400 pages.

The Lieutenant-Governor's attitude was in fact more inimical and it was his requisition that had elicited principal Lees' report. Hence the Lieutenant-Governor turned a deaf ear to the Muslim protests and, though the principal had recommended the continuance of the institution in a changed and rather emaciated form, he (the Lt.-Governor) decided to do away with it altogether.<sup>4</sup> His reasons were, first, that the progress of legislation had gradually

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Hidāya fī al-Furū'*, of Burhān al-Dīn, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Farghānī al-Marghinānī al-Rishtānī (d. 593/H. 1197 A.C.). It is a commentary on the same author's *Bidāyar al-Mubtadī*. Translated into English by Charles Hamilton (London, 1791).

<sup>4</sup> Minute by the Lt.-Governor, 15 Sept. 1858, *Collections to Education Despatches*, 1861, Vol. 9 (Coll. to Despatch No. 7 of 28 February 1861).



diminished the necessity for Muslim law officers whose training was the object for which the institution had originally been established and who, he felt certain, would soon be "dispensed with altogether." Secondly, the attempt to improve the Arabic Department of the institution had hitherto "entirely failed of success", the Muslim teachers themselves, far from assisting the efforts of the principal in this respect, had "conscientiously" thwarted him by every "ingenious means" they could devise. It was not possible to "improve" the institution by employing a sufficient number of European teachers, the Lieutenant-Governor observed, for, to find Europeans in India acquainted with Arabic "was very difficult" and if "any accident were to remove the present Principal", he was "not acquainted, even by name, with any officer competent by knowledge of Arabic to supply his place, not to talk of other qualifications..." To achieve "the desired end" through the agency of the Muslim teachers was out of the question.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, even if the means in respect of personnel were available, stated Halliday, it was not worthwhile to attempt to improve the institution, for the "reform we are aiming at is, as I personally know, not merely distasteful to the existing teachers, but bitterly detested and decried by all the numerous and respectable body of Mahomedans for whose especial gratification the college is kept up at a cost to Government... the people whom we seek to please have not the smallest value for Arabic Literature, and think scorn of our new books and our new-fangled modes of teaching..."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, and here the Lieutenant-Governor revealed his attitude and decisive reasons and stated: "to encourage Arabic and nothing else but Arabic, which is what we are now doing in the Arabic Department of the Mahomedan College, is to foster against ourselves the old Mahomedan hostility, and to prolong, at our own expense, and to our continual disadvantage, the bitter sentiments of religious and political hatred of which we have but lately reaped some of the natural fruit. It is important to remember the fact, twice emphatically alluded to by Principal

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 7-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 17-18, 25.

Lees, that the Mahomedan College has produced and is producing *extensive political evil*. It is in fact a nursery of disaffection... It would perhaps have been better for us if we had never meddled with the matter at all; but having meddled with it, we ought not to act so as to make things worse than they need be."<sup>1</sup> The Lieutenant-Governor suggested therefore that the Arabic Department, or the Madrasa proper, should be abolished and that, in lieu thereof, Professorships in immediate connection with the newly established Calcutta University or at the Presidency College should be established for the teaching of the "higher walks of Arabic Learning and Literature to any sufficiently advanced Arabic students who might desire to take advantage of them."<sup>2</sup> Having written this minute the Lieutenant-Governor "again consulted" principal Lees<sup>3</sup> who then added a "Memorandum" agreeing with the proposal for abolishing the Madrasa and saying that if facilities were offered for the study of the "oriental languages", as the Lieutenant-Governor had proposed, he (Lees) would not advocate for the maintenance of what he called "Institutions for the benefit of persons of a particular religious belief."<sup>4</sup>

The way in which Lees wrote the above mentioned memorandum suggests that he had been persuaded by the Lieutenant-Governor to accept the proposal for the abolition of the Madrasa. Be that as it may, both of them were at one regarding the supposed political effects of the courses of studies hitherto pursued in the Madrasa. The difference in their attitudes lay in that the principal believed that the existence of a special institution for the study of Arabic literature would attract the Muslims towards it and would gradually make them impervious to the political influences of the other branches of Islamic learning. The Lieutenant-Governor, on the other hand, believed that the Muslims had no love for Arabic literature as such and they valued the Madrasa mainly as an institution for Islamic learning. In this

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, last para.

<sup>4</sup> Lees' memorandum, 18 September 1858, added to the Lieutenant-Governor's minute, *ibid.*

analysis he was correct; but in proposing to establish Arabic professorships in lieu of the Madrasa he seems to have adopted, perhaps unwittingly, the same assumption as that of Lees' in respect of the attraction of the Arabic literature. Yet in doing so the Lieutenant-Governor, who apparently despaired of getting qualified Europeans to staff the Madrasa, did not explain wherefrom qualified persons to act as professors would be obtained, or wherefrom the "sufficiently advanced Arabic" students to study "the higher walks of Arabic learning and literature" would come, since on the abolition of the Madrasa there would remain no other institution worth the name to teach Arabic upto the desired standard. It seems that he meant the proposal rather as an emollient to soothe the otherwise strong measure of abolishing the Madrasa than as a practical policy to be soon carried into effect.

The proposal to abolish the Madrasa did not, however, meet with the approval of the Governor-General-in-Council. They observed that to do so, specially at that point of time, would hurt the feelings of the Muslim subjects, would "increase their suspicion of our intention by stealth to undermine their religion"<sup>1</sup> and would otherwise be "viewed by them as a deliberate act of bad grace towards them, or as evincing a desire on the part of Government to force a system of education upon them which is repugnant to their feelings."<sup>2</sup> The India government also questioned the correctness of the statement that the Madrasa was a "nursery of disaffection" and observed that not only did the Muslims educated at that institution "not show any hostility to the government during the" outbreaks of 1857, but "some of them were better affected towards it than other members of the" Muslim community.<sup>3</sup> It was further observed that even if the Lieutenant-Governor's reasons were sound, it was not open to the India government to accede to his proposal in view of the Home Government's despatches of 1841 and 1854 expressing their

<sup>1</sup> Minute by H. Ricketts, 13 December 1858, *Coll. to Edn. Despatches*, 1861, Vol. 9, *op.cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Govt. of India to Bengal Govt., 2 July 1860, No. 1219, *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, July 1860, No. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, also minutes by H. Ricketts, J.P. Grant and Lord Mayo, dated respectively 13 Dec. 1858, 20 January 1859 and 20 June 1860, all in *Coll. to Edn. Despatches*, 1861, Vol. 9, *op.cit.*

“decisive” views regarding the general question of the Madrasa and confirming the policy of its continuation. The Bengal government was therefore asked on 2 July 1860 to “continue to act in the spirit of the reforms of 1854, to do this carefully and not hastily; and to give the Principal, with this view, all the authority which he ought to possess.”<sup>1</sup>

The existence of the Madrasa was thus once again saved; but the net outcome of the proceedings was a negation of the Muslims’ desire to maintain it as an institution of Islamic learning and a reconfirmation of its secularization as effected by the reforms of 1854. In this respect the India government’s denial of any desire on its part to “force a system of education” upon the Muslims which was “repugnant to their feelings” was inconsistent with the policy actually pursued. So was also the case with regard to the much emphasized principle of religious neutrality. In its true sense the principle should have meant impartiality towards and equal opportunities for all the religious systems. But that was not at all the case. Nor was the government adopting the principle in the negative sense of having nothing to do with religion in state affairs. On the contrary, it had been maintaining, out of the revenues of the country and as an essential aspect of governmental activities, an elaborate “ecclesiastical” establishment for catering to the religious needs of the votaries of Anglican (Protestant) Christianity. Financial assistance (grants-in-aid) was being given, also out of the revenues and the funds allocated for education, to missionary schools whose object and courses of studies were avowedly geared to the conversion of the students to Christianity. The government did not of course publicly and as a body directly participate in proselytizing work; but its individual members, in fact almost all persons in authority and influence, were allowed to and did actually participate, in what was called their “private” capacities, in the task of furthering the cause of Christianity and in assisting the missionaries.

It may also be recalled that the educational policy of the government was formulated largely with a view to facilitating the dissemination of Christianity among the conquered population. It

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, July 1860, No. 11.

was from this stand-point that the principle of religious neutrality was invoked in the educational measures. In the name of this high-sounding phrase a system of education bereft of all instructions in the religious systems of the people was installed not only in the Madrasas but also in other government educational institutions. It ensured the rise of a whole new generation of educated youths who would have no grounding in their own religious systems. That in itself would prepare a very fertile field for the missionaries' work. It may be noted that the government was providing a system of education not for a people having no religion at all but for peoples who had their own well-established systems of religion, some of which was openly dreaded as a "formidable antagonist of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> These systems needed to be demolished or at least weakened if the rulers' religion was to make any appreciable headway. That is exactly what the so-called policy of religious neutrality aimed at. For one thing, neither in England nor in the other European countries had the philosophy of a purely "secular" system of education bereft of any religious instruction been as yet accepted either in the private or in the public sectors.

The India government's directive to continue the Madrasa did not therefore advance matters for the Muslims in any way. It left them, at the best, where they were in 1854. On the other hand the discussions about the fate of the Madrasa throughout 1858 to 1860 and the general suspicion about the Muslims engendered by the outbreaks of 1857 had a seriously unsettling effect on their education and future as a whole. Moreover, whatever might have been the attitude of the "supreme government", the ideas and attitudes of the immediate authorities, namely the Bengal government and its education department, mattered more. Principal Lees, who continued to supervise and administer the Madrasa, thought that the India government's above mentioned orders had invested him with unlimited powers regarding the

<sup>1</sup> For instance, amidst the discussions on education William Muir, a high official, opened his article on "The Mohammedan Controversy" published in the *Calcutta Review* for 1845 with the remarks: "Mohammedanism is perhaps the only undisguised and formidable antagonist of Christianity. From all the varieties of heathen religions Christianity has nothing to fear,... But in Islam we have an active and powerful enemy;..."

running of the institution. Hence he proceeded to transform it into a special Arabic college. The Director of Public Instruction, on the other hand, upheld the notion of either doing away with the institution or assimilating it to the general system. The resultant conflict and controversy between the two led to an utter mismanagement and decline of not only the Arabic Department (Madrasa proper) but also the Anglo-Persian Department which had proved a marked success till 1860. That situation, along with other events, gave rise to another series of proceedings in the end of the sixties which formed the background of the educational measures of the seventies and which may more appropriately be dealt with in the next volume of this work.

In the meantime it may be observed that the educational policy of the government during the period under review, far from benefiting the Muslims, rather completed the process of their decline. During the first half of this period, broadly, their own system of education broke down and the existing madrasas (the so-called indigenous institutions) died out partly because of their poverty consequent upon the political and administrative changes and partly because of such government measures as the resumption of *lākharāj* lands. In the meantime the educational policy which the government evolved with undoubted Christianizing intentions rightly aroused the Muslims' religious susceptibilities. Even then the Muslims were not averse to a study of the English language as such. Indeed the eagerness evinced for such a study by the Madrasa students had occasioned a proposal in the late twenties of the century for opening a central English college in Calcutta at an estimated annual cost of about 22,000 rupees; but the government turned down the proposal and, partly because of their fraternity with the *bania* class and partly actuated by the "downward filtration" theory, bestowed all their attention and patronage on the "Hindu College", aiding it with no less than 30,000 rupees a year, for the exclusive benefit of only a section of the wealthy Hindus of Calcutta till at least 1854. A far more substantial amount was indeed available from the Mohsin Trust which could more fittingly be applied for the Muslims' education; but that amount too was used for general English education in

such a way as benefited the Hindus of a particular locality. Simultaneously the government undertook the process of de-Islamization of the Calcutta Madrasa in the name of the so-called principle of religious neutrality jeopardizing even the modest advances that had been made towards English education in that institution too. During that time as also afterwards the educational authorities alleged that the Muslims, because they had preceded the British as the ruling power, had an antipathy towards English education. The reproach has been echoed more frequently in subsequent writings. How far the allegation correctly represents the attitudes of the Muslims in general and how far it reflects the rulers' own complex and frame of mind is a question which calls for a more serious enquiry than has hitherto been made. The obvious success of the Anglo-Persian Department, however, clearly throws doubts on the correctness of the allegation and brings into bold relief the fact that neither proper nor impartial educational opportunities had been placed before the Muslims.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VII

Statement showing the success of the Anglo-Persian<sup>1</sup>  
Department of the Calcutta Madrasa, 1854-61.

Names of students	Distinctions	Position held in 1862
1853-54		
Golam Sarwar	Obtained Arabic Senior and English Junior Scholarships.	Translator, High court.
Adalat Khan	Obtained English Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Deputy Inspector of Schools.
Muhammad Ali	Ditto. Ditto.	Deputy Magistrate, Rangpur.
1855		
Daliluddin Ahmad [Dalil al-Din Ahmad]	Obtained Arabic Senior and English Junior Scholarships; entered Presidency College.	Deputy Magistrate, Midnapor.
Fyazuddin Ahmad [Fayyāz al-Dīn Ahmad]	Obtained English Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Teacher, Colingah Branch School.
Abdullah	Ditto. Ditto.	Teacher, Anglo-Persian Department of the Madrasa.
Aladad Khan [Allah Dād Khān]	Ditto. Ditto.	Deputy Inspector of Schools.
1856		
Syed Obaidullah	Obtained English Junior Scholarship; entered Presidency College.	Deputy Magistrate, Jessore.
Sobhan Baksh [Subbān Bakhsh]	Ditto. Ditto.	Dead.
Kasim Ali [Qāsīm 'Alī]	Ditto. Ditto.	Teacher, Colingah Branch School.
1857		
Abdul Jabbar	Passed University entrance Examination; obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Deputy Magistrate, Bhawaniganj.
Abdur Razzaq	Ditto. Ditto.	Teacher, Anglo-Persian Department.
Abdur Rahman	Ditto. Ditto.	Writer, Accountant-General's Office.
Ahmad	Ditto. Ditto. Obtained B.A. Degree.	Deputy Magistrate, Pabna.
Muhammad Ali	Ditto. Ditto.	Teacher, Anglo-Persian Department.
Rahim Baksh	Ditto. Ditto.	Dead.
Rabiul Hosain	Ditto. Ditto.	Daroga of Midnapore.

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Edn. Proceedings*, March 1864, No. 26.



Names of students	Distinctions	Position held in 1862
1858		
Adalat Khan	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Munshi, Fort William College.
1859		
Ali Hafez	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Translator, High Court.
Ihtimam Hosain	Ditto, Ditto. entered Medical College.	Dead.
Hyder Hosain	Passed Entrance exam., obtained no scholarship.	Dead.
Muhammad Dayem	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Student, Presidency College.
Odaitullah	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Medical College.	Student, Medical College.
Abdulla	Ditto. Ditto.	Munshi, Fort William College.
Safiur Rahman	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Civil Engineering College.	Unemployed.
1860		
Abdul Qadir	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Student, Presidency College.
Abdul Rahim	Passed Entrance exam., obtained no scholarship.	Clerk, Financial Department.
Kalimur Rahman	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior Scholarship, entered Presidency College.	Assistant Translator, Legislative Branch, Home Department.
Muhammad Ahmad	Passed Entrance exam., obtained no scholarship on account of advanced age; entered Presidency College as a free student.	Student, Presidency College.
Hamiduddin	Passed Entrance exam., obtained Junior scholarship; entered Presidency College.	Ditto.
Muhammad Yasin	Ditto. Ditto.	Unemployed.
1861		
Ahamad	Passed Entrance exam., obtained no scholarship.	

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES AND THE MUSLIMS

The Muslim protest against the educational resolution of 1835, their opposition to the secularization of the Calcutta and Hugli Madrasas and their lack of enthusiasm for the government's educational system were in a large measure a reaction to the Christianizing intentions that underlay those measures. In the present chapter the essential features of the Christian missionary activities in Bengal during this period and the Muslims' response to them are noted briefly.

#### I. ASPECTS OF THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

Contact between Islam and Christianity was nothing new. It had more than a thousand years' history to its account before the establishment of British supremacy in south Asia. A new phase of development started, however, with the European expansion over Asia and Africa following the geographical discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Portuguese nation who led the van of this expansion engaged themselves in systematic proselytizing work along with their trade and colonization. Their efforts were however largely discredited by the tyranny, oppression and physical torture which they often used to secure converts to Christianity. Not that they did not send peaceful missions to propagate their religion. At least three Jesuit missions were sent to the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar;<sup>1</sup> but these signally failed to achieve their object though the missionaries never ceased to entertain high hopes of success. The leader of the third mission, Francis Xavier, prepared a treatise on the claims of Christianity as against Islam and presented it to Akbar's son and successor, Jahāngīr. A counter-treatise in reply was quickly prepared and circulated by a Muslim scholar named Ahmad ibn Zain al-'Ābedīn.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See C.H. Payne, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, London, also E.D. Maclagan, "Jesuit Missions to the emperor Akbar", *J.A.S.B.*, Part I, Vol. LXV, 1896, pp. 38-113.

<sup>2</sup> Both these works are noticed at some length in the preface of Dr. S. Lee's *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism*, Cambridge, 1824. See *infra*, p. 216.

With the decline of the Portuguese power and the ultimate success of the English over their European rivals in the field of commerce and colonial expansion there began an era of more systematic Protestant Christian missionary activities in the south Asian subcontinent. The success of the English coincided with the decline of the Ottoman power under continued European pressure on the one hand and the disintegration of the Mughal state in south Asia on the other. The situation was viewed by Christian enthusiasts in Britain as an opportunity for propagating Christianity among the newly conquered people. Many an enthusiast openly pointed out that hitherto Christianity had not been able to make much headway against Islam because the church had been clogged and obscured by stifling errors and corruption and because of "hostility of the Mohammedan governments." But now those obstacles were removed, the one by the "Reformation" and the other by the establishment of British supremacy in south Asia. A "grand era of the connection of Christianity with Islam arose with the dominion of Europeans in India."<sup>1</sup> It was further pointed out that since the presence of Europeans "was generally the effect of conquest" it "invested the conqueror's faith and opinions with the prestige of power and authority." Here too, it was further argued, "our opponents [i.e. Muslims] are greatly outnumbered by the Hindoos; and the mixed character of the population might be expected to have broken the bond of Mohammedan union, so far at least as to weaken the thralldom of opinion and custom..."<sup>2</sup>

Thus a spirit of settling rather an age-old account with Islam inspired many of those actively connected with the Christianizing efforts. Even for the sake of converting the Hindus it was thought necessary to assault and dislodge Islam— "there are more hopeful tokens among the Hindoos than amongst Mohammedans; but that should not discourage us from our controversy with the latter... The Hindoo, sickened by idolatry, turns to the other two religions which surround him, and inquires into their respective

<sup>1</sup> W. Muir, *The Mohammedan Controversy*, Edinburgh, 1897, p. 5. The essay was first published in 1845.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

claims; and we must be ready at hand to meet him with the proofs of our most Holy faith... The Hindoo, who has cast off his hereditary idolatry, is bound by no family shackles or national prejudices to Islam; and if his conscience be really awakened, the comparison of the two religions, Christianity and Mohammedanism, cannot fail to be of essential service and, under God's blessing, to lead to practical results."<sup>1</sup> Thus Islam was considered a rival even in respect of the missionaries' labour among the Hindus. The above view was indeed born of practical experience. In so far therefore as the Muslim scholars took up their pen in defence of Islam and launched a counter-offensive against Christianity they might be said to have indirectly fought also the Hindus' battle against the missionary onslaughts. Indeed it will be seen later on that many of the objections raised by the Muslims were also taken up by the Hindus in their counter-offensive against Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

The duty to propagate Christianity was specifically imposed upon the East India Company's chaplains by the Charter Act of 1698 which asked them, besides performing their ministerial function, to "instruct the Gentoos" in the Protestant religion. For a time after the establishment of their dominion over Bengal, however, the Company opposed the entry of missionaries there for fear of violation of the monopoly of trade. It was genuinely apprehended that many private English traders would throng to the Company's dominions in the garb of missionaries and teachers. That opposition, as already indicated in the last chapter, was soon overcome by the combined pressure of the English evangelicals and the free-traders. Consequently the Charter Act of 1813 formally opened the gates for the missionaries' entry into the Company's territorial possessions and also made its government in India undertake some "educational" responsibility. Henceforth the government, though it did not directly and publicly engage itself in proselytizing work, so shaped its educational policy as to facilitate the progress of Christianity and indirectly did all that was possible to help the missionaries' work. Its officers were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.99-100.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, P. 222.

allowed privately to support and help the missionaries. It also passed some special legislation to encourage conversion to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> In the event the policy of religious neutrality professed by the government was at its best a subjective, if not hostile, neutrality.

The English “evangelicals” organized themselves for systematic missionary work mainly in the last decade of the eighteenth century. A number of missionary societies were established at that time. The most important of them were:

1. The Baptist Missionary Society
2. The Church Missionary Society
3. The London Missionary Society
4. The Free Church of Scotland Mission
5. Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

These societies were assisted and supported by a number of supplementary publication and propaganda bodies like the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, British and Foreign Bible Society, the London Tract Society, Christian Literature Society, etc. Intellectually the Christianizing drive was aided by the work of the “Orientalists” among the Company’s officials as well as in the British and European universities.<sup>2</sup>

It is not necessary to mention here in detail the dates and circumstances of the arrival in Bengal of the missionaries of the various societies. Suffice it to mention that by the first quarter of the nineteenth century the missionaries of almost all the above-mentioned societies were well settled with their work in Bengal. Also missionaries of other societies in Europe and America arrived in course of time. By the middle of the century there were as many as 71 mission stations in Bengal established by the different societies. Of these stations 30 were situated in and around Calcutta and the rest were distributed in the various

<sup>1</sup> Act XXI of 1850, for instance. See *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> The beginning of “oriental” studies goes back to 1285 when Honorius IV took steps to establish schools of Arabic to convert the “Saracens” to Christianity. The Council of Vienna, 1312, recommended the same method and proposed the establishment of Professorships at Oxford, Salamanca, Bologna and Paris. Ever since the beginning the “studies” of the “orientalists” have been characterized by a tenacious prejudice against Islam. Indeed the best known “orientalists” have been from among the ranks of Christian missionaries and clergymen.

districts. Each station was in charge of one or two European missionaries, assisted by a number of preachers and teachers. Each station also ran a number of schools of different types.<sup>1</sup> The parent missionary societies in Britain had their "corresponding committees" in Calcutta and other principal cities in the Company's dominions. Similarly the Tract and Christian Literature societies had their branches at these places.

It was also during the first quarter of the nineteenth century that the missionaries developed the methods which they have hitherto followed. The most common practice was preaching and propaganda tours through the country delivering lectures at market places, city streets or any other place where a congregation of people were found. This was supplemented by distribution of numerous publications relating to Christianity or in denunciation of Islam or Hinduism. For this purpose the missionaries established their own printing presses, mainly at Serampore and Calcutta. From these and other commercial presses translations of the Bible in various languages and books and tracts were published in large numbers. As the work of preaching progressed the missionaries began to publish also a number of journals, newspapers and periodicals. In fact the first Bengali newspaper, the *Samāchār Darpan* (The Mirror of News) was published by the Baptist missionaries of Serampore in 1818. The missionary journals and newspapers carried on the propaganda for Christianity besides dealing with other matters and news of public interest. In the course of their propaganda drive through the vernacular language the missionaries, mainly the Serampore Baptists under the leadership of Carey, introduced a new Bengali prose style.<sup>2</sup> Its chief feature was a calculated and systematic elimination of Arabic and Persian words which had been naturalised in the language and which were now substituted by

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter. Also see M. Wylie, *Bengal as a Field of Missions*, London, 1854 and J. Long, *A Handbook of Bengal Missions in connection with the Church of England*, London, 1848. For a general account see Rev. M.A. Sherring, *The History of Protestant Missions in India from their commencement in 1706 to 1881* (New revised edition by Rev. E. Storrow), London, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> See S.K. De, *History of the Bengali Literature in the nineteenth century, 1800-1825*, Calcutta, 1929.

Sanskrit words.<sup>1</sup>

The missionaries' most formidable method was, however, education. It was their pressure which had induced the Company's government to undertake a programme of "education" for their subject people. The working out of that programme was also largely in the hands of officials deeply concerned in the missionaries' work. Apart from the government's education policy, the missionaries themselves fixed their attention upon the conversion of the youth and rising generation of the population. For that purpose they established and conducted a number of vernacular and English schools connected with their different stations throughout the country. In these institutions free education was provided to the students. The missionaries and their preachers acted as teachers in these institutions and the Bible and other works on Christianity formed an essential part of the courses of studies. During the period upto 1833, commonly referred to as the "age of Carey", the emphasis was generally on vernacular education; but from the latter year there was a shift of emphasis on English education and the rising generation in Calcutta and other urban areas. The idea was to raise from among the influential and urban sections of the population a class of teachers and preachers who would themselves instruct their people in Christianity. This view, as already mentioned in a previous chapter,<sup>2</sup> was supported by influential officials in the education department resulting in the government's educational resolution of 1835. An outcome of this emphasis on English education as a means of propagating Christianity was the publication of a considerable number of English journals and newspapers by the missionaries in the thirties and the forties.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was this prose style which was spoken of by the Hindu memorialists of Calcutta in 1838 as "pure Bengali." see *supra*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> The most important of these English periodicals and newspapers were *The Calcutta Christian Observer* (monthly, started in 1832), *The Christian Intelligencer* (Calcutta, weekly, started in 1834), *The Friend of India* (weekly, Serampore, started in 1835), *The Calcutta Christian Advocate* (weekly, started in 1839), *The Missionary Herald* (Calcutta, weekly, started in 1840), *The Free Churchman* (weekly Calcutta, started in 1843), and *The Calcutta Christian Herald* (weekly, started in 1844). *The Calcutta Review*, a quarterly periodical devoted to religious as well as political and administrative matters, was also started in the latter year and was edited by the Rev. A. Duff.

Towards the end of the fifties, however, there was a sort of return to Carey's policy and a renewed emphasis on vernacular education and the education of the masses.<sup>1</sup> A subsidiary method adopted by the missionaries was their programme of philanthropic work with a view to attracting distressed people towards Christianity. Thus the missionaries established and maintained a number of orphanages and advanced material help to the afflicted people in times of famine and natural calamities. Such material means proved fruitful on a number of occasions.<sup>2</sup>

Thus by systematic preaching tours and lectures, by distributing numerous tracts and publications, by means of their missionary stations and educational institutions scattered throughout the country, by maintaining orphanages and distributing material aids in times of calamity, and by publishing a number of vernacular and English journals and periodicals, the missionaries embarked upon an ambitious project of converting the people to Christianity. Considering their organization and the extent of their efforts and methods it may be said that the missionaries brought as far as possible the political prestige and influence of the British nation, their material and intellectual resources and their technological development consequent upon the industrial revolution together to bear in the appropriate manner on the task of Christianizing the subject population.

## II. WILLIAM CAREY'S ATTACKS ON ISLAM AND *THE SĀBĀTĪAN PROOFS*

Although legal permission was not given for the missionaries' entry into the Company's dominions till the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, they did not in fact wait for that enactment. Quite a few of them arrived in Bengal even before the turn of the century. The most prominent of those "illegal" entrants were William Carey and his colleague John Thomas of the Baptist Missionary Society. They came to Bengal in 1793 on a Danish East Indiaman and at first stayed with a Calcutta Hindu named

<sup>1</sup> See Minutes of a meeting of Bengal missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, 9-11 March 1858, C.M. S. Archives, North India Missions, No. 11. Also *Elementary Statement Respecting the Christian Vernacular Education society for India*, London, 1859, pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> This was particularly so at the time of a natural calamity and famine around Krishnagar in 1839 when, as a result of the missionaries' relief operations the people of about 50 villages offered themselves for Baptism. See C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 27 February 1839 and 31 March 1840.



Ram Basu and then with the “wonderfully Christian” George Udney, the Company’s commercial resident at Malda in north Bengal.<sup>1</sup> While at Malda Carey learnt Bengali and Sanskrit languages and acquired an intimate knowledge of the customs and habits of the people. He and his colleague remained at Malda till 1800 when four other Baptist families arrived by another Danish ship and settled at the Danish colony of Serampore, about 20 miles north of Calcutta. Carey and Thomas joined them at Serampore and with the help of a printing press given by George Udney began his missionary publications. It was Carey’s good fortune that Lord Wellesley, who was sympathetic to the missionaries’ cause, was the Governor-General at that time. He not only “tolerated” the presence of the missionaries near Calcutta but also appointed Carey, on the recommendation of the Company’s chaplain, Claudius Buchanan, Professor of Bengali and Sanskrit at the Fort William College which was then founded for the training of the Company’s junior servants.

From his press at Serampore Carey published a Bengali translation of the Bible and other books and tracts. At that very initial period he launched an attack on Islam through a number of booklets and tracts in the local languages. In these publications Carey exhibited the usual prejudice against and ignorance of Islam and abused it and its prophet in the most virulent and bigoted manner. The worst of these publications were the following:<sup>2</sup>

1. *Address to the Muhammadans,*
2. *An Account of a Certain Tyrant from his birth to his death,*
3. *Some Account of Mohammad,*
4. *The Forerunner of the Bible, and*
5. *The Rise of Wisdom.*

The last mentioned work was addressed to both Muslims and Hindus.

<sup>1</sup> For details about Carey’s activities see J.C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, 2 Vols., London, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> These tracts are not available in their originals; but their English translations and the whole series of correspondence connected with them are contained in *H.M.S.*, Vol. 690. See for translations of the tracts pp. 9-21, 126-133, 155-161, 163-203.

These publications gave great umbrage to the Muslims in and around Calcutta who sent in strong protests to the government against the attacks thus made on their religion and prophet. The situation was indeed tense; because the Muslim protests came in the wake of the mutiny of sepoy at Vellore in Madras (1806) which was attributed by many in the official circles to an attempt on the part of Christianizing enthusiasts to obliterate caste distinctions among the sepoy as a preparatory step to their ultimate conversion to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Against this background the Governor-General, Lord Minto, took the Muslims' protest into serious consideration and ordered Carey to withdraw the objectionable tracts from circulation and also to transfer his press from Serampore to Calcutta so that proper control could be exercised over its publications. Carey withdrew the tracts from circulation with apology and an explanation that the abusive expressions in them had been inserted without his knowledge by a recent Muslim convert to Christianity. The orders for the transfer of the press were subsequently cancelled but government continued to supervise its publications. Carey's attempted exculpation of himself about the tracts was not convincing in as much as the title of at least one of them was offensive enough. Surely such a title could not have been used for the publication without his knowledge and merely at the instance of a recent Muslim convert. Carey did not of course mention the alleged convert's name, nor do we know of any such Muslim convert cooperating with the missionaries at that time.

Shortly after this incident we find on the scene an Arab Muslim adventurer who came to Bengal at that time, feigned conversion to Christianity to know, as he states, its secrets and then prepared an elaborate treatise defending Islam against the missionaries' insinuation and launching counter-attacks on Christianity. He is Jawād Sābāt ibn Ibrāhīm Sābāt Bāsīfin al Ḥasanī.<sup>2</sup> His life-story is rather interesting. He belonged to a

<sup>1</sup> See for official views and correspondence on the affair *H.M.S.*, Vols. 507-510; also A.T. Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, London, 1962, pp. 237-244.

<sup>2</sup> I have taken this and the other information about Jawad Sabat and his work mainly from Maulavi Abdul Wali's *Life and work of Jawad Sabat, An arab Traveller, Writer and Apologist, etc.*, Calcutta, 1925.

noble Arab family tracing its descent from the fourth Khalīfa of Islam ('Alī ibn abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with them). Jawād's father Ibrāhīm Sābāt was governor over an Iraqi province under the Ottomans from 1773 to 1776, then the Shaikh of Bahrain's envoy at the Iranian court from 1777 to 1779. In the last mentioned year he was assassinated while on a tour in Khuzistan. Jawād's mother also belonged to a noble family, that of the famous Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. Her father, Sayyid Muhammad, was chief physician (Ra'īs al-Ḥukamā') first at the Irani ruler Shāh Thamasṣp's court, then at the court of Sultān 'Abd al-Ḥamīd I of Turkey and finally at the Turkish governor's court at Baghdad where he (Sayyid Muhammad) died in 1768. Jawād was a small boy at the time of his father's death. Young Jawād received his primary education at the hands of his mother who had travelled after her husband's death from Iran to Iraq. There Jawād completed his education by studying the commentary of the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* with some very able scholars of Baghdad and Basra. His mother died at this latter place in 1794.

Thereupon Jawād took to extensive travels obviously in search of employment and livelihood. Travelling through Iran, Bukhara, Afghanistan and parts of India he ultimately reached Calcutta in 1797. In the following year he was at Dhaka where he stayed for sometime with the zamindar of Balda Khal, Mīr Ashraf 'Alī al-Ḥusainī. The latter was a Shi'ī Muslim who took Jawād's help in writing a letter in Arabic to the '*ulamā*' of Iraq requesting them to prepare a reply to the criticisms of Shi'ism contained in Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz Dehlawī's book *Tuḥfa-i-Ithnā 'Asharia* which evidently had gained circulation in Bengal at that time. Jawād prepared the letter for Mīr Ashraf 'Alī.<sup>1</sup> We do not know whether the letter was ultimately sent to Iraq or, if sent, what reply it elicited. Soon, however, Jawād left Dhaka and travelled to Agra in 1800. It is clear that he was moving from one place to another in search of a suitable employment. We find him in the following year at Madras where he succeeded in attracting the attention of the English authorities who appointed him, in view of his deep knowledge of Islamic laws, *Qāḍī* of the city of Iṣḥāq Fatan

<sup>1</sup> The letter is reproduced in Maulavi Abdul Wali, *op.cit.*, appendix V.

(subsequently corrupted into Vizagapatam).<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that the *shari'at* laws were still in force in the courts in the Company's dominions. He worked in that post from 1803 to 1806. During that period he acquired a proficiency in English and also improved his mastery over Persian.

Jawād was at Madras when the Vellore mutiny took place. It was about that time that he appears to have determined to take upon himself the task of defending Islam against the missionary attacks. The method he adopted for this purpose, it may be observed, was not quite straight, and it involved him in some misunderstanding with his friends in Calcutta. Be that as it may, Jawād himself writes that he was very much distressed at seeing many Muslims being misled by the missionary preachings. He therefore resolved to make an outward profession of Christianity in order to obtain a deeper knowledge of it by close contact with missionaries and church officials. Accordingly he left his post at Vizagapatam and "embraced" Christianity at the hands of Dr. Ker, senior chaplain at Madras, and assumed the name of Nathaniel Sabat. In 1807 Dr. Ker sent him to Serampore for assisting the missionaries there in the work of rendering the Bible in Arabic and Persian languages.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the same year Jawād was sent to Henry Martyn, chaplain at Dinapur (Bihar) who was in charge of the Arabic and Persian translation of the Bible. Jawād remained with Martyn till the end of 1808 and was then transferred to Lucknow where he stayed till 1810. Towards the end of the latter year he returned to Calcutta. It was at that stage of his life that misunderstandings developed between him and some of his erstwhile friends in the city, notably Aḥmad Shirwānī, assistant to Dr. Matthew Lumsden, then Professor of Arabic at the Calcutta Madrasa.<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Shirwānī disclosed to the missionaries and some English officials that Jawād's adhesion to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4; also William Canton, *A History of British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. I., London, 1904, pp. 289-290.

<sup>2</sup> See J.C. Marshman, *op.cit.*, Vol. I., p. 297. It may be noted that the first Arabic translation of the Bible was made during the time of Khalifa Al-Ma'mūn (See Bertold Spuler, *The Muslim World, Part I: The Age of the Caliphs*, tr. F.R.C. Bagley, Leiden, 1960, p. 26, n.1.

<sup>3</sup> Jawād speaks of Ahmad Shriwani as Aḥmad the Georgian (Jurji). The latter was a scholar of some note and published a number of Arabic works. Dr. Lumsden held many posts at different times including that of Secretary to the Calcutta Madrasa.

Christianity was only fake and insincere.

The allegation proved too true when in 1812 Jawād presented himself before the chief *Qādī* of the city, Mawlawī Najm al-Dīn Khān, openly abjured Christianity and declared his adhesion to Islam. Jawād then compiled his book in Arabic in defence of Islam and against Christianity under the title of *The Sābātian Proofs*.<sup>1</sup> But he did not get any publisher for this book in Calcutta because, as he says, of the opposition of the misionaries and their English friends. Undaunted by this opposition Jawād decided to publish the work himself by spending whatever he had laid by and by seeking financial help from the Muslims of the city. A number of the latter indeed took up the cause, of whom the most prominent was Shaikh Ghulām Ḥusain ibn Shaikh Ghulām Nabī, a wealthy merchant,<sup>2</sup> who supplied the necessary funds with which a printing press and other necessary materials were purchased and the printing of the book was secretly completed at Jawād's house on 10 Dhu al-Ḥijjah, 1229 H. (1814 A.C.) In the preface the author directs that the book should not be sold nor bought, but distributed free. He also laid down that of the 600 copies printed, 550 copies should be distributed as follows:

100	copies	for	the	people	of	the	Holy	cities	of	Makka,
										Madina,
										Hejaz
										and
										Najd.,
50	..	..	..	..	..					Yaman
50	..	..	..	..	..					Amman
100	..	..	..	..	..					Iraq
										(Basra,
										Baghdad,
										Hulla,
										the
										Mashad
										and
										neighbourhood)
100	..	..	..	..	..					Iran
										and
										Ma-wara
										al-Nahr
50	..	..	..	..	..					Istanbul
100	..	..	..	..	..					Hind
										(India)

550 copies

Jawād also forwarded a copy of the book with a letter written in English to the missionaries for their perusal. Thus having

<sup>1</sup> The Full Arabic title of the book is:

البراهين الساباطية فيما تستقيم به دعائم الملة المحمدية وتهدم به اساطير الشريعة المنسوخة العيسوية

Two copies of the work are preserved in the Raza Library, Rampur. One is copied by Shaikh Inamullah of Khurja (U.P.) in 1264/1848 from a printed copy of 1229/1814 and the other is copied by Sayyid Qasim Ali Bilgrami in 1288/1871. See Acc. Nos. 8181 M and 1526 D in *Catalogue of the Arabic MSS. in Raza Library*, (ed. Imtiaz Ali Arshise), Vol. II, pp. 436-437.

<sup>2</sup> He was known at that time as the "Prince of Merchants" in Calcutta. He was a Nakhuda and had his residence at the Kolutola locality of Calcutta. He founded the Nakhuda Mosque there.

accomplished his object he finally left Calcutta in 1815 and travelled to Sumatra where he took the cause of the ousted King of Acheen and acquired “such power and influence that he was regarded by the rebels as their greatest enemy, and being taken prisoner, was treated with ruthless severity and finally was sewn up in a sack and thrown into the sea.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Sābātian Proofs* is a fairly large book of 235 demy octavo pages divided into five chapters in addition to an introduction. In the introduction the author relates the important incidents of his life together with interesting sidelights on the social condition of the Calcutta Muslims at that time, particularly of the merchant community. The first chapter, which is called “The Mirror”, critically reviews the Old and New Testaments, quoting biblical verses in English but in Arabic characters. The second chapter deals with the foundations of Christianity together with a critical analysis of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic, Syrian, Greek, Armenian, Georgian, English, Quaker, Baptist and Methodist Christians. It also criticises the 36 articles of creed of the Church of England, quoting from the English translation of the Book of Prayer rendered by order of King James I in 1603 A.C. The third chapter presents arguments against the divinity of Christ and in support of his prophethood. The fourth chapter presents proofs of the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and replies to the objections of the Christians and Jews in this respect. The subject-matter of the book practically ends with this chapter. The fifth and final chapter gives a short history of the author’s family and the story of the compilation and publication of the book together with certain other matters including a list of the most prominent Muslim scholars of the time in Arabia and India.

Some of the points raised by Jawād Sābāt had of course been covered by earlier Muslim scholars like Shaikh Ibn Taimiyah (661-728 H.).<sup>2</sup> It appears, however, that in preparing the *Proofs Sābāt* depended solely on his own study and research. At any rate he was a prolific writer and a scholar of no mean order. Besides

<sup>1</sup> William Canton, *op.cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> See Ibn Taimiyah, *Al-Jawāb al-Sahīh li-Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīh*, 2 Vols.

the *Proofs* he had compiled at least two dozen other books and booklets.<sup>1</sup> Intrinsic value apart, the importance of the *Sābāṭian Proofs* lies in the fact that it is the first serious work published in modern times in south Asia in defence of Islam against Christian missionary attacks. As such it not only reflects the nature of those attacks but also the concern these had caused among the Muslims of the region even at that early period of British hold over it. The *Sābāṭian Proofs* in fact epitomizes that concern and fervently calls on the Muslims to meet the new challenge accompanying the European expansion over Asia. The author sincerely applied all his material means and intellectual capacity to meet that challenge. In this respect the *Sābāṭian Proofs* is indeed a landmark in the history of the intellectual encounter between Islam and Christianity. It is also an important source-book on the social history of the Muslims of Bengal in the early nineteenth century. The success of the book is indicated by the fact that it continued for long to be a book of reference for Muslim apologists and preachers.

### III. THE MISSIONARY PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW OFFENSIVE

It is not known what view the missionaries took of the *Sābāṭian Proofs*. As for Carey and his colleagues at Serampore they appear to have studiously abstained themselves from any further direct confrontation with the Muslims. In the meantime there was a noticeable trend in the missionary circles towards having a more intimate knowledge of the ways and ideas of the Muslims. In fact for a time the missionaries carried the battle against Islam out of Bengal and south Asia to the heartland of Iran. Thus, shortly after having completed the Arabic and Persian translation of the Bible Henry Martyn went to Iran in 1809 and there engaged himself in public disputations with the Muslim doctors at Shiraz. These discussions led to the publication of an anti-Christian treatise by an Iranian scholar named Mirza Ibrahim. The work concerned itself mainly with the subject of "miracles" of Christianity. According to a not too friendly critic, the treatise was "evidently the work of an able and learned writer, and is

<sup>1</sup> See for a list of his works Maulavi Abdul Wali, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31.

remarkable for its freedom from anything harsh and virulent.”<sup>1</sup> Martyn’s response to this work was the publication of three small tracts in quick succession. The first tract dealt with the subject of miracles, the second was a tirade against the prophet of Islam and his teachings together with a section on the theme of atonement and salvation. The third tract was directed against sufism. According to the same reviewer, these tracts did “not open any new ground” nor did they “touch upon the evidences proper to Christianity.”<sup>2</sup> In reply to these tracts another Iranian scholar, Mirza Muhammad Raza, published a treatise of about 300 pages in 1813. Martyn did not see this work as he died of illness in the previous year.

For sometime the controversy in Iran remained in abeyance; but Martyn’s work was taken up by a Cambridge university professor, the Rev. S. Lees. He published in 1824 a more serious work entitled *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Moham-medanism*. It was not so much a historical review of the controversy as a continuation of it on behalf of the missionaries. Indeed the work consists of three portions, a preface reviewing the progress of the controversy till Martyn’s visit to Iran, translation of the controversy between the latter and the Muslim doctors there, and Lees’ own continuation of the argument, with particular attention to the points raised by Mirza Ibrahim and Mirza Muhammad Raza. Lees’ discussions are spread over three chapters, dealing respectively with miracles and the evidences of Christianity interspersed with attacks on the evidences of Islam, a defence of the Christian scriptures as against the objections of the Muslim doctors regarding their genuineness and integrity, and criticism of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). In his treatment of the subject Lees drew considerably on Locke’s theory of evidence and indicated some new lines for the Christian apology which were taken up by subsequent apologists.

While Lees had been preparing the above mentioned work steps were being taken in Europe to train missionaries specially

<sup>1</sup> Muir, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



for work among Muslims. This training work was done mainly at the Basel Missionary Seminary in Switzerland. One of the characteristic features of this seminary was the provision for teaching Arabic and aspects of Islam along with Christian studies. Among the early products of this seminary was Carl Gottlieb Pfander who took the lead in the next phase of the missionary offensive against Islam. A native of Württemberg, Pfander passed out of the seminary in 1825 and was that very year sent by the Basel Missionary Society to work at the Christian Mission in Georgia which had its headquarters at Shushy. Pfander stayed with the Georgian mission till 1835. During that period he made extensive tours into Persia, visited Baghdad, Isfahan and Tehran, acquired a proficiency in Persian and occasionally carried on disputations with the Muslim doctors. In 1829 he completed his main controversial work, *The Balance of Truth*, in the German language.<sup>1</sup> In this work he drew as well as developed on the lines indicated by Lees and attempted to show the superiority of Christianity over Islam. A Persian version of it entitled *Mīzān al-Ḥaq* was published at Shushy in 1835. In that year, however, the Russian government prohibited missionary activities in Georgia whereupon Pfander returned to Basel. He next joined the Church Missionary Society of England and was by the latter sent to Calcutta in 1838.

#### IV. RESUMPTION OF THE MISSIONARY OFFENSIVE AND THE MUSLIM RESPONSE

Meanwhile the stage was being set in Bengal for a resumption of the offensive against Islam. In 1832 the Church Missionary Society opened a special mission station at the Wellesley Square in Calcutta for the purpose of preaching Christianity to the Muslims.<sup>2</sup> It was headed by the Rev. J.C. Thompson who, assisted by a new convert from Bihar, Hyder Ali, began systematic preachings among the Muslims of the city and its

<sup>1</sup> A Powell in *J.R.A.S.*, No. 1, 1976, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report*, 1840, p. 8. The mission was called "Hindustani Mission" because the preachings were generally made in Urdu, at that time indiscriminately termed by Englishmen as Hindustani, which was the language of the upper class Muslims even in the cities and towns of Bengal.

vicinity. Thompson even undertook preaching tours to Muslim localities adjacent to Calcutta. His experience was not however encouraging. Thus speaking about his tour in Howrah district (west of Calcutta) he noted with some sadness: "Amongst the Mohummedans, I cannot say there were any who readily heard or willingly received what we offered, but wished us away from the place."<sup>1</sup> Thompson's efforts were emulated by the missionaries of other societies. They also had a similar experience. For instance, early in 1833 two missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society made a special tour of the Muslim localities north of Calcutta, "up the river Hoogley." The missionaries stated that they "had many opportunities of communicating with respectable and intelligent Mussulmans", but very few of them showed any inclination to receive the Christian tracts and booklets. "Some who received tracts expressed a desire to answer them, but said they were afraid of involving themselves in trouble with the government."<sup>2</sup>

The apprehension alluded to here indicates that the Muslims of that locality entertained an impression, rightly or wrongly, that the missionaries were being backed by the government. Indeed it was difficult for the people to think otherwise. The missionaries belonged to the ruling nation. They were openly supported by many an English official. Also, the supercilious and abusive manner in which the missionaries generally addressed the Muslims openly calling them "followers of the false prophet" and "imposter", etc.,<sup>3</sup> tended to foster the same impression; for such a posture on the missionaries' part only betrayed their awareness of the political power of their nation. Another reason for the Muslims' apprehension might have been the violent suppression of Tītu Mir's reform movement towards the end of 1831 - an incident which had deeply stirred the Muslims of the district of 24-Parganas, particularly the localities north and east of Calcutta, and its aftermath continued till 1833.<sup>4</sup> Against that background

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *B.M.S. Report*, 1833, pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> The expressions are taken from the above-mentioned report of the Baptist Missionary Society. Such expressions were, however commonly used by the missionaries and English officials of the time.

<sup>4</sup> *Infra*,

came the educational discussion and resolution of 1835. The Muslim memorial submitted against that resolution unequivocally reflected the same apprehension about the government's connection with the Christianizing efforts.

The establishment of the special mission at Wellesley Square was followed by the publication of a number of tracts and booklets against Islam. The most objectionable of these publications was a Bengali book entitled *Wujhat al-Īmān*, prepared by a missionary named J. Paterson.<sup>1</sup> Thus when Pfander arrived in Calcutta early in 1839 a new phase in the missionaries' work among the Muslims had already started. Pfander began his work in Calcutta by distributing the *Mizān al-Ḥaḡ* and by a course of lectures at the Church Missionary Society's chapel at Wellesley Square. He also prepared two other smaller works, *Miftāḥ al-Asrār* (Key of Secrets) and *Tarīq al-Ḥayāt* (Way of Life), both in Persian. The former dealt with the doctrine of Trinity and related questions, and the latter discussed the doctrine of "redemption." The friends of the missionaries took care to have the books published in a form calculated to attract the Muslims. They were "lithographed, not printed", wrote the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, "as the Musalmans have a great objection to printed books."<sup>2</sup> The "whole expense of carrying these works through the press", we are further informed, had been "defrayed by two gentlemen of the Civil Service who feel deeply interested in the conversion of the Muhammadans, and who are quite competent to judge both of the literary and religious adaptation of the works to the end for which they are designed."<sup>3</sup> The journal did not of course disclose the names of these two officials.

Pfander's books and lectures caused considerable excitement among the Muslims of the city. They quickly took up the challenge. "Some of the most learned Maulavis", we are told, visited the chapel at Wellesley Square and held discussions with Pfander.<sup>4</sup> Details of these discussions are not however on record.

<sup>1</sup> J. Paterson, *Wujhat al-Īmān* (Bengali text), Calcutta, 1838. Copy in the British Museum (Oriental section).

<sup>2</sup> *C.C.O.*, October 1839, Vol. VIII. p. 636.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 636-637.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1839, Vol. VIII, p. 481.

The Muslims also prepared “tracts and books in opposition to Christianity” and “sent emissaries in every direction” to combat the missionary preachings.<sup>1</sup> One of the tracts which proved specially effective was that prepared by Maulavi Abdullah Khān-i-Saman of Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> It was published early in the forties and was written in the form of a dialogue between a Muslim doctor and an imaginary Christian missionary named Godwin who, being discomfited in the discussion, embraced Islam. The book proved such a success that it came to be commonly known as “Godwin Tract.”<sup>3</sup> In this and other similar publications the common objections raised by the Muslims against Christianity were that God could not have a son; that the doctrine of Trinity was polytheistic; that there were four sacred books, viz., the *Tawrat*, the *Zabur*, the *Injil* and the *Qur’ān*, each succeeding book abrogating and replacing the previous one; that the New Testament possessed by the Christians was not genuine, that the *Qur’ān* was the only portion of revelation which was extant in its original form and that Christ was no more than a man, at best a prophet. These publications were widely circulated throughout Bengal. Some of them were found by the missionaries as far as Dinajpur, the northern extremity of the country.<sup>4</sup> The missionaries were also opposed by Muslim preachers in the interior parts of the country. For instance, when on 5 February 1841 the Rev. J.J. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society visited a Muslim village in Burdwan district (West Bengal) he had a controversy with a Maulawi “who came with a large number of followers” and obliged the missionary to withdraw from the place.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed the missionaries soon found it necessary to reckon with the opposition and objections of the Muslims. Early in 1842 the missionaries openly recognized that “the Musalmans were

<sup>1</sup> See *B.M.S. Report*, 1845, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Maulavi Abdullah Khan-i-Saman was a prominent person in the city. A Street in the heart of Calcutta still bears his name (Abdullah Khansama Lane).

<sup>3</sup> See “Outline of the Tract, called ‘Godwin Tract’ written by Maulavi Abdullah Khansaman, of Calcutta, in refutation of Christianity”, *C.C.O.*, August 1846, Vol. XV., pp. 533-543.

<sup>4</sup> “Extract from the journal of a missionary at Dinajpur”, *C.C.A.*, 7 September 1844, p. 395.

<sup>5</sup> “Extracts from the journal of the Rev. J.J. Weitbrecht”, appended to *C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report*, 1842, p. 77.

more unwilling to listen to the preaching of the Gospel than the Hindus.”<sup>1</sup> And a little afterwards, in 1844, a missionary spokesman in Calcutta published a special discussion on the “difficulties of preaching the Gospel to Muhammadans” in which he recounted the above-mentioned Muslim objections and called upon his friends “to forward to the Editors specimens of replies to them” adding: “we mean, replies which may be readily used in preaching: for we suppose there is no Christian Missionary in India who would not be able, in his study, to discover some sound arguments, by which the objections referred to may be satisfactorily refuted; but the difficulty is to have a pointed reply at hand, by which their effect upon a listening multitude may be neutralized at the moment.”<sup>2</sup> This appeal for “specimens of replies” and the whole tone of the discussion show that the missionary circles in Calcutta, though they hailed Pfander’s works as very useful for preaching among the Muslims, were still groping for “sound arguments” and “pointed reply at hand” by which the latter’s objections might be “satisfactorily refuted”. Obviously in view of the “difficulties” thus encountered the Church Missionary Society began to pay more attention to north India which they thought was a more inviting field for labour among Muslims. Accordingly Pfander was transferred to Agra (Akbarabād) in 1841. The Muslim-Christian controversy was thus transferred from Bengal to north India where it indeed reached its climax in the early fifties. Before noting that development, however, it would be worthwhile to refer briefly to the Bengali Hindus’ counter-criticisms of Christianity which were in a way a continuation of the controversy already started by the Muslims and which drew largely on the objections raised by the latter.

#### V. THE HINDU ANTI-MISSIONARY PROPAGANDA

The Hindu reaction to Christian missionary activities took three main forms — attempts by the *Brāhma Samāj*<sup>3</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> “Missionary Conference - discussions and decisions”, C. C. O., June 1842, Vol. XI., pp. 373-374.

<sup>2</sup> “Difficulties of preaching the Gospel to Muhammadans”, C. C. O., October 1844, Vol. XIII, pp. 602-608 (the quotation is at p. 605).

<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1829 by Raja Rammohan Roy.

*Tattvabodhinī Sabhā*<sup>1</sup> to reform and bring Hinduism in line with monotheism, enforcement of caste rules against the converts as also amendment of those rules to enable the penitents to return to the bosom of Hinduism, and counter-criticism of the missionaries and Christianity. These criticisms were carried on mainly through the columns of the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, the organ of the latter body, and another journal named *Sambād Prabhākar*, edited by Iswarchandra Gupta. In their criticisms the Hindus mainly adopted the Muslims' arguments. Thus, besides alleging that the missionaries were holding out education as a bait to catch unwary youths, the Hindu writers questioned the authenticity of the Bible, criticised the doctrine of Trinity as polytheistic and castigated the concepts of "mystery" and "miracles" of Christianity.

Such criticisms were occasionally made in the thirties. In 1843, however, they assumed the form of a regular controversy with the missionaries which continued for a couple of years.<sup>2</sup> It was occasioned by the conversion of three educated Hindu youths including Madhusudan Datta.<sup>3</sup> A number of Hindu Bengali newspapers made angry comments against the missionaries. Thereupon the Rev. William Morton of the London Missionary Society came out through the columns of the *Calcutta Christian Advocate* to defend the position of the missionaries. In doing so, however, he rather confirmed the Hindu editors' charge of "intolerance" and "bigotry" on the missionaries' part by calling the former "stupid", "rabid", "fools", etc.<sup>4</sup> The *Sambād Prabhākar's* witty counter-comments on these abusive expressions made not only Morton but also his other colleagues uneasy.<sup>5</sup> Hence after pausing and pondering for over a month they adduced 12 "reasons" in justification of their efforts to convert the Hindus to Christianity. The "reasons" thus stated were mostly vague assertions of which the substance was that Hinduism was "false" and that Christianity was the only religion by which man could be

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1839 by Devendranath Thakur. It subsequently merged with Brahma Samaj.

<sup>2</sup> See for details, M.M.Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1857*, Chittagong, 1965, chapter II.

<sup>3</sup> He subsequently made his mark as a talented Bengali poet.

<sup>4</sup> C.C.A., September 1843, Vol. V., pp. 253-255.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1843, Vol. V., p. 303.

“saved.”<sup>1</sup> Naturally the *Prabhākar*'s editor treated the reply as evasive and challenged the missionaries to prove the merits of their cause.<sup>2</sup> From this time the *Prabhākar* began to publish also a series of letters of a “searcher after truth.” These letters stated in some detail and one by one that (a) the doctrine of Trinity was polytheistic; (b) that the genealogy of Christ given by Matthew and Luke did not agree; (c) that the virgin birth of Christ was opposed to human nature and reason and (d) that the story of Joseph's dream was a fabrication. It is interesting to note that among other things the charge of “polytheism”, which was the missionaries' principal stock-in-trade against the Hindus, was now being hurled by the latter back on the missionaries.

To the challenge of the *Prabhākar* Morton and his colleagues at first raised some objections saying that they had not engaged themselves to carry on a topical discussion on Christianity, that the pages of a newspaper were not a suitable medium for it, that the Hindus were not acquainted with “the principle of biblical interpretation” and therefore they were “incompetent to appreciate and feel the force of the most cogent argumentation” and that the editor of the *Prabhākar*, or his correspondent, was not a “sincere enquirer” but an “enemy in disguise.”<sup>3</sup> Such objections were naturally treated by the *Prabhākar* as evasive. Hence on 23 December 1843 the missionaries published a lengthy “Reply to the Objections of the Prabhakar's Correspondent.”<sup>4</sup> As to the first objection the “Reply” discussed at some length the doctrine of Trinity and stated at the end that it was “confessedly mysterious” and should be understood as the Christians understood it. Regarding the second point it was said that the object of the two genealogies was not to prove the divinity, but the humanity of Christ, and that Matthew gave the line of Christ's reputed or supposed father whilst Luke gave that of his mother herself. On the third and fourth points the “Reply” stated that they were “miracles” and should be accepted as such, dismissing the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 374-377.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 9 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 386-387.

<sup>3</sup> *C.C.A.*, 9 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 387-388.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 409-412.

“Searcher’s” arguments as preposterous, wicked, childish, blasphemous, etc.

The “Reply” of the missionaries did not at all satisfy the Hindus. In fact the controversy continued more vigorously throughout 1844 and 1845. During this period, however, the Hindu front was led by the *Tattvabodhini Patrikā* while on the missionaries’ side *The Calcutta Christian Herald*, the *Friend of India* and the *Calcutta Review* played the most prominent part. The missionaries’ criticism were directed at this stage against the newly formulated “Vedantic doctrines” of the *Tattvabodhini Sabhā*,<sup>1</sup> while the latter, in course of defending their doctrines, made further counter-criticisms of the missionaries and Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The *Sabhā* assailed the theory of “miracles” and “mysteries” and, conveniently forgetting the doctrine of incarnation so much ingrained in Hinduism, categorically stated: “For the reception of any truth by a creature endowed with reasoning faculty it cannot be necessary for the Creator of all things... to appear in a finite shape in the midst of the wonders of the physical world. ...Mysteries lying beyond the stretch of human faculties cannot form a part of religion... To leave man to his free thought, then to disable him from perceiving the force of a truth, and yet to oblige him to hold a certain conviction for which he is quite incapacitated, and this under pain of eternal damnation, does not seem to us to be the mark of Divine Mercy...”<sup>3</sup> Similarly the historicity and authenticity of the Bible came in for criticism. The *Sabhā* asked: “The ten Commandments are said to have been written down on two slabs of marbles. By whom were they written? By God or by Moses? How have they been so long preserved? And where are they now to be seen?”<sup>4</sup> To the missionaries’ contention that Christianity was responsible for the remarkable progress of Europe the *Sabhā* stated that that was not the case, but that it was to the teachings of Bacon and his

<sup>1</sup> See C.C.H., 15 October and 31 December 1844, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. II, pp. 266-267 and Vol. III, pp. 102-147, and the *Friend of India*, 6 January 1844.

<sup>2</sup> T.P., Āświn, 1766 Śaka (1844) Series I, Vol. I., pp. 112-116, Fālgun, 1766 Śaka (1845), Series I, Vol. I., pp. 153-156, and Āświn, 1767 Śaka (1845), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 221-228.

<sup>3</sup> T.P., Series I., Vol. I., p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.



followers, "to the expansion of commerce, to the invention of the art of printing and the spread of education and other similar causes that Europe owes its present civilisation. Christianity itself is indebted to those very causes for the seeds of reformation which it has since secured in its bosom."<sup>1</sup>

To the above criticisms the missionaries did not give any direct reply although they published a mass of materials in support of their claims. In fact the controversy decidedly turned to their disadvantage. To tell the Hindus, as the missionaries were doing, that their religion was not supported by reason and scientific truth, and then to ask them to accept the "miracles" and "mysteries" of Christianity as such, was clearly inconsistent. The adverse effect of the controversy was seen in the changed attitude of "Young Bengal", a class of educated Hindu youths whose unorthodoxy and rationalism were earlier thought by the missionaries as encouraging portents of their ultimate conversion to Christianity. From September 1845 a section of Young Bengal began to publish a series of little tracts against Christianity entitled *Rational analysis of the Gospel*.<sup>2</sup> These were reported to be made up of extracts from the writings of Thomas Paine and other European sceptics.<sup>3</sup> In reply the missionaries published at least 12 *Anti-Infidel Tracts*;<sup>4</sup> But these did not apparently cut any ice with Young Bengal, nor with the orthodox Hindus. The latter's attitude was best reflected in a tract issued by Prasannakumar Thakur<sup>5</sup> under the caption: *Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in one true God*.<sup>6</sup> The writer delineated three classes among the Christians and equated them with the orthodox, reformist and ordinary Hindus and advised his countrymen to compassion the missionaries when they tried to make converts,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> *C.C.A.*, 6 September 1845, Vol. VII, p. 422. These tracts were published every Saturday from the *Prabhakar* press. The *Tattvabodhini Sabhā* stated that it had no connection with these publications and that their editor was one Shyamacharam Mukherji (*T.P.*, 1 Paus, 1767, Śaka, Series I, Vol. I., pp. 246-247).

<sup>3</sup> *C.C.A.*, 6 September 1845, Vol. VII., pp. 422-423.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 November 1845, p. 517 and 31 January 1846, Vol. VIII, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> He was the uncle of Devendranath Thakur, founder of the *Tattvabodhini Sabhā*, but not a member of the latter body.

<sup>6</sup> The pamphlet was printed in the *Tattvabodhini Press*, Calcutta 1845 (*I.O.L. Tracts*, Vol. 642).

for, possessed of wealth and power as the missionaries were, it was almost impossible for them to perceive “the errors into which they themselves have fallen.”<sup>1</sup>

The controversy abated early in 1846. From that time the attention of the Hindus was mainly directed to the proposed legislation for enabling converts to Christianity to inherit their ancestral property.<sup>2</sup> The Hindus strongly objected to the proposed legislation and several protest memorials were submitted to government from both Bengal and Madras. The memorialists openly accused the government of partiality to the missionaries. In its reply the government attempted to pacify the Hindus by erroneously saying that under the Muslim rule the Hindu law of inheritance was “completely” set aside, that the “British government delivered the Hindus from this oppression” and that the proposed legislation only sought to “prevent the law of inheritance, which the government had restored to the Hindus, from being converted into an instrument of oppression against those who have ceased to be Hindus.”<sup>3</sup> The Hindus gave a lie to this assertion in a subsequent massive memorial submitted early in 1850. They stated that the Muslim rulers introduced their own laws “so far as affected” Muslims only, leaving the “Hindus to enjoy their own laws as amongst themselves.” The memorialists further stated that they did not know of any instance in which a Hindu convert to Islam “obtained in the Mahommedan Courts a decree for any ancestral property of which he was a part-owner with other Hindus from whose tenets he seceded.”<sup>4</sup> Despite such opposition the legislation was passed to stand as act XXI of 1850. It may be noted that the enactment was applicable equally to converts from Hinduism and Islam. That the Muslims also opposed the legislation is known from a final memorial to the Court of Directors. The list of signatures attached to the original memorial shows that at least a dozen Muslim leaders of Calcutta

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ind. Leg. Cons.*, 25 January 1845, No. 32, 2 August 1845, Nos. 4-11. Also M.M. Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ind. Leg. Cons.*, 2 August 1845, No. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 April 1850, Nos. 79-80.

subscribed to it.<sup>1</sup> The memorial of course failed to get a reversal of the enactment.

VI. THE MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY CARRIED TO  
NORTHERN INDIA: REVELATION OF THE TRUTH

Meanwhile the controversy between the Muslim scholars and the Christian missionaries was gathering momentum in northern India. Some mention of it is an appropriate ending to this chapter not only because the controversy had originated in Bengal but also because a person who had received his education first in Bengal and then in England took active part in this phase of the controversy and enabled the '*ulamā*' to meet the missionaries on their own grounds.

As already mentioned, Pfander had been transferred to Agra in 1841. He joined two other German missionaries at the Church Missionary Society's station at that place. As in Calcutta, Pfander began his work at Agra by publishing his books in both Urdu and Persian languages. He did not have to wait long before he began to receive communications from different Muslim scholars of northern India questioning the validity of his arguments. In 1845 the controversy entered a new phase when a lengthy written correspondence took place between Pfander and 'Āl-i-Ḥasan. The latter was an officer at the *Ṣadr Dīwānī 'Adālat* at Agra and was a "man of very superior abilities" holding a high place in the Muslim society for his "attainments and learning."<sup>2</sup> The missionaries allegedly distorted his correspondence and published it in their bilingual magazine, *Khair Khawāh-i-Hind*, as an appendix to Pfander's purported replies to the points raised in the correspondence.<sup>3</sup> Hence 'Āl-i-Ḥasan hastened to publish his views in the form of a voluminous work entitled *Kitāb-i-Istifāsār* which came out of the press shortly afterwards. In the same year (1845) another book in reply to Pfander's writings was published by Sayyid Muḥammad Hādī under the title *Kashf al-Astār*.<sup>4</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> I.O.L. *Parchment Record*, No. 100, list of signatures.

<sup>2</sup> W. Muir, *op.cit.*, 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Khair Khawāh-i-Hind*, Nos. I-VI (January-August) 1845.

<sup>4</sup> Both the *Kitāb-i-Istifāsār* and the *Kashf al-Astār* were published from Lucknow. The former work consisted of 800 pages.

written at the instance of Muhammad Hādī's uncle Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Sayyid Dildār 'Alī who was a recognized 'ālim of Lucknow and who also had carried on some correspondence with Pfander.

The publication of these books caused obvious uneasiness among the missionaries and their friends. And almost as a sequel to these developments 'Āl-i-Ḥasan was suddenly transferred on promotion to Fatehpur.<sup>1</sup> His new responsibilities and the distance between Agra and Fatehpur prevented him from taking any further active part in the controversy. There was a temporary lull in the discussions. In the meantime William Muir, then secretary to the government of the North-Western Provinces and a person openly sympathetic to the missionaries' cause, wrote an elaborate article in *The Calcutta Review* under the caption "The Moham-medan Controversy."<sup>2</sup> Taking his cue from Dr. Lees' work, Muir not only reviewed the progress of the controversy but also continued it on behalf of the missionaries, specially pointing out the deficiencies in the arguments so far advanced by Pfander and indicating the lines on which those arguments could be improved.<sup>3</sup> Pfander took note of those suggestions and, as Muir himself points out,<sup>4</sup> adopted them in the preparation of his next work, *Ḥall al-Ishkāl*, which was published in 1847. Though purported to be a reply to the Muslims' objections the latter work did not in fact add anything new and formed mainly a summarization and reiteration of what Pfander had already said.

The controversy was resumed in the early fifties when it actually reached its climax. The Muslim front was led at this stage by Shaikh Rahmatullah al-Kairānawī, assisted by Dr. Muhammad Wazīr Khān. Rahmatullah belonged to a noble family of Arab origin settled at Kairāna near Panipat. After completing his

<sup>1</sup> W. Muir, who as secretary to the government of the North-Western Province was doubtless responsible for 'Āl-i-Ḥasan's transfer at that critical juncture of the controversy, mentions the fact of 'Āl-i-Ḥasan's transfer in such a way as to give credit to the government and states that the fact that he was promoted despite his writings against Christianity shows the government's liberality (Muir, *op. cit.*). A Muslim writer points out, however, that the promotion was a pretext for removing 'Āl-i-Ḥasan from the scene of the controversy. (See Imdād Sabirī, *Farangiūn-ki-Jāl*, (Urdu text) Delhi, 1949, pp. 239-242.

<sup>2</sup> *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. IV 1845,

<sup>3</sup> See the *Mahomedan Controversy*, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

education at Delhi and Lucknow he worked as *Mīr Munshī* (director of correspondene) in the employ of Maharaja Hindu Rao of Delhi during the forties. At that time Rahmatullah came in contact with Dr. Muhammad Wazīr Khān, then lecturer in pharmacology in the Agra Medical College. Born in Bihar, Wazīr Khān received his English and secondary education in Murshidabad and then his medical education in the Calcutta Medical College. He travelled to England for higher studies in the late thirties. Already in Calcutta he had viewed with concern the activities of the missionaries. Therefore he utilised his stay in England to acquire a more thorough knowledge of Christianity. It appears that he concentrated his attention upon the critical and rational writings against the traditional Christianity that appeared at that time in Germany and England, particularly T.H. Home's *Introduction to the critical study of the Holy Scriptures* (1822 edition), Nathaniel Lardner's *The Credibility of Gospel History* (London, 1827), G.D. Oyley and R. Mant's *Notes, Practical and Explanatory to the Holy Bible* (London, 1840), M. Henry and T. Scott, *A Commentary Upon the Holy Bible*, (London, 1831-35) and D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 4 Vols. (Birmingham, 1842-44, tr. from the German *Des Leben Jesu*, published in 1836).<sup>1</sup> After his return from England Wazīr Khān was appointed a lecturer in pharmacology in the Agra Medical College. It was he who encouraged Rahmatullah to take up the work which 'Āl-i-Ḥasan had been forced to abandon and promised to help him (Rahmatulah) with the knowledge acquired from the western sources.

Rahmatullah left his job at Delhi towards the end of the forties and engaged himself in study and research in the subject. At first he published a number of small books of which the most important was the one criticising the doctrine of Trinity under the title: *Audaḥ al-aḥādīth fī Ibtāl al-Tathlīth*. This was followed by the publication in 1854 of his rather encyclopaedic work entitled *I'jāz-i-Īswī* in which he dealt elaborately with the question of the

<sup>1</sup> See A.A. Powell, "Maulānā Rahmat Allah Kairānawī and Muslim-Christian controversy in India in the mid-nineteenth century", *J.R.A.S.*, No. 1, 1976, pp. 45, 53.

abrogation and alteration of the Bible. In this work he in fact utilized the knowledge supplied by Wazir Khan from the above mentioned sources. "The main strength of Rahmat Allah's argument in the *I'jāz* was that", to quote a recent writer, "while availing himself of the researches of both sceptics and Christian commentators and critics, he based his main arguments only on the opinions of the avowedly Christian writers and utilized the sceptics only to introduce the scurrilous remarks about the nature of God...which he hesitated to voice in his own words."<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the publication of this work Rahmatullah called upon Pfander for a public debate with him on the merits of Christianity. After some hesitation he agreed to engage himself in the debate. It was decided that Pfander would be assisted by his colleague, the Rev. T. V. French, an Oxford graduate, and that Rahmatullah would be assisted by Dr. Wazir Khān. The subjects to be debated were, in the order stated, abrogation and corruption of the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity, the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the inspiration of the Qur'ān. It was further settled that the umpires of the debate would be, from the Christian side, Mosley Smith, judge of the *Ṣadr Dīwānī* and *Nizāmat* courts, George Christian, secretary to the *Ṣadr* Board of Revenue, and William Muir, secretary to government, N.W.P.; and from the Muslim side, Muftī Riyād al-Dīn of Agra and Munshī Khādīm 'Alī, the editor of a local Urdu paper. The debate took place on the appointed day in 1854 in the missionary school compound at Agra and in the presence of a large gathering of Muslims, Hindus and English officials. Within a short time after the start of the debate Pfander was cornered by Rahmatullah's and Wazir Khan's forceful arguments and was forced to admit that there were alterations and mistakes in the Bible.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless Pfander still insisted that a few

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the debate see, Wazir al-Dīn, *Al-Baḥth al-Sharīf Fī Ithbāt al-Naskh wa al-Taḥrīf*, Agra, 1854; Sayyid Abdullah Akbarabadi, *Mubāḥatha-i-Madhhabiyah*, Agra, 1854, and *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Vol. V, London, 1854, pp. 251-258.

A recent reappraisal is that of A.A. Powell, *op.cit.* The latter states: "... the weight of Wazir Khan's numerous examples soon forced Pfander to modify his initial categorical denial into an admission that a few 'mistakes' had actually been made of a kind more significant than mere 'copyist's error' ...." (*op.cit.*, p. 56.)

mistakes and alterations did not destroy the authenticity of the whole scripture. At that stage the audience demanded of the umpires to give their opinion on the point. Mufti Riyād al-Dīn stated that if an error or mistake was detected in any place in a document its validity as a whole would be in doubt. When asked about his opinion Mosley Smith, the English judge, remained silent. The implication was clear to the audience, and at Pfander's request the debate was adjourned for the day. When it was resumed on the following day he did not add anything new to his arguments while Wazir Khan and Rahmatullah advanced more examples of the alteration and corruption in the Bible. The debate came to an abrupt end when Pfander declined to continue it any longer.

The Agra debate of 1854 was the climax of the controversy. The debate ended clearly in Pfander's discomfiture. His position was so compromised that the C.M.S. committee in Calcutta at first transferred him from Agra to Peshawar and a little afterwards sent him out of the subcontinent to Constantinople to work among the Turkish Muslims. Pfander himself admitted in his correspondence with the C.M.S. that the immediate result of the debate had gone against him.<sup>1</sup> This is further indicated by the significant silence of William Muir, who had been present at the debate and who had only two years before contributed another article on the "Mahommedan controversy" in *The Calcutta Review*.<sup>2</sup> He did not write any further article on the subject, nor did he refer at all to the debate when he republished his above mentioned two articles in the form of a book in 1897.

The epilogue to the debate is also interesting. Both Dr. Wazir Khan and Shaikh Rahmatullah, along with many other 'ulamā', took active parts in the revolts of 1857.<sup>3</sup> When after the suppression of the uprisings the government singled out the Muslims for retribution both the leaders escaped to Makka. In the meantime Pfander had been distributing his *Mizān al-Ḥaḡ* and

<sup>1</sup> *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Vol. V., 1854; also A. A. Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> *The Calcutta Review*, 1852, Vol. pp.

<sup>3</sup> See Muhammad Miyan, 'Ulamā'-i-Hind Ka Shāndār Mādī, Part IV, Delhi, 1960, pp. 196-199.

other publications in Constantinople and adopting the same methods as he had done in India. Coming to know of his activities and also of the fact that he had a debate with the 'ulamā' at Agra, Sultān 'Azīz Khān asked his Makka governor to ascertain the fact from Indian Ḥajīs. Shaikh Rahmatullah had by his educational and preaching activities in the holy city already attracted the governor's attention. The latter therefore wrote to the Sultān informing him that the Shaikh who had in fact compelled Pfander to abandon the Indian scene was then present in Makka. Thereupon the Sultān invited Rahmatullah to Constantinople and requested him to prepare a book embracing all the points involved in the Muslim-Christian controversy. Accordingly he compiled his famous *Izhār al-Ḥaq* (Revelation of the Truth) in Arabic which was published from Constantinople at the Sultān's instance for the first time in 1864.<sup>1</sup> Reports vary as to whether Pfander had any public encounter with Rahmatullah at Constantinople; but the former soon left the place and died in London in 1865. The *Izhar al-Haq* summarizes and codifies all the arguments that Rahmatullah had presented in his earlier works, particularly the *Ibtāl al-Tathlīth* and the *I'jāz-i-'Īswī*. The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the questions of abrogation and alteration of the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity and the related question of the alleged divinity of Christ. The second part replies to the missionary insinuations against the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

With the appearance of the *Izhār al-Ḥaq* in 1864 the controversy which had started in Calcutta with the publication of the *Sābāṭian Proofs* may be said to have made a complete circuit. A period of exactly half a century that spans the two dates witnessed the progress of the intellectual encounter, like that of the British imperial interests and diplomacy, from Calcutta through northern India to Constantinople. So far as the Muslims of Bengal were concerned the story of the controversy illustrates, on the one hand, the nature of the cultural threat to which they

<sup>1</sup> See for details Muhammad Taqi Uthmānī, *Bible Se Quran Tak* (Uudu translation of the *Izhār al-Ḥaq*). Vol. I., Karachi, 1395 H., Introduction.



were exposed and, on the other, the stand they made against that threat and the intrinsic strength of Islam which sustained them even though they were politically subdued. As for the result of the controversy, briefly, Muslims think still today that the points raised in the course of that controversy, particularly those embodied in the *Izhār al-Ḥaḡ*, have not yet been satisfactorily answered.<sup>1</sup> The Christian missionary circles, on the other hand, continue to treat Pfander's works as still the best that could be said on their behalf.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The book was translated into several languages including English and French during the life-time of the author (d. 1891). It has been published in its original form from different Muslim countries at different times.

<sup>2</sup> Pfander's works went through several editions till the first quarter of the twentieth century. They have also been translated and published in several languages.

**APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VII**  
**Statistics of Missions in Bengal**  
**(1850)**

**CALCUTTA, ITS SUBURBS & VICINITY**

Stations	No. Societies	When begun	Preachers		Native churches		No. of native Christians	No. of Schools and Students (in brackets)
			Missionaries	Cate-chists	No.	Members		
Nimtala	1 Free Ch. of Scotland	1830	Revs. Dr. A. Duff, W.S. Mackey, D. Ewart, T. Smith, T. Gardinar, Lalbehari Dey.	6	1	27	52	2 Eng. Schools (1409) 1 Girls' School (100)
Simulia	1 Ditto.	1845	Revs. J. Ogilvie, J. Anderson, J. Whyte.	1	1	12	19	3 Eng. Schools (1305)
Mirzapur	1 C.M.S.	1816	Revs. G.G. Cuthbert, T. Sandys, J. Long, E.C. Stuart.	1	1	60	200	9 Vern. Schools (681) 1 Eng. School (350) 1 Girls' School (24)
Lal Bazar	1 B.M.S.	1809	Rev. J. Thomas,	2	1	35	60	1 Vern. School (12)
Intally	1	1838	G. Pearce, A. Leslie,	2	1	40	100	1 Eng. School (80)
Kalinga	1	1822	J. Wenger, C.B. Lewis, C.C. Aratoon.	2	1	50	100	1 Girls' School (12)
Circular Road	1 Scottish Ladies Edn. Society	1848	Rev. Yule	1	—	—	42	8 Girls' Schools (328)
Wellesley Square	1 S.P.G.	1847	Rev. W.O.B. Smith	1	1	41	124	1 Eng. School (106)
Camac Street	1 Free Ch. of Scotland	1838	Rev. J. Fordyce	1	—	—	35	1 Girls' School (50)

Bhawanipur	1	L.M.S.	1838	Revs. A.F. Lacroix, J. Paterson, T. Boaz, J.H. Parker, J. Mullens, W.H. Hill, E. Storrow.	1	1	28	92	4 Vern. Schools (146) 3 Eng. Schools (775) 1 Girls' School (32)
Alipur	1	St. Paul's Cathedral Mission	1850	Rev. C. Davies, T. Yate, T. Moore.	1	—	—	10	1 Vern. School (87) 1 Eng. School (80) 1 Girls' School (30)
Dum-dum	1	B.M.S.	1816	—	1	—	—	16	—
Krishnapur	1	L.M.S.	1830	—	1	1	9	100	1 Vern. School (15)
Thakurpur	1	C.M.S.	1830	—	2	1	44	283	4 Vern. Schools (269) 1 Girls' School (23)
Taliganj	2	S.P.G.	1829	Rev. T.J. Babonau	—	9	507	1594	5 Vern. Schools (170) 1 Girls' School (6)
Ramakalchak & Gungree	2	L.M.S.	1826	—	3	2	111	475	5 Vern. Schools (178)
Baripur	1	S.P.G.	1833	Rev. E. Driberg	1	2	281	674	1 Vern. School (45)
Mograhat	1	Ditto.	1833	Ditto.	—	1	196	482	—
Dhanghata	1	Ditto.	1838	Rev. H.J. Harrison	—	1	142	656	1 Vern School (35)
Narshikdarchak	1	B.M.S.	1829	—	5	1	50	326	1 Vern School (18)
Malaypur	1	Ditto.	1845	—	1	1	5	20	1 Vern School (50)
Khari	1	Ditto.	1829	—	1	1	45	235	1 Vern School (30)
Lakiantipur	1	Ditto.	1829	—	3	1	63	250	1 Vern School (40)
Tamiluk	1	S.P.G.	1841	—	1	1	50	140	1 Vern School (20)
Howrah	1	B.M.S.	1818	Rev. T. Morgan	1	1	6	15	2 Vern Schools (100)
Bali	1	Ditto.	1848	Rev. J. Ghosh	—	1	15	78	—
Agarpara	1	C.M.S.	1837	—	1	1	28	64	2 Vern. Schools (110) 1 Eng. School (310)

## MISSIONS IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS

Stations	No. Societies	When begun	Preachers		Native churches		No. of native Christians	No. of Schools and Students (in brackets)
			Missionaries	Cate-chists	No.	Members		
Serampore	1 B.M.S.	1799	Revs. W.H. Denham, J. Robinson, J. Trafford	4	1	94	200	1 Vern. Boys School (450) 1 Eng. Boys School (200) 2 Girls' Schools (49)
Bansberia	1 Free Ch. of Scotland	1847	Rev. J. Bhattacharjya	1	—	—	2	1 Vern. Boys School (99) 1 Eng. Boys School (196) 1 Girls' School (27)
Chinsurah	1 Ditto	1813	Rev. E. Miller, W.C. Fyfe, Rev. Rev. P. Chatterjya	1	—	—	5	1 Eng. Boys School (783) 1 Girls' School (60)
Ghospara	1 Estd. Ch. of Scotland	1842	—	2	—	—	9	1 Vern. Boys School (40) 1 Eng. Boys School (50) 1 Girls' School (50)
Culna	1 Free Ch. of Scotland	1848	—	2	—	—	2	1 Vern. Boys School (73)
Burdwan	1 C.M.S.	1817	Revs. A. Geidt and A. Neale	4	1	87	164	8 Vern. Boys Schools (799) 1 Eng. Boys School (30) 1 Girls' School (30)
Curwa	1 B.M.S.	1804	Rev. A. Supper	3	1	24	52	1 Girls' School (10)
Birbhum	1 Ditto.	1808	Rev. J. Williamson	4	1	37	85	4 Vern. Boys Schools (103) 1 Eng. Boys School (20) 2 Girls' School (9)
Krishnagar	1 C.M.S.	1831	Revs. C.H. Blumhardt, and S. Hassel	1	1	38	360	5 Vern. Boys Schools (198) 1 Eng. Boys School (172) 2 Girls' School (26)

Chapra	1	Ditto.	1840	Rev. C. Kruckeberg & P. Ansonge	1	1	92	558	5 Vern. Boys Schools (112) 1 Girls' School (48)
Kapadanga	1	Ditto.	1840	Rev. F. Schurr	—	1	108	833	5 Vern. Boys Schools (370) 1 Girls' School (68)
Ratanpur	2	Ditto.	1840	Rev. C. Lipp and H. Ansonge	2	1	133	1172	7 Vern. Boys Schools (409) 1 Girls' School (69)
Ballabpur	2	C.M.S.	1840	Rev. J.G. Lincke	1	1	57	806	4 Vern. Boys Schools (210) 1 Girls' School (69)
Solo	1	Ditto	1840	Rev. C. Bomwetsch	—	1	27	791	5 Vern. Boys Schools (200) 1 Girls' School (76)
Jessore	10	B.M.S.	1800	Rev. J. Parry and J. Sale	8	10	213	470	4 Vern. Boys Schools (160) 1 Girls' School (13)
Barisal	10	Ditto.	1828	Rev. J.C. Page	11	10	181	1025	4 Vern. Boys Schools (111) 1 Girls' School (22)
Chittagong	1	Ditto.	1812	Rev. J. Johannes	5	2	59	110	2 Vern. Boys Schools (32) 1 Girls' School (10)
Dhaka	1	Ditto.	1816	Rev. R. Bion and R. Robinson	4	1	25	70	—
Dinajpur	1	Ditto.	1805	Rev. H. Smylie	1	1	21	68	2 Vern. Boys Schools (120)
Darjeeling	1	Private	1842	Rev. W. Start	—	—	—	—	—

N.B. These statistics are reproduced from M.M. Ali, *op. cit.*, Appendix A. They are prepared on the basis of statistics of missions in India and Ceylon made by the Rev. Joseph Mullens of the London Missionary Society in 1850.



**PART II**

**THE ISLAMIC REFORM MOVEMENTS IN  
MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGAL  
(IMPACT OF THE *SALAFIYA* MOVEMENT)**





## CHAPTER IX THE REFORM MOVEMENT OF TĪTU MĪR IN SOUTH-WEST BENGAL

### I. INTRODUCTORY

From the second quarter of the nineteenth century there began a series of movements for reform and regeneration of the Muslim society. These movements were by and large inspired by the reform movement started in Arabia by Shaikh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ( 1115-1206/1703-1792 ). The latter's ideas entered the south Asian subcontinent, as in the case of the other parts of the Muslim world,<sup>1</sup> mainly through the pilgrims who annually visited Arabia at the time of *hajj*, that season being specially taken advantage of by the preachers to disseminate the ideas of reform among the multitude of Muslims coming from different parts of the world. The process became all the stronger in the early years of the nineteenth century when the two holy cities of Makka and Madina came under the reformers' control. It continued to be so even though they lost political control of these places shortly afterwards, for the preachers continued to visit the holy places during the time of *hajj* and carry on their preachings among the pilgrims. The reform ideas were carried to other places also through publications and writings. There are instances showing that publications containing the Arabian Shaikh's ideas were circulated from time to time in the chief cities of the south Asian subcontinent.<sup>2</sup>

At least three specific movements that took place in Bengal and other parts of the subcontinent during the mid-nineteenth century may be related directly or indirectly to the Arabian reform movement. These were:

- (a) The reform movement among the Muslims of south-west Bengal led by Al-Ḥajj Sayyid Nithār 'Alī alias Tītu Mīr (1782-1831 A.C.);
- (b) The reform movement in eastern Bengal led by Ḥājī Shari'at Allah

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that similar reform movements took place, among other places, in Indonesia and Sudan in the early thirties of the nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, J.O'Kinealy, "Translation of an Arabic pamphlet on the history and doctrines of the Wahhabis, written by 'Abdullah, grandson of 'Abdul Wahhāb, the founder of Wahhabism", *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, No. 1, pp. 68-82.

- (1781-1840 A.C.) and his son Muhammad Mohsin *alias* Dudu Miyān (1819-1862 A.C.), known as the *Farā'idī* movement; and
- (c) The reform-cum-*jihād* movement organized by Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly, northern India (1786-1831 A.C.) and continued after his death by his followers for about half a century.

Of these three movements the first two were confined to Bengal. They also appear to have been more directly influenced by the Arabian reform movement. The third movement, that started by Sayyid Ahmad, embraced different parts of the subcontinent including Bengal in a very remarkable measure. It also derived its inspiration partly from the teachings of Shāh Walī Allah (1703-1763 A.C.) and his son Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 1823 A.C.) of Delhi and partly from the Arabian movement.<sup>1</sup> The *jihād* started by the Sayyid was waged from the north-western frontier region (now in Pakistan), but men and money for the purpose went mainly from Bengal.

All the three movements were similar in so far as their principal reforming aspects were concerned. All the three called for a strict adherence to the principle of *tawhīd*, scrupulous abstinence from all kinds of *shirk*, abandonment of superstitions and un-Islamic innovation (*bid'a*) and conformity to Islamic values in dress and manners. There were of course differences in matters of detail as well as in the methods and approaches of the three movements. They also differed in minor respects from the original movement in Arabia. Such differences were, however, mainly an outcome of the socio-economic and political environment in which each of these three movements arose, as also of the character and personality of the leaders concerned. At any rate it is unreasonable to think that these leaders, deeply interested as they were in the regeneration of the Muslims, totally shut their eyes to what had been happening at the time in the birth-place of Islam. It is also remarkable that these three movements, though contemporary, were essentially independent of one another. There is no satisfactory evidence of the three leaders' having ever come in direct contact with one another, or of their having made any attempt to co-ordinate their activities, though, under the circum-

<sup>1</sup> See below Ch. XIII, for details.

tances, it is difficult to assume that they were totally unaware of one another's work. For various reasons, however, all the three movements came in conflict with the ruling power, thus assuming the form of a struggle for liberation from the foreign domination. In this respect these movements might be regarded as a continuation of the popular resistance noted earlier. It is remarkable that some persons bearing the appellation of *Faqīr* (probably descendants of the earlier generation of *Faqīrs* who for so long a period defied the Company's authority in Bengal<sup>1</sup>) were allied with Tītu Mīr in his struggle against the established authority.<sup>2</sup>

Tītu Mīr's reform movement<sup>3</sup> may be noted first if only because it was the first to come in direct clash with the zamindars and indigo planters, the two privileged classes of men in favour with the Company's government, and also, ultimately, with the forces of the government itself. In consequence it was also the first to bear the brunt of the rulers' wrath in the shape of military intervention and judicial prosecutions. Secondly, by his organization and methods Tītu Mīr presaged some aspects of the development of the *Farā'īdī* movement under Dudu Miyān.

## II. FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE OF TĪTU MĪR

Nithār 'Alī *alias* Tītu Mīr was born in 1782 A.C. at Chandpur, a part of the greater area known as Haidarpur in the district of 24-Parganas. His father's name was Mīr Ḥasan 'Alī and mother's name 'Ābida Ruqaiyya Khātūn. According to 'Abd al-Ghafūr Ṣiddīqī, who hailed from the same locality and who had

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, Chapter IV.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 254, 444.

<sup>3</sup> The primary source of information about Tītu Mīr's movement is the English records of the government. These may be classified into three categories: (a) The government proceedings regarding the movement till Tītu Mīr's death and dispersal of his followers. These are contained in the *Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations*, 22 November 1831, Nos. 67-91 and *Bengal Military Consultations*, 25 November 1831, Nos. 61-66; (b) Reports of W.S. Alexander and J.R. Colvin, both successively Joint-Magistrates of Barasat, the immediate scene of Tītu Mīr's activities, and both commissioned by the government to submit reports about the movement immediately after Tītu Mīr's death. These reports are dated respectively 25 November 1831 and 8 March 1832. They are contained in *Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations*, 3 April 1832, Nos. 1-12; and (c) Reports of five separate trials of Tītu Mīr's followers in the Commissioner's court and the *Sadr Nizāmat 'Adālat* (Chief Criminal Court), in *Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations*, 5 August 1833, No. 11. All these records are also contained in the relevant volumes of the *Board's Collection*. These are unpublished manuscript records preserved in the India Office Library and Records, London.

been related to the family of Tītu Mīr's father-in-law,<sup>1</sup> Tītu Mīr's forefathers belonged to the family of one Sayyid Shahādāt 'Alī who claimed descent from the fourth Khalīfa of Islam ('Alī ibn Abi-Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him) and who came to Bengal as a preacher during the early days of Muslim rule in the country. Siddiqī mentions further that the tombs of Sayyid Shahādāt 'Alī, his son Sayyid Hashmat 'Alī, and sister 'Ābida Raushan exist in the neighbouring village of Taragunia.<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Hashmat 'Alī's son Sayyid 'Abd Allah was a man of great learning and piety and was, in recognition of his qualifications, appointed by a Delhi ruler as the chief judge (Mīr-i-Insāf) of Jafarpur Division, now forming a part of the Barasat sub-division of the 24-Parganas district. Since that time the family carried the title of "Mīr."<sup>3</sup>

Nithār 'Alī thus appears to have belonged to a noble family with some historical background. This fact finds an indirect but significant corroboration in the report of J.R. Colvin who, though attempting to belittle Tītu Mīr's family background, yet states that he was "above the class of ordinary villagers" and was "of some respectability of connection."<sup>4</sup> There is also no doubt that the locality where Tītu Mīr was born was once the habitation of a large number of noble Muslim families. Such place-names as Haidarpur, Sarfarazpur, Jafarpur, Bashirhat, Barasat (an obvious corruption of Bashar-hat), Khanpur, not to speak of 24-Parganas itself, etc., bear an eloquent testimony to this fact.

In keeping with the tradition of his family Tītu Mīr was given an Islamic education early in his life. He studied the Qur'ān, the *Hadīth*, and the Persian and Urdu languages under one Hāfiz Ni'mat Allah of Bihar who was at that time a teacher in the local madrasa. Tītu Mīr also studied the Bengali language in his local school. At the age of 18 he completed memorization of the Qur'ān

<sup>1</sup> 'Abd al-Ghāfir Siddiqī's uncle Khudādād Siddiqī belonged to Tītu Mīr's father-in-law's family. The latter's nephew and lieutenant, Ghulām Ma'sūm, was the son of Khudādād Siddiqī's brother-in-law (wife's brother). See 'Abd al-Ghāfir Siddiqī, *Shahid Titu Mir*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1968, p.19, note 4; p.39, note 3 and p.75, note. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Siddiqī, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. Unfortunately Siddiqī does not name the Delhi ruler, nor the date of this appointment.

<sup>4</sup> Colvin's Report, paras 4 & 6.

and the main collections of the *Ḥadīth*. He was also well-versed in the four languages of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Bengali in all of which he could deliver lectures fluently. Along with this formal education he acquired skill in different branches of manly sports of the time, particularly in wrestling. In this field of physical training also Hāfiz Ni'mat Allah was his main guide and inspiration. In his twenties Tītu Mīr married the daughter of Shāh Muḥammad Rahīm Allah Ṣiddiqī, a recognized 'ālim and a land-owner in the nearby village of Khanpur, now within the jurisdiction of the Baduria police station of the same district.<sup>1</sup> Colvin mentions the latter as Munshi Amir, "a considerable landed proprietor".<sup>2</sup> This information, incidentally, is a further indication of the respectable family background and status of Tītu Mīr, for otherwise Shāh Muḥammad Rahīm Allah *alias* Munshī Amīr would not have given his daughter in marriage with a man of "no family" or no personal standing.

Sometime after his marriage Tītu Mīr went to Calcutta along with his mentor Hāfiz Ni'mat Allah. There they received the patronage of two Muslim notables, Jamāl al-Dīn Afendī and Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā'. The former was a rich and influential Egyptian merchant resident in that part of the city which, because of the presence of a considerable number of Egyptian merchants there, came to be known as Misri-Ganj (the Egyptian Rendezvous). Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā', on the other hand, was known as the "prince of merchants" in the Calcutta commercial circle and was, perhaps one of those who had helped the publication of the *Sābātian Proofs*.<sup>3</sup> He was also related to the Delhi royal family.<sup>4</sup> These two persons were great patrons of learning and sports, and Tītu Mīr easily acquired their good grace and made his mark in

<sup>1</sup> Siddiqi, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Colvin's Report, para 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> Siddiqi, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23. The Mirzapur locality and Mirzapur Street of Calcutta are named after Mirza Ghulām Ambiyā. Also the Baithak-Khana Road is named after the Baithak-Khāna or Assembly House attached to his residence. The famous garden flanking the Mirza's residence was previously known as the Mirzapur Park. Subsequently, under the influence of its Hindu members, the Calcutta Corporation renamed it as Sraddhānanda Park.

wrestling in the Calcutta sports circle.<sup>1</sup> Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā' also encouraged him in his yearning for higher Islamic learning and introduced him to Shaikh Kamāl of Bākarganj (Barisal) and Shaikh Zakī of Bihar, two scholars and pious men then well-known among the Calcutta Muslims. It was under the inspiration of these men and with the financial support of Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā' that Tītu Mīr decided to go to Makka for *hajj* as well as for acquiring a greater knowledge in the different branches of Islamic learning.

The early life and training of Tītu Mīr thus appears to have a meaningful relevance to the career of a reformer which he subsequently adopted for himself. In the accounts of the Company's officials, however, he is depicted as having been in his youth a man of "bad and desperate character". As this report is at variance with whatever we know about his early life from the indigenous sources and as this report has been followed rather uncritically by subsequent writers<sup>2</sup> it is necessary to examine it a little more carefully.

The first English official to speak thus about Tītu Mīr was the Commissioner of the 24-Parganas division, E.R. Barwell, who, on being informed for the first time about Tītu Mīr's activities, visited the Barasat Joint Magistracy on 14 November 1831 and reported to the government saying, among other things, that Tītu Mīr was a "released convict".<sup>3</sup> No detail was given on this point. Obviously the Commissioner derived this information from the Joint Magistrate of Barasat, W.S. Alexander. The latter's only source of information, on the other hand, was a deposition made in self-exculpation by Tītu's arch-enemy, zamindar Krishna Deb Rai, saying that Tītu Mīr was a "Kyd Khollassi" (*Qaid Khalāsī* or a released prisoner) and that he and his followers themselves had burnt the mosque at Sarfarazpur in order to implicate the zamindar.<sup>4</sup> This statement of the zamindar, it may be noted, is now acknowledged to be utterly false. This false statement was

<sup>1</sup> Siddiqi gives a description of some of the wrestling feats of Tītu Mīr (Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-23).

<sup>2</sup> See for instance A.R. Mallick, *op.cit.*, p. 76; and P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Barwell to government, 14 Nov. 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.* 22 Nov. 1831, No. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Enclosure 3 to Colvin's Report. The Sarfarazpur Mosque incident is discussed below.

however the sole information in the Joint Magistrate's possession when the Commissioner visited him on 14 November and also when, on 25 November (1831) the Joint Magistrate himself submitted a report about the movement. In his rather ill-assorted report of 56 lengthy paragraphs Alexander devoted only the following few lines to a description of TĪtu MĪr's antecedents:<sup>1</sup>

"...Titu Mir who appears to have been the Ring Leader of the Sect... was of about 50 years of age, and 16 years ago was a wrestler in Calcutta. After this he became a servant to any zamindar who desired a determined character either to create a disturbance or to exact from their raiyats. During his service in an affray which took place in the Nadia district he was imprisoned; after his release, the exact time I cannot ascertain he proceeded on a pilgrimage to Mecca with a Prince of Delhi and met with... Sayed Ahmad at that place, who had preceded him thither a year. On his return about 3 or 4 years ago he resided sometime in Calcutta and in different places; after which he began to teach his new doctrine in these parts taking up his abode at Haidarpur near Narkelbaria. Report says that even to the present time he was in the habit of receiving a monthly stipend from Delhi..."

Alexander submitted this report only five days after the suppression of TĪtu MĪr (19 November) in which the Joint Magistrate had himself taken a leading part. In fact the report was prepared a day or two earlier when he was still busy in hunting down the real or supposed partisans of TĪtu MĪr and when none from among the local population dared come forward to speak any favourably about the fallen leader. The Joint Magistrate had therefore neither the time nor the mood to make a dispassionate enquiry. Hence he simply depended on the information he had already in his possession, namely, the above mentioned statement of Krishna Deb Rai, and mixed it up with the well-known fact of TĪtu MĪr's having been a wrestler in Calcutta and of the zamindars' habit of maintaining armed bands for affray and oppression. If TĪtu MĪr had been involved in any criminal proceedings either in Barasat or in Nadia its records would have been available in the courts of these two districts. As there was no such record available in his court, Alexander assumed the case to have taken place in the neighbouring district of Nadia. Significantly enough, the magistrate of Nadia, E.P. Smith, with whom TĪtu MĪr had an armed

<sup>1</sup> W.S. Alexander's Report (25 November 1831), para 34.

encounter and who also submitted a report to the government about the movement<sup>1</sup>, besides writing several letters on the subject to the Barasat Joint Magistrate,<sup>2</sup> does not make any mention of Tītu Mīr's involvement in any affray or criminal proceedings in that district. More significantly, none of the prosecution witnesses in the several criminal proceedings that were instituted by government after Tītu Mīr's death did aver to his supposed discreditable antecedent. It is thus clear that the Joint Magistrate simply grasped at the false and malicious statement of zamindar Krishna Deb Rai alleging that Tītu Mīr was a *qaid khalāsi*. That the Joint Magistrate was writing from hearsay is clearly indicated by his admission that he could not ascertain the exact date of the case.

The next report about the movement was submitted by J.R. Colvin, Alexander's successor as Joint Magistrate of Barasat. Colvin's main task was to collect evidence for the prosecution of those of Tītu Mīr's followers who had been taken prisoners. So far as the latter's early life was concerned, Colvin simply adopted his predecessor's statement with some exaggeration, saying that Tītu Mīr "was at one time of a turbulent and disorderly character having been apprehended on several occasions on serious charges, for some of which he was confined and punished, when that part of this district was attached to the zilla of Kishnagor."<sup>3</sup> The speciousness of the statement is discernible from the fact that while Alexander speaks of only one case, and that also in connection with the zamindars' practice of maintaining armed bands for affray and exactions, Colvin carefully avoids any reference to their discreditable conduct<sup>4</sup> and generalizes the charge into "several occasions". It is also noteworthy that while Alexander categorically states the alleged case to have taken place

<sup>1</sup> Nadia Magistrate's Report, 28 November 1831, *Board's Collection*, 1832, file 54222, Vol. 1361.

<sup>2</sup> See *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, Nos. 76, 81-87.

<sup>3</sup> Colvin's Report, para 6.

<sup>4</sup> That Colvin was particularly careful in suppressing any fact that might implicate the zamindars or bring discredit on them is evident from the fact that though convinced of their illegal proceedings against Titu Mir and his followers Colvin particularly instructed the government not to institute any proceedings against the zamindars because, in his own words, that "would be to admit that Titu Mir's party had some ground for the excesses they committed." (Colvin's Report, para 37).



“in the Nadia district”, Colvin mentions the venue as within the Barasat district but formerly forming a part of the Nadia district or, as he puts it, “when that part of this district was attached to the zilla of Kishnagor”.

It is not known if there was really any readjustment of district boundaries during the period immediately preceding Tītu Mīr's reform movement. But whether in Nadia or in Barasat, the records of the case or cases should have been in either of these two districts. Like Alexander, however, Colvin does not specify the case or its time. This is quite strange on his part because he had ample time to lay his hands on the records of both the districts and because he had taken the trouble to dig into the records of the far-off district of Dacca-Jalalpur (Faridpur) to state, again rather incorrectly, that the quarrel there between Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah's followers and others was yet another manifestation of the same movement as that of Tītu Mīr.<sup>1</sup> This inconsistency and omission on both Alexander's and Colvin's part, together with the silence on this point of the Nadia Magistrate and of all the witnesses for the government in the several cases against Tītu Mīr's followers, coupled with the fact that both Alexander and Colvin were, under the circumstances, rather inclined to make Tītu Mīr and his movement appear in not too favourable a light, throw grave doubts on these two officials' statements about Tītu Mīr's early life. It is also just not reasonable to suppose, as Colvin would have us do, that a bad and desperate character suddenly transformed himself into a religious reformer by performing the pilgrimage to Makka. Even the capacity to imbibe the ideas of reform current in Arabia (or elsewhere in India) presupposes some amount of education and inclination which is inconsistent with the picture of Tītu Mīr's early life given by these two officials. Had Tītu Mīr's early life been unpraiseworthy or tainted by any criminal record he would not have won the confidence and support of so large a following, as by all accounts he did, within a short period of three or four years.

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure 1 to Colvin's Report (*Rūbakārī* of the Magistrate of Dacca-Jalalpur). See also para 9 of the report.

III. *HAJJ* AND BEGINNING OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT

As indicated above, Tītu Mīr's sojourn in Calcutta and contact with Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā', Shaikh Kamāl and Shaikh Zakī proved to be the turning point in his life. Here he formed the intention of going to Makka for pilgrimage as well as for further Islamic education. The statement alluded to above of his having attracted the attention of a member of the Delhi royal family most probably refers to this Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā' who, as noted earlier, traced his descent from the royal family and who spent the closing years of his life in Makka.<sup>1</sup> Tītu Mīr arrived at the latter place with his patron most probably in 1823.<sup>2</sup> He stayed there for three or four years during which period he not only performed the *hajj* but also enlightened himself with further Islamic learning. More important still, there he came in contact with the ideas of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb. Whether Tītu Mīr met Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd at Makka, as reported by Alexander, needs to be taken with caution; for we know that the latter returned to northern India by the end of 1823. So he must have left Makka more than a year before, that period being taken by the return journey and his stops at Bombay, Calcutta and other places. Even if Tītu Mīr met the Sayyid at that holy city, it would be unrealistic to assume that the former was influenced only by the latter's ideas. In fact Sayyid Aḥmad himself was influenced, as already indicated, partly by the ideas of Shāh Walī Allah and his son Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, and partly by the Arabian reform movement.

Tītu Mīr returned to Calcutta most probably by 1827.<sup>3</sup> He settled at Haidarpur in the Barasat district and shortly afterwards started a reform movement among the Muslims of the region. A recent writer states, apparently on a misunderstanding of the above mentioned report about Tītu Mīr's connection with a member of the Delhi royal family, that he (Tītu Mīr) "Lived with Delhi or elsewhere in northern India for over 5 years as a disciple of the Sayyid...he came back to his native district not as a hungry

<sup>1</sup> Siddiqī, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander states that Tītu Mīr arrived at Makka one year after Sayyid Ahmad Berelvi's arrival there. This would mean that the former reached the holy city sometime in the middle of 1823.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander's report (para 34, *op.cit*) states that Tītu Mīr returned to Calcutta "about 3 or 4 years ago", that is 3 or 4 years before 1831, which would place his return-date in 1827-28.

wrestler looking for a job, but as a devout preacher of the puritanic doctrines of the Sayyid. For this commendable work, he also received a stipend from his royal patron.”<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that neither Alexander nor Colvin makes any mention of Tītu Mīr’s having ever lived in northern India. Nor do we get such information from any other source. Moreover Tītu Mīr had been to Makka in 1823 and could not have returned to Bengal before 1824 at the earliest. In fact he came back sometime in 1827-28 when he settled at Haidarpur and started his reform movement. It was thus impossible for him to have spent 5 years in northern India from 1822 to 1827. Sayyid Aḥmad himself had left Bareilly for the north-west frontier towards the end of 1824. It is also noteworthy that Alexander made the statement about stipend etc. by way of making Tītu Mīr appear as a mercenary preacher and not in any spirit of commendation. Significantly Colvin, though he makes mention about Tītu Mīr’s having “accidentally” attracted the attention of a “royal prince”, does not speak about any stipend. In fact no prince of Delhi is known to have become a disciple of Sayyid Aḥmad at that time; and even if there was one, any financial help to the cause would have been made to Sayyid Aḥmad and not to Tītu Mīr who was not after all aiding the Sayyid’s programme of action, nor was calling upon the others to join the latter’s standard.<sup>2</sup> Under the circumstances if the report about stipend has any foundation in fact it might have reference to the financial assistance to Tītu Mīr given by Mirzā Ghulām Ambiyā’, the Calcutta based royal scion and merchant.

Tītu Mīr’s call for reform was aimed at the prevailing evils of the Muslim society of Bengal. It may be noted that the Muslims of Bengal, like the others in different parts of the Muslim world at that time, had deviated in many respects from the teachings of Islam and had succumbed to numerous un-Islamic practices, innovations and superstitions.<sup>3</sup> Like the reformers of the other places Tītu Mīr called upon the Muslims of his locality to adhere

<sup>1</sup> M.A. Khan, in *J.A.S.P.*, 1959, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> That Tītu Mīr was not a disciple of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahid is definitely known from Ja’far ‘Alī Naqwī’s *Manzūrat al-Su’adā’ Fī Aḥwāl al-Ghuzāt wa al-Shuhadā’*, written in 1272H, (Punjab Univ. MSS. Folios 1229-1234), which is the earliest available non-government account of Tītu Mīr.

<sup>3</sup> For details see Vol. I., pp. 799-804.

strictly to the principle of *tawhīd* and to abandon all practices that savoured of *shirk* or setting partnership with Allah. Thus he inveighed against the practice of showing reverence to *pīrs* and invoking their influence in spiritual or worldly affairs. Likewise he denounced the practice of paying homage to tombs or shrines of the 'ancients' called *dargāhs*. Secondly, Tītu Mīr asked his followers to discontinue all un-Islamic innovations (*bid'a*) such as extravagant ceremonies in connection with birth, marriage, death, the 'īds and the *Muḥarram*. Thirdly he encouraged them to erect mosques in their respective localities. Fourthly, he required them to conform to the Islamic standards and values in their daily life and dress. In particular he insisted upon the growing of beards and the wearing of dresses in such a way as to meet the requirements of Islam in respect of covering specified parts of the body. For this latter purpose he asked his followers not to wear *dhuti*, a kind of long sheet of cloth, by passing one of its ends between the legs as the Hindus did (and still do) because that would expose parts of the body above the knee. Fifthly, he stressed the principle of equality of all men in the sight of Allah and called upon his followers to avoid caste or class distinctions in their social intercourse. This call for equality had a deeper significance in the context of the socio-economic evils in rural Bengal arising out of the zamindari and indigo planting systems and it was this aspect of Tītu Mīr's message which quickly attracted the masses to his movement.

In his report on the movement Colvin notes specially that Tītu Mīr's teachings were particularly aimed at avoiding iniquitous caste or social distinctions; yet he (Colvin) observes that Tītu Mīr and his followers refused "to eat or join on occasions of society generally with any but those of their own", thus forming "themselves into a kind of distinct caste" which must have operated to "prevent many from joining them."<sup>1</sup> Colvin seems to have made this observation on the basis of a case which he reproduces as enclosure 2 of his report and which relates to the refusal of Tītu Mīr's followers to partake of foods distributed at a *dargāh* on the occasion of the *Muḥarram* and their consequent

<sup>1</sup> Colvin's Report, paras 6 & 8.

dispute with the partisans of the *dargāh*.<sup>1</sup> Now, these were the very practices and innovations against which TĪtu MĪr had raised his voice. Colvin's own expression, "on occasions of society generally", is significant in this context. There was thus no question of restriction on interdining nor of TĪtu MĪr's followers having formed a distinct caste by themselves. Far from being exclusive they were open-minded enough to include in their stockade a Hindu mendicant who was subsequently arrested by the government troops and released afterwards as an insance.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was TĪtu MĪr's movement confined to a limited section of the society. His call for equality and unity and his character and ideals soon attracted many so that his movement quickly spread beyond the limits of his own district of 24-Parganas. The methods that he adopted and the careful organization of his followers indeed helped the rapid spread of the movement. In each of the villages where a number of people became his followers, TĪtu MĪr organized them into a congregation (*jamā'at*) and required them to erect a mosque, if there was none, and persuaded them to say regularly the daily and weekly (*jumu'a*) prayers. It is on record that at one such village, Sarfarazpur, which is situated about 12 miles from Haidarpur, TĪtu MĪr caused a new mosque to be built on the site of an old one which had been destroyed during the Maratha invasions, and organized his followers there into a congregation.<sup>3</sup> Indeed the mosques served as the focal points of TĪtu MĪr's activities and the centres of his preaching campaigns. Within a short time, therefore, his message was carried from one locality to another and it soon spread roughly over the three districts of 24-Parganas, Nadia and Jessore.

Speaking about the extent of the movement Colvin writes as follows:<sup>4</sup>

The accompanying map which is tolerably correct, and in which I have marked off the farthest villages in each direction from which the people

<sup>1</sup> See enclosure 2 to Colvin's Report. This was the case which was brought before the zamindar Ramnarayan of Taragunia by some of his ra'yats and which, according to Colvin, gave the zamindars a chance to interfere with the movement. See below for details.

<sup>2</sup> Commissioner E.R. Barwell's letter dated 14 September 1832, forwarding the report of trial of the Barasat prisoners, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 5 August 1832, No. 11, para 31.

<sup>3</sup> Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-45; also Alexander's report, paras 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Colvin's Report, para 5. Unfortunately the map forwarded by Colvin is not traceable in the records. The area is however easily identifiable from any map of the region.

were assembled in any numbers will show the tract of country over which the influence of their leader extended. This tract running across the Jumna and Ichchamati rivers into the Nadia jurisdiction is some eighteen or twenty miles in length by twelve or fourteen in breadth."

It may be noted that the area thus indicated by Colvin was intended to show only "the farthest villages in each direction from which the people were assembled" at the Narkelbaria stockade to offer resistance to their enemies. In so far as that specific object was concerned, an area of about 20 miles by 14 miles, and extending over two different administrative jurisdictions, was large enough. This specific area, however, has to be distinguished from a much larger area over which the new ideas must have travelled. Even with regard to the specific area of the uprising, which is what Colvin intends to indicate, he is not quite correct according to some of his other communications to the government. Thus in seeking permission of the government for offering rewards for the apprehension of several persons who had absconded and who are said to have "taken a prominent part in the disturbances" Colvin listed one Munīr al-Dīn Shāh Faqīr whom he stated to be "one of the most active leaders" and who had come "from Jessore or one of the Eastern Districts".<sup>1</sup> Further, both Colvin and Barwell mention several *Faqīrs* who had joined the fighting ground at Narkelbaria and who evidently had come there from outside the districts of 24-Parganas and Nadia.<sup>2</sup> It is also stated by the Nadia Magistrate that he as well as the zamindars of Ranaghat in northern Nadia had received letters of warning from Tītu Mīr in which they were asked not to interfere with the internal affairs of the Muslims.<sup>3</sup> All these facts clearly show that the reform movement started by Tītu Mīr had spread over a far larger area than that of the uprising indicated by Colvin. In fact his statement on the one hand that the influence of the movement had reached as far as Dhaka-Faridpur and, on the other, that Tītu Mīr's influence was confined to an area of 20 miles by 14 miles only is somewhat self-contradictory.

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832, No. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Colvin's Report, paras 7 & 9.

<sup>3</sup> Nadia Magistrate's letter to government, 21 November 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 November 1831, No. 87.

## IV. THE ZAMINDARS' OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION

The rapid spread of the movement and the growing unity and organization of the ra'yats which the movement fostered soon caused concern among the zamindars and indigo planters of the region. They saw in the movement a definite threat to their iniquitous privileges and arbitrary powers, the more so because the movement coincided with the similar movements of Shari'at Allah in eastern Bengal and Sayyid Ahmad in northern India. There is no reason to suppose that the zamindars-indigo-planters were unaware of the latter movements and their implications. Hence they moved quickly to arrest the progress of Tĭtu Mĭr's movement. The leading part in this anti-Tĭtu Mĭr and zamindari combination was taken, according to Colvin, by Ramnarayan Nag, zamindar of Taragunia, Gaurprasad Chowdhury, zamindar of Nagarapur, the agent of a female zamindar of Kuragachi and Krishna Deb Rai, zamindar of Purwa.<sup>1</sup> They were of course supported by other zamindars as well as by a number of the indigo planters. Speaking about the reasons for their opposition and interference Colvin writes:<sup>2</sup>

"The peculiarities of the party necessarily involved them in differences and altercations with their neighbours... Their disputes did not go beyond words nor did they proceed to any length except in a few villages. In these complaints of the annoyance arising from them were at least on one or two occasions carried unfortunately before the Hindu zamindars by the raiyats who adhered to the established usages and worship. It was to be expected that such complaints should be readily received. Hindu zamindars are a class of men who generally dislike innovation in any shape and they were probably not disposed to favour people who may be believed in the warmth of their new zeal to have failed a little of their usual respect to their infidel superiors. There was besides this, the more certain inducement to interference in the dispute furnished by the hope of profiting by it. Accordingly one zamindar and after him at different times two or three others immediately in the same neighbourhood interposed to discourage the sect by imposing fines on some of its followers living within their estates and by subjecting them to other petty kinds of maltreatment."

The reasons thus adduced by Colvin are, at their best, only superficial. It is understandable that there were naturally differ-

<sup>1</sup> Colvin's Report, para 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

ences of opinion between Tītu Mīr's followers and the traditional Muslims; but, as Colvin himself notes, such disputes did not in most cases go beyond words. In fact, as far as he could ascertain, only one such dispute was taken up to the zamindar Ramnarayan Nag.<sup>1</sup> It is strange therefore that on account of that single case, which also did not involve more than a couple of persons in one village, a number of zamindars scattered over the whole of the district and its neighbourhood should have come forward almost simultaneously to interfere with the movement. The zamindars' supposed abhorrence of innovation and their desire to profit by interfering in the quarrels between their Muslim ra'yats do not appear plausible. Colvin himself in effect neutralizes this explanation of his by saying a little afterwards in the same paragraph that the amount of fine was "petty" and that "after it had actually been levied in one or two cases, the others united to resist it." It is therefore very doubtful that the zamindars should have chosen this obviously controversial and not easily enforceable method of making extra money. Surely there was a deeper and more urgent reason for the zamindars' interference. Colvin seems to have just touched at the point when he speaks of a little want of respect towards the zamindars on the part of Tītu Mīr's followers. It was indeed not a question of respect only. The call for unity and equality among the ra'yats, which characterized the reform movement, was a kind of revolutionary challenge to the system of state-patronized mass slavery of which the zamindars and the indigo planters were the favoured beneficiaries. The latter, who knew their position and interests far better than Colvin had either the ability to recognize or the inclination to acknowledge, saw in the movement a sure danger to their privileged position as a whole. It was this apprehension, and not the desire to settle one or two disputes among differing groups of Muslims, nor avarice, which stirred the zamindars and indigo planters of the region into combined action against the movement.

The readiness and obvious hostility with which the single case of complaint brought before zamindar Ramnarayan Nag was taken up rather suggests that it was got up by the zamindar

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*; also enclosure 2 of the Report.



himself to find a pretext for interference. The facts of the case were as follows. Sometime in the middle of 1830 two ra'yats of a village complained to the zamindar Ramnarayan Nag that one of TĪtu MĪr's followers in the village, named Pujat Mallik, had been interfering with their practice of paying homage to a *darga* in the village at the time of the Muḥarram. Immediately on receipt of the complaint the zamindar sent two of his strong men who seized and brought Pujat Mallik before him. There the poor man was beaten and tortured including, according to the statement of one witness, the plucking of his beards. He was then forced to pay a fine of 20 or 25 rupees and released. Against this high-handed oppression Pujat Mallik instituted a criminal proceeding in the court of the Joint Magistrate of Barasat on 7 August 1830, accusing the zamindar and the two ra'yats of beating and torture. The joint Magistrate, curiously enough, summoned to his court only the two ra'yats but not the zamindar. Even then the statements of a number of witnesses examined by him clearly established the facts of torture and beating by or at the instance of the zamindar. Why the latter was not summoned before the court is not recorded by Colvin who cites only this case of quarrel between the reformist and traditional Muslims. He simply observes that nothing "was proved against the defendants actually summoned in this case and it was not prosecuted to a conviction against the zamindar."<sup>1</sup> Later on the case was dismissed in default on 13 July 1831.<sup>2</sup>

Why Pujat Mallik did not press the prosecution may be guessed from the events that soon followed. Shortly after the incident of his torture and the institution of the legal proceedings, the zamindars of the region combined and started opposing the movement and persecuting TĪtu MĪr's followers. It was thus no longer the question of vindicating Pujat Mallik's right against a single zamindar. The whole reformist group were now faced with the question of protection and survival against the zamindars' combined hostility and persecution. The initiative in organizing the zamindars was taken by Krishna Deb Rai of Purwa. He did so

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

rather “gratuitously”, as Colvin notes, for no case of dispute was brought before him by any of his ra’yats. He got in touch with the leading zamindars of the region, particularly Debnath Rai of Gobra-Govindapur and Kaliprasanna Mukherji of Gobardanga, the most influential and powerful among them. Under their advice and suggestion Krishna Deb Rai promulgated a general order throughout his zamindari prohibiting his ra’yats from subscribing to Tītu Mīr’s teachings and imposing a fine of 20 rupees on any one who, following the latter’s instructions, would grow beards.<sup>1</sup> Krishna Deb Rai also prohibited the erection of mosques, on pain of a fine of 500 to 1000 rupees, forbade the sacrifice of cows on pain of cutting off the hands of the transgressors, and threatened with eviction from land any ra’yat who would give quarters to Tītu Mīr or his followers.<sup>2</sup> A number of other zamindars such as those of Nagarpur and Kuragachi followed suit and proceeded with the imposition and realization of the “beard tax”.

Naturally Tītu Mīr protested against these orders of the zamindars. He tried by all possible means to reach an amicable settlement with them. He even wrote an accommodative letter to Krishna Deb Rai urging him not to interfere with the religious activities of the Muslims and saying that he (Tītu Mīr) meant no enmity or harm to others, that he was merely preaching the teachings of Islam to the Muslims and that Islam in fact meant peace.<sup>3</sup> Krishna Deb Rai did not of course pay any heed to such protestations and offers of peace and proceeded with the realization of the beard tax. When therefore he had actually exacted this tax from one or two persons Tītu Mīr’s followers decided to resist. Accordingly when on 27 June 1831 Krishna Deb Rai sent his servants to the village of Sarfarazpur for the purpose of collecting the tax Tītu Mīr’s followers in that village resisted

<sup>1</sup> Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-49; also Colvin’s Report, paras 9-10. Colvin does not mention the names of Debnath Rai and Kaliprasanna Mukherji but sufficiently indicates the existence of the conspiracy by observing a little later (para 14) that Krishna Deb Rai was supported “by one of the extensive and influential proprietors in the district”. See below.

<sup>2</sup> Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Siddiqi reproduces the text of the letter which he might have obtained from family sources. But the text is apparently recast, for the style of the language is fairly modern and differs from early nineteenth century prose style.

and captured one of the zamindar's men and detained him for sometime. Incensed at this resistance Krishna Deb Rai immediately marched upon that village the same evening with about 300 men, plundered the houses of a number of villagers and burnt down the newly erected village mosque.<sup>1</sup> The Muslim villagers, mostly weavers, lodged a complaint about the riot and arson with the *thāna* (police station) whereupon the *Thāna Muḥarrir* started investigating the case. He asked Krishna Deb Rai to attend the investigating officer, but the zamindar did not comply with the notice. At last on the *Muḥarrir's* requisition the Joint Magistrate ordered to put the zamindar's house under watch in order to compel his attendance.<sup>2</sup> Thereupon on 7 July 1831 Krishna Deb Rai appeared at the *thāna* and stated that he had been to Calcutta but that his Nā'ib (agent) had sent men to summon "several of the Mahomedan weavers" of the village of Sarfarazpur because, in the zamindar's words, "strangers of doubtful character had assembled in the houses of these persons" and that it was thought "necessary to make enquiries as to the motive of their having collected."<sup>3</sup> This explanation, as Colvin observes, "was, and could only be a mere pretext. It was correct that strangers had come from several neighbouring villages, but they were all Titu Mir's followers, men well known throughout that part of the country, who up to that time had been guilty of no impropriety of conduct, who had come as guests to an entertainment given by members of their own sect at the period of the Muharram, and whom no one would have thought of troubling with suspicion or enquiry."<sup>4</sup>

It would thus appear that Krishna Deb Rai sent his men to Safarazpur at the time of a congregation of Tītu Mīr's followers in connection with an entertainment. If that was so, it is a further proof of the zamindar's intention to pick a quarrel than merely to collect the beard tax. Be that as it may, from the time of his appearance at the *thāna* the investigation was taken up by the *dārogha* (officer-in-charge of the *thāna*). This latter person was a Hindu and it seems he was easily won over by the zamindar. The

<sup>1</sup> W.S. Alexander's Report, para 2; Colvin's Report, para 9.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander's Report, para 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 4; Colvin's Report, para 12.

<sup>4</sup> Colvin's Report, para 12.

dārogha adopted a delaying tactics in his investigation of the case of burning of the mosque etc. and in order to confuse the issue made arrests of some persons from both parties.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime Krishna Deb Rai continued to assemble more armed men in order to sweep down upon the Muslim ra'yats.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, eighteen days after the burning of the mosque he concocted a counter-charge against the latter alleging that they themselves had burnt the mosque in order to implicate him and to cover up their maltreatment of his servants. "This accusation, however suspicious as having been preferred after so long an interval", to quote Colvin, "was at once taken up and acted upon by the dārogha, some of the witnesses in favour of the weavers were seized and sent in by him as Defendants and the others very naturally absconded or concealed themselves."<sup>3</sup> In his final report the dārogha forwarded only the evidence favouring the zamindar, supporting his story and suppressing all the material facts that would substantiate the ra'yats' case. In short, the report was "drawn up entirely as to favour the zamindar". "The fact is that, the Daroga was, as one motive to partiality a Hindu who went to the side of the Hindu party in the quarrel, and the zamindar who was implicated although of little consequence himself was connected with and supported by one of the most extensive and influential proprietors of the district."<sup>4</sup>

Confronted with the dārogha's partiality the ra'yats petitioned the Joint Magistrate for a re-investigation of the case saying that the dārogha had forwarded only prejudiced evidence and praying that impartial witnesses might be called in to decide the case.<sup>5</sup> In view of this representation the Joint Magistrate did indeed summon and take the evidence of six more witnesses; but being confused by "the contradictory evidence on both sides", as he says, and "perceiving that there was a quarrel between the two parties" he disposed of the case on 2 September (1831) after having simply taken a bond of 50 rupees from each of the persons sent in

<sup>1</sup> Alexander's Report, para 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 5.

<sup>3</sup> Colvin's Report, para 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; also Alexander's Report, para 25.

by the dārogha for keeping “the peace one with another” and dismissed them from the court.<sup>1</sup> Obviously the “young and inexperienced”<sup>2</sup> Joint Magistrate failed to understand the seriousness of the case and disposed of it on a superficial view of it which in effect left the aggrieved party more aggrieved and the offenders confirmed in their wrongful and high-handed dealings. “I am constrained to add”, subsequently wrote the Commissioner of the Division, E.R. Barwell, in commenting on Alexander’s handling of the case, “that the ground of discontent which subsequently broke out in open violence does not appear to me to have been in the first instance thoroughly gone into by the Officiating Joint Magistrate and that the decision passed by him on 2nd September last...in a case of arson referred to him from the Bashirhat Police Thana was neither calculated to check the illegal and arbitrary practices of the zamindar on the one hand nor to allay the feeling of irritation excited in the minds of the opposite and I am inclined to believe primarily aggrieved party on the other.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, emboldened by the rather favourable outcome of the case the zamindar proceeded immediately to take vengeance on his opponents by means of the extraordinary powers given him by the regulations relating to the Permanent Settlement. In particular he made “fraudulent and oppressive use” of the power of summary arrests for arrears of rent given by Regulation 7 of 1799. Thus on 3 September (1831), i.e., the day following the Joint Magistrate’s disposal of the case, Krishna Deb Rai had two ra’yats who had been mentioned as witnesses against him seized for an alleged arrear of 38 rupees and brought to his house where they were tortured and confined. The proceeding was all the more extraordinary because the two ra’yats did not in fact hold any land from the zamindar nor from his subordinate in whose name the arrest was made. The two ra’yats were however compelled to pay a portion and give undertakings for paying the remainder of the

<sup>1</sup> Alexander’s Report, para 32.

<sup>2</sup> This expression was used by the Joint Magistrate himself in explaining his handling of the situation. See *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832 No. 1, enclosure, para 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832, No. 3 para 3. Colvin in his report (paras 15-16) seems to defend Alexander’s handling of the case by saying that the latter gave his decision “with reference to the one fact proved of there being a quarrel between the parties...” As if it required any skill to realize that there was a quarrel!

sum demanded of them, “a course which they preferred to the alternative of going up to contest the demand in the Diwani court.”<sup>1</sup>

#### V. RESISTANCE AND RETALIATION

The case of Pujat Mallik in which the main offender, zamindar Ramnarayan Nag, was not even summoned before the court and that of arson and burning of the mosque at Sarfarazpur in which the police officer sided with the zamindar Krishna Deb Rai and which the Joint Magistrate handled carelessly, must have brought home to the followers of Tītu Mīr the extreme difficulty or even impossibility of success in seeking legal redress of the wrongs and persecutions committed on them. Yet, it does not appear that that disappointment was the sole reason for the steps they soon took for defending themselves and taking retaliation on their opponents. For on 25 September, that is more than three weeks after the Joint Magistrate’s disposal of the case, they obtained a copy of his decision for the purpose of making an appeal to the superior court of the Divisional Commissioner at Alipur (Calcutta). A man named Muhammad Ma’sūd, an inhabitant of Tītu Mīr’s village and an agent of his, was sent as adviser with some others of the Sarfarazpur village to Calcutta for preferring the appeal. The commissioner happened to be absent “in circuit” at that particular time, however, and the party were necessarily disappointed in their attempt for the time being.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly afterwards Tītu Mīr and his followers assembled at Narkelbaria, a few miles from Tītu Mīr’s village, and began to make arrangements for meeting force by force. Colvin does not think that the temporary delay in filing an appeal to the Commissioner’s court was the main reason for this action of theirs; for the grievance of which they had to complain “was of considerable standing in regard to time, and was not of that pressing kind which would have rendered those whom it immediately affected impatient of a slight delay”. He confessed that he was unable to speak with certainty about their real motives and observed that it “is at this point that whatever of obscurity is

<sup>1</sup> Colvin’s Report, para 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 19.

there in the affair commences". So much "may probably be assessed with safety", he stated, "that they saw reason from whatever cause to fear that they would be disappointed in their object of appealing the case and to this disappointment acting on irritated and fanatical feeling I attribute the design suddenly formed and carried into execution of proceeding to extremities by retaliating not only on the one Hindu zamindar with whom there was the immediate quarrel, but by acts of outrage against the Hindu community generally."<sup>1</sup>

It must be observed that they did not proceed against the "Hindu community generally", as Colvin states,<sup>1</sup> but only against the persecuting zamindars of the locality, who happened to be Hindus, and their partners-in-oppression, the indigo planters. As mentioned before, Colvin failed to diagnose the real reason for the zamindars' opposition, and from this failure proceeds his misconception about the nature and motives of TĪtu MĪr and his followers' counter-measures. Hence Colvin attempts to explain what appears to him as the "obscurity" in the affair in terms of the latter's "fanatical feeling" etc., making them appear as rather aggressors in the matter. It is remarkable that Colvin's report, and for that matter the records of the government relating to the affair, do not properly bring out the zamindars' and the indigo planters' role in it. It would appear from these records that after the return of TĪtu MĪr's men from Calcutta it was only they who made preparations for an armed conflict — nothing is noted about the activities of the zamindars and their allies. As if these men, who had been by all accounts maintaining hundreds of armed men for affray purposes, and especially Krishna Deb Rai who had led the attack on Sarfarazpur with at least 300 armed men and who had become all the more vindictive after the favourable termination of the case relating to the latter incident, had suddenly become inactive and peaceable citizens viewing helplessly the warlike preparations of TĪtu MĪr's men and waiting only for the arrival of the Joint Magistrate's negligible police force for their

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Colvin, and following him the Commissioner E. R. Barwell, attempted to depict TĪtu MĪr's movement as directed against the Hindus. The reason is obvious. See below for further discussion on this point.

protection. This position is manifestly so unnatural under the circumstances that the government sources, particularly Colvin's report, cannot but be considered partial or inadequate at least in this respect.

In fact there is no "obscurity" in the affair. Tītu Mīr's activities after the return of his men from Calcutta may be explained easily in the context of the zamindars' activities. When his men were trying to file an appeal in the Commissioner's court Krishna Deb Rai had been making elaborate preparations for suppressing Tītu Mīr's movement by sheer force. The zamindar got in touch with Debnath Rai, zamindar of Gobra-Govindapur and Laoghati, Latu Babu of Calcutta and also the indigo planters of the region. Latu Babu is said to have sent 200 trained affray-fighters from Calcutta to join the forces of Krishna Deb Rai and Debnath Rai.<sup>1</sup> While in Calcutta Tītu Mīr's men came to know about this hostile preparation on the part of the zamindars. It became clear to the ra'yats that while they were seeking a legal redress, their opponents were bent upon extinguishing their group and the movement by force. A sense of urgency in protecting themselves and in meeting their opponents on their own terms must have dawned on them. Hence they abandoned the attempt to find a legal remedy and took steps for self-defence as well as for retaliation.

The nature of the preparations made by them and the sequence of the events clearly prove this situation. The persons who had been sent to Calcutta for preferring an appeal to the Commissioner's court returned to their villages on 28 September (1831). Early in October Tītu Mīr with a number of his followers moved to Narkelbaria where one Mu'izz al-Dīn Biswas, one of his early disciples and owner of some *lākharāj* lands gave him shelter. On 23 October a religious gathering was organized in the village which was attended by about 500 of Tītu Mīr's followers from the neighbouring villages and by some *Faqīrs*.<sup>2</sup> The gathering had obviously an organizational and consultative purpose. Most of those who attended the meeting however

<sup>1</sup> Biharilal Sarkar, *Tītu Mīr Bā Nārkēlbāriār Larāi* (Tītu Mīr or the Battle of Narkelbaria). Bengali text, Calcutta, 1304 B.E., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, p. 69; also Colvin's Report, para 21.



returned to their respective homes by 25 October.<sup>1</sup> Of the *Faqīrs* we get the names of one Miskīn Shāh whose identity and whereabouts are not on record, and of Munīr al-Dīn Shāh, who came from Jessore.

On 28 October the *dārogha* of Bashirhat, a partisan of Krishna Deb Rai, sent a report to the Joint Magistrate saying that Tītu Mīr and his followers had been collecting at Narkelbaria for the purpose of making a quarrel with Krishna Deb Rai and that two *Barkandāzes* (a cadre of the police force) had been sent out to "quell the same".<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously another report about the gathering at Narkelbaria and signed by Krishna Deb Rai, Gaurprasad Chowdhury, zamindar of Nagarapur-Kuragachi, Shibchandra Rai and Panchanan Rai (most probably relations of Krishna Deb Rai) was sent to the Joint Magistrate.<sup>3</sup> It is curious that the *dārogha*, knowing that there was a big gathering of Tītu Mīr's followers, sent only two men (*Barkandāzes*) to disperse them. The likelihood is that these two men were sent only to give a legal cover to the zamindars' men who, under the leadership of Krishna Deb Rai, in fact attacked Narkelbaria on the following day, 29 October, carrying on depredations on the village and wounding a number of persons including Tītu Mīr, Faqīr Miskīn Shāh and Mu'izz al-Dīn Biswas.<sup>4</sup> Colvin had obviously no knowledge of this incident when he made his investigation, for there was then none to speak against the zamindar or in favour of Tītu Mīr, all those suspected of sympathy with the latter having been rounded up from the neighbouring villages or having absconded.<sup>5</sup> In fact the zamindars succeeded in suppressing this and many other acts of theirs against Tītu Mīr and his party.<sup>6</sup> Hence Colvin did not find any other explanation of the developments that followed except what he considered the "influence which a religious leader" could acquire on a "body of

<sup>1</sup> Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander's Report, para 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 36.

<sup>4</sup> Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>5</sup> Colvin himself in effect admits this fact of suppression of evidence that might go against the zamindars when he says: that "Krishna Deb Rai was able to deter men from acknowledging what they knew, by their fears that to speak in favour of the prisoners might bring on themselves accusations of having been concerned with them." (Colvin's Report, para 27).

<sup>6</sup> See *infra*, p. 289.

persons, who had previously been for the most part peaceable and harmless raiyats.”<sup>1</sup>

Krishna Deb’s attack on the Narkelbaria village on 29 October was indeed the immediate provocation which determined Tītu Mīr’s followers to retaliate. As soon as the news of the raid on Narkelbaria spread Tītu Mīr’s followers from the neighbouring region came to that village and began preparation for retaliation. Gholām Ma’sūm, Tītu Mīr’s nephew and a brave young man, undertook the task of commanding and drilling the group. In order to withstand any further surprise attack by the zamindars, an open space belonging to Mu’izz al-Dīn Biswas measuring some 60 *bighās* in area (about 30 acres) was enclosed and a bamboo stockade was erected there for the purpose of defence. It is on record that the people did not stay all along in the stockade but went home and returned from time to time. Thus having prepared themselves for a show-down Tītu Mīr’s men took the first retaliatory step on 6 November (1831) when they marched upon Purwa, Krishna Deb Rai’s village. The counter-attack was thus made exactly a week after the latter’s raid on Narkelbaria. It is therefore unreasonable to think that he had relaxed or become unmindful of the concentration of Tītu Mīr’s followers at Narkelbaria. Yet, interestingly enough, Krishna Deb Rai was not present in the village when this counter-attack was made. This shows that Tītu Mīr’s men were not well informed about his movements when they embarked on their act of retaliation; for, considering the fact that their main target was the zamindar himself and that they followed their march upon Purwa by a confrontation with the combined forces of the several zamindars,<sup>2</sup> it cannot be supposed that they simply took advantage of Krishna Deb’s absence from his village to make an attack upon it.

It appears that after his raid on Narkelbaria and in view of the preparation of Tītu Mīr’s followers for retaliation Krishna Deb Rai had gone to Gobra-Govindapur in order to join his forces with those of the powerful zamindar of that place, Debnath Rai,

<sup>1</sup> Colvin’s Report, para 21.

<sup>2</sup> See below.

for making a combined and decisive attack on the reformists. Purwa was evidently left in charge of some of Krishna Deb Rai's men, to be assisted by the neighbouring indigo planter of Akra, Lewis Charles Smith. In fact when Titu Mir's party arrived at Purwa on the morning of 6 November they found there exactly at that time the indigo planter riding on his elephant and accompanied by his "native" assistant, Nawab al-Dīn. In the scuffle that followed the latter was wounded. It is reported that a Brahman was wounded there,<sup>1</sup> but the evidence on the point is very doubtful.<sup>2</sup> The official account of the incident suggests that the indigo planter was just accidentally passing by that place at the time of the occurrence;<sup>3</sup> but it does not explain why his assistant, who was after all a Muslim, should have come under attack unless he or his principal had opposed or confronted the group. Be that as it may, the further doings of the party are recorded by Colvin as follows: "They then showed clearly the character of their quarrel and the impulse under which they acted. The zamindar had put a slight on their religious feelings and they retaliated, seizing a cow which they killed in the public market place of the village, scattered the blood over the walls of a Hindu temple and hung up the four quarters of the animal in derision of it. On this occasion they committed no plunder beyond carrying off what articles they found lying immediately exposed in the shops in the market place."<sup>4</sup>

Colvin's explanation of the Purwa incident only shows how completely he was kept in the dark about the zamindars' hostile and primarily aggressive activities. He says that Titu Mir and his men remained assembled at Narkelbaria "from about the 23rd October to the 6th November waiting for a favourable opportunity to commence their proceedings", that Krishna Deb Rai, having obtained information about their "intention to come in a mass to his village had got together means to resist them and they delayed their visit till his caution had grown gradually relaxed" and that they "at last carried their plans into effect on the morning

<sup>1</sup> Colvin's Report, para 22.

<sup>2</sup> See below for discussion on the point.

<sup>3</sup> Colvin's Report, para 22, Alexander's Report, para 37.

<sup>4</sup> Colvin's Report, para 22.

of the latter” date.<sup>1</sup> It is strange that Colvin did not ask himself the question why Krishna Deb Rai, who had “got together means to” resist Tītu Mīr’s men, should have “grown gradually relaxed” when the latter evidently continued assembled at Narkelbaria. The fact was, as indicated above, that Krishna Deb Rai had by no means relaxed. He had been busy in forming a grand coalition of the zamindars’ and indigo planters’ forces to deliver a final and decisive blow on Tītu Mīr and his party. This is further clear from what immediately followed the Purwa incident.

On their return from Purwa Tītu Mīr’s men received information that zamindar Debnath Rai of Gobra-Govindapur and his brother Hardev Rai had been advancing towards Narkelbaria at the head of a large force consisting of their own men as well as those supplied by Kaliprasanna Mukherji of Gobardanga, Krishna Deb Rai and others.<sup>2</sup> Without loss of time, therefore, Tītu Mīr and his men marched out and intercepted the former at Laoghati, within the borders of Nadia district, on the following morning, the 7th of November.<sup>3</sup> At Laoghati a rather severe battle took place between the two parties. The zamindars’ forces were signally defeated and scattered, and both Debnath Rai and Hardev Rai were wounded, the former rather mortally to which he succumbed shortly afterwards.<sup>4</sup> The extent to which Colvin had failed to obtain correct information about the zamindars’ role in the affair is clear from his description of this incident too. He says that emboldened by their success at Purwa Tītu Mīr and his men went to Laoghati in the Nadia district where the “sect” was numerous and that there they were opposed in the killing of bullocks “by the Hindu villagers headed by two Brahmans of the neighbourhood”, both of whom were wounded, one dying shortly afterwards.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Siddiqī, *op.cit.*, 77; Bihārīlāl Sarkār, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. M.A. Khān (*op.cit.*, pp. 121-122) is obviously mistaken in assuming that the sources do not supply the date of the Laoghati incident. It is in fact twice mentioned by Colvin in paras 23 and 32 of his report.

<sup>4</sup> Siddiqī, *op.cit.*, p. 79. Barwell, the Commissioner, mentions the names of these two persons in his report of Trial No. 1 but qualifies Hardev Rai as “a principal inhabitant” and Debnath Rai as his brother. (*Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 5 Aug., 1833, No. 11, para 3).

<sup>5</sup> Colvin’s Report, para 23.

It is remarkable that Colvin had frequent recourse to poor cows and Brahmans in order to give a communal colouring to TĪtu MĪr's movement. Colvin's "two Brahmans of the neighbourhood" of Laoghati were in fact none else than zamindar Debnath Rai and his brother Hardev Rai. It was also not the "Hindu villagers", but the combined forces of the various zamindars, with whom the fighting took place; nor did TĪtu MĪr and his men go there for the purpose of killing bullocks and thus wounding the feelings of the Hindus. In fact except at Purwa, and that also according to Colvin's report, at no other place any killing of cow is proved by the records including the latter's report. The perfunctory nature of Colvin's information is evident from the inherent contradiction in his statement on this point. If TĪtu MĪr's "sect" was "numerous" at Laoghati, as is stated, why should he have made a raid, as it were, on that village; and, again, how could it be reasonably assumed that the Hindu villagers dared oppose the "numerous" followers of TĪtu MĪr, joined as they were by the others? The fact was that at Laoghati a real trial of strength between the two parties took place; and in that trial the forces of the zamindars, composed of mercenary fighters, were decisively beaten and routed. The success of TĪtu MĪr and his followers was due not only to their better fighting skill and superior numbers, but, in a large measure, to the fact that the ra'yats in general throughout the neighbouring villages supported them in their struggle against the zamindars-indigo planters. This fact is amply attested by the Nadia Magistrate who, as will be related presently, had an encounter with TĪtu MĪr's party only ten days afterwards and who then noted that "all the surrounding villages" were "in league with" TĪtu MĪr and his party.<sup>1</sup>

The victory at Laoghati was decisive in so far as the zamindars' forces were concerned and it left the reformists, in the words of Colvin, "quite masters of that part of the country." Their spirits were naturally very high after that event. From that date (7 November) till the arrival of the Joint Magistrate against them with government forces on 15 November, TĪtu MĪr and his

<sup>1</sup> Nadia Magistrate's letter to government, 17 November 1831, *Beng. Mil. Cons.*, 25 November 1831, No. 63. Also *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No. 84.

men remained assembled at Narkelbaria. During that period no further clash took place with the zamindars. As Colvin specifically points out, the “only outrage” committed by Tītu Mīr’s men during that period was their settling a rather personal quarrel between a Faqīr and others of their number on the one hand and two Muslim inhabitants of the village of Sherpur, lying some 5 or 6 miles south of Narkelbaria, on the other. It is alleged that the latter’s houses were attacked and “plundered” on 14 November and that one of them, Yār Muhammad, was forced to give his two daughters in marriage with two of the party.<sup>1</sup> The accused persons strongly denied the charge at the time of their trial on that count; and though the Commissioner convicted them of the offence, the *Ṣadr Nizāmat ‘Adālat*, on a review of the case, found the evidence on the point unsatisfactory and set aside the Commissioner’s verdict with the observation that the accused persons were not found to be guilty of compelling Yār Muhammad’s daughters into a forced marriage.<sup>2</sup>

The Laoghati battle proved to be a turning point in the history of the movement. Henceforth the zamindars and indigo planters sought the government’s intervention for the suppression of the movement. The story of that intervention and the different stages of Tītu Mīr’s confrontation with the government forces are discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Colvin’s Report, para 23. Colvin does not mention the date of Sherpur incident; but it is mentioned in the report of the trial concerning that case (Trial No. 4, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 5 Aug. 1833, No. 11). In his report of trial No. 1, however, the Commissioner states that the Sherpur incident took place after the Nadia Magistrate’s defeat at the hands of Tītu Mīr. This statement, made before he actually having handled the case, is evidently a mistake on the Commissioner’s part; for the fight with the Nadia Magistrate had taken place on the 17th November; and on the two days following that engagement Tītu Mīr and his men were finally pitched against the government’s military forces.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Trial No. 4, *op.cit.*, Minute by the Judge of the *Ṣadr Nizāmat ‘Adālat*.

## CHAPTER X

### TĪTU MĪR'S REFORM MOVEMENT: GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AND SUPPRESSION

#### I. MILITARY INTERVENTION

After the Laoghati incident of 7 November 1831 Tītu Mīr's adversaries moved quickly to bring about the Government's intervention for suppressing the reformists. The first information about the Purwa incident was given to the Bashirhat police station (thānā) on 6 November by Lewis Smith, the indigo planter of the nearby factory of Akra, who had been present at the place of occurrence and had apparently taken part in the clashes that took place there. On the basis of his statement the thāna officer (dārogha) sent on the same day a report about the incident to the Joint Magistrate of Barasat, W.S. Alexander.<sup>1</sup> And on the second day after the Laoghati incident (i.e. on 9 November) a detailed report about it was sent to the Joint Magistrate by Piron, manager of the Barguria indigo factory near the Nadia border.<sup>2</sup> The latter was an agent of W. Storm,<sup>3</sup> owner of the factory, who had his head office in Calcutta where he usually lived. Henceforth the zamindars appear to have kept themselves in the background,<sup>4</sup> while the English indigo planters came forward and took the lead in moving the authorities for suppressing Tītu Mīr's movement. As an explanation of this development it has been suggested that the zamindars persuaded the indigo planters to intervene in the affair by representing to them that Tītu Mīr was a rebel against the government.<sup>5</sup> This is of course a plausible surmise; though there is no direct evidence to support it. In fact the indigo planters' involvement in the affair was rather due to their community of interests with the zamindars vis-a-vis the ra'yats. And it appears that from the very beginning the zamindars and the indigo

<sup>1</sup> Alexander's report, para 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 40.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. M.A. Khan (*op. cit.*, 123) is mistaken in supposing that Piron and Storm were owners of two different factories.

<sup>4</sup> Colvin, the investigating officer, even complained in his report (para 33) that the zamindars did not give early and sufficient information about the movement to the authorities and suggested giving them additional police duties.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. M.A. Bari in *History of the Freedom Movement*, Vol. I., Karachi, 1957, p. 552 and Dr. Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

planters joined forces in opposition to the reformists. Smith's presence at Purwa at the time of Titu Mīr's followers' retaliatory expedition on that village was not perhaps just accidental, as Colvin would have us believe. According to Biharilal Sarkar, even at Laoghati some of the indigo planters' men had joined the zamindars' forces.<sup>1</sup>

The dārogha's report of 6 November reached the Joint Magistrate on the 10th. On the following day the latter received two more reports from the dārogha dated respectively 9 and 10 November.<sup>2</sup> With his report of 9 November the dārogha forwarded the statements of some witnesses in connection with what he described as "Mr. Smith's case" (i.e. the Purwa incident) and also sent in the latter's assistant, Nawāb al-Dīn,<sup>3</sup> who had been wounded in that incident. In the report the dārogha stated mainly that after their action at Purwa Titu Mīr's party had gone to Laoghati where the zamindar Debnāth Rai had been killed and that he (the dārogha) had employed "3 Barkandazes to seize the rioters". The report of 10 November narrated the further efforts the dārogha had made in the matter. He stated that he had gone to seize Titu Mīr and his men but had come to know that some 60 or 70 persons of them had been in the look-out for him with the intention of killing him and added that without further assistance he and his barkandāzes were not in a position to put down the disturbances.<sup>4</sup> Acting on these reports the Joint Magistrate ordered the dāroghas of the two adjacent thānās of Kalinga and Kadamgāchi to send "the Jamadars and 10 Barkandazes each" to the help of the Bashirhat dārogha. The latter also was directed to collect his jamādārs, barkandāzes and chowkidārs and to proceed with the reinforcements to seize Titu Mīr and his men.<sup>5</sup> Piron's report of 9 November reached the Joint Magistrate also on the same day (11 November), but as the "whole strength of the

<sup>1</sup> Biharilal Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> These dates are mentioned by the Joint Magistrate, Alexander, in his report. He does not mention, however, why the report of 6 November took 4 days to reach him and how those of 9 and 10 November reached him in about a day's time.

<sup>3</sup> The fact that Smith's wounded assistant was a Muslim is a further indication that the attack on Purwa was not directed against the Hindus as such.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander's report, paras 38 and 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, para 38.



District" had already been ordered out he gave no further orders on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the authorities in Calcutta were approached by the indigo planter, Storm, who had received a detailed report of the happenings from his agent, Piron. On 13 November Storm placed that report before the government and urged military intervention for suppressing TĪtu MĪr and his movement. At the same time Storm forwarded Piron's detailed report about the incidents to both the Magistrate of Nadia and the Joint Magistrate of Barasat.<sup>2</sup> The government took immediate action on Storm's representation and on the same day asked the Commissioner of the 24-Parganas Division, E.R. Barwell, within whose jurisdiction the district of Barasat lay, to take up the matter.<sup>3</sup> The latter sent written instructions to the Joint Magistrate of Barasat to "take immediate steps for checking the outrages complained of."<sup>4</sup> The Commissioner followed up this communication by a personal visit to Barasat on the following day, 14 November, when he came to know further details about the incidents from the reports of the Kalinga and Bashirhat dāroghas which had in the meantime been received by the Joint Magistrate. Accordingly the Commissioner advised the latter to consult with I.H. Barlow, the Company's salt agent at Bagundi, and use such means as could be procured "for the dispersing and seizing of the rioters," adding that he (the Commissioner) "would send up some of the Calcutta Militia to assist" the Joint Magistrate.<sup>5</sup> In fact on his return to his headquarters at Alipur in the suburb of Calcutta the Commissioner ordered out, in anticipation of the government's approval, a "party of Calcutta Militia consisting of a Jamadar and 25 sepoy" asking them to proceed to Barasat and "to act under the orders of the Joint Magistrate in person."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 40. Colvin's statement in his report (para 28) that the Jamādārs and Barkandāzes of the other two thānās were ordered out after the receipt of Piron's report is evidently not quite correct; for Alexander, who gave the orders, himself states otherwise, as mentioned above.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander's report, para 42.

<sup>3</sup> Barwell's letter to government, 14 November 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 November 1831, No. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Barwell to Alexander, 13 November 1831, *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Alexander's report, para 42.

<sup>6</sup> Barwell to government, 14 November 1831, *op.cit.*

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Meanwhile the Joint Magistrate, acting in accordance with the Commissioner's directives proceeded to Bagundi in the afternoon of 14 November and, after having consultations with Barlow, the salt agent, and after having spent the night at that place, started for Narkelbaria on the following morning. According to his statement, the Joint Magistrate had then with him a jamādār (hāvildār) and 20 sepoy. The party reached Baduria, a place some five miles from Narkelbaria, at 9 a.m. where he was joined by the Bashirhat dārogha with his barkandāzes and chowkidārs.<sup>1</sup> Most probably the party of Calcutta militia ordered out by the Commissioner also joined the Magistrate at or near that place, for they took part in the action against Tītu Mīr's men in the afternoon on that day. According to the government sources, the Joint Magistrate's party now consisted of about 125 men.<sup>2</sup> They reached Narkelbaria at 12 noon and attacked Tītu Mīr's party a little later in the afternoon. The account of the encounter as given by the Joint Magistrate himself is not very clear. Uncertainty prevails particularly over two points: (a) whether there was any negotiation or warning by the Joint Magistrate before the commencement of the attack and (b) why the use of fire-arms by the government forces did have apparently no effect.

Let us follow the Joint Magistrate's account in some detail. He states that on arrival at the place he first ordered the jamādār to load the muskets with balls but that the latter stated that he had not "at that time come up with them" (that is, Tītu Mīr's party) and that he "was confident that" Tītu Mīr and his men would "disperse on seeing the military". The jamādār further suggested that "the powder should be first tried".<sup>3</sup> The Magistrate then states that "perceiving that 5 or 600 persons were congregated who did not seem at all to move" he ordered the jamādār to load the muskets with balls and the latter "gave orders to that effect to the sepoy."<sup>4</sup> Obviously the two consecutive paras of the Joint

<sup>1</sup> Alexander's report, para 43-44.

<sup>2</sup> E.R. Barwell's report of trial No. 1, para 4, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 5 Aug. 1833, No. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander's report, para 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para 45.

Magistrate's report are somewhat inconsistent. In fact on this point E.R. Barwell, the Commissioner who tried the case relating to this incident after TĪtu MĪr's defeat and death, and who examined a number of witnesses in that connection, notes that those witnesses strongly denied the order to load with ball being at all carried out. The Commissioner further observes that "it is very probable that in the hurry and confusion of the moment, the Joint Magistrate's order to load with ball may have been mistaken in supposing he saw that order executed..."<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, the Joint Magistrate next states that wishing to prevent bloodshed he went forward to "remonstrate with them but was received with a shower of brickbat" and on TĪtu MĪr's men advancing he ordered the jamādār to fire on them. The latter did so, "but nobody fell or appeared wounded in the slightest degree". Perceiving that "almost every person on my side was running away", says the Joint Magistrate, "I was also obliged to run for life..."<sup>2</sup>

It would thus appear that the Joint Magistrate ordered to load the muskets with balls immediately on his arrival on the spot and before making any attempt at negotiation or warning. It is also evident that there was a lack of co-ordination in the conduct of the campaign as is indicated by the difference of opinion between the Joint Magistrate and the jamādār with regard to the loading of the muskets with balls or powder and also by the admitted hurry and confusion in which the said order to load with balls is said to have been given. If the matter was well conducted there could not have been any hurry and confusion before the commencement of hostilities. In all likelihood the magistrate's order to load the muskets with balls was taken to be a signal for firing and the jamādār and the sepoys started firing with "powder", so that the magistrate's subsequent or simultaneous attempt at negotiation, if there is any substance of truth in that self-explanatory statement on his part, was of no avail.

That the "discharge of musquetry" took place before or simultaneously with the alleged attempt at negotiation seems to be indicated even by what the Commissioner stated in this

<sup>1</sup> Report of trial No. 1, para 5, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 5 Aug. 1833 No. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander's report, para 47.

connection in his trial report. In continuation of his above mentioned observation regarding the loading of muskets with balls he says: "at any rate the discharge of musquetry took no effect — for a shower of brickbats and other missiles by which the Joint Magistrate and his party were assailed, being the only reply to an attempt made by Mr. Alexander to parley with the insurgents, he then gave order to the sepoy to fire..."<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that this description of the affair by the Commissioner is as ambiguous as that of Alexander. The Commissioner does not say directly and clearly that Alexander attempted to negotiate before the commencement of hostilities but introduces the subject in a roundabout way as an explanation of the ineffectiveness of the "discharge of musquetry". Taking the Commissioner's statement as it is, it would appear that the discharge of musquetry took place before or simultaneously with the alleged attempt at remonstrance. Thus Tītu Mīr and his men, seeing that they were under attack, made the counter-attack in self-defence with "brickbats and other missiles". It may be noted in this connection that the Muslim law officer who was attached with the Commissioner's court and who examined the original Persian statements of the witnesses in this case ( which documents unfortunately are not available now ) observed, while giving his legal opinion on the case, that Tītu Mīr's men acted in self-defence being first attacked by the Magistrate's party.<sup>2</sup> The Commissioner of course rejected this view,<sup>3</sup> but his own description as quoted above rather goes against his opinion.

Be that as it may, in the first encounter with the government forces which thus took place in the afternoon of 15 November 1831 Tītu Mīr and his men came out victorious. The Joint Magistrate's party and the contingent of the Calcutta Militia were completely defeated and routed. The Joint Magistrate himself narrowly escaped, being hotly pursued for a long time and having run for about five miles and swam across a narrow canal, as he himself states, he at last arrived at Baduria. One jamādār, three

<sup>1</sup> Report of Trial No. 1, para 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 34.

barkandāzes and 10 sepoyes of the Magistrate's party fell in the action; while the Hāvildār of the Calcutta Militia was so seriously wounded that he was left for dead in the field, but later on he survived. The dārogha of the Bashirhat thānā and several barkandāzes were wounded and carried off into the stockade where the dārogha died and the rest were released.<sup>1</sup>

Alexander's expedition and its complete discomfiture had the effect of convincing the government that Tītu Mīr and his men were in fact rebels; while the latter were now equally convinced that the Joint Magistrate and his police forces were in league with the zamindars and indigo planters to crush them. Henceforth events followed in quick succession. Alexander, having reached Bagundi, proceeded on a boat through the Sundarbans taking with him the treasures of that salt agency and reached Calcutta at 3 p.m. on 16 November. On getting his report about the affair the government immediately ordered out "one complete Battalion of Native Infantry from Barrackpore and two Six Pounders [i.e. guns] manned with necessary compliment [sic] of Golandaz from Dum Dum, the whole under the command of a Field Officer", to be joined by "1 Havildar and 12 Troopers of the 3rd Regiment of Light Cavalry".<sup>2</sup> They were instructed to proceed immediately to Barasat and to route and seize or in the event of resistance to destroy the "Insurgents". Alexander was also asked to return to Barasat in order to afford the necessary information and guidance to the officer commanding the detachment, without of course having any authority to interfere with such military operation as the latter might deem expedient.<sup>3</sup>

### III. COUNTER-ATTACK ON THE INDIGO FACTORIES AND ROUTING OF THE NADIA MAGISTRATE'S FORCES, 16-17 NOVEMBER 1831

Before the army reached Narkelbaria Tītu Mīr and his men had also acted quickly. On the morning following the routing of the Joint Magistrate's forces (i.e. on 16 November) Tītu Mīr's men attacked and ransacked the Barguria indigo factory, obviously because of Piron's and Storm's role in the matter and their open

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 5; Colvin's report, para 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Bengal Military Proceedings*, 16 November 1831.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

alliance with the zamindars. Piron, having suspected some such eventuality, had in the previous night escaped with his family from the factory.<sup>1</sup> After their successful attack on the Barguria factory Tītu Mīr's men next attacked and captured on the same day another of Storm's indigo factory situated at Hugli, not far from Narkelbaria. The Superintendent of that factory, Blond, and his wife and children were taken prisoners, but were released on his complete submission to the reformists and his agreeing to "make indigo as the rulers of the country",<sup>2</sup> meaning perhaps an acknowledgement of the freedom of the indigo-planting ra'yats in the matter of indigo cultivation.

In the meantime the Magistrate of the neighbouring district of Nadia had moved out against Tītu Mīr and his men. The Magistrate had received the first information about the incident at Laoghati, which lay within his jurisdiction, on 10 November. Apparently he then asked his police officers to proceed against Tītu Mīr, for two days afterwards, on 12 November, they informed the Magistrate that they were afraid to act in view of the large number of men Tītu Mīr had assembled and "their formidable appearance" and asked for assistance. The Magistrate had immediately despatched a dārogha with 20 barkandāzes to the assistance of the police officers.<sup>3</sup> After he had done so he received, on 14 November, Storm's communication together with a copy of Piron's letter sent from Calcutta. On receipt of this latter communication from Storm the Magistrate resolved to proceed himself against Tītu Mīr and his men. Accordingly on 16 November he started for Narkelbaria by way of Radarpur indigo factory. At that latter place he was joined by the indigo planter David Andrews with four other Englishmen and their assistants and other fighting men whom they had collected for the purpose. According to the Magistrate's own report, the party consisted of eleven elephants, a "pretty strong body" of police and other barkadāzes, with "12 or 14 muskets" with double barrels,

<sup>1</sup> Nadia Magistrate to govt., 14 Nov. 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Barwell's report of Trial No. 1, *op.cit.*, para 6.

<sup>3</sup> Nadia Magistrate to govt., 14 Nov. 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No. 81.

“amounting to about 200 or 300”.<sup>1</sup> There are indications that the Magistrate’s party was reinforced also by zamindar Krishna Deb Rai and his fighting forces.<sup>2</sup> Most probably it was Krishna Deb Rai who, after the Laoghati incident, had given the first information about it to the Nadia Magistrate. That he or some other zamindar was in contact with the Magistrate is clearly indicated by the latter in his communication to the Barasat Joint Magistrate wherein he (the Nadia Magistrate) stated that “some of the neighbouring zamindars” had promised him their aid.<sup>3</sup>

The Nadia Magistrate’s party arrived at the Barguria factory at 5 p.m. on the same day (16th November) only to find that the factory had already been attacked and sacked in the morning of that day. Here also he came to know about the Barasat Joint Magistrate’s discomfiture at Narkelbaria on the previous day. Not knowing that the latter had already proceeded to Calcutta the Nadia Magistrate now wrote to him from Barguria asking him to join the Nadia party “without loss of time” and with as large a body as he might be able to assemble, “if possible, military”.<sup>4</sup> The Nadia Magistrate did not however wait for the Barasat Joint Magistrate’s response and on the following morning (17 November) proceeded from Barguria towards Narkelbaria. After advancing for only one and a half miles, however, he came across TĪtu MĪr’s party who, according to the Magistrate’s estimate, numbered “1000 or 1500”.<sup>5</sup> As at Narkelbaria, here also the Magistrate’s party acted in an unco-ordinated and haphazard manner. The account of the encounter that took place there is best given by the Magistrate himself as follows:

“....proceeded to the distance of a mile and ½ from the factory towards Narkelbaria; but finding that those people were assembled in very large numbers, and evidently regularly organised for an attack, and perceiving all our attendants all falling off, we thought it most prudent to retire; no sooner had we turned round than they approached as fast as they could

<sup>1</sup> Do to do, 16 and 17 Nov. 1831, *ibid.*, Nos. 82 & 84; also *Ben. Mil. Cons.*, 25 Nov. 1831, No. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Biharilala Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 30 and Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Nadia Magistrate to Barasat Joint Magistrate, 16 Nov. 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 25 Nov. 1831, No. 76.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Nadia Magistrate to government, 17 November 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 25 Nov. 1831, No. 84; also *Bengal Military Consultations*, 25 November 1831, No. 63.

run, and having cut down two of our followers who could not run, we had but just time to get on board the pinnace before numbers of them lined the bank pelting us with bricks and cutting down and killing all they could come up with. From the pinnace we fired several rounds upon them; but with surprising little effect, as they bobbed down and avoided the spots, and then began dancing and jumping about in defiance of us. Mr. Andrews, succeeded in shooting a man, whom we supposed to be a Sardar from his dress, besides one other, one wounded, and probably several others wounded, from the number of shots fired. Finding our position every moment more hazardous from their seizing the boats on the bank and approaching us, we jumped on the opposite shore, and ran for about a mile, when fortunately we reached the elephants, and thus escaped, being cut to pieces. My Fauzdari Nazir was cut down severed in pieces while trying to make his escape; and I cannot yet speak to the loss of lives, or precisely to the loss of property.”<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from the above account that the Magistrate began his retreat on seeing that Tītu Mīr’s followers “were assembled in very large numbers, and evidently organised for an attack” and that his own men were all falling off. It is also clear that the Magistrate, instead of giving orders for an organised retreat, himself first got upon a boat along with the indigo planter David Andrews leaving other boats and their men on the shore. Admittedly the retreat was made before Tītu Mīr’s party had commenced their attack. It was from their boat on the river (Ichhamati) that the Magistrate and David Andrews opened fire on the latter who are stated to have been till then pelting bricks from the shore and allegedly “cutting down and killing all they could come up with.” Evidently the latter statement is a sort of cover-story to justify the haphazard retreat. It is said first that they cut off two of the Magistrate’s followers, next it is said that they cut down and killed all they could come up with, and finally it is stated that the Fauzdari Nazir was “cut down severed in pieces”. In fact it was this Nazir who, according to the judicial proceedings on this case, was the only casualty in the affair.<sup>2</sup> It would seem from the Magistrate’s account that even this poor man would not have lost his life had not the former and David Andrews committed the folly of opening fire and wounding and killing several of Tītu Mīr’s followers, being themselves at a safe distance

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Barwell’s report of trial No. 1, *op.cit.*, para 6.



on a boat on the river while a number of their own men still on shore and without any commander to guide their operations or retreat. Clearly TĪtu MĪr's men began the onslaught after the firing by the Magistrate and the indigo planter and got on the boats left on the shore in order to pursue the Magistrate and David Andrews. Till that time TĪtu MĪr's party were admittedly only pelting bricks and shouting defiance. The inconsistency and apologetic nature of the Magistrate's account is evident also from the fact that although he ends up by saying that he could not speak precisely about the loss of property, he in fact states at the beginning of the account that he had lost to his opponents "one elephant, one pinnacle with all its furniture, plate and other utensils, some money, 2 Bazras [ a kind of boat ] and a cook's boat, together with Jolly boat and Dingis" and his own palanquin.<sup>1</sup>

Thus was the Nadia Magistrate's expedition against TĪtu MĪr also a failure. There was a basic difference, however, between this expedition and that undertaken by the Baraṣat Joint Magistrate. The latter, as noted above, acted under instructions from his superior authorities and was accompanied by police officers as well as a contingent of the Calcutta Militia. The Nadia Magistrate, on the other hand, acted on a communication from the indigo planter Storm and the forces accompanying the expedition consisted mainly of mercenary fighters supplied by the indigo planter David Andrews and also, perhaps, by the zamindar Krishna Deb Rai. And yet, so far as the Nadia Magistrate's information went prior to his undertaking the expedition, there was only a clash between a party of Muslims and some zamindars' men in the course of which a person was killed<sup>2</sup> and for which he had already sent 20 barkandazes and a dārogha to the assistance of his police officers from whom he had not admittedly heard further about the affair. Thus his action is only illustrative of the readiness with which district officers of the time were prone to respond to the requests of the indigo planters and to concert measures with them as against the ra'yats.

<sup>1</sup> Nadia Magistrate to government, 17 November 1831, *op. cit.*, para 1.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the Magistrate came to know about the sacking of Barguria factory and Alexander's discomfiture only on arrival at the latter place.

IV: THE FINAL ATTACK ON NARKELBARIA,  
18-19 NOVEMBER 1831

Be that as it may, the army was called out, as already mentioned, not after this so-called “second successful resistance to the civil authorities”, as Colvin reports, but previously to that and upon Alexander’s representation after his discomfiture at Narkelbaria on 15 November. The Joint Magistrate returned to Barasat on the night of 16 November while the 11th Regiment Native Infantry, commanded by Major Scott reached that place on the following morning (17 November), that is precisely at the very hour when Titu Mīr and his men were facing the Nadia Magistrate and his party near Barguria. On their way back to Narkelbaria Titu Mīr’s followers appear to have attacked on the same day another indigo factory at the village of Jangalpur, belonging to Shillingford and are said to have “robbed” a Faqir of “his standard and drum” and “plundered the shop” of a shop-keeper named Ramnarayan in the market of the same village.<sup>1</sup>

From Barasat Alexander started with the troops for Narkelbaria in the afternoon of 17 November and reached Matiarhat, about 18 miles from Barasat, at night. From there they started in the early hours of 18 November and reached Narkelbaria at break of day.<sup>2</sup> “The rest of the cavalry arrived an hour or so later.” Thus Titu Mīr and his men had got very little respite after their return from Barguria. A little skirmishing took place on that day in which, as Alexander records, “one European artillery man and two horses were shot”.<sup>3</sup> As all the infantry had not yet arrived, the final attack was deferred till the morning of 19 November when the guns and infantry were brought up. After “a round or two of grape, they retired to a kind of stockade when the infantry advanced, and commenced firing which in about an hour finished the business.”<sup>4</sup> The number of dead was about 50, and nearly 30

<sup>1</sup> Barwell’s report of trial No. 1, *op.cit.*, para 8. See below for a discussion about the authenticity of these incidents.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander to Barwell, 19 November 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 25 Nov. 1831, No. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

persons were wounded, while 250 persons had been taken prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the brief account given of the expedition by Alexander who accompanied it. There is no other first-hand information about the event. Even according to Alexander's own account, TĪtu MĪr and his men do not appear to have offered any resistance when on 19 November the army attacked them.<sup>2</sup> The Joint Magistrate's statement that they were "shouting defiance" might even mean that they were trying to communicate their readiness to surrender and when that attempt was met with the firing of "a round or two of grape" they retired into the stockade. There does not appear to have been any attempt on their part at a counter-charge, probably because they thought that the army would in that case simply advance without firing and would capture them, thus making them prisoners and sparing their lives. The army commenced firing with the cannons and muskets, however, on the unopposing crowd in the stockade and "finished the business", as Alexander puts it, "in about an hour". TĪtu MĪr himself with many others were killed. When the army entered the stockade TĪtu MĪr's son Gauhar 'Alī, who was wounded, was found sitting beside the dead body of his father. The numbers killed and wounded as recorded by the Joint Magistrate were only those that he could assess immediately on his entry into the stockade; there doubtless were others, at least from among the wounded, who were carried away by those who could escape.

The repression and reprisals did not stop with the fall of the stockade. According to Colvin's report, there followed an "indiscriminate seizure of Mahomedans" in the neighbouring villages "on the plea of their being of TĪtu MĪr's sect".<sup>3</sup> Many fled their villages in order to escape the tyranny and persecution. In Colvin's moderate statement: "There was however a general confusion and much plunder throughout that part of the country which had been inhabited by Titoo Meer's followers for some

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Barwell's statement (report of trial No.1 *op.cit.*) that they were prepared to fight having exposed the mangled body of the European to view on an elevated spot in advance of their line etc. does not find any mention in Alexander's letter quoted above.

<sup>3</sup> Colvin's report, para 38.

days subsequent to their defeat and dispersion. The property and houses of these people were left of course deserted and became the subject of common pillage. The police had scarcely had time to reform and as was unavoidable in the temporary license which prevailed several were sufferers who had no connection with the insurgents.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, although 250 persons were stated to have been taken prisoners in the stockade, within one day another hundred were hauled up from the neighbouring villages so that the total number of prisoners stood at 350 on 21 November.<sup>2</sup> Of these people 330 were put into Alipur jail on 22 November.<sup>3</sup> The witch-hunting continued for several months, for Colvin, who was deputed to make investigations and collect evidence for the trial of Tītu Mīr’s followers, asked for authority as late as 16 March 1832 to announce several rewards for the apprehension of ten persons, one of whom was stated to be from Jessore, and the rest from Narkelbaria and its neighbouring villages, who were said to have absconded.<sup>4</sup>

#### V. TRIALS OF THE PRISONERS

After the defeat and dispersal of Tītu Mīr’s men and simultaneously with the repressions, arrests and plunder by the army and their retinue on the spot, the government resolved, on 22 November 1831, to make a thorough investigation into the causes and circumstances of what they called the “insurrectionary movement in the District” and appointed J.R. Colvin, hitherto an officer in Calcutta, temporary Joint Magistrate of Baraset and asked him to submit a detailed report on the affair and also to collect evidence for the trial of the prisoners.<sup>5</sup> “The serious nature of the late disturbances in the district of Baraset”, so recites the resolution, “renders it an object of paramount importance, that the cause which gave rise to them should be fully investigated, in order that the motives which actuated the insurgents may be rightly understood, and such measures adopted as may be deemed

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Barwell to govt., 21 Nov. 1831, para 4, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Do to do, 22 Nov. 1831, para 1, *ibid.*, No. 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 April 1832, No. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No. 91.

expedient to prevent a recurrence of similar disorders.”<sup>5</sup> By the same resolution the government appointed E.R. Barwell, Commissioner of the 24-Parganas (18th) Division and F.J. Shore, a member of the Governor-General’s Council, special commissioners for the trial of the prisoners. The Muslim law officer who usually attended the Commissioner of the 18th Division was to sit with the special commissioners to give his legal opinion on the cases. The Commissioners of Revenue and Circuit of the Calcutta and Murshidabad as well as the magistrates of the several districts bordering Barasat also were called upon to submit immediately their opinions regarding the causes of the uprising and “the total want of information or the neglect” which prevailed about it “until it broke out into an insurrection which routed, dispersed and expelled the civil authorities.”<sup>1</sup>

Colvin immediately took up his new assignment and after completing the investigations submitted his report on 8 March 1832. On the basis of that report and the evidence he collected five cases were framed against 197 of the prisoners. These 197 persons were tried over and over again in a series of five separate trials. According to a revised resolution adopted after the receipt of Colvin’s report, E.R. Barwell, Commissioner of the 24-Parganas Division, alone presided over these five trials.

(a) *Trial No. 1*

In trial No. 1, one hundred and eightyfour persons were charged with

“riotously assembling in arms and setting at defiance the legal authority by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Barasat, with murder, wounding and plundering and... with joining and being accessory to the proceedings of the rioters assembled at the village of Narkelbaria after the above described attack on the Joint Magistrate and assembling in arms in defiance of the legal authority with the view of creating disturbances and plundering on the 15th November 1831 or 1st Agrahayan, 1238 B.S.”

It may be noted that the charge was framed in very vague and general terms and the date mentioned at last (15 November) was somewhat confusing. More important than this, the trying officer, Commissioner Barwell, was clearly prejudiced against the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

prisoners. Thus, while reciting the circumstances of the case he completely ignored the fact of the prisoners' previous quarrel with the zamindars and outright rejected the plea of their oppression and exaction of the "beard tax" by observing that it was nowhere borne out by the statements of the witnesses.<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the fact of the zamindars' oppression and exaction of the beard tax was clearly established by Colvin's report which the Commissioner had approvingly forwarded to the government, concurring "entirely" with "Mr. Colvin in his views and suggestions on the several points noticed in his Report"<sup>2</sup> and that further, while forwarding a little earlier W.S. Alexander's report to the government, the same commissioner had officially expressed his opinion that the ra'yats were the aggrieved party in their quarrel with the zamindars.<sup>3</sup>

In his recital of the alleged offences of the prisoners the commissioner mentioned all the incidents beginning from the march on Purwa on 6 November till the suppression of the group on 19 November, thus in effect taking into consideration all the counts and charges against the prisoners in trial No. 1. In doing so, however, he mixed up the dates and sequence of events. For instance he stated that the alleged forcible marriage of Yar Muhammad's daughter at the village of Sherpur had taken place "a day or two" after the encounter of Titu Mīr's men with the Nadia Magistrate.<sup>4</sup> It may be recalled that the latter event took place on 17 November and "a day or two" after that event, that is on 18 and 19 November, Titu Mīr and his followers were actually engaged by the army at Narkelbaria. Interestingly enough, the same Commissioner, while trying the prisoners separately for their alleged offence at Sherpur, stated that that event had taken place on 14 November (that is 3 days before the encounter with the Nadia Magistrate).<sup>5</sup> Such carelessness about the dates and sequence of the alleged offences is only indicative of the Commissioner's prejudice and eagerness to prove the guilt of the prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> Barwell's report of trial No. 1, paras 33 & 34.

<sup>2</sup> Barwell to government, 16 March 1832, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832, No. 4, para 2.

<sup>3</sup> Barwell to govt., 28 Nov. 1831, *ibid.*, No. 2, para 3.

<sup>4</sup> Barwell's report of trial No. 1, para 8.

<sup>5</sup> Barwell's report of trial No. 4, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 5 August 1833 No. 11.

In the face of such attitude of the trying officer, it must have required a good deal of courage and straightforwardness on the part of his Muslim law officer to state his legal opinion on the case. He plainly pointed out that TĪtu MĪr was "an expounder" of the doctrines of Islam, that "in consequence of the hostility of certain Hindoo zamindars and others towards him and his followers and of the demand on the part of the zamindars of a fine or tax on beard" TĪtu MĪr had stood forward as the head and protector of his followers and had "drawn a numerous congregation together", between whom and the zamindars arose "frequent quarrels"; that intelligence of these disturbances having reached the Joint Magistrate of Barasat, "that officer, accompanied by 18 sepoy and others proceeded to Narkelbaria and that he then and there ordered the sepoy to fire upon TĪtu MĪr's party", and that therefore the latter could "only be considered as having acted in self-defence, and that therefore the charge of riotously assembling in arms and setting at defiance the legal authority by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Barasat with murders, wounding and plundering not established against them either on clear legal proof or on strong presumption."<sup>1</sup>

So far as the Joint Magistrate W.S. Alexander's expedition against TĪtu MĪr's men on 15 November was concerned, which is clearly the main subject in trial No. 1, the Muslim law officer's analysis and opinion seem to reflect the facts of the case; for, even according to Alexander's own statement and Colvin's report concerning that event discussed above,<sup>2</sup> it was the Joint Magistrate and his forces who commenced firing immediately on their arrival on the spot so that TĪtu MĪr's men clearly acted in self-defence on that occasion.

Adverting to the general charge of "assembling in arms with a view to creating disturbances", the Muslim law officer observed that, even if admitting the existence of presumption evidence in support of such a charge, TĪtu MĪr's followers, "in consequence of their having placed themselves in the predicament of Rebels by their opposition to govt. troops which were sent out against them

<sup>1</sup> Report of trial No. 1, para 33.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*. p. 275-276.

and which after killing and wounding several of their number among whom was their chief Titu Mir so entirely dispersed the Insurgent force as to remove all chance of future aggression therefrom, the subsequent apprehension of the prisoners with a view to the infliction of further punishment was precluded; and that on these grounds therefore they were one and all entitled to their release.”<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say that the Commissioner outright rejected this view and convicted all the prisoners of the offences with which they were charged. Thus he sentenced Ghulam Ma’sūm, one of the principal followers of Titu Mir, “to suffer capital punishment at Narkelbaria” where his body was to be “exposed on a gibbet as a warning to others.” The rest of the prisoners were all sentenced “to imprisonment in banishment or at any rate to transportation for life.” Significantly enough, when the case came up before the Şadr Niẓāmat ‘Adālat (chief criminal court) for confirmation of sentence, the Muslim Law Officer of that court as well substantially agreed with his counterpart in the Commissioner’s court, declaring the proceedings of the prisoners as having in the ultimate analysis amounted to “rebellion”, but that “as their leader was slain and their assembly utterly dispersed such of them as have been apprehended are not liable to any Legal Penalty according to the doctrine laid down in the Chapter on rebellion in the Hedaya and other Legal Works” and that the whole of the prisoners were “entitled to their release.”<sup>2</sup> It may be observed that the Indian Penal Code which deals, among other things, with the law of rebellion and war against the established government,<sup>3</sup> had not yet been passed and the East India Company’s government still professed to administer criminal justice according to the law they had found in force in the land. In vital matters, however, they acted according to their own notions and concepts. Hence the Şadr court did not pass any remark on the above mentioned expositions of the law by the Muslim law officers and substantially confirmed the Commissioner’s verdict with regard to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, (extract from the proceedings of the Court of Şadr Niẓāmat ‘Ādālat).

<sup>3</sup> Sections 121-124.



offences of the prisoners.

Considering, however, that the evidences were “so replete with variations and contradictions” and “the alleviating circumstances to be found throughout the Fauzdari proceedings and Mr. Colvin’s report”, the Şadr court drastically varied the Commissioner’s sentences. Thus, while it confirmed the death sentence for Ghulām Ma’sūm, it forthwith acquitted 57 of the prisoners, sentenced only eleven persons to life imprisonment, and reduced the term of imprisonment for the rest — 2 to seven years’, 18 to five years’, 40 to four years’, 38 to three years’ and 10 to two years’ imprisonment. Two persons, in consideration of their having each lost a hand by amputation in consequence of wounds received, and Gauhar ‘Alī, son of Tītu Mīr, having had a leg shot off, were also released. Three persons died in jail before the trial was concluded and one person, a Hindu named Deoki Pathak, was released as insane.

(b) *The other trials*

Although all the events and circumstances had been cited and taken into consideration in trial No. 1, four more trials were held by the Commissioner on the four specific events of the Nadia Magistrate’s discomfiture on the 17th, the Purwa incident of the 6th, the affair of Yar Muhammad’s daughters at Sherpur on the 14th and the attack on Shillingford’s indigo factory at Jangalpur on the 17th November. Significantly enough, the Laoghati affair of 7 November in which zamindar Debnath Rai had lost his life in the fight and which event was in no way less serious than either the Purwa incident, or the Sherpur affair or the attack on the Jangalpur indigo factory was neither cited in these trials, nor made the subject of any separate trial. This total suppression of fact regarding the Laoghati event clearly shows the extent to which the zamindars had succeeded in hushing up their role in the whole affair. It is easy to understand that any enquiry and legal proceedings in regard to the Laoghati event would have exposed the zamindars’ hostile and illegal acts towards Tītu Mīr’s followers and would have laid bare the whole development in not too unfavourable light for the latter.

In trial No. 2, 43 persons already convicted in trial No. 1 were again charged with the offence of “attacking in an armed body the magistrate of the District of Nadia and his attendants with murder, wounding and plundering on the 17th November 1831 or 3rd Agraḥayan 1238.” The most farcical part of the proceedings in this trial was that the Commissioner relied on *only one witness* for the prosecution for convicting all the accused persons except one and in doing so he merely twisted and misinterpreted the statements of the several witnesses called in by the prisoners in their defence. In formulating his verdict the Commissioner also made a downright false statement in saying that Tītu Mīr and his men had “sallied forth” from Narkelbaria for the purpose of attacking the magistrate and that the latter was “escorted by about 250 of his police and some elephants.”<sup>1</sup> It is worth recalling that according to the Nadia Magistrate’s own official communications he had marched out against Tītu Mīr on having received Storm’s communication from Calcutta, that his (the magistrate’s) forces consisted mainly of the mercenary fighters supplied by the indigo planter David Andrews and not of the police force and that the magistrate found out the party when they were returning from their attack on the Barguria indigo factory and were assembled in prayer (*Namāz*) in a plain not far off in the evening of 16 November.<sup>2</sup> The case was thus very much different from sallying forth from Narkelbaria for the purpose of attacking the Nadia Magistrate.

Be that as it may, since the Commissioner had already sufficiently evaporated his prejudice by awarding life imprisonment for all the prisoners in the previous trial No. 1., he had now per force nothing more to add by way of sentencing imprisonment. Hence he merely repeated the same sentence of life imprisonment for them. As usual the case came up before the Ṣadr Nizāmat court for review and confirmation of the sentences. The Muslim law officer of that court gave the same opinion as he had done in trial No. 1, but the court did not accept his view. In

<sup>1</sup> Report of trial No. 2, para 3.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, p. 279; also Nadia Magistrate to Barasat Jt. Magistrate, 16 Nov. 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No. 76.

reviewing the case, however, it acquitted 13 and convicted only 28 prisoners. It also varied the sentence of punishment for them. One of them was sentenced to imprisonment for 5 years and 16 to two years' imprisonment. No further sentence was passed with regard to the remaining 11 prisoners, that passed on them in trial No. 1 was deemed sufficient. One of the prisoners died before the conclusion of the trial.

The Purwa incident formed the subject-matter of trial No. 3. In it a total of 26 persons were accused. Of these twenty-six persons one died before the conclusion of the trial and two were acquitted by the Commissioner. In this case also the latter passed the sentence of life-imprisonment for the remaining 23 persons including the newly accused prisoners. The Şadr Nizāmat court, however, acquitted 10 of them and sentenced the remaining prisoners to only two years' imprisonment. The sentence of two of them was to run consecutively after the expiry of their terms of punishment awarded in trial No. 1. The most significant point in respect of this case was that upto the time of the trial which took place on 17 September 1832, the Brahman who was stated to have been wounded by Tītu Mīr's men at Purwa did not appear before the court and was said to have been still absconding.<sup>1</sup> It may be recalled in this connection that the dārogha of the Bashirhat thānā, while investigating the case immediately after the incident, had only sent up Nawāb al-Dīn, a servant of Lewis Smith's, as the person wounded by Tītu Mīr's men at Purwa. In view of these facts it would appear that the alleged wounding of a Brahman at Purwa was a mere concoction; for there was no reason for his still absconding when Tītu Mīr had been killed and his followers rounded up and put on trial.

The Sherpur affair was the subject-matter of trial No. 4. In this case 14 persons were charged with the offence of forcible marriage of Yar Muhammad's daughters and of plundering his house. Of these 14 persons 10 had already been punished in the previous trials; the remaining four were newly accused. The Commissioner convicted all of them of the offences and included

<sup>1</sup> Barwell's report of trial No. 3, para 2.

the newly accused four persons also in his sentence of life-imprisonment. As mentioned before, the Şadr Nizāmat Court reversed the Commissioner's finding regarding the alleged forcible marriage of Yar Muhammad's daughters with two of Titu Mīr's followers and observed that the allegation was not at all proved by the evidence. It also acquitted 5 of the 14 prisoners of the general charge of maltreating Yār Muhammad and others and plundering his house. Of the rest, one having been already sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment in the previous trials, and another, Ghulām Ma'sūm, having already been sentenced to death, no further sentence was passed on them. The remaining seven persons were sentenced to two years' imprisonment, the term of such of them as had been sentenced in the previous trials was to commence on the expiration of those sentences.

The last and fifth trial dealt with the attack on Shillingford's indigo factory at Jangalpur including what was called the "robbing" of a Faqīr of his standard and drum and the "plundering" of a shop belonging to one Ramnarayan Ghosh. In this case also 14 persons were accused, of whom one was not implicated in any of the previous four trials. As usual the Commissioner included this additional person in the sentence of life-imprisonment. The infliction of life-imprisonment on several persons in the last two cases which, according to the Commissioner's own findings, were not in any way connected with the main charge of "setting at defiance" the legal authority and attacking the magistrates shows the extent of vindictiveness with which he viewed the cases. And in bringing the series of cases to a close and forwarding them to the Şadr Nizāmat Court he attempted to convince the latter of the need for such severe punishments by saying that "whatever previous grounds may have existed for the belief that Titu Mir and his followers were driven into excesses committed by them, by insults offered to their religious tenets by exactions on the part of the zamindar Krishna Dev Rai", no proof of this existed and that even "admitting the provocation to have been offered in its fullest extent", it was essential for the "preservation of public tranquillity" that the prisoners "should not be permitted to return to the

scene of their” proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately the Şadr Court was not as prejudiced as the Commissioner and in this last case, as in the previous ones, it drastically varied the Commissioner’s sentences, acquitting 9 out of the 14 persons, and sentencing 4 of the remaining five to only two years’ imprisonment. No further punishment was awarded for the fifth person, his sentences in the previous trials being considered sufficient.<sup>2</sup>

Thus were a total of 197 prisoners tried in five trials. Of these persons four died in prison before conclusion of the trials, one was released as insane and 52 were acquitted of the charges brought against them. Of the remaining 140 persons, their total sentences were as follows:

1	person	(Ghulam Ma’sûm)	was sentenced to death;
11	persons	were sentenced to imprisonment	for life;
9	”	”	” for seven years;
9	”	”	” for six years;
16	”	”	” for five years;
35	”	”	” for four years;
34	”	”	” for three years;
22	”	”	” for two years;

Three persons were convicted but no punishment was awarded to them because two of them had each one hand shot off in the attack on Narkelbaria and the other person, Gauhar ‘Alī, Tĭtu Mĭr’s son, had one of his legs shot off on the same occasion.

It must be added that even the revised punishments awarded by the Şadr Nizāmat court were out of proportion to the offences with which the men were charged. The real causes of the trouble, namely, the oppressive nature of the zamindari and indigo planting systems, and the alleviating circumstances of the quarrel of Tĭtu Mĭr’s men with the zamindars and indigo planters, the Bashirhat police officer’s mishandling of the case and his undoubted partiality for the zamindar Krishna Dev Rai, the Joint Magistrate W.S. Alexander’s rough-shod campaign against Tĭtu Mĭr’s followers, etc., were not apparently taken into any consideration in adjudicating the cases against the prisoners. The last four trials were, in particular, in the nature of double

<sup>1</sup> Barwell’s report of trial No. 5, concluding para.

<sup>2</sup> Report of trial No. 5, Şadr Nizāmat Court’s judgement.

punishment; for the offences dealt with in these four trials had in fact been all recited and taken into consideration in trial No. 1. Moreover, the offences alleged in the last three trials were either not so serious or not clearly established by the evidence adduced. Thus with regard to the Purwa incident the alleged wounding of a Brahman remained all through a mystery, that man never appearing before the court even at the time of the trial. With regard to the Sherpur incident the Şadr Court did of course reject the allegation of forcible marriage of Yar Muhammad's daughters, but in punishing the prisoners on the general charge of maltreatment and plundering the house of Yar Muhammad, no mention was made of the nature or value of the property alleged to have been taken away. Similar vagueness prevails over the alleged plundering of Shillingford's residence and Ramnarayan Ghosh's shop. In this case also no mention was made of the kind of properties, nor even of the approximate value of those properties, said to have been taken away. The only specific mention of the property taken was that of a standard and a drum belonging to a Faqîr. Yet, on these vague, unspecified and obviously malicious charges so many men were sentenced to at least two years' imprisonment in each of the last three trials and their sentences were to run consecutively. If this was not a miscarriage of justice, it was definitely not in accordance with the law of the land according to which criminal justice was professedly administered.

#### VI. EPILOGUE

Thus Tîtu Mîr's reform movement was violently suppressed and his followers vindictively punished. His aim was essentially a reformation of life and society of the Muslims according to the teachings of Islam. As indicated earlier, he derived his ideas from the *Salafiya* movement initiated by Shaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhâb. In the wider context, therefore, the Bengal development was part and parcel of the reform movements then under way in the world of Islam largely on account of the impact of the Arabian movement. Yet Tîtu Mîr's reform movement is distinguishable in several respects from the other movements, particularly from the contemporary *jihād* movement started by Sayyid

Aḥmad Shahīd and the *Farā'idī* movement in east Bengal. Sayyid Aḥmad visited Calcutta and its vicinity in the early twenties and obtained a number of followers from Bengal. This fact and the contemporaneity of the two developments have naturally led some to assume that Tītu Mīr was a follower of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd.<sup>1</sup> There is however no solid support for this assumption. Definitely Tītu Mīr was not a disciple or formally appointed *khalīfā* of the latter. Even if assuming that he was inspired by Sayyid Aḥmad's example, Tītu Mīr clearly chose a different line and a different field of action. Instead of joining the *jihād* against the Sikh rulers of the Panjab directed from the north-west frontier region, which was till then the main political feature of Sayyid Aḥmad's programme, Tītu Mīr devoted his attention to the reformation and regeneration of the Muslims of Bengal from within the land. There is no indication of his having ever asked any of his followers to move to the north-west frontier and join Sayyid Aḥmad's group, as was done by a number of the latter's formally appointed *khalīfās* in Bengal. There is also a view that while Tītu Mīr and his followers belonged essentially to the Ḥanafī school of thought, the followers of Sayyid Aḥmad were not all quite so.<sup>2</sup>

Tītu Mīr's movement had greater similarity with the *Farā'idī* movement in east Bengal in that both the movements concentrated their attention to and received support from the rural and agrarian masses and both were involved in the conflicts with the zamindar-indigo-planter classes. But there was a very important doctrinal difference between the two. The *Farā'idī* movement clearly proceeded on the undeclared but unmistakable assumption that Bengal was then governed by foreigners and not by Muslims. Hence the *Farā'idīs* abstained themselves from *Jumua'* prayers on Friday thereby earning for themselves the rather reprobative appellation of *Be-Jumua'-Wallāhs* (Non-performers of *Jumua'*

<sup>1</sup> Biharilal Sarkar, *op.cit.*, and following him some other later writers.

<sup>2</sup> T.E. Ravenshaw, *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. 42, Calcutta, 1865, p. 127. Ravenshaw's view, however, has to be taken with caution; for he wrote in the context of the Ḥanafī-non-Ḥanafī controversy of the sixties in its relation to the question of whether British India was to be considered a *dār-al-ḥarb*, and because Ravenshaw himself confused the *Farā'idī* movement and that of Tītu Mīr as one and the same.

prayers). Tītu Mīr and his followers, on the other hand, are never known to have raised any objection to the saying of *Jumua'* prayers in Bengal. On the contrary there are indications that they erected mosques and started congregational prayers on Friday wherever they had a sizeable following. From this point of view the *Farā'idī* movement appears to be more markedly political in nature; but then, neither Ḥajī Shari'at Allah, who started the movement, nor his more vigorous and active son and successor, Muhammad Moḥsin alias Dudu Miyan came to any direct clash with government officers or armed forces. On the other hand Tītu Mīr and his followers took the rather unusual step of building a stronghold and defensive sanctuary, which the *Farā'idī* leaders neither attempted nor perhaps felt the need to do. Moreover, Tītu Mīr's direct clash with the government forces, his death at their hands together with a number of his followers and the severe punishment of a number of the latter after their defeat and suppression have all invested the movement with a more pronounced anti-government character than has been the case with the *Farā'idī* movement.

Whether Tītu Mīr deliberately stood up in rebellion against the government is a moot question. His clash with the government troops appears to be a sequel to a process of development in which the starting point was his organizing for defence against persecution and threat of annihilation by the zamindars. Each stage in this process of development has been analysed above in the light of the available records. The government's intervention in the matter was brought about mainly at the instance of the indigo planters, particularly W. Storm, owner of several indigo factories in the district of Barasat, who made common cause with the zamindars. When Tītu Mīr and his followers saw this alignment of the zamindars and the indigo planters and, in particular, when they further saw that the armed bands of the latter were also accompanied by the magistrates and the government forces in their march against them, they must have turned desperate. It must have dawned on them that their struggle was not only against the zamindars-indigo planters but also against the alien government whose handmaids and protégés this latter group were.



We have no records whatsoever from the side of TĪtu MĪr and his party, so that it cannot be said whether they formally announced their independence or rebellion; but it was precisely in this light that the immediate government authorities viewed the matter. Thus the Commissioner E.R. Barwell states that sometime after the Purwa incident TĪtu MĪr's party "openly proclaimed themselves masters of the country — asserting that the period of British rule had expired and that the Mahomedans [Muslims] from whom the English had usurped it, were the rightful owners of the empire."<sup>1</sup> He further states that after the capture of the Narkelbaria stockade "a standard with a peculiar device and inscription upon it, which Mr. Alexander understood to be symbolical of sovereignty was likewise found planted in the stockade and was made over by Mr. Alexander to his successor Mr. Colvin..."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the latter does not make any mention of this in his report. On the other hand he says that several of the ra'yats of Narkelbaria village had in their evidence before him "united in stating that the people of TĪtu MĪr's sect" had been "long in the habit of talking of schemes against the government", but that under the circumstances he considered this to be only "natural exaggeration".<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless Colvin thought that the "absence of any adequate resistance" to their proceedings fostered what he called the "fanatical desire" of TĪtu MĪr's men in "securing revenge at whatever risk" and this ended "at last in open insurrection against the government."<sup>4</sup> Further, throughout the official communications on the subject and the court proceedings TĪtu MĪr and his men are repeatedly termed as "insurgents". The formal charge framed against them, however, avoided that expression or the terms of "rebellion" and "insurrection" and was confined to the expression: "setting at defiance the legal authority" etc. Be that as it may, by their resistance to the forces commanded by the Joint Magistrate of Barasat they had, as the Muslim law officers of both the Commissioner's court and the Şadr Nizāmat court pointed out, "placed themselves in the

<sup>1</sup> Barwell's report of trial No. 1., para 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 10.

<sup>3</sup> Colvin's report, para 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para 25.

predicament of rebels.” And it was on this ground that these law officers asked the courts to treat the prisoners as political offenders which, in the ultimate analysis they really were. For one thing, whether they planned a revolt from the beginning or were driven to that position by the circumstances, or were merely “constructive rebels”, there is no doubt that they stood up against persecution and oppression and in defence of their faith. They were therefore sufferers and martyrs for conscience’s sake.

In the official records, particularly in some places in Colvin’s report and Barwell’s trial report, Titu Mir and his followers have been accused of enmity towards the Hindus in general. A little careful reading of these documents would at once make it clear that these are only general and vague remarks contradicted even by the facts noted in these documents. Thus, for instance, in para 23 of his report Colvin says that from the “8th to the 15th” of November Titu Mir’s followers “remained gradually increasing in numbers and confidence, killing bullocks in different places, plundering the villages in the neighbourhood of Narkelbaria, seizing raiyats”, etc., and then ends up the para by stating that after the “murder” at Laoghati (7 November), (that is the death of Zamindar Debnath Rai in the fighting), the “only outrage committed by the party” was at Sherpur.<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that the latter event took place on 14 November. Thus, by Colvin’s own admission the “only outrage” committed by the men from the 8th to the 15th November was the incident at Sherpur and his statement about their “killing bullocks in different places, plundering the villages in the neighbourhood of Narkelbaria, seizing raiyats” etc., within the same period is proved to be only a vague and tendentious remark.

Similarly in the succeeding para of his report (para 24) Colvin, while speaking about the defeat of the Nadia Magistrate, lets loose his eloquence thus: “The consternation spread by an event so unprecedented in Bengal district as the defeat of two Magistrates and the fanatical conduct of the people in forcing the Hindus whom they laid hold of to acknowledge themselves Mahomedan converts was such that the most powerful zamindars

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 23.

in the vicinity sought safety for themselves and their families by flying from their houses.”<sup>1</sup> A moment's pause would expose the speciousness of the statement. It is said that TĪtu MĪr's men laid hold of the Hindus and forced them to acknowledge themselves converts to Islam and then, significantly enough, reference is made by way of substantiation only to the flight of the most powerful zamindars. The fact was that after the defeat of the Nadia Magistrate with whom the zamindars also had joined forces, the latter naturally were alarmed and some of them who had been the most virulent in their hostility towards TĪtu MĪr's followers like Krishna Deb Rai and the kinsmen of zamindar Debnath Rai might have removed themselves and their families to Calcutta. There was no forcible conversion of any Hindu nor was there any flight of the Hindus as such. Nor, it might be added, was the conflict in any way concerned with any attempt on the part of TĪtu MĪr and his followers to force Islam on the Hindus.

These are the only two passages in Colvin's report which attempt to give a communal character to TĪtu MĪr's movement. Obviously these vague and incorrect remarks have been the basis of subsequent incorrect assumptions about the character of TĪtu MĪr's movement. The most notable instance of this sort of incorrect assumptions is the remarks of Hunter which, in their turn have been adduced by other writers in their criticism of the movement. Writing in 1871 about the so-called “Indian Wahhabi movement” Hunter obviously enlarged the vague expressions of Colvin's and said that TĪtu MĪr and his followers were guilty of “incessant outrages”, their “general proceedings being to kill a cow in a Hindu village, and, if the people resisted, to murder or expel the inhabitants, plunder their houses, and burn them down.”<sup>2</sup> It must at once be pointed out that there is no basis at all in the official records, including Colvin's report for such invectives.

As already noted, from the Laoghati incident of 7 November

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 24.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Hunter, *Our Indian Musalmans etc.*, 1871, p. 46. Hunter is also wrong in saying that Yar Muhammad's daughter was married to “the head of the sect” that is, TĪtu MĪr. Yar Muhammad's daughters were alleged to have been forcibly married by TĪtu MĪr's followers; but that allegation was held by the Šadr Nizāmat court as not proved by the evidence.

to the arrival of the government troops at Narkelbaria on the 18th there was an interval of only 10 days; and all that those people did during that period, however trifling, such as the alleged robbing of a Muslim Faqīr (beggar) of his drum, were fully investigated after the defeat and dispersal of Tītu Mīr's followers, and each item of the alleged offences formed the subject of a specific trial. No Hindu was forcibly converted to Islam and no one's house was burnt down. No such thing is mentioned in the official records or the trial proceedings. No cow was offensively slaughtered except the one at Purwa, and that also by all accounts specifically in retaliation of Krishna Deb Rai's burning of the mosque at Sarfarazpur. No Brahman was wounded at Purwa, the person in fact wounded was Nawwāb al-Dīn, a Muslim assistant to the indigo planter Smith. None was *murdered* as such; all those who died from among the adversaries of Tītu Mīr and his followers, lost their lives in fightings only or from wounds received therein. Even the Bashirhat dārogha, who accompanied the Joint Magistrate in his expedition of 15 November was, according to Colvin's report, "very seriously wounded" and was captured along with others. Colvin only surmises that the dārogha, because of his role in destroying the ra'yats' case before the Joint Magistrate, was most probably done to death in the stockade. There is however no evidence in support of this surmise and no case was framed against the prisoners on this count. On the other hand the Muslim law officer of the Commissioner's court, who had access to the original Persian depositions of the witnesses in the various cases, said that the dārogha *died* in the stockade and the other captives were released. Even Colvin is aware of the weakness of his surmise on this point and hastens to add: "The instance is remarkable being the single one in which life was taken by the people except in the heat of fighting or pursuit."<sup>1</sup> This statement of Colvin's is a decisive proof that (except the doubtful case of the dārogha) Tītu Mīr and his followers did not commit any murder at any other place. No village was plundered; only the strongholds of indigo planters were the targets of attack. If Ramnarayan Ghosh's shop was "plundered", so was Yar

<sup>1</sup> Colvin's report, para 39.

Muhammad's house; and there is no reason to suppose that communalism or hostility towards the Hindus was a motive in the former instance. In fact the circumstances show that the alleged plunder of Ramnarayan Ghosh's shop was connected with the attack on the indigo planter Shillingford's station at Jangalpur.

Far from being communal in nature, the movement was in fact a popular one, having the active support of the Muslim ra'yats in general, who were numerous in the area, and the tacit support of the Hindu peasantry as well. For the struggle as it developed was clearly a result of the interaction between the spirit of reform prevalent in the world of Islam at that time on the one hand, and the peculiar socio-economic system then obtaining in Bengal, on the other; and in so far as TĪtu MĪr stood up against the iniquity and oppressiveness of the zamindari-indigo-planting system, he undoubtedly championed the cause of the peasantry as a whole, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The extent of the popularity of the movement is clearly indicated by the fact that for so important a case as that concerning the confrontation between TĪtu MĪr's men and the party led by the Nadia Magistrate the government could procure *only one* witness for the prosecution. It may also be pointed out that while reporting about the confrontation the Nadia Magistrate himself pointed out to the government that TĪtu MĪr's men were "in league with all the surrounding villages"<sup>1</sup> of the area (near Barguria factory where the fighting took place), quite at a distance from Narkelbaria. Even with regard to the other cases, the witnesses for the prosecution consisted mainly of sepoys and troopers who had fought against TĪtu MĪr and some others in the employ or evidently under the influence of the zamindars. It is also noteworthy that the Nadia Magistrate, in submitting a report regarding his proceedings in this respect and the movement in general, stated that several of the zamindars within his jurisdiction had declined to co-operate with him in his march against TĪtu MĪr.<sup>2</sup> This piece of information goes to show that at least those zamindars did not view the movement as one

<sup>1</sup> Nadia Magistrate to govt., 17 Nov. 1831, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 22 Nov. 1831, No 84; also *Bengal Military Consultation*, 25 Nov. 1831, No. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Nadia Magistrate's report, 28 Nov. 1831, *Board's Collection*, 1832, File 54222.

directed against the Hindu community or Hindu zamindars as such and that to them Tītu Mīr and his men appeared to have some ground of justification for their proceedings.

In fact Tītu Mīr's movement had three broad aspects. Primarily and basically it was a movement for reforming the life and society of Muslims of Bengal in accordance with the ideas derived from the Arabian reform movement started by Shaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and partly, perhaps, also from that started by Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd in northern India. Secondly, and arising out of this fact, it was the first organised and popular revolt against the zamindari-indigo-planting system which dominated the socio-economic life of rural Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thirdly, it was a protest and uprising of the common man in Bengal against the alien rule imposed by the East India Company.

In all these three aspects the movement drew its leadership as well as support from the rural masses. This was so because the questions at issue mainly concerned them and because, also, no urban Muslim élite or leadership had yet clearly emerged. The articulate section in the local population of Calcutta at that time consisted mainly of the zamindars and zamindar-businessmen, and their interests were bound up with those of the established government and therefore at variance with the aims of the movement. It was because of this lack of urban support that Colvin stated in his report that those who had taken part in the movement were "unimportant" persons, "merely common ra'yats".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Colvin mentions elsewhere in the same report that all the "respectable" Muslims of the locality entertained similar opinions as those of Tītu Mīr.<sup>2</sup> Colvin's apparent self-contradiction in this connection is easily understandable. There were indeed many "respectable" Muslims in the locality, but a harder truth was that they had all ceased to be "important".

The killing of Tītu Mīr and a number of his followers, and the ruthless suppression of the others, doubtless dealt a severe blow to the movement. Such killings and trials did not however

<sup>1</sup> Colvin's report, para 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 7.

totally extinguish the spirit of reform which continued to inspire and pulsate the Muslims through various channels. Some two weeks after the Narkelbaria massacre the government found it necessary to direct a contingent of troops to Jessore on an apprehension that the followers of TĪtu MĪr in that district were likely to create disturbances there.<sup>1</sup> No disturbances did however take place there. According to a local tradition<sup>2</sup> two disciples of TĪtu MĪr in Jessore named Munshī Muḥammad Yāsīn and Munshī Faḍ al-Dīn continued to preach the doctrines of reform in that district for some years after TĪtu MĪr's death. The latter of the two above named persons, Munshī Faḍ al-Dīn, came into a clash with an indigo planter in Jessore and for fear of further trouble migrated to Faridpur where he settled by marrying the daughter of a *Farā'idī* leader there. In the district of Nadia TĪtu MĪr's followers had for sometime a hard time under the magistrate E. P. Smith. That officer had the bitter experience of having been routed by TĪtu MĪr's party. He now issued a general order to his police officers directing them to arrest each and every person who was, or was suspected of being, a follower of TĪtu MĪr. The magistrate's indiscriminate proceedings caused misgivings even in the minds of the government who directed him to rescind his general orders and to take action only against those of the followers of TĪtu MĪr who were proved to have taken part in the late disturbances.<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, these facts further show that TĪtu MĪr's reform movement did not remain confined to Barasat district alone.

In course of time a number of TĪtu MĪr's followers appear to have made common cause with the *jihād* movement initiated by Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd. It may be noted that the latter also lost his life in the same year (6 June 1831) in the battle of Balakot in the north-west frontier. Thereafter the *jihād* movement drew its support mainly from Bengal and Bihar and was directed against British rule. When this latter movement was suppressed in the sixties, several persons from Barasat were found commanding

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Military Proceedings*, 6 December 1831, *Board's Collection*, 1832, file 54222.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in M. A. Khan, *History of The Farā'idī Movement*, Dhaka, 1984, pp. 205, 315-316.

<sup>3</sup> Govt. letter to the Commissioner of the 14th Division, in reply to Nadia Magistrate's report of 28 Nov. 1832 *Board's Collection*, *op.cit.*

groups of *mujāhids* on the north-west frontier.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the struggle against the zamindari-indigo planting system started by Titu Mīr was continued in east Bengal through the *Farā'idī* movement. This struggle culminated in the famous "indigo revolt" of the late fifties and early sixties and the "agrarian" outbreaks of the early seventies. The former event led to the appointment of a commission of enquiry on the basis of whose recommendations certain remedial measures were adopted by the government mitigating some of the sufferings of the ra'yats; while the latter event (the agrarian outbreaks) initiated a series of discussions and measures resulting in the passing of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 which did away with some of the worst evils of the zamindari system. Side by side with these developments the Muslims of Bengal also underwent a process of regeneration based on the teachings of Islam, preparing them for a revised socio-political role in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The causes for which Titu Mīr and his followers had made supreme sacrifices were ultimately vindicated in a large measure. Their struggle did not go totally in vain.

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, Chapter XV.



CHAPTER XI  
THE FARĀ'IDĪ MOVEMENT I: ḤĀJĪ SHARĪ'AT ALLAH  
AND THE INITIAL PHASE

I. EARLY LIFE OF SHARĪ'AT ALLAH

The socio-religious and agrarian issues involved in Titu Mir's movement manifested themselves more prominently through the *Farā'idī* movement in east Bengal which was started about the same time. It also illustrates more strikingly how the reform ideas emanating from Arabia were influenced by local circumstances in Bengal. The *Farā'idī* movement was initiated by Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah and it reached its culmination under the leadership of his son and successor Muḥammad Moḥsin *alias* Dudu Miyān.

Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah was born in 1781<sup>1</sup> at Sammail, a village in the present Madaripur subdivision of Faridpur district, but at that time forming a part of Bakarganj district. His father 'Abd al-Jalīl was a petty landholder, called Talukdar. One of Sharī'at Allah's uncles, 'Āshiq Miyān, was an officer at the court of the then nominal Nawwāb of Murshidabad.<sup>2</sup> Sharī'at Allah lost his father at the age of eight and was looked after for sometime by his paternal uncle 'Azīm al-Dīn. When about twelve years old Sharī'at Allah went to Calcutta for education and attached himself to Mawlānā Bashārat 'Alī, then a well-known 'ālim in that city. Under his tuition Sharī'at Allah studied the Qur'an for one year and then, on his advice, went to Furfura (Mulla Simla<sup>3</sup>) in Hugli district for studying Arabic and Persian languages. After having spent a couple of years at Furfura Sharī'at Allah next joined his uncle at Murshidabad and spent another year there in improving his knowledge of Arabic and Persian. In 1799 a turning point in his life came when he accompanied his preceptor Mawlānā Bashārat 'Alī to Makka.

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Khan, "Tomb inscription of Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah", *J.A.S.P.*, 1958, 195.

<sup>2</sup> These and other particulars about Sharī'at Allah's early life are derived from two short manuscript biographies written late in the 19th century, namely, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah and Wazīr 'Alī*, *Muslim Ratnahar*. See M. A. Khan, *The Farā'idī Movement in Bengal*, Karachi, 1965, 2 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. I., p. 779 for early Muslim settlement at Furfura. It has ever since been an important seat of Islamic learning in Bengal. The *madrasas* at Furfura still today attract a large number of students from different parts of Bengal.

All the available sources of information show that Sharī'at Allah stayed in Arabia continually for about 16 years (from 1800 to 1815). During this long period he studied the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh* and other branches of Islamic learning at Makka and Madina and also acquired an uncommon proficiency in Arabic language. It is stated that for the first two years of his stay at Makka he remained under the guidance of one Mawlānā Murād, a Bengali domicile there. Then, for the rest of his stay in Arabia he received his education and training mainly at the hands of one Ṭāhir Sambal, described in the *Farā'idī* sources as a *Ḥanafī* scholar of uncommon erudition and also a *ṣūfī* of the *Qādiriyyah* order.<sup>1</sup> Before leaving for home Sharī'at Allah visited Cairo where he spent another period of two years studying different branches of Islamic learning at the library of the great Al-Azhar university there. In 1818 he returned to his birth-place, Faridpur.

Thus Sharī'at Allah spent his youth and the most formative period of his life at Makka and Madina, the birth-place and centre of Islam. His sojourn in Arabia, it may be noted, coincided with an important period of Islamic history when the reform ideas of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb were current there, the holy cities themselves having been brought under the political control of the reformers for sometime early in the 19th century. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the spirit and ideas of reform must have made an impression on Sharī'at Allah's mind. The *Farā'idī* sources do not of course mention him as a follower of the Arabian Shaikh. There are also certain differences in matters of details between the latter's ideas and those propagated by Ḥajī Sharī'at Allah. Nevertheless there is no denying the fact that his stay and education in Arabia during that significant period enkindled in him an urge for reforming the Muslim society in his own country.

It may be noted that even before their loss of political power the Muslims of Bengal had succumbed to a number of innovations and un-Islamic practices. They had come to neglect the

<sup>1</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Ḥajī Sharī'at Allah*, MSS, fol. 9 quoted in M.A. Khan, *op. cit.*, 4. The writer in the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, II., 57 (M. Hidayat Hossain) describes Ṭāhir Sambal, without much evidence, as a *Shafī'i* jurist.

essentials of Islam and had, in common with the Muslims of many other lands, begun to concern themselves with unimportant, unnecessary or even unlawful matters. They used to sanctify graves of the ancients, pay almost idolatrous reverence to living or dead religious guides called *pīrs*, participate in Hindu religious ceremonies like *Rath Yātrā* and *Dol Yātrā* and perform various un-Islamic practices in connection with marriage, birth or death. As a result of their degeneration and the influence of the neighbouring Hindu society they had also developed a sort of class or caste distinction based on birth or profession. In short, they had moved away in many respects from the teachings and principles of Islam.

The reforming influence to which Shari'at Allah had been exposed in Arabia together with his knowledge of the teachings of Islam would have brought him sooner or later into clashes with the superstitious practices of his countrymen. It is stated that he came back home just in time to have a last glimpse of his uncle who was on his death-bed and who died the very day Shari'at Allah reached home. He received his first great shock when he found that the inhabitants of the village would not co-operate with him in the funeral of his deceased uncle because of his refusal to comply with certain un-Islamic practices.<sup>1</sup> From that very day he determined to undertake a programme of reforming his society. Initially he began addressing gatherings of Muslims, calling upon them to conform to the true doctrines of Islam and to avoid all un-Islamic practices. It appears that in this early phase of his reforming efforts Shari'at Allah did not meet with any appreciable success. According to his Bengali biographer, Shari'at Allah felt that this lack of success was due to his not having taken his teacher's formal permission for undertaking such a programme of reform.<sup>2</sup> Hence he paid a second visit to Makka in 1819-20 for obtaining his teacher's permission for the projected reform movement and returned to Faridpur towards the end of the latter year or early in 1821. Before this second visit to Makka, however, Shari'at Allah had married; for his son Muhammad Moḥsin, who

<sup>1</sup> Abd al-Halim, *Hijji Shari'at Allah*, MSS, Fol. 10-11, quoted in M. A. Khan, *op.cit.*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

was to play a very important part in the development of the movement, was born in 1819.<sup>1</sup>

A contemporary English observer states that during his second visit to Makka Sharī'at Allah "took his abode" among the Arabian reformers and thus imbibed the ideas of reform from there.<sup>2</sup> The statement may be taken as only indicating that it was after his second visit to Makka that he began his reform movement in all seriousness and determination; for otherwise his stay at Makka for the second time was very short and the influence of the reformers there was at that time at a low ebb. If Sharī'at Allah had imbibed the spirit of reform from Arabia, (which in all likelihood he did), it must have been during his first visit when his stay there was much longer and when the Arabian reformers exercised greater influence over the holy cities. Be that as it may, Sharī'at Allah's efforts at reform after his return from his second visit to Makka were attended with greater success and many persons in the district began to respond to his call.

## II. MAIN ASPECTS OF SHARĪ'AT ALLAH'S TEACHINGS

The reforms advocated by Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah were naturally responsive to the condition and circumstances of the Muslim society of the land. The Muslims had deviated in many respects from the true teachings of Islam and had indulged in many sinful acts. The first task of any reformer was therefore to make them aware of this situation, persuade them to seek Allah's forgiveness for their past failings and make them resolve to abide by the injunctions of Islam. They had also adopted many un-Islamic practices which blurred or even violated the principle of *tawḥīd* (oneness of Allah), the cardinal feature of Islam. Along with this they had also been remiss in performing the obligatory duties of Islam. Under the situation, they were to be specially called upon to strictly adhere to the principle of *tawḥīd* and to be regular in performing the obligatory duties. Again, the country had passed under the domination of a foreign nation. This new political situation called for an adjustment of their socio-political outlook,

<sup>1</sup> See *Trial*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> James Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Vol. II., Calcutta, 1840, 248. Taylor was a surgeon at Dhaka while Sharī'at Allah preached his doctrines there.

specially in such matters as were concerned directly or indirectly with the altered situation. Finally, because of their degeneration and deviation from Islam they had lost sight of the important principle of equality and brotherhood among themselves and had fallen victims to class distinctions and social inequality. These were to be removed and a spirit of equality and unity infused among them.

The reforms advocated by Sharī'at Allah were specifically aimed at these aspects of the society. To begin with, Sharī'at Allah asked his fellow Muslims to seek Allah's forgiveness by performing *istigfār* (or *tawbah*), repent for past sins, resolve to maintain His oneness (*tawhīd*) in belief and actions, obey His injunctions and the traditions of the Prophet and to refrain from innovations and superstitious acts.<sup>1</sup> Sharī'at Allah maintained that it was only by means of such *istigfār* and honest resolution (*iqrīr-i-bai'a*) that one could enter upon a reformed life. In order to bring home to the Muslims the true significance of *istigfār* he formulated its terms in Bengali language.<sup>2</sup> This formula of *istigfār* in fact contained all the essential aspects of his programme of reform. Lest his followers should mistake him as a *pīr* Sharī'at Allah, in conducting the *tawbah* of his disciples, discarded the practice of the traditional *pīrs* of holding the disciple's hand. Traditionally this practice was believed to be a means for transmitting spiritual merit to the disciple. Sharī'at Allah denounced it as a misleading and harmful innovation. To obviate any misgivings in this regard he also substituted the expressions *pīr* and *murīd* (religious guide and disciple, respectively) for *ustādh* and *shagrid* (teacher and pupil, respectively) to describe his relationship with his followers. According to later *Farā'idī* sources, a person who performed the *istigfār* and undertook to lead a reformed life came to be known as a *Taubār* Muslim (i.e., a Muslim who has performed the *tawbah*).

One of the main points in the formula of *tawbah* was an undertaking to refrain from all kinds of *shirk* (setting partnership with Allah). In this context Sharī'at Allah elaborated the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> James Wise, *op.cit.*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> M.A. Khan, *op.cit.*, 61-62. The formula of the *tawbah* quoted by Khan appears from its language-pattern to be a twentieth century formulation, though the points contained in it might be those emphasized by Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah.

of *tawhīd* (oneness of Allah) and stressed that true *īmān* (belief) meant not only a theoretical belief in the unity of Allah but also a scrupulous abstinence from all practices and superstitions that savoured even in the slightest degree of polytheism or setting partnership with Allah. He pointed out that any direct or indirect participation in such un-Islamic practices as sanctification of graves, unusual reverence to *pīrs* or such indirect support given to Hindu religious ceremonies as *pūjā* (ceremonial worshipping of idols) by paying contributions on the occasion, etc., were a violation of the principle of *tawhīd*.<sup>1</sup> This insistence on the practical implications of *tawhīd* constituted the most significant aspect of Sharī‘at Allah’s reform movement and marked its closest resemblance with the reform movement initiated in Arabia by Shaikh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. “As the *Farā’idī* doctrine of *tawhīd* or monotheism corresponds entirely to the same doctrine of” the Arabian reform movement, rightly observes M. A. Khan, “we have historical evidence to assume that it was influenced by” the latter.<sup>2</sup> Because of this strict application of the principle of *tawhīd* Sharī‘at Allah’s followers refused to pay contributions demanded by the Hindu zamindars on the occasion of *pūjās* and similar Hindu ceremonies. This was one of the reasons for the conflict which soon ensued between the two parties.

In consonance with the teachings of Islam Sharī‘at Allah called upon the Muslims to be regular in their observance of the obligatory duties (*Farā’id*) of Islam, namely, profession of the article of faith (*Kalima*), saying of prayers five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramaḍān, paying of *zakāt* and going on pilgrimage to Makka, the last two being required of only those who satisfied specified financial and physical qualifications. These duties are in fact the five recognized “pillars” of Islam. There is no difference of opinion among Muslim jurists about the absolute obligatory nature of these duties. Sharī‘at Allah’s emphasis on them was therefore only natural. There was nothing new in this

<sup>1</sup> James Taylor, *op.cit.*, 249; Nizām al-Dīn, *Durri-Muhammad* (Bengali puthi), 24, quoted in M. A. Khan, *op.cit.*, 66.

<sup>2</sup> M. A. Khan, *op.cit.*, xlx.

emphasis nor could it distinguish him from any other leader who sought a regeneration of the Muslim society. Yet it has been supposed that this emphasis on the observance of the obligatory duties was the “central principle of the *Farā'idī* reform programme from which it has derived the name itself.”<sup>1</sup> Shari‘at Allah’s movement did indeed become known as the *Farā'idī* movement; but there is no indication in the sources that it came to be known as such because only of its emphasis on the *Farā'id* of Islam. The explanation of the name has to be sought in something more than that. Shari‘at Allah and his followers could only and did in fact describe themselves as true Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

In the extant *Farā'idī* sources the movement is referred to as “Islamic movement” which it really was. The term *Farā'idī* appears to have been applied to it and its protagonists by the others who did not subscribe to their views. The earliest reference to a distinctive appellation for Shari‘at Allah and his followers is contained in a government record of 1830 concerning an alleged dispute between the reformers and others wherein the two groups are described respectively as “Tueeyooni Hal” [*Ta'aīyūnī Hāl*] and “Tueeyooni Sabik”, i.e., the new school and the old school of Muslims.<sup>3</sup> The classification is obviously juristic, having reference most probably to the two groups among the same *Hanafi* population. In any case, the terms did not become common in use.<sup>4</sup> As late as 1837 a Hindu writer in the Bengali newspaper *Samāchār Darpan* spoke about Shari‘at Allah and his followers as “evil *Yavanas*” without mentioning the term *Farā'idī*. It may be noted that the term *Yavana* was derisively applied by communal Hindu writers of the nineteenth century to the Muslims. The absence of any mention of the term *Farā'idī* in the letter under reference is only indicative of the fact that the latter term had not as yet become widely known. Writing in 1839, however, the English surgeon at Dhaka, James Taylor, refers to Shari‘at Allah

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Farā'idī* ballad, quoted in *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Rubākārī* of the magistrate of Dhaka, appended to Colvin's Report on the Barasat uprising of Titu Mir's followers. *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832, No. 6.

<sup>4</sup> In course of time the term *Ta'aīyūnī* in fact came to be applied to Maulānā Karāmat 'Alī Jaunpuri's anti-*Farā'idī* movement.

and his followers as “Ferazees”<sup>1</sup> (*Farā'idīs*) which term henceforth appears in government records and other writings. It thus appears that the term *Farā'idī* was invented and applied to the movement and its followers by others and that it came to be in common use by the end of the thirties. Clearly the term had a negative and derogatory allusion to the fact that Shari'at Allah and his followers concerned themselves with only the *Farā'id* of Islam and not with the other duties and practices current and popular among the then Muslim society. Thus the term *Farā'idī* has to be understood not merely with reference to what Shari'at Allah and his followers insisted on doing but more with reference to what they insisted on *not doing*.

This in fact brings us to the truly distinguishing aspect of Shari'at Allah's movement, namely, his attitude to the changed status of the country under British rule and its implication with reference to the saying of Friday congregational and 'Id prayers. Though obviously inspired by the Arabian reform movement, Shari'at Allah did not discard the principle of *taqlid* (attachment to one of the four established schools of law). In fact he declared himself a follower of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa and then, by adopting a strict interpretation of the law regarding the saying of *Jumua'* and 'Id prayers, he declared that these prayers were not permissible in Bengal at that time. He did not of course make any direct reference to British rule, nor did he declare the country a *dār-al-ḥarb*; but took his stand on a strict Ḥanafī interpretation of the technical term *Miṣr Jāmi'* (a town or locality suitable for *Jamua'* prayers). It may be noted that Muslim jurists are generally agreed in principle that for saying *Jumua'* and 'Id prayers in a place, it must be a *Miṣr Jāmi'*; but they differ widely in defining the term. Both Imāms Shāfi'ī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal define it as a habitat of 40 or more persons; while Imām Mālik is of opinion that even localities with less than 40 inhabitants might be a *Miṣr Jāmi'*.

The Ḥanafī jurists not only differ from these views but are also divided amongst themselves about the interpretation of the term. One group of them hold that a locality is a *Miṣr Jāmi'* if its

<sup>1</sup> James Taylor, *op.cit.*, 247.



biggest mosque cannot accommodate all its inhabitants, if assembled there. Another view explains the term as “a large township in which there are roads, lanes, market-places and many villages attached to it, and where the *wālī* (governor) resides, who is able to administer justice and protect the oppressed and to whom the people turn (for help and guidance) whenever any calamity befalls them.” Somewhat akin to this latter interpretation but more pronounced in its emphasis on the political status of the locality is the opinion of Imām Abū Yūsuf, the leading Ḥanafī jurist. He holds that a *Miṣr Jāmi'* is a “locality where the '*Amīr* and the *Qāḍī* reside and enforce the civil and criminal laws of Islam.” Adopting, as it appears, this latter interpretation Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah declared that since there was no longer any Muslim governor (*wālī*) and *Qāḍī* administering Islamic law in the country, the saying of *Juma'* and '*Īd* prayers in it was not permissible. His attitude in this respect was clearly related to the changed political status of the land. In effect it implied that Bengal under British rule was a *dār-al-ḥarb*, though he avoided saying so directly. As subsequent events show, the *Farā'idīs* did not make any direct pronouncement on the political status of the country in order to steer clear of any political controversy or confrontation with the British Indian administration.<sup>1</sup>

The question of the permissibility of the *Jumua'* prayers was by no means new or simple. As early as the reign of Sultan Muhammad ibn Ṭughlaq (725-752/1325-1351) the issue was raised and seriously debated. So far as the mid-nineteenth century Muslims of Bengal and northern India were concerned, there was a multiplicity of attitudes and practices. Thus while the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd, who considered British India a *dār-al-ḥarb* and waged on that account a direct *jihād* against the non-Muslim rulers, did not call for suspension of *Jumua'* and '*Īd* prayers. On the other hand, there was a second group of '*ulamā'* who, though they openly held that British India was a *dār-al-ḥarb*, did not join the *jihād* but abstained themselves from *Jumua'* and '*Īd* prayers and lived and served peacefully under the British

<sup>1</sup> See the *Farā'idī* leader Mawlawī 'Abd al-Jabbār's debate with Maulānā Karāmat 'Alī Jaunpuri in 1867, *infra*, Ch. XVIII.

Indian government. Prominent among this group were Mawlawī Muḥammad Wajih, Professor of the Calcutta Madrasa in the fifties of the nineteenth century and Muḥammad Faḍl al-Rahmān, *Qāḍī al-Quddāt* of the city of Calcutta during the same period.<sup>1</sup> Their position approached most closely that of the *Farā'idīs* but differed from them in that the latter did not openly declare British India a *dār-al-ḥarb*. Lastly, there was Mawlana Karāmat 'Alī of Jaunpur, a dissident from Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd's movement, who held that British India was not a *dār-al-ḥarb* and campaigned against the suspension of *Jumua'* and 'Īd prayers. All these divergent groups, it may be noted, professed themselves to be followers of the Ḥanafī school of law.

Shari'at Allah's acceptance of the doctrine of *taqlīd* and his suspension of *Jumua'* and 'Īd prayers distinguish his movement not only from the Arabian reform movement but also from the movement of Tītu Mīr on the one hand and the reform-cum-jihād movement of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd on the other. According to the Ḥanafī view, saying of *Jumua'* prayers is *Wājib* or a near-obligatory duty.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, therefore, the general body of Ḥanafī Muslims of the country began to distinguish Shari'at Allah and his followers as *Farā'idīs* or the upholders of only the obligatory duties (*Farā'id*) to the exclusion of the near-obligatory duties like *Jumua'* and 'Īd prayers. The term *Farā'idī* thus appears to be related to the suspension of these two prayers, which is really the distinguishing feature of Shari'at Allah's movement. Occasionally he and his followers were also referred to as *Be-Jumua'-Wallahs* (i.e., suspenders of *Jumua'* prayers). Incidentally, the controversy and divisions over the question of *Jumua'* prayers go to show that the Muslims of Bengal in general, though many of them had fallen victims to innovations and un-Islamic practices, had not totally lost sight of the *farā'id* and *wājibāt* of Islam and had otherwise been accustomed to the saying of *Jumua'* and 'Īd prayers so that the call for their suspension appeared to them unusual and revolutionary.

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Hunter, *Indian Muslims*. London, 1871, 142-43.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Ḥanafī view *Jumua'* prayer is *wājib* in essence ( بالذات ) but *tard* (obligatory) as a substitute ( بتدليل ) for *Zuhr* prayer.

Apart from the question of *Jumua'* and *'Īd* prayers, Shari'at Allah's reform programme contained some very beneficial social aspects. Proceeding from the principle of *tawhīd* he called upon the Muslims to abandon all kinds of innovations and un-Islamic practices connected with birth and death, specially the performance of *Fātiha* in remembrance of dead relatives and the ceremonial observance of *Chatī* and *Chillā* (first and fortieth day of the birth of a child, respectively), participation in non-Muslim festivals like *Rath Yātrā* and *Dasherā*, observance of the 10th day of Muharram with procession, dance, music and other festivities and paying of unusual reverence to *pīrs*, believing in their mystic and supernatural powers or even performing annual festivals in honour of them (*urs*). To cut at the root of the practice of paying reverence to graves, Shari'at Allah, like the Arabian reformers, forbade the raising of graves above the ground level or marking them with any structure.

True to the spirit of Islam he called for equality of all Muslims and strictly enforced it among his followers. This had a special significance in the context of the state of affairs in eastern Bengal at that time. In the districts of Dhaka, Faridpur, Bakarganj and the surrounding areas there were a large number of Muslims engaged in weaving (called *Julāhā*), fish-mongering (called *Nikārī*), oil-grinding (called *Kulu*), palanquin-bearing (called *Kāhār* or *Chākar*) and similar other jobs. They constituted generally the poorer section of the society. Specially the weavers (*Julāhā*) had been reduced to a very pitiable condition on account of the decline of the once-great and flourishing cloth industry of eastern Bengal consequent upon the East India Company's commercial dealings.<sup>1</sup> As a result the weaving class had come to be treated as a sort of lower caste by the more comfortable section of Muslims of the locality. The influence of the neighbouring Hindu society had a great deal to do with the development of such social discrimination among the Muslims. Shari'at Allah strongly denounced this trend and pointed out that all Muslims were equal irrespective of birth, profession or economic circumstances. He declared that all those who had performed *tawbah* and had

<sup>1</sup> See *Supra*, pp. 41-43.

undertaken to lead a reformed life as pointed out by him were not only equal among themselves but were also to be treated as equals by the others. This emphasis on social equality had a tremendous effect on the above-mentioned professional groups of Muslims and it readily unified them under the leadership of Sharī'at Allah.

For the same purpose of eradicating inequality and discriminatory practices from the Muslim society Sharī'at Allah espoused the cause of a class of people known as *dāis*. These people were the offspring of professional midwives who, besides performing other services in connection with the birth of a child, used to sever his navel cord from the mother. At a time when medical services were very rare, they thus rendered a very essential service to society. Nevertheless, because of the influence of the Hindu caste system, a special stigma came to be attached to their profession. The *dāis* were derisively called *Nār-Kātā* (cutters of navel cord) and as a class they were socially almost ostracised. The discrimination appeared all the more inhuman because, as a result of this social prejudice, no respectable Muslim lady would cut the navel cord of a newly born baby even if no *dāi* was available at the moment, thus entailing great sufferings and even the risk of death for both the mother and child. It is reported that as *dāis* were not very numerous in the above mentioned districts mothers had sometimes to wait for a full day or more for the arrival of a professional *dāi* who would then sever the child's navel cord. Sharī'at Allah strongly criticised this social prejudice as an un-Islamic and very harmful innovation born out of contact with the Hindu society. He stressed that there was nothing low in the work and that in case of need elderly women of the village or even the father of the baby should perform the job of severing the navel cord. Besides these reforms, Sharī'at Allah also insisted, like Tītu Mīr, upon the Muslims' conforming to Islamic standards in dress, such as wearing the *dhuti* without passing one end of it in-between the legs and also upon the growing of beards by the Muslims.

### III. SPREAD OF THE MOVEMENT AND BEGINNING OF CONFLICT WITH THE ZAMINDARS

All the sources state that Sharī'at Allah's success was

phenomenal, especially in the thirties. James Taylor, the Ḥajī's contemporary and an officer (surgeon) stationed at Dhaka thus wrote in 1839 about the progress and main features of Shari'at Allah's reform movement:

"Within the last ten years a Mahomedan sect has sprung up, in this part of the country and has spread with extraordinary rapidity in this district [Dhaka], Fureedpore, Backergunge and Mymensingh. The founder of it is a man of the name of Shurkitullah [Shari'at Allah], a native of Fureedpore ... Since his return [from Makka] he has been engaged in promulgating his doctrines, and he has succeeded in making converts to the number, it is estimated, of one-sixth of the population of the above places: in the city [of Dhaka] they are supposed to comprise about one-third of the Mussulman population."<sup>1</sup> Speaking about the teachings and practices of the *Farā'idīs* Taylor says that they differed "little from the Moolavees of the western districts" [i.e., followers of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd] of whom there were a "considerable number" also settled at Dhaka.<sup>2</sup> The *Farā'idīs* adhered to the "strict letter of the Koran and reject all ceremonies that are not sanctioned by it." They likewise rejected all the popular ceremonies connected with the observance of 10th Muḥarram, but they used to keep fast on that and the following day, spend the night in prayer, and observe the commendable duties of "feeding the poor, and effecting a reconciliation among persons at enmity with each other; but the commemoration of the martyrdom of Hussein and Hossein, which is held at this time, is not only forbidden, but even witnessing the ceremonies connected with it is avoided by them."<sup>3</sup> Further, they rejected

"the rite of Puttee, Chuttee and Chila which are performed between the first and the fortieth day after the birth of a child and observe only the rite of Uqueekha [*Aqīqa*], which consists in sacrificing two he-goats for a male, and one for a female child. The ceremony of shaving the child's head takes place at this time, and the weight of the hair in gold or silver, according to the circumstances of the parents, is distributed among the poor. In the same way they have divested the marriage ceremony of its

<sup>1</sup> James Taylor, *op.cit.*, 247.

<sup>2</sup> It would appear from Taylor's statement that the movement of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd had found some support in Dhaka even during Shari'at Allah's life-time.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, *op.cit.*, 249.

formalities. The various customs observed on this occasion, viz., of "sitting in state", of "carrying and applying turmeric", of "measuring for wedding garments" and "the Shubghust procession", are all prohibited, and the only show or pomp that is permitted is the adornment of the bride and bridegroom on the day of their shaddee or marriage. The rite solemnized by the parties giving their consent in the presence of witnesses, and on this occasion music and dancing are dispensed with, and the only expense incurred is a feast called "Elema Khana" [*Walīma*] to their friends and the poor. Their funeral obsequies are conducted with a corresponding degree of simplicity, offerings of fruit and flowers at the grave and the various Futeeha ceremonies being prohibited; their graves are not raised above the surface of the ground, nor marked by any building or brick or stone. The Ferazees have the character of being stricter in their morals than their other Mahomedan brethren..."<sup>1</sup>

The last remark of the contemporary European observer goes to show that Sharī'at Allah succeeded in effecting a salutary change in the character and attitude of his followers. And despite the fact that his rejection of many of the popular customs and ceremonies and his suspension of the saying of *Jumua'* and *'Īd* prayers caused some misgivings in the minds of a certain section of the traditional Muslims of the land, his doing away with costly and many un-Islamic ceremonies in connection with birth, marriage and death, his call for a reformed and simple life in accordance with the principles of Islam, and his insistence upon unity and equality of all Muslims attracted to him large numbers of the rural Muslim population of eastern Bengal, notably of its four important districts of Dhaka, Mymensingh, Faridpur and Bakarganj. It was this popularity and rapid spread of the movement that brought it before long into conflict with the zamindars and indigo planters of eastern Bengal.

The same causes that brought Tītu Mīr and his followers into conflict with these two classes of people in south-west Bengal operated more strongly in east Bengal. The claim of the *Farā'idī* peasantry to equality not only as between themselves and their other fellow Muslims but also between them and the zamindar-indigo planters who had hitherto been in the practice of treating them almost as sub-human beings, the refusal on the part of the former to pay the illegal and un-Islamic taxes like the contributions levied on the occasion of a *pūjā* or the marriage of a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-50.

zamindar's son or daughter and, above all, the growing unity and the organization of the *ra'yats* inspired by a renewed religious fervour and the ideal of a reformed and noble life were developments that inevitably caused concern and hostility on the part of the vested landed classes whose social superiority and economic prosperity rested solely upon the suppression and sufferance of the common man. This being the underlying issue, the conflict also followed the same pattern of development in east Bengal as it had done in south-west Bengal — the zamindars playing upon the idiosyncrasies of the conservative section of the Muslims and their differences with the *Farā'idīs* to find a pretext for interfering with the reform movement, implicating its leaders and followers in false criminal cases, instituting suits for alleged arrears of rent and, as a final resort, applying physical force to suppress the movement.

It may be noted that both Tītu Mīr's and Sharī'at Allah's movements were contemporary and the conflicts in both south-west and east Bengal came to the surface almost simultaneously. The first recorded instance of the zamindars' interference with Tītu Mīr's followers, it may be recalled, is dated the middle of 1830. Since then the conflict rapidly grew in extent and seriousness till the killing of Tītu Mīr and the dispersal of his followers by government military forces in November 1831.<sup>1</sup> Sharī'at Allah's troubles with the zamindars of his region also started about the same time. The situation in south-west Bengal and its rapid deterioration naturally engrossed the government's more immediate attention, specially as the scene of the development was in the vicinity of the government's headquarters in Calcutta. Indeed, the earliest government record referring to Sharī'at Allah's movement is contained in an enclosure to Colvin's report on Tītu Mīr's movement. The record is a court order (*rubākārī*) dated 29 April 1831, issued by the magistrate of Dacca-Jalalpur relating to a case concerning Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah's followers and their opponents. Colvin brought this record to government's notice as an illustration of what he mistakenly

<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, pp. 282-284.

suggested to be yet another instance of the spread of Titu Mir's movement in east Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

The *rubākārī* furnishes us with the earliest glimpse of the growing conflict between Sharī'at Allah's followers and the others. It was issued consequent upon a case of affray between the two groups. The record does not give any clear or detailed information about the incident. It attributes the affair merely to "difference in matters of religion" which, it says, existed for "some time" between a follower of Sharī'at Allah and the other inhabitants of a village called Ramnagar. That follower of the Hājī, says the *rubākārī*, "wished to bring his brother over to that sect & on his not consenting a huge body of persons attacked and plundered the village in which he lived with a view to bringing about conversion by force [.] They repeated the attack also the next day." Clearly the *rūbākārī* is much too sketchy and leaves many things to be said. A little closer look at the document shows that it was in fact drawn in two different and somewhat contradictory strains. It states that in the whole village only one person was a follower of the Hājī who had a religious difference with his brother and, by implication, with the rest of the villagers who were obviously of the same religious inclination as that of the brother. Under the circumstances it was only natural that that solitary follower of the Hājī should have been the object of harassment and oppression by the others. Yet, no allusion is made to such an outcome. On the contrary the whole blame is placed upon that single *Farā'idī* individual of the village (and the *Farā'idīs* of other places generally) and it is stated that as his brother refused to come over to his group "a huge body of persons attacked and plundered the village" with a view to bringing about that brother's conversion by force. Why a huge body of persons, apparently from other places, should have all of a sudden come forward and attacked and plundered the whole village when the alleged object was merely the conversion of one person only remains to be explained.

Taking the statement of the *rubākārī* as it is, the least that it implies is that surely the other villagers espoused the cause of the

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure No. 1 to Colvin's report, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832, No. 6.



non-*Farā'idī* brother and treated the *Farā'idī* brother in such a way as caused the interference by the "huge body of persons" (i.e. other *Farā'idīs* of other places) on his behalf. The whole background story and the real causes of the affray thus appear to have been skipped over by the *rubākārī* which states the case in such a way as to throw the whole blame on the *Farā'idīs*. In view of this obvious partiality of the document and in the light of subsequent developments both in south-west and east Bengal there seems to be much truth in the tradition current among the *Farā'idī* circles<sup>1</sup> which says that the incident of 1831 was brought about by the zamindars of the locality who instigated the villagers against the *Farā'idī* individual and thus caused the conflict to develop and who ultimately influenced the magistrate's judgement in the case in favour of the non-*Farā'idī* villagers. The magistrate sentenced "two leaders on the part of the followers of the Ḥājī" who were said to have been "actively engaged in the affray" to one year's "imprisonment with labor and a fine of 200 rupees [each?] and in default of payment of the fine to imprisonment for a further period of one year." "The others", of whom neither the number nor the names are mentioned in the *rubākārī*, were awarded a "similar punishment except that the fine imposed on them was only 100 rupees." Further, Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah was subsequently apprehended but "no proof existing against him he was released on a Mochulka [bond] and giving security to the amount of 200 rupees to keep the peace for one year."<sup>2</sup>

The further sequel to the incident of 1831 is not on record. Shortly afterwards in the same year, however, the troubles in south-west Bengal leading to Tītu Mīr's death and the dispersal of his followers turned public attention towards that direction and doubtless made both Sharī'at Allah and the east Bengal zamindars more cautious in their activities. It is no wonder therefore that we do not hear of any serious development in east Bengal for some years. Nevertheless the conflict between the two sides continued to smoulder under the surface. In 1837 we get the report of growing hostilities and petty physical clashes between Sharī'at

<sup>1</sup> Collected in M.A. Khan, *op.cit.*, 15

<sup>2</sup> *Rubākārī* of the Magistrate of Dhaka-Jalalpur, *op.cit.*

Allah's followers and the zamindars. Writing to the Bengali newspaper *Samāchār Darpan* a correspondent, who was evidently a partisan of the zamindars, alleged that Sharī'at Allah's followers were at enmity with zamindar Babu Tarini Charan Majumdar of village Patkanda in Faridpur district and zamindar Diwan Mrittunjay Ray of Rajnagar in Dhaka district. The correspondent stated that the "evil Yavanas" (i.e., the *Farā'idīs*) were obstructing the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses by indulging in the sacrifice of cows and even by visiting Hindu houses with belts made of cow-hides on their waist. The writer stated that Babu Tarini Charan Majumdar, not deeming it fit to engage in an open fight with them had brought the matter before the Faridpur magistrate's court who had punished a number of them with imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> The correspondent further alleged that Sharī'at Allah aspired after the restoration of Muslim rule (*Bādshāhī*) in the country, that his party were a hundred times more powerful than those of Tītu Mīr and that therefore the government should intervene with military force and crush the former as they had done in the case of the latter. If this was not done, observed the correspondent, "the Hindu religion would be destroyed within a few days and there would be an end to all things."<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, he made some allusion to Sharī'at Allah's teachings and stated that he was preaching a new doctrine or *sharā* (*shar'* or law, *sharī'at*) and was asking his followers to grow beards and wear the *dhuti*, unlike the Hindus, without passing one of its ends between the legs.

The correspondent's allegation that the *Farā'idīs* were obstructing the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses is obviously ill-based and was aimed at exciting the ill-feelings of the influential Hindus as also of the government against Sharī'at Allah and his followers. It is not understandable how the sacrifice of cows, which had recognisedly been an age-long practice with the Muslims irrespective of *Farā'idīs* and non-*Farā'idīs*, should have constituted an obstruction to the worship of Hindu gods and

<sup>1</sup> Brajendranath Bandopadhyaya, *Sambād Patre Sekaler Kathā*, Bengali text), Vol. III, Calcutta, 1342 B.E., pp. 311-312.

goddesses by the Hindus. There is no mention of the *Farā'idīs* attempting to sacrifice cows offensively at or near Hindu temples. The correspondent's report rather betrays the growth of a new anti-Muslim attitude on the part of a certain section of the Hindus than a new anti-Hindu feeling on the part of the *Farā'idīs* or other Muslims of the region. It appears that even the wearing of cow-hide belts by some Muslims and their occasional visiting of Hindu houses with those belts on was objectionable to the correspondent. Interestingly enough neither he nor any one else of his sort has ever been found objecting to the wearing of shoes made of cow-hide by the Hindu zamindars and other comfortable Hindus of the land. Similarly, the correspondent's allegation that Shari'at Allah was aspiring after the restoration of Muslim rule was an incorrect and exaggerated statement made with a view to bringing about the government's intervention for suppressing the movement. The government did not of course come forward with military forces to interfere with Shari'at Allah, as desired by the correspondent.

Unfortunately we do not have any other information about the development of 1837 which, according to the correspondent's report, led to the imprisonment of some of Shari'at Allah's followers. Writing a couple of years afterwards (1839-40) James Taylor stated that Shari'at Allah was at the time "under the ban of the police, I believe, for exciting his disciples in the country to withhold the payment of revenue."<sup>1</sup> Whether such police restrictions upon Shari'at Allah was a sequel to the incidents of 1837 is not known; but as it is known that neither Shari'at Allah nor his successor Duda Miyān advocated non-payment of lawful land revenue, Taylor's remarks about the former's having asked his followers to withhold the payment of revenue seem to have reference to the *Farā'idīs*' opposition to the zamindars' demand for illegal and idolatrous taxes. The correspondent's report as well as Taylor's statement go to show, however, that since the mid-thirties the *Farā'idīs* were coming increasingly into conflict with the zamindars.

<sup>1</sup> James Taylor, *op.cit.*, 250.

IV. DEATH OF SHARĪ'AT ALLAH: ORGANIZATION OF THE FARĀ'IDĪS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF DUDU MIYĀN

Sharī'at Allah did not live long after James Taylor had written the above-mentioned remarks and died in 1840 at the age of 49. His prominent followers then acclaimed his son Muḥammad Mohsin alias Dudu Miyān as their leader.

As already indicated, Dudu Miyān was born in 1819. He received his early education at the hands of his able father who sent him, at the age of 12, to Makka for further Islamic education. On his way to Makka via Calcutta Dudu Miyān is reported to have paid a visit to Tītu Mīr at Barasat.<sup>1</sup> At Makka Dudu Miyān spent some five years in intensive study and returned home by 1837.

Under Dudu Miyān the *Farā'idīs* were organized into a really unified and powerful brotherhood capable of facing the oppressive zamindars and indigo planters on their own terms. Dudu Miyān organized the *Farā'idīs* of the several districts under a hierarchical system with himself at its head. Each *Farā'idī* village or number of villages and each part of a town containing 300 to 500 *Farā'idī* families was organized into a unit, called village or ward unit as the case might be. In each unit an educated and intelligent *Farā'idī* individual was appointed the leader's (*ustādh's*) agent or *khalīfa*. The unit *khalīfa's* duty was to instruct the *Farā'id* in the principles of Islam, enforce the *Farā'idīs* among them, arrange for mosques for daily congregational prayers, maintain a *maktab* or *madrassa* for the education of *Farā'idī* children, render the community necessary services in connection with marriage, birth and death, look after their material and social interests, settle disputes among the *Farā'idīs*, adjudicate their civil and criminal cases and in general to foster unity and brotherhood among them. As remuneration for his services the unit *khalīfa* was to receive a contribution from the *Farā'idīs* in his unit equal to one fortieth of the produce of the lands belonging to them. Ten such village and ward units were formed into a circle or *gird*. Each *gird* was placed

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Khan states (*op. cit.*, p. 24, n. 4) that he saw a "string of beads preserved at Bahadurpur in the permanent residence of Dudu Miyān and his descendants" which was "a gift of Titu Mīr to Dudu Miyān."

under the supervision of a superintending *khalīfa*. He was to supervise and coordinate the activities of the unit *khalīfas*, visit the units for that purpose at regular intervals, maintain a *peadah* and a messenger for keeping in touch with the units as well as for communicating every relevant matter to the *ustādh* for his decision and guidance. The superintending *khalīfa* was also to maintain a headquarter (*astānah*) for religious and social meetings, for the stay of important visitors and for hearing of appeals from the decision of unit *khalīfas* which were disposed of in a session of all the unit *khalīfas*. Further, the superintending *khalīfa* was required to look after the overall social and political interests of the *Farā'idīs*. In important districts like Faridpur he was to raise and organize a volunteer corps for resisting the oppression of the zamindars and indigo planters. The unit *khalīfas* as well as the superintending *khalīfas* were required to maintain records of their transactions.

Over and above the superintending *khalīfas* stood the *ustādh* Dudu Miyān himself. He was assisted in the organizational and administrative matters of the community by a select group from among the superintending *khalīfas* who together formed a sort of *Majlis-i-Shūra* or consultative body. Thus by a hierarchical organization Dudu Miyān not only unified the *Farā'idīs* into a common brotherhood, but also established a sort of local administration parallel to that of the East India Company. The *Farā'idīs* were asked not to take their civil and criminal cases to the Company's courts. Even non-*Farā'idīs* were encouraged to avoid the Company's courts, especially in cases between a *Farā'idī* and a non-*Farā'idī*. By means of this *khilāfat* system, as it was called, Dudu Miyān exercised great influence over the peasantry of eastern Bengal generally, particularly in the districts of Faridpur, Bakarganj, Dhaka, Tippera and Mymensingh. Thousands of the rural population followed him almost blindly and were ready to act at his bidding.

The most significant aspect of his organizing activity was the raising and training of a volunteer corps to fight the professional clubmen and fighting force (*lāthiāls*) maintained by the zamindars and indigo planters. The need for raising such a volunteer force

arose from the high-handedness of the latter class of people. The way for such measures of self-defence was indeed shown by Tītu Mīr. Ḥājī Sharī'at Allah appears to have taken some steps in creating such a force; but the credit of developing it to the extent of a regular volunteer corps goes to Dudu Miyān. If the report of his meeting with Tītu Mīr is correct, it might be supposed that the idea of active resistance to the oppression of the zamindars and indigo planters by means of an organized fighting force was derived from him. The system of judicial administration evolved by the *Farā'idīs* for themselves and the raising of a volunteer corps for defence were, in the wider context, an outcome of the inadequacy and corruption of the East India Company's police and judicial administration in the interior districts.

By their unity and organization the *Farā'idīs* succeeded even in influencing the non-*Farā'idīs* to accept their method of justice or even in accepting their doctrine. This position they definitely attained by the early forties. In his usual annual report for the year 1843 the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces, W. Dampier, made a particular reference to this aspect of the *Farā'idīs'* influence. A non-*Farā'idī* Muslim zamindar, he wrote, could not collect his rents from the *Farā'idī* ra'yats, "and on his trying to enforce his demands about 50 cases were brought against him. He came to the Station, and it was notified to him that if he became one of Dudu Miyān's disciples every thing would be settled. He did so, acknowledging that person as his Mureed [*ustādh?*], and on the next day every complaint was withdrawn and the parties returned to their homes."<sup>1</sup> Dampier further noted:

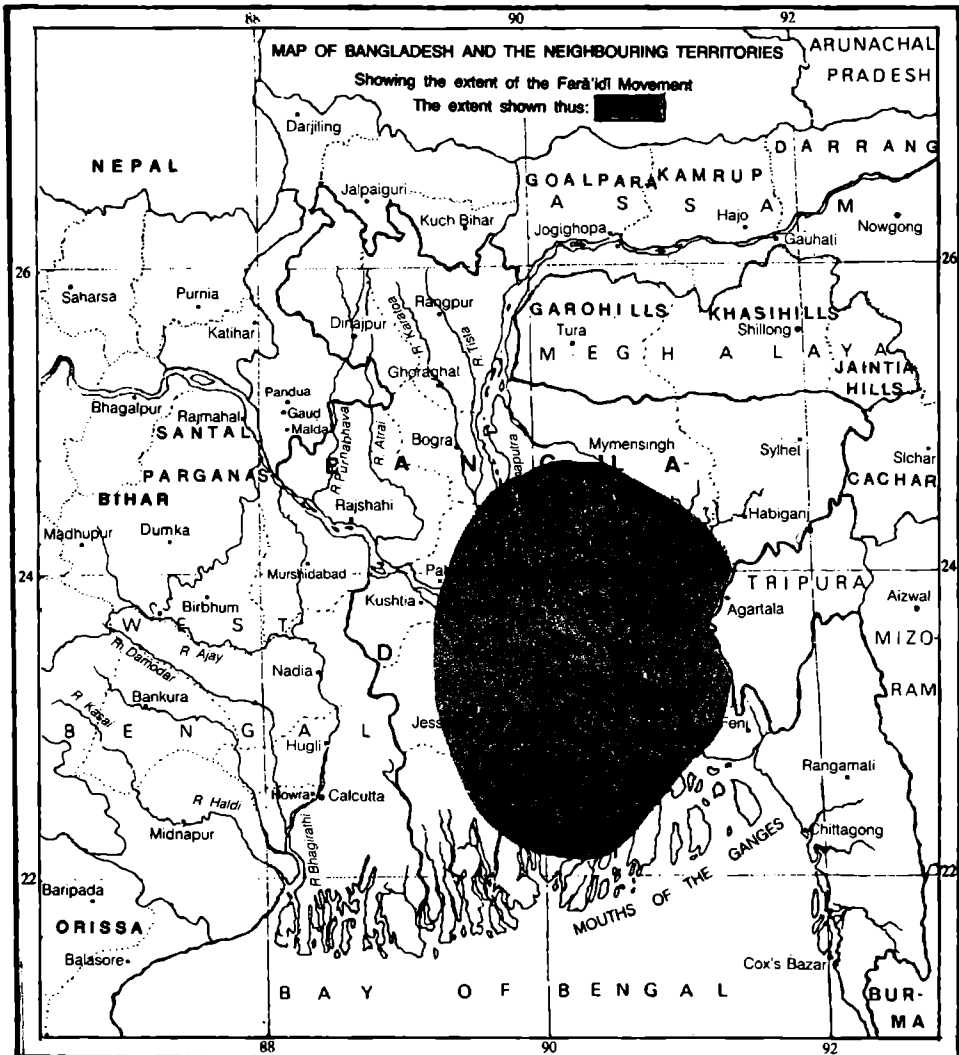
"The ostensible doctrines of the Ferazees are good, they inculcate a rigid adherence to the truth, an abstinence from all ceremonies approaching to idolatry or Man-worship, etc. and a strict conformity with the Koran. Their esoteric doctrines are, however, that an oath before a Judge, not of their Sect or religion, is not legal, and that before such a tribunal it is right to deviate from the truth to favour a Brother. Before a Judge of their own Sect they must speak the truth to enable him to do justice in the sight of God; they also hold though not openly, that as God made the earth common to all men, the payment of rent is contrary to his [His] law, and they frequently resist all demands on this account especially from Hindu zamindars, and it is this doctrine which will I think cause a collision. I

<sup>1</sup> Dampier's report, 24 April 1843, *Bengal Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 29 May 1843, No. 26, para 10.

believe that they draw a distinction between the tribute to Government and the rent for land as they seek the occupancy of the Government churs [new alluvial lands] in the large Rivers..."<sup>1</sup>

Thus by the early forties the *Farā'idīs* were well organized under the leadership of Dudu Miyān as a force to be reckoned with. The conflict with the zamindars which Dampier apprehended in his above mentioned report was not slow in coming. Indeed it had already started by the time he had been penning that report. The different aspect of that conflict and the issues involved in it are dealt with in some detail in the following chapter.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 8.



CHAPTER XII  
THE FARĀ'IDĪ MOVEMENT: II. CONFLICT  
WITH THE ZAMINDARS AND AFTER

I. THE ZAMINDARS AND INDIGO PLANTERS ORGANIZE THEMSELVES

While Dudu Miyān had been giving the *Farā'idī* movement an organized and popular character, the zamindars and the indigo-planters also were organizing themselves for preserving and furthering their privileged position and interests. The scene of their organizing activities was of course the capital city of Calcutta where the most influential members of their class lived, leaving the management of their zamindari in the rural districts to their agents and employees. These "absentee" zamindars also engaged themselves in commercial enterprises and owned and controlled the newly rising periodical press of the time. Through this periodical press they naturally advocated their cause and criticised those that were opposed to them. An instance of such use of the periodical press for furthering the zamindari interests was the writing of the *Samāchār Darpan's* correspondent in 1837 against the *Farā'idīs*, to which reference has been made in the previous chapter.

The year 1837 was in fact a significant stage in the development of the *Farā'idī* movement in its relation with the zamindars-indigo planters on the one hand and the organization of the latter class on the other. It was in this year that Dudu Miyān returned from Makka after having completed his education there and joined his father in strengthening the *Farā'idī* movement. It was also in the same year that we hear of Sharī'at Allah's conflict with some east Bengal zamindars. Also, in the same year the government passed a regulation, consequent upon the passing of the Charter Act of 1833, allowing the English indigo planters to purchase and own landed estates in Bengal. Hitherto they had been conducting the indigo plantation business as lease-holders of the Bengali zamindars. Most important of all, it was in 1837 that a "Zamindari Association" consisting of the Bengali zamindars was formed in Calcutta. In the following year this body was enlarged, mainly through the efforts of Dwarkanath Thakur and Parsanna-



kumar Thakur, two prominent zamindars and members of the Zamindari Association, to include the European land-holders (indigo planters) and was renamed the "Landholders' Society."<sup>1</sup>

The avowed object of the Society was to oppose the government proceedings, then in progress, for resuming rent-free lands and generally to advance the interests of the land-holders. It may be noted that in the earlier stage the resumption proceedings had dealt a severe blow to the *lā kharāj* lands held by many old Muslim families and charitable institutions. In the thirties, however, these proceedings began to touch the interests of the Hindu zamindars, many of whom held vast rent-free lands in the names of their relatives or creatures nominally for charitable purposes but really for their personal interests. Soon after its formation the Land-holders' Society made contact, through its European members, with sympathizers in England from among the advocates of Free Trade and others like John Crawford, Lord Brougham, George Thompson, William Adam and others. The result was the formation in July 1839 of the British India Society in London for bringing to the notice of the British public, especially members of Parliament, the view-points of the land-holding and commercial community of Calcutta. To consummate the process Dwarkanath Thakur visited England in 1842 and while returning to Calcutta early in 1843 brought with him George Thompson who helped the formation of the "Bengal British India Society" which was modelled on the society in London. The new society was virtually an extension of the Landholders' Society — William Theobald, a prominent indigo planter and an influential member of the latter society, became the president of the Bengal British India Society.<sup>2</sup>

Thus were the zamindars and indigo planters publicly combining and organizing themselves for furthering their interests as they had indeed been co-operating with one another in their dealings with the *ra'yats*. Fortunately for the latter,

<sup>1</sup> "Prospectus of the Landholders Society", *Friend of India*, 15 March 1838, Vol. IV, p. 105. See also "Proceedings of the Meeting for the formation of the Landholders Society", *Englishman*, 21 March 1838, Vol. VII, pp. 548-49.

<sup>2</sup> "Proceedings of the meeting for the formation of the Bengal British India Society", *The Bengal Hurkaru*, Calcutta, 24 April 1843. Also see for details, M.M. Ali, *op.cit.*, 172-174.

however, a third party now emerged on the scene to speak on their behalf. These were the Protestant Christian Missionaries in Bengal. For various reasons they had found out that the zamindari and indigo planting systems had been hampering their work of Christianization. They often met with the remark by the rural masses that they did not wish "to go to that heaven in which such and such a planter would be."<sup>1</sup> Also the Christian converts, like the *Farā'idīs*, began to oppose as unconscionable and irreligious the taxes levied by the zamindars on the occasion of a *puja*, a *śrāddha*, a marriage and a host of other Hindu socio-religious ceremonies. Further, the zamindari and indigo planting systems so impoverished the *ra'yats* that they were unable to send their children even to a charity school conducted by the missionaries, which was indeed the chief method of their proselytizing efforts. For as soon as a boy was five or six years old, he was sent into the field to tend cattle, either in the service of others, or to save the expenses of a servant to his parents. Thus it so happened that when Dudu Miyān had been organizing the peasantry of eastern Bengal generally against the high-handedness of the zamindars and the indigo planters, and the latter two classes had been coming closer together and forming the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society, the Christian Missionaries in Bengal also had found the necessity to speak about the condition of the *ra'yats* under the zamindari and the indigo planting systems.

The occasion for such missionary advocacy of the *ra'yats'* cause was indeed provided by the formation of the Landholders' Society in 1838. Commenting on this development the Serampore based Baptist Missionary Society's influential weekly English newspaper, the *Friend of India*, observed that the *ra'yats* had more reason to complain of their landholders than the latter had to complain of the government. The journal wished that the Landholders' Society had adopted a more comprehensive designation indicating a "pledge that the interests of the tenants would not be overlooked."<sup>2</sup> The *Calcutta Christian Observer*, another

<sup>1</sup> See for instance, J.C. Page (a Baptist missionary in Bengal at the time), "The Zemindary System and Christianity", *Proceedings of the General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries*, September 4-7, 1855, Calcutta, 1855, pp. 108 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Friend of India*, 29 March 1838, Vol. IV, pp. 129-130.

missionary journal, commented more pointedly and stated that the formation of the Landholders' Society "would bind the Zamindars together the more effectually to oppress the already too much oppressed raiyats, the poor creatures whose wrongs already cry aloud for redress."<sup>1</sup> Supporting these observations a correspondent of the same journal illustrated the zamindars' high-handedness and misuse of powers and the impracticability of any remedy through the law-courts because of the bribery and corruption prevalent in them. He cited the case of a poor ra'yat with whom he was "personally acquainted"; the ra'yat's rent was "wrongfully" doubled, and on his resistance to pay it he was forcibly deprived of his land. He sought justice in the law-court, "but being too poor to be able to bribe the Umlahs, and other harpies of the court" his case was "tossed about from court to court for the last 12 years" and was not yet decided.

The zamindar had in the meantime wreaked his vengeance not only upon him but upon all his relatives by depriving them of their lands on some pretext or other. The correspondent further observed that this was not a "singular instance", but that he knew "thousands of similar cases".<sup>2</sup> The zamindars-indigo planters indeed attempted to counter these charges against them through their organs like the *Reformer* and the *Englishman*;<sup>3</sup> but their discussions were more or less evasive or were generally mixed up with other matters.<sup>4</sup> The discussions started in 1838 had not totally died out when George Thompson came to Calcutta with Dwarkanath Thakur early in 1843. At that time the missionary spokesmen openly asked Thompson to avoid identifying himself with any party and pointed out that the "greatest oppressors" of the country were the "Zemindars, wealthy natives and native officials" and if Thompson would listen "to the tales of misery from the lips of the poor" he would find that they were "far deeper evils, and more truly needing correction than all the

<sup>1</sup> C.C.O., April 1838, Vol. VII, pp. 232-233.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-214.

<sup>3</sup> The editors of these two journals were, respectively, Prasanna Kumar Thakur and W.C. Hary, both Joint-Secretaries of the Landholders Society. See *Beng. Pub. Cons.*, 11 April 1838, No. 25.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance *Englishman*, 19,21,22 and 30 March 1838.

oppressions” complained of by the “well-fed baboos of Calcutta.”<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, Thompson did not listen to this advice and identified himself with the zamindars and indigo planters.

Such missionary advocacy of the *ra'yats'* cause had however an indirect bearing on the *Farā'idī* movement. In both leadership and support the latter was essentially a rural mass movement having no liaison with the capital city of Calcutta. Far less had it any journal or mouthpiece to propagate and support its cause. Hence the occasional missionary writings on the *ra'yats'* condition, though inadequate, tended to convey to the government that there was another side of the story and that the cause of the zamindars' and indigo planters' troubles with the *ra'yats* was not simply that which the former was giving out. Such impression, together with the avowedly critical attitude adopted by the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society towards the government proceedings for the resumption of rent-free lands doubtless made the government less enthusiastic about any prompt intervention on behalf of the zamindars and indigo planters in their quarrels with the *ra'yats*, as was done in the case of Tītu Mīr and the Barasat uprising. This explains why, inspite of the fact that the *Farā'idī* movement was more widespread and more pronouncedly hostile towards the zamindars and indigo planters, the government did not think in terms of militarily suppressing the movement though the latter group of people, as will be seen presently, spared no pains to convince the government that like Tītu Mīr's movement the *Farā'idī* movement also was anti-government in nature and hostile to British rule in the land.

## II. INCREASING HOSTILITY OF THE ZAMINDARS AND INDIGO PLANTERS TOWARDS THE *FARĀ'IDĪS*

Almost exactly after the formation of the Landholders' Society the hostilities of the zamindars and indigo planters towards the *Farā'idīs* began remarkably to increase. Such hostilities followed their usual course. Backed by their influential organizations and lobby in Calcutta, possessed of vast material resources and extraordinary statutory powers, maintaining large

<sup>1</sup> C.C.A., 18 February 1843, Vol. IV., p. 329.

bodies of trained fighters (*lāthiāls*) and affray parties and being on terms of intimacy with the few magistrates and police officers scattered in the rural districts, most of whom were also kept obliged by illegal gratifications and much needed social intercourse, the zamindars and indigo planters were determined to suppress the *Farā'idī* movement by sheer force and oppression. In the Dhaka district where the *Farā'idīs* were quickly gaining in number and strength the zamindars and the indigo planters subjected the *Farā'idī ra'yats* to various physical tortures such as tying them up by the beards with a tree or pole, putting hot chilli powders in their nostrils, placing poisonous and ferocious insects on the navel of a *ra'yat* after forcing him on the ground and such other methods in addition to beating and confinement. The zamindars also imposed the infamous beard-tax upon the *Farā'idīs*, implicated them in false civil and criminal law-suits, arbitrarily increased the land-rents besides levying the illegal taxes and ousted recalcitrant *ra'yats* from their lands. The *Farā'idī ra'yats* were also subjected to all possible social inconveniences such as preventing the barbers or washermen from rendering them any service.<sup>1</sup>

In the face of such oppressions and inconveniences Dudu Miyān encouraged his followers to organize themselves for self-defence and also to settle, wherever possible, on *khās* lands (lands directly under the control of government) and *chars* (newly formed alluvial lands) in the big rivers so as to avoid any interference by the zamindars. Nevertheless, conflicts between the *Farā'idī* peasantry and the zamindars-indigo planters became inevitable because of the attitude of the latter. In 1839-40 a fresh campaign of oppressions and harassments of the *Farā'idīs* was started mainly at the instance of A. A. Dunlop, an indigo planter having several factories in Faridpur district. In alliance with several Hindu zamindars of the district of whom Jaynarayan Ghosh was the most prominent, Dunlop redoubled the above mentioned methods of oppression on the *Farā'idīs* and, to put a definite check upon the progress of the movement, instituted several false criminal cases against Dudu Miyān. All these cases,

<sup>1</sup> James Wise, *Eastern Bengal*, p. 24; Wazir Ali, *Muslim Ratnahar*, pp. 7-8, quoted in M. A. Khan, *op.cit.*, 36.

however, failed for want of evidence.<sup>1</sup> This further angered the indigo planter and his allies who now became more virulent in their oppressive and illegal methods of suppression of the *Farā'idīs*. As a result the latter took the first serious retaliatory step towards the end of 1841. According to the report of the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces (W. Dampier), about 800 *Farā'idīs* collected and attacked the house of the Faridpur zamindar Jaynarayan Ghosh, ransacked it and carried off his brother Madan Mohan Ghosh, the former's main instrument of oppression, who was subsequently killed.<sup>2</sup> Naturally the incident became the subject of a criminal case. About 117 of the *Farā'idī* peasants were arrested of whom 107 were ultimately tried before the Sessions Judge, but only 22 persons were sentenced to imprisonment for seven years. The rest were released.<sup>3</sup>

That the attack on Jaynarayan Ghosh's house was only a retaliatory measure and was not caused in the least by any mundane or plundering motive is amply admitted by the Superintendent of Police himself who, in his report on the subject, observed that the *Farā'idīs* "were not instigated by a desire of plunder, but of revenge for the oppression and extortion practised on them by this zamindar, and if a tenth part of what they say, after their conviction, stated to me in a petition extenuating their conduct, was true, I am only surprised that a much more serious and general disturbance did not occur." Dampier further observed that "the zamindars appear to have done everything which could degrade these men in their religion and their females." He therefore cautioned the magistrate of Faridpur to "keep a strict watch, not only over the people, but also over their Zamindars" who were apt to "resent the non-payment of these men of puja expenses etc., which they consider encouraging idolatry, by the very gross ill-treatment."<sup>4</sup> Dudu Miyān also was accused and brought to trial in this case, but was released for lack of evidence against him.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Dudu Miyān's statement before the Faridpur Sessions Judge in 1847, *Trial etc.*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Superintendent of Police, Lower Provinces, in *Calcutta Review*, I., 1844, 215-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See the remark of the Ṣadr Nizāmat 'Adālat, *Trial*, XXXIII.

Although the affair thus ended in the imprisonment of a few *Farā'idī ra'yats*, its overall effect on the movement was momentous. It increased the *Farā'idī* leaders' confidence in the efficacy of their unity and organization and considerably raised their status in the estimation of the non-*Farā'idī* peasantry. The latter now began to join the movement in ever-increasing numbers, if only because in it they clearly saw a potential check upon the oppressive and arbitrary conduct of the zamindars and indigo planters.

### III. DUDU MIYĀN'S PILGRIMAGE TO MAKKA AND THE JIHĀD LEADERS' PREACHING TOUR IN EAST BENGAL, 1843

Shortly after the conclusion of the case arising out of the retaliatory attack on zamindar Jaynarayan Ghosh's house Dudu Miyān, accompanied by one Shari'at Allah who is stated to be "the son or nephew" of Tītu Mīr of Barasat, went on a pilgrimage to Makka.<sup>1</sup> What arrangement Dudu Miyān must have made for the conduct of the movement during his absence is not known. Early in 1843, however, the *Farā'idīs* became the subject of concern for the government authorities. This was so not because of any disturbing act by the *Farā'idīs* themselves but by the coming of the Patna *jihād* leader Mawlawi 'Ināyat 'Alī and Mawalānā Karāmat 'Alī of Jaunpur, accompanied by a few of their respective followers, on a preaching tour of east Bengal. After visiting the districts of Rajshahi, Murshidabad, Pabna, Barasat and Jessore they came over to Dhaka and Mymensingh in east Bengal. Whether they chose this time in view of Dudu Miyān's absence in Arabia or it was just a coincidence is not known. 'Ināyat 'Alī and Karāmat 'Alī were, however, at cross-purposes and they seem to have well-nigh neutralized each other's efforts. For, while the former preached a *jihād*, then against the Sikh rulers of the Panjab, and sought recruits and financial support for the purpose, Karāmat 'Alī, though once a follower of Sayyid Aḥmad, was now opposed not only to the policy of active *jihād* but also to the *Farā'idī* views regarding the suspension of the *Jumua'* and 'Īd prayers in Bengal.

These differences in the view-points of the leaders were not

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Supdt. of Police, Lower Provinces, to the govt. of Bengal, No. 1001, 13 May 1843, para 6. *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 29 May 1843, No. 25.

however at first known to the local authorities. Hence their arrival in the east Bengal districts caused a good deal of uneasiness to the latter. The Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces, Dampier, promptly alerted the magistrates and police officials of the different districts as well as the Bengal government. Writing to the latter he stated: "The Mahomedan population of the Eastern Districts are all what is called Ferazees, that is Wahabees<sup>1</sup>, strongly united together, very fanatic, under the control of particular leaders and inimical to our government, and they require to be most carefully watched; for if there is any danger of an outbreak in these provinces, it is from the excited religious fanaticism of this sect."<sup>2</sup> 'Ināyat 'Alī left Dhaka, however, shortly afterwards, much to the relief of the Superintendent of Police. Nevertheless he once again reminded the government in another communication "of the extreme excitability" of what he termed "the lower orders of the Sherawallahs, or Ferazees as they are called" and the "necessity for preventing" the other preachers from coming amongst them.<sup>3</sup> His apprehensions about the *Farā'idīs* did not quite subside even when he discovered shortly afterwards that Karāmat 'Alī was at variance with the opinions of Dudu Miyān and noted that "the Zillahs of Furreedpore and Backergunge over which his influence extends, were not visited by the other preachers."<sup>4</sup> Referring to the departure of 'Ināyat 'Alī and his companions from east Bengal Dampier wrote to the government: "Now that the Moolahs have left these districts in which the Sect of Sherawallahs or Ferazees most prevails there is not I think any fear of a disturbance... but this class of Mahomedans requires very careful watching."<sup>5</sup>

Acting on these communications the government of Bengal asked the Superintendent of Police to send for Karāmat 'Alī and speak to him on the rumours which were abroad "on the real

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that Dampier was not aware of the differences between the *Farā'idī* movement and the *Jihād* movement which the Anglo-Indian officials called the Indian Wahhābī movement.

<sup>2</sup> Dampier to govt. of Bengal, 5 April 1843, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 29 May 1843, No. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Do to do, 10 April 1843, *ibid.*, No. 22A.

<sup>4</sup> Do to do, 13 April 1843, *ibid.*, No. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, para 2.



objects of himself and his followers.”<sup>1</sup> Dampier was also directed to ask “the more judicious among the Magistrates in the Zillahs... to pursue a similar course with the influential leaders who may visit their districts” and to give well-timed warning to the people, “conveyed to them through proper channels, of the inevitable mischiefs of riotous assemblage and tumult.”<sup>2</sup> Further, Dampier was instructed to place the police generally “upon their guard against all unusual meetings and extraordinary collections of the Mahomedans”, to call for weekly reports from the magistrates on the quietude of their districts until the rumours should have subsided, and himself to visit such districts as were “most obnoxious to suspicion” and frequently to keep government informed of the results of his enquiries.<sup>3</sup>

Dampier not only carried into effect these instructions but also took some extra measures in order to curb the influence of the *Farā'idīs*. Thus, thinking that some of the Muslim subordinate police officials who had *Farā'idī* leanings would not co-operate with him in his policy of watchfulness over the *Farā'idīs*, he outright dismissed them from service on various grounds. As instructed, he summoned Karāmat 'Alī, who was then at Dhaka, to attend his office. The latter naturally denied all connection with the *Farā'idīs*, stating himself to be a *Hanafi* and “opposed in his doctrines to those in force amongst the Ferazees.”<sup>4</sup> Having duly communicated the government's instructions to the magistrates and police officers the Superintendent of Police informed the government thus: “Great caution is requisite in issuing orders to Local Police regarding the Sect. If Hindus, or Mahommedans not being of that persuasion, they are too apt to interfere with the regular prayer meetings of these people, and if of that sect they will not give information or act against them; and in one district it has been found necessary to get rid of some of the Mahomedan Police officers, as opportunities offered, who were known to hold

<sup>1</sup> Bengal Govt. to Supdt. of Police, Lower Provinces, 24 April 1843, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 29 May 1843, No. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> Dampier to govt. of Bengal., 13 May 1843, *ibid.*, No. 26, para 2.

these doctrines.”<sup>1</sup> Dampier also visited some of the districts and further wrote to the government saying: “... with the precautions given to the Magistrates no disturbances will now take place, but when Doo Doo Meea and Sherawt Oollah [Sharī‘at Allah] return from Mecca...great care must be taken to watch the districts of Furreedpur, Backergunge, Noakholly and parts of Jessore.”<sup>2</sup>

#### IV. THE ZAMINDARI PRESS OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE FARĀ‘IDĪS AND THE ATTACK ON DUDU MIYĀN’S RESIDENCE

Dudu Miyān returned from ḥajj most probably towards the end of 1843. He was then at the height of his reputation and influence over the peasantry of east Bengal. In the meantime the discussions about the ra‘yats’ condition initiated by the missionaries on the formation of the Bengal British India Society received a fresh impetus from the case of oppression by a zamindar upon some Christian converts of Jessore.<sup>3</sup> The missionaries once again agitated the subject through their journals and newspapers, particularly calling upon the Bengal British India Society to take up the subject for their consideration.<sup>4</sup> Under pressure of these discussions the latter body appointed a committee for collecting and publishing information on the condition of the agricultural population of lower Bengal and circulated a questionnaire on the subject.<sup>5</sup> From October 1844 to May 1845 some replies to the questionnaire were indeed published along with the proceedings of the monthly meetings of the Bengal British India Society.<sup>6</sup> These replies amply confirmed that (a) the zamindars were generally unsympathetic towards the ra‘yats; (b) that they (the zamindars) used to levy a number of extra taxes under various pretexts and that these extra demands together far exceeded the amount of lawful rent; (c) that they used to have recourse to bribery, forgery, forcible detention and confinement

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 6.

<sup>3</sup> See M.M. Ali, *op.cit.* 147-48, 174-176.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance *C.C.O.*, 1844, XIII, 372-375; *C.C.A.*, 15 June 1844, VI, 248; *Friend of India*, 1844, X, 438-439; *Bengal Hurkaru*, 11, 18 June and 11 July 1844 and *C.C.H.*, 27 Aug. 1844, I., 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> B.B.I.S. Proceedings, 5 Sept., 1844, *Bengal Hurkaru*, 11 Sept. 1844.

<sup>6</sup> B.B.I.S. Proceedings, for these months in *Bengal Hurkaru*, 12 Oct., 12 Nov. and 9 Dec. 1844; 16 Jan., 6 Feb., 3 & 21 March, 16 April and 12 May 1845.

of the *ra'yats*, withholding the receipts for rents paid, institution of false law-suits and unscrupulous use of the *panjam* and *haftam* regulations in order to bring recalcitrant *ra'yats* to their knees and (d) that under the zamindari and indigo planting systems the *ra'yats* in general were reduced to extreme poverty and degradation. These revelations made the Bengal British India Society very uneasy and publication of the further replies that were received<sup>1</sup> was abruptly stopped.

Obviously to redress the damage that had been done to the cause of the zamindars and indigo planters by the above revelations about the *ra'yats'* condition Pearychand Mitra, a member of the Bengal British India Society, came forward to defend the position of the zamindars and indigo planters through two serious articles published in *The Calcutta Review* and captioned respectively "The Zemindar and Ryot" and "Indigo in Lower Bengal."<sup>2</sup> Though making use of the published and unpublished replies to the above-mentioned questionnaire and other materials,<sup>3</sup> Mitra mainly advocated the interests of the zamindars and indigo planters and selected the *Farā'idīs* as his target of special attack. "The Ferazis are the same men", he wrote, "who under Titu Mir gave the Government such trouble in Baraset district some fourteen years ago. They are at present headed by one Dudu Mian and abound in the districts of Dacca, Faridpore and Bakarganj."<sup>4</sup> Thus openly trying to incite the ruling power against the *Farā'idīs* and to divert public attention generally from the real issue of the *ra'yats'* condition under the zamindari and indigo planting systems Mitra put forth his venom against the *Farā'idīs* as follows: "The chief tenets of these worthies are that murder and perjury on behalf of the sect, are not only pardonable but praiseworthy... If any disturbance now takes place in Lower Bengal, it will be through the instrumentality of the Ferazis, and though a company of sepoy might put them down,

<sup>1</sup> See B.B.I.S. Proceedings, 27 Jan. 1846, in *Bengal Hurkaru*, 31 January 1846.

<sup>2</sup> *Calcutta Review*, No. VI (July-December 1846), 305-353 and No. 7 (January-June 1847), 186-219.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the information contained in these two articles with the issues of the *Bengal Hurkaru* mentioned in f.n.6 of the previous page.

<sup>4</sup> *Calcutta Review*, No. 7 (Jan-June 1847), 199.

yet it would not be without a considerable effusion of blood.”<sup>1</sup>

Nothing could be farther from the truth than Mitra's statement that “murder and perjury on behalf of the sect” were the *Farā'idīs'* chief tenets. Except for the attack on zamindar Jaynarayan Ghosh's house in 1841 which resulted in the death of his brother and which was acknowledgedly a retaliatory measure on the part of the *Farā'idīs* no “murder” or “perjury” as such had been proved against any of the *Farā'idīs* so far. On the contrary the government records, reports by the Christian missionaries and the results of the enquires conducted by the British India Society itself, of which the zamindars and indigo planters were the organizers and members, show indisputably that corruption, perjury, institution of false law-suits, physical tortures, abduction and confinement of *ra'yats* attended with murder and maintenance of armed bands for affrays were the usual practices of the generality of the zamindars and indigo planters of the time.

Mitra's articles appear to be a press feeler for a fresh round of physical offensive by the zamindars and indigo planters against the *Farā'idīs*. Indeed by the time Mitra's above mentioned remarks were coming out of the press,<sup>2</sup> such physical offensive had already started. Already in 1844 and 1845 the indigo planter Andrew Anderson Dunlop had unsuccessfully instituted two false law-suits against Dudu Miyān alleging “abduction and murder” in the one and “unlawful assemblage” in the other case.<sup>3</sup> Having failed by such methods to stop the growing unity and organization of the peasantry under the leadership of Dudu Miyān, Dunlop and his zamindar allies, now led by Gopimohan Ghosh, decided to put an end to Dudu Miyān and his movement by sheer force. Accordingly on 30 Bhādra of 1253 B.E., corresponding to mid-September 1846 they led an attack on Dudu Miyān's residence with a large number of their armed men. The event is

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Each number of the *Calcutta Review* was published at the beginning of the six-monthly period for which it was issued; i.e., the January-June 1847 issue came out early in January. Materials for that issue had necessarily been sent to the press at the beginning of the previous period, i.e., in July 1846 or in the month following. Naturally, therefore, the incidents that took place in the second half of 1846 did not find mention in the article under reference. In fact Mitra's mention of the Barasat incident of 1831 as having taken place “some fourteen years ago” indicates that he prepared the article sometime in 1845.

<sup>3</sup> See *Trial etc.* p. 47.

described by Dudu Miyān himself as follows: "When he [Dunlop] could not in any way gain his end, on the 30th Bhadur last, the said Mr. Dunlop, through his Gomastas and the said Baboos personally, with about 7 or 800 men, armed with weapons, attacked my house, broke the front door and murdered four watchmen and severely wounded others, and plundered about one and a half lakh of rupees [150,000] in cash and property, concealed the bodies of the slain, and presented the wounded persons as part of an unlawful assemblage before the Darogah; they were forwarded to the Magistrate: one of them named Ameerodeen died in hospital."<sup>1</sup>

Dudu Miyān of course attempted to have the case investigated by the Faridpur Joint Magistrate (G.C. Fletcher). The latter, however, being on terms of intimacy with the indigo planter and the zamindars, did not attach any importance to Dudu Miyān's representations and took up the case of alleged unlawful assemblage, as preferred by the zamindars, and ordered the dārogha to investigate it, directing Dudu Miyān to state whatever he had to say before that official in the course of his enquiry. When the dārogha along with some of the court officials came to the spot for investigation they took their residence with the indigo planter and the zamindars. Even then, to prevent Dudu Miyān from stating his case, Dunlop and the zamindars, in collusion with the dārogha, had Dudu Miyān seized and carried away to Dunlop's indigo factory at Pānch Char where the *Farā'idī* leader was kept confined for two days and one night. They even threatened to put Dudu Miyān to death, but after much entreaty on his part he was spared his life and was released after some time. He then arrived at Faridpur and presented a petition stating the whole matter to the Magistrate. The latter outright rejected the petition and attempted to get Dudu Miyān's consent to a compromise with the indigo planter Dunlop. As the former did not agree to compromise the matter and insisted on an enquiry the Magistrate ultimately consented to investigate the matter himself. He took up the investigation, however, rather leisurely after two months and

<sup>1</sup> Dudu Miyān's statement, *Trial etc.*, 47-48. For corroboration beyond any shadow of doubt see below, text.

even then combined the programme of investigation with a wild buffalo hunting excursion of his to a place called Paragram, at some distance from Dhaka. There the Magistrate kept Dudu Miyān waiting in the camp from 30 November to 7 December 1846. During this period the Magistrate once came to Dhaka where Dudu Miyān also came, on 6 December, and sought permission to go home but was ordered back to Paragram where the Magistrate also returned on 7 December.<sup>1</sup>

V. THE FARĀ'IDĪ ATTACK ON THE PĀNCH CHAR INDIGO FACTORY,  
5 DECEMBER 1846

The attack on Dudu Miyān's house and life resulting in the killing of five of his men and the Magistrate's obvious partiality to the aggressive party and his procrastination in investigating the matter must have been too much for Dudu Miyān's followers who now took a decisive retaliatory step. Thus when their leader had been in attendance on the Magistrate at Paragram they led a counter-attack, on 5 December, on Dunlop's factory at Pānch Char, burnt it to the ground, carried away his oppressive gomastah named Kali Kanjilal and also attacked and ransacked the zamindar Gopimohan's house. The Magistrate received information about the event immediately on his arrival at Paragram on 7 December and rushed to Pānch Char wherefrom he wrote to the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces describing the attack as follows:

"On 5th December last, about daylight, a large body of armed men variously stated as numbering from 300 to 500, but probably not exceeding at the most the former number, attacked the factory of Mr. Dunlop at Pānch Chur, plundered it, burned all the Cutch houses in the factory, and wounded and carried off the Gomastah by name Kalee Kanjilal. From the factory they proceeded through the Bazar & Village... till they came to the house of Gopeemohun Baboo, a Zemindar between whom and Doodoo Meeah there has long been ill-will, and disputes going on for years. In this man's homestead they plundered whatever property was in all the houses, and then burned to the ground every one, saving only the four houses of the inner court, which were built of brick and from the upper storey of which, the Zamindar and his family saw the arson and plunder going on, and esteemed themselves lucky that the attacking party who came into the lower storey did not force their way

<sup>1</sup> Dudu Miyān's statement, *Trial etc.*, 47-48.

upstairs, and that they themselves were not scorched to death by the flames or suffocated by the smoke from the large cutcha houses blazing all round them. In the homestead of Gopimohun's copartner Seeb Chunder Baboo, which closely adjoins Gopimohun's, all the cutcha houses were burned, but it does not appear, that robbing took place to the same extent as in the other house. While this plundering was going on, the Mohurrir of the Thanah and Jamadars of Seeb Chur and Muxoodpore made two attempts to put a stop to the disturbance, but in vain, being outnumbered in the proportion of nearly a hundred to one. From the Zemindar's house the plunderers went to Mr. Dunlop's Cutcherry, on the banks of the river, robbed it of all that was worth removing, and burned it also, after which they went over the churs to the east of the cutcherry and were last seen crossing the Pudda about two miles off."<sup>1</sup>

As Dudu Miyān had been in attendance on the Magistrate at Paragram at the material time of the occurrence and for some days both preceding and following it, the latter was doubtful whether it would be possible to establish "by such proof as would satisfy the exigencies of the law" Dudu Miyān's connection with the act. Yet the Magistrate was of opinion that Dudu Miyān had a hand in the affair. "Under any circumstances", wrote the Magistrate, "it would be advisable to retain him in jail till the enquiry into the matter closes, as his influence while on the spot is so great as entirely to prevent the possibility of procuring evidence in the neighbourhood of Pānch Chur from which village his house is less than a couple of miles distant."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly the Magistrate had Dudu Miyān arrested and committed to prison.

On receipt of the above communication the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces (Dampier) also was in doubt about establishing by legal evidence Dudu Miyān's connection with the attack on Pānch Char factory. Nevertheless the Superintendent of Police shared the Joint Magistrate's impressions and in forwarding his communication to the government added: "I have on former occasions expressed to the Government my apprehensions of disturbances being likely to arise from the combination and bigotry of the Ferazee Sect, but I wish to bring this case to the notice of his Honor the Deputy Governor to show how utterly unable I am to procure the punishment of, or even to

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 17 Feb. 1847, No. 134, para 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 4.

tie up the hands of the person, who certainly directed the perpetration of these acts.”<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, neither the Joint Magistrate nor the Superintendent of Police alluded to the more serious incident of the attack on Dudu Miyān’s house which resulted in the death of at least 5 persons and the plunder of cash and property worth 150,000 rupees. Dampier vaguely passed over the matter and put all blame on Dudu Miyān and the *Farā’idīs* saying: “There have for long been differences between Mr. Dunlop and Doodoo Meeah and lately many reciprocal complaints have come before the Local Court, the bad feelings which had ceased for some time (after Doodoo Meeah’s return from Mecca) having again arisen with much bitterness, Doodoo Meeah finds that, he is getting the worst in these cases, and so a party of his followers from a distant part, is sent to attack and plunder the property of his opponents in and out of the way place which they do not run much risk of opposition or detection.” Dampier further informed the government that he could detain Dudu Miyān “whilst the charge against him of inciting these acts is pending, but when he is discharged, which I am sure under the present Laws he must be, I cannot demand security from him as a person liable to cause disturbance to the public peace, or do more than take from him a small personal recognizance for a limited period. This man has authority over thousands, his word and orders are the Law of the Ferazees in Fureedpore and the adjacent Districts, and I have reason to believe, that many of the Mahomedan officers, high and low, have imbibed the principles of his Sect, the tenets of which I detailed in my letter No. 1001 of the 13th of May 1843.”<sup>2</sup>

Like the Joint Magistrate, thus, the Superintendent of Police also took only a one-sided view, assuming Dudu Miyān and his followers as the source of all troubles and paying no attention to the activities of the zamindars and indigo planters to which the acts of the *Farā’idīs* were mere a reaction and response.

<sup>1</sup> Supdt. of Police, Lower Provinces, to Scy. Bengal Govt., 19 January 1847, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 17 Feb. 1847, No. 133, para 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 4.



VI. THE DHAKA DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER'S REPORT  
AND RECOMMENDATION

On receipt of Dampier's above mentioned and two other communications on the subject<sup>1</sup> the government of Bengal asked the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division (J. Dunbar) to furnish a report on the condition and state of feeling among the population of the district of Faridpur and its neighbourhood, with particular reference to Dudu Miyañ and his followers.<sup>2</sup> Immediately on receipt of this directive the Commissioner informed the government that he had "for sometime past been engaged in collecting information relative to the Ferazees, and their influence in this part of the country" and that he would send a full report on the subject as soon as he had brought his enquiries to maturity.<sup>3</sup>

The promised report was sent by the Commissioner some three weeks afterwards, on 18 March 1847.<sup>4</sup> The Commissioner's information was necessarily derived from the persons with whom he came in contact, like the Joint Magistrate of the district, the police officers, mainly the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces and a few European individuals like the indigo planter Dunlop and the zamindars. Hence the Commissioner's report essentially reflected the views and impressions of these people together with casual notices about the religious practices of the *Farā'idīs* and his recommendations about the measures to be adopted for suppressing them. After telling the government that the "lower classes" of people in Faridpur were in "far easier" circumstances than those in the other districts and that "with few exceptions" the general body of the people were happy with the British Indian government and that they "would be sorry to have cause to think seriously of a change of rulers as a likely event", the Commissioner observed: "Of late years, however, men's minds have been unsettled by the doctrines, and the peace of the well disposed portion of the community has been frequently disturbed by the practices of the Mahomedan Sectarians usually known

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 17 Feb. 1847, Nos. 135, and 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Dunbar to Bengal govt., 24 Feb. 1847, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 7 April 1847, No. 98.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 99. A copy of the report is preserved also in the *Dalhousie Papers*, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, GD 45/6/443. See Appendix E to this part.

under the name of Ferazees.”<sup>1</sup> He then referred to the founding of the “sect” by Ḥajī Sharī‘at Allah and noted that the latter’s son Dudu Miyān had “been very successful in diffusing the Ferazee principles throughout Furreedpore, & the neighbouring districts”, that the “number of Ferazees acknowledging Doodoo Meeah for their leader has been variously estimated at from 50 to 80,000”, and that Dudu Miyān “has attained a degree of influence far exceeding that possed by his father.” Echoing the sentiments of the zamindars and indigo planters Dunbar stated that Dudu Miyān used his influence “to effect his purposes by force”, which had rendered him “obnoxious to the law”, but that he had hitherto “managed to escape with impunity.”<sup>2</sup>

After giving a short description of the doctrines of the *Farā'idīs* and their organization under the leadership of local *Khalifās*, the Commissioner informed the government: “It is supposed that Doodoo Meeah has rather lost ground of late, in the affections of his followers, in consequence of the frequent calls he has been making for pecuniary contributions, and the belief that a considerable portion of the money, is applied to their own immediate uses by him and his Sirdars.”<sup>3</sup> This remark of the Commissioner, it must be pointed out, is clearly an unsubstantiated allegation based, as it appears, on the reports of Dudu Miyān’s enemies. This is clearer from the following para of the Commissioner’s report where he makes a reference to the impressions of this group of the people. “There is a very general impression”, writes Dunbar, “among the Hindu population, as well as with the Mahomedans of the old creed, that their [the *Farā'idīs*] ultimate object is the expulsion of the present rulers of the land, and the restoration of the Mahomedan power. That the possibility of such a consumation at some remote period, has presented itself to the better informed amongst them, and that it has even been held out to the multitude of their followers, as an idea to be cherished in their hearts, is not unlikely; but I am not disposed to think, that there has ever yet been any real inclination

<sup>1</sup> The Commissioner’s report, 18 March 1847, *op. cit.*, paras 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 5.

of trying conclusions with the powers that be. Still there can be no doubt, that the power which Doodoo Meah possesses for good or for evil is great, and that if he chose to exert it in opposition to law, much trouble would be required to allay the storm he might raise. The readiness with which his will is obeyed, and the facility with which his followers can be brought together for an illegal purpose, were fully exemplified in the late outrage in Furreedpore, for the perpetration of which it is understood, that several hundred men were brought together from different parts of the country, some of them thirty to forty miles distant."<sup>1</sup>

In thus communicating to government what he called "the general impression" of the Hindus etc., about Dudu Miyān's ultimate object being the "expulsion of the present rulers of the land, and the restoration of the Mahomedan power" Dunbar was as far from the truth as he was in his above mentioned statement about the "supposed" decline in Dudu Miyān's popularity because of his alleged misuse of the common funds. These statements were mere reproduction of the sentiments of the opponents of the *Farā'idīs* and these were uncritically adopted by the Commissioner in order to persent Dudu Miyān and his followers in as dark a colour as possible to the government. In the same strain and showing the same dependence on the information supplied by the enemies of the *Farā'idīs* the Commissioner further stated that the *Farā'idīs* were "much disliked by the Hindus, the Orthodox Mahomedans and by Europeans" for their power of combination in committing what was called "outrages of the most atrocious nature" in the districts of Dhaka, Faridpur and Bakarganj.<sup>2</sup> Dunbar could not however point out any case having been proved against the *Farā'idīs*. Therefore he adopted the favourite theme of the zamindars-indigo planters alleging that because of their combination and unity the *Farā'idīs* prevented others from giving evidence against them and also produced false evidence in their support. In saying so, it must be noted, the Commissioner totally overlooked the fact, established by the findings of the law courts, that it was not the *Farā'idīs* but their opponents who were found

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 7.

to have instituted false law-suits against the former, for which some of the zamindars' witnesses were punished by the law courts for perjury on more than one occasion. It appears that since the *Farā'idīs* could not be unjustly punished through the law courts, they (the *Farā'idīs*) were blamed for having prevented evidence being produced against them and for having fabricated evidence in their favour. So far as specific acts on the part of the *Farā'idīs* were concerned the Commissioner could only state: "they not only resist successfully the levy of all extra or illegal cesses by the Zemindars and Talookdars, but with equal ability to their land rent, they give much more trouble than others in collecting it — they would withhold it altogether if they dared for it is a favourite maxim with them, that the Earth is God's, who gives it to his people — the land tax is accordingly held in abomination, and they are taught to look forward to the happy time, when it will be abolished."<sup>1</sup>

Thus having described the *Farā'idīs* as a dreadful power for evil the Commissioner recommended: "The Sect should be put down with a strong hand — nothing short of this will put a stop to their lawless conduct."<sup>2</sup> Clearly betraying his adoption of the views of the zamindars and indigo planters, particularly of Dunlop, the Commissioner stated: "as a first and all important step, every one who has well considered the subject, looks upon the removal of Doodoo Meeah, not only from this part of the Country, but from the Country itself, as indispensable. To keep him in durance, or subject him to any measure of punishment here or at Furreedpore, or at any place to which his followers could by possibility have access, would be to scotch, not to kill the snake." To emphasize the need for such a strong measure Dunbar referred to the attack on the Panch Char factory of Dunlop and added: "Looking at these things and bearing in mind, that the employment of a military force was necessary, some years back, to put these people down, and that not long after, troops were again warned to be on the readiness to act against them; it will be admitted, that effectual measures should be taken for breaking up

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 8.

the association, and giving them a blow from which they cannot readily recover.”<sup>1</sup> Dunbar further reminded the government that the law had hitherto failed to reach the *Farā'idīs*, “and it may do so again - if so it is surely a subject of grave consideration, how far, as rulers of the Country, we should be justified, in leaving the lives and property of a vast number of peaceable subjects, exposed to the machinations of men, so devoid of moral restraint [?], as Doodoo Meeah and his adherents have shewn themselves to be, and with such fearful power for evil, as they have at their command.”<sup>2</sup>

Dunbar further stated that he had himself gone to Faridpur at the beginning of March and had perused the proceedings in “Mr. Dunlop’s case” (i.e. the Panch Char incident). “I would fain hope”, observed he, “that the evidence will be found sufficient to bring down upon Doodoo Meeah (now in Jail) the full measure of punishment, which he deserves. Should it be otherwise [so], however, I would strongly advise, that Government should come forward and lay hold of him, on the grounds of his being a notorious disturber of the peace, and the avowed leader of a Sect, which have over and over again done grievous violence to the law.”<sup>3</sup> In conclusion Dunbar recommended: “Doodoo Meeah should be transported. His Khalifas, Moonshes and Sirdars should be placed under strict surveillance. The Heads of all offices should be enjoined to shut the doors of office and employment against all Ferazees, high or low, and the Collectors of Land Revenue should be instructed to discourage, as much as possible, their Settlement in the Khass Mehals, to which they have heretofore resorted in great numbers, having there much more of their own way than on the lands of the Zemindars and Talookdars. Notices might also be issued, warning the Ryots against payment of the Ferazee tax, and promising full and immediate protection to those who resisted its levy.... The history of Teetoo Meer and the insurrection which occurred under his auspices, at Baraset, about fourteen years since, shows how

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 10.

completely such leagues can be broken up and utterly dispersed, when sufferance becomes dangerous.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, like the advocates of the zamindars and indigo planters, particularly the writers in the *Samāchār Darpan* and *The Calcutta Review*, the Commissioner equated the *Farā'idī* movement with that of Titu Mīr and urged the same strong measure of militarily suppressing the former. In thus toeing too closely the line of the zamindars and indigo planters the Commissioner in fact destroyed much of the effectiveness of his report and recommendations. For, if the *Farā'idīs* were resisting, as the Commissioner admitted, the levy of illegal taxes by the zamindars and were generally preferring to settle on *khāṣ* lands in order to be away from the power and influence of the latter, surely there was another side of the story and a case for the *Farā'idīs*. Even in his undisguised antipathy towards them the Commissioner could not but state that the *Farā'idīs* were not stopping the payment of lawful land-rent. Secondly, if Dudu Miyān's influence was on the wane, as the Commissioner alleged, surely the strong measure recommended for his suppression was not immediately called for. Thirdly, as Dudu Miyān had already been arrested and kept in prison for about three months since the Panch Char incident without there being any disturbance or rising at the instance of the *Farā'idī* population, inspite of so much talk about their combination and “power for evil”, surely the ordinary arms of the law had not become totally ineffective against them. Further, as preparations were already in progress for putting Dudu Miyān and a number of his followers on trial, it was only to be expected that the government would await the outcome of those legal proceedings before taking any extraordinary measure against the *Farā'idīs*. As will be seen presently, when that trial was concluded, further facts emerged which convinced the government that the *Farā'idīs* had a far stronger case against the zamindars and indigo planters than they had against the former. Above all, the circumstances had also changed considerably since the early thirties when the Barasat affair had taken place, to which

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 11.

the Commissioner and other advocates of the landed interests had drawn the government's attention. The agrarian issues involved in such disturbances had become clearer to the government by the early forties, if only because of the occasional press discussions about the *ra'yats*' condition initiated by the missionaries. Also the combination of the zamindars and indigo planters against the "Resumption" proceedings and their opposition to the draft of a "Sale Law" then under consideration, necessarily cooled the government's enthusiasm for readily championing their cause as against the *ra'yats* as was done in the early thirties.

The government's reply to the Commissioner's report reflected this changed attitude on their part. The Commissioner was told that since Dudu Miyān was then under arrest and was likely to "put on his trial for his concern in a violent outrage" said to have been perpetrated by his followers at his instigation, the government would await the result of those judicial proceedings before disposing of the subject. In the meantime the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces was directed to keep his close attention on the district and to keep the police in a state of vigilance. The government was also "glad" to perceive from the 5th para of the Commissioner's report that the influence of Dudu Miyān was "beginning to decline", and that therefore it was hoped "that an end will thus be gradually put to the excitement which has hitherto prevailed among the people." "Were it otherwise, however", the Commissioner was told categorically, "the Deputy Governor could not consent to adopt the extreme & rigorous measures which you have suggested, and which as all experience shews, have usually a greater tendency to increase, than to diminish the strength & spread of religious fanaticism."<sup>1</sup>

#### VII. TRIAL OF DUDU MIYĀN AND HIS FOLLOWERS, 1847

One fact common to the reports and communications of all the three principal local officials concerned in the affair, the Joint Magistrate of Faridpur, the Superintendent of Police of the Lower Provinces and the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division - was that, in the opinion of each of them, there was no substantial

<sup>1</sup> Govt. to Commissioner of Dhaka Division, 7 April 1847, No. 609, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 7 April 1847, No. 100.

evidence to connect Dudu Miyān with the attack on the Pānch Char factory. Yet, strangely enough, these officials, particularly the Joint Magistrate, did all that they could to bring about Dudu Miyān's commitment to the Sessions and his ultimate conviction for the offence. In doing so they had recourse to such evidence as was found subsequently by the Supreme Criminal Court (Ṣadr Nizāmat 'Adālat) to have been manifestly tutored and fabricated.

The Joint Magistrate formulated two separate cases, the one against Dudu Miyān for what was called "counselling, instigating, procuring, and by direct and indirect orders" causing the attack on the Pānch Char factory; and the other against 63 of his followers for the commission of the crime alleged. Both the cases were committed to the "Court of the Sessions Judge of Zillah Dacca at Furreedpor" in July 1847.

The "evidence" produced against Dudu Miyān consisted in the main of the statements of three persons, admittedly his opponents. They swore to the effect that they had gone to the house where Dudu Miyān was temporarily residing while in attendance on the Joint Magistrate at Paragram, and there heard him give orders to some of his followers (who were named) to attack, plunder and burn the factory of Dunlop and the houses of the zamindars at Pānch Char. The witnesses further stated that on the following day they informed Dunlop's Mukhtiyar (manager of the Pānch Char Factory) of what they had heard. This evidence was sought to be supported by a letter, said to have been written by that Mukhtiyar to Dunlop detailing the information and giving the names of the parties from whom it was received. A further support was sought in a note dated 5th December and signed by Dunlop which he is said to have sent off to Pānch Char on receipt of the first note. The statements of the three persons were not tested by any cross-examination at the Joint Magistrate's court nor in the sessions court; nor was the Mukhtiyar's note produced to the Joint Magistrate's court immediately after the institution of the case. The complaint was made and Dudu Miyān apprehended on 7 December 1846; but the note was not produced till June 1847, that is only a short time before Dudu Miyān was committed to the Sessions. Nor was any explanation given about the delay in



producing the note before the court. Moreover, its genuineness was rendered highly doubtful by the statement of Dunlop himself in the court where he said that he did not know the names of the persons from whom his Mukhtiyar received the information; whereas the note produced in fact contained the names of those persons.

An indirect proof was sought in certain letters, found under equivocal circumstances on the person of Zahid Khan, one of Dudu Miyān's followers, and alleged to have been written by the latter even from his confinement in prison when he had evidently been under strict watch and denied any paper or pen. Dudu Miyān emphatically denied having written those communications, and they contained expressions invoking Hindu gods and goddesses which it was highly unlikely for a person like Dudu Miyān to write. The evidence in the second case against 63 of the latter's followers was more voluminous. It consisted in the main of the statements as to recognition of the prisoners by more than one hundred witnesses who accounted for their presence at the place of occurrence by accident or curiosity on hearing and seeing the disturbance. These witnesses also were very little if at all subjected to cross-examination.

The trial of the two cases in the Sessions court took place on 30th and 31st July and 2nd to 6th August 1847 respectively. On the basis of the above mentioned "proofs" the sessions Judge (Henry Sweetenham), assisted by a jury of six persons<sup>1</sup>, convicted Dudu Miyān and all the other prisoners of the offences alleged against them. Dudu Miyān was to be imprisoned at Alipur for life, while the 63 others were to undergo imprisonment with labour from 5 to 7 years each. As under the law it was not within the power of the Sessions Judge to award such heavy punishments, he referred the cases to the Şadr Niżāmat 'Adālat for passing the necessary sentences. On perusing the records and the evidence, that court was of opinion that the evidence adduced against Dudu Miyān was "far from trustworthy, or conclusive",

<sup>1</sup> The jury consisted of three Muslims and three Hindus. They were Mawlawi Muhammad Nazim (Principal Sadr Amin), Sayyid Ghulam Ali (Wakīl), Nasir al-Din Muhammad (Wakīl), Rajkishore Rai (Munsif, i.e. a subordinate civil judge), Baroda Kinkar Rai (Wakīl) and Harachandra Chakravarty (Mukhtiyar), said to be a man "of great respectability". *Trial*, Appendix, p. XXVII.

adding that it bore a “strong resemblance to that adduced in the case tried by the Additional Sessions Judge at Dacca, Mr. Longhnan, in July 1841 when the prisoner and many of his disciples were tried and acquitted.”<sup>1</sup> The court therefore ordered to acquit Dudu Miyān and release him.

The same view was taken of the case against the 63 others. “Respecting this”, observed the Şadr Nizāmat ‘Adālat “a vast number of witnesses for the prosecution have sworn that they recognized the prisoners among the rioters; but their evidence has been contradicted by the evidence of the police officers (1 mohurrir, 2 jemadars, and several barkandazes), who followed the rioters from place to place, as they proceeded perpetrating outrage after outrage. These all and one declare that they several times attempted to seize some of the rioters; but being threatened, retreated and desisted. Yet they could not recognize any of the rioters, because they were disguised, with clothes over their faces. This is completely contradictory to the testimony of the other witnesses. The witnesses too are all ryuts, or dependants, of the mortal enemies of the prisoners’ spiritual guide; and frequent charges of a heinous nature have been brought mutually against each other. They are not therefore disinterested, and have in other cases testified against the prisoners... Lastly, it is affirmed by the witnesses, that the mob of the rioters assembled the night before at the house of Doodoo Meea, close to which the jemadar and burkundazes had been stationed, purposely in anticipation of such an event. Why were not the mob dispersed as they gathered, and intimation sent to the thannah, only a few miles off, for more force if required?... Again, 27,000 rupees of property are said to have been plundered and destroyed and burnt, yet not a rupee’s worth recovered, although the police in broad day light saw it carried off; and no detailed statement, or map, or plan of the houses destroyed and burnt, is on record. The Court therefore, dissatisfied with the evidence against the prisoners, acquit them and order their release.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII-XXXIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII-XXXIX.

The outcome of the cases was a great set-back for Dunlop and his zamindar allies. It also set off a process of new heart-searchings in government circles and brought about their unequivocal censures upon the Faridpur Joint Magistrate for the manner in which he had handled the case. Reviewing the proceedings of the case the Superintendent of Police (Dampier) now sent in a report to government pointing out the further defects and untrustworthiness of the evidence in the two cases, adding that the commitment ought not to have been made "by the Joint Magistrate" in the case against Dudu Miyān.<sup>1</sup> More significantly, the Superintendent of Police now revealed to the government the fact of the previous attack on Dudu Miyān's house which the latter had of course mentioned in connection with his defence. Dampier now wrote to the government: "From an expression casually let drop before me by a gentleman, acquainted with Mr. Dunlop I was sometimes ago led to suppose that something of the kind had occurred, and from subsequent enquiries from persons I have no reason to distrust, I have ground for belief that Doodoo Mea's statement as to a previous attack on his house is true and I shall call for the papers of that case to see how the matter stands, and how the Police and Joint Magistrate acted in it." Dampier also pointed out that the cases and their results illustrated "the disadvantages and inconvenience which sometimes arise from the junction of the executive and Magisterial duties in the hands of an inexperienced but zealous officer." The Superintendent of Police was of course apologetic about this particular "inexperienced and zealous" officer, saying that he had "acted to the best of his judgement & for the preservation of the peace of the district", being fully aware of what was called "the baneful influence of Doodoomea, the combination among his followers, their implicit obedience to his commands and the evils occurring, and likely to occur from their fanatical spirit, and under such circumstances he unwittingly allowed his feelings to influence his judgement...."<sup>2</sup> Dampier was not however as apologetic in respect of the Sessions Judge and the others assisting

<sup>1</sup> Supdt. of Police to Bengal govt., 25 October 1847, No. 2364, *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 Nov. 1847, No. 70, para 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para 5.

him in the cases and stated: "How an experienced Sessions Judge, who had no such interest in the proceedings, could convict, or the Jury & Moulavee, give in a verdict and Fatwa of conviction, on such evidence, as was adduced in both Cases in that Court, is to me perfectly incomperhensible."

It is not however at all incomperhensible if it is remembered that the Company's judicial and police administration in the Bengal districts, manned mostly by "young" and "inexperienced" officers, was corrupt and susceptible to the influence of the zamindars and indigo planters in the mufassal. The members of the jury and the Muslim law officer (Mawlawī) in these cases were apparently so selected as would give a desired verdict. And although the Superintendent of Police thus washed his hands off the cases, he was no less prejudiced against the *Farā'idīs*. As early as 1843 he had dismissed a number of Muslim police officials because of their *Farā'idī* leanings and on mere suspicion of their being potential disturbing elements. The question also remains to be answered why, after having come to know "sometime ago" about the attack on and murders at Dudu Miyan's residence, the Superintendent of Police had not brought those facts before the Sessions Court when the case against Dudu Miyān was in progress or at least pressed the matter further before the conclusion of the cases. The only relieving feature was that corruption and partisanship had not similarly corroded the top-most level of the government machinery. On receipt of information about the verdict of the Şadr Nizāmat 'Adālat on the cases and Dampier's above mentioned report, the Deputy Governor ordered the whole Persian proceedings in the cases to be translated into English for the government's perusal and also communicated to the Superintendent of Police the government's censure of the conduct of the Joint Magistrate who was directed to "be careful in all future cases not to allow his zeal for the detection and punishment of offences however laudable in itself to exercise an undue influence over his judgement." Further, Dampier was directed to submit a report about the result of his examination in the proceedings on the case of attack on Dudu Miyān's house.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bengal govt. to Supdt. of Police, Lower Provinces, 3 November 1847 No. 2294, *Beng. Cr.* =

What report Dampier must have sent to the government is not on record. Whatever it was, and inspite of it, there were by now sufficient facts before the government to show that the *Farā'idīs* were not so much at fault as they were made out to be. This meant that even if the Commissioner's suggestion for adopting extraordinary measures to suppress them in the event of the legal proceedings against them having failed had not been earlier negated, the government would now have discountenanced it more emphatically. The English translation of the proceedings in the two cases was of course printed in 1848;<sup>1</sup> but this record as also the report of the Superintendent of Police showing that the *Farā'idīs* had also a case in their favour appear to have remained confined to high official circles without finding their way to the public. On the other hand, and curiously enough, the Commissioner's report about the *Farā'idīs* did not remain as buried within the government files. It was used, almost lock, stock and barrel, by some writers connected with government circles in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was first used elaborately by a writer in the *Oriental Baptist* in the end of 1855<sup>2</sup> and subsequently by such administrator-writers as H. Beveridge, J.E. Gastrell, W.W. Hunter and James Wise who reproduced in essence the Commissioner's erroneous and prejudiced opinions representing Dudu Miyān and the *Farā'idī* movement generally as a force for evil.<sup>3</sup>

#### VIII. THE LATER PHASE OF THE MOVEMENT

The Panch Char incident proved, however, a turning point in the history of the *Farā'idī* movement. The failure of the criminal proceedings against Dudu Miyān and his followers, the government's refusal to take any extraordinary measure against the *Farā'idīs* and, above all, a realization that the latter were also in a position to fight back in a more decisive way, made the zamindars

= *Judl. Cons.*, 3 Nov. 1847, No. 71.

<sup>1</sup> Printed by W. Ridsdale, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1848.

<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in *C.C.O.*, January, 1856, pp. 28-31.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance H. Beveridge, *District of Bakarganj*, p. 340; J.E. Gastrell, *Jessore, Fureedpore and Backergange*, p. 36 and W.W. Hunter, *Indian Musalmans*, London, 1871, pp. 100, 109 and *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, IV., 399.

and indigo planters henceforth less ready to have recourse to their mercenary fighters and other oppressive measures against the *Farā'idīs*. An indirect relief for the *Farā'idī* peasantry came also from the growing estrangement between the two sections of the landholders - the Hindu zamindars and the European indigo planters. The honeymoon of co-operation between the two groups ended by the late forties and the relationship between them deteriorated over a number of issues culminating in 1851 when the Hindu zamindars formed a new organization for themselves, called the British Indian Association, from which the European indigo planters were excluded.<sup>1</sup> This development offered a welcome respite to the *Farā'idīs*. It is no wonder therefore that since 1847 and for the rest of Dudu Miyān's life we do not hear of any clash between the *Farā'idīs* and the zamindars. This fact goes to show also that it was not really the wont of the *Farā'idīs* to organize for plunder and arson, as alleged by their opponents; for there is no denying the fact that they emerged from the Panch Char incident and its sequel triumphant and more self-confident than ever, with Dudu Miyān's prestige and influence at their height.

For ten years after 1847 Dudu Miyān was left comparatively free to devote his attention to peaceful preaching of his teachings and organization of his followers. Details of such activities are not, however, available. A trying time again came for him in 1857 when there was a widespread outbreak of sepoy and others against the British rule. The opponents of the *Farā'idīs* and the zamindars' lobby did not fail to take advantage of the situation to create an alarm and apprehension in the minds of the rulers regarding Dudu Miyān and his followers. At least one anonymous petition and a communication from the Joint Magistrate of Faridpur (J.H. Ravenshaw) were forwarded to the government alleging hostile intentions on the part of the *Farā'idīs*.<sup>2</sup> The government were in a critical situation and were not in a mood to take any chance. Hence Dudu Miyān was arrested and kept

<sup>1</sup> See for details, M.M. Ali, *op. cit.*, 177-178.

<sup>2</sup> See *Appendix (A) to Further papers Relative to the Mutinies in the East Indies (Inclosures in No. 1)*, Parliamentary Papers, 1857. Inclosure No. 466 at p. 202.

confined at the Alipur jail throughout the troublous period. He was released in 1859 but shortly after his return to Faridpur was again arrested by the police, most probably at the instigation of the zamindars. No case appears to have been instituted against him and he was again released in 1860. His health was however on the wane. Shortly after his release he fell ill at Dhaka where he died in 1862. He lies buried at 137 Bangsal Road of the old city.

Dudu Miyān's death was an irreparable loss to the movement. His personality, organizing ability, courage and fortitude in the face of overwhelming odds had given the movement a popular and dynamic character. None of his successors could indeed fill the gap in the leadership created by his death. Nonetheless, his life's work was well accomplished. Even before his release from the Alipur prison the spirit of unity and resistance to oppression which he succeeded in imparting to the peasantry had spilled over into the other districts, notably in Jessore, Pabna and parts of Murshidabad where the peasantry organized a general revolt against the indigo planting system in 1859-60. It occasioned the appointment of a commission of enquiry into the system. The findings of the commission totally discredited the indigo planters as a class and led to appropriate legislation which put an end to many of the acknowledged evils of the system. All these happened just before Dudu Miyān breathed his last.

Dudu Miyān was survived by his three sons of whom the eldest, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Haider was chosen as the leader of the *Farā'idīs*. He died shortly afterwards in 1864 when the leadership devolved on the second son, 'Abd al-Ghafur alias Nayā Miyān. He was very young at that time. Hence the affairs of the *Farā'idīs* were practically managed by Dudu Miyān's three senior followers, namely, his son-in-law Bani Yamin Miyān of Barisal, Mawlawī 'Abd al-Jabbār of Madaripur (Faridpur) and Munshī Faiḍ al-Dīn Mukhthār, originally an inhabitant of Jessore but later on settled in Faridpur. Things were changing rapidly in the late sixties, however, when the activities of the *jihādīs* were brought to light and were followed by a series of trials of the leaders in the early seventies. Once again much suspicion was cast on the *Farā'idīs* who were openly but mistakenly equated and identified

with the *jihādīs* in both official and non-official writings.<sup>1</sup> Coinciding with these developments Mawlāuī Karāmat 'Alī of Jaunpur, who had been opposing the *Farā'idīs*, particularly on their having suspended the *Jumua*' and *'Id* prayers since the thirties, now renewed his opposition more vigorously, carrying on debates and discussions on the subject at different places. One such debate took place between him and the *Farā'idī* leader Mawlawī 'Abd al-Jabbār at Barisal in 1867; and another in 1879 between the latter and the former's son, Mawlawī Ḥāfiz Aḥmad. Such controversy continued from time to time throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. Nayā Miyān died in 1884 and was succeeded in the leadership of the *Farā'idīs* by Dudu Miyān's third son Sa'id al-Dīn Aḥmad (1855-1906). The movement continued in a much moderate form in the first half of the twentieth century under the leadership of the descendants of Dudu Miyān's sons, some of whom are still prominent in the public life of present Bangladesh. After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 the *Farā'idīs* formally altered their stand regarding the saying of the above mentioned prayers, holding them permissible under the changed status of the country.

<sup>1</sup> See for instance T.R. Ravenshaw's Memorandum in *S.R.B.G.*, XLII and the comments of the *Hindoo Patriot*, 2 August 1869, quoted in the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. L, April 1870, pp. 73-75.



## APPENDICES TO PART II

- A. W.S. Alexander's report of 25 November 1831 on Titu Mir's movement and its suppression.
- B. J.R. Colvin's report of 8 March 1832 on the above
- C. Reports of trials of Tītu Mīr's followers
- D. The *Manzurat at Su'adā'* on Tītu Mīr's movement.
- E. Dhaka Divisional Comissioner's Report on the *Farā'idī* Movement
- F. Statement of Dudu Miyān before the Dhaka Sessions Court



## APPENDIX A

### Report of W.S. Alexander, Acting Joint Magistrate of Barasat, on Titu Mir's Movement and its suppression.<sup>1</sup>

To

E.R. Barwell Esqre, Comissioner of Circuit.

Sir,

As Government will be anxious to be made acquainted with the whole particulars of the late occurrence and my proceedings throughout I have the honor to furnish you with a more detailed account than circumstances allowed me to forward at the time.

2. On the 27th June last I received a report from the Mohurrir of Busseerhaut Thannah informing me that a statement had been given in by one Rumdhun Sircar, Naib of Nuboo Govind Roy (Deceased) Talooqdar of Mouzah Nagur Surfuruspoore to this purport that 20 or 30 persons had assembled in the House of Bolae Julah and others and that he had sent 3 persons to ascertain the cause of their congregations, his men however, maltreated and one Peadah severely beaten. The Mohurrir then informs me that he took the statement of Tundah Choukeedar who brought the Naibs written statement and that it was very contradictory. Daceen Kareeghur (one of those taken in the stockade) then arrived and gave the following statement on oath. That Kissen Deb Roy Talooqdar (son of Nubo Govind Roy deceased) was levying a tax of 2 Rs. 8 as. upon all persons who wore beards and treated those who did not pay the fine with severity. After him Purrial Kurreeghur appeared and stated that his cousin Rahamut Kureeghur came to his house and told him that Kissen Deb Roy Talooqdar accompanied by 300 persons with sticks had set fire to a mosque and that the Burkundauze placed at Tarraguniah by the Muhurrir had gone away before the latter circumstance had occurred.

3. The next report dated the 27th June and received 30th do informs me that the Mohurrir had proceeded to the spot and perceived that a Mosque had been burnt down, and that Kissen Deb Roy Talooqdar was not in attendance and unless orders were issued to surround his House he would not shew himself at the same time sending in Gorae Chowkeedar and Nowas Khallassee as Prisoners - ordered on the same day "The Talooqdars door to be watched until he was in attendance and the prisoners to be placed in confinement."

4. On the 7th July Kissen Deb Roy and Hurrynarain Bose presented themselves before the Nazir stating that they had come from Calcutta- "Ordered that the watch be removed from the Talooqdars house and he and Bose give 500 Rupcees each security to remain in attendance."

5. Received a petition from Daem Kareeghur on the 15th July stating the above circumstances and saying that Kissen Deb Roy had assembled 2 or 300 Persons with swords sticks etc. to enforce the tax on Beards [.] "Ordered it to be filed with the other papers.

<sup>1</sup> *Bengal Criminal Judicial Proceedings*, 3 April 1832, No. 3.

6. Received a petition from Kissen Deb Roy of the same date stating that the charges preferred against him were malicious and totally unfounded and praying that the two persons then in confinement 15 or 16 days should be released on security. "Ordered that Security to the amount of 50 Rupees each to be taken. ["]

7. Received a report from Darogah of Busseerhaut on 16 July dated the 14th do stating that he had been unwell and had also to send in witnesses for the Sessions, but that he would now enquire fully and particularly into the case, and sending in at the same time Lucky Kaunt Bose and Khoshaul Gazy on the Talooqdar's side Rahamut Oollah, Yar Ghazee Mullick Chand Karighur Deloo Kareghur and Kader Bux Kareghur on the other side [.] "Ordered that 50 Rupees security be taken for the attendance of each Person.

8. On the 29th July Kadir Bux and others presented petition that the Reports of the case be quickly sent in [.] "Ordered to be filed."

9. Received a Report from Darogah on the 5th August dated the 3rd to this effect "That on enquiring into and taking Evidences the case in question it appeared to him that a quarrel had originated between the two Parties (but does not state the causes of the same) and that the Mussulman Party had set fire to their own mosque in order to bring a cause of Complaint against the Talooqdars, also that the Talookdars' Party had assembled but had not committed any oppressive act. He therefore made both parties Defendants and the Government Prosecutor and sent the case in for Trial "ordered that the Report be filed with the other papers. The defendants defence and Evidence of the Witnesses be taken 5th August 1831."

10. Kissen Deb Talooqdar in his Defence denies having treated the opposite party in an oppressive manner and states that 20th Days before the case in question, he was residing in the Subah Bazar at Calcutta and that his Naib wrote to him to inform him of certain persons having assembled in Daem Kareghur's House whome he considered to have been engaged in Dacoity which took place in the House of Bemal Bunge of Nullah also that Teetoo Meer and Goolaum Mausoom were among them. He had on this account placed two other persons to keep watch with the Chowkeedar.

11. Hurree Narain Bose denies the whole circumstances and states that he was at Balynggur near Calcutta in the House of Kaleenauth Baboo.

12. Nawas Khalasy, Khoshall Mundul, and Lucky Kant Ghose deny the whole affair stating that there has always been a Quarrel between them and the other party which is the cause of the present complaint.

13. Kadir Bux Kareghur in his defence states that Kissen Deb Roy wished to levy a Tax on Beards which he resisted, his House was then Plundered and his mosque ordered to be fired. The persons who were assembled in his House, he merely sent for Dinner to no person beat him although his property was taken away Khirullah, Behar Ghazy, and Jan Mahomed, set fire to the mosque according to the order of Kissen Deb Roy.

14. Mullick Chund Kareghur in Defence states that on the 2nd of Assaur Lucky Kant Ghose, Khoshal Sing, and Jan Mahomed servants of Kissen Deb Roy came to his House and Demanded 2 Rs. 8 as. for Beard they then took him to Daem's House and also demanded the same Tax. He resisted on which about

30 persons plundered his House and took away his goods Gave Intelligence of these circumstances at Pharry.

15. Rahamut Ghazee and Deloo state that they are ignorant of the whole affair.

16. Yar Ghazy states that he resisted a Tax for Beards on which 300 persons of the party of the Talooqdar went to Kadir Bux's House; Hurree Bose accompanied with about 100 persons plundered his House; Hurree Bose also struck him a Blow with a stick on a question from the Court of what goods the Talooqdar's People had plundered him, witness could not give a satisfactory answer; stating that without a search he could not tell.

17. Purriall denied creating a disturbance and states that he knew nothing about the burning of the mosque (Person who first gave intelligence at the Thannah of the same.

18. Goolam Mausoom denies the whole stating that he was at the Thannah when it occurred.

19. Daem Kareghur in his defence states nearly the same as Mullick Chund Kareghur with the exception of his going to the Thannah to complain; and on his Return hearing that Kissen Deb Roy with 300 persons had set fire to the mosque.

20. Ram Chund Hajam Sumsopod Soroop Ghazy, Purusullah, Kamaloo-deen Kareghur, Sunnaullah and Akhury witnesses state that Kadir Bux Kareghur set fire to his own mosque in order to lay complaint against the Talooqdar. In other particulars their Evidence is not the same.

21. Rujeebullah witness states that he heard from a woman that Kadir Bux had set fire to his own mosque and also that they ill used Lucky Kant the Talooqdar man.

22. Manick Ghazy witness states that he saw the mosque burning and that he heard from People assembled around, that Kadir Bux had set fire to it.

23. Tundah Ghazy Chowkeedar witness states that he saw persons congregated in Kadir Bux's and others Houses and that he went and gave intelligence of the same to the Gomustah of the Talooqdar. The Gomustah ordered Durba Sirdar and Khooshal Sing to Keep watch with him, the next Day he went and ordered those Congregated to go to the Talooqdar's Cucherry. They did not consent but abused them and beat Khooshal Sing and detained him, the next day he heard that the mosque had been fired and burnt.

24. Received a petition on the 12th August from Daem Kareghur and others praying that witnesses who were unconcerned might be brought forward as all who had as yet given evidence were prejudiced in favor of the Talookdar.

[25.] On consideration that there might be causes of complaint on both sides and that the setting fire to the mosque on the part of the owner was very doubtful "ordered that six more witnesses who were unconcerned Persons should be produced by the nazir and that the case should remain over for their evidence.

26. On the 19th the witnesses with the exception of Sunaee who was considered a prejudiced person being the Brother of Khoshal Defendant were in attendance and their Evidence taken.

27. Danish Gayen witness states that at the latter End of Mohurrim at 2 or 3 O'Clock P.M. He heard a noise and proceeding to the spot saw many Persons assembled near the House of Daem Kareghur and Kadir Bux they then proceeded to the mosque when Kissen Deb Roy and Hurree Bose gave orders to set it on fire. Heer Ullah brought fire, Beer Ghazee and Jan Mahomed lit the Roof witness then came away, witness on being questioned concerning others who were present during the above transactions states that he saw no one besides did not see any plundering 2 or 300 Persons were collected on the Talookdar's side. The mosque is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a Koss from his House witness could not explain how it was that he only perceived the firing of the mosque and not the plundering of the Houses did not see Goolaum Mausoom and Kadir Bux present at the firing of the mosque. On question of Goolaum Mausoom's whether the Talooqdar did not send a Peadah to levy a Tax on beards witness replied that he never saw him do so, although had heard a Report of the same.

28. Sunaee Sirdar states almost the same as above except that he heard a noise in Kadir Bux's House as if Persons were plundering only saw Tundah Ghazy near him during the affray.

29. Sunder Mullick states the same as the 2 foregoing witnesses.

30. Prawn Ghazy heard only that there was a quarrel between the two parties.

31. Lochun Gohose same as above concluded on the 27th August 1831.

32. In my Roobukary on the 2nd September after looking over the papers a second time and recapitulating the evidence on both sides which was diametrically opposite, and perceiving that there was a quarrel between the two parties I came to the following decision "That from the contradictory Evidence on both sides and from the knowledge of a Quarrel having originated in some manner between both Parties it is ordered that a Bond of 50 Rupees be taken from each of the Persons concerned to keep the Peace one with another and that they now be allowed to go away."

33. It may be here remarked that after looking over the Papers a second time at my own House and after mature deliberation I came to the above decision and it was the business of those concerned in case of their not being satisfied with my Decision to have appealed to the superior Court and Indeed Kadir Bux presented a Petition for a copy of my Proceeding in the case stating that it was his intention to appeal which copy he obtained.

34. Before I proceed further I wish to give a detailed account of all the circumstances which I have as yet been able to collect concerning the length of time this new Religion has been proceeding and more particularly the account of Teetoo Meer who appear to have been the Ring leader of the sect. This latter person was about 50 years of age, and 16 years ago was a wrestler in Calcutta after this he became a servant to any Zemindar who desired a determined Character either to create Disturbances or to exact from their Ryotts. During his service in an affray which took place in the Nuddeah District he was imprisoned; after his release the exact time I cannot ascertain he proceeded on a Pilgrimage to Mecca with a Prince of Delhi and met with the Imposter Syed Ahmed at the place, who had preceded him thither a year on his Return about 3 or 4 years ago he resided some time in Calcutta and in different Places; after

which he began to teach his new Doctrine in these parts taking up his abode at Hyderpoor near Nurkulbarreah Report says that even to the present time he was in the Habit of receiving a monthly stipend from Delhi. During the last 3 or 4 years he obtained a good Reputation abstaining from his former Practices and confining himself merely to the conversion of Mussulmans to his peculiar doctrine which was a wish to suppress all worship of "Peers" as well as building Durghas for them. I have not as yet been able to collect information concerning the other Persons who do not seem to be at all known.

35. After my Decision of the case the full particulars of which I have given and not hearing any thing further from your Court I concluded that the matter had been settled amicably between the Parties, on the 31st of October I received a Report from the Darogah of Baseerhaut Dated the 28th Ditto. Informing me that Teetoo Meer and others were collecting and proceeding to kill a Cow on Kissen Deb Roy's Talooq and that he (the Darogah) had sent 2 Burkundazes to quell the same.

36. Received also a Report from Gorah Persaud Chowdry, Kissen Deb Roy Sheeb Chunder Roy, and Punchanund Roy informing me of the above circumstances ordered as the Darogah had sent 2 Burkandazes to quell the Riot to remain filed with his Report.

37. No Report after this reached me until the 10th November when I concluded naturally that the Riot was much exaggerated; as 2 Burkundazes had been sufficient to quell it. This one however was dated the 6th and was to this effect that he (the Darogah) had gone to enquire into a case of arson and Received a statement brought by one Kadum Sirdar of Poorah Village from Mr. Lewis Charles Smith of Akrah and he "Kudum Sirdar" stated that Teetoo Meer and others to the amount of 300 Persons had killed a Cow were plundering the Bazaur of Haut Kolah. The Darogah did not send the original statement but went to enquire into the particulars and informed me that Mr. Smith had stated that 4 or 500 Persons had attacked him while on an Elephant and had wounded his servant Nawaboodeen who was too weak to send in.

38. Received another Report on the 11th November dated the 10th informing me that the Darogah had gone to seize Teetoo Meer and others when he was informed that the Insurgents to the amount of 60 or 70 Persons armed were on the Road searching for him and declaring that they would murder him also stating that he and his Burkundazes without further assistance could not put down the outrages "ordered that Parwannahs be sent to the Darogahs of Kalingah and Kudumgachee, to send the Jumahdars and 10 Burkundazes each to help the Darogah of Busseirhaut and that a Perwannah be sent to the Darogah of Busseerhaut that he, his Jumahdar and Burkundazes together with all the Chowkeedars he could collect do proceed to the spot and seize the Rioters."

39. Received another Report from the Busseerhaut Darogah on the 11th November dated the 9th informing me that he had gone to inquire into the circumstances of Mr. Smith's case, also that a cow had been slaughtered but that the Rioters were dispersed and Mr. Smith had gone to Akrah. His servant Nawabooddeen stated that a number of Persons headed by Goolaum Maasoom, Daem Kareghur, Kureem Kareghur, Babun Kareghur and Kabil

Kareghur had seized and beat Gakul Chunder Chuckerbutty. Buttacharje who was going peaceably to both Golaum Maasoom said he will make his a Mussulman tomorrow; after taking his clothes and wounding him they threw him on the Road Muyischunder Ghose also stated that the Insurgents took a cow of his and killed it Luckun Deb, Mohun Shaw, Goluck Chunder Shaw, Sumah Chaund Muddit, shop-keepers of Haut Poorah stated also that the Insurgents plundered their Houses. Mahis Chunder Banoorjea also stated that the Insurgents killed a cow, before his Place of worship and threw the Blood over it. The Darogah after this states that the Insurgents had proceeded to Laoghattee in the Kishnagur District and had murdered Debnauth Roy also informing me that he had placed 3 Burkunduz to seize the Rioters and had gone himself to inquire into a case of arson sent in the wounded man Nawabooddeen with his Report "ordered that the wounded man be placed in the Hospital his statement taken and information of the above particulars be sent to Magistrate of Kishnagur."

40. Received a Letter from Mr. Piron on the 11th dated the 9th informing me the above particulars - "as the whole strength of the District has been sent against the Rioters without hearing of the result gave no further orders."

41. Received a Report from the Kulingah Darogah on the 12th dated the 10th to the same effect. Same order.

42. On the 13th I received a Letter from Mr. W.M. Storm enclosing Letter from his assistant and informing me of the steps he had taken Likewise received a communication from you of that date requesting me to take immediate steps for checking the outrages Complained of and subsequently in an interview at this station advising me to proceed without delay to Bagundee to Consult with Mr. W.H. Barlow and use such means as I could procure for the dispersing and seizing of the Rioters at the same time informing me that you would send up some of the Calcutta militia to assist me.

43. In obedience to your desire I proceeded on Monday afternoon to Bagundee and reached the Busseerhaut Thannah at about 7 P.M. I sent word to the Darogah who was in the Mofussil after the Rioters to meet me next morning and proceeded to Bagundee where I communicated with Mr. I.H. Barlow who was of opinion that on seeing me and a few military they would disperse.

44. On Tuesday the 15th I left Bagundee at 4 O'Clock A.M. accompanied by (Havildar) Jumahdar and 20 Sepoys and arrived about 9 O'Clock at Boodureah within 3 Koss of Nurkulbureah, at which place I was informed the Rioters were assembled. Here I was joined by the Busseerhaut Darogah, Burkundauzes, Chowkeedars.... and on the sepoy's refreshing themselves proceeded to the spot where I arrived about 12 I give orders to the Jumahdar to load with Ball but he was of opinion (as we had not at that time come up with them) that powder should be first tried as he was confident the Rioters will disperse on seeing the military.

45. On arriving at the spot and perceiving that 5 or 600 persons were congregated who did not seem at all inclined to move I ordered the Jumahdar to load with Ball and he gave orders to that effect to the Sepoys. Wishing, however, to prevent Bloodshed I went forward myself to remonstrate with



them but was received with a shower of Brickbat.

46. On the Rioters advancing I ordered the Jumahdar to fire on them; who did so, but no body fell or appeared wounded in the slightest degree one person this time advanced towards me with drawn sword and in self defence I wounded him about the Thigh; when he retired to the Crowd.

47. Perceiving that almost every person on my side was running away and that my individual assistance was of no avail, I also was obliged to run for my life. The insurgents pursuing me with drawn swords — after running about 5 miles I reached a Nullah where I was obliged to swim across and go on to Budoreah, at which place I providentially obtained a Boat and arrived at Baugundee at sunset.

48. I immediately related all these particulars to Mr. I.H. Barlow and we determined that it was best for me to proceed by water through Soonderbuns in order to acquaint Government of the state of the District. I lost no time in getting on Board a Boat with Mr. Barlow's Treasure and reached Calcutta next day (16th November) at about 3 O'Clock P.M. and communicated with the Vice-President and afterwards with Mr. Blunt and yourself on being informed the same evening by you that the military were to be called out I proceeded with all practicable Dispatch to Baraset and issued orders for provisions for the Troops as well as for the construction of temporary Bridges on the Bagundee Road.

49. Early on the morning of the 17th I communicated with major Scott Command. 11th Regiment N.I. and informed him that Dispatch was required to check the marauders before they could commit on further atrocities and he agreed to march at 3 O'Clock P.M. I was delayed some little time in writing letters—we soon overtook the Troops and proceeded with Captain Sutherland whose Party was in advance and arrived at Multear Haut at about 11 P.M. some time after which the infantry appeared.

50. On the morning of the 18th at 4 O'Clock A.M. I again proceeded with the Cavalry and arrived at Badoorea at about 8 A.M. and went on from thence in advance with Captain Sutherland and the Troopers under his Command in order to shew them the way to Narkulbareah, where the Insurgents were assembled some Skirmishing took place after which I took a note from Captain Sutherland to be forwarded to major Scott and liked to bring up the artillery Troopers which near Lieutt Shakespear of the artillery an Insurgent took deliberate aim almost and the Ball passed close to my Ear. The same person whose name I have ascertained to be Tettoo Sirdar shot Macan the artillery man I remained before this place during the whole day and retired with the Troops at sunset.

51. Early on the morning of the 19th I repaired with the Troops to the spot and after the routing commenced, the particulars of which are contained in my letter to you of that date I employed myself during the whole day in apprehending those concerned according to orders received from Government.

52. On the 20th Instant I repaired to the stockade in order to search for papers which might have been useful to Government to developed plot, if any such existed, I then perceived that much valuable property had been taken away I then gave orders for the removal of the wounded on board the pinnace as soon

as bearers and others for that purpose could be obtained I also wrote a note to Dr. Temple at Bagundee to examine the wounded dress their wounds and see that they were well attended and properly fed, likewise I sent a Havildar and 5 Sepoys as a Guard over them I then gave orders for the Burning of the remaining dead Bodies Tetoo Meer and the other chief persons having been burnt the day before for fear of any persons taking away their Bodies.

53. At 2 P.M. after ascertaining that a Guard was placed over the prisoners I proceeded with Troop and reached muleear [Matiar] Haut at sunset.

54. The next morning November 21st I arrived at Baraset and took all the names of the Prisoners and perceiving 7 men told wounded who had till then concealed the same I ordered them to be put into Hospital and sent word immediately to Mr. Montgomerie medical attendant of this station.

55. On the same evening I sent the Prisoners under the charge of Lieut Troop of the 48th Regiment N.I. to Calcutta.

56. In conclusion I beg most respectfully to lay before Government the fact of my having been in a constant state of movement from monday the 14th till monday the 21st of November and that it was impossible for me to have my servants or means near me of giving them such accounts as I should have wished of the whole Transaction I may also here remark that being only civil authority in the camp every Gentleman and on this service sent to me on every occasion I ought also to mention that Mr. Shillingford an Indigo Planter residing within 2 or 3 miles of Narkulbareah as well as an assistant of Mr. W. Storm's whose name I cannot at present recollect assured me that the atrocities of those marauders had only taken place from the beginning of the present month.

Baraset  
Joint Magistracy  
November 25th 1831.

I have  
(Signed) W.S. Alexander  
Acting Joint Magistrate  
Commissioner's Office  
18th Division  
The 28th November 1831  
(True Copy)  
(Signed) E.R. Barwell  
Commissioner of Circuit.

## APPENDIX B

### J.R. COLVIN'S REPORT ON TĪTU MĪR'S MOVEMENT AND SOME RELATED DOCUMENTS

[1. Commissioner E.R.Barwell's letter of 16 March 1832, forwarding J.R.Colvin's report]<sup>1</sup>.

To J. Thomason Esqre,  
Deputy Secretary to Government Judl.Dept., Fort William

Sir,

I hasten to lay before the Honble the Vice President in Council the accompanying report from Mr. Colvin the Officiating Joint Magistrate at Baraset in the late disturbances in that district with its Enclosures in Original.

2. It is almost superfluous in me to add that the ability with which this admirable paper has been drawn up abundantly justifies every expectation that could have been formed from the superior talent [,] Intelligence and judgement of the writer and that I entirely concur with Mr. Colvin in his views and suggestions on the several points noticed in his report.

3. I shall be prepared to commence upon the trial of the Prisoners at the earliest possible period, after their final commitment and with that view propose holding the Sessions of the Suburbs and 24 Pergunnahs a month earlier than the usual period or from the 1st Proximo instead of the 1st May.

4. I solicit the favour of Mr. Colvin's report being returned to me with the orders of Government as I have not had time to retain a copy of it for the use of my office, and am naturally anxious to preserve so valuable a document.

Zillah Jessore Com'r Office  
18th Division the 16th March 1832

I have etc.  
Sd/ E.R.Barwell Commr.

[2. J.R. Colvin's Report]<sup>2</sup>

From

J.R. Colvin,  
Officiating Joint Magistrate at Baraset

To

E.R.Barwell Esquire  
& c.a. & c.a. [etc. etc.]

Dated 8th March 1832.

Sir,

1st. I have now the honor to submit in this address the result of my inquiries in regard to the causes and character of the disturbances which occurred in the Baraset district in the Month of November last.

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Proceedings*, 3 April 1832, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 5; also *Board's Collection*, File 15422, pp. 399-442.

2nd. This report might have been furnished at a much earlier period. It has been delayed in consequence of the time which has been necessarily devoted to the object of collecting and preparing the evidence for the Trial of the numerous prisoners who are found to have been concerned in the affair. That duty has been at length brought nearly to a completion.

3rd. What I have to submit will be found probably to have little of novelty, as the main circumstances of the case have been already made pretty correctly known through various channels. A clear statement of the results of my own investigation will at the same time be expected by the Government whether as tending to confirm the information previously received or otherwise.

4th. It is satisfactory to be able to say which I do with confidence that the disturbance was entirely of a local and as far as regards the individuals principally or subordinately concerned in it of a very unimportant character. With scarcely an exception all these were inhabitants of the Northern portion of the Baraset, and of a few of the adjoining Villages of the Nuddea district and were merely common Ryots, weavers (who are numerous throughout that part of the country) and others of the most ordinary classes of the Mahomedan population. The principal man among them, Meer Niser Alee (commonly known by his more familiar name of Tittoo Meer) was of some little respectability of connection but he had not a follower of higher rank than one or two men of his own village, who had I believe, been hangers on in petty capacities about our Courts or Police Thannas, nor were any persons engaged with him but such as had adopted his religious tenets in the first instance, or the Ryots of the neighbourhood who joined his party on seeing the success which it for some time met with.

5th. The accompanying map which is tolerably correct<sup>1</sup>, and in which I have marked off the farthest Villages in each direction from which the people were assembled in any numbers will show the tract of Country over which the influence of their leader extended. This tract running across the Juboona and Issamutty rivers into the Nuddea jurisdiction is some Eighteen or Twenty miles in length by Twelve or Fourteen in breadth.

6th. Tittoo Meer was himself an inhabitant of the Village of Chandpore a few miles to the south west of Narkelbaria and was of no family, though above the class of ordinary Villagers. He was at one time of a turbulent and disorderly character having been apprehended on several occasions on serious charges, for some of which he was confined and punished, when that part of this district was attached to the Zillah of Kishnaghur. Some seven or eight years ago accident brought him to the notice of a member of the Royal family of Delhi, whom he attended on a Pilgrimage to Mecca. After his return he remained for about a year without exciting remark, and then commenced his career as a religious teacher and reformer. In this capacity, he gradually collected a body of 300 or 400 followers who became separated from the bulk of the Mahomedan inhabitants of the country by distinctions of dress and appearance, and by their refusing to eat or join on occasions of society generally with any but those of

<sup>1</sup> The map mentioned here is not traceable in the existing records. [M.A.]

their own number, as well as by the peculiarity and superior strictness of their doctrines.

7. The tenets of these people were in most respects the same as those which have been spread widely throughout India, by the preaching and influence of Seyyud Uhmeed [Sayyid Ahmad], the well known fanatic, who gave so much trouble to the Sikhs in Lahore. Their prominent characteristic is the Zealous profession of Mahomedanism in its original purity to the exclusion of the various idolatrous and superstitious practices with which time and in this country intercourse with the Hindoos have been allowed to corrupt it. Petty teachers of the sect more or less accurate and strict in their own notions, are as far as I have been able to learn, not infrequent in the Bengal districts and it is notorious that in Calcutta and its neighbourhood Sayyud Uhmed had for his disciples nearly all the most respectable of the Mahomedan inhabitants. Several books have been printed both in Persian and Hindoostanee for the purpose of explaining and enforcing the doctrine, and these appear to be in general circulation.

8th. This reformation of their religion although embraced by numbers in different parts of the country is not calculated to be popular with the mass of Mahomedans in India. It interferes with some of their most cherished observances. The Ceremonies of Mohurrum, those performed at stated periods after the death of relatives, the customary honours and offerings to the Tombs of their saints are summarily denounced by it. This cause must naturally tend to impede its extension, especially among the lower classes who are attached to their old habits, and it certainly had the effect of restricting the number of Titto Meer's followers here. These too, by eating only together had formed themselves into a kind of distinct caste and although their conduct in that point was but an instance of the imitation of Hindoo customs, which their tenets profess particularly to avoid, they adhered to it so rigidly, as to separate themselves from their nearest relatives - a Circumstance which operated doubtless to prevent many from joining them.

9th. The peculiarities of the party necessarily involved them in differences and altercations with their neighbours and in such differences is to be found the first origin of the irritation which led to the excesses ultimately committed by them. Their innovation was in itself of a troublesome kind and they had little scruple as to giving offence by proclaiming their contempt for the commonly received opinions and prejudices. In other places I have heard of instances of the members of the sect having been guilty of open outrages of the general feeling which have required to be checked by the Police, and for which they had no provocation to plead in excuse. A riot occurred in the Furreedpore Zillah during last Year proceeding from an attempt at forcible conversion to their doctrines in which they appear to have been entirely aggressors. A copy of the Roobukaree held by the Magistrate in that case with an abstract Translation in English is forwarded with this letter as pointing out a quarter to which the sect is found to have extended and showing that, even when not interfered with it may be accompanied by a spirit of turbulence which it would be proper for Police authorities to watch and guard against. In this district however I cannot find that any acts of violence towards others are justly chargeable against Tittoo

Meer's followers before the commencement of the recent disturbances. Their disputes did not go beyond words nor did they proceed to any lengths except in a few villages. In these complaints of the annoyance arising from them were at least on one or two occasions carried unfortunately before the Hindoo Zemindars by the Ryots who adhered to the Established usages and worship. It was to be expected that such complaints should be readily received. Hindoo Zemindars are a class of men who generally dislike innovation in any shape and they were probably not disposed to favour people who may be believed in the warmth of their new zeal to have failed in a little of their usual respect to their infidel superiors. There was besides this, the more certain inducement to interference in the dispute furnished by the hope of profiting by it. Accordingly one Zemindar and after him at different times two or three others immediately

\* Ram Narayan Nag of Tara-  
goonia Gooropersaud Chow-  
dree (Zemindar of the village of  
Nagurpoor adjoining Poorwa  
Koorgatchy).

The agent of the Female Zemin-  
dars of Koorgatchy.  
Kishen Deb Rai of Poorwa.

in the same neighbourhood\* interposed to dis-  
courage the sect by imposing fines on some of its  
followers, living within their Estates and by  
subjecting them to other petty kinds of maltreat-  
ment. The first case of the sort of which I am  
aware was brought into this Court as far back as  
the 7th August 1830 and I herewith submit the  
proceedings relating to it with a short statement

of the substance of the evidence in English. The charge, it will be observed, was not prosecuted by the plaintiff to conviction against the parties to whom it really might have been brought home, and it was dismissed on default on the 13th July last. The exactions of the other Zemindar do not appear to have commenced till shortly before this period. They were practised, I understand, in three, but more positively in two Villages lying close to each other on the right bank of the Issamutty, and marked in the map by the general name of Poorwa Koorgatchy, in the first instance on the occasion of quarrel between the Mahomedan Ryats themselves, in the last more gratuitously by a person named Kishen Deb Rai Proprietor of the Village of Poorwa and Surfurazpoor either because he shared in the feeling of dislike to the new tenets or was willing to avail himself of a profitable example. It was this last exaction out of which the disturbances immediately arose. Its amount was petty being only two and a half Rupee from each of the party from whom it was demanded, but after it had been actually levied in one or two cases, the others united to resist it, some servants of the Zemindar who were sent to collect it were beaten and one seized and detained, the Zemindar incensed at the opposition came with a number of people to the spot, and a squabble ensued in the course of which a thatched building used as a mosque was set on fire, complaints on the subject were sent on both sides to the Thana Police, and the affair came on their report into the Magistrate's court.

10th. The fine taken by the Zemindars had become known by this time by an irritating name, that of tax or Fine on Beards. This was sufficiently natural, as the care with which their beards were allowed to grow was one of the most obvious marks by which Titto Meer's followers were distinguished. The name however added to the provocation really given by the exaction.

11th. There can be no doubt that the people were ill treated by the

mofussil Police in the inquiry which was instituted on the receipt of the complaints above referred to. A report of the Proceedings in the case has already been transmitted to you, with Mr. Alexander's letter of the 25th November last and an abstract of them is appended also to this letter for the convenience of reference, and prepared with the view of showing readily the points in which I consider the investigation to have been partial or defective.

12th. It will be seen that it was admitted on the part of the Zemindar that his people had been sent to summon several of the Mahomedan weavers living on his Estate and that in this interference on his side the quarrel commenced. The reason for the interference he represented to be that strangers of doubtful character had assembled in the houses of these persons, and that his Naib had thought it necessary to make inquiries as to the motive of their having collected. Had the Daroga done his duty or stated the truth, he would have informed the Magistrate, that this representation was, and could only be a mere pretext. It was correct that strangers had come from several neighbouring Villages, but they were all Tittoo Meer's followers - men well known throughout that part of the Country, who upto that time had been guilty of no impropriety of conduct, who had come as guests to an entertainment given by members of their own sect at the period of the mohurram, and whom no one would have thought of troubling with suspicion or inquiry.

13th. It will be noticed too, that the first charge preferred to the Police on the part of the Zemindar was only on account of the forcible detention of his servants. A complaint had been immediately laid by the weavers alleging the subsequent assault and the burning of their mosque and the evidence of some of the witnesses named by them, with that of several of the Villagers who supported them in their story had been taken by the Thana mohurir, who commenced the inquiry previously to the arrival of the Darogha. Eighteen days afterwards nearly the whole of these persons were accused in a counter charge then advanced on the Zemindar's side, as having been concerned, in assaulting and maltreating three of his people about the time at which he stated the weavers to have burnt the mosque themselves for the purpose of getting up a case against him. This accusation however suspicious as having been preferred after so long an interval was at once taken up and acted upon by the Darogah, some of the witnesses in favour of the weavers were seized and sent in by him as Defendants and the others very naturally absconded or concealed themselves. The final report made by him adverts only to their non-attendance as having precluded him from taking their depositions makes no remark as to the character of the charge against them, or the delay which had occurred in the appearance of the Zemindar's people, is quite silent as to the real origin of the quarrel and is in short drawn up entirely so as to favour the Zemindar.

14th. The fact is that the Darogah was, as one motive to partiality a Hindoo who went to the side of the Hindoo party in the quarrel, and the Zemindar who was implicated although of little wealth or consequence himself was connected with and supported by one of the most extensive and influential proprietors in the district. The Mahomedan defendants accused the Darogah before the Magistrate of having openly colluded with their opponents, of having first endeavoured to force them into a compromise and on their refusing

of having [forwarded] evidence only as suited the Zemindar's purpose. My recent enquiries on the spot and my knowledge of all the circumstances of the case satisfy me that their complaints in this respect were perfectly well founded.

15th. In the Court at Baraset the evidence forwarded in exculpation of the Zemindar on the main charge under investigation, that of having been engaged in a tumultuous assault with the burning of the thatched mosque, was so direct and strong that it would have been difficult to have found him guilty on it. Indeed as to the latter part, that of setting the thatched building on fire it is impossible to form any positive opinion even now though it is certain that the weavers were ill used generally. Perhaps had the first ground of dispute with some of the suspicious points in the case been gone further into, the truth might have been in part ascertained. It will be seen however that the case of the weavers was ill pleaded, as the circumstance of their belonging to a peculiar religious sect, the members of which had been harmless and unobjectionable in their conduct (a circumstance which would have excited inquiry and materially assisted the decision) was not distinctly brought forward or insisted upon. The Darogha concealed the fact, and it will not be a matter of surprise if the European Magistrate should have been ignorant of the existence or character of a not very numerous body of Mahommedan sectarians, who had upto that time caused no trouble in the management of the district, and had done nothing to force themselves in any way on the notice of the public authorities.

16th. The needlessly laboured report made by the Darogha in the affair had excited doubts of its fairness and some additional witnesses were summoned through the Nazir of the Court. Their evidence was directly opposed to that at first forwarded but was by no means sufficient to clear the case under the contradictions in the different statements and with reference to the one fact proved of there being a quarrel between the parties both were dismissed without punishment on the 2nd September last, after having been bound down in the sum of 50 Rs. each to keep the peace.

17th. It is certainly much to be regretted that the complaints as to the first exaction of the Zemindar were not more thoroughly investigated. It is however very doubtful whether any investigation would have succeeded in proving them, evidence on the one side would have been met by evidence on the other, and no further light might have been thrown on the subject. At the same time the more careful enquiry would have been satisfactory to the parties aggrieved and the attention of the Magistrate having been drawn to their complaint the Zemindar would probably have been rendered cautious for the future.

18th. After the above case had been disposed of and the several defendants had returned to their homes it is alleged on the part of those engaged in the disturbances that a fraudulent and oppressive use was made by the Zemindar of the power of summary arrest for arrears of rent authorized under the provision of Regulation 7, 1799 and that this was one of the provocations which at last forced them into acts of violence. Their statement is that process under the Regulation was taken out in reality by the Zemindar but nominally by a third party against two persons who although not apprehended had been included by the Zemindar's people in their sweeping charge against all the witnesses, who had been ready to give evidence in favour of their opponents, that those persons



held no lands either from the real or the nominal Plaintiffs or indeed from any one, that they were nevertheless seized for an alleged balance of 38 Rs., carried to the Zemindar's house, confined and maltreated and compelled to pay a portion and give agreements for the remainder of the sum demanded from them, a course which they preferred to the alternative of going upto contest the demand in the Dewanny Court. On enquiry regarding this statement I have found that a suit of the nature described was instituted in the Zillah Court of the Twenty-four Pergunnahs against the individuals in question on the 3rd September last, the day following that on which orders on the case of affray were passed here, that the Plaintiffs were persons apparently quite unconnected with the Zumindar of Poorwa although living in his village and that on the 26th September they gave in a receipt professing that their claims had been satisfied by the defaulters in the mofussil. A short abstract of the proceedings in the case with the originals and abstracts of some statements taken by me and before Mr. Barlow will be found among the enclosures to this letter. These statements lead strongly to the belief that there had been some unfair play in the matter. I do not at the same time attach importance to it as the oppression practised in it affected only two persons, was not calculated to exasperate any general feeling and further we find the party acting after its occurrence with the view of prosecuting their quarrel with the Zumindar by legal measures.

19th. A copy of the decision passed in this Court on the case of affray was taken out on the 25th September for the purpose of an appeal against it being laid before you. The people proceeded to Calcutta to present their petition but you happened unfortunately to be absent on Circuit. They were necessarily therefore disappointed for the time. It is at this point that whatever of obscurity there in the affair commences. I should have before mentioned that although the exactions of the Zumindar of Poorwa were exercised only towards the Ryots of his Estate, yet Titto Meer, the head of their sect had made common cause with those persons while their complaints were yet pending here; a man of the name of Mohd. Musood, at present one of the prisoners in the Allipore Jail and Inhabitant of Titto Meer's Village, accompanied them afterwards to Calcutta as their adviser and agent on his part, and it is to the circumstances of some kind or other that occurred in Calcutta that I ascribe his adopting the resolution of collecting his followers and of seeking revenge for his party by force. It was not I think the mere accident of your temporary absence, or any short postponement of the means of legal redress that can be considered sufficient to have hurried them into the determination of resorting to violence. For the injury he had to complain extended only to a few of the members of his sect, was of considerable standing in regard to time, and was not of that pressing kind which could have rendered those whom it immediately affected impatient of a slight delay. I have made every inquiry in my power for the purpose of ascertaining as accurately as possible the real nature of the motives by which he was actuated but I am unable to speak of them with certainty. The people themselves and their friends differ in their own accounts of the matter, some alleging their want of means to meet the various expenses direct and indirect of prosecuting their appeal, others the advice given in Calcutta which discouraged their following it up after the strong evidence which the Zumindar

had been able to bring forward in his favor. I will not enter into mere conjectures on the subject, so much may probably be assessed with safety that they saw reason from whatever cause to fear that they would be disappointed in their object of appealing the case and to their disappointment acting on irritated and fanatical feeling I attribute the design suddenly formed and carried into execution of proceeding to extremities by retaliating not only on the one Hindoo Zumeendar with whom there was the immediate quarrel, but by acts of outrage towards the Hindoo community generally.

20th. The resolution to take revenge forcibly must have been acted upon as soon as entertained. The persons who came to appeal were in Calcutta in the end of September, or during the early part of October, and on the 23rd of the latter month Tittoo Meer's followers had assembled in numbers in the Village of Narkelbaria and their intention to proceed to Poorwa prepared to create a tumult by openly killing cows and insulting the Hindoo feeling was proclaimed and known.

21. The pretext under which the members of the sect were at first collected together was that of an entertainment to be given to several Fakeers. The Village of Narkelbaria was chosen for the purpose because a principal Ryut in it, named Maiyooddeen Biswas [Mui'zz al-Din Biswas], who had a property of about sixty Beegahs of Lakhiraj land was the leading and had been the earlier follower of Tittoo Meer in that part of the country. Preparations were made during the period of the entertainment for the violent measures that had been determined on and the minds of the party were worked up to join them. The readiness with which a body of persons, who had previously been for the most part peaceable and harmless Ryots were induced to lead themselves to the most lawless outrage is a striking instance of the influence which a religious teacher can acquire over an utterly rude and uninformed people. By far the greater number of those concerned in the disturbances had personally no grievance whatever to complain of and became engaged in them simply from a devotion to Tittoo Meer's wishes. Yet I cannot learn that any of those originally of his sect held aloof from him in this affair.

22nd. The party remained from about the 23rd October to the 6th November waiting for a favorable opportunity to commence their Proceedings. They were less bold in the first instance than they became ultimately for information having been obtained by the Poorwa Zemindar of their intention to come in a mass to his Village had got together means to resist them and they delayed their visit till his caution had grown gradually relaxed. They at last carried their plans into effect on the morning of the latter of the dates above mentioned when fortunately for him he made no opposition to them. They then shewed clearly the character of their quarrel and the impulse under which they acted. The Zemindar had put a slight on the religious feelings and they retaliated, seizing a cow which they killed in the public market place of the Village scattered the blood over the walls of a Hindoo temple and hung up the four quarters of the animal in derision before it. On this occasion they committed no plunder beyond carrying off what articles they found lying immediately exposed in the shops in the market place. But they wounded rather severely a Brahmin of the Village and attacked and illtreated an assistant

to a Native Indigo factory who happened to be passing.

23. After this successful beginning their progress was more rapid and fearless. The following day they went in an armed body to Laoghatee one of the places their sect were numerous in the Nuddea district. There they were interfered with in killing Bullocks by the Hindoo Villagers headed by two Brahmins of the neighbourhood and as they expected and had provided for, an affray ensued in which both the Brahmins were severely wounded one of them so seriously as to cause his death very shortly afterwards. The same evening they returned to Narkelbaria which continued to be their headquarters. The length to which they had by this period committed themselves had naturally rendered them more determined and their conduct at Laoghatee at once created a general terror which left them quite masters of that part of the Country. From the 8th to the 15th of the month they remained gradually increasing in numbers and confidence killing Bullocks in different places, plundering the Villages in the neighbourhood of Narkelbaria, seizing Ryots forcing from them agreements to furnish grain, compelling many of them to profess conformity to the tenets of their sect, sending out parties in quest of Daroghas who were obnoxious to them, and acting in short in open contempt of all authority. Their proceedings at the same time it should be mentioned were not marked by any acts of gross cruelty and they showed throughout an entire want of concert or enterprise. After the murder at Laoghatee the only outrage committed by the party at a distance from Narkelbaria was at a Village named Sherepor lying 5 or 6 miles to the southward where owing to some private quarrel with a Fukeer and others of their own number, they plundered the houses of two of the inhabitants and made the daughters of one of them go through the ceremony or mockery of a forced marriage with two of their sect.

24. On the 15th of November Mr. Alexander arrived at the spot for the purpose of apprehending them, and I need not recapitulate any of the occurrences subsequent to that date. The rioters were of course much emboldened by their successful resistance to the civil force of Two districts, but they had no time given to them to extend their plans. It is fortunate that military were immediately employed against them, for their numbers were daily receiving considerable accession and the necessity of procuring the means of subsistence must have soon led them to carry their depredations a distance. They would have met with no opposition for miles round. The consternation spread by an event so unprecedented in a Bengal district as the defeat of two Magistrates and the fanatical conduct of the people in forcing the Hindoos whom they laid hold of to acknowledge themselves Mahomedan Converts was such that the most powerful Zemindars in the vicinity sought safety for themselves and their families by flying from their houses. Had they been left for a few days undisturbed it is my belief that they might have marched without difficulty to any of our neighbouring stations, and that there would have been no sufficient protection for these in any strength of mere Police Burkundazes.

25. The detail which has been above given comprises all that it appears important to mention in what I have been able to trace of the history or character of the case excepting as regards the length of time which elapsed

before the serious nature of the disturbance was fully ascertained, and effectual measures adopted for its suppression. The circumstances from which it arose, as exhibited in the detail may be recapitulated in a few words. There were first disputes among the Mahomedan Ryots themselves owing to the introduction of a novel set of doctrines then in one or two places interference and petty exactions on the part of the Hindoo Zemindars before whom these quarrels were carried, the occurrence of slight accidental affray in the course of such levying of exactions which brought the matter in one instance under the cognizance of the Police when the influence of the Zemindar and the misconduct in the Darogah prevented the real facts of the case from being made clearly known to the Magistrate, disappointment in the aggrieved party Mahomedans of the new sect at finding that they were likely to fail in obtaining redress from legal measures, the nature of the quarrel which immediately affected their religious feelings, the interest taken by their leader in the case with his influence over the whole body of his followers and a fanatical desire of securing revenge at whatever risk, which was fostered and confirmed by the absence of any adequate resistance into a spirit of lawless violence ending at last in open insurrection against the Government.

26. I have received no information in the course of my inquiries, which leads me to suspect in the least degree that there was any thing in the proceedings of the part beyond the result of a sudden fanatical impulse. Their plans from the first were guided by mere accident and caprice. The only fact worth mentioning in connection with this part of the case is that several of the Ryots of the Narkelbaria Village have in their evidence before me united in stating that the people of Tittoo Meer's sect have been long in the habit of talking of schemes against the Government. But much of this is only the natural exaggeration of persons who are irritated by illtreatment received by them during the disturbances. After the disorders commenced the language and hopes of those who took the lead in them, rose doubtless with their successes. They were ignorant fanatics themselves and they held out such inducements as were most likely to keep together their followers. Whether support was given to Tittoomeer by any person of wealth or influence is a further point to be noticed, suspicion was directed against a man named Munshee Umeer, a considerable landed proprietor with whom Tittoomeer was connected by marriage, but I am satisfied, without any good cause. No one with any thing to lose could have ventured to put it to risk in such an affair.

27. In proof of the accuracy of the opinions I have formed respecting the origin of the disturbances I would refer to the language held by the people themselves, to the whole circumstances of their conduct and to the information acquired by myself personally during a long inquiry on the spot. I annex Extracts from the depositions of the witnesses from Narkelbaria which show that the party uniformly alleged the exactions of the Poorwa Zemindar as the motive for the outrage Committed by them in that Village. That revenge against the Zemindar was the first object of their sudden assemblage is evident from the protracted period, from the 23rd October to the 6th November for which they waited for a convenient opportunity of carrying their known intention of proceeding to Poorwa into effect, and the kind of revenge which

they took is the surest evidence of the kind and reality of the injury which they had received. The intelligence which I received from all quarters was such as to leave the slightest doubt on my mind, that the exaction that they complained of had been actually practised. To procure full legal proof of the fact was at the same time, it will be readily understood a matter of more difficulty. The power over the Ryots possessed by a Zemindar, wealthy himself or supported by influential and wealthy connections allows in any case little hope of distinct evidence being acquired against him where he is much interested in suppressing it and in the present instance besides this and other accidental aids arising from his being of a family of high caste by connected with his Estate (where only of course personal knowledge of the circumstances was to be looked for) Kishen Deb Rai was able to deter men from acknowledging what they knew, by their fears that to speak in favor of the prisoners might bring on themselves accusations of having been concerned with them. I found that these causes would prevent my obtaining proof from any but immediate relatives and friends of the people from whom the fine had been collected or demanded. There was however the expedient of encouraging and sending for these, and trusting to a comparison of their depositions with statements taken from the parties themselves who are in confinement in the Allipor Jail. Copies of the evidence given by those persons respectively before myself and Mr. Master are submitted with this letter together with an abstract Translation. With a good deal of exaggeration and contradiction they agree generally as to all main circumstances, and there is a coincidence regarding one or two minute particulars which as there was no opportunity of concerting a story I consider sufficient, when supported by the very strong presumptions of the case to render the papers a good ground on which to found if it were thought advisable a judicial conviction and punishment.

28. It remains to notice the conduct of the police with the information possessed by the Magistrate and the means employed by him to check the disorders. It will be sufficient for this purpose to mention briefly dates and substance of the reports furnished from the Thannas with the orders passed on them. Copies of these papers being also forwarded for reference. On the 23 of October Kishen Deb Rai, the Poorwa Zemindar was aware that Tittoomeer's followers had collected in large numbers in Narkelbaria that they had armed themselves with clubs and that it was their intention to come [in] a body with the view of insulting him and provoking a tumult by killing [a] cow in his Village. He applied accordingly for aid both to the Busseerhaut Thanna within which division Poorwa is situated, and by a petition to the Court [of] Baraset. In these representations he described the party as persons who had left the old and taken to a new Mahomedan[ism] who were resorting to every means of making converts, and who had not been deterred from their schemes by the loss of their false complaint in the Court. He forwarded also a letter to one of his Nabi[s] from a Gomashta of the Barguria ..... Factory in which information was ..... of the affair describing it as one not to be neglected the people being resolute or literally "having eat the dinner of death" (*Maut ka Khana*). It is my duty then to say that early and accurate intelligence, was transmitted to my predecessor of the circumstances of the case, and of the

probable occurrence of a quarrel likely to be serious, because originating in irritations of religious feeling at the same time it is to be observed that the request of the Zemindar was only for the interference and assistance of the Thanna Police and that the Darogah in reporting to the Magistrate treated the matter as one which could be settled by the deputation of only two Burkundazes to Poorwa to warn both sides from Proceeding to an affray. No orders were issued to the Police upon these representations the precautions taken being regarded as sufficient although the people continued assembled in a greater or less body (many of them having dispersed occasionally to their homes) from the 23rd of October till the date at which they actually made the attack on Poorwa no further reports regarding them reached Baraset in the interval. The delay in their proceedings perhaps set suspicion somewhat at rest but there is no acquitting the neighbouring Police of having acted in the business with the most culpable supineness. The Thanna of Calinga is within less than 2 miles from Narkelbaria yet no report even of the assemblage in that Village was sent from it upto the 10th of November. The Busserhaut Thanna was at some distance but complaints had been specially made to it and no one measure was adopted to watch Tittoo Meer's proceedings or to keep the Magistrate informed of them. The next report on the subject received at Baraset was from the Darogah of Basserhaut and was not dispatched till the 6th November when he had heard of the threatened outrage in Poorwa having actually taken place. In this the Darogah sent intelligence of what had happened and said that he would proceed immediately to the spot and write further. This report reached Baraset only on the 10th November tho it should have been received two days earlier - a delay caused by irregularities in the transmission of the Thanna Daks which I have found general in the district. No orders were issued in reply. On the following day the 11th November, two reports came from the Darogah one dated the 9th of the month detail[s] his proceedings on going to Poorwa, and mentioning the circumstances of the murder of the Brahmin at Laoghatee the other dated the 10th stating that the rioters were moving about openly in search of himself and he had no force adequate to apprehend them. On the same day a letter was received from Mr. Piron superintendent of the Bargureea factory giving information of the numbers and fanatical spirit of the party and adding that they could not be put down except by an armed force. Under these statements reinforcements of a Jemadar and Ten Burkundazes from each of two other Thannas were ordered to the assistance of the Daroga. On the 12th November the first report of the Darogah of Calinga Thanna arrived dated the 10th and confirming Mr. Piron's statement. On the 13th Mr. Storm addressed Government on the subject in Calcutta, and on the following afternoon Mr. Alexander proceeded in person to Narkelbaria.

29th. Reports from both Thannas of the 11th, 13th and 14th of November reached Baraset after Mr. Alexander had left it, and the tenor of these which were written under great apprehension, would have doubtless at once brought the matter before Government had they not been anticipated by Mr. Storm's communication.

30th. It must now be a subject of much regret, with reference to the

particulars above stated that the matter was viewed as unimportant and treated so lightly in the beginning. Had the information given in the first instance been followed up by immediate inquiries and precautions the disturbances which occurred might perhaps have been altogether prevented [.] After those disturbances had actually commenced the absence of the full knowledge which might have been obtained of their origin and character led to the use of measure very inadequate to their object. It could not of course have been foreseen that the fanaticism of the party would carry them to the lengths to which they at last proceeded, but it would have been [at]once obvious that the case was not one of an ordinary kind, or which could be satisfactorily settled by any ordinary exertions on the part of the Police.

31st. To the Darogah of the Busserhat Thanna nothing is imputable beyond a want of sufficient vigilance and activity. The Darogah at Calinga was guilty of a wilful concealment of what was going on. His Thanna I have mentioned, is close to Narkelbaria, and he must have been aware of the affair from the first yet he made no reference regarding it till three days after the date at which by his own account he had heard of the actual commencement of the outrages in Poorwa. The man it seems was a follower of Sayyed Ahmud's doctrines, and this accounts for his gross neglect of his duty. There has not after every inquiry appeared ground to believe that he was in actual correspondence in [with] the rioters but he was obviously willing [to] favor them by remaining silent on the subject of their excesses as long as he could do so with any hope of saving appearances. He has of course been dismissed from office, and I only regret that I had not the means of punishing him more severely.

32nd. That for the week from the 7th to the 15th November which elapsed between the affray at Laoghatee and Mr. Alexander's proceeding to the disturbed part of the district in person, the local Police should have been able to make no effort to disperse or oppose the party cannot excite surprise. In any Country, the strength of the stipendiary Civil Police receiving no assistance from the spirit of the inhabitants must always be quite insufficient to contend with a body of reckless fanatics equal and in the present instance it was superior to themselves in number.

33rd. The only additional point to be adverted to as regards the facts of the case relates to the apparent neglect of their Police duties by the Zemindars who gave no information at Baraset either of the first collection of the people, or of their subsequent proceedings. This neglect was for the most part only apparent. The principal proprietors in the Villages in the neighbourhood of Narkelbaria lie a considerable distance off and the time at which the affair commenced was just after the close of the Dussera festival when their Mofussil Naibs and agents had nearly all dispersed to their own homes. The Zemindar of Narkelbaria itself and the farmer to which it is leased are however justly chargeable with some remissness, and they have accordingly been punished by fine. I would mention here for such consideration as it may be thought to deserve that there appears to be a defect in the Law in respect to the responsibility attaching to Zemindars and their agents on occasions of the assemblage of bodies of men under suspicious circumstances within the Estates belonging to or managed by them respectively. They should I think be declared distinctly accountable for

communicating all intelligence which they may obtain of such assemblages, as of other occurrences both to the local Police Darogah and to the Magistrate. At present, as far as I am aware, only the principal persons of whatever class actually resident in the Village where the assemblage takes place are held bound to send information to the near [nearest?] Police station, a precaution which would obviously be of no use should the head man of the Village, or the Police Darogah, or both, be disposed from any cause to connive at the circumstances.

34. The instructions of Government direct that in the event of my conceiving that criminality or blame attaches to Zemindars or others in the district in connection with the disturbances. I should recommend such measures regarding them as may appear expedient and also that I should offer any suggestions which I may believe to be calculated to secure the future tranquillity of the district.

35. In reply to the first of these instructions it need not be repeated that the whole affair began in illegal though petty exaction on the part of a Zemindar the punishment for which had it been proved in the first instance, would probably have been by a fine, with perhaps a short temporary imprisonment enhanced in the particular case by the circumstance of the exaction being one calculated to interfere with, and excite religious feeling. I am not disposed to consider that penalty should be increased now on account of the extreme consequences to which the offence has led. A more severe punishment be specifically declared to be attached to the kind of offence for the future were there reason to apprehend that it would be of frequent recurrence and of generally dangerous effects. But for what is past I should think it unfair to judge of it otherwise than if the accidental results which have attended it had not happened. I should therefore have no recommendation to submit to Government with a view to the punishment of Kishen Deb Rai were there any mode in which the Government could directly interpose its authority in the case. The matter however is scarcely of such importance as to require its interference nor is there I believe any law, by which it could take the misconduct of the Zemindar under its immediate cognizance.

36. The entire root of the mischief which has occurred lies deep and cannot easily be removed. The powers possessed by Zemindars enable them to exercise a petty Jurisdiction among their Ryots and to make petty exactions on all kinds of pretences. The corrupt character of the people and the defects of our own instruments pervert our administration of Justice, and render it a matter of the greatest uncertainty whether we shall arrive at the truth or not in all cases in which men of wealth or influence will be injured by its detection and our confined intercourse with the people and consequent ignorance of many of their feelings and circumstances allow false representations to be frequently imposed on us with the utmost boldness and with slight risk of discovery.

37. The formal evidence of Kishen Deb Rais exactions has been forwarded with this letter for such observations or orders as the Government may deem it proper to communicate on a review of it. Should the case be left to be disposed of by this Court in the ordinary course of procedure it would be a question with me whether, especially after the length of time which has elapsed it would be attended with advantage to sentence Kishen Deb Rai to the comparatively



inconsiderable punishment which only I should think myself justified in giving. To award punishment at all would be to admit that Titto Meer's party had some ground of justification for the excesses which they committed, while the great disproportion between the penalty for the provocation and that for the offence might have the effect of making the one appear oppressive or the other not worth the inflicting. Security against the repetition of the mischiefs which have occurred will be best derived not from the example of imposing at the present late period slight imprisonment or fine in this instance, but by an increased vigilance of attention to cases as they may arise on the part of the Magistrate, and the application as far as possible of an early check to any arbitrary abuses of power which may be found to be attempted for the future.

38. In regard to means for preserving the peace of the district from being further disturbed no extraordinary measures of precaution are now requisite. On my first taking charge I availed myself of the discretion granted by the orders of Government and brought a strong party of Fifty up-Country Burkundazes to aid the old Police in the event of any partial renewal of the disorders taking place and for the purpose of restoring general quiet and confidence. The latter object was the only one that required attention, for there has never been the slightest symptom of a renewal of the disturbances. There was however a general confusion and such plunder throughout the part of the Country which had been inhabited by Tittoo Meer's followers for some days subsequent to their defeat and dispersion. The property and houses of these people were left of course deserted and became a subject of common pillage. The Police had scarcely had time to reform and as was unavoidable in the temporary license which prevailed several were sufferers who had had no connection with the insurgents. Such excesses were soon checked and measures had been adopted by Mr. Alexander before my arrival for preventing the indiscriminate seizure of Mahomedans on the plea of their being of Tittoo Meer's sect. It was not therefore long necessary to maintain the addition to the ordinary Police force [.] At present there can be no apprehension of a recurrence of disorders on the part of Tittoo Meer's adherents. In the Villages where they may remain in any numbers it will be however proper that they should be watched for some time, both with the view of checking any possible disposition to turbulence, and for the purpose of protecting them from being subjected, as they may be at first, to maltreatment. Precautions with this latter object will be adopted in releasing the different prisoners yet in confinement, against whom there may be no sufficient evidence of having been concerned in the disturbances. Persons professing Seyyud Ahmud's doctrines though not disciples of Tittoo Meer, are to be found in various parts of this district[.] Should they happen to be involved in disputes affecting their religious feeling the progress of these should be carefully looked to and members of the sect must at the same time be prevented from shewing their Zeal by acts of outrage against the habits and opinions of their neighbours.

39th. It is now only necessary before concluding this report to advert to the proof which has been obtained against the large body of prisoners who have been apprehended in the affair. That proof will I believe, be sufficient for securing the conviction of the greater number of them including all who were

active and principal leaders. Against a good many there is distinct evidence as to various specific acts of violence but for the most part the principal offence established is a general and continued participation in the lawless proceeding of the party. I regret at the same time that my endeavours have been unsuccessful in procuring evidence respecting the actual perpetrators of one or two particular atrocities the persons immediately engaged in which it would have been very desirable to have traced and brought to punishment [.] Of these atrocities one was the murder of the former Darogah of the Busserhat Thanna who attended Mr. Alexander when he proceeded to Narkelbaria with the civil force of the district on 15th November. This man was very seriously wounded in the attack then made on the Police, was carried into the Village with others who were soon released he alone being detained, and he is generally and I fear truly reported to have been dispatched afterwards in cold blood. The instance is remarkable being the single one in which life was taken by the people except in the heat of fighting or pursuit. Their enmity to the Darogah arose from his being the person who colluded with Kishen Deb Rai, and injured the Mahomedan defendants in the quarrel which was the origin of the disturbance. The witnesses who have been able to say any thing of his death before me have spoken of it only by hearsay.

40. A large number of the prisoners whom it is my intention to commit for Trial are persons whom there is no reason to consider to have been active principals in the disturbance, though there is the fullest proof of their having been concerned in it [.] I should have been glad to recommend these men to the immediate clemency of Government but I am of opinion that it might have a bad effect to release them too hastily after the lengths to which the party went and the unexampled boldness with which it defied all authority and the measure also would be very unpopular with the Hindoo population of the neighbourhood whose feelings were so wantonly insulted by their proceedings[.] Many of the prisoners have already been or will be now at once released from the absence of proof and it will be better that the others who are not deserving of the heaviest degrees of punishment should be set at liberty gradually after such different periods of imprisonment as may be deemed adequate to their several cases, than that they should be let loose in a body immediately.

41. Respecting the mode of conducting the trials of the people, the Resolution passed by Government on the 22nd November last provide for their cases being investigated by a special Commissioner acting under the provisions of Regulation 4, 1799. The matter however is scarcely of such importance as to require that it should be brought under the operation of that Law which otherwise affords no facilities beyond those given by the ordinary process [.] I would suggest therefore that I may be permitted to make the commitments in the usual manner to your Court.

42. A few persons who took a prominent part in the disturbances have hitherto succeeded in eluding apprehension. It would be advisable to offer rewards for the seizure of these to secure their being brought to punishment if possible, or to keep them at all events from returning to this part of the Country. One of them is a Fukeer of whom several had joined themselves to Tittoo Meer and whose influence was very mischievous in the affair. The

necessary application for authority to offer these rewards is made a separate letter as also for authority to give rewards to several of the Police officers who were wounded when accompanying Mr. Alexander on the 15th November.

43rd. In justice to Mr. Piron the Superintendent in-charge of Mr. Storm's Indigo Factory at Baggurrea, I take the opportunity of acknowledging here the very useful and ready assistance I have received from him, throughout the course of my enquiries, I regret sincerely that the exertions which he made in giving early information of the assemblage and proceedings of the rioters should have exposed him to the serious loss which he suffered in the destruction of much of his property, which was not interfered with, until it had become known that he had come down in person to Baraset to represent the disturbed state of the Country to the Magistrate.

44. On taking charge of the district I brought with me, and have retained in employ since, three native officers in addition to the permanent establishment of the Court of which it was desirable that I should be in some degree independent. I have to request authority for charging in a contingent Bill for the salaries of these persons at the rates noted in the margin.

45. I shall await the orders of Government as to my relinquishment of my present temporary appointment and return to the Presidency. In the meantime, something still remains to be done towards completing the papers for the final commitment of the prisoners for Trial.

Baraset  
Joint Magistracy  
March 8th 1832.

I have & ca.  
(Signed) J.R. Colvin  
Offg. Jt. Magistrate.

#### ENCLOSURES TO COLVIN'S REPORT<sup>1</sup>

No. 1

Roobookaree of the Magistrate of the Dacca Jalalpoore  
29th April 1831

The Government Prosecutor, against two parties of Mahomedans  
on a charge of affray with plunder and beating.

The quarrel between the parties is this, that the one, the disciple of a person named Hazee Shurecut Oollah and the other the Inhabitants of the Village of Ramnagur have had for some time a difference in matters of religion. The former sect is known by the name of "Tuuyyooni Hāl" [Ta'aiyuni Hāl] the latter by that of "Tuuyyooni Sabik" [.] The latter like the Inhabitants of the Country generally worship Mahommed<sup>2</sup> and the different Peers. The former

<sup>1</sup> *Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons.*, 3 April 1832, No. 6.

<sup>2</sup> The Rubakari of the Magistrate is wrong in saying that the traditional Muslims of the land used to worship the prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of Allah be on him), though it is correct that many of them paid superstitious reverence to Pirs. (M.M. Ali)

reverence neither. In other matters also they disregarded established rules. As for instance in this case one of the Hajee wished to bring his brother over to that sect & on his not consenting a huge body of persons attacked and plundered the village in which he lived with the view of bringing about conversion by force [.] They repeated the attack also the next day.

Two leaders on the part of the followers of the Hagee who were actively engaged in the affray were sentenced to one Years imprisonment with labor and a fine of 200 Rupees and in default of payment of the fine to imprisonment for a further period of one Year. The others to a similar punishment except that the fine imposed on them was only 100 Rupees.

Hajee Shurecut Oollah the leader of the party was subsequently apprehended but no proof existing against him he was released on a Mochulka and giving security to the amount of 200 Rs. to keep the peace for one Year.

A true Abstract Translation  
(Sd) J.R. Colvin Offg. Jt. Magte.

NO. 2

PUJAT MULLICK\* AGAINST RAMNARAIN NAG ZEMINDAR AND OTHERS[,]  
INSTITUTED AUGUST 7TH 1830

Pujat Mullick — Charge Beating etc.

"I would not eat any of the foods distributed at Fatihas and did not join in the Society and Meetings of other Mahommedans. On this two of the Defendants complained of me to the Zemindar who sent two of his Servants, seized me, had me beaten and extorted an agreement from me for the payment to him of Twenty Rs."

Puraun Mundul Defenant — "There is a Durgah [Dargah] in our Village in which 16 families of us Mahommedans were in the habit of making offerings during the Mohurram. The prosecutor broke this Durgah down. On which we complained to the Zemindar who sent for the Prosecutor [.] made the matter up between us and told the Prosecutor to build up the Durgah again etc."

Burkut Oollah Defendant — "I and the first defendant with others complained to the Zemindar that the Prosecutor hindered our Cattle from Grazing and had broken down our Durgah which interfered with our customary offerings and Ceremonies and that in consequence we could not remain on his Zemindaree [.] On this the Zemindar, with the view of settling the matter amicably between us sent for all parties and told the Prosecutor to build the Durgah again etc."

Ubdool Kureem-a Witness — "The Prosecutor was brought to the house of the Zemindar when I was there [.] The latter asked him why he did not perform the usual ceremonies and make the usual offerings to the Pfers. He replied he acted according to his religion on which the Zemindar gave orders for a fine of 25 Rs. being taken from him his beard plucked etc. Has heard the

Prosecutor and others say that the former had broken down a Durgah."

Bisoo Sirdar a Witness — "Say the Prosecutor carried off by the Zemindar's people, has heard from the Defendant that the Prosecutor had broken down a durgah on which they had complained to the Zemindar. Knows that the Prosecutor broke down a Durgah."

Sheik Golab—a Witness — "Gives the same account as the first witness excepting as regards breaking down the Durgah."

Nothing was proved against the Defendants actually summoned in this case and it was not prosecuted to a conviction against the Zemindar.

A True Abstract Translation (Sd) J.R. Colvin Jt. Magte.

NO. 3

ABSTRACT OF PROCEEDINGS IN THE CASE OF AFFRAY  
WITH ARSON AND PLUNDER  
GOVERNMENT VS. KISSEN DEB ROY & OTHERS AND  
KADIR BUKSH & OTHERS.

The Mohurrir of the Thannah reports on the 24th June 1831 that he had received first statements from the two parties agreeing in the fact that the Zemindars [Zemindar's] people had been sent to summon a number of the weavers connected with the second party of the Defendants and that these had seized a Zemindaree Paidah [Piadah] named Khosal Sing. The allegation on the one side however is that the people had been sent to call the weavers in consequence of a number of strangers having collected in their houses. On the other hand they had been sent to enforce the payment of the fine which had been demanded from the "Shamder" Ryots. Afterwards at midnight a further representation from the Second party of the Defendants was received at the Thannah to the effect that late in the day a large assemblage of the Zemindar's people had burnt a mosque.

The Mohurrir went to the spot to inquire regarding this latter charge and reports on the 27th June, that the Zemindar will not attend on him or give up any of the accused people. He requests that he may be permitted to force his appearance by preventing any one from entering or coming out of his house, till he should shew himself. This authority was granted on the 30th June.

On the 7th July the Zemindar appeared at Baraset and on the 9th the Darogah who had in the interim gone himself to the Village apprehended two people of the Zemindar's party who then brought a counter charge against the weavers inculpating most of the persons whom these had named as witnesses and various others who had given statements in their behalf before the Mohurrir. He reports that the case appears to be clearly one of affray between the parties and he accordingly apprehends and sends in several of the original complainants and witnesses on the part of the weavers as defendants.

These persons in their Mofussil statements admit that a number of persons from different villages had come to their houses on the day of the squabble but state that it was to an entertainment. They do not allude to the fact of these people being of the same peculiar sect with themselves.

Several Ryots had given Statements before the Mohurrir in favor of the Zemindar as well as several on the other side; alleging various irregularities (which really exist) in the papers as prepared by the Mohurrir [.] the [The] Darogah took evidence afresh and wrote down the depositions of a number of persons most of whom he represented to be unconnected with either party. These united in supporting the Zemindar's story. The Witnesses for the Weavers, the Darogah adds would not attend on his summoning them and most of them were implicated as Defendants in the charge advanced by the Zemindar's people. He had only therefore he remarks to trust to their Statements as delivered to the Mohurrir and could send none of them into the Magistrate.

In recapitulating the evidence the Darogah says that the account of the transaction given by the impartial witnesses whom he had examined, supported the Zemindar's story — that several allegations of plunder which had been advanced on the other side were contradictory and not to be credited — that some of the Witnesses named by the Weavers were of the same sect themselves and stood accused as associates with them in this affair, and that others were open to suspicion on other accounts, but that on the whole he thought the offence of being concerned in an affray attended with beating was established against both parties.

On the 15th and 29th July petitions were presented on the part of the weavers complaining of the conduct of the Darogah in the above enquiry.

Before the Magte. the Zemindar's story in which he was supported by a number of Witnesses, was that on the day on which the affair occurred he was absent in Calcutta [.] that at first a few people were people were [sic] sent by his Naib to look after an assemblage of strangers of suspicious character in the houses of the Weavers that these assaulted and beaten information of which being sent to the Thannah 3 persons were ordered by his Naib to watch the Strangers, so as to prevent their escaping before the Police came up that on going to the spot those persons were beaten off on which to get up a case the weavers themselves set their thatched Mosque on fire. In the course of his reply to the charge he mentions Tittoo Meer a "Kyd Khoolasie" or released convict as being the head of the other party but does not advert to any peculiarity in their religious opinions [.] He accuses them in general terms of associating with bands of strangers.

The weavers in their replies give the same account of the transaction as that stated by them in the Mofussil. They do not mention with any distinctness their peculiarity as a religious sect. Complaining only that a fine had been imposed on them, for allowing their beards to grow and one of them alluding to their being distinguished in their manner of dress from their neighbours.

No Witnesses were sent up on this side as above stated. The principal defendant mentions the names of the different people from other Villages who were in his house at the time, and who could give evidence but these had been accused along with him as reported by the Darogah.

On the 9th August the Nazir was directed to bring in 6 Witnesses unconnected with either side.

The next day the weavers petitioned, pointing out that the Zemindar had

allowed none of his Ryots to attend the Mohurrir who first went to inquire alleging that he gained over the Darogah and in conjunction with him at first endeavoured to persuade them to agree to a compromise which they had refused - Offering to prove this, and requesting that their Witnesses to the point and to the fact of the Zemindar's people having burnt the Mosque might be summoned and arguing that no reliance could be placed on the statement of the person who had not given himself up to the Darogah till 18 days after the date of the transaction and then charged them with having burnt their Mosque themselves. In this petition they represent themselves to be persons who had particularly devoted themselves to the religious duties.

On the 12th August 3 of the weavers petitioned separately to the effect that they were 6 Coss [roughly 12 miles] off at the Police Thannah when they are accused of being concerned in burning the Mosque and appealing to the Thannah people and others in proof.

The case was decided on the evidence at first taken and that of the 5 of the 6 independent Witnesses ordered to be brought by the Nazir. Three of these deposed to having seen the Zemindar come to the spot with a large body of persons and to his people setting the Mosque on fire by his orders. The [They] mention on cross examination the demand by the Zemindar as a fine on the Beards of the weavers, but not distinctly as to a matter within their knowledge. The plunder of any property is not proved.

The decision refers to the direct contradiction in the evidence of the 2 Sets of Witnesses mentions so much only as being clear that there was a quarrel between the parties the nature of which they stated differently and on these grounds dismissed both, taking from the [them] recognizances to the amount of 50 Rs. to keep the peace towards each other.

A True Abstract Translation      Sd/ J.R. Colvin - Offg. Jt. Magte.

NO. 4

CASE UNDER REGULATION 7, 1799.-  
HULDHUR GHOSE AND RAMCHUND GHOSE GAUTIEEDARS  
OR (UNDERFARMERS)

Vs.

BHULAE AND PUJAR [FAJAR]- KAREEGURS (OR WEAVERS)

Process taken out on an alleged Pottah for 4 Years from the 5th Jeth 1235 B. the annual rent being 49 Rupees. The defendants are stated to have paid for the 1st Year but only 14 Years [Rs.] on account of 1237 B.S. on [On] the 3rd April a Dustuk was ordered to be issued for the apprehension of the defaulters. On the 26th September the Nazir reports that they had been seized and the matter adjusted in the Mofussil.

Having learnt on the spot that the Paidah who served the Dustuk had really gone to the Zemindar's house and been accompanied by the Zemindar's people instead of those of the nominal Plaintiff I begged Mr. Barlow to take the man's statement. In it he admits with a good deal of hesitation that Kissen Deb Roy the Zemindar had in the Mofussil avowed himself to be the real Plaintiff

and had acted as such. The Paidah having been subsequently sent to me, his deposition was taken down on oath and he then spoke directly & distinctly to the above effect.

On first speaking to the Zemindar on the subject he denied really having acted as Plaintiff in the affair. Afterwards on finding probably that the fact of the defendants' having been taken to his house had become known he had admitted they had come there but for the purpose of getting his aid in adjusting the matter, they being also Ryots of his.

Two of the principal men in the Village where the land on which the arrear was stated to have been due is situated depose that they never saw or heard or saw of the Defendants having any connection with it — personally or through others that the land is still uncultivated and has been since the death of the Ryot who formerly held it, but they add that they have heard the nominal Plaintiffs whose tenure it is talk of leasing it to weavers.

One of the nominal Plaintiffs who is the manager of the property, states that he gave the land to the Defendants but without speaking of it to any of the head people of the Village. On being called upon for his original accounts he says that he keeps no accounts though he has a tenure of nearly 200 Rupees annual rent.

Kissen Deb Rai's statement that the Defendants referred to him to adjust the demand on them by the nominal plaintiffs is quite undeserving of credit. They were among the persons with whom he had just before been engaged in the dispute which came into Court.

Sd/ J.R. Colvin Offg. Jt. Magte.

NO. 5

Witnesses from the Nurkulbaria Village.— These persons unite in saying that Tittoo Mir's party uniformly alleged among themselves the exactions attempted by Kissen Deb Rai as their motive for commencing their proceedings by the outrages committed by them in Poorwa.

1. Hugur Mundul
2. Joorain do.
3. Neemoo Basher
4. Kooran Mundal
5. Mendee Gain
6. Tara Gain
7. Pattor Parhayte

Signed/ J.R. Colvin Offg. Jt. Magte.

NO. 6

#### PROCEEDINGS REGARDING THE EXACTIONS BY KISSEN DEB RAI

1. Dilloo Weaver of Surfuruzpore
2. Pai Malee Weaver of Taragona
3. Maizoodeen do of Surfuruzpore
4. Tonoo do do
5. Shah Gazee do do

These persons deposed to me in the Mofussil to the following effect. That Kissen Deb Rai had first taken the fine from two persons named Daim and Kaim of the Porwa Village that afterwards he had twice summoned the weavers from the Surfuruzpore Village and made a demand from them [,] that of these a person



named Bolae had been first illtreated to make him pay and then another person named Hussanooddeen who gave a man named Kyroollah as his Security and afterwards paid Kyroollah One Rupee [,] that on the demand on the others being pressed the quarrel ensued which came ultimately into Court.

The depositions of these persons were taken in the Allipur Jail. They differ in several points of detail from the witnesses examined before me and from each other but they agree in stating that the exaction was first made from the two persons Daim and Kaim of Poorwa [,] that the demand then followed from the Surfuruzpore Weavers and on their refusing the quarrel ensued [,] Nos 7, 9 and 15 also agree in speaking to the circumstance of Hissam Ooddeen\* having given Khyroollah as his Security.

6. Kadir Bux Weaver of Surfuruzpore (in jail)
7. Moolookchund do. (do)
8. Bholae do. (do)
9. Kissamooddeen do. (do)
10. Sonllah Ryot of Furrehhottapore
11. Soonder Gaze of Surfuruzpore
12. Danish Gaze do. Furrehhottapore (do)
13. Deani Weaver of Surfuruzpore (In jail)
14. Piyar Gaze do (In Jail)
15. Badul do (do.)

Nos. 7 and 8 allege the payment of the fine by themselves and name Witnesses in the Jail (Nos. 10, 11 & 12) who do not however support their statement or are inconsistent in their evidence.

16. Daim Weaver of the Poorwa Village (in Jail) These are the persons from whom the fine is said to have been first levied.
17. Kaim do do (do)

They agree in saying that the latter was summoned to Kissen Deb Rai's house and the demand made when one Rupee was paid at the time and Rs. 1 As. 8 afterwards to a servant of the Zamindars. They name as Witnesses several persons in Jail of whom the three following were examined.

18. Mahtabdeen Weaver of Koorgachy (In Jail) One of the Witnesses named as above confirmed the story.
19. Budhoe Weaver of Mugor Khallee (In Jail)
20. Huzaree Weaver of Burwa (In Jail)

These confirm it in part having been present at the latter payment to the amount of which however they do not speak distinctly.

21. Eynooddeen Weaver of Poorwa (Confined at Baraset) This person was examined at Baraset. He is a brother of Nos. 16 & 17 [,] His statement varies in the details from that given by them. There is in it the contradiction to their story that he says the whole payment 2-8 was paid at once to the Zemindar's servant part of it by No. 18 which is not alleged by himself or the others.

[\* The name is differently written by Colvin in the previous para. Probably that written here is correct. The other names written by Colvin throughout the report and also by the Commissioner in his trial reports are changed or corrupted forms. - M. Ali.]

22. Urezoolah Gain Weaver of Poorwa examined at Baraset This man says that No. 17 is his nephew and told him of the exaction having been made. He saw no payment himself.
23. Ameer Beb Weaver of Poorwa examined at Baraset This man is in the influence of the Zemindar [.]. He deposes that he once met No. 16 & 17 returning from the Zemindar's house and that they told him they had wished to give that person Rs. 2 As. 8 in some case but that he refused to receive it.
24. Gopee Mohun Bose These are the most respectable residents of the Poorwa Village [.]. Several of them speak to its having been a general report in the place that Kissen Deb Rai had demanded the fine from the Weavers but only [No.] 27 states that he heard of the circumstances of the quarrel which came into Court [.]. Nos. 30 & 31 had heard only of the quarrel.
25. Ram Ruttun Bidya Bagesh
26. Bugwan Chunder Sirma
27. Seerae Churn Ghose
28. Bugwan Chunder Chukerbutty
29. Bugwan Chunder Bose
30. Ram Ruttun Butercharjea
31. Jey Gopal Mokerjea

In his defence Kissen Deb Rai states that Tittoo Meer's projects were from the first of an ambitious and seditious kind [,] that many of his Ryots would not join the Sect on his, the Zemindars dissuasion and that this is the cause of the enmity of the party against him, that he was in Calcutta when he is said to have taken the fine in Poorwa and some of those from whom he is said to have taken it are not his Ryots. On cross examination he admits that these latter are for the most part Ryots under Brahmins who hold their Bruhmatur land in his Village.

32. Kissormuddeen Mohurrir of the Busseerhaut Thannah These are persons who went first to Poorwa when complaints of the quarrel were carried before the Police. They depose to having been quite satisfied that the Zemindar was then in the Village tho' he kept concealed and got off secretly when orders were issued to set a watch round his house.
33. Hushamut Oollah Burkundauze

A True Abstract Translation

Signed/ J.R. Colvin Offg. Jt. Magte.

APPENDIX C  
REPORTS OF TRIALS OF TĪTU MĪR'S FOLLOWERS

ŞADR NIZAMAT 'ADĀLAT'S LETTER DATED 19TH APRIL 1833 TO INDIA  
GOVERNMENT STATING THE RESULTS OF THE FIVE TRIALS IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE BARASAT DISTURBANCES.'

To

C. Macsween Esqr.  
Secretary to Government in the Judicial Depart.-

Sir,

<p><i>Nizamut Adawlut</i> Present. R.H. Rattray and H. Shakespear Judges R. Walpole and C.R. Barwell Officiating Judges.</p>	<p>Esqres Esqres</p>	<p>22nd Ultimo, communicating the orders of Govt. on the General Police Report of the 18th Division for the first six months of 1832, and with reference to the 5th paragraph to submit copies of papers as pr. accompanying List, shewing the result of the Trials of the prisoners implicated in the Baraset Disturbances.</p>
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2nd. From these papers it will be perceived that 197 prisoners were committed in five Trials.

3rd. In Trial No. 1, 184 prisoners were committed, of whom 3 died before trial, and one was released as insane; of the remaining 180, 123 were convicted, 57 acquitted. Fourteen were convicted of the first or principal charge, viz. of having riotously assembled in arms and set at defiance the Legal authority, by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, which attack was attended with Murder, wounding and plundering. Gholam Mausoom who appeared to be the Leader was sentenced to suffer Death, 11 were sentenced to perpetual imprisonment and 2, in consideration of their youth were sentenced to 7 years imprisonment with labor. One Hundred and nine (109) prisoners were convicted of the second or minor part of the charge, viz. of having joined and been accessory to the proceedings of Rioters assembled in the village of Narcoolbariah, after the attack on the Joint Magistrate and of having assembled in arms in defiance of the Legal authority with a view of creating disturbances and of plundering. Of these 18 who were proved to have been Ring leaders in the disturbances, were sentenced to be imprisoned for five years from the 26 July last, 40 were sentenced to be imprisoned for four years, 38 for three years, all with hard labor, one, a son of Meer Teettoo in consideration of his youth and the untimely loss of his father, and 9 others in consideration of their having been wounded in the storming of the Stockade by the Troops for two years, with labor in Irons. Two persons in consideration of their having each lost hand by amputation in consequence of wounds received and one from his having had a leg shot off on the same occasion, were released.

4th. In the 2nd Trial, 43 of the persons charged in Trial No. 1 were committed. One died before Trial, and one was acquitted [acquitted] by the Commissioner. Of the rest 13 were acquitted by this Court, and 28 convicted of attacking in an armed Body the

\* viz. 1 prisoner to 3 years  
10 do to 4 do  
5 do to 5 do

Magistrate of the District of Nuddea and his attendants, with murder, wounding and plundering. 16 were sentenced to two years Imprisonment in addition to the sentences\* passed on them in trial No. 1 and one prisoner acquitted in the former case to imprisonment for 5 years from the 13th August 1832. No further sentence was passed on the remaining 11, that passed on the Trial No. 1\*\* appearing sufficient.

\*\* viz. 1 to suffer Death  
9 to Impt. for life  
1 to do for 7 years

5th. In trial No. 3, 26 prisoners were committed viz., 14 of those implicated in the former cases and 8 others.<sup>1</sup> Of these one died before Trial, & 2 were acquitted and released by the Commissioner. Ten were acquitted by this Court, and thirteen convicted of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms to the disturbance of the public peace in the market place of Purwa, and there insulted the religious feeling of the Hindoos by slaughtering cows and scattering their blood on the walls of Hindoo temple, accompanied with plundering and other acts of violence. Two prisoners were sentenced to be imprisoned for two years in addition to the sentence passed on them in trial No. 1.11\* persons (acquitted in the former cases and four not implicated in them) to be imprisoned from the 28th August last.

\*1 to imprisonment for 2 years  
1 to do for 3 years

6th. In trial No. 4 fourteen persons were committed. Five were acquitted by this Court and 9 convicted of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms to the disturbance of the public peace and plundered the dwelling house of Yar Mahomed. One of the convicted prisoners was the person sentenced to Death in trial No. 1—another having been sentenced in trials No. 1 & 2 to imprisonment for 7 years,\* no further sentence was passed on him. The remaining 7 were sentenced to be imprisoned with hard labor in Irons-5 from the 22nd August last and 2 from the date of the expiration of the sentence passed on them in trial No. 1.\*\*

In No. 1 for 5 years  
In No. 2 for 2 do  
7 years

\*1 to impt. for 3 years  
1 to do for 5 do

7th. In trial No. 5, 14 persons were committed. Nine were acquitted by this Court and 5 convicted of having tumultuously assembled in arms and of plundering and extortion and sentenced, with the exception of one whose sentence of 7 years imprisonment in trials No. 1 & 2 was deemed sufficient for this case also, to be imprisoned with labor in irons for 2 years, 1 from the 10th September last and the remaining 3 from the date of the expiration of the sentences passed on them in former Trials.\*

The following is the general result of the sentences passed in the five Trials.

Sentenced to Death .....	1	
do - to Imprisonment for life .....	11	
do - to -do- for 7 years .....	9	
do - to -do- for 6 years .....	9	
do - to -do- for 5 years .....	16	140
do - to -do- for 4 years .....	35	
do - to -do- for 3 years .....	34	
do - to -do- for 2 years .....	22	
Convicted but sentenced to no punishment .....	3	
Acquitted and released .....		49
		<hr/>
Total Tried by this Court .....	189	
Died before Trial .....	4	
Released as mad .....	1	
Acquitted by Commissioner .....	3	
		<hr/>
	Total Committed	297 [197]
		<hr/>

Fort William  
The 19th April 1833

I am & ca.  
Signed: I.F. M. Reid.  
Registrar

(No. 312 B)

From: Mr. E.R. Barwell  
Commissioner of Circuit, 18th Division.

To: J.F. Reid Esqr.,  
Register to the Nizamut Adawlut  
Fort William

Dated 14th September 1832

Sir,

Court of the Commissioner of  
Circuit.-

Zillah Baraset.-

Trial No. 1 of the Calendar for  
the 1st Sessions of 1832.

Government  
Versus.

1. Ramzaun aged 25 son of Cooran.
2. Aukil Mahomed aged 27 son of Sooraun.
3. Thunday 1st alias Abdoollah aged 35 son of Moosdin.
4. Lalchaund Biswas, aged 32 alias Lall Mahomed, son of Coobeer Biswas.
5. Allaudy Mandle aged 36, son of Cooraun.
6. Moojdin Mandle aged 30, son of Teetoo Mundle.
7. Naipaul Mundle, aged 40, son of Nehaul Mondle.
8. Ruhumut aged 18, son of Hyder.
9. Paunchoo Mundle aged 38, son of Barket-oollah.
10. Thunday 2nd aged 30, son of Bokoo.
11. Ooginul aged 28 son of Lauzun.
12. Khezur aged 40, son of Shaikh Barketoolah.
13. Parrun Gauzy aged 20 son of Bakoo Gauzy.
14. Aumeer Mundle-aged 40 son of Currim.
15. Fakeer Mahomed aged 25 son of Jooraun.
16. Najiboolah aged 30 son of Khasaul.

I transmit herewith to be laid before the Nizamut Adawlut the Proceedings in the Trial noted in the Margin held at the station of Allipore on the 11th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 18th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 28th and 29th June, and 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st and 26th July of the current year. The Report has been delayed for the reasons assigned in my address No. 286 of the 23rd Ultimo and under the authority of the Superior Court communicated to me in your reply dated 31st Idem.-

2nd. The following are the circumstances in which from the evidence for the prosecution the commitment of the Prisoners to take their Trial on this occasion would appear to have originated. One Teetoo Meer originally a man of bad and desperate character but who had latterly by the performance of a Pilgrimage to Mecca acquired a Reputation for sanctity and resided at the village of Chandpore in Baraset District under pretence of instructing the Mahommedan community of his Neighbourhood in the ordinances of their Religion collected about him a numerous body of followers; not long previous to the Festival of the Dussurah of the past year he was joined by a Fakir or Devotee called Miskeen Shah who took up his abode at Teetoo Meer's House; other deevoties subordinate it would seem to Miskeen Shah were subsequently added to the Party and in his name levied contributions of money from each of the followers of the new sect with which they purchased and laid in supplies of Rice and other provisions, at the House of one Moyezoodeen Biswas in the Village of Narkoolbariah where they proceeded

17. Baudul aged 50 son of Paunchoo.
18. Toraub Ally aged 21 son of Teetoo Meer.
19. Golaam Mausoom aged 30 son of Mahomed Motaharoollah.
20. Mahomed Massood aged 55 son of Shaikh Sadder oollah.
21. Dubberodeen aged 32 son of Motaroollah.
22. Poyaun aged 25, son of Mahammed Ophaw.
23. Moolookchand Mundle aged 45 son of Ramzaun Mundle.
24. Gauhur Ally aged 19 son of Teetoo Meer.
25. Baahan Oollah, aged 32 son of Sabdaul.
26. Hallimuddeen aged 18 son of Mahomed Sullim.
27. Kaudir aged 40 son of Bholau.
28. Khanauye alias Kheyr Oollah aged 36 son of Hyder alias Eyn Oodeen.
29. Loyee alias Raujeem aged 32 son of Coobeer Shah.
30. Mussi Oollah aged 22 son of Coobeer Shah.
31. Tauriff alias Tauher aged 32 son of Bholau.
32. Rajeem alias Abdool Ruheem aged 26 son of Coobeer Shah.
33. Chuckoo aged 27 son of Nundoo.
34. Bahau Ooddeen aged 40 son of Shaukdaur Mallick.
35. Najeem alias Rujeeb Oollah aged 30 son of Ramzaun.
36. Audoo aged 40 son of Nabbaud.
37. Ameer aged 30 son of Urrusoollah.
38. Auriff Mundle aged 20, son of Ruffy Mundle.
39. Chunnoo aged 22 son of Shiqdar Mullick.
40. Bunmauly Mundle aged 45 son of Nubbaut.
41. Raujoo Mundle aged 32 son of Guddaee Mundle.
42. Urridgoollah aged 40 son of Nubbaut.
43. Saujun aged 45 son of Purra-sollah.

to establish their Head Quarters and under pretence of giving an entertainment to those of their own persuasion assembled together a considerable concourse of People whom they armed with clubs and other Weapons. Being thus prepared they first sallied forth to attack the market place of a Hindoo Village named Poonra [Poorwa], where they slaughtered a cow and with the Blood of the animal defiled the Temple of Idols[,] hung up the four quarters in the different parts of the Haut, plundered the shops and maltreated and wounded an unfortunate Brahmin. They then assaulted a country brown [born ?] Christian of the name of Smith in the employ of Praunauth Baboo zemindar, as overseer of an Indigo Factory who was passing by on an Elephant at the time; they likewise ill-used all Mahomedans who were not of their persuasion and openly proclaimed themselves Masters of the country - asserting that the period of the British Rule had expired and that the Mahomedans from whom the English had usurped it, were the rightful owners of the Empire. The Introduction of something like martial order in their ranks was attempted and the Prisoner Gholaum Masoom appointed to Head the Insurgent Force. The Village of Raocoottee or Law Ghattee, in the Nuddea District, was their next object of attack. Here they commenced operations by a repetition of the same outrage to the religious feelings of the Hindoos which they had committed at Poonra viz., the slaughter of a cow in that part of the Village exclusively occupied by Hindoo residents.

3. But being opposed by Hurdeb Roy a principal Inhabitant of the place, and a Brahmin, at the head of a Party of Villagers, an affray ensued, in which Debnauth Roy the Brother of Hurdeb Roy was killed, Hardeb Roy and [a] number of the Villagers severely wounded. The Insurgents after their return to Narkelbariah from this excursion proceeded to sack and plunder the neighbouring Village of Ramchunderpore to extend their depredations throughout the whole of the surrounding country.

4th. Intelligence of the commission of these acts of violence and of the open defiance by

44. Tauhur Mohomed Mundle aged 35 son of Kurraun Oollah.
45. Chaund Mundle aged 40 son of Kurraun Ooddeen.
46. Gouhur Junior aged 30 son of Kurraun Ooddeen.
47. Nawauzy, aged 32 son of Keenoo.
48. Gopaul Shaikh aged 30, son of Moosdin Mundle.
49. Bauhau Ooddeen aged 40 son of Shaikh.
50. Sudder Oollah aged 38, son of Ghareeb Oollah.
51. Bhursoy, son of Aukil Mahomed (dead).
52. Naipaul aged 25 son of Misry.
53. Mannick Shaikh aged 45 son of Khan Mohomed.
54. Goray aged 20 son of Munglay.
55. Sauduck Dhaureeah aged 37 son of Khosaul.
56. Shummas aged 40 son of Khosaul.
57. Huneef aged 35 son of Hauder Mundle.
58. Zahir Oollah, aged 40 son of Coober.
59. Ruhumut aged 28 son of Khosaul Dhowreeah.
60. Rujeem aged 34 son of Furreed.
61. Puttun Shah Mundle aged 34 son of Paunchoo Mundle.
62. Bauhau Oollah alias Burke-toollah aged 30 son of Jauroollah.
63. Ausaun Oollah aged 32 son of Mannick.
64. Kadir Bukhsh aged 35 son of Moosdin.
65. Moolook Kareegur aged 30 son of Ruhumut.
66. Dhunney aged 32 son of Purbut.
67. Yar Mahomed Noorbap aged 65 son of Mullyah Ghauzee.
68. Shumusooddeen aged 45 son of Omur Ghauzee.
69. Shaikh Peeaar aged 40, son of Mullyah Ghauzee.
70. Bholay Kareegur aged 30 son of Ruhumut.

Teetoo Meer and his followers of all authority having reached Mr. Alexander, the Officiating Joint Magistrate at Baraset that officer with a view of checking the progress of the disorder and of apprehending the Rioters proceeded in Person, on the 14th November last to the disturbed part of the district by the way of Baugundee the station of the Jessore salt agent, from whom he obtained a party of the Calcutta Provincials on guard at the station, consisting of a Jumadar, Havildar and 18 sepoy in aid of the Police Force assembled at the Basserhaut Thannah, which was not sufficiently strong to oppose to that of the Insurgents; and including the sepoy is said to have amounted to no more than 125 men.

5. On the approach of the Joint Magistrate and his party to the Village of Narkoolbariah the Insurgents were found drawn up on the Plain before it in a Body of between 5 and 6000 men armed with Clubs, swords and spears and prepared to make every possible resistance. Seeing them in such a force Mr. Alexander states that he immediately ordered the sepoy to load with Ball instead of blank Cartridge which it appears they had previously been instructed by the Joint Magistrate to do under an impression that the Rioters would be easily dispersed, and to save Bloodshed; Mr. Alexander likewise deposes that he saw his order carried into execution, but this is strongly denied by the other Witnesses for the prosecution who were of the Joint Magistrate's party and it is very probable that in the hurry and confusion of the moment, the Joint Magistrate's order to load with Ball may have been mistaken in supposing he saw that order executed; at any rate the discharge of the musquetry took no effect - for a shower of Brickbats and other missiles by which the Joint Magistrate and his party were instantly assailed, being the only reply to an attempt made by Mr. Alexander to parley with the Insurgents, he then gave the order to the sepoy to fire, when the Rioters being none of them hurt, rushed forward to the charge Headed by the Prisoner Golaum Masoom their leader who was mounted on Horseback, with a drawn sword in his hand, and called out to them to cut the Joint Magistrate to pieces. In that



71. Hissaum Ooddeen aged 30 son of Shah Ghauzee.
72. Daim aged 20 son of Purraun.
73. Rahumut Oollah aged 38, son of Ameer Shah.
74. Bundul Kareegur aged 51, son of Sut Khan.
75. Kaudim aged 50 son of Nassoo Mollah.
76. Khosaul aged 50 son of Zuhuddy.
77. Gopaul alias Golaub aged 34 son of Moosdin.
78. Cooraun Mundul aged 35 son of Bhanjimant.
79. Edoe Mundle aged 60 son of Khizeer Mundle.
80. Aumeeroodeen aged 32 son of Purras Oollah.-
81. Kaim aged 44 son of Khosaul.
82. Ruffee Mohamed aged 30 son of Koosay.
83. Daim aged 33 son of Kanoo.
84. Kaim aged 25 son of Kanoo.
85. Eynooddeen aged 20 son of Kanoo.
86. Munglay aged 32 son of Burket Oollah.
87. Beenoo aged 50 son of Raumzaun.
88. Ghurreeb Oollah aged 55 son of Hulleem.
89. Moosdeen alias Moyaz Ooddeen aged 45 son of Roopay.
90. Kalapahaur aged 20 son of Ghurreeb Oollah.
91. Mahtaub Oodeen aged 32 son of Kurreem.
92. Hauroo aged 20 son of Ghurreeb Oollah.
93. Budden aged 30 son of Hunniff Mundle.
94. Shaikh Zuekee alias Juttaee aged 35 son of Shurruff Ooddeen.
95. Dhannay aged 40 son of Shurreef Ooddeen.
96. Kitaub Ooddeen aged 35 son of Saudoo.
97. Fuqueer Mahomed aged 50 son of Wahadee.
98. Thunday aged 50 son of Purraun.
99. Bholay aged 38 son of Boodhay.

that officer escaped with great difficulty for the sepoy and Burkundauzes who accompanied him being immediately surrounded by overpowering numbers were unable to offer any resistance, 10 of the sepoy, and 3 Burkandauzes were cut down and killed on the spot. Juwund Ally the Jumadar of the Thannah of Kulingah one of the Joint Magistrate's party who escaped and a Witness for the prosecution saw the prisoner Gholaum Musoom No. 19 and Huneef No. 181 cut down the Jumadar and Havildar of the Calcutta Provincials; the former was instantly killed, but the latter although so desperately wounded that he was left for dead on the Field has survived. The Darogah of the Busseerhaut Thannah, a Brahmin, the Witness Juwand Ally and several Burkundauzes who were all desperately wounded, were carried off by the Insurgents into their stockade at Nurkelbareah, where the Darogah was barbarously murdered.

6th. Elated by this victory the Insurgents whose numbers had greatly increased and were now become the Terror of the whole Districts next proceeded to destroy and plunder the Burgurreah Indigo Factory belonging to Mr. Wm. Storm in the immediate vicinity of Narkoolbariah in revenge for information given by Mr. Piron the superintendent of that Factory of the outrages previously committed by them to the Joint Magistrate at Baraset. Mr. Piron however whose Life they had sworn to take, had fortunately made his escape with his Family to Hooghly but the whole of the property he left behind him in the Factory Bungalow was totally destroyed. The Dwellings of all the Ryots and dependants of the Factory were similarly plundered and laid waste [;] they likewise took possession of another Factory belonging to Mr. Storm adjacent to their stronghold of Narkoolbareah, called Hooghly; and marched off Mr. Blond the superintendent of the Factory with his wife and infant children whom they compelled to walk uncovered through the heat of the sun as Prisoners into the stockade where they were taken before Teetoo Meer and a Fukir supposed to be Miskeen Shah, who was seated by him.

100. Hissam Oodeen aged 40 son of Waudy.
101. Kitaub Oodeen aged 35 son of Navauzy.
102. Marglay aged 30 son of Uzzeez Oollah.
103. Nawaub Oodeen aged 36 son of Urriz Oollah.
104. Sunna Oollah aged 40 son of Eedoo Mundle.
105. Maun Oollah aged 45 son of Khyroollah.
106. Nujeeb Oollah aged 35 son of Eedoo Mundle.
107. Shaikh Tajoo aged 35 son of Urreez Oollah.
108. Muddaury aged 50 son of Ullaudy.
109. Taujoodeen aged 32 son of Paunchoo.
110. Coobeer son of Joorau (dead).
111. Shaikh Gawhur aged 42 son of Shaikh Hunniff.
112. Hidayutt Oollah aged 30 son of Deanut Oollah.
113. Meer Hidayutt Oollah aged 32 son of Mooraud Ally.
114. Shaikh Durrausut Oollah aged 40 son of Koodrut Oollah.
115. Ummeer Ooddeen aged 22 son of Shakir Biswas.
116. Sheikh Zurriff aged 35 son of Sheikh Bhollay.
117. Sheikh Muttee Oollah aged 32 son of Bukhshoo.
118. Shakir aged 37 son of Coobeer.
119. Nawauz Ooddeen aged 34 son of Beckoo Biswas.
120. Kaulaupahar aged 45 son of Ghurreeb Oollah.
121. Baukir son of Coobeer (dead)
122. Aumeer aged 45 son of Bukhshee Mundle.
123. Nujem Oodeen aged 30 son of Emaum Oodeen.
124. Sheikh Roushun aged 45 son of Bukhshee Mundle.
125. Buddi Oollah aged 34 son of Binnode.
126. Aumeer aged 35 son of Burkut Oollah.

Mr. Blond, however, who was an intelligent country born person, and seems to have shewn considerable self possession and presence of mind on this trying occasion not only preserved his own and the lives of his Family, but the whole of the property belonging to the Factory by his entire submission to the pretensions of these fanatics for whom he immediately offered to make Indigo as the Rulers of the Country and upon these conditions was permitted to return in safety with his wife and children to his House.

7th. The Insurgents were now in such force as to be able effectually to resist and put to flight the Magistrate of Nuddea who immediately after the occurrence of the event above recited had arrived in the neighbourhood of Nurkoolbariah, with a large body of the Police of his District and accompanied by Mr. David Andrews an Indigo Planter and other European Residents of Nuddea to the aid of the Baraset Joint Magistrate. The Insurgents however not only compelled Mr. Smith and his party to retreat to their Boats in the Issamutty but subsequently to abandon them to Pillage, and the Fouz-darree Nazir of the Nuddea Court, Mahomed Saleem, they cruelly butchered before Mr. Smith's Eyes.

8th. A day or two after this second successful resistance to the Civil authorities a Party of the Insurgents wantonly plundered the Dwelling of a respectable Moosulman named Yar Mohamed residing at the Village of Sherpoor, whose Daughters they forced into a marriage with two of their gang; they likewise pillaged the Haut of Jungulpore; and levied a contribution in money from Mr. Shillingford an Indigo Planter in the neighbourhood. Mahomedans of a different persuasion from their own they placed under restraint and compelled to wear their Beards in a fashion peculiar to Teetoo Meer and his followers; they put a great many persons to death and devastated the whole neighbourhood for miles around Narkoolbarreeah, all the more peaceable inhabitants of which whether Hindoos or Mahomedans deserted it and fled, many of the Hindoos indeed were deprived of their Caste. It would be endless in short to enumerate all the enormities committed by this Band of lawless

127. Eynooden aged 34 son of Burkut Oollah.
128. Bakhtour aged 35 son of Baukir.
129. Thunday aged 35 son of Goberdhun.
130. Usmut Oollah aged 40 son of Sunnay Mundle.
131. Sudder Oollah aged 34 son of Sunnay Mundle.
132. Aumeer Mundle aged 35 son of Doollaul.
133. Ramzaun Mundle aged 55 son of Ally Mundle.
134. Tauriff aged 33 son of Doolhub.
135. Shurriff aged 32 son of Doolhub.
136. Zuriff aged 28 son of Ghunnee Mundle.
137. Purrus Oollah aged 40 son of Ghunnee Mundle.
138. Sheikh Mudden aged 30 son of Munnick.
139. Mookhtaur aged 60 son of Sooran.
140. Suffy Karreegur aged 40 son of Goburdun.
141. Sheikh Munglay aged 28 son of Bukhteur.
142. Poyaut Mullick aged 28 son of Mohee Ooddeen.
143. Cauloo aged 25 son of Churn Shah.
144. Muneer Ooddeen aged 30 son of Churn shah.
145. Dhunnooy aged 20 son of Zaokeer.
146. Mahobut Khan aged 25 son of Gool Khan.
147. Rattee Boodeen aged 25 son of Moosdin.
148. Mosaueh Khan aged 35 son of Gool Khan.
149. Khoorshaed aged 22 son of Commer Ooddeen.
150. Koochil aged 32 son of Khulleel.
151. Mokim aged 45 son of Paundaur.
152. Paunchoo aged 25 son of Jungly.
153. Kittraub Ooddeen aged 40 son of Zynooddeen.
154. Bunnoo Sirdar aged 55 son of Zynooddeen.
155. Mungloy aged 53 son of Peeaur Mundle.

fanatics until subdued and dispersed by the military Force which Government found it necessary to send out against them.

9th. A Detachment consisting of 11 Regiment Native Infantry a Troop of Horse Artillery with a couple of Guns and some of the Troopers of the Body-Guard under the command of Major Scott having joined Mr. Alexander the Officiating Joint Magistrate at Baraset on Thursday the 17th November last, the latter who is a witness for the prosecution, accompanied the troops towards Narkoolbaria. Mr. Alexander states that on the morning of Friday the 18th he proceeded in advance with the Troops of the Body Guard commanded by Captain Sutherland and the Troops of Horse artillery to reconnoitre the position of the Insurgents, and arrived at their stockade at about 9 A.M. [;] that while engaged in making observations the party of Horse were hooted at and abused by the Insurgents who far from shewing any signs of intimidation commenced skirmishing with the Troopers when an European mounted artillery man was killed by a Musket shot that from the Insurgent Party and some other minor casualties occurred. The Infantry not coming up till the evening the attack was deferred till the following morning Saturday the 19th November when the Troops moved on towards the Village and the guns were brought up. The Insurgents who were drawn in front of the village, armed and prepared to fight having exposed the mangled Body of the European to view on an elevated spot in advance of their Line received the Detachment as it approached with loud yells on the first round being fired set up a general shout still maintaining their ground, nor was it until after the Troops had repeated their fire that they dispersed throwing down their Arms and retreating into the stockade.

10th. Mr. Alexander cannot state precisely what occurred during the attack upon that position, but on entering it he found about 200 Prisoners including the wounded who had been secured by the sepoy and to this number were added who were subsequently apprehended in the village, making a Total as reported to Mr. Alexander of 288 persons. A standard with a

156. Aurif aged 25 son of Deeanut Oollah.
157. Cauloo aged 25 son of Ramzaun.
158. Laul Mahomed aged 26 son of Purrus Oollah.
159. Bunmaullee aged 30 son of Khyroollah.
160. Edoo Turrifdar aged 45 son of Aukil Mahomed.
161. Edoo Mundle aged 37 son of Moojdeen.
162. Nawauzy aged 35 son of Tetoo Biswas.
163. Kurrim aged 42 son of Jaun Mahomed.
164. Bhoodhoy aged 45 son of Aukil Mahomed.
165. Dannish Ghauzy aged 34 son of Purrus Oollah.
166. Tonwauz aged 25 son of Alim Ghauzy.
167. Moottee Oollah aged 30 son of Khonwauj.
168. Muttee Oollah aged 32 son of Hauroo.
169. Ullaudy Mundle aged 60 son of Coobeer.
170. Phauzil aged 35 son of Noor Mahomed.
171. Noor Mahomed aged 56 son of Aukil Mahomed.
172. Bhoodhoy aged 32 son of Baunnoo.
173. Yar Sirdar aged 40 son of Bauhou Sirdar.
174. Teetoo Mundle aged 35 son of Jooraun.
175. Kittaub Ooddeen aged 25 son of Emaum Ooddeen.
176. Serauj Ooddeen aged 30 son of Kayaum Ooddeen.
177. Burket Oollah aged 28 son of Moyzoodeen.
178. Deowkee Pautuck aged 50 son of Sookunnee Pautuck.
179. Ussaulut Khan aged 65 son of Soorut Khan.
180. Golaub Sheikh aged 28 son of Kassim.
181. Hunniff Mundle aged 45 son of Baukir.
182. Shuhoor Biswas aged 34 son of Rahumut Biswas.
183. Nihaul Ooddeen aged 40 son of Hillaul Ooddeen.
184. Maudub Kareegur aged 25 son of Eamaum Ooddeen.

peculiar Device and inscription upon it, which Mr. Alexander understood to be symbolical of sovereignty was likewise found planted in the stockade and was made over by Mr. Alexander to his successor Mr. Colvin on that Gentleman's relieving him from the charge of the Joint Magistracy.

11th. Tarra Gayn witness, an Inhabitant of Narkoolbareeah saw the prisoners, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, prepared to attack the Officiating Joint Magistrate and his party on the plain before the village of Narkoolbariah on the 15th November, he afterwards saw them with the rest of the Insurgents in the stockade at that place, where likewise he saw the prisoners 16, 21, 24, 27, 32, 36, 41, 42, 43, 94, 95, 96, 97, 108, 131, 173, 181 and 178 who belonged to the Insurgents party.

12. Neemchand witness Inhabitant of Narkoolbarreah and a Barber in the employ of the Insurgents identified the prisoners 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 49, 50, 65, 68, 95, 97, and 131 as having been actually engaged in the attack upon and fight with the officiating Joint Magistrate and his party on 15 November, and deposed to having seen them before and after that occurrence in the stockade at Narkoolbareeah. He likewise constantly saw there with the rest of the Insurgents, and taking active part with them the prisoners 23, 24, 34, 38, 46, 48, 55, 64, 71, 72, 74, 77, 80, 81, 83, 84, 87, 90, 94, 98, 99, 100, 101, 105, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128, 136, 137, 138, 139, 144, 150, 151, 154, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161, 167, 168, 169, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 181, 182, and 183, and can positively swear to the whole of these prisoners from his having been employed to shave and trim the Beards of the Insurgent's party and of such who under the orders of Teetoo Meer were detained as prisoners and compelled to adopt the fashion of wearing Beards which was the distinguishing mark of the new sect.

13. Juwand Ally Jumadar of the Kulingah Thannah who accompanied the officiating Joint Magistrate in the first encounter with Insurgents

## Charges

The prisoners Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 38, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 48, 49, 58, 62, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 87, 88, 89, 92, 95, 96, 97, 125, 126, 129, 135, 136, 148, 150, 165, 170, 172, 173, 177 and 181 are charged with riotously assembling in arms and setting at defiance the Legal authority by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, with Murder, Wounding and Plundering and the whole of the Prisoners, including those above enumerated with joining and being accessory to the proceedings of the rioters assembled at the Village of Narkoolbareeah after the above described attack on the Joint Magistrate and assembling in arms in defiance of the Legal authority with the view of creating disturbances and plundering on the 15th November 1831 or 1st Ugrohun 1238 B.S.

## Futwa- Acquittal.

17th. Lateef Burkundauze swore to having seen the prisoner No. 19 in the fight and the prisoners 9, 12 and 19 in the stockade at Narkoolbariah.

18th. Shewuck Ram Burkundauze deposed to prisoners 19, 65, 77, 82, and 89 being engaged in the fight with the Acting Joint Magistrate.

19th. Peaur Mundle, with exception to prisoners 37, 54, 67, 76, 79, 84, 85, 88, 89, 110, 121, 129, 137, 147, 149, 160, 176, 178, in all 18 men whom he could not identify, swore to the rest of the prisoners as having been at the meeting convened by the Fukeers; to having seen them in the Stockade both before and after the Encounter with the Joint Magistrate of Baraset and to their having been engaged in the subsequent fight with the Magistrate of Nuddeah.

20th. Digut Sepoy deposes to having seen the prisoners 18, 19, 21, 24, 58, 62, 71, 72, 77, 82, 96, 125, 135, 143, 144, 170, 177 among the Insurgents in the stockade to which they conveyed him in a wounded state from the field, after the repulse of the Joint Magistrate's Party.

21st. Bissumber Sepoy recognised the prisoners 19, 30, 58, 71, 72, 77, 87, 159, 165, 173, 176, 177 as actively engaged in the attack on the Offg. Joint Magistrate, and the Prisoner 18 as having been subsequently in the stockade.

22nd. Byjenauth Sing Sepoy saw the prisoners 6, 19, 20, 21, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 45, 48, 56, 57, 59, 76, 92, 101, 112, 113, 125, 126, 127, 137, 138, 145, 149, 150, 154, 162, 173 and 180 armed engaged in the attack upon the Joint Magistrate.

saw the prisoners 4, 19, 21, 26, 28, 37, 38, 41, 65, 105, 132, 136, 146, 148, 168, 172, 177 and 181 actively engaged on that occasion - likewise the prisoners 3, 9, 14, 15, 23, 25, 31, 34, 35, 39, 49, 62, 77, 79, 80, 86, 91, 93, 97, 102, 108, 115, 123, 125, 126, 138, 141, 144, 155, 156, 165, 167 and 171, armed and assisting at the Fight. The prisoner Gholam Masoom No. 19 he (witness) swears to as the Leader of the Insurgents Force and to the Prisoners Nos. 35 and 181 as the persons who attacked and wounded him. The prisoners Nos. 18, 108, and 171 he afterwards saw in the stockade armed with clubs.

14. Ramnarain Ghose witness saw the prisoners 5, 7, 19, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 74, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92 and 140 among the Insurgents in the stockade at Narkoolbareeah where they had detained him as prisoner.

15th. Gopaul Burkundauz deposed to having seen the prisoners 4, 28, and 181 laying about them in the fight with the officiating Joint Magistrate.

16th. Achunbit Paure Sepoy identified the prisoner 19, 31, 41, 45, 48, 58, 64, 73, 96, 125, 129, 136 as taking an active part on the same occasion.

23rd. Joraun Mundal saw the prisoners 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 77, 95, 96, 97, 101, 105, 122, 123, 131, 133, 134, 136, 154, 155, 176 and 181 armed and proceeding to the attack on the Offg. Joint Magistrate's Party; and previously thereto in Company with the rest of the Insurgents, he also recognised the prisoners Nos. 4, 40, 46, 47, 48, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 70, 71, 73, 75, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 90, 91, 94, 98, 103, 104, 106, 108, 109, 112, 116, 117, 120, 125, 137, 139, 140, 142, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 173, 175, 177, 178, 179, 180, 182 and 184 as belonging to the Insurgent Band.

24th. Qusseem Ooddeen identified the prisoners 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 34, 36, 37, 39, 43, 45, 50, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 72, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 95, 101, 104, 105, 106, 118, 119, 120, 125, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 134, 137, 142, 143, 144, 145, 151, 153, 154, 157, 160, 163, 168, 169, 172, 174, 184, as having been among the Rioters.

25th. Nukkoo Mundal in like manner swore to the prisoners 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 50, 53, 55, 58, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 88, 90, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 104, 105, 107, 108, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 133, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 160, 164, 166, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176, 178, 179 and 181.

26th. Bhick Sing Sepoy saw prisoners Nos. 22 and 154 in the stockade after the attack upon the Joint Magistrate.

27th. Kalloo Burkundauze saw the prisoners Nos. 19, 28, 117, 135 and 149 in the encounter with the Offg. Joint Magistrate and afterwards in the stockade among the Rioter prisoners 4, 18, 20, 29, 111, 113, 126, 146, 148 and 150.

28th. Mr. Henry Bland Indigo Planter swore to the prisoners 3, 14, 19, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 77, 133 and 134 as having been of the party who invested the Hooghly Factory after the pillage of that of Bargurreah, and saw the prisoners 4, 5, 17, 71, 135, 137, 166 in the stockade at Narkoolbareeah with the other Insurgents; likewise after the stockade was taken saw the prisoner 24 near the body of Teetoo Meer the Chief of the Band who was killed with several others in the attack upon the place by the Military.

29th. Among the prisoners are two sons of Teetoo Meer Nos. 18 and 24, one of whom No. 24 had his leg shot off below the knee in the stockade.

30th. The prisoners plead not guilty; denying in general terms their having engaged in Riot or Disturbance of any kind. They accuse the witnesses for the prosecution of having been influenced in their evidence by vindictive motives arising from differences of opinion in regard to the observances and ceremonies of their Religion. The witness Peaur Mundul they charge with having been employed by the Zumeendar Kisendeb Roy to levy a fine from them for wearing Beards; and they allege that the latter caused their mosque to be burnt down and that a complaint preferred by them in the Joint Magistrates's Court at Baraset of this act of aggression on the part of the Zumeendar was dismissed. The meetings at Narkoolbareeah they declare to

have been merely for religious purposes as the disciples of Teetoo Meer and the Prisoner Gholaum Masoom above the rest urges in his deference [defence] that he had incurred peculiar enmity by accompanying to Baraset the Plaintiff in the prosecution instituted in the Joint Magistrate's Court for levying fines upon Beards and Burning down the Mosque.

31st. The prisoner Deokee Phatuck No. 178 a Hindoo mendicant who seems to have joined the Insurgents being evidently in a state of Insanity and a certificate to that effect having been furnished by the Civil Surgeon orders have been issued for this to the Insane Hospital at Rusupuglah. Prisoners 51, 110 and 121 died in Jail previous to being brought to trial.

32. The witnesses for the defence although many of them related to the prisoners were so far from being able to substantiate any of the allegations brought forward by the latter in their own behalf that their evidence only tended to confirm that of the witnesses for the prosecution.

33rd. The Futwah of the Law Officers is in substance as follows. It sets forth that Teetoo Meer was an expounder of the Doctrines of the Mahomedan faith; that in consequence of the Hostility of certain Hindoo Zumeendars and others towards him and his followers and of the demand on the part of the Zumeendars of a fine or Tax upon [beard] (a fact nowhere proved by the Evidence) Teetoo Meer had stood forward as the head and protector of the sect to which he belonged and had drawn a numerous congregation together, between whom and the Hindoos who opposed them arose frequent quarrels. That intelligence of these Disturbances having reached the Offg. Joint Magistrate at Baraset that officer, accompanied by 18 sepoy and others proceeded to Narkoolbariah and that he then and there ordered the sepoy to fire upon Teetoo Meer's party that the latter in return assailed the sepoy with Brick bats and then attacked them with clubs and swords in which encounter ten sepoy, one Jemadar and three Burkundaues of the Joint Magistrate's party were killed and seven or eight others with the Darogah of the Busseerhaut Police Thannah wounded and carried away prisoners into the stockade at Narkoolbareeah where the Darogah died, and the rest were released. The Futwah then goes on to say that although 19 of the prisoners viz. Nos. 4, 14, 19, 21, 28, 31, 32, 35, 37, 39, 41, 45, 48, 49, 65, 125, 136, 156 and 181 are proved by the Evidence for the prosecution to [have] attacked the Joint Magistrate in the manner above described and with exception to No. 37 to have been seen in arms both before and after the fight with the rest of the multitude congregated at Narkoolbareeah, yet in consequence of the Joint Magistrate having gone to the village which was in fact the stronghold or place of Residence of Teetoo Meer's followers, accompanied by sepoy whom he ordered to fire upon them. The prisoners, in the opinion of the Moolvee, could only be considered as having acted in self Defence, and that therefore the charge of Riotously assembling in arms and setting at defiance the legal authority by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Baraset with Murders wounding and plundering not established against them either on clear Legal proof or on strong presumption. On the other hand while admitting the existence of presumption Evidence in support of the general [charge] or assembling in arms with the view of creating disturbances and plundering against the whole prisoners with exception to the

prisoner No. 37 the Futwah proceeds to declare that in consequence of their having placed themselves in the predicament of Rebels by their opposition to the Govt. Troops which were sent out against them and which after killing and wounding several of their number among whom was their Chief Teetoo Meer so entirely dispersed the Insurgent Force as to remove all chance of future aggression therefrom, the subsequent apprehension of the prisoners with a view to the inflection [infliction] of further punishment was precluded; and that on these grounds therefore they were one and all entitled to their release.

34th. In this finding which appears to me at direct variance with the Evidence in the case I can by no means concur. The assumption with which it commences of the persecution of the prisoners on account of their religious principles and of the levy of a Tax on their Beards by the Zumeendars is no where borne out by the statements of the witnesses either for the prosecution or for the defence. The second position that the prisoners having been first fired upon by the sepoys who accompanied the Offg. Joint Magistrate of Baraset to Narkoolbareeah were justified in their resistance to that officer and his party, is so entirely opposed to the Evidence upon this point that its advancement cannot but lead to conclusions unfavourable to the judgment of the individuals making it. The depositions of the witnesses clearly prove that, it was not until Mr. Alexander on an attempt to parley with the Insurgents had been assaulted with a shower of Brick bats and other missiles which struck several of his party and that he saw the whole Body of Rioters advancing in arms and with evidently Hostile intentions towards him he gave orders to his men to fire. The third argument upon which the Law Officer rests his verdict of acquittal viz. that the dispersion of a Lawless Rabble by Military Force is to bar infliction of punishment on such of their number as have been apprehended and brought to trial for the Commission of crimes and outrages in which they were principally concerned is too absurd to require refutation.

35th. Adverting therefore to the necessity which in my opinion exists for making a severe example on this occasion, to the danger of permitting any of the prisoners to return to the scene of their crimes, to their open and daring resistance of all Legal authority, to the acts of cruelty rapine and violence perpetrated by them and to the devastation and loss of Life ensuing therefrom, I would condemn the prisoners Gholam Masoom No. 19, who appears under the selection of Teetoo Meer to have Headed the Insurgent Band, and to have been forward in urging them on to the excesses of which they were guilty, to suffer capital punishment at Narkoolbareeah the spot from where he carried on his depredations, where his body should be exposed on a Gibbet as a warning to others and the rest of the prisoners, his associates I would sentence to imprisonment in banishment or at any rate to transportation for Life.

Allypore Commissioner's Office  
18th Division,  
The 14th September 1832.

I have the honour to be & ca.  
Sd/- E.R. Barwell  
Commissioner of Circuit.



## MINUTE

## Case of Ramzan Mundul No. 1 &amp; ca. &amp; ca.

This is a most formidable and difficult case, whether considered with reference to the number of prisoners concerned, or to the evidence adduced against them, and it has in conjunction with Four other Trials connected with the Baraset Insurgents fully occupied my time during the greater part of the month. On carefully comparing and analyzing the depositions made by the several witnesses for the prosecution before the Magistrate in the first instance and subsequently on the Trial held by the Commissioners I have found them so replete with variations and contradictions in regard to the Identification of many of the Prisoners, and to the parts taken by the latter in the offences with which they are charged, as altho' not of a nature to invalidate their evidence in toto, or such as may not be reasonably accounted for by the long interval which elapsed before the trail came on, yet render necessary the utmost circumspection in avoiding to attach to it according as it effects each individual accused, more weight than it is justly entitled to; lest the innocent be confounded with the guilty, or the criminal in a lesser degree be convicted of a higher grade of Offence, than is clearly and Legally brought home to them respectively.

On the most mature consideration I am not satisfied with the evidence adduced in this case against the prisoners Nos. 1, 7, 15, 25, 34, 40, 46, 47, 48, 52, 54, 56, 57, 60, 66, 67, 68, 69, 74, 75, 76, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 91, 93, 102, 103, 108, 116, 117, 123, 124, 127, 130, 132, 137, 141, 143, 145, 149, 151, 152, 153, 156, 157, 160, 161, 164, 166, 174, 176, 179, 182, 184, and would direct their immediate release.

With respect to the rest of the prisoners I am of opinion that the first or principal charge is satisfactorily established against Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 19, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 41, 181. Of these No. 19 who appears to have Headed the Insurgents force, and to have been very conspicuously and actively engaged in the attack on, and massacre of the Joint Magistrate's party, I would in concurrence with the opinion expressed by the Commissioner condemn to capital punishment and the others to perpetual imprisonment, with the exception of Nos 8 & 13 for whom in consideration of their youth, I think a sentence of 7 years Imprisonment would suffice.

The remaining prisoners I consider to be fully convicted from all the evidence in the case of the Second or minor part of the charge and would pass sentence on them as follows.

Nos. 14, 20, 32, 36, 42, 43, 44, 50, 74, 94, 95, 120, 125, 131, 142, 172, 173, 175, they appearing to have been Ring Leaders in the disturbances, to be confined for the term of 5 years.

Nos. 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 27, 33, 35, 37, 45, 49, 53, 55, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 70, 71, 73, 78, 79, 82, 86, 89, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 105, 107 to be imprisoned for the term of 4 years.

Nos. 26, 38, 39, 72, 92, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 118, 122, 128, 129, 133, 134, 135, 136, 140, 144, 146, 147, 148, 150, 154, 155, 158, 159, 162, 163, 165, 167, 169, 170, 171, 177, 183 to be confined for 3 years.

This last class I propose to sentence to a somewhat more limited period of

imprisonment than the one immediately preceding, not on account of any distinction in point of criminality between the two classes, but with a view to obviate all possible risk of endangering the public peace by the simultaneous discharge of so numerous a body of Public Offenders, who reside in the same neighbouring villages.

The prisoners Nos. 18, a son of Teetoo Meer, with reference to his youth, and the evil influence and untimely loss of his father, and Nos. 80, 90, 104, 115, 119, 126, 138, 168 and 180, in consideration of their having been wounded on the storming of the Stockade by the Troops I would sentence to only 2 years imprisonment. No. 23 and 81 each of whom has had a hand amputated in consequence of wounds received, and No. 24, whose leg was shot off, on the same occasion, should I think be set at liberty without any additional punishment.

The several degrees of punishment above specified appear to me especially with reference to the alleviating circumstances to be found throughout the Fouzdarry Proceedings and in Mr. Colvin's report dated the 8th March 1832, to be fully sufficient to satisfy the claims of Public Justice. In issuing the final orders of this Court on these trials the Magistrate's attention should I think, be particularly directed to the concluding part of the 38th Paragraph of the Report just alluded to and he should be instructed, in releasing the different prisoners, to adopt proper precautions with the view of checking any possible disposition to turbulence on their part, as well as for the purpose of protecting them from being subjected to maltreatment. Having given my opinion for passing a sentence of Death on the Prisoner No. 19 the concurrent voice of another judge as far as regards that Individual, becomes necessary. Should that punishment be deemed too severe, I shall be ready to reconsider my judgment.

Sd/- R. Walpole.

I concur with the Commissioner of Circuit and Mr. Walpole in a Capital sentence against Gholaum Masoom<sup>19</sup>, who is clearly proved to have been the leader of the party at whose hands the Sepahees lost their Lives on the 15th November 1831, and to have been aiding and encouraging his followers, by word and example, in the acts then committed by them. Nothing is discoverable in the proceedings of the Trial upon which I could Honestly suggest the commutation of this to a mitigated Punishment.

Sd/- R.H. Rattray  
January 19th, 1833.-

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COURT OF  
NIZAMUT ADAWLUT HELD AT THE PRESIDENCY UNDER  
DATE THE 29TH OF DECEMBER 1832.-

Present.-  
R. Walpole Esqre.  
Officiating Judge.

The Court having duly considered the proceedings held on the Trial of Ramzaun Nos. 1 to 184, charged sixty nine of them (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 38, 41, 42,

1st Session 1832,	43, 45, 46, 48, 49, 58, 62, 64, 65, 67, 70, 71, 72,
No. 1 of Calendar	73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92,
Zillah Baraset	95, 96, 97, 125, 126, 129, 135, 136, 148, 150, 165,

170, 172, 173, 176, 177 and 181) with riotously assembling in arms and setting at defiance the Legal authority by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, with murder, wounding and plundering and the whole of the Prisoners including those above enumerated, with joining and being accessory to the proceedings of the Rioters assembled at the village of Narcoolbareeah after the above attack on the Joint Magistrate; and assembling in arms in defiance of Legal authority with the view of creating disturbances and plundering, and the Futwa of their Law Officer on the said Trial, pass the following Sentence.

The Futwa of the Law Officer of the Nizamut Adawlut, finds that a person named Meer Teetoo assembled a Body of Mossulmans, and complaining of various grievances, posted himself in the village of Marrcalbarreah (Narkoolbarreah) and there erected a Bamboo Stockade; that the Joint Magistrate, the Public authority on receiving information of this, went against them with a party of Sepoys and Burkundauzes, and was opposed by them when some of the Sepoys and others in attendance on the Joint Magistrate were slain, and others wounded, that at length a Military force marched against the Insurgents, slew some of them, together with their leader Meer Teetoo, and apprehended the survivors. It declares the proceedings on their part to amount to rebellion and that the Prisoners Thunday 31st alias Abdoollah son of Moosdin, Laulchaund<sup>4</sup>Biswas, Aumeer<sup>14</sup>Mundle the 1st son of Currim, Toraub<sup>18</sup>Ally, Golam<sup>19</sup>Masoom, Dubber Ooddeen<sup>21</sup>, Khonanje<sup>28</sup> alias Khoyr Oollah, Mussioollah<sup>30</sup>, Tauriff<sup>31</sup> the 1st alias Tauhir son of Bholae, Ranjoo Mundle<sup>41</sup>, Chaund Mundle<sup>45</sup>, Gopaul Sheikh<sup>48</sup>, the 1st son of Moosdin, Bauhau Uddeen<sup>49</sup> the 2nd son of Sheikh Dullooo, Moolook Kareegur<sup>65</sup>, Gopaul<sup>77</sup> 2nd son of Golaub son of Moosdin, Buddi Oollah<sup>125</sup>, Zurriff<sup>136</sup>, Burket Oollah<sup>177</sup> and Haniff<sup>181</sup> 2nd Mundle son of Bauker, are convicted, on violent presumption, of being the associates of Meer Teetoo in his attack on the Joint Magistrate and his party; and the remaining prisoners with the exception of the prisoners Goroo<sup>54</sup>, Yar Mahomed Noorbaf<sup>67</sup>, Buddeen and Dhunnooy<sup>145</sup> the 3rd son of Zauker, of being united with the said Meer Teetoo either before or after the attack. But that as their leader was slain and their assembly utterly dispersed such of them as have been apprehended are not liable to any Legal Penalty according to the Doctrine laid down in the Chapter on rebellion in the Hedaya and other Legal works. It therefore declares the whole of the prisoners entitled to their release.

The court not being satisfied with the evidence against the prisoners Ramzaun<sup>1</sup> 1st son of Cooraun Fukeer, Mohamed<sup>15</sup> 1st son of Joorau, Bahaun Oollah<sup>25</sup>, Bahaun Ooddeen<sup>34</sup> the 1st son of Shaikhdaur Mullick, Banmauly Mundle<sup>40</sup> the 1st son of Nubbaut, Gouhar<sup>46</sup> 2nd son of Kurraun Ooddeen, Nawauzy 1st son of Kunoo, Gopaul<sup>48</sup> 1st son of Sheikh son of Moosdin Mundle, Naipaul<sup>52</sup> 2nd son of Misrey, Goroy<sup>54</sup>, Shummus<sup>56</sup>, Hunniff<sup>57</sup> 1st son of Kaudir Mundle, Rujeem<sup>60</sup> 2nd son of Furreed, Dhunnooy<sup>66</sup> 1st son of Purbut, Yar Mahomed<sup>67</sup>, Noorbaf Shumus Oodeen<sup>68</sup>, Sheikh Peaur<sup>69</sup>,

Kaudem<sup>75</sup>, Khosaul<sup>76</sup>, Budden<sup>93</sup>, Mungloy<sup>102</sup> the 2nd son of Uzzees Oollah, Nawaub Ooddeen<sup>103</sup>, Muddaury<sup>108</sup>, Sheikh Zurriff<sup>116</sup>, Sheikh Mutee Oollah<sup>117</sup> the 1st son of Bukhshoo, Nujeem Ooddeen<sup>123</sup>, Sheikh Roushun<sup>124</sup>, Eyn Ooddeen<sup>127</sup> the 2nd son of Burket Oollah, Usmut Oollah<sup>130</sup>, Aumeer (132) the 5th son of Doolaul, Purrus Oollah (137), Mungloy (141) the 3rd, Kaurigur son of Bukhtour, Dhunnoy (145) the 3rd son of Zaukeer, Koorshield (149), Mokim (151), Paunchoo (152) the 2nd son of Jungly, Kitaubuddin (153) 3rd son of Bukshee, Auriff (156) 2nd son of Deannut Oollah, Boodhoy ((164) the 1st son of Akil Mahomed, Tourvauz (166), Teetoo Mundle (174), Serauj Ooddeen (176), Ussawlut Khan (179), Shukoor Biswas (182), Naipaul Mundle (7), 1st son of Nehaul Mundle, Buudul (74), the 2nd Kaureegur son of Sutkham, Daim (83) the 2nd son of Keenoo, Kaim (84), the 2nd [3rd?] son of Keenoo, Eynooddeen (85) the 1st son of Keenoo, Beenoo (87), Ghureeb Oollah (88), Mahtaub Uddeen (91), Cauloo (143) the 1st son of Churu Shaw, Cauloo (157) 2nd son of Ramzaun, Edoe (160) 2nd Turrufdar son of Aukil Mahomed, Edoe (161) 3rd son of Moosdeen, and Maudub Kaureegur, acquit them of the charge preferred against them, and direct that the Commissioner issue a Warrant for their immediate release in this case, detaining the thirteen prisoners last named in confinement to undergo the sentences passed on them in other cases before the Court.

The Court convict the prisoners Thundoy 1st alias (3) Abdoollah son of Moosdin, Lalchund Biswas (4), Allaudy the 1st Mundle (1) son of Cooraun, Moosdin Mundle (6) the 1st son of Teetoo Mundle, Ruhumut (8) 1st son of Hydur, Purran Gauzy (13), Golam Mausoon (19) son of Mahomed Motahar Oollah, Dubber Ooddeen (21), Khounje (28) alias Khoyr Oollah, Loyee (29) alias Ruhim, Mussi Oollah (30), Tauriff 1st alias Tauhir son of Bholace, Rajoo (41) alias Rudgim, and Hanniff (181), 2nd son of Bauker Mundle of the 1st or principal charge viz. of having riotously assembled in arms and set at defiance the Legal authority by attacking the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, which attack was attended with murder, wounding and plundering; and sentence the said Thundoy (3) 1st alias Abdoollah son of Moosdin, Lalchund Biswas (4), Allaudy (5) 1st Mundle son of Coraun, Moosdin Mundle (6) the 1st son of Teetoo Mundle, Dubber Ooden, Khonaujee (28) alias Khoyr Oollah, Loyce (29) alias Rudgim, Mussioollah (30), Tuariff (3), 1st alias Tauhir son of Bholace, Rajoo (41) alias Rudgim, and Hunniff (181) 2nd Mundle son of Bauker Mundle, to be imprisoned for life; and taking into consideration the youth of the prisoners Ruhumut (8) 1st son of Hydur and Purran Gauzy (13) sentence them to be imprisoned with labor for the term of seven years from the 26th of July last, the date on which the trial was concluded by the Commissioner of Circuit.

The Court further convict the whole of the remaining prisoners of the 2nd or minor part of the charge viz. of having joined and been accessory to the proceedings of the Rioters assembled in the village of Narcoolbareeah, after the attack upon the Joint Magistrate and of having assembled with arms, in defiance of the Legal authority with a view of creating disturbances, and of Plundering; and sentence the prisoners Aumeer (14) 1st Mundle son of Currim, Mahomed Massod (20), Rujeem (32) 1st alias Ubdool Raheem, son of Coober

Shah, Oodoo (36) Urridgeollah, Sanjum (43), Tauheer Mahomed Mundle (44), Sudder Oollah (50), Gopaul (77) 2nd alias Golaub son of Moosdin, Sheikh Zuckee alias Juttaee, Dhunnooy (95) 2nd son of Shurreef Ooddeen, Kaulaupo (120) 2nd son of Ghurreb Oollah, Buddioollah (125), Sudder Oollah (131), 2nd son of Sufi Mundle, Poyaut Mullick (142), Boodhoy (172) 2nd son of Bannoo, Yar Sirdar (173), Kittaub Ooddeen (175) 4th son of Emmumooddeen, who are proved to have been ring leaders in the disturbances, to be imprisoned with hard labor for the period of five years from the 26th of July last, the prisoners Aulik Mahomed (2), Pauchoo Mundle, 1st son of Burket Oollah, Thunday (10) the 2nd son of Bokoo Ooyeeal (11), Khoezur (12), Nujeeb Oollah (16) 1st son of Khosaul, Baudul (17) 1st son of Panchoo, Poyaun (22), Kauder (27), Chuckoo (33), Nujeem (35) alias Rujeeb Oollah, Aumeer (37) 2nd son of Urris Oollah, Chaund Mundle (45), Bauhau Oodden 2nd son of Dulloo, Maunick Sheikh (53), Sauduck Dhoreeah (55), Tauhir Oollah (58), Ruhumut (59) 2nd Dhoreeah son of Khosaul, Ruttun Shah (61), Buckan Oollah, Ausan Oollah (63), Karderbaksh (64), Moolook Caurigur (65), son of Ruhumut, Bholoy 1st Caurigur (70) son of Ruhumut, Hissaum Ooddeen 1st son of Shah Ghauzee, Ruhumut Oollah (73), Cooraum Mundle (78), Edoo (79) 1st Mundle son of Khizur Mundle, Ruffee Mahomed (82), Mungloy (86) the 1st son of Burket Oollah, Moosdin (89) 2nd alias Moyeez Ooddeen son of Roopy, Kittaub Ooddeen 1st son of Saudoo, Fuqeer Mahomed (97), 2nd son of Wahedee, Thunday (98) 3rd son of Purraun, Bholoy (99) the 2nd son of Boodhoy, Hissaum Ooddeen (100), 2nd son of Waudy, Kittaub Ooddeen (101) 2nd son of Newazy, Maunoollah (105), Nujeeb Oollah 2nd son of Eedoo, and Sheikh Taujoo (107), to be imprisoned with hard labor for the term of four years from the same date; the Prisoners Hullim Uddeen, Auriff Mundle (38) 1st son of Ruffy Mundle, Channoo (39), Dain (72), 1st son of Purrain, Hauroo (92), Taujoodeen (109), Sheikh Gouhur (111), Hidayutt-Oollah (112), 1st son of Deannut Oollah, Meer Hidayut Oollah (113), 2nd son of Moradally, Sheikh Durrausut Oollah (114), Shakir (118), Aumeer (122), 3rd son of Bakshee Mundle, Buktour (128), Thunday (129), 4th son of Goberdhun, Ramzaun (133), 2nd Mundle, son of Auzeem Ooddeen, Tauriff (134), 2nd son of Doolhub, Sharriff (135), Zurriff (136), Suffy Kaurigur (140), Maneer Oodden (144), Mahobat Khan (146), Rutteeb Ooddeen (147), Mosauhik Khan (148), Koochil (150), Baunoo Sirdar (154), Mungloy (155), 4th son of Peaur Mundle, Laul Mahomed (158), Bunmauly (159), 2nd son of Khyr Oollah, Nowauzy (162), 2nd son of Teetoo Biswas, Kurrim (163), Dannish Ghazee (165), Mootee Oollah (167), 2nd son of Khonwauz, Allaudy Mundle (169), 2nd son of Coobeer Mundle, Phauzil (170), Noor Mahomed (171), Burkett Oollah (177), and Nehaul Ooddeen (183), to be imprisoned with hard labor for the term of three years from the same date; the prisoner Taraub Ally (18), with reference to his youth, and the evil influence and untimely loss of his father Meer Teetoo, and the prisoners Aumeer Ooddeen (80), Kalapahar (90) 1st son of Ghurreeb Oollah, Sunna Oollah (104), Kummur Uddeen (115), Nowauz Ooddeen (119), Aumeer (126), 4th son of Burket Oollah, Shaikh Mudden (138) alias Muddaury, Moottee Oollah (168) 3rd son of Hauroo Mundle and Golaub Sheikh (180) in consideration of their having been wounded in the storming of

the stockade by the Troops, to be imprisoned with hard labor for the term of two years from the same date.

In consideration of the prisoners Moolookchaund (23) 1st son of Ramzaun, and Kain 1st son of Khosaul having each lost a hand from amputation in consequence of wounds received, and of Gouhur Ally (24) 1st son of Teetoo Meer having had a leg shot off, on the same occasion, the Court direct that they be discharged without further punishment.

The Court observe that the prisoner Deowhipautuck (178), having been reported Insane, has been released and that the prisoners Bhursoy (51), Coobeer (110), and Paukir (121) died in Jail before trial.

A true Extract-  
Sd/- C.G. Udney  
Deptt. Registrar.

## [TRIAL OF RAMZAN MANDAL AND OTHERS]

(NO. 312 C)

To

J.F.M. Reid Esqr.,  
Registrar to the Nizamut Adawlut,  
Fort William.

Sir,

Court Commr. of Circuit  
Zillah Baraset.

Trial No. 2 of the 1st Calendar  
for the 1st Sessions of 1832

Government

Versus

1. Ramzaun Mundle aged 35 yrs. Son of Cooran Mundul.
2. Aukel Mahomed aged 27 Son of Jooran.
3. Thunday alias Ubdoollah aged 35 Son of Moosdeen.
4. Laul Chaund Biswas aged 32 alias Laul Mahomed Son of Coober Biswas.
5. Ullaudy Mundul aged 30 Son of Cooraun.
6. Moosdin Mundul aged 30 Son of Teetoo Mundul.
7. Naipaul Mundul aged 40 Son of Nehaul Mundul.
8. Ruhumut aged 18 Son of Hyder.
9. Paunchoo Mundul aged 38 Son of Burket Oallah.
10. Thunday aged 30 Son of Bakoo.
11. Oojeaul aged 28 Son of Sujam.
13. Purraun Gauzee aged 20 Son of Bokoo.
14. Aumeer Mundle aged 40 Son of Curream.
15. Fukeer Mahomed aged 15 Son of Jooran.
16. Nasee Boollah Son of Khooshel.
17. Baudul aged 50 Son of Pauchoo.
18. Toraub Ally aged 21 Son of Syed Nessaur Ally alias Titoo Meer.

I transmit herewith to be laid before the Nizamut Adawlut the Proceedings in the trial noted in the margin held at the Stations of Allypore on the 27th and 28th and 31st July and the 3rd 4th 8th 9th and 13th of August of the Current year.

2nd. The prisoners who are all of them implicated in the trial No. 1 of the Calendar, already reported upon, are separately committed in this case of the charge of attacking in an armed Body the Magistrate of the District of Nuddea and his attendants with Murder Wounding and Plundering.

3rd. The Witnesses for the Prosecution state with very little variation in their evidence, that intelligence of the excesses committed by the new Sect to which the Prisoners belonged, whose sole object while professing to be Orthodox followers of the Mahomedan Faith, was plunder, having spread far and wide, the Magistrate of Nuddea, accompanied by Mr. David Andrews the Proprietor of Mulla Haut Indigo Factory and other European Residents of the District, and Escorted by about 250 of his Police and some Elephants came to the Bургuriah Factory with the intention of aiding the seizure and dispersion of the Insurgents. But the latter on receiving intimation of the Magistrate's approach sallied forth in a Body of at least a (1000) thousand armed Men, from their stockade at Narkelbarreeah attacked and drove the Magistrate and his party back to the Issamutty River which is about two or three Miles from the Stockade, Killed Mahomed Suleem the Fouzdarree Nazir of the Nuddeah Court who was unable to reach the boats before the Insurgents came up with him wounded several others and plundered a Pinnace Budgrew belonging to Mr. David

19. Golaun Masoom aged 30 Son of Motahur.
20. Mahomed Mussood aged 55 Son of Shaikh Sudder Oollah.
21. Dubber Uddeen aged 32 Son of Motaur Oollah.
23. Moolook Chund aged 45 Son of Ramzaun. Lost a Hand.
27. Shaikh Kaudder aged 40 Son of Bholey.
28. Khonange aged 36 Son of Hyder alias Eynooden.
29. Loyee alias Rudgin aged 32 Son of Coobeer Shaw.
30. Mussi Oollah aged 22nd [sic] Son of Coobeer Shawh.
31. Taurriff alias Taubur aged 32 son of Bholey.
36. Audoo aged 40 Son of Nubbut Mundel.
40. Bunmauly Mundel aged 45 Son of Nubbut.
41. Rajoo Mundul aged 32 Son of Guddy Mundul.
42. Urriz Oollah aged 40 Son of Nubbait.
43. Saujun aged 45 Son of Turrus Oollah.
44. Tauhur Mahomed Mundle aged 35 Son of Kurreen Ooddeen Mundul.
51. Bhursoy Son of Aukel Mahomed. dead.
77. Gopaul alias Golab aged 34 Son of Moosdin.
95. Dhunnooy aged 40 Son of Shurriff Ooddeen.
96. Kitaub Ooddeen aged 35 Son of Saudho.
97. Sookher Mahomed aged 50 Son of Ohhauddy Mundul.
105. Maunoollah aged 45 Son of Khyr Oollah.
108. Muddaury Mundul aged 50 Son of Ullauddy.
130. Usmut Oollah aged 40 Son of Sonnoy Mundul.
131. Sudder Oollah aged 34 Son of Sunnoy Mundul.
163. Kurrim aged 42 Son of Khan Mahomed.
174. Yar Sirdar aged 40 Son of Bauharree Sirdar.

Andrews of every article of value it contained after compelling the Magistrate & European Gentlemen on board to seek safety in flight on the opposite Bank of the River.

4th. The Prisoners with exception to Nos. 15, 20, 23, 40 and 130 are clearly proved on the testimony of Eye Witness by whom they were identified to have been actively engaged in the attack. [sic] On the Magistrate of Nuddea and his Party; and the evidence against four out of the remaining 5 above enumerated, altho' not perhaps sufficient to Convict them in point of Law the recognition of each individual resting upon the asseacration [sic, assertion] of one Witness only, yet affords strong presumption of their participation in the offence with which they stand charged. It does not implicate the Prisoner No. 130, however on this Occasion.

5th. The answers given by the Prisoners Ramzaun No. 1 Alaudee No. 5, Purraun No. 13. Ameer No. 14, Toraub Ally No. 18, Moolookchaund No. 23, Loyee alias Rujcem No. 29 and Faulkir Mahomed No. 44 on their examination before the Jt. Magte. of Baraset in which admissions were made by them to a certain extent of their connexion with the Insurgent Party were likewise duly attested.

6th. The line of defence set up by the Prisoners is nearly the same as that pursued by them in Trial No. 1 of the Calendar. They deny in general terms all share in the commission of the outrages laid to their charge; and impute the Witnesses for the Prosecution, whom they likewise accuse of having been the instruments of oppression on the part of the Zemindars, motives of Hostility towards them on account of their religious tenets. They reiterate also the old complaint of exactions having been levied from them by the Hindoo Zemindars for wearing Beards and on Other Pretences.

7th. The only Prisoners who on the Trial called for Witnesses previously cited by them on their commitment were Fukeer Mahomed No. 15, Golaun Masoom No. 10 [19], Dubbeer Ooddeen No. 21, Rajoo No. 41, Asmat Oollah No. 130 and Yar Sirdar No. 173.



(NO. 312 D)

To

J.F. Reid Esqr.,  
Register [sic] to the Nizamut Adawlut,  
Fort William.

Sir,

Court of the Commr. of Circuit  
Zillah Baraset.

Trial No. 3 of the 1st Calendar  
for the 1st Sessions of 1832

Government

*Versus*

64. Kaudir Bukhsh aged 35 years son of Moosdin.
67. Yar Mahomed Noorbap aged 65 years son of Mullozah Ghauzee.
69. Peaur Kauregur aged 40 years son of Mullozah Ghauzee.
71. Hissamoody Noorbap aged 35 years son of Shaw Ghauzee.
73. Ruhumut Oollah Kaureegur aged 38 years son of Oomar Shaw.
74. Baudul Kaurigur aged 51 years son of Sat Khan.
83. Dain aged 33 years son of Kunoo.
84. Kaim aged 25 years son of Kunoo.
85. Eynooden aged 20 years son of Kunoo Gya.
87. Benoo aged 5[0?] years son of Ramzaun.
185. Hazzary Noorbap, aged 38 years son of Doolaul.
186. Gooplam Noorbap aged 32 years son of Koorauin Gauzee.
187. Hurriff Oollah aged 40 years son of Bhomur Kaurigur.
88. Ghureeb Oollah aged 25 years son of Hullim.
89. Moozooddeen aged 45 years son of Roopoz.
90. Kaula Pauhar aged 20 years son of Gureeb Oollah.

I transmit herewith to be laid before the Nizamut Adawlut the proceedings in the trial noted in the margin held at the station of Allipore on the 15th, 27th and 28th of August last.

2nd. The prisoners 26 in number stand charged with assembling in an armed body for the purpose of creating an affray in the market place of Poonra and insulting the religious feelings of the Hindoos by killing Cows and sprinkling their blood on the walls of the said market place and other places and with wounding and plundering. With exception to 8 of them viz. Nos. 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, and 192. The rest of the prisoners were committed on the general charges contained in Trial No. 1 of the Calendar.

3rd. The witnesses for the prosecution agree in stating, that the Insurgent followers of Teetoo Meer proceeded early one morning during the latter end of Kartick but the precise date of which they cannot recollect in an armed body of about 500 men to the market place of a village called Poonra where after wounding a Brahmin by the name of Gocal Chuckerbutty who has since absconded they seized a couple of cows belonging to one Mohesh Ghosh & another Hindoo not mentioned, slaughtered the animals in the middle of the market place, defiled the temple of the Idol with their blood, and hung up their four quarters in contemptuous profanation of all that is held most sacred by the Hindoos, both before the Shrine of the Deity itself & in other parts of the market place. They likewise plundered the shops of the retail dealers in the market & assaulted a Mr. Smith in the employ of Praunnath Baboo who was passing by on an elephant at the time.

4th. Seventeen of the prisoners are clearly identified on the testimony of eye witnesses as

91. Mataub Ooddeen aged 32 years son of Kurreem.  
 188. Nuckoury aged 20 years son of Deanut.  
 189. Moolook Chund aged 26 years son of Hunniff.  
 190. Boyopaur aged 32 years son of Saudoo.  
 139. Mookhtaur aged 60 years son of Jooran.  
 140. Suffy Kaurigur aged 40 years son of Goburdhun.  
 141. Mungloy Kaurigur aged 20 years son of Bukhtour.  
 192. Moolook Chund Kaurigur aged 50 years son of Jhoroo.  
 148. Mosahib Khan aged 35 years son of Gool Khan.

#### *Charge*

Assembling in an armed body with swords Stanes & c. for the purpose of creating an affray in the market place of Poonra and insulting the religious feelings of the Hindoos by killing the Cows of Mohesh Ghosh and others & spilling the bloods on the walls in the aforesaid market place & others [sic] places and wounding & plundering on the 6th November 1831 or 22nd Kartick 1238.

arises [sic] out of differences on the score of religion. They admit however that altho' they took no part in the act, Cows were slaughtered in the market place of Poonra by the Fukeers in revenge as alleged by them for the imposition of a Tax upon their Beards by the Zumeendars Kissen Deb Roy and the prisoner Moosaheb Khan No. 148 likewise admits [in] his confession before the Magistrate with exception to that part of it which states him to have eat and drank with the rioters after the slaughter of the cows.

9th. The only prisoners who called for witnesses in their defence were Nos. 64, 88, 185, 189 and 192. But the evidence adduced by them merely tends to confirm that previously given by the witnesses for the prosecution.

10th. The Futwa of the Law Officer convicts 17 of the prisoners Viz. No. 64, 67, 69, 74, 83, 84, 85, 87, 186, 88, 90, 91, 188, 189, 191, 139 & 148, on violent presumption and declares them liable to punishment by Tawzeer, on the ground of expediency or at the discretion of the ruling power, but acquits the prisoners Hussum Ooddeen 71, Ruhumut Oollah No. 73 Suffy Kaureegur No. 140-Mungloy No. 141, Moolook Chund son of Jharoo No. 192, Hurrif Oollah No. 187, Moyzooddeen No. 89 and Huzzaree No. 185 for want of proof of guilt and pronounces them entitled to their release.

11th. In that part of the sentence which directs the acquittal and release of

having been present at, and actively concerned in the commission of the outrages above recited.

5th. In addition to these the prisoner Moosahib Khan 48 is convicted on his own confession before the Magistrate attested by the evidence of competent witnesses.

6th. The identification of the prisoner Suffy Kauriff No. 140 as one of the rioters rests on the testimony of one witness only, but that testimony is corroborated by the admission of the prisoner himself in his examination before the Magistrate proved on the trial by the writer who took it down, that he was with the rioters at Poora and eat food with them in the market place of that village.

7th. The evidence against the prisoners 71, 73, 89, 141 and 187 is legally insufficient the proof of their participation in the outrages laid to their charge being confined to the deposition of one eye witness only as affecting each individual against the prisoner Hazzary 185 there is no evidence at all and the prisoner Boyopaur 190, died before being brought to trial.

8th. The prisoners in their defence pleaded not guilty and retort upon the witnesses for the prosecution the imputation of having been influenced in their evidence by vindictive feeling

the prisoners Huzzaree 185 and Hurrif Oollh 187 I concur [.] Against the former there is no proof whatever and the testimony of the single witness who swore to the latter as an accomplice in the acts of the rioters at Poonra is unsupported by any corroborating circumstances. The prisoners have therefore been released under a warrant from me to that effect.

12th. In the rest of the finding however I do not agree for instance altho' the identification of the prisoner Suffy Karregur No. 140 as a participator in the outrages committed by the insurgents at Poonra rests upon the testimony of a single witness yet that testimony is confirmed by the prisoner's own admission before the Magistrate that he eat rice with the rioters in the Haut or market place of the village, and in my judgement therefore affords sufficient grounds for the conviction of the prisoners on violent presumption.

13th. Again the contradiction in the evidence of the witnesses against the prisoner Moolook Chund 192, is of too trivial a nature to invalidate the main facts of the case as therein stated, or to constitute as declared by the Moolvee a fair plea for acquittal.

14th. I have further to object, in this as in trial No. 2 to the mode in which sentence of punishment is pronounced by the Moolvee upon the convicted prisoners. Whether found guilty upon clear legal proof or on violent presumption, I consider the crimes committed by them of too dangerous a character to be held punishable on grounds of expediency merely, they are clearly so, according to the strict letter of the law; and to concede this point would, I apprehend, be giving encouragement to the spirit of unbridled and blood thirsty fanaticism in which they appear to have originated.

15th. It remains to notice the evidence against the prisoners Hussam Ooddeen No. 71, Ruhumut No. 73, Moyzooddeen No. 89 and Mungloy No. 141.- Altho' insufficient in point of law to convict them of the charge in this peculiar case the criminality of the prisoners has already I conceive been so completely established in Trial No. 1 of the calendar from which all the others have emanated as to render immediate the substantiation [sic] of further matter of accusation against them with exception to the prisoner Gooplaw No. 186, Nuckawree 188, Moolook Chund son of Hunniff 189 Boyapaur son of Sadoo No. 191 & Moolook Chund son of Jharoo 192, since committed, they are included with the rest of the prisoners in that Trial in the sentence of transportation to which I have recommended they should be condemned, and to which I have now to add the 5th individuals last enumerated.

Allipore Commr's Office,  
18th Divn.  
The 17th Sept. 1832.

I have the honour to be & ca.  
Sd/- E.R. Barwell  
Commr. of Circuit.

## ABSTRACT

Commissioner 18th Division reporting upon Trial No. 3 of the Calendar of Prisoners concerned in the Baraset insurrection, committed by the Officiating Joint Magistrate of the Suburbs under Orders of Government of the 22nd November last, to take their trial before the Commissioner of Circuit at the 1st Sessions of 1 1832.

Sd/- E.R. Barwell Commr. of Circuit

## MINUTE

I concur in convicting the prisoners Nos. 74, 83, 84, 85, 87, 90, 91, 139, 186, 188, 189, 191, of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms to the disturbances of the public peace in the market place of Poonhra and there insulted the religious feelings of the Hindoos by slaughtering cows and scattering their blood on the walls of the Hindoo temple, accompanied with plundering and other acts of violence, & sentence them to be imprisoned for the term of 2 years, which in the case of No. 90 & 139 is to commence from the expiration of the term of imprisonment adjudged against them in No. 1 of the Calendar. I acquit the remaining prisoners in this Trial.

With reference to the 14th paragraph of the Commissioner's letters [sic] accompanying the Trial the Court having already observed in Trial No. 2 for his information, that he has misconstrued the meaning of the term Seasut, as used by his Law Officer, do not deem it necessary to make any further remark on the subject.

Sd/- R. Walpole,  
29th December 1832.

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COURT OF  
NIZAMUT ADAWLUT HELD AT THE PRESIDENCY UNDER DATE THE  
29TH DECEMBER 1832

Present  
R. Walpole Esqre  
Officiating Judge

The Court having duly considered the proceedings held on the trial of Kauder Buksh and others, charged with assembling in a body with swords, Stares & c, for the purpose of creating an affray in the market place of Poonra, and insulting the religious feelings of the Hindoos by killing the Cows of Mohesh Ghosh and others, and spilling the blood on the walls in the aforesaid market place and other places, and with wounding and plundering; pass the following sentence.-

1st Session of 1832, No. 3 of 1st  
Calendar Zillah Baraset

Court of the Commr. of Circuit  
Zillah Baraset.

The Court concur with the Commr. of Circuit in convicting the prisoners Baudul<sup>74</sup> Kauregur, the 2nd son of Sutt Khan, Daim<sup>83</sup> the 2nd son of Keenoo,

Kaim<sup>84</sup> the 2nd son of Keenoo, Eeyn<sup>85</sup> Ooddeen the 1st son of Keeno, Benoo<sup>87</sup>, Ghureeb<sup>88</sup> Oollah, Kala Pahaur the 1st son of Gurreb Oollah, Mataub<sup>91</sup> Ooddeen, Mooktaur<sup>139</sup>, Gouplau Noorbap, Nockoury<sup>188</sup>, Moolook<sup>189</sup> Chund the 3rd son of Hunnif and Bogapaur the 2nd son of Saudoo, of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms, to the disturbance of the public peace, in the market place of Poonra, and there insulted the religious feelings of the Hindoos by slaughtering cows, and scattering their blood on the walls of the Hindoos temple, accompanied with plundering and other acts of violence, and sentence them to be imprisoned, the prisoners Kala<sup>90</sup> Pahaur the 1st son of Gureboollah and Mookhtar for the term of two years from the date of the expiration of the sentence passed upon them in Trial No. 1 of the Calendar; and the prisoners Baudul<sup>74</sup> Kaureegur the 2nd son of Sutt Khan, Daim<sup>83</sup>, the 2nd son of Keenoo, Kaim<sup>84</sup>, the 2nd son of Keenoo, Eeyn Ooddeen the 1st son of Keenoo, Benoo<sup>87</sup>, Ghureeb<sup>88</sup> Oollah, Mataub Oodeen<sup>91</sup>, Gouplau<sup>186</sup> Noorbap, Nuckoury<sup>188</sup>, Moolook<sup>189</sup> Chund the 3rd son of Hunniff and Boyopaur<sup>191</sup> the 2nd son of Saudoo for the term of two years from the 28th August 1832, the date on which the trial was concluded by the Commissioner; and not being satisfied with the evidence against the prisoners Kaudir<sup>64</sup> Buksh, Yar<sup>97</sup> Mahomed Noorbap, Peaur<sup>69</sup> Kauregur, Hissam<sup>71</sup> Ooddeen 1st Noorbap, son of Shah Gauzee Ruhumut<sup>73</sup> Oollah Kaurigur, alias Moynzooddeen, son of Roopoy, Moosdin 2nd Suffy<sup>140</sup> Kaureegur, Mungloy 3rd Kaureegur, son of Bukhtour, Moolook<sup>192</sup> Chund 4th son of Jharoo and Mosaubhib<sup>148</sup> Khan, acquit them of the charge preferred against them, and direct their release in this case.

The Court observe that the prisoner Boypaur the 1st son of Purraus Oollah is reported to have died, and that the prisoners Huzzary<sup>185</sup> Noorbap and Hurrif Oollah have been acquitted and released by the Commissioner.

[A True Extract]  
Sd/- C.G. Udney, Register

COPY  
(NO. 312 E)

To

J.F. Reid Esqr.,  
Register to the Nizamut Adawlut,  
Fort William.

Sir,

Trial No. 4 of the 1st Calendar  
for the 1st Sessions of 1832.

Government

Versus

19. Golam Masoom aged 30 years son of Motahaur.
77. Gopaul alias Golaub aged 34 years son of Moosdin.
80. Ameer Ooddeen aged 32 years son of Purus Oollah.
128. Bukhtaor aged 35 years son of Baukeer.
193. Soobeed aged 45 years son of Kootaun.
194. Useph aged 55 years son of Khulil.
143. Cauloo aged 25 years son of Churn Saw.
144. Munnir Ooddin aged 30 years son of Churn Shaw.
142. Poyout Mullick aged 28 years son of Mohuddeen.
157. Cauloo aged 25 years son of Romjaun.
195. Mohaib Oollah aged 40 years son of Zuddy Mundul.
160. Eedoo Turruffdar aged 45 years son of Aukul Mahomed.
184. Maudub Caurigur aged 25 years son of Emaum Ooddeen.
197. Zaukeer aged 32 years son of Gopaul.

Charge

Attacking and plundering in a large armed body compelling the daughters of a person named Yar Mahomed to enter into forced marriage and seizing Royotts on the 14th November 1831 or 30th Kartick 1238.

Futwah

Seeasutun Tauzeer.

which occurred at Narkoolbarreah resided at the House of Yar Mahomed and

I transmit herewith to be laid before the Nizamut Adawlut the proceedings on the trial, noted in the margin held at the station of Allipore on the 15th, 16th and 22nd August of the Current year.-

2nd. The prisoners stand charged with attacking and plundering in a large armed body the residence of a person named Yar Mahomed with compelling the daughters of that individual to enter into a forced married [sic] and with seizing ryots.

3rd. The witnesses for the prosecution state that a band of about 300 armed marauders belonging to the Insurgent party from Narkoolbarreah came early one morning to the village of Sherpore & attacked and plundered the dwelling of one Yar Mahomed a respectable inhabitant of the place breaking open chests and digging up the terrace of the House to get at the property of which they robbed the individual in question that they then compelled his two daughters one of them a widow named Muhtob and the other unmarried Mussumat Khoorma to enter into a forced marriage with two of their gang - The first [with] the prisoner Moheeb Oollah No. 195 - and the second with Kaloo the son of Romjaun No. 157, and after maltreating Yar Mahomed himself, his son Buddee Oollah, and others inhabitants of the village of Sherpore carried them off to the stockade at Narkoolbarreah. The women who were brought into court deposed to the violence offered them and the whole of the prisoners were identified on the testimony of eye witnesses to have been parties concerned in the outrages laid to their charge.

4. The prisoners pleaded not guilty but allege in their defence that a certain Fucker named Koorban Shah whom they state to have been the prime instigator of all the disturbances

that the latter in concert with the Zumeendar had with a view to conceal this fact by which he was himself implicated got up the present case against the prisoners, they likewise allege that the prisoners Cauloo and Mohib Oollah were married to the daughters of Yar Mahomed with the consent of that individual, and that on the 4th day after the marriage of Mohib Oollah they all partook of an entertainment which was given by Mohib Oollah on that occasion.

5th. The prisoner Cauloo (157) asserts moreover that the Fakeer Koorban Shah and Yar Mahomed gave Mussammut Khoorma in marriage to him and the prisoner Mohib Oollah No. 195 makes a similar assertion with regard to Mussomut Mahtaub.

6th. Hurroo Mundal, however, a witness summoned on the part of the prisoner Cauloo, instead of saying anything in his favour deposes to his having joined the new sect ostensibly from religious motives but in reality for the sake of plunder which he states the prisoners to be in the practice of resorting to for the means of subsistence, and to his having forcibly carried off Yar Mahomed's daughter.

7th. The prisoner Mohib Oollah declined calling for any evidence in support of his allegations.

8th. Aunoo a witness cited by the prisoner Maudub Kauregur No. 184 to prove that he did not assist at the plunder of Yar Mahomed's residence, states that he not only saw him in company with the rest of the insurgents and armed with a Bhudgen taking an active part in the pillage of that individual's property, but on several other occasions that plunder was the object and the means by which he submitted [sic] and that it was not until after he had and his associates had laid the country waste, he (the prisoner) had been apprehended and brought to trial.

9th. The rest of the prisoners declined calling for any evidence in their defence.

10th. The Futwa of the Law Officer finds the prisoner Gholam Masoom No. 19, Gopaul alias Golaub No. 77, Poyout Mullick 142, Cauloo No. 157, Mohib Oollah No. 195, Eedoo No. 160, and Zaukir No. 197, guilty on violent presumption; and barring the inadmissibility according to Mahomedan Law of the evidence of Yar Mahomed and his son Buddee Oollah the parties robbed, similarly convicts all the rest of the prisoners, and adjudges them "seasatun" or on the ground of expediency, liable to punishment by Tauzeer.

11th. The whole of the prisoners I consider to have been clearly convicted of the outrages alleged against them, and to be legally punishable. The measure of punishment to be inflicted I have already suggested as far as relates to the prisoner Gholam Masoom No. 19 distinctly from the rest, and to the prisoners 77, 80, 128, 142, 143, 144, 157, 160 and 184 in Trial No. 1 of the Calendar and in the sentence of transportation for life pronounced upon the latter I would include the additional prisoners 193, 194, 195 and 197 of the case under reference.

Allipore Commissioner's Office  
18th Division  
The 17th September 1832.

I have the honor to be etc.  
Sd/- E.R. Barwell  
Commr. of Cirt.

## ABSTRACT

Commissioner 18th Division reports upon the trial of 14 prisoners concerned in the late disturbances in the Baraset District committed in Trial No. 4 of the Calendar of those prisoners for the 1st session of 1832.

Sd/- E.R. Barwell Commr. of Circuit.

## MINUTE

I concur in convicting the prisoners 19, 80, 128, 142, 143, 157, 160, 184 of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms to the disturbances of the public peace, and plundered the dwelling house of Yar Mahomed; (I do not find them guilty of compelling his daughters into forced marriage) and sentence them with the exception of No. 19, and 77, to be confined for 2 years - the term of imprisonment of such of them as have been sentenced in former numbers of the Calendar to commence from the expiration of those sentences. No. 19, with reference to his conviction and sentence in No. 1 Calendar, it is unnecessary to sentence to any punishment in this case\*. I acquit the remaining prisoners.

Signed/- R. Walpole  
29th December 1832.

\* The same remark is applicable to No. 77 with reference to the sentences passed on him in No. 1 and 2 of the Calendar.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE NIZAMUT ADAWLUT  
UNDER DATE THE 29TH DECEMBER 1832 HELD AT THE PRESIDENCY.

Present  
R. Walpole Esqre.  
Officiating Judge

No. 4 of 1st Calendar  
1st Sessions, 1832

The Court having duly considered the proceedings held on the trial of Golaum Masoom and others, charged with attacking and plundering in a large armed body, compelling the daughters of a person named Yar Mahomed to enter into a forced marriage, and seizing Ryuts; pass the following sentence.

2nd. The Court concur with the Commr. of Circ. in convicting the prisoners Golaum Masoom<sup>19</sup> son of Motahur, Gopaul<sup>77</sup> the 2nd alias Golaub, son of Moosdin, Aumeer<sup>80</sup> Ooddeen, Bakhtuor<sup>128</sup>, Poyout<sup>142</sup> Mullick, Cauloo<sup>143</sup> the 1st son of Churn Shaw, Cauloo<sup>157</sup>, the 2nd son of Ramjaun, Edo<sup>160</sup> 2nd Turruffdar son of Aukul Mahomed and Maudub<sup>184</sup> Kaureegur of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms, to the disturbance of the public peace, and plundered the dwelling house of Yar Mahomed; but do not find them guilty of compelling his daughter into a forced



marriage; and sentence them with the exception of prisoner Gholaum Masoom<sup>19</sup> who has been sentenced to death in No. 1 and Gopaul<sup>77</sup> the 2nd alias Golaub whose sentence in No. 1 & 2 of the Calendar appears sufficient for this case also, to be imprisoned with hard labour for the term of two years, the term of imprisonment of the prisoners Aumeeroodden<sup>80</sup>, Cauloo<sup>143</sup> the 1st son of Churn Shaw, Cauloo<sup>157</sup> the 2nd son of Romjaun, Edo<sup>160</sup> the 2nd Turruffdar son of Aukul Mahomed & Maudub<sup>184</sup> Kaureegur to commence from the 22nd August last, the date on [which] the trial was concluded by the Commissioner, & of the prisoners Buktour<sup>128</sup> and Poyout<sup>142</sup> Mullick from the date of the expiration of the sentences passed on them in trial No. 1 of the Calendar, & not being satisfied with the evidence against the prisoners Soobeed<sup>193</sup>, Useeph<sup>194</sup>, Munnir<sup>144</sup> Ooddeen, Moheeb<sup>145</sup> Oollah and Zaukeer<sup>197</sup>, acquit them, and direct them that the Commissioner issue a warrant for their release in this case, detaining the prisoner Munnir Ooddeen<sup>144</sup> in confinement until the expiration of the sentence passed upon him in trial No. 1 of the Calendar.

(A true extract)

Sd/- C.G. Udney, Depty. Regr.

(NO. 312 F)

To

J.F.M. Reid Esqr.,  
Register to the Nizamut Adawlut,  
Fort William.

Sir,

Court of the Commr. of Circuit.  
Zillah Baraset.

Trial No. 5 of the 1st Calendar  
for the 1st Session of 1832.

Government

Versus

- 77. Gopaul alias Golab aged 34 years son of Moosdin.
- 128. Bukhtour aged 35 son of Baukir.
- 131. Sudder Oollah aged 34 years son of Sunnoy.
- 193. Soobied aged 45 years son of Koraun.
- 142. Poyout Mullick aged 28 son of Mohoudden.
- 194. Useph aged 50 years son of Kallah.
- 143. Caloo aged 25 years son of Churn Shaw.
- 144. Munnir Ooddeen aged 30 years son of Churn Shaw.
- 196. Turrick Oollah aged 28 son of Bechoo Kaurigur.
- 157. Caloo aged 25 years son of Ramjaun.
- 160. Edoe Turrufidar aged 45 son of Aukul Mahomed.
- 161. Edoe aged 38 years son of Moosdeen.
- 169. Ulladdeen aged 60 years son of Coobee Mundle.
- 184. Mandul Carreegur aged 25 son of Emaun Ooddeen.-

*Charge*

Attacking the Village of Junglepore in a large armed body with plundering and forcible exaction on the 17th November 1831 or

I transmit herewith to be laid before the Nizamut Adawlut the proceedings in the trial, noted in the margin held at the Station of Allipore on the 30th August and 1st and 10th September of the current year the Trial having been postponed to procure the attendance of Mr. Shillingford a witness for the prosecution under confinement for Debt in the Calcutta Jail, but which was at length unavoidably dispensed with in consequence of the refusal of the Supreme Court to comply with the application of the Magistrate without an affidavit of the absolute necessity for the evidence required.

2nd. The prisoners are charged with attacking, plundering and levying forcible exactions in a large armed body in the village of Junglepore.

3rd. The witnesses for the prosecution state that one evening the date of which they do not precisely recollect but which would appear from the Magistrate's proceedings to have been on or about the 16th November last the prisoners in a band of about 200 armed men sallied forth from Narkoolbarreeah in the first instance to a village called Sheerpore where they seem to have remained during the night and the greater part of the next day, that while there, they robbed a Fukeer at a place of a House a Standard a Nakora or Drum he had in his possession and maltreated several other persons; that toward the afternoon they proceeded to invest the village of Junglepore, and after compelling Mr. Shillingford an indigo planter who resided there to give them a sum of money plundered the shop of a Podar named Ramnarain in the haut of the village.

4th. The participation of the prisoners in these acts of violence and aggression is clearly proved against them by the evidence; & the answers of 6 of their number—Viz. the prisoners Maudub 184, Bukhtour 128, Soobied 193, Caloo

3rd Ugrohaun 1238.-

*Futwa*

Seatun Tazur.

157, Sudder Oollah 131, and Poyouth Mullick 141, in their examinations before the Magistrate acknowledging themselves to have been followers of Teetoo Meer, are likewise duly attested.

5th. The prisoners generally plead not guilty and ascribe the evidence given by the witnesses for the prosecution to hostility arising from religious differences.

6th. The prisoner Kauloo No. 157 however admits that he entertained Koorbaun Shah Fakeer and a party of about 300 men whom he had invited to partake of a feast he gave them at Sheerpore, but alleges that they afterwards returned to Narkoolbarreah where he himself subsequently joined them having gone round alone by the way of Junglepore; that while at Narkoolbarriah he overheard Teetoo Meer and the Fakeer Koorban Shah in the course of conversation together allude to the displeasure of Government having been excited by their slaughter of Cows and disputes with the Zumeendars which they observd they were unable to account for; that he (prisoner) remained at Narkoolbarriah that night but returned to his home the next morning. The prisoner declined calling for any witnesses.

7th. The prisoner Edoe Turruffdar (No. 160) further states that he merely went to Mr. Shillingford's to demand rent and that the Fukeer Koorban Shah having likewise give [sic] there Mr. Shillingford gave the latter 30 Rs. Prisoner likewise admits that he had a stick or Truncheon in his hand.

8th. Prisoner 161 Edoe, son of Moosdeen denies having gone himself to Junglepore but says that the prisoner Ullaudin No. 169 told him he had gone to receive rent from Mr. Shillingford and was just coming away from that Gentleman's factory when the Fukeer came there and that he had heard that the Fakeer and his men plundered the haut at Junglepore.

9th. Sham Chund Ghose, a witness summoned by the prisoner Edoe Turruffdar 160 and Ullaudeen No. 169 in their defence, states that when the latter went to Mr. Shillingford to demand rent the Fukeer and a large body of men came up and attacked the place and that prisoner 160 was of the Fukeer's party and armed with a Bludgeon.

10th. Imaum Ooddeen another witness on the part of the prisoner Ullaudeen gives evidence to nearly the same effect.

11th. Gholaum Ushouf a witness summoned by the prisoner Edoe 2nd No. 161 deposes that the prisoner accompanied the Fukeer Koorban Shah to Sherepore on a Wednesday and did not return home till the next evening when the Fukeer likewise returned to Narkoolbareeah -which is just 3½ koss from Junglepore. The evidence for the defence thus corroborating the statements of the witness for the prosecution.

12th. The *Futwa* of the Law Officer convicts the prisoners 77, 128, 131, 160, 161, 169 & 184 on clear legal proof, and the other seven prisoners on violent presumption and adjudges them all on the ground of expediency to be liable to punishment by Tazeer.

13th. I agree in the verdict with exception to the reservation I understand to be conveyed by the term "Secasutun" as here applied & which for reasons already stated by me should not in my opinion be admitted.

14th. The measure of punishment I would recommend should be awarded to the whole of the prisoners with one exception in this having been suggested in my reports upon the previous trials in which they were implicated, it only remains for me to include the additional prisoner No. 196 convicted on the present charge in the sentence of transportation for life passed upon the remainder.

15th. With reference to the 12th paragraph of the orders of Government communicated to me in a letter from Mr. Secretary Thomason under date 3rd April last I have in reporting finally upon the result of these trials which none [sic, now?] brought to a close, to remark that whatever previous grounds may have existed for the belief that Teetoo Meer and his followers were driven into the excesses committed by them, by insults offered to their religious tenets and by exactions on the part of the Zumeendar Kissendeb Roy, no proof beyond the assertions of the prisoners themselves appears upon evidence of this fact. That admitting the provocation to have been offered in its fullest extent it never can be held as any extenuation of the inhuman outrages practised by these marauders on the unoffending and peaceful inhabitants of the surrounding country, that under the cloak of religion I consider their real object to have been plundered [sic] and that I deem it to be essential to the preservation of public tranquillity that they should not be permitted to return to the scene of their lawless and criminal proceedings.

Allipore Commr's Office  
18th Division  
The 18th September 1832

I have the honor to be & ca.  
Sd/- E.R. Barwell  
Commr. of Circuit.

#### ABSTRACT

Commissioner 18th Division reports upon the 5th and last Trial of the 1st Calendar for the 1st Sessions of 1832 of Prisoners concerned in the late disturbances in the Baraset District.

Sd/- E.R. Barwell Commr. of Circuit

#### MINUTE

I concur in convicting the prisoners 77, 160, 161, 169, & 184 of riotously and tumultuously assembling together in arms, attended with plundering and extortion - and sentence them, with the exception of No. 77, whose sentence in Nos. 1 & 2 of the Calendar appears a sufficient punishment for this offence also, to be imprisoned for 2 years.- the term of confinement of such of them as have been sentenced in former numbers of the Calendar to commence from the expiration of these sentences. I acquit the remaining prisoners.

29th December 1832.

Sd/- R. Walpole, Judge

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE NIZAMUT ADAWLUT UNDER DATE  
THE 29TH DECEMBER 1833 [SIC, 1832], HELD AT THE PRESIDENCY.

Present  
R. Walpole Esqre.  
Judge.

The Court having duly considered the proceedings held on the trial of Gopaul alias Golaub and others, charged with attacking the village of Junglepore in a large armed body, with plundering and forcible exaction; pass the following sentence.

The Court deeming the prisoner Gopaul the 2nd alias Golaub son of Moosdin, Edoo<sup>160</sup> the 2nd Turruffdar son of Aukel Mahomed, Edoo the 3rd son of Moosdin, Ullaudeen<sup>169</sup> the 2nd son of Koober Mundle, and Maudub<sup>184</sup> Kaurigur guilty of having riotously and tumultuously assembled together in arms and of plundering and exaction, sentence them with exception to the prisoner Gopaul<sup>77</sup> the 2nd alias Golaub son of Moosdeen, whose sentence in No. 1&2 of the Calendar appears a sufficient punishment for his offence in this case also to be imprisoned with hard labour for the term of two years the term of confinement of the Prisoners Edoo<sup>161</sup> the 3rd son of Moosdin to commence from the 10th September last, the date on which the trial was concluded by the Commissioner; of the prisoners Edoo<sup>160</sup> the 2nd Turruffdar son of Aukel Mahomed and Maudub Kauregur from the date of the expiration of the sentence passed on them in trial No. 4; and of the prisoner Ullaudin the 2nd son of Koobeer Mundul from the date of the expiration of the sentence passed on him in Trial No. 1 of the Calendar; and not being satisfied with the evidence against the prisoners Bukhtour<sup>128</sup>, Sudder<sup>13</sup> Oollah the 2nd son of Sunnoy, Poyout<sup>142</sup> Mullick Cauloo<sup>143</sup> the 1st son of Churn Shaw, Munnir<sup>144</sup> Ooddeen, Cauloo<sup>157</sup> the 2nd son of Raumjaun Soobeed<sup>193</sup>, Useph<sup>194</sup> and Turrick<sup>196</sup> Oollah against them, and direct that the Commissioner issue a warrant for their release in this case, detaining the six first named prisoners in confinement until the expiration of the sentences passed upon them in trial No. 1&4 of the Calendar.

[ A true extract ]  
Sd/ C.G. Udney.  
Depy. Register.

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COURT OF NIZMT. ADUT.  
HELD AT THE PRESIDENCY UNDER DATE THE 19TH OF JANUARY 1833.

Present.  
R.H. Rattray Esqre.  
Judge &  
R. Walpole Esqre, Officating Judge.

The Court having duly considered the proceedings held on the trial of Rumzaune Mundul and others, 184 Persons, in trial No. 1 of the Calendar of

the First Sessions of 1832, for the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, as regards the case of the prisoner Gholaum Mausoom, No. 19 of the said trial. and the Futwa of their Law Officer thereon pass the following sentence.-

The Futwa of the Law Officer of the Nizamut Adawlut, convicts the prisoners Gholaum Mausoom, son of Motahaur Oollah, of having been associated with Meer Teetoo in his attack on the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, in which several persons were slain and others wounded; but declares that as the chief of the Insurgents was subsequently slain and their assembly utterly dispersed, the prisoner is liable to no Legal penalty, according to the doctrine laid down in the Chapter on rebellion in the Hedaya and other Legal works; and that he is entitled to his release.

The Court deeming the prisoner Gholaum Mausoom, son of Motahaur Oollah proved guilty of having been the leader of an Insurgent party engaged in an attack on the Joint Magistrate of Baraset, in which attack certain Sepahes and others Persons were murdered, and others wounded, and not seeing any circumstance in favour of the said Gholaum Mausoom, to render him a proper object of Mercy, sentence the said Gholaum Mausoom, son of Motahaur Oollah, to suffer Death by being hanged by the neck until he is dead; and ordered that his body be afterwards exposed upon a Gibet, at or as near to the spot where the murders were committed as circumstances may admit.

A True Extract.

Sd/- J.F.M. Reid- Regr.

(True Copies)

Sd/- J.F.M. Reid, Register

Order. Ordered that the subject of the foregoing letter be brought to the notice of the Hon'ble the Court of Directors.

[Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations,  
5 August, 1833, No. 11]

APPENDIX D  
THE MANZŪRAT AL-SU'ADĀ' ON TĪTŪ MĪR'S MOVEMENT\*

دو صد و چهل و بیست بود که یکبار لاله‌الده الله گفته و سه بار الله را  
 بر زبان آورده بخوار رحمت حق تعالی بپرستند تا ناله دادند ایسرا جیون  
 الحمد لله که بعد وفاست آن بر کزنده اگر چه نام آن دایار که از خلفای حضرت  
 امیرالمؤمنین بودند الله تعالی بکرم خود نارا بدعا می آن بزرگتایم پر شیخ  
 شریف داشت اگر چه نام اهل قرابت در باب اجزای رسوم  
 بدعت کوشش ناسکور نمودند پس بدعت است بکلام استهسته اکثری  
 رسوم بداعت خاشای آنها هم بر طرفت شد اگر چه نام آنها خدیز بر جاده  
 مستقیم نه آمدند الله تعالی یاد می ما و آنها و جمیع مؤمنین و مؤمنات  
 باد این تم آمین سالی بر فادش بالا کوشش کند شده بود  
 که در لکله بنگار در فواح اضلاع کلله متعین بود که در آنجا با از قوم  
 بنود سکونت داشت و در هر چهار طرفت آن قریایسه خرد بودند  
 که در آنجا سلمان که بر نیمه مرز بانی میداشتند اکثر آنها بلکه اکثر همه از  
 مریدان حضرت امیرالمؤمنین و خلفاء آنجناب بودند جز ازار  
 هیچ پارچه بر بدن نداشتند از نافت تا زیر زانو همان لباس بود  
 و تمام تن بر نه میداشتند و بجز صلوة خمس و روزی رمضان عبادتی در آنجا

\* Mawalawi Sayyid Ja'far 'Alī Naqwi, *Manzūrat al-Su'adā' Fi Ahwāl al-Ghuzāt wa al-Shuhadā'* (Tārikhi-Ahmadiya), University of the Panjab Library, Lahore, Folios 1229-1234.  
I am grateful to Professor Muhammad Aslam of Lahore for procuring for me the photocopies of this material.

راج بود بجز از ایندگان لشکر کلکنه که از انجا واقفانه از غار حبه  
 هم نبود ناگهان در آنها مسعیر میرفتند و او دشمنند که نسبت بد بکران در  
 مسایل طهارت و صلوة و اقیقت داشتند پس در همان مقام  
 م راجا سکونت داشت و بازار بود اقامت جمعی نمودند مردم از  
 م قریات روز جمعه مجتمع میکردند و غیرالمؤمنین را سزا بد سپردند  
 اجتماع این اجتماع حاضر کردید سخنان استخوانی و سخن با مسلمانان  
 رساناد که بر تو کس کوشش ننهاد چون از صلوة فارغ میشدند  
 پیش آمدند و فرمودند که شمارش را ده هشتاد و نه بار میگرد  
 این که استخوانی که در این خود بینی که ناقوس نواز است  
 ان شمارا پسند است و صوتش با صوت خرچه قدرانگام  
 و انصاف برین سخن بقبض آمد گفت که اگر باز درین  
 نجاج خواهد نمود خواهد دید اینم دیدنی است پس مرد خود را  
 در فیکه ایشان درین مسجد جمع نمودند سنگها بر نیند آن  
 همچنان میکردند اما اجتماع مسلمانان موقوف شد پس  
 نه پیش داروغه پولس بردند چون تمامی آنها بودند



*Charge*

Attacking in an armed Body the Magistrate of the District of Nuddea and his attendants with Murder. Wounding and Plundering on the 17th November 1831 or 3rd Ugrohun, 1238.

*Futwa*

Secasutun Tazeer upon 37 of the Prisoners and acquittal of 5 others Viz. Nos. 15, 20, 23, 40 and 130.

8th. The Prisoner Fukeer Mahomed attempts to prove an alibi by the evidence of one Jooroun Mundul whom he summons to testify he was at the same time [at] Witness's House on the day when the Magistrate of Nuddeah was attacked. But the Witness is unable to say where the Prisoner was on that occasion.

9th. Meer Cossunuddin and Mussullum Witnesses cited on the part of the Prisoners Gholaum Moosoom No. 19 for the same purpose to prove an alibi depose to the Prisoner's having been at his own house on Thursday the 3rd or 4th Augrohun but independent of their being nearly related to the Prisoner their evidence is so contradictory as to render it undeserving of credit.

10th. Gholaum Ukbur the Father-in-Law of Tumeezooden a first cousin by the father's side, to the Prisoner Dubber Ooddeen No. 21, endeavour to prove the Prisoner was [sic] confined to the House by Sickness on the day the Magistrate of Nuddea was repulsed by the Insurgents; but likewise grossly contradict themselves - the Witness Gholaum Ukbur first stating to the Court that he had heard the Prisoner was in his own house when that occurrence took place & then on a question from the Prisoner asserting that he (Prisoner) was lying ill at Witness's House on that occasion, while Tumeezooden deposes to having gone one morning to the Prisoner's House and found him in a fever, and to having heard the same day either that the Magistrate of Baraset or some other Gentleman in authority had been attacked by the Insurgents.

11th. The evidence of Ruttee Kant a Witness cited by the Prisoner Raujoo No. 41 proves nothing, merely showing the Prisoner to have been at the Witness' House during the 3rd first days of the Month of Kartick precisely a month previous to the attack on the Nuddea Magistrate.

12th. Immaum Ooddeen Mundul one of the Witnesses cited by the Prisoner Ausmut Oollah No. 130 states that he for his part never saw the Prisoner go to Narkoolbarreah but cannot p [sic] say whether he did or not. On the other hand Nepaul Sirdar, a Witness Summoned by the Prisoner Yar Sirdar No. 173 instead of giving any testimony in the Prisoner's favour proves him to have been of the Insurgents Party at Narkoolbarreah where he was in the constant habit of going.

13th. The Prisoner Bhursoy No. 51 Son of Aukeck Mohomed as stated in my Report on Trial No. 1 died in Jail Subsequent to his commitment.

14th. The Futwah of the Law Officer Convicts 37 of the Prisoners viz. No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44, 77, 95, 96, 97, 105, 108, 131, 163 and 173 of the charge against them in this Trial on presumption and adjudges them to be liable "Secasutun" which in this Sense I understand to mean on grounds of expediency only to punishment by "Tazeer". The 5 Prisoners Fukeer Mohomed No. 15, Mohomed Mussood No. 20, Moolookchund No. 23, Bunmaullec No. 40 and Usmut Oollah No. 130, he acquits for want of proof of

Guilt whether on clear legal evidence or strong presumption and declares them entitled to their Release.

15th. In this finding I do not concur; 1st because it appears to me that the 37 Prisoners found guilty by the Moolvee on presumption only, are Convicted on the fullest Legal Proof, and that being so they are liable to Punishment not merely on the ground of expediency or at the discretion of the Ruling Power as implied by the expression used in the Futwa, but under the strict letter of the Law, and 2ndly because I consider the charge to be established on strong presumption against 4 out of the 5 acquitted Prisoners.

16th. The measure of punishment which in my judgement should be awarded to the Prisoners has already been suggested in my Report upon Trial No. 1 of these Commitments for the consideration of the Court, and I have therefore nothing further to add upon that subject.

Allypore Commr's Office  
18th Division  
The 15th September 1832.

I have the honour to be etc.  
Sd/- E.R. Barwell  
Commr. of Circuit.

#### ABSTRACT

Commissioner 18th Division Reports upon Trial of 42 Prisoners charged with attacking in an armed Body the Magistrate of the Nuddeah District and his attendants with Murder, Wounding and Plundering on the 17th November 1831 or 3rd Ugrohun 1238 being Trial No. 2 of the Calendar of the Commitments prepared conjointly by the Magistrate of Baraset of Persons concerned in the late Disturbances in that District under the 18th Paragraph of the Orders of Government of the 22nd November 1831.

Sd/- E.R. Barwell  
Commr. of Cirt.

#### MINUTE

Ramzaun Mundul and others No. 2 Calendar-

I concur in the conviction of the Prisoners 2, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 27, 36, 42, 43, 77, 95, 96, 97, 163 and sentence them to be imprisoned for 2 years, in addition to the term of imprisonment to which they have been respectively sentenced in No. 1 of the Calendar. I likewise concur in convicting the Prisoner No. 7 and sentence him to 5 years imprisonment. I further concur in the conviction of No. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 21, 28, 29, 30 and 31 but with reference to the sentences already passed on them in No. 1 of the Calendar, do not think it proper to sentence them to any additional punishment in this case [.] I acquit the remaining prisoners.

With advertence to the 14th paragraph of his letter of Reference the Commissioner should be informed, that the term Seasut does not, as supposed by him, mean punishment awarded on ground of expediency only, but is used technically to express exemplary punishment for the protection of the

community from atrocious offenders, which corresponds with the use of it in the Futwa given by the Law Officer of his Court in this trial.

I observe moreover that the Commr. altho' concurring with his Law Officer in the Acquittal of Prisoner No. 130 has not issued any warrant for his release in this case, in consequence it is presumable of that Prisoner having been convicted in another; His attention should be called to the concluding part of clause 2, Sec. 6, Regn. LIII, 1803, and to the order passed by this Court in the case Kanhia Singh and others, Page 10, Vol. 2nd, Macnaughten's Nizamut Reports and should be directed to issue a regular Warrant of Acquittal in this case with respect to the individual in question.

29th December 1832.

Signed/- R. Walpole.-

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COURT OF  
NIZAMUT ADAULUT HELD AT THE PRESIDENCY UNDER DATE  
THE 29TH DECEMBER 1832.-

Present.-

R. Walpole Esqre.  
Officiating Judge.

The Court having duly considered the proceedings held on the Trial of Ramzan Mundul and others, charged with attacking in an armed body the Magistrate of the district of Nuddea and his attendants, with murder, 1st Sessions 1832 No. 2 of 1st wounding and plundering and the Futwa of the Calendar, Zilla Baraset Law Officer on the said trial, pass the following sentence.

The Futwa of the Law Officer of the Nizamaut Adlt. declares that the prisoners Ramzaun Mundul the 1st son of Cooraun, Aukel<sup>2</sup> Mahomed, Thunday<sup>3</sup> 1st alias Ubdoolah son of Moosdin, Lalchaund<sup>4</sup> Biswas, Ullauddy<sup>5</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Koorau, Moosdin Mundul the 1st son of Teetoo Mundul, Naipaul<sup>7</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Nehaul Mundul, Ruhumut the 1st son of Hyder, Paunchoo<sup>9</sup> Mundul, the 1st son of Burket Oollah, Thunday<sup>10</sup> the 2nd son of Boko, Oojeaul<sup>11</sup>, Purraun<sup>13</sup> Gauzee, Aumeer<sup>14</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Currim, Nujeeb<sup>16</sup> Oollah the 1st son of Khosal, Baudul<sup>17</sup> the 1st son of Panchoo, Torab<sup>18</sup> Ally, Gholaum Masoom<sup>19</sup>, Dubbeer<sup>21</sup> Ooddin, Sheikh<sup>27</sup> Kaudir, Khowangee<sup>28</sup> alias Khyr Oollah, Loyce<sup>29</sup> alias Ruheem, Musee<sup>30</sup> Oollah, Tauriff, the 1st alias Tahir son of Boloy, Audoo,<sup>36</sup> Raujoo<sup>41</sup> Mundul alias Rudjim, Urridge<sup>42</sup> Oollah, Sayun<sup>43</sup>, Tauhur<sup>44</sup> Mahomed Mundul, Gopaul<sup>77</sup> the 2nd alias Golaub son of Moosdin, Dhunoy<sup>95</sup> the 2nd son of Surrooff Ooddeen, Kitaub<sup>96</sup> Ooddeen the 1st son of Saudoo, Fukeer<sup>97</sup> Mahomed the 2nd son of Chandy Mundul, Maun<sup>105</sup> Oollah, Muddaury<sup>108</sup> Mundul, Sudder<sup>131</sup> Oollah the 2nd son of Sunnoy, Kurreem<sup>163</sup> and Yar Sirdar<sup>173</sup> are proved to have been among the insurgents, who made an attack on the Magistrate, in which attack several persons were slain and wounded, and property plundered; but that as their leader was slain by the Troops of Government, and their assembly utterly dispersed, the Insurgents who have

been captured are liable to no Legal penalty, as is laid down in the chapter on Rebellion in the *Hidaya*\* and other Legal works, and that therefore the above mentioned prisoners, with the Prisoners Fakeer<sup>15</sup> \* See Chapter 10 Book 9 in Vol. II, Page 227 of Hamilton's *Hidaya*\*\* Mahomed the 1st son of Joorau, Mahomed<sup>20</sup> Muksood, Moolookchaund<sup>23</sup> the 1st son of Romjaun, and Bunmauly<sup>40</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Nubbaut, who are not proved to have been among the Insurgents are entitled to their release.

The Court acquitting the Prisoners Ramzaun<sup>1</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Cooraun, Fukeer<sup>15</sup> Mahomed the 1st son of Joorau, Moolook<sup>23</sup> Chaund the 1st son of Romjaun, Bunmauly<sup>40</sup> Mundul 1st son of Nubbaut, Muddaury<sup>108</sup> Mundul, Burraun<sup>13</sup> Gauzee, Torab Ally, Mahomed<sup>20</sup> Masood, Rajoo<sup>41</sup> Mundul alias Rudgim, Tauhur<sup>44</sup> Mahomed Mundul, Maun<sup>105</sup> Oollah Sudder<sup>131</sup> Oollah the 2nd son of Sunnoy, and Yar<sup>173</sup> Sirdar, direct that the Commissioner issue a warrant for their immediate release, detaining the eight prisoners last above named to undergo the sentence passed upon them in trial No. 1 of the Calendar; and convicting the remaining Prisoners of the crime charged against them, sentence the said Aukel<sup>2</sup> Mahomed, Paunchoo<sup>9</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Burket Oollah, Thunday<sup>10</sup> the 2nd son of Bokoo, Oojeeaul<sup>11</sup>, Aumeer<sup>14</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Currim, Nujeeb<sup>16</sup> Oollah the 1st son of Khosaul, Baudul<sup>17</sup> the 1st son of Pauchoo, Sheik<sup>27</sup> Kauder, Audoo<sup>36</sup>, Urridge<sup>42</sup> Oollah, Sanjun<sup>43</sup>, Gopaul<sup>77</sup> the 2nd son of Moosdin, Dhunna<sup>25</sup> the 2nd son of Surreef Ooddeen, Kittaub Ooddeen the 1st son of Saudoo, Fukeer<sup>97</sup> Mahomed the 2nd son of Wahiddee Mundul, and Kurrim<sup>163</sup>, to be imprisoned for the term of two years, in addition to the sentence passed upon them respectively in trial No. 1; and the prisoner Naipaul Mundul the 1st son of Nehaul Mundul to be imprisoned five five (sic) years from the 13th August 1832, the date on which this trial was concluded by the Commissioner; and deeming the sentence passed upon the prisoners Thunday<sup>3</sup> 1st alias Abdoollah son of Moosdin, Lalchaund<sup>4</sup> Biswas, Allaudy<sup>5</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Cooraun, Moosdin<sup>6</sup> Mundul the 1st son of Teetoo Mundul, Ruhumut<sup>8</sup> the 1st son of Hyder, Dubber<sup>21</sup> Ooddin, Khowangee alias Khyr Oollah, Loyce<sup>29</sup> alias Ruheem, Mussee<sup>30</sup> Oollah, and Tariff 1st alias Tauhi son of Bholoy in Trial No. 1 of the Calendar, sufficient for this offence also, do not think proper to sentence them to additional punishment in this trial.- The prisoner Golaum<sup>19</sup> Masoom has been sentenced to Death in Trial No. 1.

The Court observe that the Prisoner Bhursoy<sup>51</sup> is reported to have died, and that the Commissioner has acquitted the Prisoner Usmut<sup>130</sup> Oollah.

(A true Extract)

Signed C.G. Udney,  
Deputy Registrar.

\*\* The Court's citation of the page no. of the work in question does not appear to be correct. Chapter 10 of Book 9 entitled: "Of the Laws Concerning Rebels" occurs on pp. 247-256 of the first edition of the work which was in circulation at that time. -M.M. Ali.

TRANSLATION  
(With comments in footnotes)

It happened when even one year had not elapsed on the episode of Balakot.<sup>1</sup> There was a place in the suburbs of the district of Calcutta, in Bengal, where a Hindu raja resided.<sup>2</sup> On all four sides of the place were small villages inhabited by poor Muslims who were peasants by occupation. The majority of those people, rather most of them, were disciples (*murīds*) of the *Amīr al-Mu'menīn* (i.e. Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd) and his *khulafā'*.<sup>3</sup> [They were so poor that] the only garment which they wore was an *izār* (pajama) from navel to knee, keeping the rest of their body completely bare. They did not practise any other form of worship except the five daily prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadān. [P. 1230 starts] No one among them knew about the *jumu'a* prayer except those who came from the city of Calcutta. It so happened that there appeared among them a person named Mīr Tītū who, more than any one of them, knew about the rules and injunctions regarding purification and prayers.<sup>4</sup> He started the saying of *jumu'a* prayer in the same locality where the raja resided and which was a market place. The people from all the villages began gathering in the place on Fridays thereby creating a scene of 'Īd of the faithful. Hearing about this the raja's son came to that place on one occasion and started abusing and ridiculing the Muslims. No one heeded him; but when the prayer was over Mīr Tītū came forward and addressed him saying: "You are the son of a chieftain and it does not behove you to mock and jeer at the religion of others. Look at your own religion; how the blowing of *naqūs* is approved of and liked by your religious leaders though its sound resembles the voice of donkey." Hearing this, that enemy of justice became furious with rage and warned the Muslims saying: "If you assemble for a second time in this mosque for prayer you will see what befalls you." He then ordered his men to stone the Muslims if they again assembled in the mosque for prayer. These orders were carried out; but despite that the Muslims did not stop assembling there. They took the matter to the police *dārogha*, but as all the policemen were Hindus [p. 1231 starts] and had deep regard for the raja, the poor oppressed people did not get their wrong redressed. They then took up the matter with the Magistrate of the district [Joint Magistrate], but to no avail. They discussed and thought over the matter among themselves and, as the oppressions upon them increased day by day, they decided upon armed resistance as the last resort. As the couplet goes: "When there remains no way out, it is quite right to have recourse to the sword."

<sup>1</sup> The battle of Balakot took place on 6 May 1831; while the final assault on Narkelbaria and the death of Tītū Mīr happened on 19 November of the same year.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is obviously to the father of Krishna Deb Rai, zamindar of Purwa.

<sup>3</sup> This is also confirmed by Colvin in his report, para. 7.

<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that the writer of this account, who was a personal secretary of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, does not mention Tītū Mīr as his *khalifa* or disciple.

Mir Titū wrote to all the Muslims of the locality informing them that an appointed Friday was a day for the Muslims' martyrdom and made a public call asking everyone to assemble at the place before mid-day. The raja was slumbering in negligence. At noon on the appointed day the Muslims gathered together, said the *jumu'a* prayer and afterwards attacked the raja's residence. Anyone who attempted to resist them was killed either by sword or by batons. They killed both the raja and his son as they were of one stock. Their women were taken into custody.<sup>1</sup> An Englishman who managed an indigo factory, hearing about the plight of the raja, rushed with his men to the scene of occurrence and met with the same fate.<sup>2</sup> An English merchant who heard about what had befallen one of his countrymen hurried to the place and received what the others before him had already received.<sup>3</sup> [Page 1232 starts] As news of these events reached the Magistrate of the district he sent a contingent to surround them, capture them and bring them to him without killing them. On arriving at the spot, however, the contingent found themselves confronted with a band of desperate people who did not care for their lives and who were ready to fight. Hence, with a view to frightening them away, the contingent fired on them with cartridges without balls.<sup>4</sup> No sooner did the Muslim hear the guns fired at them than they charged the contingent with swords and batons and killed them all except those who fled away. Thereupon the Magistrate appeared on the spot, riding on a horse all alone and bare-headed, and keeping himself at a distance bowed his head towards them and with his both hands made signs to be excused.<sup>5</sup> As every one among the Muslims was so eager to be immersed in the mercy of Allah, they made a dash towards him with whatever they were armed with. The magistrate fled from the spot and succeeded in saving his life with much difficulty after having crossed a rivulet. Afterwards he wrote to

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is obviously to the attack on Krishna Deb Rai's residence at Purwa on 6 November 1831; but the account given here is totally inaccurate and grossly exaggerated. The attack took place in the morning, not in the afternoon, after the *jumu'a* prayer. Neither Krishna Deb Rai nor any one of his family were hurt in any way, not to speak of their being killed. Indeed, no one was killed on that occasion. Nor, even according to the government reports and the statements of Titū Mir's adversaries, was any woman maltreated on that or any other occasion.

<sup>2</sup> This statement is also incorrect. Lewis Smith, manager of the nearby indigo factory of Akra, was at the scene of occurrence; but he was not even wounded. Only his servant Nawab al-Din was reported to have been wounded.

<sup>3</sup> The allusion is probably to the encounter on 17 November between Titū Mir's party and the Nadia Magistrate accompanied by the indigo planter David Andrews. Neither of these two Englishmen was hurt on that occasion. Only the magistrate's *fauzdari nazir* was reported to have been killed.

<sup>4</sup> This part of the account, which obviously refers to the Joint Magistrate W.S. Alexander's first expedition against Titū Mir (14-15 Nov.), substantially confirms what appears from the Joint Magistrate's own account that Titū Mir's party were first fired upon without any warning being given, that the gun-fires had no effect on them and that they thereupon made a counter-charge, in self-defence, as the Muslim law-officer pointed out. (See *supra*, pp. 274-276).

<sup>5</sup> This statement is clearly imaginary and appears to be based upon an imperfect acquaintance with the self-exculpatory explanation given afterwards by the Joint Magistrate that he attempted to negotiate with the "insurgents" before attacking them.

Calcutta all about what had happened. Consequently another contingent was sent to kill and eliminate the Muslims. Mawlawī Hidayat Ahmad Gangohī, the narrator of this episode, along with a few other Muslims, tried to stop the contingent being sent,<sup>1</sup> but most of the infidel Hindus of the contingent reached the scene of conflict. On the other hand, due to passage of time and also because of the lack of discipline and obedience, most of the Muslims [page 1233 starts] had dispersed and left the place of conflict. However, Mīr Tītū together with his followers remained there. On that day he told his followers that as martyrdom with patience and perseverance was highly meritorious, they should leave off their arms and remain standing in rows and facing the *qibla* till their lives were laid down in the cause of truth.<sup>2</sup> Most of the people followed his orders. Some of them took shelter in the houses and some others climbed the trees. Of all the persons Mīr Tītū and his close associates were the first to taste martyrdom. None of them moved from his place. The Magistrate's men then set fire to the houses. The inmates were either burnt or killed and imprisoned if they ran out. Those who had climbed the trees met the same fate. Then the Magistrate made a search for the servants of the raja<sup>3</sup> in every nook and corner and put them into prison. Their case was put before the authorities in the form of written charge and indictment. As regards Mīr Tītū and his followers the opinion of the Magistrate was that whatever they had committed by way of killing the raja, ransacking his house and the *kothi*, killing of the Englishmen and the contingent, they had done so on account of their having received no redress of their wrongs and therefore they could not be blamed for those acts. [P. 1234 starts] However, it was most improper on their part to chase away the Magistrate, especially when he had approached them all alone and unarmed showing his humility and asking for being excused. He had approached them simply to dispense justice and for redressing the wrongs done to them, and not for killing them or throwing them into prison. It was decided that as Mīr Tītū and all his followers had been killed and some of them burnt to death, they had in fact received more than they deserved by way of punishment. The rest of them deserved pardon and should be set free. As regards the raja and his men, it

<sup>1</sup> This is an important piece of information indicating that perhaps the Muslim leaders of Calcutta made an attempt to counter the zamindars' and indigo planters' lobby there; but though Mawlawī Hidayat Ahmad Gangohī is thus cited as the narrator of this account and made to appear as an observer of the events from a close quarter, his information, as revealed by this account, was obviously incorrect, exaggerated and misleading in many respects.

<sup>2</sup> This part of the account confirms the conclusion arrived at by the present writer on an analysis of the government records (see *supra*, p. 283) that on the occasion of the final assault upon Narkelbaria Tītū Mīr and his men did not offer any resistance and that the army mowed down this unopposing group with gun and cannon shots.

<sup>3</sup> Here and in what follows the account is manifestly wrong. The zamindars' men were not rounded up nor put on trial; it was only Tītū Mīr's real or supposed followers who were hunted down, captured, put on trial and awarded various punishments including the sentence of death for Ghulam Ma'sūm. Even the apology for the Magistrate (Joint Magistrate) in this part of the account is in conflict with what is stated earlier in connection with the sending of the contingent in the first instance against Tītū Mīr.

was observed that the whole trouble started on account of the wickedness of the raja's son who did not desist from his evil acts until he received a deserving punishment at the hands of the *fugara'* and *ra'yats*. It was pointed out that he practically did not recognize the authority of the government and was instrumental in inviting annihilation and death upon others. So it was decided that as he himself had perished and received an everlasting punishment, his companions who were already under detention and those who were subsequently detained must remain imprisoned for long periods of time by way of retribution.



## APPENDIX E

### THE DHAKA DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER'S REPORT OF 18 MARCH 1847 ON THE FARÁ'IDI MOVEMENT<sup>1</sup>

NO. 50 OF 1847

From

J Dunbar Esqr.,  
Commissioner of Dacca

To

F.J. Halliday Esqr.,  
Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal  
Fort William.

Sir,

I have now the honour to comply with the requisition contained in Mr. Under Secretary Young's letter dated the 15th February last No. 272.

2d. There is perhaps no part of Bengal, in which the people, and particularly the lower Classes, are in easier circumstances, than in the District of Furreedpore. It has been stated to me by persons, who have had the fullest opportunities of judging, and my own observation confirms the assertion, that within the last few years, a very marked improvement has taken place in the general condition of the people, and in the appearance of the country. Much land formerly covered with jungles is now under cultivation, and many sites for villages and houses long unoccupied, are again the abodes of a hardworking, and I believe, for the most part, a cheerful population. Land rents are paid with greater punctuality, and the collections from the Hauts and Bazars have shewn a gradual but steady increase. The inhabitants generally, as well the Cultivators of the soil as other Classes, have more substantial houses and better clothing, and though with many the daily earnings of their labour are not more than sufficient to cover their current expenses, there is little extreme destitution amongst them. In considering the cause of this improvement, a large measure of the good which it exhibits, is due to the abolition of the inland transit duties, and the consequent facility of Sale and barter, which has given increased encouragement to the cultivation of a greater variety of crops than formerly.

3d. The inhabitants of Furredpore, and I believe I may add also, of Dacca, Mymensingh and Backergunge, are for the most part satisfied with their condition, and the general feeling amongst them towards Government may be safely said to be good. The memory of the evils under which they groaned, previous to the establishment of the British power, has not yet fully passed away. Tradition keeps before them a picture of the fearful oppression to which they were subjected, when law & justice were little respected; and each man, who had the power, did that which was right in his own sight. They have learnt to appreciate the advantages of living under a powerful and Stable Government, which makes the happiness of its subjects its own object, and

<sup>1</sup> *Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations*, 7 April 1847, No. 99. Also *Dalhousie Papers*, Scottish Record Office, (Edinburgh), GD 45/6/443.

which provides, to the best of its ability, for the security and protection of life and property, from the highest to the lowest, and there can be no doubt, that with few exceptions, the body of the people would be very sorry to have cause to think seriously of a change of rulers, as a likely event.

4th. Of late years however, men's minds have been unsettled by the doctrines, and the peace of the well disposed portion of the community has been frequently disturbed by the practices of the Mahomedan Sectarious usually

\* Ferz-Commandment of God-Feraiz (Plural) Commandments of God- from which, Ferazee, or who acts up to the Commandments of God.

known under the name of Ferazees.\* It may be well, that I should say a few words in regard to the rise and progress of this sect, and their present condition. Between twenty and thirty years since, a man named Sereut Oollah, born of obscure parents, in the District of Furreedpore, gave himself forth as the apostle of a reformed Mussulman Creed. He persuaded a considerable number of the Mahomedans around him, that they and their fathers had departed from the true tenets of the Koran, and he promulgated several new rules, for the guidance & observance of his followers - he acted with considerable caution and prudence, not going much, if at all, beyond the character of a religious Reformer. On his death he was succeeded as Head of the Sect which he had established, by his son Mahomed Mahoseen, alias Doodoo Meeah, who has been very successful in diffusing the Ferazee

\* The number of Ferazees acknowledging Doodoo Meah for their leader has been variously estimated at from 50 to 80,000.

principles throughout Furreedpore, & the neighbouring Districts,\* and who has attained a degree of influence far exceeding that possessed by his father. This influence he has not unfrequently made use of to effect his purposes by force, when he found that gentler measures had failed. Altho' he has thus on more than one occasion, rendered himself obnoxious to the law, he has hitherto managed to escape with impunity. Some years back he made a pilgrimage to Mecca, where his followers are taught to believe, that visions and revelations of a nature tending to his future exaltation, were vouchsafed to him.

5th. The Ferazees profess to return to the pure doctrines of the Koran, stripped of all ceremonies and glosses. They assert a kind of equality amongst themselves, which is no doubt very seductive to the lower classes, but which has tended to keep men of wealth, rank and respectability, to whom this levelling system cannot be very palatable, from joining their ranks. Some of the ceremonies, and many of the expenses formerly attendant upon births, marriages and deaths, and on other occasions, are not only prohibited by them, but every good Ferazee is bound to do his utmost to put a stop to practices, which they are taught to look upon as sinful. United by the strong bond of a common faith, not yet equal to cope with the creed which it seeks to supplant, they look upon the cause of even the lowest or the poorest amongst them, as the cause of the whole body; and they are taught to believe, that nothing is criminal which is done on behalf of a brother in distress. A general contribution is entered into to defray whatever expenses it may be necessary to incur, and in

و در جابه‌ست راجه در قلوب سسان <sup>تنگن</sup> بزد منظر مان بچاره بداد  
 خود نرسیدند پس مرا نغمه بگام ضلع نمودند چنان با نقد زمان <sup>مرا</sup>  
 نمودند پس با خود ما امیدند که اگر زن چه باید نمود و اندام ایسان  
 بومایر مای افزود ناچار السیف آنرا کجیل <sup>بجو دست</sup> از همه حلقه  
 درگست <sup>حلال</sup> است بردن نسیم دست <sup>بیر تمیز</sup> موهوس  
 مسلمانان جواری را تحریر رقعات اطلاع دادند که غلان روز  
 جمعه روز شنبادست مسلمانان است <sup>صلواتی</sup> امام هر کلمه آرد  
 باید که قبل از نیمروز جمع شوند و راجه در خواب غناست  
 وقت نیز و زمانی مسلمانان حاضر شدند و نماز جمعه ادا نموده  
 بر مکان راجه مرقوم یورش نمودند کیسکه با ایسان <sup>مقابل</sup> شد  
 از ششیر و چوب بستند پس راجه را با پسرش <sup>پاره پاره</sup> نمودند  
 که رئیس از مردوسا ممتاز نبود و زمان آنها را به بند آوردند  
 در آنجا اگر نری بود که کارخانه نیل داشت باستماع <sup>مصبیت</sup>  
 راجه با مردم خود شتافت آنچه راجه یافته بود بهمان <sup>بیافت</sup>  
 باجری ازان قوم باستماع گشته <sup>بگفتن</sup> خود و دید آنچه سانی را

رسیده بود بلا حین بم رسیده چون در خبر حکم ضلع رسیده بگشتی فرستاد  
 که محاصره کرده بم را که فرار آرد اما کسی را نکند آن پلشن بمقابل انقوم  
 که از جهان خود سیر آرد خواست که محاصره نماید چون آنها را میما بقبال  
 یافتست برای تخریف بنا دین بلا کلو که سردا دند بچرد و سرش را باریت  
 از اینجا شریف محمد آوردند که بفرقه العین بصره سبب شمشیر کا و چون بقتضای  
 اجسام آنها را از مرغ روح خالی ساختند سوا کی که نزد کان بم برهان  
 باختند باز حکم ضلع نهاد بر اسپه سوار کسر برهنه عاجز می کنان را رسیده  
 و از دور سیر نمود و راجع سیر او و برود دست خود را نشان داد استغواست  
 نشانها خود میگردد چون هر یک از اینان مستعان آنها صرحمت حق بود  
 با اسلحه خود تقاضا نمود که بتکلف تمام اسپه سواران را از میدان  
 درود بار می که حال بود جان سلامت برود بجز حکم خاص همان  
 بکلکته نوشت و از اینجا پلشن دیگر برای قتل آنها همین کردید و در وقت  
 به است احمد کنگو همی را وی این حکم بیهت با تخی چند از مسلمانان  
 بارض نمودند اکثر کفار بنود آن پلشن در میدان مصافقت کردند  
 شری از آن سبب طوالت ایام و عدم الطاعت که بد بگردان

مشرف شده بود ز ما میر تیمو با جماعت خود حاضر بودند آن روز  
 بجماعت خود امر فرمودند که ششها دست با صبر و استقامت در زیر  
 عظیم دارد پس باید که اسلحه بگذارید و رو بقبله صفت لبته بایستید  
 حتی که جان بخت نسیم کنید پس اکثری از مردم همچنان کردند و بعضی  
 در مکانی خریدند و بعضی بالای درختان رفتند پس اولای میر تیمو  
 مع بر ایوان خود ششها دست ششها دست سیراب شدند  
 که بیخس از جای خود تجاوز نکرد و بعد از آن مردمان حاکم انیس  
 در آن خانه ماندند که سوخت سوخت و کسی که بیرون  
 آمد یا کشته شد یا گرفتار کردید و همین حال کسیکه نزد خندان  
 بودند پس حاکم نوکران راجه را آلاش کرده از جا بجا بپرانید  
 گرفتار ساخت و معاطله شان پیش حکام کلکته بدو را اظهار  
 بمعرض تحریر در آمد پس انصاف از جانب حاکم نسبت  
 بهم ایوان میر تیمو چنان شد که آنچه سالی از قتل و غارت خانه  
 راجه دگوشی و کتله آنکریز و قتل اهل بلین بوفوج آمد چون بچاکان  
 مظلوم بودند و در بیج محکمه بداد خود سرسید بودند بیج بدکردند



such a case, false evidence is not only allowed, but commended.<sup>1</sup> In every place where the Ferazees are to be found, Doodoo Meah has an Agent, known under the designation of Khalifa, Moonshee, or Sirdar, whose duty it is to keep the flock together, and make more proselytes, and through whom is collected a general tax for the purposes of the association, very much resembling that levied in Ireland, and known as O'Connell's rent. It is supposed that Doodoo Meah has rather lost ground of late, in the affections of his followers, in consequence of the frequent calls he has been making for pecuniary contributions, and the belief that a considerable portion of the money, is applied to their own immediate uses by him and his Sirdars.<sup>2</sup>

6th. Did the leaders of the Ferazees confine their views merely to the introduction of certain changes in the religious observances of the Mahomedans, they might be left unmolested, either to work out their own ends, or to sink into insignificance again, if they failed. There is a very general impression, however, among the Hindoo population, as well as with the Mahomedans of the old Creeds, that their ultimate object is the expulsion of the present rulers of the land, and the restoration of the Mahomedan power. That the possibility of such a consummation at some remote period, has presented itself to the better informed amongst them, and that it has even been held out to the multitude of their followers, as an idea to be cherished in their hearts, is not unlikely; but I am not disposed to think, that there has ever yet been any real inclination of trying conclusions with the powers that be. Still there can be no doubt, that the power which Doodoo Meah possesses for good or for evil is great, and that if he chose to exert it in opposition to law, much trouble would be required to alley the storm he might raise. The readiness with which his will is obeyed, and the facility with which his followers can be brought together for an illegal purpose, were fully exemplified in the late outrage in Furreedpore,<sup>3</sup> for the perpetration of which it is understood, that several hundred men were brought together from different parts of the country, some of them thirty or forty miles distant.

7th. The Ferazees are much disliked by the Hindoos, by the Orthodox Mahomedans, and by Europeans, for all alike dread a power which they have so frequently exerted to a fearful extent, for the purposes of oppression and revenge. A reference to the records of the Criminal Courts in Furredpore, Dacca, and Backergunge, will at once shew, that this dread rests upon no slight foundation. Outrages of the most atrocious nature have been committed, with a daring which might well excite surprise, were it not known, that while every one not belonging to the sect who dares to give evidence against a Ferazee incurs their most dreadly hatred, and unless powerfully protected, is sure before long to rue it, evidence to any extent, for the purpose of bringing off their own followers, when in grips of the Law, can be produced with facility, on the mere word of Doodoo Meah, or his Sirdars. The comparative impunity

<sup>1</sup> [This is a wholly incorrect statement on the Commissioner's part. It was true in regard to the adversaries of the *Farā'idīs*, i.e., the indigo planters and zamindars.]

<sup>2</sup> [This is also a prejudiced statement, based most likely on what the indigo planters and zamindars whispered to the commissioner.]

<sup>3</sup> [The reference is to the Panch Char incident, see *supra*, pp. 342-344.]

with which they have on many occasions been guilty of such outrages, has induced a confidence, which renders them ever but too ready to take the law into their own hands - they not only resist successfully the levy of all extra or illegal cesses by the Zemindars and Talookdars, but with equal ability to pay their land rent, they give much more trouble than others in collecting it - they would withhold it altogether if they dared, for it is a favourite maxim with them, that Earth is God's, who gives it to his people - the land tax is accordingly held in abomination, and they are taught to look forward to the happy time, when it will be abolished.

8th. The Sect should be put down with a strong hand. Nothing short of this will put a stop to their lawless conduct. As a first and all important step, every one who has well considered the subject, looks upon the removal of Doodoo Meah, not only from this part of the Country, but from the Country itself, as indispensable. To keep him in duress, or subject him to any measure of punishment here, or at Furreedpore, or at any place to which his followers could by possibility have access, would be but to scotch, not to kill the Snake. In the outrage lately perpetrated in the District of Furreedpore, it is well known, that though not present himself, the whole affair was planned,

\* A Gentleman of the highest respectability, who lives at an Indigo factory called Cossimpore, and who has several other factories in the District of Furreedpore.

arranged & carried out by his orders. Mr Dunlop\* has for some years past stood between the Ferazees, and those whom they sought to oppress in his neighbourhood- for this he has long been marked as an object of revenge, and fearfully has that revenge been carried out. In open day, his Factory\* was attacked, plundered, and burnt to the ground, and the residence of his friends and neighbours the Hindoo Zemindars of Panch Chur shared the same fate- that they and their families escaped with their lives, was owing to their having been able to find an imperfect shelter from the flames, and from the bullets of the attacking party, on the roofs of their brick built houses - the amount of property lost by them is computed at Rupees 26,000. In a pecuniary point of view Mr. Dunlop's loss was small, but his Gomuhtah was carried off, and according to the account given by some of the parties implicated, subsequently cruelly put to death in the District of Backergunge.

9th. Looking to these things, and bearing in mind, that the employment of a military force was necessary, some years back, to put these people down, and that not long after, troops were again warned to be in readiness to act against them; it will be admitted, that effectual measures should now be taken for breaking up the association, and giving them a blow from which they cannot readily recover. It may be said, that as a political party, there is no reason to entertain serious apprehensions from their designs, and that nothing further is required than the vigorous administration of the Law; but the law has failed to reach them on former occasions, and it may do so again - if so, it is surely a subject of grave consideration, how far, as rulers of the Country, we should be justified, in leaving the lives and property of a vast number of peaceable subjects, exposed to the machinations of men, so devoid of moral restraint, as Doodoo Meah and his adherents have shewn themselves to be, and



with such fearful power for evil, as they have at their command.

10. When at Furredpore at the beginning of this month, I had the whole of the proceedings in Mr. Dunlop's case before me. I would fain hope, that the evidence will be found sufficient to bring down upon Doodoo Meah\* the full measure of punishment, which he deserves.

(\* Now in Jail)

Should it be otherwise, however, I would strongly advise, that Government should come forward and lay hold of him, on the grounds of his being a notorious disturber of the peace, and the avowed leader of a Sect, which has ever and ever again done grievous violence to the Law. Apart from the Ferazees themselves, there is no spirit of disaffection whatever in this part of the Country, but the people are watching with anxiety the result of the present proceedings at Furredpore. Doodoo Meah's followers have given out, that he will soon be at liberty again, and that they will then clear scores with those, who have been in any way accessory to his present imprisonment, or to the conviction of any of his people.

11th. Doodoo Meah should be transported. His Khalifas, Moonshes and Sirdars should be placed under strict surveillance. The Heads of all Offices should be required to shut the doors of Office and employment against all Ferazees, high or low, and the Collectors of Land Revenue should be instructed to discourage, as much as possible, their Settlement in the Khass Mehals, to which they have hereto resorted in great numbers, having there much more of their own way than on the lands of the Zemindars and Talookdars. Notices ought to be also issued, warning the Ryotts against payment of the Ferazee tax, and promising full and immediate protection to those who resisted its levy. These measures, if they failed to eradicate the Sect entirely, would at all events have the effect of weakening and dividing them, and of giving confidence to all those who are opposed to them; and it seems not improbable, that in a very short time, the very name of Ferazee would fall into contempt. The history of Teetoo Meah and the insurrection which occurred under his auspices, at Baraset, about fifteen years since, shews how completely such leagues can be broken up and utterly dispersed, when sufferance becomes dangerous.

12th. I should have replied to the call of Government upon this subject sooner, had I not been anxious before doing so, to learn the result of a communication sent to Chittagong, with a view to ascertain whether there was any truth in a rumour which had reached me, that a secret correspondence had been entered into by the Heads of the Ferazees with persons beyond the Frontier. A reply has been received, and it would not appear, that such had been the case, or that Doodoo Meah had ever sought for support, other than what he has ever found in the fealty and attachment of his own immediate followers and adherents.

Commr's Office,  
Dacca Division,  
Dacca,  
The 19th March 1847.

I have & c.  
Sd/- J. Dunbar,  
Commr. of Revenue

## APPENDIX F

### \* STATEMENT OF DUDU MIYÂN BEFORE THE SESSION COURT OF DACCA AND HIS PETITION IN CONNECTION WITH HIS TRIAL ON THE PĀNCH CHAR INCIDENT, 1847

The prisoner, Mohsinuddeen Ahmud *alias* Doodoo Meea, was then called upon to answer, and he stated-

I pray that the petition, which I now present, may be ordered to be read and considered.

In 1245, Mr. Dunlop, to implicate me in the matter of the plunder of the houses of Mahomud Bukhshee and others, of Bunkhola, wrote an English letter to the Joint Magistrate of Fureedpore, blaming me without cause, and caused many sepoy to be brought; but I appeared of my own accord. It was said I had gone to a feast at the village of Alleepoor, seven or eight days previous to that occurrence, and had given orders respecting the said matter. To support that false charge Benoolah, Mateehoolah, Bungsee Singh, and others, eight false witnesses, were tutored to give evidence to my having given that order. But the said perjured witnesses were severely punished and I was released. And in the matter of the murder of Chhukowree, and the imprisonment, by my people, of Kabil and Nothoolah, and that I had ordered those acts, the said Mr. Dunlop by his servant Panchoo Khalasee complained against me; and in that too I was released, as I have written in my petition. And in the month of Agrahun, in the year 1251, Mr. Dunlop himself and his people petitioned against me, saying that Chur Hukeegutpore, Gopee Mohun Baboo's property, has been purchased by the said gentleman; that as in this I held pottahs of the lands from the Chowdrays of Shaiknuggur, my people on that pretence had cut and taken the paddy thence. By means of such petitions filed by himself and his people, he sued me. But on investigation by the authorities I was declared guiltless and released from all the charges. Owing to this enmity, in the month of Jeit or Asar, last year, the said gentleman himself swore to a false affidavit stating that I had caused an unlawful assemblage, and presented it to the Magistrate. In that case also I was released as guiltless. When he could not in any way gain his end, on the 30th of Bhadur last, the said Mr. Dunlop, through his Gomashtas and the said Baboos personally, with about 7 or 800 men, armed with weapons, attacked my house, broke the front door and murdered four watchmen and severely wounded others, and plundered about one and a half lakh of rupees in cash and property, concealed the bodies of the slain, and presented the wounded persons as part of an unlawful assemblage before the Darogah; they were forwarded to the Magistrate: one of them

\* *Translations of the Proceedings held in two cases tried in 1847 before the Session Judge of Dacca in which Doodoo Meea and his followers, belonging to the Sect of Hadjees or Ferazees, were charged with Unlawful Assemblage- attended with Wounding, Plunder, Arson & c. Calcutta, 1848, pp. 47-52.*

named Ameerooddeen died in hospital. The Magistrate did not investigate this. Even when the Darogah of Bhoosnah was ordered to investigate and to take my answer and a list of names, and two peons of the Nazir were sent with him, yet when the said Darogah and I arrived at my house, Hoseinuddeen Chowdry, Mr. Dunlop's man, and Arman Sikdar, a witness in this cause, came there, and on a discussion as to where the Darogah's lodging should be, the said Hoseinuddeen Chowdry being forbidden, the said Arman Sikdar yet insisted that the lodgings should be within Mr. Dunlop's property, but they would not mind this; the said Darogah, the Jummadar of the Balagushtee, and burkundazes, who were with him, know this well and can prove this if called upon. At that time, they seized and took me away from the custody of the two Nazir's peons who came from court, and from the said Darogah, the jummadar, burkundazes, and from the peons that accompanied, and having detained me for two or four *gurrees*, prevented me from delivering my answer and list of names, and carried me away to Pauch Chur to Gopee Mohun Baboo's and the gentleman's factory, and kept me one night at the bazar, and previous and following days; and the said Sahib and Baboo having bought over the peons, they sought to take my life, when I earnestly begged of the Darogah of Seebchur and Bhoosnah for protection that night, and, arriving under their safeguard at Furreedpore, I presented a petition stating the particulars to the Magistrate, who rejected it, and agreeably to his former order, seeing no means of coping with the said gentleman and the Baboos, and consenting to a compromise with the said gentleman and the baboos, the Magistrate recorded a proceeding and got me to sign it. He then sent an English letter and a perwannah to the said gentleman and the Baboos. They have thereby ruined me in wealth and life, talooks, lands, and houses, and have made me an outcast from my country. As the authorities did not investigate the matter, and on my refusal to compromise the matter, the Magistrate proposed to proceed to my house, and enquire into the matter, and ordered the Darogah of Seebchur to repair the road; and when the Magistrate taking me with him arrived at Paragram, my said opponents (asamees) fearing severe punishment in that case, although I was before and after the occurrence in Paragram and Dacca, they brought a charge against me of being projector of and accessory in the plundering of houses and of murder, on the 21st Agrahun, and have procured false evidence to be given through the ryuts and servants of the gentleman and the Baboos.

My Lord, I was in Paragram on the 16th of Agrahun, with his worship the Magistrate, with five or six elephants on a buffalo hunt, and at nightfall the said gentleman went away to Furreedpore, passing near Newabgunge, and I and others with four or five elephants proceeded to Paragram and arrived at my lodgings one *pruhur* or ten *dundos* at night, and because of the stay of the said gentleman at Furreedpore and Dacca on the 17th of Agrahun last, I mounted a horse in the afternoon and went to the village of Mashail, which is to the south of Paragram, to shoot paddy birds & c. and after dusk at four or six *dundos* at night, I returned to my lodgings. All this the witnesses for my defence know. As to the letters which are seized and brought in as my writings, some of these bear the name of Doorgah, others "Sat somodro Char Bed," and one quarter of faith.

My Lord, for myself I know the Koran and the commands of Allah and Russool, therefore to write the name of Doorgah is to destroy the unity of Allah, and is infidelity; the writer of such cannot remain a Mussulman: and to write "Char Bed," or "Sat Somodro," or "one quarter faith," is against the precepts of our Koran. Mussulmans never write these. Particularly, if my name signed in the list of names and in the petition which I wrote myself and presented to the Foujdarry be compared with these papers, it will be proved to the court whether they are false or not. Especially Rajkissore Ghose, the ameen of Pauch Chur factory, declares delivering to the Nazir and Darogah the two letters of Mohun Chuckerbutty and Mr. Dunlop 5, 7, 10, or 15 days after occurrences, but the said letter, which was written by Mr. Dunlop, was presented to the Magistrate in this month of Shrabon, on the day that I was made over to the Sessions Court; and the said letter was not mentioned at all before, it was only mentioned in last Assar; and on the said 21st on Saturday, I was all day in attendance at the Magistrate's tent at the said Paragram, and owing to the Magistrate not returning from Dacca, and there being no court, when a little of the day remained I went to Dacca by boat, and in consequence of the illness of my mother and daughter, and the climate of Dacca not agreeing with their health, with the view of sending them home, but fearing Mr. Dunlop, and wishing to report this to the Magistrate and seek protection to return home, on the 22d of Agrahun, in the morning, I went to the Magistrate's house, and stood at the western door, but the said gentleman forbid me to go to the house. I stood on the road in hopes of speaking to him, but he would not hear me, but ordered me to attend at his tent at Paragram: accordingly on the 23d of Agrahun, on Monday, I attended at Paragram, and heard that Mr. Dunlop's mooktar had filed a petition in the pending case. Besides this I know nothing more.

Q. Have you any more to say?

A. No, what more will I say? the Judge is the controller of life and property. On investigation, order my life to be spared.

Mohsinuddeen Ahmud *alias* Doodoo Meea, the prisoner, further stated: I said that at evening and after dusk I was shooting at the village of Mashail: that night was moonlight: on the Bheetah Tilah (rising ground) there are one or two leafless bina trees, on which many paddy birds and other wild fowls settle at evening time, and I used to shoot them with small shot: these birds do not settle in the day time, but in the evening, I therefore went shooting in the evening. But on the 19th of Agrahun, the Magistrate, and Mr. Ford of the factory, and a Captain from Dacca, and I went out on elephants, and after hunting buffalos returned towards evening.

MOHSINUDDEEN AHMUD *alias* DOODOO MEEA, Prisoner.THE PETITION OF MOHSINUDDIN AHMUD *alias* DOODOO MEEA,  
A PRISONER IN FURREEDPORE JAIL.

## HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That Mr. Dunlop, of Cossimpore Factory, and Gopee Mohun and Juggutchunder Baboos and others, of Panch Chur, having an inveterate enmity against me for some time past, on the 30th of Bhadon last, the gomashas of all the factories, and the Baboos themselves with 7 or 800 armed latteeals attacked my house and broke open the front door with axes, killed four watchmen, and severely wounded the gomashas and others, six persons, and plundered my property. I, and the representatives of the murdered persons, petitioned, when my said enemies, fearing punishment, together with others, got up this case on the 21st of Agrahun 1253, of my having been the instigator of persons who attacked, plundered, and burnt factories and houses, & c., and seized and carried off Kaleepershaud Kanjeelall, and brought this false charge into court.

My Lord, I faithfully stated to the Joint Magistrate, in writing, the whole circumstances of my being constantly in attendance on the said gentleman at Paragram, before these occurrences, and that I knew nothing of them, and this is proved beyond suspicion; but the said gentleman, disregarding my statements, has forwarded me to be tried by your honor.

I now set forth my statements distinctly, and pray that I may be delivered from this false accusation.

1st. That Mohun Chuckerbutty, the said gentleman's Mookhtar, about a month after the said occurrences, made a false affidavit, saying, that on the morning of the 3rd of December 1846, Kanaye and Hesabooddeen Meenah, of Kesubpoor, and Arman Sikdar, of Pauch Chur, had told him that I had given orders for the plundering of the Pauch Chur Factory, & c.

My Lord, this deposition of the deponent is altogether untrue, and that is every way clearly shew; because, if this were true, the Magistrate being there, he would have immediately deposed to this effect before him; and as the Darogah, Nazir and Amlah were all there he would have spoken to them. Moreover, even in the petition presented on the 7th December, after the occurrence, no mention is made of hearing this previously from the witnesses, or of my giving the orders, nor even till about a month after staying at the said place, and at Manikgunje, & c. But after coming to Pauch Chur and settling their plan, the said witnesses, who are the ryuts of the baboos and the gentleman, and implicated parties in the plunder of my house and in the murders, have given tutored evidence. The Magistrate put me in irons and unjustly put me in jail; and, in my absence, took the depositions of several persons, in what manner I cannot say. Dispenser of justice, if the evidence be true, then why did the said gentleman's Dacca Mookhtar, Ramchunder Bose, petition the Magistrate of the said place in the same month of Aghun, saying that I sat in the house of Dhunnoo Duffadar, of Bada, and gave the orders about the said affray; but not being able to prepare witnesses to support this, he falsely stated, that I sat in the house of Gholam Russool, Jummadar at Paragram,

aforesaid, and gave the orders. Dispenser of justice, why did not the said Mookhtar immediately bring to the notice of the Magistrate such a serious case, if he had received previous notice of its perpetration, or declare it to the Darogah? Whether this deposition was preconcerted or not requires investigation.

My Lord, the said witnesses too are my inveterate enemies: this year too, siding with the aforesaid gentleman, they have borne witness against me and my people in the cases of Panchoo Sikdar and Habul, & c.; and that the said witnesses have given evidence will appear from the conversation in the out-house of Gholam Russool Jummadar. I therefore pray, that the petition of Ramchunder Bose Mookhtar be called for from the Zillah of Dacca, a perusal of which will clearly shew the falsity of the prosecutor's deposition; and if the file of the case of plundering of the houses of Panchoo Sikdar and others, and mine, which is in the Foujdarry court here, be called for and perused, it will appear that the witnesses are criminals of that case. I pray that the above matter may be considered, and the papers be called for and a hearing granted, that I may be released from this false charge.

2nd. That the Magistrate, without shewing me and without taking my answer, sent for those of my servants whom my enemies had brought over to their side and under their power, and shewed some letters as mine and tutored them; and after a few days caused them to give false evidence resting on ambiguous expressions. And even among these witnesses are Omur Merdah, Goluk Paul and others, who are implicated in the robbery and murders at my house; and the said Omur Merdah has been for some time filing complaints against me on the part of the said gentleman. One of my people had named Lukheekanth Dutt as his witness for the defence, but he could not by any means produce him; if the said person were not on the side of the said gentleman, why did he come to give evidence against me? Tureekoollah Sikdar, witness, was made a criminal party in this case of arson and apprehended; but having persuaded the prosecutor, he was released. And if he do not now act up to what he is told, he will not be able to remain in the country. This will appear on investigation.

3rd. I never write letters, &c. with my own hand: when there is occasion for writing, I cause them to be written by the Mohurrirs; therefore many of my servants have been coaxed over to their views by the said gentleman and baboos. They are not ignorant of my ways, and in the factories of the gentleman are writers of various capabilities, and to prepare these letters is not a matter of difficulty to them. You are the ruler of the country; on hearing my defence, order me to be saved from this false indictment.

4th. That owing to an inveterate enmity, my opponents, the said Gentleman and the Baboos have got up this charge to ruin me: the least attention on the part of your worship will prove this; because the complainant's witnesses, in their respective depositions, have stated, that my people have committed these cruelties on them. My Lord, how did the witnesses know that my people have committed such deeds? But as they say, that they saw my brother, Mahomed Kazee, and thus knew they were my people, and that on asking for help in my name, they were released, and not punished, my Lord,

how is this likely to be true? For if any one commit such evil deeds, then what reason is there to declare that it is the orders of such a one, and to take out paper from one's pocket and give the order? Who are such fools in this age as to give orders for a criminal act, and then to declare it, and proceed to the execution of it publicly? To swear to such assertions, what else is to be inferred, but to bring me in guilty in your presence? Dispenser of justice, I am not in the least acquainted with the burning of the houses, &c. The magistrate himself went to the Mofussil, and dined with Mr. Dunlop in his tent; and after some consultation, and after taking the deposition of some of his creatures, and without judging my case, has committed me. Nothing remains to shew the enmity of the worshipful gentleman towards me before your honor; because the said gentleman having closed his own kutcherry, to ensure my punishment, sat every day with you during the proceedings, up to the time of the closing of the court, and in various ways suggested matters to you. In this your worship will see my evil destiny. Especially he put me in irons and confined me night and day in a separate cell; and to make me appear a great criminal in your estimation, he has written to the Sudder and procured troops and collected the burkundazes from several zillahs. Dispenser of justice! I am but a poor subject, what power have I to oppose the Government? That the Magistrate should have reported me to the Sudder as a creator of disturbance among the ryuts, proves the extent of his ill-will. I only expect justice. My Lord, if my disciples were ready to lay down their lives at my word, then how is it, that those disciples, who are giving evidence, are seeking to ruin me? this will be seen in the proceedings.

5th. Before this Mr. Dunlop and the Baboos, having conspired together, got up a case of murder against me, in which the Magistrate having committed me to the Sessions, I was found innocent, and released: therefore, seeing they could do nothing against me, they preferred this false suit against me. I beg to file the proceeding of that case, and pray that it may be read, and that I may be released from this false case.

6th. All the complainants and witnesses, who have been tutored, are criminated in the case of the plunder of my house and murder, being also implicated in the cutting off the beards of my people, and making them drink spirits, and beating and imprisoning them. And before this, all those persons being on the side of the gentleman and the baboos, have been complainants and witnesses against me and my people; especially the witness Hosein Kareegur, of Hajeepoor. who, in the month of Bhadur last, siding with the gentleman, deposed at the Thannah, stating that my people had plundered his house, and imprisoned and made away with his nephew, Anoo Kareegur. The said Anoo Kareegur came into court, petitioned, and deposed before the authorities, saying, that Mr. Dunlop's people had seized and carried him off to the factories at Cossimpoore and imprisoned him, and instigated his uncle, Hosein, to depose falsely against the Meea's people; and the witness, Ebadoollah Khalasee, of Chundypore, in the year 1248, stood forth as complainant and prosecuted my people as having plundered and destroyed the said gentleman's indigo plant; and the witness Allee Mahomud, of Goalkanda, having paid money to the factory amlah and the baboos, forcibly abducted the wife of one of my people,

named Hazaree Kareegar, on whose complaint the prisoner was summoned in court. He did not appear, but put forward his son, Abdool Kareegur, to bring a cross suit for plunder &c. The witnesses, Koodrutoollah of Hajepoor, and Baker Mahamud of Khara Kandee,—the complainants, Hudanoollah and Bechoo and Panchoo Khalasees, &c., have always borne false evidence, and been complainants against me and borne enmity towards me. They are the gentleman's and the baboos' ryuts and servants, what hindrance is there for them to bear false evidence? The ill-will and enmity of the above witnesses are such, that if an opportunity occurred of their seizing me and my people, nothing would hinder their committing murder. How can I then be pronounced guilty on the evidence of such persons? The papers of all the above cases are in the Foujdarry court. I pray that they may be brought and considered, and the nature of the enmity of the said persons towards me will then appear.

7th. The mookhtear of the gentleman, my opponent, has deposed to his having heard from Arman Sikdar and others, of my having given orders, and his having written to the said gentleman; and that the said gentleman wrote and sent the letter to the Pauch Chur Factory. These letters have been put in by him in this case. My Lord, it was in the power of the said gentleman and the mookhtear to prepare these letters. What difficulty was there to prepare and put them in? If the letters were true, what hindered them from being filed at the commencement of the suit? Considering the enmity existing between me and the gentleman and the baboos, there was nothing that could prevent their writing and filing these letters. On a consideration of these, I pray that my life be delivered from this false charge.

8th. Oomur Merdah, the witness on behalf of my opponent, has sworn in his deposition at the Foujdarry court of having never deposed against me. Dispenser of justice, I beg to file along with this petition an authenticated copy of the deposition he gave in the Thannah Sheeb Chur, against me and my people. I pray, that on perusal thereof, the said witness, who has falsely deposed, be punished.

9th. The witnesses in their respective depositions have stated, that very early on the morning of the 21st of Agrahun last, 4 or 500 armed latteals came out of my house and proceeded towards Pauch Chur. Dispenser of justice, while my family was at Dacca during nearly a year, my empty house was guarded only by Thannah Burkundazes; that people should come forth out of my house, while in this condition, it is not probable, for my opponent has forced me to leave my country; therefore, that people should come forth out of my house, cannot be true or probable. I pray that all these matters be considered, and that I may be released from this false charge.

10th. In this case, the false evidence which the witnesses have given, is not hid from the court; and the four witnesses, who have been committed by the Magistrate for giving false depositions, have clearly deposed before this court, that they swore falsely in the Foujdarry court, under instructions of Nazir Bhooran, a creature of my opponents, and through threats of the Nawabgunj Darogah. My Lord, whether or not my opponents have resorted to dexterity and intimidation in forcing people to give such false evidence, requires the



court's consideration. Previous to this they instituted two other cases of murder, plunder, &c. against me; but in which I was acquitted as innocent by the judgment of the Sessions Court, and many of the witnesses were committed to take their trial for perjury before the Sessions Court. Dispenser of justice, my opponents have from the beginning been unceasingly trying to have me punished; but by the just decisions of the judges, I have in most cases been released. Not obtaining their aim in any way, they again this year brought a case of arson, &c., against me. But, it is my belief, that I will never be punished by your honor on such a false charge. I pray that on consideration of the above circumstances, and calling for all the papers of the files, my life may be delivered.

To have me punished in this case, the Magistrate adopts the extraordinary mode of retiring with the complainant's brother, Brijomohun Baboo, under the shade of a seemul tree, and consulting together. He had the witnesses first called and taken to a separate house, and shewed them all the fabricated letters that have been filed, giving them various advice and counsel. Dispenser of justice, if the Magistrate bears such wrath against me, and seeks to have me punished, how will I, a subject, escape? He dismissed my true plaint; and on the false charge of my opponent, imprisoned me often; and on the false charge of my opponent, imprisoned me often, and fined me in a heavy sum. Being helpless, I paid the fine and suffered the imprisonment. Being a Magistrate, if he act partially, there is no alternative. Therefore, if your honor will not enquire whether the said gentleman is acting as I have above stated, I will be ruined. I never gave orders for this case of arson, &c., and am not at all cognizant of it. I am unjustly criminated and forwarded by him to your honor. On an investigation this will not remain hid. The 19th Srabon, 1254.

12th. All the letters that the Darogah has sent in to your honor, as being in my handwriting, have the name of Doorgah written on the top of them, and the petition said to be Zahid Khan's, requesting leave to depart, which also the Darogah has sent in, has the name of "Ram" on the top; the writing of the letter and that of the petition are in the handwriting of one person, there is no difference.

My Lord, if I had truly written the letter with my hand, then why was the name of Doorgah on it, especially if Zahid Khan did write the petition to me, requesting leave, why then should the name of "Ram" appear on it? If the letters were written by Mussulmans, the name of Doorgah or Ram would never be written on them. But, if it be supposed that the letters may have been written by the hand of a Hindoo Mohurrir, Dispenser of Justice, the writing in the body of the letter and that of the petition are by the same person. Under these circumstances, it is worthy of enquiry, whether or not my opponents have fabricated the letters and sent them into court through the Darogah. The letters are not at all my writing; if my signature on any paper be compared with the said letters, it will be clearly seen whether they have been fabricated by my opponents or not. That Mussulmans do not write the name Doorgah or Ram on their letters is proved from Oomur Merdah and other witnesses, in their respective depositions at the Foujdary court in answer to questions. On a consideration and perusal of the papers and grounds [of appeal] I pray that I may be released from this false charge. The 20th Shrabon 1254.



# تاريخ المسلمين في البنغال

المجلد الثاني « أ »  
المسلمون في البنغال  
تحت الحكم البريطاني  
١٧٥٧ - ١٨٧١ م

تأليف

د. محمد مهر علي

أستاذ تاريخ الإسلام في جنوب آسيا

بمركز البحوث جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية

جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية  
إدارة الثقافة والنشر



