



# BENGAL FAMINE

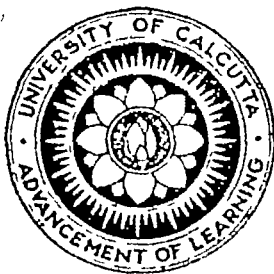
(1943)

As revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes in Calcutta

BY

TARAKCHANDRA DAS, M.A.

Lecturer in Anthropology, Calcutta University



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

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## P R E F A C E

In the midst of World War II, when human civilization faced the greatest crisis in its career, Bengal was overcome with a grim tragedy which has few parallels in the history of the world. The victims of the famine of 1943 in Bengal far outnumbered the victims of the battle fields of this great war. Men, women and children died in thousands, inch by inch, unknown and unmourned. They could not attract the attention of the world on their miserable plight as humanity, for the time being, forgot its sacred tasks and fought for mere power and wealth.

In the following pages I have tried to place before the readers some facts regarding the socio economic condition of a section of these victims of the famine, namely, those who came to Calcutta for a morsel of food. The survey was conducted by the teachers and students of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Calcutta. The investigators approached their task with a genuine scientific interest and were not actuated by any party-politics.

A preliminary report of this survey was published in the local press at the beginning of 1944 which served as the basis of certain questions of Mr Sorensen in a lively debate in the British Parliament. That report really supplied the first factual basis of the ravages of the famine and helped in focussing attention of our legislators on this important question both at the centre and in the province. Pandit Jawharlal Nehru also referred to this survey in *The Discovery of India*.

The present Report was written in 1944 but arrangement for printing and publication could not be completed before July, 1948. This delay in printing gave me the opportunity to utilise some of the data published in the meantime.

The major part of this Report was submitted to the Famine Inquiry Commission in 1944 in the form of a memorandum. Some of the facts stated therein and a few suggestions put forward have been adopted by the Commission and appear in its Report.

A sample survey of a large number of Bengal villages to find out the effects of the famine was undertaken by the Indian Statistical Institute at the request of the Government of Bengal in 1944. The results of this survey are already available to the readers in *A Sample Survey of the After-effects of the Bengal Famine of 1943* by Prof P C Mahalanobis and others, and in *A Plan for Rehabilitation in Bengal* by Prof K P Chattopadhyay and Mr R K Mukherjee. In view of this fact I have not elaborately dealt with the data collected from the villages. Part II of this Report which deals with the village-data has been

allowed to remain in the same form in which it was submitted to the Faming Inquiry Commission

The present Report was written before the partition of Bengal. Therefore all the figures and conclusions embodied in it refer to united Bengal

I now take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those persons who helped me in preparing and printing this book. In this connection I am specially indebted to Prof P N Banerjee, our popular Vice Chancellor who, in the midst of his onerous duties went through the manuscripts of this book and made valuable suggestions. I am grateful to Prof K P Chattopadhyay Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology Prof H O Raychaudhury Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Prof Rajchandra Bose formerly Head of the Department of Statistics and Mr N K. Bose Lecturer in Geography who carefully read the manuscripts and suggested additions and alterations. My thanks are also due to my colleagues and pupils who readily agreed to and actively participated in the collection of data under trying circumstances. It is also my duty to acknowledge here the help I and my co-workers received from our hosts in far off villages where we conducted our investigations. I record my appreciation of the encouragement I received from Mr A K. Sen Principal, City College Calcutta who accompanied me on different occasions in course of this survey in the villages. My pupils of the Post-Graduate and Under Graduate classes of 1948 and 1944 rendered me very valuable assistance in working out the data. Mr Sachin Roy and Miss Nilima Majumdar deserve special mention in this connection. Mr N O Sen Mr S Kanjilal and Mr Bhupendralal Banerjee of the University Press were very kind to help me with their suggestions in the printing of this Report. I am also indebted to the proof readers of the University Press who went through the final proofs. Some of the illustrations of this Report have been reproduced from photographs very kindly lent by *The Statesman Ltd.*

Department of Anthropology  
University of Calcutta.  
The 14th April 1949

T C D.

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She came to save her child

# CHAPTER I

## APPROACH OF THE FAMINE

### I THE PRELUDE

By the middle of 1942 practically the whole of Burma fell into the hands of the Japanese. Streams of Indian refugees from Burma poured into Assam and Bengal mainly through Manipur and Chittagong. The awful tales of the Burma evacuees rang from one end of the country to the other. But none dreamt that it was a prelude to a bigger calamity which swept away millions of Bengalees in the very next year.

The *aman* crop (winter paddy crop)<sup>1</sup> of 1942 was gathered in at the end of the year. It was not satisfactory in many parts of Bengal for various reasons. The price of rice came down temporarily, but not to the same extent as in previous years. With the end of January 1943, the rice-market began to show unusual symptoms of unrest. This was the time when the cultivators had their granaries full, when few people came to the market to purchase food-grains. Yet the market began to experience steady rise—at first slow but gradually it gathered momentum and at last, by the end of May, it jumped to a figure which was four to six hundred per cent more than the usual price of rice in previous years, at that period of the year. In Chittagong the increase was eight hundred per cent.

Rice is the staple food of the Bengalees. In fact, for a very large number of them, it is practically the only food. The day-labourers, petty agriculturists, artisans, and traders who form more than 65 per cent of our population, according to the Census of 1931,<sup>2</sup> can hardly afford to pay for meat, milk, eggs, vegetables and sweets. In many cases they are the producers of these articles of food but their low average income forces them to sell every bit of these products in order to purchase the all-important rice, even under normal conditions of life. The poverty of the Bengalees of this stratum of society is well known to every one who has come

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1 This is the main paddy crop of Bengal. It is harvested from the latter part of November up to the first part of January.

2 This figure has been calculated on the basis of the Census of 1931 as figures for occupation or means of livelihood are not available in the Census Reports of 1941.

in contact with them. Practically they have no reserve. The petty agriculturists are mostly tenant cultivators (*bargadars* or *bhagidars* or *bhagchashis*). They cultivate the land of their non agricultural neighbours generally for a half share of the produce, and own at the utmost one or two *bighas*<sup>3</sup> of land. The case of the day labourers and artisans is even worse. Practically they do not possess any land whatsoever. But many of them own a few domestic animals—say milch cows a few goats and a number of fowls. Their domestic utensils of value are the few brass and bell metal pots and pans which are the pride of the women folk. Some of them even possess a few silver ornaments and rarely some gold ones. This is their reserve—the price of which would not exceed Rs 300/ (twenty pounds) for a whole family in most cases. This does not of course, include the homestead land and the huts which also are not of much cash value.

This reserve was soon eaten up by the soaring price of rice. At first the ornaments were sold or mortgaged then came the domestic animals and domestic utensils. Next those parts of their poor cottages which had a market were sold out. These consisted of doors and window-sills and panels, and corrugated iron-sheets. Last of all the implements of occupation were parted with. When everything was lost the helpless people began to live upon wild roots, fruits, and leaves. The stems and tubers of wild *Colocasia antiquorum* were extensively consumed. The aquatic plants like *shapla* (*Nymphaea lotus*) were eaten in large quantity. Molluscs from ponds were boiled in water and eaten with avidity. We found heaps of shells of snails in front of almost every house in a number of villages in the District of Howrah. When even these wild products of their habitat became rare they began to move towards the nearest towns. By that time many of them had lost their health and strength. Lack of food had already undermined their vitality. Consumption of unwholesome food had upset their digestion and as a result most of them fell easy prey to bowel complaints. This was mostly the case with adult men and women for they had tried their utmost to save the children from the ravages of hunger. But their sacrifice was of no avail.

## II. INFLUX OF DESTITUTES INTO CALCUTTA

By the middle of July 1943 the streets of Calcutta began to ring with the piteous cry of the people who had come to the Second City of the British Empire for a morsel of food. Here and there groups of these people could be seen begging for food or money from the passers by. At first their number was small but as the days passed by it gradually increased. By the middle of August the streets of the city became overcrowded

3 A *bigha* of land is equal to .33 of an acre.

with the destitutes They were to be seen almost at every street-corner. The open pavements were their homes Some sought the shelter of the spreading trees in the public parks A fortunate few took refuge in the air-raid shelters constructed all over the city Some tried to protect themselves from the blazing August sun behind the baffle-walls A large number found refuge under the Railway Sheds at the suburban Railway Stations. Both ends of the abandoned Howrah Bridge were occupied by a large number of families By the side of the Lower Circular Road<sup>4</sup>, between Dhurramtolla Street<sup>5</sup> and Sealdah Station<sup>6</sup>, many families were found bivouacking day and night

Many of these families had a fixed place for passing the night During day time the adult members moved individually, or with one or two children, in different parts of the city But at night they all assembled at these fixed places in order to keep contact with one another Moreover, they were afraid of molestations, especially the women, in the darkness of the black-out night It was not unusual to find groups of twenty to thirty persons lying on the pavement, side by side, sleeping under the open sky. Usually such groups were formed by families hailing from the same village or neighbouring villages or by related families A sense of fraternity had developed among them in the midst of their indescribable distress

It is beyond the capacity of the present writer to give a true pen-picture of the destitutes who thronged the streets of Calcutta during those memorable days of the peak of the famine The picture of the famine of 1770 which the immortal pen of Bankim Chandra has drawn at the beginning of *Anandamath* fits exactly word for word with the scenes which took place in Bengal in 1943

"People first began to beg Then who could give alms? The people began to starve Then they began to fall victims to diseases They sold their cattle, sold the yokes and ploughs, devoured their seed-grains, and sold their houses and homestead-lands Agricultural lands were also sold Then they began to sell their daughters, next sons and after that wives Then who would buy girls, boys and women? There was no purchaser, everybody wanted to sell For want of food they began to eat the leaves of trees and to consume grass as also weeds Members of the wild tribes and those belonging to the lower strata of society began to eat dogs, rats and cats Many people fled away (from their villages) Those who fled, died of

4 It is one of the most important roads of Calcutta, which connects its southern and northern parts with the E I Railway Station at Sealdah

5 This is also another important street which connects Lower Circular Road with Chowringhee Road and partly passes through an important business quarter of Calcutta

6 This is one of the two Railway Stations of Calcutta Through it the city is connected with the whole of North. East and South Bengal.

starvation in strange places those who did not do so began to die of taking unwholesome food of starvation and of diseases

Pestilence such as fever cholera, consumption and small pox found opportunity Specially small pox was most prevalent In every house people began to succumb to it Who would give water to the sick and who would touch them? No one was medically attended to—no one was looked after and no one removed the corpses Beautiful human bodies rotted in palatial buildings On the appearance of small pox in a house the other members left the sick and fled for safety In the famine of 1943 the place of small pox was taken by malaria, cholera and dysentery

The destitutes who came to Calcutta in the rains of 1943 might be divided into three classes, viz (a) those who had been reduced to mere skin and bones (b) those who had swollen limbs and (c) those who though reduced in weight, yet looked more or less normal The first two classes were the real victims of the famine. The last group was composed of persons who had been somehow or other maintaining themselves at home but on hearing that food was being distributed freely in Calcutta came to the city to relieve the pressure on the rest of the family, some of whom had become incapacitated through disease or could not be spared in view of the urgent agricultural operations. This is why the last group looked better than the other two.

Whenever we passed through the Lower Circular Road during these months we could not take off our eyes from the scattered families settled on its eastern footpath between Dhurrantolla Street and Sealdah Station They were the true victims of the famine. We shall describe one of these families which is a typical specimen. It had settled under a tree with a few branches and fewer leaves, just a little away from the junction of Dhurrantolla Street and Lower Circular Road The family consisted of husband wife and three children. The day I took my notes the husband was lying ill and the wife was cooking the peelings of some vegetables perhaps collected from the street in an earthen pot on an oven temporarily made with three bricks. The three children were lying near by All of them had the colour of charred wood The body frame of the man showed that he was once sturdily built but all the muscles had shrunk His whole face was covered with beards and the eyes, deeply sunk in the sockets, had a languid look. His whole appearance showed that he was in an extreme state of exhaustion all the vigour of his youthful life seemed to have been wrung out drop by drop, and as it were, he seemed to have been merely waiting for the last moment when death would relieve him of his agony The wife looked slightly better but she herself had also been reduced to skin and bones. In fact I could count

her ribs from a distance of ten feet at least. The intestines seemed to have disappeared altogether from the abdomen. She was not more than twenty-five years of age yet there was no womanly breast. Only two nipples dangled from two parched sheets of skin from which everything else seemed to have dried up. Her hair had become matted perhaps they were not attended to since she had left home. Her eyes had also sunk into the sockets, but they had not yet lost their lustre as in the case of her husband. Indeed they had an unusual glow, which was perhaps the outward indication of her great determination to survive this catastrophe, most probably for her little children. She had realised that her companion of life was about to pass over to the realm of the unknown leaving her alone in charge of the babes. One of the children, a girl, had swollen limbs. In some parts of the legs the skin had cracked and a liquid discharge was slowly trickling out. Flies had settled on the festering wounds and on the face of the child. Her face was writhing with pain but she had not even the strength to cry. The other two children were also equally reduced in weight but their limbs had not, till then, become swollen. They were looking at the boiling pot with the hunger of ages concentrated in their eyes. Such pictures were quite common throughout the city.

The destitutes lived a life which was in many respects less than human. So far as personal cleanliness was concerned, they presented a scene of utter carelessness. As a rule they did not bathe, there was no lack of water in Calcutta but most of them had no extra cloths to change over after bathing. Moreover, the monsoon rains drenched them to the skin many times over during day and night. The cloths dried on their body. Many of them suffered from fever, bowel-complaint, measles, etc. and were naturally afraid of bathing. The single piece of *dhoti* or *sari*<sup>8</sup> which covered their body when they left home could not be washed or cleaned for months together. The dirt and dust of the streets of Calcutta went on accumulating on them. The approach of a destitute could be easily detected by the terrible odour which he emitted constantly. Even this noxious smell came to be associated with the places where they lived for some time such as the Railway sheds, air-raid shelters, projecting verandahs, etc. These thousands of vagrants had no latrine except those few public latrines in parks and important street-corners which were hopelessly insufficient for such a large number of persons. The street-sides and the open lands abutting on them in South Calcutta were indiscriminately used for the purpose of answering nature's call. Indeed, it was difficult for the pedestrians, in those days, to move through the unpaved foot-paths of South Calcutta. In the free-kitchens they received food but many of them had no vessel to receive it. They would receive the gruel on a leaf from which it occasionally ran over to the street. But the unfortunate recipients, oblivious of the basic rules of personal hygiene, took every drop of the liquid food from the pavement. In many of these free-kitchens there

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8 *Dhoti* is the lower garment of men and *sari* that of women



was no arrangement for distributing water. The unfortunate destitutes went to some street channel and drank the accumulated rain water. We shuddered to think of the consequences. Thus they lived face to face with starvation and death, oblivious of all rules of personal hygiene and public sanitation.

These destitutes came to Calcutta divested of all their belongings. Before they left their village home they had sold all their domestic utensils, domestic animals, ornaments, implements of occupation and such other personal effects. So when they reached Calcutta many of them had nothing left but a piece of tattered rag which could hardly cover the body and one or two broken enamelled iron plates or cups.

Hunger had driven the destitutes to the city of Calcutta. They had exhausted all their resources before leaving home. Most of them were willing to work but there were few to employ. Our experience of the working capacity and intention of these people was not very encouraging. They were in dire necessity of food and they agreed to do everything without thinking of their own capacity. Starvation had weakened them and when they began to work they discovered to their horror that there was hardly any strength left in their emaciated body. So generally they were unsuccessful as workers. Moreover want had weakened their moral stamina and often they fell easy prey to temptations when they were employed as domestic servants and committed petty pilfering.

The destitutes came to Calcutta for food and they consumed any and every kind of edible object which was available to them. In June and the first part of July they begged for food and coins from door to door and at street-corners. With the advent of August the situation became more critical. Their number had increased to such an extent that individual charity could not possibly cope with the situation. Food and coins were no longer available for the mere asking. Death by starvation on the streets of Calcutta became a common thing. The Press took up the cudgel and *The Statesman* and other newspapers of the city published pictures of the dead and dying on the streets of Calcutta. The attention of the citizens of Calcutta as well as of the whole of India and abroad was attracted to this grim tragedy. People within the city and outside became conscious of the magnitude of the tragedy which was being enacted before their very eyes. Charitably disposed persons opened centres for feeding the destitutes. The Government of the Province slowly recognised the gravity of the position and started relief work. By that time the number of destitutes had risen to about one hundred thousand in Calcutta itself. The Government and private organisations for relief were not adequate for the purpose at any stage. Moreover the food distributed at many of these centres was neither sufficient in quantity nor adequately nourishing in quality. Sometimes, even it was not fit for human consumption. The Government insistence on the use of *Dumestium (umbroideum)* in the food distributed from relief centres

PLATE II

(To face page 6)



From house to house they begged for rice-gruel (*phan*) and nothing more  
A septuagenarian granny trying to save her orphaned grandson



maintained or aided by the Government, possibly did more harm than good. The people of Bengal are not accustomed to this coarse grain and they also did not know how to prepare it into food. In many free-kitchens the writer had seen the use of unhusked *bajra* (*Pennisetum typhoides*). This caused havoc on the people. Already their digestive system had been weakened by starvation and consumption of unwholesome food. *Khichuri*<sup>9</sup> is ordinarily a heavy diet for the Bengalees and the addition of *bajra* (*Pennisetum typhoides*)—occasionally unhusked—made it more indigestible. Hundreds of destitutes had complained to the writer and his co-investigators about the injury done by this food to themselves and their friends and relatives. They said that bowel complaints started on consumption of this gruel consecutively for a number of days. This had been their personal experience and many of them consequently shunned the free-kitchens out of fear although they were suffering acutely from hunger. Medical opinion was also divided about the proper food value of this diet and its suitability for the Bengalee stomach. Yet the Government insisted upon its use.

As days passed on the cry for food became more acute, more constant and more piteous. The destitutes no longer asked for uncooked or cooked rice or for money. They had already realised that these things had become rare and scarce. They begged for a little *phan*<sup>10</sup>. From morning till midnight, men, women and children moved from door to door for a little *phan* with a tin-can or an earthen pot in hand. The gasping cry of little children "*Mago! Ektu phan deo*" (Mother! Give a little gruel) often rent the midnight air and brought before the mind's eye of the reposing public the picture of hundreds of emaciated boys and girls moving in rain-soaked rags through the Second City of the British Empire for a morsel of food. Even this *phan* was not available. Four or five persons daily waited at the doorside of each householder for *phan*. Often they fought and scrambled for it. They even stored a little for later consumption. This is not imagination but actual experience of the writer. One day, in September, the writer saw a group of persons who had arrived from some interior village of Diamond Harbour Sub-Division of the District of 24-Pargannas. They had been without a morsel of food for two days. On meeting some of their acquaintances here, in the city, they asked for *phan* which was readily given from the quantity stored for consumption at night. Without even a pinch of salt they drank the liquid with the avidity that beggars describe. Every member of that hungry little party drew the starchy liquid from the pot for full two minutes at a breath and then seemed to heave a sigh of relief.

9 *Khichuri* is a kind of food prepared by boiling rice and pulses generally in equal quantity together in water till they attain the consistency of porridge. Salt and spices are added to it. The Bengalees, as a general rule, drain off the liquid starch from boiled rice before eating it. *Khichuri* retains this starch and is therefore a heavy diet for them.

10 When rice is boiled in water the starch becomes mixed with it. This starchy liquid is called *phan*. Among the Bengalees it is drained off and either thrown away or given to the cattle.

The urge for food was too acute and intense the pangs of hunger must be satisfied with any possible or impossible food. Discrimination was out of question. They had consumed all possible kinds of roots fruits and leaves already while at home. In Calcutta they took to cast-off skins of vegetables and to rotten fruits. They collected the former from the streets and the latter from near about the fruit stalls in the markets. The receptacles of street-garbage were regularly hunted, morning and afternoon, for the crumbs of food which were thrown into them. Indeed these receptacles placed in front of or near big hotels boarding houses or similar eating establishments were regularly watched throughout all the waking hours. Some of the municipal dust bins in front of military establishments were also regularly visited. These unfortunate people used to sit near the receptacles in a line. The servants of these establishments brought the refuse of the plates as well as crumbs of bread and such other things in baskets and push carts. They did not generally allow the destitutes to take these things directly from the receptacles but deposited them in the dust bins or on the streets. This was a common sight in the city in those days. At the bend of a lonely lane there was a garbage-receptacle where the servants of a military establishment used to deposit its refuse and a nearby Corporation Charitable Dispensary threw the discarded surgical dressings of its patients. The writer daily passed through this lane and always found one or two destitute families seated near by either patiently waiting for the arrival of the servant of the military establishment or actually engaged in taking out of the garbage-receptacle the crumbs of food. The surgical dressings, the ashes and the dirty refuse of the local houses did not deter them from their hunt for crumbs which could be eaten. It was a pitiable sight which showed to what extent human beings might divest themselves of their natural abhorrence for dirt and filth. This was not all. Even the carcasses of dogs, rats cats etc. were welcome food to these miserable remnants of humanity. One day a pupil of the writer himself a man in charge of an educational institution, reported that he saw with his own eyes people eating the carcass of a dog in front of a well known market of South Calcutta.

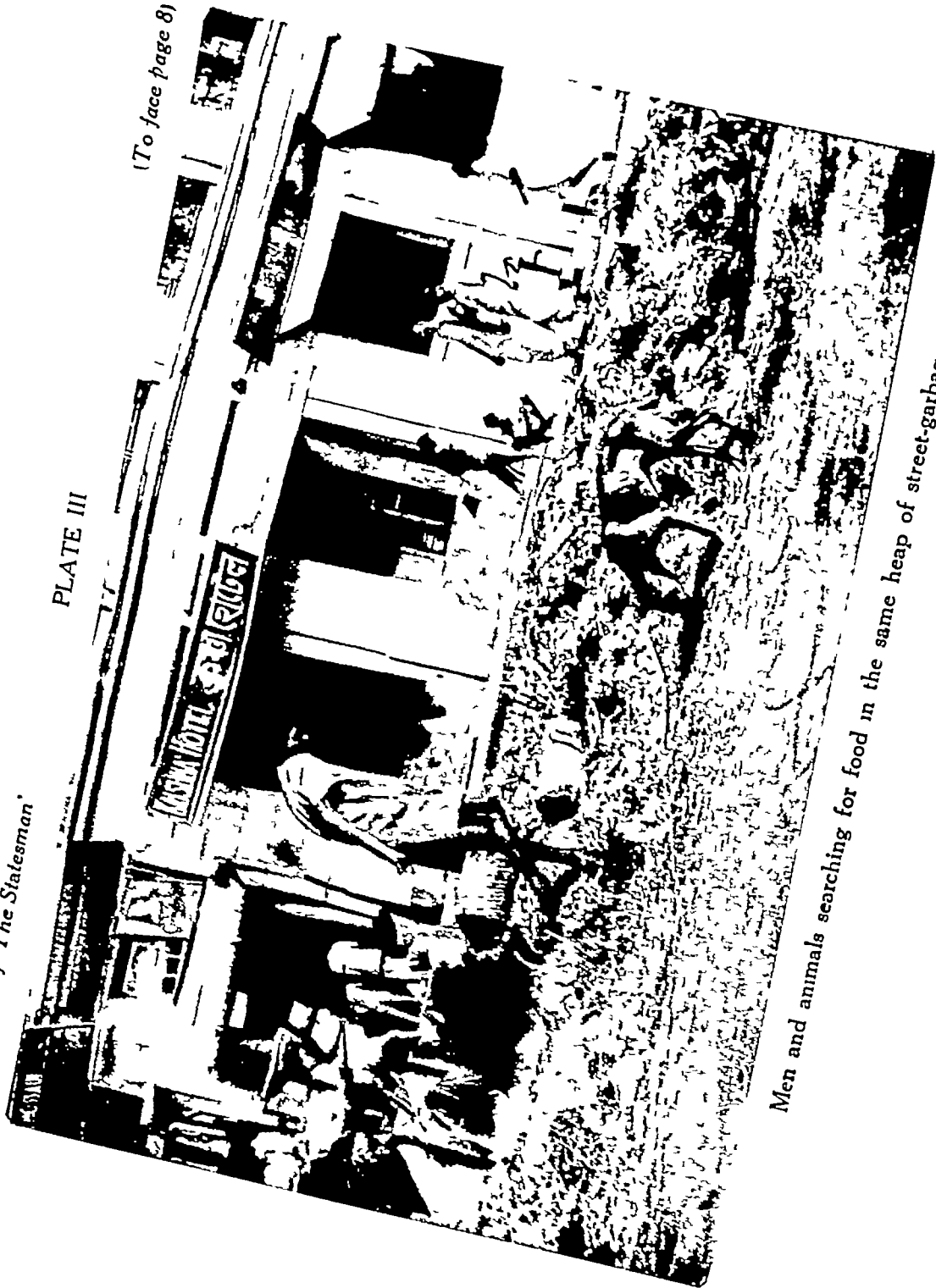
### III. CIVILIZATION FACE TO FACE WITH HUNGER

Kindness love affection etc. are essential elements of human civilization. When starvation stares in the face these sentiments find real opportunities to display their grip on human mind. In course of the last famine, the writer witnessed on several occasions grim struggles between hunger and these finer sentiments. We shall describe only two such cases. A destitute family consisting of husband wife and two children had been residing on the foot-path of a street in South Calcutta for a few days. They used to get food from the local free-kitchen and also gathered

*By courtesy of 'The Statesman'*

PLATE III

*(To face page 8)*



*Men and animals searching for food in the same heap of street-garbage*

The urge for food was too acute and intense the pangs of hunger must be satisfied with any possible or impossible food. Discrimination was out of question. They had consumed all possible kinds of roots, fruits and leaves already while at home. In Calcutta, they took to cast off skins of vegetables and to rotten fruits. They collected the former from the streets and the latter from near about the fruit stalls in the markets. The receptacles of street-garbage were regularly hunted, morning and afternoon, for the crumbs of food which were thrown into them. Indeed these receptacles placed in front of or near big hotels, boarding houses or similar eating establishments were regularly watched throughout all the waking hours. Some of the municipal dust bins in front of military establishments were also regularly visited. These unfortunate people used to sit near the receptacles in a line. The servants of these establishments brought the refuse of the plates as well as crumbs of bread and such other things in baskets and push carts. They did not generally allow the destitutes to take these things directly from the receptacles but deposited them in the dust bins or on the streets. This was a common sight in the city in those days. At the bend of a lonely lane there was a garbage-receptacle where the servants of a military establishment used to deposit its refuse and a nearby Corporation Charitable Dispensary threw the discarded surgical dressings of its patients. The writer daily passed through this lane and always found one or two destitute families seated near by either patiently waiting for the arrival of the servant of the military establishment or actually engaged in taking out of the garbage-receptacle the crumbs of food. The surgical dressings, the ashes and the dirty refuse of the local houses did not deter them from their hunt for crumbs which could be eaten. It was a pitiable sight which showed to what extent human beings might divest themselves of their natural abhorrence for dirt and filth. This was not all. Even the carcasses of dogs, rats, cats, etc., were welcome food to these miserable remnants of humanity. One day a pupil of the writer himself a man in charge of an educational institution, reported that he saw with his own eyes people eating the carcass of a dog in front of a well known market of South Calcutta.

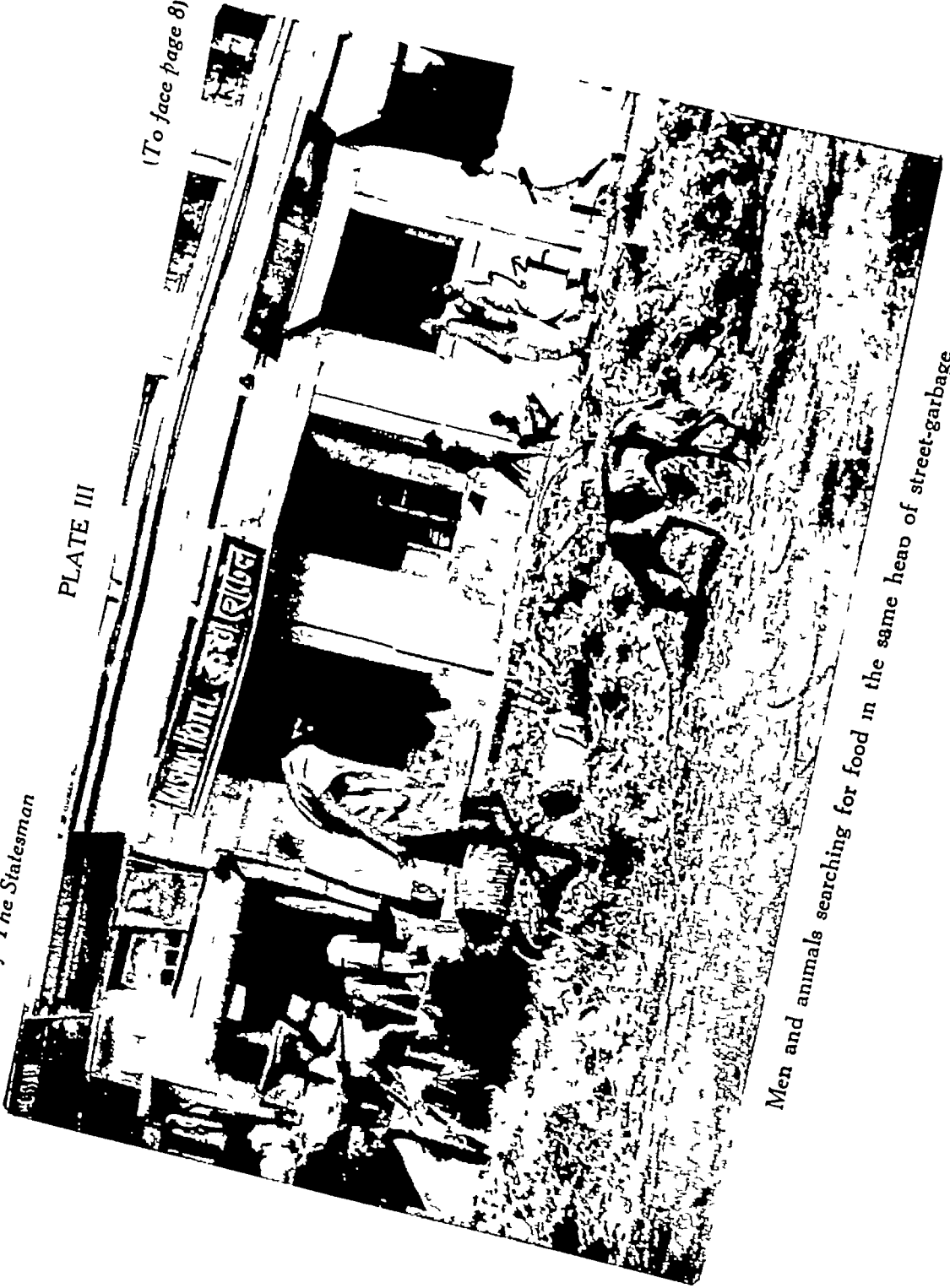
### III. CIVILIZATION FACE TO FACE WITH HUNGER

Kindness, love, affection, etc. are essential elements of human civilization. When starvation stares in the face these sentiments find real opportunities to display their grip on human mind. In course of the last famine, the writer witnessed on several occasions grim struggles between hunger and these finer sentiments. We shall describe only two such cases. A destitute family consisting of husband, wife and two children had been residing on the foot path of a street in South Calcutta for a few days. They used to get food from the local free-kitchen and also gathered

*By courtesy of 'The Statesman*

PLATE III

*(To face page 8)*



*Men and animals searching for food in the same heap of street-garbage*





*phan* (gruel) from private houses in the neighbourhood. One day the elder son, a boy of about ten, had collected a bowl of *phan* (gruel) which he brought to the parents. He offered the bowl first to his mother but she refused and asked him to take the contents. The father, all of a sudden, pounced upon the bowl and drank up half of its contents before he set it down on the ground for his children. The son again insisted on the mother to take it. On this, she reluctantly sipped a little and then gave the rest to the boy who gladly drank up the residue. The other child was only a few months old and did not require such food. In contrast to this the writer saw, on another occasion, a struggle between mother and son for food. Both of them had received a few pieces of bread and a little curry from a free-kitchen, a few minutes back. The boy had eaten his share of the food and took a piece of potato from his mother's share. At once the mother grew furious and began to beat the child mercilessly. The writer had to intervene to save the child from severe injury. The mother had temporarily lost all sense of proportion and was literally mad with rage at the apprehension of losing her share of the coveted food. Such scenes of contrast were quite common to those who cared to see things with their own eyes.

Beliefs, traditions and customs lost their force in the face of hunger. Hindus and Muhammadans, Caste-Hindus and Scheduled Castes—all received and consumed cooked-food sitting side by side. In the villages, on rare occasions, Hindus and Muhammadans had separate free-kitchens and concession to caste prejudice was made on some occasions in the interest of higher caste people. But just as exceptions prove the rule, such cases were so few that they proved that the famine had practically done away with social rules regarding interdining, which are so strong in our country. In Calcutta these exceptions were very rare. Hindus received cooked food from Muhammadan houses and Muhammadans reciprocated it. They did not think of inquiring about the caste or religion of the beneficent provider of food. On many occasions, in order to judge the strength of caste sentiments in their mind, we pointed out to the Hindu destitutes the houses of Muhammadan gentlemen and asked them whether they had received cooked-food or *phan* (gruel) from such houses. They said they had received food from such houses—the caste-idea had not occurred to them at all. In almost every case, at first there was a reaction—they were shocked. But soon they became conscious of their helpless condition when life had to be saved even at the cost of caste. Many of them said that when the famine would pass away they would again observe the usual caste-rules. It may be said without any fear of contradiction that the destitutes of Calcutta belonged to one caste and that was the caste of the 'have-nots'.

It is difficult to judge what effect starvation had on the morals of the Calcutta destitutes. I have already stated that some of them committed

petty thefts when employed in domestic service. It is not impossible that some of the young women sold their body for food. But such cases did not come within our knowledge nor did we hear any direct or indirect statement to this effect from our informants in Calcutta. We did not hear of any organised attempt at robbery by the destitutes in Calcutta. This may mean two things: either they reached Calcutta in an extreme state of exhaustion or they were too much afraid of sin. Food of all sorts lay before their eyes arranged in heaps in shops all over the city. But no one attempted to seize it by force, though we definitely know that men and women were dying of starvation on those very streets within sight of such food which lay in abundance for sale. However religious minded one may be, hunger is a greater force to destroy religious scruples. Moreover we know that many of them were not scrupulous enough when any opportunity to grab other people's property came in their village home. Yet they did not make any attempt to save themselves from sure starvation. This can bear only one explanation that they were utterly exhausted and had no initiative left in them even to revolt against the condition imposed upon them by society. The attitude of the people themselves was that of complete resignation: they attributed their misery to fate or *Karma*<sup>11</sup> alone which afforded poor consolation to them in their miserable plight.

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11 The doctrine of *Karma* pervades the whole life of the Hindus. They firmly believe that every individual is destined to fare in the next world according to his activities here. The present life in the same way is conditioned by the past one. The soul, which is believed to be immortal, is reborn in this world repeatedly according to the nature of its works in the preceding births till it attains a permanent place in the heaven. This is the popular belief which is not always consistent with the philosophical doctrines of the Hindus. This popular belief very intimately influences the life and activities of the Hindus. It is a social force of great strength which integrates the different elements of our life and guides and controls them. Modern education is rapidly undermining this force but its strength remains unabated in the mind of the so-called uneducated.

## CHAPTER II

# ORGANISATION OF THE SURVEY

### I ORIGIN OF THE IDEA

In July and August, 1943, when the streets of Calcutta were thronged with the destitutes the writer conceived the plan of making a sample survey of these unfortunate people. To ply those persons who had been moving from door to door for a handful of food with questions of socio economic interest may appear unkind. Indeed, it has been characterised as such in certain quarters. But many branches of science have their foundation, more or less, on human misery. Quite a large number of the innumerable remedies which medical science has now brought to bear on human life is the result of experiments on hundreds of innocent lives. In science, the end justifies the means. In the present case too the writer was actuated by the same motive. He perceived that if immediate measures were not taken to put on record the facts relating to the conditions, social and economic, which drove these thousands of persons from their homes, and the degree of destitution they had reached, much valuable materials for social science would be lost for ever. In social science suggestions for the future are made by studying the past and the present. We have no record of the past famines of Bengal. Even there is no reliable account of the Great Famine of 1770 which wiped out at least a third of the population of Bengal. The writer intended to overcome this deficiency as far as it lay within his humble means. Moreover, he was well aware that the data would be of some help at least, to the people as well as to the Government, in future schemes of rehabilitation as well as in long range remedial measures that might be undertaken by the Government. We are glad to state that these hopes have been fulfilled to a considerable extent. The Government of Bengal realised the value of such data and entrusted Prof. P C Mahalanobis, F.R.S., of the Indian Statistical Institute with the work of carrying on a sample survey of rural Bengal in collaboration with Prof K P Chattopadhyay, M.Sc., of the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University.<sup>12</sup>

With this view of collecting definite data on the victims of the famine the writer sought the co-operation and help of his colleagues and pupils. On the 25th

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<sup>12</sup> Nearly 16,000 families from 386 villages, scattered over the whole of Bengal, were surveyed and the results published in two separate books entitled *A Sample Survey of After-effects of the Bengal Famine of 1943* by Prof P C Mahalanobis and others, and *A Plan for Rehabilitation in Bengal* by Prof K P Chattopadhyay and another

14. What has become of the assets ?
15. Previous occupation of the man ( in case of woman—of her husband )
16. Was there any debt ? Was any attempt made to secure loan to stabilise position ? What was the result ?
17. Is repatriation possible ? If so where the unit may possibly return ?
18. Is there any willingness to take up any work ? If so, what kind of work ?
19. How the unit is maintaining itself now ?
20. Are all the members of the unit moving together or seeking for food independently and assembling at night ?
21. How far caste restrictions on interdining are observed ?

### G INFORMATION ON CONDITION OF HEALTH

22. Each individual of the unit is to be investigated on the following points.
  - (a) Height, (b) Weight (c) Pulse rate (d) Respiration (e) Incidence of any disease that is plainly visible (f) Period of suffering.

The questionnaire reveals the aim of the investigation. It was divided into three parts. The first part sought to collect general information on the unit such as the name of its leader his or her age, sex, religion caste ( if Hindu ) civil condition name of father or of husband ( in case of married or widowed women ) name of village, post office etc. In addition to these details for identification, we also collected in this part information on the time of abandonment of house and its immediate cause.

The second part of the questionnaire was prepared mainly with the idea of assessing the economic position of the family during and immediately preceding the famine. Question Nos. 13 14 15, 16 18 19 and 20 have direct bearing on this point while Question Nos. 10 11 and 17 have indirect relation with this point. Question Nos. 9 and 21 deal with social conditions. In this part of the questionnaire our aim had been to elicit information which would be useful both for immediate rehabilitation and for long range remedial measures. Famines in Bengal have turned out to be events of periodic recurrence. There may be immediate causes which possibly vary on different occasions but beyond these proximate happenings there are certainly other causes which are constantly operating in the background and whenever and wherever there is a slight disturbance of the normal course a full fledged famine develops within a short time. These causes are partly geographical and social but mainly political and economic. So far as geographical and political causes are concerned we had no necessity to carry on investigation among the destitutes. They can be easily studied from the existing literature on the subject. This was the reason why we devoted our attention only to the collection of economic and social data so that we may put on record the condition of the most affected part of our population.

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to collect data on the

physical and physiological conditions of the destitutes. The height weight index would have given us a ready picture of the different degrees of body-emaciation which the destitutes underwent during the famine. When associated with pulse-rate and respiration it might have opened a new field for physiological investigation. Collection of data on the incidence of disease at that time among the destitutes was expected to indicate the lines of action of the Health Department of the city in its struggle against the spread of these maladies among the healthy citizens of Calcutta. It would have, as well, forewarned the Government about the nature of the work that lay ahead of it in the rural portions of Bengal. Unfortunately this important section of the scheme could not be worked out as we were unable to enlist the services of any properly qualified medical man who alone could have carried out such investigations. Most of the students of the Department of Anthropology who were properly qualified for this work were engaged in the more urgent work of giving medical relief to the destitutes. Only one of our investigators, Dr J K Bose, M A, Ph D ( Lond ) collected data on the height and weight of 100 persons of different age-groups, but this is not statistically sufficient to give a correct picture of the destitutes of Calcutta.

## II PERSONNEL OF THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted by the teachers and students of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Calcutta. The following list shows their names arranged according to the number of units studied by each.

1	Mr Naresh Chandra Gangopadhyaya, M Sc (Exp Psychology) —6th year student of Anthropology	133 units
2	Miss Nilima Majumdar—5th year student of Anthropology	100 units
3	Mr M N Basu, M Sc—Asst Lecturer	100 units
4	Mr J K Bose, M A —Asst Lecturer	100 units
5	Mr T. C Das, M A —Lecturer	100 units
6	Prof. K P. Chattopadhyay, M Sc (Oantab)—Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology	98 units
7	Mr Nrupam Kumar Shyam Chaudhury—6th year student of Anthropology	70 units
8	Mr Tapas Kumar Dutt, M Sc (Anthropology)	52 units
9	Mr T C Ray Chaudhury, M A —Lecturer	35 units
10	Mr Sachindra Nath Roy—5th year student of Anthropology	20 units
11	Mr Manirul Islam—4th year student of Anthropology	12 units
	Total	820 units

The collection of socio-economic data is an extremely difficult and complicated matter. Those who have no training in field-work in social sciences cannot be expected to give even a tolerably correct account. In most cases they miss important points or misunderstand common things. Often, either they do

14. What has become of the *assets* ?
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not understand the answers of their subjects or cannot make themselves sufficiently explicit to the latter. The handling of subjects is partly a technical and partly a temperamental affair. The colossal ignorance of our common folk is a source of great annoyance to the educated investigator. The indirect method of answering questions is another pitfall into which the lay investigator often falls unaware. The indefinite and vague answers which the village folk naturally give to an unknown investigator are equally disturbing factors. In most cases the informant and the lay investigator are at loggerheads they cannot understand one another nay they do not even trust one another. The informant is always suspicious of the well dressed investigator whom he takes to be a Government agent who has come either to impose a new tax or realise subscription for the Sarkar (Government). The investigator on the other hand has no natural sympathy for his subjects and so looks upon them at best, as bores without education or culture. This atmosphere of suspicion and lack of sympathy obstructs work and vitiates results. Now this can be overcome only by a thorough training in field methods under expert guidance for a considerable period of time. This is not the work of two or three lectures in a packed class. Any socio economic survey conducted by workers who have not been thoroughly trained in theoretical and practical sides has little scientific value and cannot be depended upon. It is no doubt true that some persons have an inborn sympathy for the common people and natural aptitude for work of this type. They can quickly adopt the technique and succeed within a short time to ingratiate themselves into the confidence of their informants. But such persons are rarely found. Therefore, previous training in field work is absolutely necessary before starting in such work. *The study of anthropology is by itself a help towards the acquirement of a sympathetic attitude towards the common people.* Naturally mental co-operation ensues. We are convinced of this from our experience of over twenty years of field work.

All the members of the teaching staff of the Department of Anthropology who took part in this destitute survey have long experience of field work in sociology. Mr M N Basu has conducted investigations on two interesting castes of Bengal and has already published his results. Dr J K Bose has worked on a number of Assam tribes and has published the results of his investigations in both Indian and foreign scientific journal. Mr T C Ray Chaudhury took part in many of the demonstration tours organised by the Department of Anthropology. His work on the Brahmins of Bengal has received recognition from the University. Prof Chattopadhyay is an expert in the subject and has wide experience of Chota Nagpur tribes and Bengal castes. The writer also may claim to have some experience of field work among a large number of tribes of Assam and Chota Nagpur monographs on some of which have already been published while others are under preparation. Among the students Messrs T K Dutt and N K. Shyam Chaudhury had already received their field training before they took part in this destitute survey. Mr N C Gangopadhyaya who had been

engaged in preparing a thesis on the socio-economic condition of the Namasudias, acquired sufficient experience in handling subjects and eliciting information from them in course of this work. Miss N Majumdar and Mr S. N Roy were specially trained for this work. They had no previous experience of this type of investigation. Mr Manirul Islam had neither any previous experience nor did he receive any training for this particular work. He had to depend for his investigation on his knowledge of anthropology acquired in the Under-Graduate Classes.

This short analysis of the qualifications of the individual investigators is necessary for a proper evaluation of our work and for comparison with the works of other investigators in the same field<sup>16</sup>. This analysis shows that 83.9 per cent of the data were collected by persons who had more or less experience of field-work. Those who were specially trained for this purpose contributed 14.6 per cent while only 1.5 per cent were collected by a person who had no training to his credit. The following Table I shows the details in this respect.

TABLE I

SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF UNITS STUDIED BY DIFFERENT GROUPS OF INVESTIGATORS

(a) Teachers of the Department of Anthropology	52.8%
(b) Students who have already received regular training in field-work	14.9%
(c) Students who have acquired practical knowledge of field-work in course of preparation of theses under expert guidance	16.2%
(d) Students who have received special training for this survey	14.6%
(e) Students who have no training in field-work	1.5%

### \* III PLACES OF COLLECTION OF DATA

The data were collected from different parts of the city and also from Howrah. Generally speaking each investigator moved in a particular locality from day to day. The author and Dr J. K. Bose made their collections at Ballygunge Place. Prof K. P. Chattopadhyay's work was confined to three places, viz., Swinhoe Street, St. Lawrence School and junction of Gariahat Road and Ballygunge Circular Road. Mr M. N. Bose devoted his attention to

16 The random sample survey organised by Prof P. C. Mahalanobis and Prof K. P. Chattopadhyay was carried out by 92 volunteers, the majority of whom belonged to the Provincial Kisan Sabha, a Communist organisation. There were also a few Congress workers (Vide *A Sample Survey of the After-effects of the Bengal Famine of 1943* by Prof P. C. Mahalanobis and others, Page 2). As Prof Mahalanobis has not mentioned the names and qualifications of his volunteer-workers we are not in a position to compare the results of his survey with those of ours. As far as we know most of his field-investigators did not possess any recognisable knowledge of sociology or economics and they had no previous training in field-work save and except what was hurriedly given by Prof K. P. Chattopadhyay or his collaborators, on this occasion. These are serious handicaps which have certainly influenced the investigation and its results. Moreover, another point appears to be noteworthy in this connection. The employment of members of a particular political party is not safe in a socio-economic survey of this type which aims at scientific accuracy.

Howrah Bridge area and Nimtolla. Mr N C. Gangopadhyaya collected his data at Bhowanipore Kallighat and Belgatchia area. Mr N K. Shyam Chaudhury gathered information from different parts of Ballygunge. Miss N Majumdar and Mr S N Roy made their entire collections at Ballygunge Destitute Home at Fern Road Ballygunge. Mr T K Dutt confined himself to Taltollah and Wellington Square area. Mr T O Ray Chaudhury carried on investigation at Baraset Sealdah and Ballygunge. Mr Manirul Islam mainly confined himself to Howrah. This account shows that inspite of our attempt to spread the inquiry over the whole of Calcutta it was confined more to District IV of the city. The causes of such concentration and its effect on the data will be dealt with in Chapter IV.

The destitutes constantly moved from door to door in search of food throughout the waking hours of day and night. It was difficult to find them calmly settled for an hour or two at any one place. They were always in a hurry; hunger drove them from one place to another. They would gulp the gruel (*phan*) given in a private house and at once sit down in line for food in a free kitchen. It was true that they did not find sufficient food at any one place. But it was, at the same time, also true that they were always afraid of getting no food on the morrow. So they tried to store up in their stomach as much food as available in the immediate present. This psychology of the famine-stricken kept them always on the move. Therefore, it was very difficult for us to find a suitable time when we could approach them and gather our information. The only time when they could be handled was the period of waiting before distribution of food in free kitchens. In many of these centres tickets were issued every day to the destitutes for which they came early. After receiving these tickets they calmly waited for an hour or two which was the best time for approaching them. During this period they had some amount of psychological stability which was possible under the circumstances. Prospect of getting food in the near future made them a little composed at this time. This opportunity was therefore fully utilised by our investigators. Most of them attached themselves to one or more free-kitchens and collected the data under their patronage. This necessarily led to limitation of time for our work which naturally controlled the output. As all the investigators were either teachers or students of the Department of Anthropology (with the exception of one who was an ex-student) they were not free to devote the whole day to this work. Moreover this was the busiest term of the Session for the Department. Therefore the workers had to snatch an hour here or there for survey. This invariably forced them to select places which were near the University Science College at Ballygunge, so that they might run to those places between 11 A M. and 1 P M. and carry on investigations. Those who worked in distant parts of the city, had naturally to depend on holidays and off-days. This partly explains the preponderance of Ballygunge data over those from other parts of

By courtesy of 'The Statesman'

PLATE IV

(To face page 18)



Feeding in a free kitchen



the city. The other causes of this preponderance will be dealt with in Chapter IV

#### IV METHOD OF COLLECTION OF THE DATA

The method of collection of the data is an important factor in all socio-economic inquiries. Their value depends much on the method of inquiry employed for eliciting information. Roughly speaking there are three such methods, *viz*, (a) personal observation and knowledge, (b) genealogical method and (c) narrative method. The first is, no doubt, the most accurate method and therefore the best. But unfortunately it is not always possible to employ this method. So far as appearance, dress, cleanliness and the property possessed were concerned, this method could be employed in the present case but in other respects, it was not possible. None of the investigators, for example, had any personal knowledge about the economic condition of the people before they left home. Nor were they acquainted with the social condition, beyond a general idea which is not of much value in intensive work. The use of the narrative method, though unavoidable in certain circumstances, was undesirable in the present inquiry. It generally gives incomplete and often inaccurate data. Therefore the genealogical method of inquiry was the best under the circumstances. It aims at collecting concrete facts and not abstract or generalised statements. Its conclusions are therefore based on actual facts and not on personal opinion which mainly characterises the data collected by the narrative method. Let us employ these three methods in relation to a few items of our questionnaire, and analyse the answers which we may expect to get under the different methods. Suppose we are to collect information on (1) the nature of a unit of destitutes (Item 9 of the questionnaire), (2) the number of members of the family dead within six months before abandonment of home, and after abandonment (Item 11 of the questionnaire), and (3) assets of the family before the famine, *e g*, ornaments (Item 13 of the questionnaire)

Now, according to the first method, the answer to Question 1 will be complete and accurate as the investigator himself knows the different members and has observed them on various occasions. According to the second method (Genealogical Method) the investigator will select a member of the unit and build up the genealogical table of his family starting from him. He will be able to know from it (a) the relationship of the different members of the unit and of others who have not come, (b) their seniority in age, (c) their name, sex, etc. Now, according to the third method, the investigator will first ascertain (a) the names of the different individuals of the unit, (b) their sex and (c) their relationship. So far as sex and names are concerned he will not ordinarily commit any mistake but their relationship will lead him to many a pitfall. Some of these mistakes will be due to inaccurate use of words, *e g*, cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles, grandparents, etc. In common parlance the

connotation of these terms is not fixed e.g. *dada* may indicate (1) elder uterine brother (2) elder first male cousin second male cousin and so on (3) elder step-brother etc. In the genealogical method there is no scope for such mistakes. Moreover this method gives a wider range of knowledge about the family within a shorter space and time. Thus the first and the second methods are equally good for this purpose while the third method is hopelessly inadequate.

In eliciting information on the second question the investigator following the first method has no difficulty as the facts are already known to him. The follower of the second method also does not meet with any difficulty as he has already marked out the persons who have died during these periods and noted the date or months passed, in each case. The investigator following the third method will have to ask one or other or both of the following questions, *viz.*, (1) How many persons have died in your family within six months prior to abandonment of home and after abandonment of home? (2) Who are those persons? The informant experiences considerable mental pressure in answering such questions. First he will have to find out the sixth month from the abandonment of home and then mentally count the number of the dead and then give the answer. This is a complicated process for most of the rural folk. Some of the members will be possibly left out while others from a nearly related branch might be included. The second alternative is very likely as the investigator has not defined the nature of the family within which the informant has to confine his answer. Thus there are opportunities for considerable mistakes in this matter. Therefore, the second method is much better than the third one in this respect even it is superior to the first one as the investigator according to the first method, is liable to commit mistakes (a) when a large number of persons die in a village within a short time, or (b) when death occurs during his temporary absence, or (c) when death occurred long ago and the investigator has forgotten all about it or (d) when death has occurred very recently and the investigator has not received any information. In all these cases the second method is far better than the first one.

When we come to the third question we find the very same difference. The first method is not very useful as ornaments are worn by the female members of the family who do not generally come out in the public in Bengal. So, there is less opportunity for the investigator by the first method to have a complete knowledge about them. Moreover in Bengal among the rural folk the same piece of ornament is used by different persons at different times in ordinary families of limited means. Often for example, there is one pair of bangles or one necklace in a family which is worn in turn by each female member of the family when she goes on a visit to her parental family or to the house of a relative. The investigator may thus find different members of the family wearing this ornament and may naturally think that each of them possesses one. Genealogical method would not allow any such mistake as the investigator will ask each member one

by one, what ornaments he or she possesses and thus exhaust all the members of the family if he sticks to the genealogical table. The investigator, according to the third method, on the other hand, would merely ask what ornaments the different members of the unit possess. He cannot exhaust all the members of the family unless they are all included in the unit, because he has no knowledge of them. The general tendency of this method is to thrust on the informant the duty of classifying the data which in itself is an onerous task. From this short analysis of the three methods it is quite clear that the genealogical method is quick, correct, complete and convenient. We have devoted so much space to the evaluation of the different methods because other persons and institutions have also carried on such investigations.<sup>17</sup> If their data have not been collected according to the genealogical method, and by persons who have thorough training in it, they cannot be compared with our data which had been collected by this method alone. Our experience in the Post-Graduate Classes of the University shows that it takes a pretty long time even for the graduates to understand the essential elements of this method and its application. Moreover, no reliance can be placed on conclusions based on data collected according to unreliable methods.

## V. THE SUBJECTS AND THEIR MANIPULATION

We have already given an account ( Chapter I ) of the physical, psychological and sanitary conditions of the destitutes who came to Calcutta. This account clearly sets forth the nature of the material we had to handle. They were a dazed lot, thoroughly unnerved by the crushing blow of the famine. Many of the units were composed of only one or two persons—all other members of the family having died by starvation or flood or disease. Jagaddhari Haldar of Basar Gopinathpur ( 24-Pargannas ), aged about sixty, came in such a condition. The flood and cyclone of October 1942 had destroyed all he had. He lost his wife and mother. His younger brother and the latter's wife together with three sons and two daughters were also drowned. His house, his food-grains, his domestic animals and utensils were all destroyed. Jagaddhari alone survived by luckily climbing upon a tamarind tree. Since then he had been roaming in search of food here and there. While narrating these mishaps to the writer the man began to weep and it was pretty difficult to console him. Bipin Pradhan of Mangramaro ( Midnapore ) came with his old mother and a son aged five years. He had lost in course of two months ( June-July & July-Aug ) of 1943, his father, two younger brothers, father's brother, and the latter's wife and son. All of them died of bowel-complaint which was the result of eating unwholesome food. In other words, they had died of starvation. They were reduced to this plight by recurrent floods for the five years preceding 1943 in their part of the country which destroyed their crops year after year. They had sold

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17 Prof P C Mahalanobis has not mentioned the method of collecting data pursued by his field-investigators.



all movable property and also wanted to sell their land but there was none to buy it. After exhausting all means of subsistence and after the death of six members of the family the remaining three came to Calcutta. It was not an easy affair to collect data from such informants. Another typical case was that of Sarathi Bagdi of Sarkorchak (24-Pargannas) aged about twenty five. Her husband died of bowel complaint after which she came to Calcutta with a son aged about seven years and a daughter of one year. Both these children had been lost on the same day. She left them on the street and went to answer nature's call but on return could not trace them any more. We met her on the tenth day after this incident. She had been weeping all the while and could hardly answer our questions. We offered her food which she did not take but merely went on weeping. She had become terribly reduced and it appeared that she had practically given up food since the loss of her children. This was the type of subject with which we had to deal. We do not mean to say that all our subjects were of these extreme types. There were units which had not suffered much and which had come to Calcutta to tide over the situation. They had even then hope of returning home within a short time where they would once more be with their near and dear ones. There were others who had been reduced to extreme poverty but the cruel hands of death had not till then touched them.

The manipulation of such subjects is a difficult task. Faced with death, disease, starvation and destitution they presented a medley of complex mental reactions when approached for information. Some of them looked upon us as beneficent providers of food, they gladly and willingly co-operated with us and often gave information which we did not ask for. Others suspected us for Government agents who were associated in their mind with all sorts of mischief. This attitude reached its climax when the news spread that Government were going to drive away the destitutes from Calcutta. At that time they flatly refused to answer our questions and accused us of complicity with the Government drive against the destitutes. There was a third group of people whom adversity had turned nonchalant. They did neither welcome our approach nor turn it back. They answered the questions in a manner as if these did not affect their well being in any way.

The greatest difficulty was experienced in collecting information on the economic condition of the units. When the informants realised that we could give them food in the free-kitchens they had a natural tendency to paint their condition in the darkest colour. We had to combat this by convincing them that their assets had nothing to do with the distribution of food. Many were unwilling to make any statement about their debts. They thought that we would somehow or other put pressure on them for payment of the debts. We had to convince them that our work had no connection with the realisation of debts. Some could easily understand it but others were not thoroughly convinced. Such was the situation under which we worked. Tact and patience were the two most

important factors in the manipulation of our subjects. Different investigators, of course, had these two qualities in different degrees. Those who had previous experience of field-work among backward social groups could be relied upon as they acquired these qualities in course of such work. To the beginners we constantly pointed out the necessity of these qualities and we hope they had exercised them to the fullest extent.

## VI. VALUE OF THE DATA

As far-reaching conclusions will be drawn on the basis of these data it is fit and proper to discuss their value here. The value of sociological data depends mainly on three factors—the investigator, the investigated and the method of investigation employed. We have already discussed the merits and demerits of all these three factors in relation to our survey. It now remains to see the nature of the data collected by the different groups of investigators and their comparative value.

In a previous Section (see page 17) we have divided the personnel employed in the survey into five classes, *viz.*,

- (a) Teachers of the Department of Anthropology
- (b) Students who have already received regular training in field-work
- (c) Students who have acquired practical knowledge of field-work in course of preparation of theses under expert guidance
- (d) Students who have received special training for this survey.
- (e) Students who have no training in field-work.

We shall now place five sheets of data representing the collections of the different classes enumerated above. These sheets have been drawn at random and no selection has been made. They are the following —

### DATA FROM CLASS A

Ballygunge Place

3 9. 43

- 1 Sundari Haldar.
2. (a) About 25, (b) Female, (c) Hindu, (d) Pod, (e) Married
- 3 Umanath Haldar
- 4 Sashi Haldar
- 5 (a) Pratapnagar, (b) Can't say, (c) 24-Pargannas
- 6 Ballygunge Place
- 7 (a) First left in July, 1943. Came to Calcutta and remained here for about 15 days and then went back home as the youngest son had been suffering from bowel-complaint. The latter died at home within 4 or 5 days of arrival.

all movable property and also wanted to sell their land but there was none to buy it. After exhausting all means of subsistence and after the death of six members of the family the remaining three came to Calcutta. It was not an easy affair to collect data from such informants. Another typical case was that of Sarathi Bagdi of Barkerohak (24-Pargannas) aged about twenty five. Her husband died of bowel complaint after which she came to Calcutta with a son aged about seven years and a daughter of one year. Both these children had been lost on the same day. She left them on the street and went to answer nature's call but on return could not trace them any more. We met her on the tenth day after this incident. She had been weeping all the while and could hardly answer our questions. We offered her food which she did not take but merely went on weeping. She had become terribly reduced and it appeared that she had practically given up food since the loss of her children. This was the type of subject with which we had to deal. We do not mean to say that all our subjects were of these extreme types. There were units which had not suffered much and which had come to Calcutta to tide over the situation. They had even then hope of returning home within a short time where they would once more be with their near and dear ones. There were others who had been reduced to extreme poverty but the cruel hands of death had not till then touched them.

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### DATA FROM CLASS A

Ballygunge Place

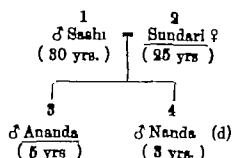
3. 9. 43

1. Sundari Haldar.
2. (a) About 25, (b) Female, (c) Hindu, (d) Pod, (e) Married.
3. Umanath Haldar
4. Sashi Haldar
5. (a) Pratapnagar, (b) Can't say, (c) 24-Pargannas.
6. Ballygunge Place
7. (a) First left in July, 1943. Came to Calcutta and remained here for about 15 days and then went back home as the youngest son had been suffering from bowel-complaint. The latter died at home within 4 or 5 days of arrival.

(b) She left home again 4 or 5 days after this incident and is now remaining in Calcutta for about a month

8. Lack of food at home

9



10 She has none.

11 Nanda (No. 4) died in August 1949

12 Bowel complaint.

13 (a) Homestead with a hut (b) As in (a) less DU (c) As in (b)

OL—Nil

DA—Nil

DU—As in No. 16

14 Homestead available Husband remaining there as he is ill and cannot move

15. Petty trader in vegetables.

16 One brass water pot mortgaged for Rs 4/ and one *ghati*; one *bati* one *thala* and one jug mortgaged for Rs 2/ Interest per month per Rupee, /2/

17 She will go home when better days come and not at present.

18 Willing to work. Can serve as a maid servant

19 Begging and eating in free kitchen

20 Nos. 2 and 3 moving together No 1 remaining at home—ill.

21 Not observed now

22. Healthy The boy (No 3) seems to be under fed and emaciated

#### DATA FROM CLASS B

1 Kalo Baishnav

2 (a) 20 yrs, (b) Female (c) Hindu (d) Baishnav (e) Married.

3 Hari.

4. Not given.

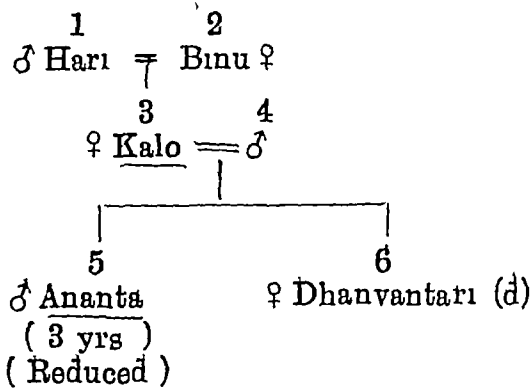
5 Baraset, 21 Pargannas.

6. Remains in Calcutta for 3 or 4 days and then returns to Baraset. When she comes here she remains at Padmarhat.

7 Comes to Calcutta, remains here for 3 or 4 days and then goes back to Baraset Her only hut having fallen she remains on the street at Baraset

8 Not mentioned.

9



Husband ran away from home seven months ago

- 10. Father and mother living at Rameswarpur They are cultivators
- 11. Dhanvantari ( No 6 ) died four days ago.
- 12. Starvation
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18. Capable of manual work
- 19. Begging and eating in free-kitchen
- 20. Together
- 21.
- 22.

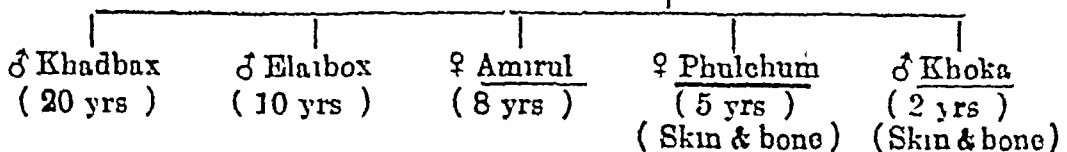
DATA FROM CLASS C

Date—12 9 43

Place—Asutosh Mukherji Rd

- 1. Mayurjan
- 2. (a) 45, (b) Female, (c) Muhammadan, (d) Muhammadan, (e) Married
- 3. Did not see ; does not know the name
- 4. Latif Sardar
- 5. (a) Dadpur, (b) Sankarpur Ghnutar, (c) Ditto, (d) 24-Pargannas
- 6. Foot-path, Bhowanipore
- 7. Ten days
- 8. Lack of food Used to work But the husband is now ill and cannot labour So, she has come here.

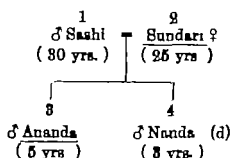
9. ♂ Latif Sardar ( 50 yrs ) = ♀ Mayurjan ( 45 yrs )



(b) She left home again 4 or 5 days after this incident and is now remaining in Calcutta for about a month

8. Lack of food at home

9



10 She has none.

11 Nanda ( No. 4 ) died in August 1943

12 Bowel complaint.

13 (a) Homestead with a hut (b) As in (a) less DU (c) As in (b)

OL—Nil

DA—Nil

DU—As in No. 16

14 Homestead available Husband remaining there as he is ill and cannot move

15 Petty trader in vegetables.

16 One brass water pot mortgaged for Rs 4/ and one *ghat*; one *bati* one *thala* and one jug mortgaged for Rs 2/ Interest per month per Rupee 1/2/

17 She will go home when better days come and not at present

18 Willing to work. Can serve as a maid servant

19 Begging and eating in free kitchen

20 Nos. 2 and 3 moving together No 1 remaining at home—ill

21 Not observed now

22 Healthy The boy ( No 3 ) seems to be under-fed and emaciated

#### DATA FROM CLASS B

1 Kalo Baishnav

2 (a) 20 yrs, (b) Female (c) Hindu (d) Baishnav (e) Married.

3 Hari.

4 Not given.

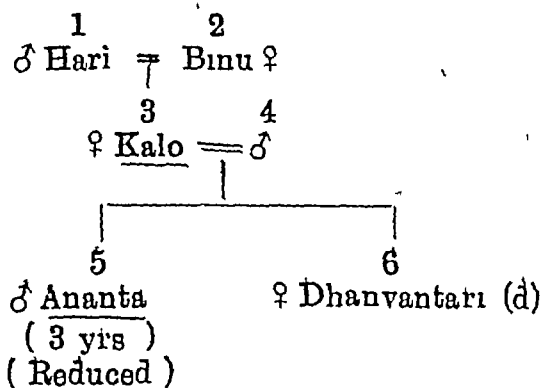
5 Baraset, 21 Pargannas

6. Remains in Calcutta for 3 or 4 days and then returns to Baraset  
When she comes here she remains at Padmarhat.

7 Comes to Calcutta, remains here for 3 or 4 days and then goes back to Baraset Her only hut having fallen she remains on the street at Baraset

8 Not mentioned.

9



Husband ran away from home seven months ago

10. Father and mother living at Rameswairpur They are cultivators

11 Dhanvantari (No 6) died four days ago

12. Starvation

13

14

15

16

17.

18 Capable of manual work.

19 Begging and eating in free-kitchen.

20. Together

21

22

DATA FROM CLASS C

Date—12 9 43

Place—Asutosh Mukherji Rd

1. Mayurjan

2. (a) 45, (b) Female, (c) Muhammadan, (d) Muhammadan, (e) Married

3 Did not see ; does not know the name

4. Latif Sardar

5. (a) Dadpur, (b) Sankarpur Ghnutar, (c) Ditto, (d) 24-Pargannas

6 Foot-path, Bhowanipore

7 Ten days.

8 Lack of food - Used to work But the husband is now ill and cannot labour So, she has come here.

9.

♂ Latif Sardar = Mayurjan ♀  
(50 yrs) (45 yrs.)

♂ Khadbax  
(20 yrs)

♂ Elaibox  
(10 yrs)

♀ Amirul  
(8 yrs.)

♀ Phulchum  
(5 yrs)

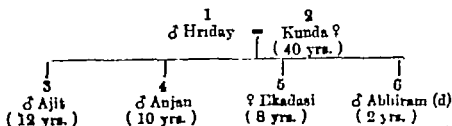
♂ Khoka  
(2 yrs)



- 10 Other members at home. The two sons are at the home of their employers in the native village.
- 11
- 12
- 13 Homestead—6 Kathas  
Cult. L —nil  
Hut — 1 for sleeping and 1 kitchen
- 14 Husband and the sons look after them
- 15 Thatching, tilling the field, harvesting, and weeding
- 16 20 rupees.
- 17 Will go to-morrow or day after to-morrow All are ill, so she will go
- 18 Diseased so unable.
- 19 Bogs Bats in the free-kitchen As at home so also here
- 20
- 21 Eating whatever is given by the people.
- 22 She herself Phulchum and Khoka—reduced to skin and bone. The other two are also ill they have swollen legs.

## DATA FROM CLASS D

1. Kunda Halder (female)
2. (a) 40 (b) Female, (c) Hindu (d) Namasudra, (e) Married.
- 3 Nil
4. Hriday Halder
- 5 (a) Kakdvp (b) Cannot say (c) Lakmikanthapur (d) 24 Pargannas.
6. Ballygunge Destitute Home, Fern Road
- 7 One and a half months before
8. Flood and failure of crops.
- 9.



- 10 Not recorded.
- 11 Abhiram (No. 6)
12. Bowel complaint—started by starvation
- 13 (a) OL & HL.—same as (c) (l) Same as (c) (c) OL.—5 bighas  
DA —Nil Ditto HL.—5 bighas (include tanks & orchards)
- DU—Some worth Rs 20/ Ditto DA—Nil
- OR.—Worth Rs 60/ Ditto DU—nil
- OR.—nil

- 14 Those included in (c) are available
- 15 Cultivator (tenant and owner)
- 16 Got loan on interest.
- 17 Yes. Own home
18. Not recorded as there was no such question in the second scheme
- 19 Eating in Ballygunge Destitute Home
- 20 Yes. Remaining together
- 21 Not observed
- 22 Nil

## DATA FROM CLASS E

	Howrah		
	22	9	43.
1 Bachu			
2 (a) 25 years, (b) Female, (c) Hinduism, (d) Ruidas, (e) . . . .			
3 Nani			
4 Refused to name			
5 Gāngadharpur, Dist.—Hooghly.			
6 Street beggar			
7 For begging			
8 About one month.			
9. She herself with one son only			
10 No			
11 None			
12			
13 Onehouse			
14. Have been sold by the money-lender			
15 To skin cows			
16 No Tried but failed			
17. No			
18 No (She thinks that nobody will give her work)			
19 By begging			
20 Yes			
21			
22			

## Question Nos 1 to 4

So far as Question Nos 1 to 4 are concerned all the investigators have given equally good answers

## Question No 5

The answer to the fifth question varies in the different classes In Class A the village and the district are given The informant could not

give the Post Office and the Police Station. At this, the investigator tried to identify the area from which she came by getting the name of the nearest Railway Station. In this he was successful. In Class B, only the place of residence and the district are given—the remaining two are not mentioned but they can be easily deduced as Baraset is a Sub-Divisional town. In Class C we get all the four. In Class D we get only the name of the village and of the district. The Post Office and the Police Station are not mentioned and there is no attempt to give any indication about the area from which the unit came. In class E the district is clearly mentioned. But there is no indication regarding the nature of the place of residence mentioned.

#### Question No. 6

The answer is uniform in all the Classes.

#### Question No 7

All the five Classes supply the necessary information but the information given by the fifth Class is included under No 8 by mistake. Though the information supplied by Classes A and B are of the same nature yet A is more detailed and accurate while B is vague and insufficient. But B supplied the minimum necessity.

#### Question No. 8

The answer to this question has been given by all except B who has not mentioned it at all. The answer given by E has to be stretched to fulfil its purpose. The answers given by A, C and D are complete though that of C is more detailed.

#### Question No 9

Classes A, B, C and D have given the information in the form of a genealogical table but E has only described it. From E, it cannot be understood whether it is complete or incomplete. In all the Classes the sex of the different individuals is indicated. The names of all the individuals are given in Classes A, C and D but in Classes B and E the names of all the individuals are not given. Age of all the individuals has been given by A and C; B has omitted it in three cases, D and E in one case each.

#### Question No 10

The answer is satisfactory so far as A, B, C and E are concerned. In D there is no record.

#### Question Nos 11 & 12

The answers are equally satisfactory in all the cases.

#### Question No 13

The answers to this question vary greatly in different Classes. Classes A and D have the best record. They have classified and arranged the

different kinds of assets and have put them under the three headings required by the question. Class C has also recorded the assets under different groups but has not exhausted all the possible groups contemplated in the question. The answer in Class E is very unsatisfactory and incomplete. Class B has not recorded it at all. This, however, is not the case with the other member of the Class, who has recorded it in his sheets. This particular investigator received his instructions from a person other than the writer which led to this omission. Further, he did not collect any information under Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, and 21. This was also due to the same cause. In Class A also we have the same incomplete data from one of the investigators.

#### Question No 14.

The answers are all satisfactory and serve our purpose. Class B has no record under this heading.

#### Question No 15

The answers are all equally satisfactory except that of Class B where there is no record.

#### Question No 16.

The answers vary. Class A has given the capital, the things mortgaged and the interest. Class B has no record. Class C has given the amount of loan (which seems to be a simple loan) but not the interest. Class D has given the amount of loan and the things mortgaged against it but has not mentioned the rate of interest. The answer of Class E is incomplete in its own way.

#### Question No 17.

The answers are satisfactory in all cases (with the exception of Class B which has no record) but not equally so. Class A has given both the time and place, Class C only the time but not the place though it can be easily imagined, Class D has given the place but not time. Class E had not to make this distinction.

#### Question No. 18.

The answers to this question are also satisfactory though there are points of discrimination. Class A has recorded both the intention and nature of work, B speaks nothing of intention, C and E are complete in their own way, D has not recorded it according to instructions as the data were collected at a time when this was not necessary,

#### Question No. 19

The answers to this question are equally satisfactory in all Classes

## Question No 20

Classes A B D and E have given complete answers. Though C has not recorded any information it can be easily reconstructed from the data.

## Question No 21

Answers given by Classes A C and D are complete. Classes B and E have no record

## Question No 22

Though this question was given up yet Classes A and C have recorded information under this heading as far as possible for layman.

This analysis of the data shows that information collected by Class A is decidedly the best and it forms 52.8% of our stock. The next in order is that collected by Class C. Classes B and D come after Class C and they both stand on the same footing. The data of E are of a lower order. The superiority of the data of Class C over those of B and D is most probably due to experience of sustained field work among a social group. In spite of this difference in the merits of the data from different Classes it must be stated that all the first four Classes have supplied the minimum necessity and the variation lies only in matters relating to details. Under these circumstances we think that collection of data by persons who have not been properly trained for this type of work for a considerable period under the guidance of social scientists with field experience will not meet with success. The data collected by such untrained persons will not be comparable with our data. In fact they will have little scientific value.

# CHAPTER III

## NATURE OF THE SAMPLE

### I GENERAL

of destitute population into  
 have already stated that the influx gradually reached its climax  
 ted sometime in July 1943 and grant of Bengal realised the  
 part of September. The Government for an indefinite period of  
 eping these people within the city ved the plan of an all-out  
 the end of October they concei, mber when the city was  
 was successfully organised in Nov We need not discuss the  
 this so-called undesirable element started our sample survey  
 us drive and its methods We is about to reach its climax  
 of September when the influx wa the same month. On the  
 it to an end by the last week of be stating that over 100,000  
 1943, *The Statesman* published a no, 0,000 were being fed daily  
 assembled in Calcutta, of whom 6 organizations who either  
 kitchens run in Calcutta by private, or 16,000 meals per day )  
 od from Government kitchens ( ov Officer, Calcutta, at subsidy  
 plies through the Relief Control le newspaper, were being  
 30,000 more, according to the sam did not receive any help  
 other private organizations which, ow from which source *The*  
 veinment in any way We do not kn to be plar  
 ived these figures but they appear maximum figure of the desti-  
 to be approximately the correct ma the-beginning of September  
 st half of October then the figure for, ple survey was carried out  
 en nearabout 80,000 Thus, our sam, 80,000 to 100,000 We  
 en the destitute population varied from persons In other words,  
 20 units with a population of 2,537 of the destitute population  
 on extended from 3.17 to 2.54 per cent the total influx at 80,000,  
 " g of the survey, when we assume, operation is when we hold  
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 ne may be considered as sufficiently fit a

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*Census of India, 1941, Vol IV (page 110)* the figure 1,216,803 has been  
 per sample of 61,460,377 Thus, the Census authorities regard 1.97 per  
 sample

**Question No 20**

Classes A B D and E have given complete answers. Though C has not recorded any information, it can be easily reconstructed from the data.

**Question No 21**

Answers given by Classes A C and D are complete. Classes B and E have no record

**Question No 22**

Though this question was given up yet Classes A and C have recorded information under this heading as far as possible for laymen

This analysis of the data shows that information collected by Class A is decidedly the best and it forms 52.8% of our stock. The next in order is that collected by Class C. Classes B and D come after Class C and they both stand on the same footing. The data of E are of a lower order. The superiority of the data of Class C over those of B and D is most probably due to experience of sustained field work among a social group. In spite of this difference in the merits of the data from different Classes, it must be stated that all the first four Classes have supplied the minimum necessity and the variation lies only in matters relating to details. Under these circumstances we think that collection of data by persons who have not been properly trained for this type of work for a considerable period under the guidance of social scientists with field experience will not meet with success. The data collected by such untrained persons will not be comparable with our data. In fact they will have little scientific value.

## CHAPTER III

# NATURE OF THE SAMPLE

### I. GENERAL

We have already stated that the influx of destitute population into Calcutta started sometime in July 1943 and gradually reached its climax in the latter part of September. The Government of Bengal realised the danger of keeping these people within the city for an indefinite period of time and by the end of October they conceived the plan of an all-out drive. This was successfully organised in November when the city was cleared of this so-called undesirable element. We need not discuss the nature of this drive and its methods. We started our sample survey from the 2nd of September when the influx was about to reach its climax and brought it to an end by the last week of the same month. On the 16th October, 1943, *The Statesman* published a note stating that over 100,000 destitutes had assembled in Calcutta, of whom 60,000 were 'being fed daily at 220 free kitchens run in Calcutta by private organizations who either get cooked food from Government kitchens (over 16,000 meals per day) or take supplies through the Relief Control Officer, Calcutta, at subsidy rates'; About 30,000 more, according to the same newspaper, were being maintained by other private organizations which did not receive any help from the Government in any way. We do not know from which source *The Statesman* received these figures but they appear to be plausible. So, if we assume 100,000 to be approximately the correct maximum figure of the destitutes at the first half of October then the figure for the beginning of September might have been near about 80,000. Thus, our sample survey was carried out at a period when the destitute population varied from 80,000 to 100,000. We investigated 820 units with a population of 2,537 persons. In other words, our investigation extended from 3.17 to 2.54 per cent of the destitute population. At the beginning of the survey, when we assume the total influx at 80,000, our percentage rises to 3.17 while at the end of our operations when we hold the destitute population at 100,000 our percentage drops down to 2.54. As a sample of the destitute population of Calcutta during these two months our figure (2537) therefore may be considered as sufficiently fit and proper from the standpoint of number<sup>18</sup>.

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18 In the *Census of India, 1941*, Vol IV (page 110) the figure 1,216,803 has been regarded as a proper sample of 61,460,377. Thus, the Census authorities regard 1.97 per cent as a proper sample.



The first item of information gathered was the name of the leader of the unit. It was neither possible to interrogate all the members of the unit nor was it profitable to do so. Some of them were too young and some too old. Some of them were so much stunned by mishaps that they could not remember the names of their parents or even of grown up children. Naturally these persons were of little use for our inquiry. Our investigators always tried to isolate the units and interrogate them in a more or less secluded and congenial atmosphere. This was helpful as people naturally hesitate to lay bare their poverty to others unless they are professional beggars. But away from others, in a lonely corner they often found it easier to unload their mind to the sympathetic investigator. But unfortunately such secluded corners were few and often people surrounded the investigator in large number when they thought that he might be somehow or other helpful in procuring them a meal. Under the circumstances the investigator on meeting a unit, generally had to exercise his judgment in selecting the proper informant. Generally he began to talk with the group in an impersonal manner—levelling his questions to the group instead of any particular person. This method of interrogation soon revealed the person who was most intelligent and smart in the unit. This person generally came forward and began to answer his questions. The other members of the unit often remained passive or helped the informant on occasions when he was unable to remember a particular point. Thus, they served as good checks on the information supplied by this person who has been marked as the leader of the unit in our records. In selecting the leader we generally avoided such persons who happened to be unimportant adjuncts to the unit—persons who were not intimately related to the core of the unit—inspite of their better knowledge or smartness. This caution was necessary as the religion and community of the the unit had to be derived from the religion and community of its leader.

In Question No. 9 the investigator was instructed to prepare a genealogical table of the unit showing the relation of its members with one another and with other persons of the family or extended family or household as the case might be who had been left at home. The members of the unit present were generally underlined or marked out in any other way according to the convenience of the worker. Only those persons have been included in our sample. The sex of the different persons was ascertained and indicated by the usual symbols and their civil condition was also collected and shown in the table in the customary manner. So far as these facts were concerned we had no difficulty. But we also aimed at collection of data relating to the age of the different individuals of the table. Here we met with indifferent results. Perhaps more than 99% of our informants could not give even their own exact age—not to speak of other members of the party. Their ignorance in this respect was colossal. Generally they asked us to guess for ourselves the age from the person's appearance. This was more so when the leader of the unit happened to be a

(To face page 32)

PLATE V



Driven by hunger and uprooted from the family they took shelter before the gate of a well-to-do citizen

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PLATE V

(To face page 32)



Driven by hunger and uprooted from the family they took shelter before the gate of a well-to-do citizen



woman She could not give her own age nor that of her husband but she could manage to give us some idea about the age of her children—especially of the last few Often she could give the difference in years between the different issues Under the circumstances we mainly depended on our personal observation and judgement The investigator himself saw all the persons of the unit and formed his own notion about their ages Then he discussed the matter with the informant and other members of the unit and finally adjusted them and put them down in years, with the exception of cases below one year of age. As a result the classification of age-groups is based not on actual facts but on notions of the investigators confirmed or modified by statements of informants In spite of this uncertain basis, we believe that our investigators did not commit any error in the broader classifications i e., from 5 to 60. In the first five groups they had been considerably helped by the mothers of the children. In the classification of ages we have followed the Census system and we depend for its accuracy on the very same grounds on which the Census figures stand We had, however, one advantage over the Census authorities. Our investigators were all educated men with a keen sense of scientific accuracy and high notions of responsibility There cannot be any question of comparison between them and the village enumerators on whom the Census authorities ultimately depend.

## II AGE DISTRIBUTION

In Appendix I we find a detailed distribution of the sample population under different age-groups A summary of this is given in Appendix IA The total population surveyed is 2537 Of these 570 persons or 22.47 % are included in the age-group 0 to 5 years, 661 or 26.05 % in the age-group 5 to 15 years, 982 or 38.71 % in the age-group 15 to 50 years, 113 or 4.45 % in the age-group 50 and over, and 211 or 8.39 % in the group for which the age could not be ascertained

The age-distribution of our sample reveals some interesting facts One of them is the great preponderance of persons in the first two quinquennia Table I below shows the position of our figures in relation to the figures for Bengal ( 1931 and 1941 ) and for the 24-Pargannas ( 1931 )

Column 1 of Table I gives the age-periods in years Column 2 gives the percentage of persons in each age-group, in our sample, to the total sample i e., 2537. In order to make these figures comparable to similar figures obtained from the Census Reports we have distributed the age-unspecified group of our sample, comprising 211 persons proportionately over the nine age-groups In Column 3 we have given the percentage of each age-group of Bengal to the total population of Bengal in 1931 Column 4 gives similar figures for 1941. In Column 5 also we have given similar figures for the District of 24-Pargannas ( 1931 ) from which more than 81 % of our sample were derived In Columns 6, 7 and 8 we have recorded the difference between Columns 2 and 3, Columns 2 and 4, and Columns 2 and 5 respectively



TABLE I  
SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE OF EACH AGE-GROUP BETWEEN OUR SAMPLE AND THE POPULATION OF  
BENGAL (IN 1931 AND 1941) AND OF THE 24-PARGANNAS (IN 1931)

Age-groups	Percentage of each age-group to the total sample i. e. 537 (The age-unspecified group having been proportionately distributed over the different age groups)	Percentage of each age-group to the total population of			Difference between Cols. 3 & 3.	Difference between Cols. 3 & 4.	Difference between Cols. 3 & 5
		Bengal in 1931	Bengal in 1941	24 Pargannas in 1931			
Col. 1	-	3	4	5	6	7	8
0-5	4.5	13.55	13.87	14.16	+ 8.97	+ 10.65	+ 10.56
5-10	7.65	13.43	14.38	14.11	+ 7.23	+ 6.28	+ 8.54
0-10	12.17	26.98	28.26	28.27	+ 10.19	+ 16.91	+ 18.90
10-15	7.0	11.78	11.23	11.00	- 4.02	- 3.47	- 3.24
15-20	2.5	9.62	9.41	9.63	- 5.37	- 1.96	- 2.08
10-20	15.01	21.40	20.44	20.63	- 6.39	- 5.43	- 5.92
20-30	14.39	19.00	18.77	20.25	- 4.61	- 4.38	- 5.86
30-40	13.16	13.86	14.53	14.87	- 7.0	- 1.37	- 1.71
40-50	4.1	8.64	9.11	9.14	- 1.23	- 1.70	- 1.73
50-60	3.4	4.81	5.23	4.93	- 1.07	- 1.40	- 1.19
60 & Over	1.10	3.31	3.65	3.61	- 2.21	- 2.65	- 2.51

An analysis of these figures in Table I shows that infants aged 0 to 5 formed 24.52% of the destitutes who thronged the streets of Calcutta during our survey in 1943. Their proportion in the total population of Bengal in 1931 was 15.55%. So, there is a difference of 8.97% between the two series. At the next quinquennium also we find almost a similar case. That age-group was represented in Bengal by 13.43% in 1931 whereas we have 20.65% in our sample. Here again we find a difference of 7.22% making up a total difference of 16.19% in the first two quinquennia between the two series. In 1941 this difference is even higher, i.e., 16.91%. When we compare our figures with those of the District of 24-Pargannas the difference rises still higher and stands at 18.90%. Thus the first two quinquennia of our data hold 45.17% while the same periods for the whole of Bengal had 28.98% in 1931 and 28.26% in 1941. In the 24-Pargannas these two quinquennia held 26.27% in 1931. From the next quinquennium the order is reversed. The percentage of persons between 10 to 15 and 15 to 20 in our sample is far less than what occurs in the population of Bengal or of the 24-Pargannas. In the population of Bengal these two quinquennia held 11.78% and 9.62% in 1931 and 11.23% and 9.21% in 1941 whereas we have only 7.76% and 7.25% respectively in our sample. So if these two quinquennia are considered together we find a difference of 6.39% in 1931 and 5.43% in 1941. The next decade (20 to 30) also has almost the same feature—our sample is deficient by 4.61% and 4.38% from the two Census series of 1931 and 1941 respectively. In the next few decades too our sample has got a regularly lower percentage than all the Census series though the difference is not so wide as in the two preceding decades (i.e., 10 to 20 and 20 to 30). From this comparative study of the population distribution in the two series it is evident that children up to ten years of age came to Calcutta in a very large number—their proportion in the destitute population of Calcutta far exceeded their ratio in the general population of Bengal or even of the 24-Pargannas. But people of the next two decades (10 to 30) were proportionately the least to come to Calcutta. People aged 30 to 60 came to Calcutta almost in the same proportion as they occur in the population of Bengal.

We have so long compared the percentages of the different age-groups of our sample with those of the population of Bengal and of the district of 24-Pargannas. But statistically this is not above criticism. Our sample was mainly derived from seven districts of Bengal. The following list shows the number of persons which came from each district.—

Serial No.	Name of the district.	Number of persons.	Percentage of the total sample
1	24-Pargannas	2061	81.24
2	Midnapore	187	7.76
3	Howrah	67	2.64
4	Nadia	69	2.48
5	Hooghly	41	1.62
6.	Burdwan	41	1.62
7	Dacca	82	1.26
8	Other Districts (Faridpur, Gaya, Tippura, Balasore etc.)	85	1.38

It definitely shows that our sample does not represent all the districts of Bengal nor does it contain a proportionate number of the population of the different districts represented in our sample. Therefore it is not sound to compare the different age-groups of our sample with the age-groups of either entire Bengal or of the district of 24 Pargannas. To avoid this difficulty we have worked out the "Expected percentage of the different age-groups of the population of the districts mainly represented in our sample". We have put this Expected Percentage in Column 3 of Table IA. It has been worked out in the following manner. Let P indicate the percentage of a particular age-group of a district to its total population and let N indicate the number of destitutes representing a district in our sample. Let the digit attached to N or P indicate the serial number of the district included in the list given above. Now the Expected Percentage of the age-group 0 to 5 will be

$$\frac{P_1 \times N_1 + P_2 \times N_2 + P_3 \times N_3 + P_4 \times N_4 + P_5 \times N_5 + P_6 \times N_6 + P_7 \times N_7}{N_1 + N_2 + N_3 + N_4 + N_5 + N_6 + N_7}$$

(P here indicates the percentages of the age-group 0 to 5 in their respective districts.) We have not taken into consideration the different districts included under Serial No. 8 owing to the very small number of persons coming from them into our sample. In this way we have worked out the "Expected Percentage" of each of the nine age-groups into which we have divided our sample.



words for every 100 male destitutes there were over 111 female destitutes. According to the Census of 1931 In every hundred of the total population of Bengal there are 52 males and 48 females or over 108 males for every 100 females.<sup>20</sup> This position is substantially maintained in the Census of 1941 as we find therein 52.65% men and 47.35% women. The difference between the two sexes is further increased if we take into consideration the population of the district of 24 Pargannas in 1931. There the males formed 53.98% and the females 46.02%. The following Table 2 shows the difference in the proportion of sexes between our sample and the two Census series as well as the figures for the district of 24 Pargannas.

TABLE 2

SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN PROPORTION OF SEXES BETWEEN OUR SAMPLE AND THE FIGURES FOR BENGAL IN THE LAST TWO CENSUSES AND OF 24 PARGANNAS IN 1931

Source	Percentage of males.	Percentage of females.
Our sample	47.3	52.7
Bengal in 1931	51.98	48.02
Bengal in 1941	52.65	47.35
24-Pargannas in 1931	53.98	46.02
Expected Population	53.5.	46.57

Thus we have more women than men in our sample while Bengal shows a greater number of men than women in its population at both the censuses. This is also the case with the 24 Pargannas in 1931 and with the "Expected Percentage of the sexes of the districts mainly represented in our sample. The preponderance of women over men in our sample is not found equally in all the age groups but is restricted to certain decades.

This is evident from Table 3. In Column 1 of this Table 3 we have given the age-groups. In Column 2 the percentage of each age group of males of our sample to the total sample has been recorded. Column 3 records the percentage of each age-group of females of our sample to the total sample. Column 4 gives the difference between Columns 3 and 2. In Column 5 we have shown the number of females for each 100 males in each age-group of our sample. Column 6 gives the "Expected Percentage" of each age-group of males to the total population of the districts mainly represented in our sample. In Column 7 we have given similar figures for the females. Column 8 gives the difference between Columns 6 and 7. Column 9 records the number of females for each 100 males of each age group of the "Expected Percentage". The "Expected Percentages" of this Table 3 have also been worked out in the same manner as in Table 1A.









An analysis of Columns 2 and 3 of Table 3 shows that the number of males persistently preponderates over the females in the first three quinquennia (i.e., 0 to 15 years) of our sample. From the fourth to the twelfth quinquennium (i.e. 15 to 60) the table is turned and we have more females than males. In the last age-group (i.e. 60 and over) again the males number more than the females. If we compare these three age-groups of our sample with the corresponding age groups of the Expected Percentage of the two sexes in the districts mainly represented in our sample we find that in the latter cases the males always preponderate over the females. In Table 3A we have reduced the different quinquennia and decades into three broad age groups namely 0 to 15 15 to 60 and 60 and over and have compared the two series of figures.

TABLE 3A  
Being a Summary of Table 3

OUR SAMPLE					EXPECTED PERCENTAGE			
Age-groups	Percentage of each age-group of males of our sample to the total sample.	Percentage of each age-group of females of our sample to the total sample.	Difference between Cols. 2 and 3	Number of females for each 100 males in each age-group of our sample.	"Expected Percentage" of each age-group of males to the total population of the districts mainly represented in our sample	Expected Percentage of each age-group of females to the total population of the districts mainly represented in our sample.	Difference between Cols. 6 and 7	Number of females for each 100 males in each age-group of the "Expected Percentage"
Col. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0-15	30.39	22.60	+7.79	74	19.36	17.80	+1.56	0
15-60	16.10	29.35	-13.24	183	22.31	26.70	+4.39	83
60 and over	9	35	+44	44	18	176	+158	97

It shows that in the first broad division we have 30.39% of males and 22.62% females in our sample whereas there are 19.36% males and 17.80% females in the Expected Percentage. The difference between the males and females of this age-group in our sample is +7.79 whereas in the "Expected Percentage" it is only +1.56. In the second age-group of this Table 3A there are 16.10% males and 29.34% females in our sample whereas we have 22.31% males and 26.70% females in the "Expected Percentage". The difference between males and females



A moving free-kitchen Women and children far outnumbered the adult males



of these two series is  $-13.74$  and  $+5.52$  respectively which reveals a very wide gap between the two series. In the third age-group of this Table we find that there are 79% males and 44% females in our sample whereas in the "Expected Percentage" the males are 182% and the females 176%. In both the series the males number more than the females

To be more explicit, for every 100 males of the first age-group of this Table 3A, there are 74 females in our sample and 92 females in the "Expected Percentage". In the second age-group for every 100 males there are 185 females in our sample and only 83 females in the "Expected Percentage". This is very extraordinary. In the third age-group too there is considerable difference as, for every 100 males of this age-group there are only 44 females in our sample and 97 females in the "Expected Percentage". The erratic nature of the percentages of the two sexes in the two series calls for an explanation. A comparison of Columns 5 and 9 of Table 3 may give some clue to the peculiar behaviour of the two series

In Column 5 of Table 3 we find that the number of females per 100 males of our sample gradually decreases from 83 in the first quinquennium to 61 in the third quinquennium. In the "Expected Percentage" the difference between males and females is never so sharp in any of these three quinquennia. It varies from 102 females per 100 males in the first quinquennium to 87 in the third (See Chart II). The unusual preponderance of males over females in the first three quinquennia of our sample is not accidental. Apparently, it is not due to biological causes but appears to be the result of socio-economic factors produced by the famine. There are two possible explanations viz. (a) more male children came to Calcutta or (b) male and female children came in equal proportion but some of the latter disappeared from the streets having been absorbed by some agencies or institutions soon after their arrival here. Let us examine the possibilities of these two explanations one by one

In Bengal the male child is preferred to the female one and this might have induced the parents to send away the boys in larger number to Calcutta where food was available and thereby to save them from the clutches of the famine. But this preferential treatment of the male children was not possible in the first quinquennium when both male and female children remain dependent on the parents or guardians and are not able to move independently. So, in respect of the boys of this quinquennium the parents could not exercise their predilection. Therefore we should expect to find in this quinquennium males and females in our sample in the same proportion as they occur in the "Expected Percentage". But this is not the case. For every 100 males there are 83 females in our sample and 102 females in the "Expected Percentage". The greater number of males in the first quinquennium of our sample, therefore, could not have been due to parental predilection for sons

The preponderance of boys over girls in the second and third quinquennia might have been due to the fact that boys become more and more independent as they grow in age while the movements of the girls are more and more restricted with the increase in their age and consequent physical development. A boy of 8 or 9 is taught to shift for himself even in normal times in the class of people from which the majority of the destitutes had been derived. So compelled by hunger boys of this age and over might have come to Calcutta independently of their parents—sometimes with a neighbour or distant relative sometimes even alone. We found such boys on the streets of Calcutta in course of our survey. What was the attitude of the parents or guardians to the girls of the second and third quinquennia? Customs traditions and the moral code of the people of Bengal dictate that girls as they grow in age are to be more and more strictly kept at home away from the public sight. But this attitude is more in keeping with those girls who have sexually matured or are about to do so i.e. roughly speaking with the girls of the third quinquennium and not with the girls of the second quinquennium. Therefore unhampered by social conventions but impelled by hunger the girls of the second quinquennium are expected to have come in the same proportion as the boys of the same quinquennium. So in the second quinquennium too we should expect the same proportion of boys to girls in our sample as in the "Expected Percentage." But this is not the case for every 100 males of the second quinquennium there are 70 females in our sample and 86 females in the Expected Percentage. Therefore the higher proportion of males in this quinquennium is not due to their coming to Calcutta in greater number but to some other reason.

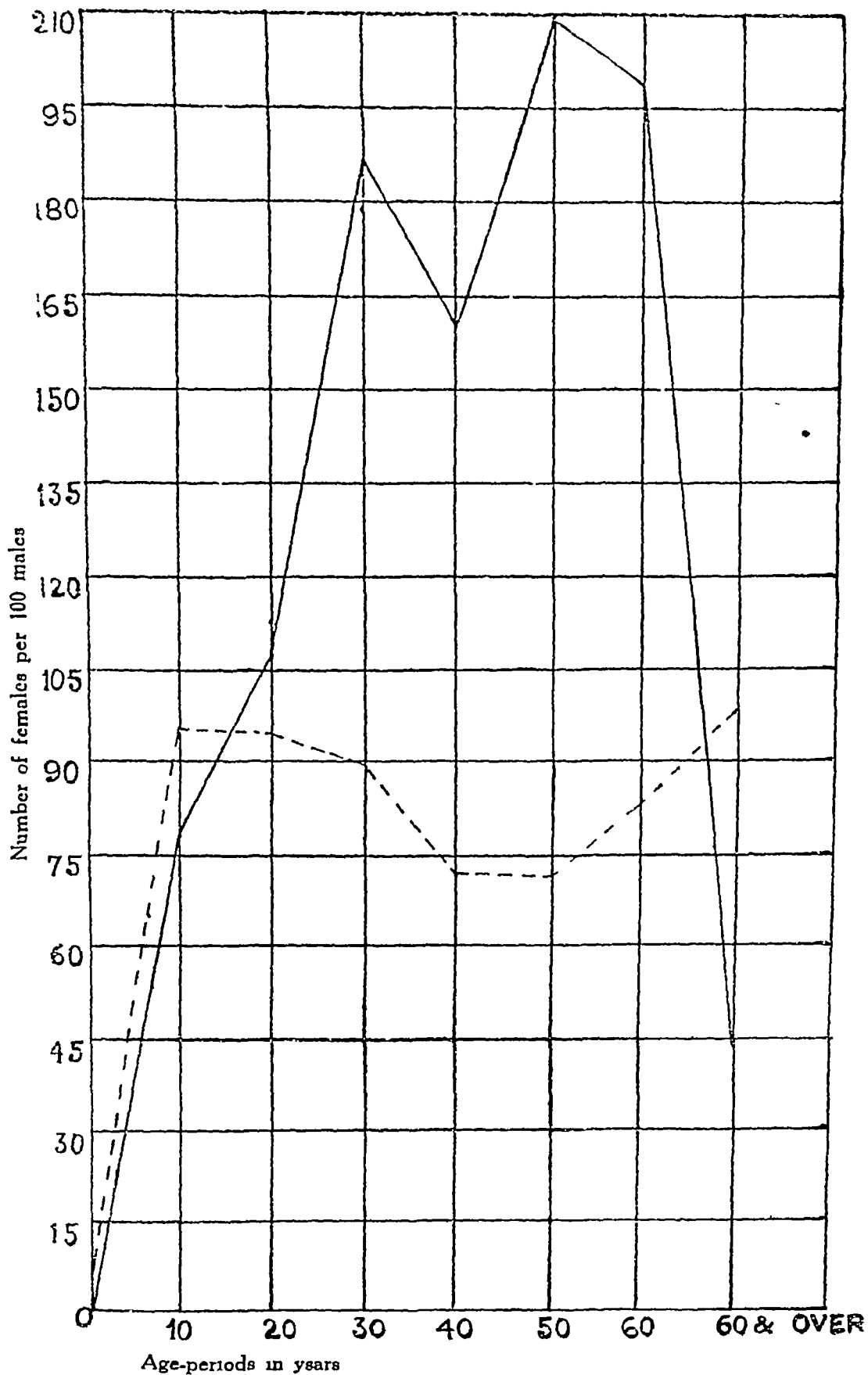
Let us now examine the third quinquennium. Here the proportion of girls is lowest in our sample. For every 100 males of this age-group we have 61 females in our sample and 87 females in the "Expected Percentage." It may be reasonably argued that this very low proportion of females at this age group was due to restrictions put on the free movements of girls. This is the age-period during which girls in Bengal attain sexual maturity. The parents try to get them married at this time of their life. Naturally therefore they put special restrictions on their movements at this age so that no social stigma may touch them and thereby hamper the progress of matrimonial negotiations. This, according to some is the sole or the most important cause of the very low proportion of females in the third quinquennium. But we have to assess properly the value of the following arguments before accepting this conclusion —

- (1) Hunger pinches equally both boys and girls. Starvation and death faced both male and female and young and old in those dark days of the famine. Could the parents leave their grown up daughters to uncertain fate for upholding social conventions of normal times? Can we expect that the grown up daughters would implicitly obey

CHART II

(To face page 42)

Showing the number of females per 100 males in our sample and in the "Expected Percentage"



Broken line="Expected Percentage"

Continuous line=Our sample

The preponderance of boys over girls in the second and third quinquennia might have been due to the fact that boys become more and more independent as they grow in age while the movements of the girls are more and more restricted with the increase in their age and consequent physical development. A boy of 8 or 9 is taught to shift for himself even in normal times in the class of people from which the majority of the destitutes had been derived. So compelled by hunger boys of this age and over might have come to Calcutta independently of their parents—sometimes with a neighbour or distant relative sometimes even alone. We found such boys on the streets of Calcutta in course of our survey. What was the attitude of the parents or guardians to the girls of the second and third quinquennia? Customs traditions and the moral code of the people of Bengal dictate that girls as they grow in age are to be more and more strictly kept at home away from the public sight. But this attitude is more in keeping with those girls who have sexually matured or are about to do so i.e. roughly speaking with the girls of the third quinquennium and not with the girls of the second quinquennium. Therefore unhampered by social conventions but impelled by hunger the girls of the second quinquennium are expected to have come in the same proportion as the boys of the same quinquennium. So in the second quinquennium too we should expect the same proportion of boys to girls in our sample as in the Expected Percentage. But this is not the case for every 100 males of the second quinquennium there are 70 females in our sample and 86 females in the 'Expected Percentage'. Therefore the higher proportion of males in this quinquennium is not due to their coming to Calcutta in greater number but to some other reason.

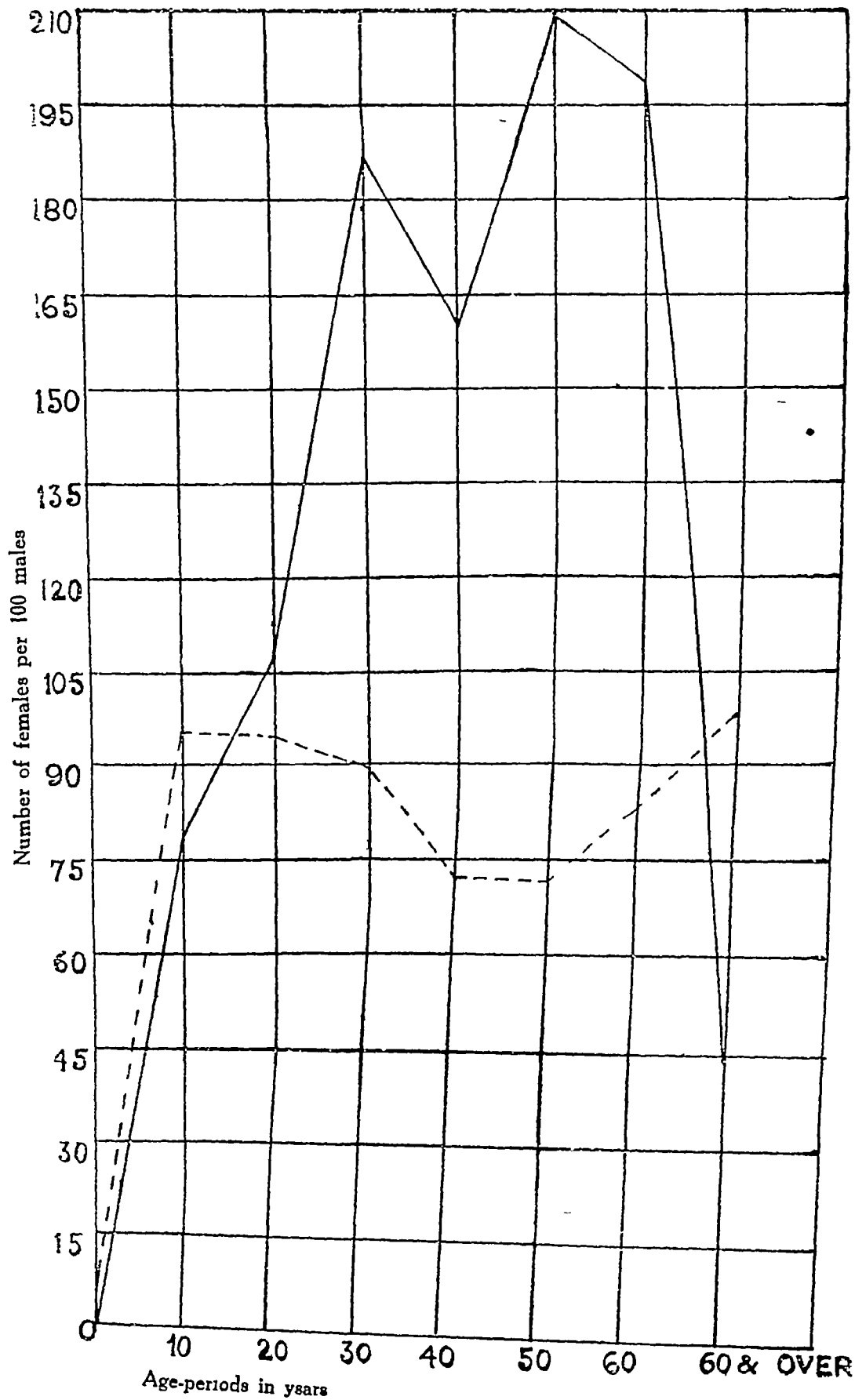
Let us now examine the third quinquennium. Here the proportion of girls is lowest in our sample. For every 100 males of this age group we have 61 females in our sample and 87 females in the Expected Percentage. It may be reasonably argued that this very low proportion of females at this age-group was due to restrictions put on the free movements of girls. This is the age-period during which girls in Bengal attain sexual maturity. The parents try to get them married at this time of their life. Naturally therefore they put special restrictions on their movements at this age so that no social stigma may touch them and thereby hamper the progress of matrimonial negotiations. This according to some is the sole or the most important cause of the very low proportion of females in the third quinquennium. But we have to assess properly the value of the following arguments before accepting this conclusion —

- (1) Hunger pinches equally both boys and girls. Starvation and death faced both male and female and young and old in those dark days of the famine. Could the parents leave their grown up daughters to uncertain fate for upholding social conventions of normal times? Can we expect that the grown up daughters would implicitly obey

CHART II

(To face page 42)

Showing the number of females per 100 males in our sample and in the "Expected Percentage"



Broken line="Expected Percentage"

Continuous line=Our sample



The preponderance of boys over girls in the second and third quinquennia might have been due to the fact that boys become more and more independent as they grow in age while the movements of the girls are more and more restricted with the increase in their age and consequent physical development. A boy of 8 or 9 is taught to shift for himself even in normal times in the class of people from which the majority of the destitutes had been derived. So compelled by hunger boys of this age and over might have come to Calcutta independently of their parents—sometimes with a neighbour or distant relative sometimes even alone. We found such boys on the streets of Calcutta in course of our survey. What was the attitude of the parents or guardians to the girls of the second and third quinquennia? Customs, traditions and the moral code of the people of Bengal dictate that girls as they grow in age are to be more and more strictly kept at home away from the public sight. But this attitude is more in keeping with those girls who have sexually matured or are about to do so i.e., roughly speaking with the girls of the third quinquennium and not with the girls of the second quinquennium. Therefore unhampered by social conventions but impelled by hunger the girls of the second quinquennium are expected to have come in the same proportion as the boys of the same quinquennium. So in the second quinquennium too we should expect the same proportion of boys to girls in our sample as in the Expected Percentage. But this is not the case for every 100 males of the second quinquennium there are 70 females in our sample and 86 females in the "Expected Percentage". Therefore the higher proportion of males in this quinquennium is not due to their coming to Calcutta in greater number but to some other reason.

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- (1) Hunger pinches equally both boys and girls. Starvation and death faced both male and female and young and old in those dark days of the famine. Could the parents leave their grown up daughters to uncertain fate for upholding social conventions of normal times? Can we expect that the grown up daughters would implicitly ob-





their parents, even when placed face to face with death, merely for upholding the social conventions of normal times? We have enough materials to show from our survey that wives disobeyed husbands and children disobeyed parents. In the face of these evidences it is too much to assume that grown-up daughters sacrificed themselves to the ideas of propriety of their parents.

- (2) These grown-up daughters could not be left alone at home. Some responsible guardian, preferably one of the parents, must have remained at home to look after them. This was only possible for such families which had some means left to maintain these persons at home. We have elsewhere shown that an overwhelming proportion of the destitutes left their home only when they had no means of maintaining themselves in the rural homes of their ancestors.
- (3) More than 97 per cent of the destitutes of Calcutta were inhabitants of Western Bengal. These destitutes were mostly derived from the lower strata of both Hindu and Muhammadan society. In fact the Scheduled Castes formed nearly 54% of the destitutes of Calcutta. These people generally do not observe purdah in West Bengal. Women of this stratum are found to work in the field along with men. They go to the markets both for selling and purchasing commodities. They visit relatives in distant villages covering the path on foot either accompanied by men or not. Under these circumstances, we do not think that social conventions, which they did not observe very strictly even under normal conditions, were seriously respected in the abnormal circumstances of the famine.
- (4) If we accept, for the sake of argument, that social conventions were responsible for the lowest proportion of females in the third quinquennium, they must have operated with equal, if not greater, force in the case of the females of the fourth quinquennium. But in our sample the females of the fourth quinquennium have the highest proportion. For every 100 males of this age-group we have 204 females in our sample and 102 in the "Expected Percentage". This huge deficit of males in the fourth and subsequent eight quinquennia might be attributed to two causes, namely, (a) that able-bodied grown-up males were not looked upon with the same favour as females and children in the free-kitchens. Some discrimination was made in this respect. (b) Grown-up males secured work in mills, factories and private houses. Thus they were kept out of the destitute population. So far as the first argument is concerned we agree to the fact that discrimination was made in respect of able-bodied grown-up males. But this was not done in case of



their parents, even when placed face to face with death, merely for upholding the social conventions of normal times? We have enough materials to show from our survey that wives disobeyed husbands and children disobeyed parents. In the face of these evidences it is too much to assume that grown-up daughters sacrificed themselves to the ideas of propriety of their parents.

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diseased persons. We have no record about the proportions of the diseased among males and females in different age groups. As to the second argument our experience of the destitutes leaves a wide margin of doubt about the efficacy of this ground. Continued malnutrition for a long time before leaving home effectively undermined the working capacity of the grown up males of this stratum of society. Most of them were not capable of bearing the sustained efforts of a millhand or factory worker. We tried to secure employment for both males and females in domestic service. We, however found in most cases that they had become incapable of even the light work of domestic establishments. This was the experience of most of our investigators. So the argument of absorption of the males of this age-group (fourth quinquennium) by mills factories and domestic establishments cannot stand under the circumstances.

These four causes stand on our way to the acceptance of the theory that the lowest proportion of females in the third quinquennium was due to social conventions. Some of these girls might have remained at home but the majority came to Calcutta just like the women of the next quinquennium and subsequent decades but they did not remain on the streets. There are two possible places where they might have gone namely (a) orphanages and work centres, or (b) brothels. We know that orphanages and work centres were opened by the Government long after our survey operations. So that has not affected the proportion of the females of the third quinquennium. Therefore we are forced to conclude that the low proportion of girls in the first three quinquennia was mainly caused by their absorption in large number in the brothels of Calcutta. The gradual decrease in the proportion of girls from the first to the third quinquennium in our sample is quite natural under the circumstances. The girls of the third quinquennium were the best preys of the touts of these infamous houses. Devoid of any encumbrance in the shape of children and being of the age which was suitable at the moment or would be so in near future for the carnal trade they were readily victimised.

We have already noticed that the number of females in our sample is uniformly higher in all the subsequent age-grades from the fourth quinquennium except the last one where the order is reversed. This shows that the females of a somewhat higher age probably came in a greater number. In the "Expected Percentage" of the two sexes in the districts mainly represented in our sample the proportion of males and females is of a completely different nature than what we meet with in our sample during these age periods (i.e. 15 to 60 and over). In the fourth quinquennium the percentage of females is higher than that of males in the "Expected Percentage". But in all the subsequent decades we find that the males have all along a higher percentage than the females (vide

Table 3) But the difference is not as wide as in our sample. In the third decade for every 100 males there are 187 females in our sample and only 89 females in the 'Expected Percentage' series. In the fourth decade the number of females per 100 males in our sample is 160 whereas in the "Expected Percentage" series it is only 72. The fifth decade holds 210 females for each 100 males in our sample as against only 71 females of the "Expected Percentage". In the sixth decade also for every 100 males there are 197 females in our sample and only 82 females in the "Expected Percentage" series. If we now consider all the four decades (i.e., 20 to 60) together, we find that for every 100 males of this age-group (20-60) there are 182 females in our sample and only 79 females in the "Expected Percentage" series. If we add to these four decades the fourth quinquennium the number of females per 100 males rises to 185 in our sample and 83 in the "Expected Percentage" series. Naturally the question crops up in our mind—why women of these age-periods came in a far greater number to Calcutta than they occur in the population of the districts mainly represented in our sample? There might have been a number of causes but the most important one seems to be the fact that *they were burdened with children*. The child-bearing age among the women of Bengal runs roughly between 15 and 45. The mothers, unable to bear the sight of children dying inch by inch of starvation, left home in search of food for their children, if not for themselves. The age-period 15 to 30 in the life of a woman is perhaps marked by the greatest number of immature children. If she begins to bear children at 15, then, by 30 she may have 5 or 6 of them, of whom only one or at the most two will be able to earn their livelihood. In the next decade too, this condition persists to a considerable extent, though she gets some relief through the maturation of the earlier-born children, especially the daughters. In our sample the relative proportion of women is highest in the fourth quinquennium and then it gradually decreases in the third and fourth decades. But again it rises in the fifth decade to the highest point and then lowers down in the sixth decade. This secondary rise in the relative proportion of women in our sample is most probably due to widowhood. Though the number of immature children gradually disappears through the fifth and sixth decades yet widowhood increases during these age-periods among women. Among the women of the fifth and sixth decades of our sample 44.44% and 70.69% respectively are widows (Vide Table 5). But in the previous two decades i.e., third and fourth, their proportion is 16.89% and 27.37% respectively. Therefore we think that the secondary rise in the proportion of women in the fifth and sixth decades of our sample is more the effect of widowhood than the existence of immature children.

Besides these two factors, namely, incidence of immature children and widowhood, there was another, which by decreasing the number of mature male destitutes indirectly increased the proportion of mature women. In a



large number of cases the adult male population did not come to Calcutta owing to one or more of the following three reasons

- (a) the adult men looked after the standing crops in the fields and guarded the house and property
- (b) many of them were disabled to move from the house owing to malnutrition as they tried to feed the children at their own expense and at the same time subjected themselves to more and more strenuous exertions in earning a livelihood and
- (c) they experienced great difficulty in Calcutta in receiving food at the free-kitchens in many of which preference was given to women and children—the able-bodied adult men therefore had no chance of getting any food in Calcutta whereas they could at least depend on wild products in their village homes.

These are possibly the causes of the preponderance of women over men in the adult stage.

But when we consider the last decade of our sample we find a sudden heavy fall in the proportion of women. In this age grade of our sample there are 44 females for every 100 males as against 97 females for every 100 males of the "Expected Percentage series. It is not possible to suggest any cause for this deficiency of women in the last age-grade of our sample from our survey. Possibly it was due to their comparatively greater weakness at this age. Women being less hardy than men submitted to their fate at this age-period without trying to exert themselves to the utmost.

#### IV MARITAL CONDITION OF THE DESTITUATES

Our data regarding marital condition seems to be fairly correct. In one case only there is some scope for doubt—a girl is shown as unmarried in the age-group 20 to 30 which is rather unusual in Bengal among the class of people which came to Calcutta. Out of 2537 destitutes surveyed 1865 (63.80%) are unmarried, 906 (35.71%) married and 266 (10.48%) widowed. Among the unmarried 823 or 32.40% are males and 543 or 21.40% are females. In the married group there are 330 or 13.00% males and 576 or 22.70% females. The widowed group holds 48 or 1.80% males and 218 or 8.69% females. The following Table 4 shows the distribution clearly.

The proportion of males to females in the unmarried group of our sample is almost similar to what occurs in the population of Bengal in 1931. But in this respect 1931 Census figures cannot be regarded as normal. The Child Marriage Restraint Act (XIX of 1929) came into operation from the 1st of April, 1930. By this Act marriage of boys under 18 and girls under 14 became illegal. Public opinion in Bengal was against this measure. As a result parents hurriedly gave away in marriage boys and girls of very tender age before the Act

came into force. The nature of the population reflected in the figures of the Census of 1931 which we meet with a large increase of marriage of both sexes at early ages. Compared with 1931 throughout the whole province, there are more than twice as many boys and eight times as many girls married at the age group of 15 to 20 years as there are in any boy and four times as many girls married at the same age group. (*Census of India 1931* Vol V, Part I, p. 202). Since the figures of those married should not be compared with the 1931 census. To be the type of the married group which also to its birth and the effect of the Act. The group of the widowed, however, was not affected by the Act at the same measure. Owing to these peculiar circumstances we should not compare our figures with the 1931 Census figure.

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF MARITAL CONDITION IN OUR SAMPLE COMPARED WITH THAT IN THE POPULATION OF BENGAL IN 1931 AND 1941

(A) We compare the figures of our sample with those of the 24 Parliamentary district for the year 1931 and the figures of the Census Report for Bengal for 1941)

Marital condition	Number and percentage in our sample			Percentage of marital condition in the total population of Bengal in (a) 1931 and (b) 1941		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Unmarried	522 32.46%	513 21.40%	1035 53.86%	(a) 21.39% (b) 26.50%	(a) 14.89% (b) 17.43%	(a) 30.28% (b) 44.32%
Married	339 13.00%	576 22.70%	915 35.71%	(a) 27.89% (b) 23.70%	(a) 21.00% (b) 22.00%	(a) 50.55% (b) 45.45%
Widowed	48 1.89%	218 8.59%	266 10.48%	(a) 1.69% (b) 2.32%	(a) 8.47% (b) 7.90%	(a) 10.16% (b) 10.22%

When we compare our figures with those obtained from the Census of 1941 (Bengal) we find that in the unmarried group the difference in the proportion of males and females of our sample and of the population of Bengal is similar. In our sample the males are 11 per cent more than the females while in the population of Bengal it is 9.46 per cent. The difference between the two sexes in this group of our sample may be attributed largely to their difference in the population of Bengal. Thus, it seems, there was not much selection between the sexes as long as they remained unmarried and therefore of a lower age. But when we come over to the married group we find a very sharp difference between the male and female in our sample whereas it is almost negligible in the population of Bengal. In our sample of the married for every 100 males there are 175 females but in the population of Bengal, according to the Census of 1941, for every 100 married males there are 94 married females. On the other hand in the widowed group the difference between male and female is almost of the same nature in both the series. In our sample, there are 8.59% widows and 1.89%

## DISTRIBUTION BY MARITAL CONDITION OF EACH SEX IN THE SAME AGE-GROUP

(The upper figure is the actual number of persons in that particular group and the lower figure its percentage to the total of each sex in each age-group.)

Age group	MALE				FEMALE				Total
	Unmarried		Married		Unmarried		Married		
	Our Sample	Census 1941	Our Sample	Census 1941	Our Sample	Census 1941	Our Sample	Census 1941	
0-5	379 100%		Nil		300	100%	Nil		300
5 to 10	250 100%		Nil		280	100%	Nil		300
10 to 15	11*	100%	Nil		112	73-30%	52	15	60
15 to 20	31	92-73%	3-01%	18-61%	65	1-75%	2	103	114
20 to 25	25	1-53%	69-52%	67-33%	116	1-40%	1	181	210
25 to 30	1	5%	66-1%	51-12%	116	Nil	Nil	138	180
30 to 35	Nil		69-07%	60-86%	65	Nil	Nil	65	117
35 to 40	Nil		3-45%	83-23%	29	Nil	Nil	17	68
40 & above	Nil		75-1%	75-1%	16	Nil	Nil	2	8
Age unsp. Total	41 60-0%		63 57-2%		110	27 20-7%	27	53 52-47%	101

\* B-11e are not able to compare our figures of this Table with those of the '41 Pargannas as district figures in these respects are not available in the Census Report for Bengal for 1941.

widowers while according to the Census of 1941 there are 7.90% widows and 2.32% widowers in the population of Bengal. So, the widowed people came to Calcutta almost in the same proportion as they are found in the population of Bengal. This may sound unbelievable. Widows are helpless creatures in Bengal they cannot earn their own livelihood and having lost their husband they generally become undesirable dependents on their parents, brothers or husband's brothers. So, naturally, at the time of famine they were the first to be thrown into its vortex. But this is not wholly the case, they came in a relatively lesser proportion than the unmarried but in the same proportion as the married females. So the distribution of marital condition further confirms our hypothesis that marriage and incidence of immature children were the two most important factors in driving the destitutes out of their homes ( See pp 44-45 )

In Table 5 we have shown the distribution of marital condition of each sex in different age-groups. It also shows the percentage of each figure to the total of each sex in each age-group. For purposes of comparison we have also given the corresponding percentages of the population of Bengal from the Census of 1941. Our figures show that among the destitutes who came to Calcutta there was not a single male or female under ten years of age who was married. Even in the next quinquennium ( 10 to 15 ) there was no married male. Among the females of this age-group 52 or 75.36% were unmarried, 15 or 21.74% married, and 2 or 2.9% widowed. Among the males of the next quinquennium ( 15 to 20 ), 92.73% are unmarried, 3.64% married and 3.64% widowed. Among the women of the same quinquennium 92.10% are married, 6.14% widowed and 1.75% unmarried. In the next decade ( 20 to 30 ) the percentage of unmarried among males drops down to 21.55 and among females it almost disappears ( .46% ) but there is a phenomenal increase in the percentage of married among the males ( 69.82% ), though it slightly decreases among the females ( 82.65% ). The widowed, both among the males ( 8.62% ) and females ( 16.89% ), have steadily increased in number in this quinquennium. From the next decade ( 30 to 40 years ) onwards we do not find any unmarried female. The percentage of married females from this decade gradually decreases but there is a correspondingly steady rise in the percentage of widows from decade to decade. The case of the males during these decades is also similar though not exactly the same. In the decade 30 to 40 years there is only 8.6% unmarried among the males which disappears from the next decade. The percentage of married among the males steadily increases from the third decade ( 20 to 30 years ) and reaches the peak at the fifth ( 40 to 50 ) after which it gradually declines. The widowers, on the other hand, steadily increase in percentage from the second decade and reach the maximum at the seventh, with the exception of the fifth decade where there is a sudden fall.

If we now compare our figures with those obtained from the Census of

Bengal 1941 (See Table 5) we observe a number of phenomena which require explanation. Among males from 0 to 15 years of age, we do not find any case of marriage or widowhood all the persons of this age are unmarried but in the population of Bengal we meet with a number of married as well as widowed persons in this age-period. This, perhaps shows the low economic position of the destitutes as, in Bengal only the more well-to-do people of the lower classes indulge in marrying their sons at a very young age. Therefore absence of marriage among the male destitutes of these age-periods gives a rough idea of their economic status. This is also evident in the next age-period i.e. 15 to 20 years where we meet with a higher number of unmarried in our sample and a higher number of married in the population of Bengal. In the next two decades i.e. 20 to 40 the percentage of unmarried is higher in the population of Bengal than in our sample. This is difficult to account for. From the fifteenth year onwards in each age group of the males the percentage of married men in our sample is always lower than that in the population of Bengal with the exception of the third decade where it is slightly higher. On the other hand the percentage of widowers is always higher in our sample than in the population of Bengal. Both these factors indicate a lower economic status of the destitutes. In Bengal every man gets married if he has enough money to pay the bride-price (in most of the social groups bride price being prevalent) as soon as he reaches marriageable age that is, roughly 20 to 30 years. When a man loses his wife he secures another by payment of a higher sum (provided he has the age to marry). Both these factors show that marriage of males in Bengal is bound up with economic potentialities. The destitutes of Calcutta had undoubtedly a lower economic potential which is the cause of a lower ratio of married men and a higher ratio of widowers when compared with the population of Bengal. In other words the marital condition of the destitutes is a true index to their economic potentialities.

In our sample women of 0 to 10 years are all unmarried though it is not so in the population of Bengal. In the age-grade 10 to 15 years 75.86% are unmarried in our sample against 60.72% of the Bengal population. But among the married of this age-grade our sample has 21.74% whereas the Census of 1941 shows 37.10%. The percentage of the widowed of this age-grade is almost equal. In the next age-grade of the females i.e. 15 to 20 years we find the highest percentage of married girls in our series which is higher by nearly 10 per cent than the corresponding figure of the Census of 1941. On the other hand the unmarried females of this age grade in our series is only 1.76% while they are 15.62% in the population of Bengal. Both these factors again are attributable to lower economic condition of the destitutes. In the poorer section of the community fathers are eager to marry their daughters as soon as possible as it relieves them of the burden of maintaining unproductive dependants and brings in the bargain some hard cash. In the next two decades

(20 to 40) we have in our sample a lower percentage of married women and a higher percentage of widows than what appears in the population of Bengal. But in the decades following, the condition is reversed and we have in our sample a higher percentage of married women and a lower percentage of widows than what occurs in the population of Bengal. This peculiar disposition of percentages in the two age-blocks 20 to 40 and 40 to above 60 is perhaps due to some social causes such as discrepancy of marital age between husband and wife in the class of people from which the destitutes had been derived.

## V. DISTRIBUTION BY COMMUNITIES

In the sample we have studied, three religions are represented—Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. We did not find any follower of Buddhism, Jainism or Zoroastrianism. Nor did we meet with any member of the tribal faiths. The Hindus form the largest proportion of our sample, the Muhammadans come next in order and the Christians last. There were 1816 or 71.58% Hindus, 701 or 27.63% Muhammadans and 20 or 7.9% Christians. If we divide the Hindus into two groups—Scheduled Castes and Caste Hindus we find that the former number 1362 or 53.68% and the latter 454 or 17.89% of our sample. If we now arrange the different communities according to number we find that the Scheduled Castes top the list and contribute 53.68%, the Muhammadans occupy the second position with 27.63% and the Caste Hindus follow them with 17.89%. If we assume that 100,000 destitutes came to Calcutta then, on the above basis, people of the Scheduled castes numbered 53680 persons, Muhammadans 27630, Caste Hindus 17890 and Christians 790 only. Thus the Scheduled Castes numbered nearly double the Muhammadans and the latter more than one and a half times the Caste Hindus. This shows how hardly the Hindus, especially the Scheduled Castes, were affected by the famine. This appears more clearly when we compare the proportion of the different communities in our sample with that in the population of Bengal. According to the Census of 1941 we find that the Hindus form 41.98 per cent of the population of Bengal, Muhammadans 54.30 per cent and Christians of all kinds together 27%. Of the Hindus those who recorded themselves as members of Scheduled Castes form 12.36%, those who did not mention their castes form 11.30%, while those who belong to other Hindu Castes form 18.32 per cent.

The low proportion of the Muhammadans in our sample (27.63%) is not, perhaps, a true index to the condition of whole of Bengal. The greater part of the destitutes of Calcutta came from those parts of Bengal where the percentage of the Muhammadans is proportionately lower than that of the Hindus as a whole, and sometimes even of the Scheduled Castes. The Calcutta destitutes mainly came from the districts of 24-Pargannas (81.58% of the units) and Midnapore (7.93% of the units). In the 24-Pargannas the Hindus form 65.32% of the population and the Muhammadans 32.47% according to the Census of 1941.

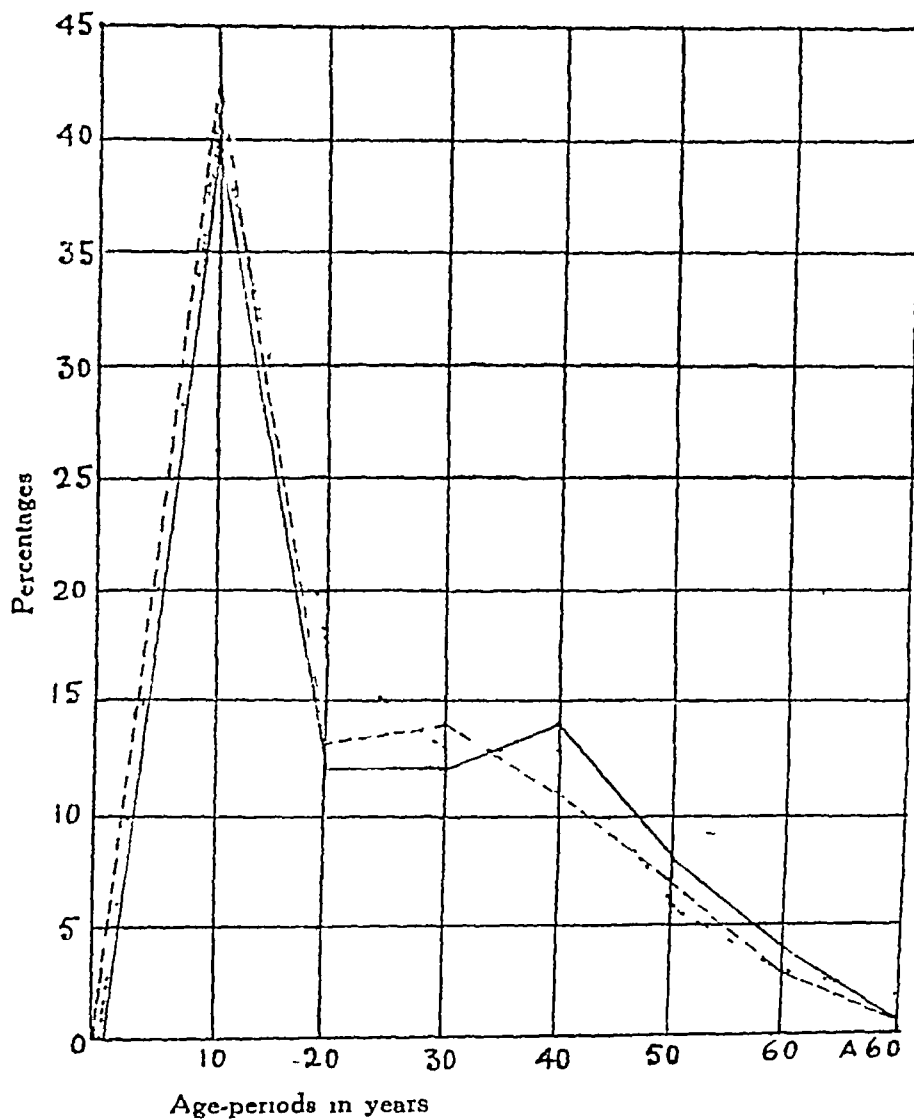
In Midnapur the Hindus are 84·06% and the Muhammadans only 7·72%. If these two districts are taken together then the Hindus form 74·21% and the Muhammadans 20·73% of the population. This definitely shows that the Hindus and Muhammadans had been equally affected by the famine or rather the latter had been hit harder as the Muhammadans of our sample show a higher percentage than their proportion in the population of these two districts. From this it is not difficult to conjecture the degree of destitution among the Muhammadan population in those districts of Bengal where they form the majority. The economic condition of the Muhammadan masses of those districts does not differ substantially from their condition in the 24 Pargannas and Midnapur. Unfortunately we have no data to measure Muhammadan destitution in East Bengal. A study of the famine influx population of the city of Dacca would have given a true picture of the condition of the Muhammadans of East Bengal.

In chart III we have plotted the distribution of the three communities. In all the three communities we find the highest peak at the age period 0 to 10 years. It is 42, 41 and 40% respectively for the Scheduled Castes, Caste Hindus and Muhammadans. The differences among them here are negligible. At the next age-period there is a sharp fall for all of them to 17, 13<sup>1</sup> and 12% for the Caste Hindus, Scheduled Castes and Muhammadans respectively. At the third decade again the three communities behave exactly in the same manner as in the first decade, i.e. the difference in percentage is only one per cent. on each side of the Caste Hindus. In the fourth decade there is a slight rise for the Muhammadans but the Caste Hindus remain steady though the Scheduled Castes decline. From the fifth decade all the three communities decline by rapid strides. From these facts we may conclude that all the three communities came in almost the same proportion at different age-grades. Out of the seven age-grades, in one there is a difference of 5% between two communities (Caste Hindus and Muhammadans at 10 to 20 years) in another three per cent and in the remaining five either two per cent or less than that even between the different communities.

The distribution of the three communities on the basis of sex is shown on charts IV and V, the former representing the males and the latter the females. Among males of all the three communities the highest mode is found in the age period 0 to 10 years. The Scheduled Castes and the Caste Hindus have for the same point (23%) while the Muhammadans are one point above them. From this mode all the three communities drop abruptly—the Caste Hindus to 9% and the other two communities to 6% at the next age period. This tendency to fall to lower percentages continues systematically till we reach the last age-grade where it is only 1%, with the exception of the Muhammadans who have a secondary rise at the fourth decade. Among women also we find the highest mode in the first decade in all the three communities though compared with

CHART III (To face page 52)

Showing distribution of the three communities by age in our sample



Broken line=Scheduled Castes  
Dotted line=Caste Hindus  
Continuous line=Muhammadans





the males, it is lower in each case. Just as among the males, here too, we meet with a sharp fall at the next decade to 8% for the Caste Hindus (cf 9% for males) and 7% for the remaining two (of 6% in the case of males). From this point there is a slight rise for the latter two (2%) in the third decade but the Caste Hindus decline 2%. During the next decade (30 to 40 years) the three communities approach one another closely again and then practically follow the same line of declination. Thus, with the exception of the slight difference between the Caste Hindu females and the females of the other two communities at the age-period 20 to 30 years the females of all the three communities practically follow almost similar lines of declination in the different age-grades. The males of all the three communities also behave almost in the same manner with the exception of the Muhammadans at the age-grade 30 to 40 years.

The distribution of marital condition of the three communities is shown in Table 6. In each of the three communities the unmarried form the largest block, next in order are the married followed by the widowed (See Table 6).

TABLE 6

The relative proportion of the three communities under different marital conditions.  
(The upper figure in each pair of lines is the actual number of persons and the lower figure, the percentage of the community concerned.)

Communities	Unmarried			Married			Widowed		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Scheduled Castes	442 32 45%	311 22 83%	753 55 28%	152 11 16%	329 24 15%	481 35 31%	19 1 39%	109 8 00%	128 9 39%
Caste Hindus	156 34 36%	94 20 70%	250 55 06%	67 14 75%	98 21 59%	165 36 34%	7 1 54%	32 7 04%	39 8 59%
Muhammadans	219 31 24%	132 18 83%	351 50 07%	107 15 25%	146 20 83%	253 36 09%	21 2 99%	76 10 84%	97 13 83%

Thus out of every 100 persons of the Scheduled Castes there are 55 unmarried persons, 35 married and roughly 10 widowed, among the Caste Hindus the proportion is 55, 36 and 9 respectively, while among the Muhammadans it is 50, 36 and 14. Therefore in our sample the Scheduled Castes and the Caste Hindus have got practically the same proportion of unmarried persons while the Muhammadans are deficient by about 5 per cent.

In the married group the contributions of the three communities are almost equal. Here the Caste Hindus top the list, followed closely by the Muhammadans and the Scheduled Castes. The difference between the first two is only 25 per cent and between the last two 78 per cent. Among the widowed again we find a close similarity between the Scheduled Castes and the Caste Hindus but the Muhammadans differ widely. In this group the Muhammadans have the highest proportion, followed by the Scheduled Castes.

and Caste Hindus. The difference between the first two is 44% and between the last two only 80%.

The relative proportion of the two sexes, under different marital conditions in the three communities, is shown in Table 7

TABLE 7

The relative proportion of the two sexes in the three communities under different marital conditions.

Communities.	Sex	Unmarried		Married		Widowed		Total Number of Persons.	Grand Total
		Number of persons.	Per centage.	Number of Persons.	Per centage.	Number of Persons.	Per centage.		
Scheduled Caste	♂	442	72.10	153	24.80	19	3.10	612	1362
	♀	311	41.82	329	43.92	109	14.55	749	
Caste Hindus	♂	166	67.83	67	29.13	7	3.04	230	454
	♀	94	41.06	98	43.75	32	14.28	224	
Muhammadans	♂	219	63.11	107	30.83	21	6.05	347	701
	♀	122	37.29	146	41.24	76	21.47	334	

In the unmarried group, as Table 7 shows the males always have a relatively higher proportion than the females while in the married and the widowed groups the order is reversed and we find a relatively higher proportion of females than males. This is observed in all the three communities.

Out of every 100 males of the Scheduled Castes 72 are unmarried 25 married, and 3 widowed. The corresponding figures for the Caste Hindus and Muhammadans are 69 29 3 and 63 31 and 6 respectively. On the other hand out of every 100 females of the Scheduled Castes 41 are unmarried 44 married and 15 widowed. The corresponding figures for the Caste Hindus and Muhammadans are 42, 44 14 and 37 41 and 22 respectively. This shows that among females there is very little difference between the two Hindu communities. The Muhammadans differ in all the three marital conditions from the Hindu communities though it is lowest in the married and highest in the widowed. Another remarkable feature is that the Scheduled Castes possess the highest relative proportion of unmarried males while the Muhammadans have the highest relative proportion of widows. This Table further shows that among the married the difference in the relative proportion of the sexes is highest among the Scheduled Castes and lowest among the Muhammadans. In other words we have relatively the highest proportion of married males among the Muhammadans and the lowest among the Scheduled Castes. Again we have relatively the highest proportion of married females among the Scheduled Castes and the lowest among the Muhammadans. At this stage it is difficult to point out the causes of this difference between the two communities.

CHART V (To face page 54)

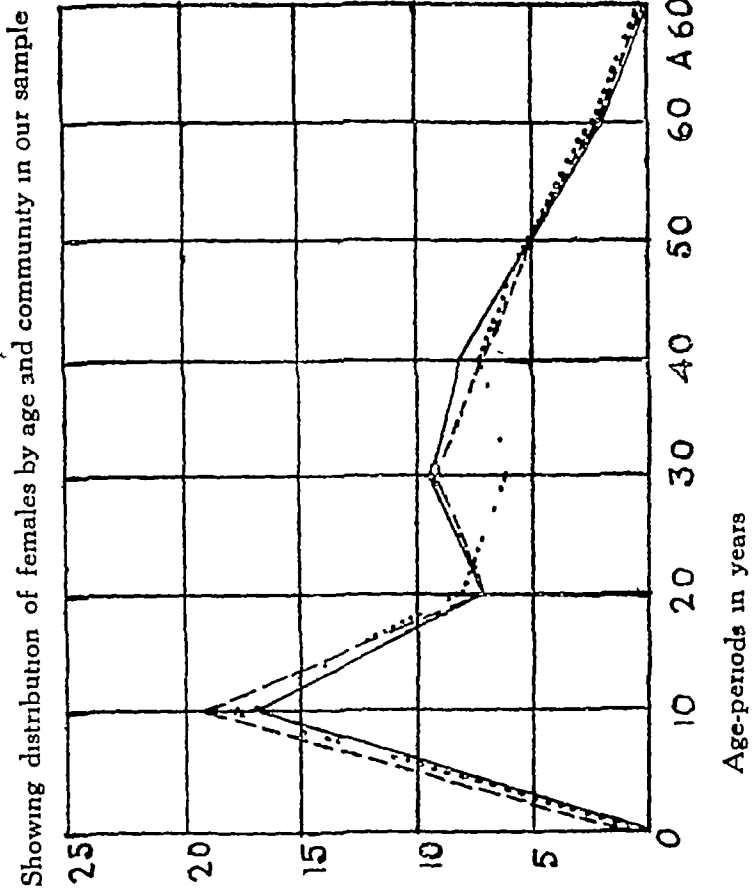
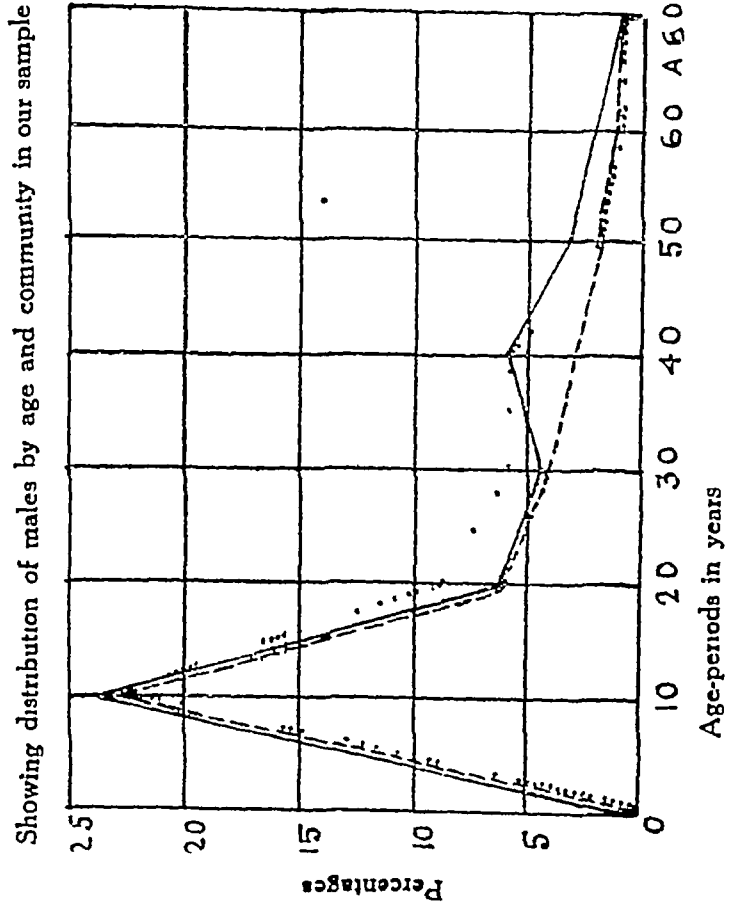


CHART IV



Broken line=Scheduled Castes, Dotted line=Caste Hindus, Continuous line=Muhhammadans



## SUMMARY

From this analysis of the data we arrive at the following conclusions —

- (1) Children aged 0 to 10 years came to Calcutta in the largest number and their proportion in our sample far exceeds their proportion in the population of Bengal. People aged more than thirty came to Calcutta almost in the same proportion as they occur in the population of Bengal. But those who were 10 to 30 years of age were proportionately the least to come here.
- (2) We have more women than men in our sample for every 100 males there are 111 females. From 0 to 15 years the proportion of males is higher than that of the females but from 15 to 60 years the order is reversed and we have more females than males. This tendency reaches its climax between 20 and 40 years of age. This is attributed to the existence of a greater number of immature children during these age-periods.
- (3) We have a greater number of married women than men for every 100 married males there are 175 married females.
- (4) Our sample consists of Scheduled Castes, Caste Hindus, Muhammadans and Christians. The Scheduled Castes have the largest number (53.68%), the Muhammadans come next with 27.63% followed by the Caste Hindus (17.89%). The Christians rank lowest (7.9%). The lower percentage of the Muhammadans is more apparent than real as they form a lower proportion of the population of those districts from which the destitutes came to Calcutta. In fact their relative proportion in our sample is much higher than their relative proportion in the population of the districts of 24-Pargannas and Midnapur from which nearly 90% of the destitutes of our sample were derived.

## CHAPTER IV

# HOME OF THE DESTITUTES AND THEIR RESIDENCE IN AND AROUND CALCUTTA DURING THE INFLUX

The data tabulated in Appendix II were collected under Question Nos. 5 and 6. These data were primarily necessary for identification of the units as well as for ascertaining the area for which Calcutta became the focus of attention. It also shows the distribution of the units over the different parts of Calcutta and its suburbs. One of our investigators studied a few units at Barasat which have also been included here.

We collected information on 2537 persons as Appendix I shows. It has already been stated that we did not make inquiries from each and every individual of this number but interrogated one of the individuals of each unit. The term unit is used here purposely in preference to family or house. Anthropologically a family consists of a man his wife (or wives) and their dependent children own and adopted. An extended or joint family may be defined as a group of families related genealogically (or by adoption) and living together as a well-defined unit (*Notes and Queries on Anthropology* 1929 pp. 54 and 55). A house has been defined in the Census Report of India as "consisting of the buildings one or many inhabited by one family that is by a number of persons living and eating together in one mess with their resident dependents such as mother widowed sisters younger brothers, etc., and their servants who reside in the house" (*Census of India 1931 Vol. V., Part I., pp. 56-57*). Our units had neither the character of the family and extended family nor of the house as defined above. Our units often included persons who cannot be regarded either as members of the simple family or of the extended family. The term house includes one or more buildings used as residence but our units had no such structure to live in till we reach the period when they were collected in the 'homes, organised by the Government or by private bodies which came into existence after our survey had been completed. Our units often consisted of persons absolutely unconnected with one another either by blood or by marriage co-villagers often formed units. Sometimes two or more persons very distantly related by blood or marriage came as a juncture to the core of a unit which was formed by a simple or extended family.

We investigated 820 units. The average number of persons in a unit is 3.09. If we now arrange the different districts according to the number of units contributed by each we find that the district of 21 Pargannas holds the

list with 669 units. The next place is occupied by Midnapur with 65 units which is followed by,

Howrah—19 units	Balasore— 3 units
Nadia— 18 "	Cuttack— 2 "
Hooghly— 15 "	Muzaffarpur 2 "
Burdwan—11 "	Bibhum— 1 "
Dacca — 9 "	Tippora — 1 "
Faridpur — 4 "	Gaya— 1 "

Thus, in our sample we have 687 units from the Presidency Division, 111 units from Burdwan Division, 13 units from Dacca Division, one unit from Chittagong Division and none from Rajshahi Division. Seven units belong to other provinces. These units coming from different districts occupied different parts of the city and its suburbs. We find the highest number of them in District IV of the Calcutta Corporation (509 units or 62.07%). Next in order are District I (68 units or 8.29%), District II (55 units or 6.83%) and District III (19 units or 2.31%). Tollygunge gave shelter to 33 units or 4.02%, Howrah to 5 units or .61% and Baraset to 5 units or .61%. Sixty-eight units (or 8.29%) had no fixed residence either in any part of the city or in its suburbs. They moved about from place to place in search of food. Another 57 units (or 6.95%) did not remain in the city or its suburbs at night, they daily went to their village-home in the evening and came back in the morning. They passed the whole day here, eating in free-kitchens or begging food from house to house. Thus, Calcutta itself gave shelter to 79.51% of the destitute-units of our sample and if those who moved from place to place within the city are included in this category, as they should be, the percentage rises to 87.80. The suburbs only account for 5.24% and the rest (6.95%) daily visited their homes.

We have already indicated the places where they lived in Calcutta and its suburbs (P 3). Each of the destitute units which remained in Calcutta or its suburbs was connected with a particular place which served as its temporary home. To this place the different members of the unit repaired regularly at night for sleeping. Even during day-time when rest was needed, to this corner they assembled. Often this place of refuge was nothing better than the pavement of a street with a big tree spreading its branches over it. But even this had an attraction for the units which selected the particular place for residence. Sometimes they changed such residence but only when they could not find sufficient food from the adjoining houses or from the local free-kitchen. We have observed many such units associated with particular spots. Sometimes they went home and came back again to the same spot. This attachment is perhaps the product of a number of psycho-sociological factors. The destitutes, under normal condition, were habituated to come to their home for rest and sleep during generations of settled life which has ingrained this habit into their mind. They could not cast aside this mental predilection even when



they were dislodged from their ancestral homes. As soon as they reached Calcutta they settled at one place and made it their home and thence they moved from house to house for food. Soon they became known to the householders of the locality who regularly supplied them with the refuse of the plates as well as rice-gruel. Gradually in many parts of the city it came to be the practice of householders to give whatever food they could spare to the same units from day to day. This supplied the socio-economic basis for a fixed place of residence even in Calcutta.

Besides the dwellers of the pavements there were others who occupied the air raid shelters and railway sheds. The life of the latter did not differ from that of the former. In addition to these three classes of residents there was a fourth class which occupied rented rooms in the bustees (slums). These units were mainly formed of persons who had some relatives or friends working in Calcutta. They came to their house and took shelter therein. They usually paid rent from 4 to 8 annas per month per head for sleeping accommodation. Another class of destitutes also lived in rented rooms. Those who lost their home in course of the flood and cyclone of 1942 came to Calcutta, often long before the famine condition started and accommodated themselves in such rented rooms. These units generally belonged to the districts of Midnapur and 24 Pargannas.

Two points are noteworthy in the data tabulated in Appendix II. One of them is the unusually high percentage of destitute-units (81.68%) from the district of 24 Pargannas in our sample. The next in order is Midnapur which contributes only 7.93%. The difference between the two is very wide and requires an explanation. The next point to be cleared is that 62.07 per cent of the destitute units of our sample were found in District IV of the Calcutta Corporation. The second in this respect was District I which held only 8.29% of our sample. These two factors seem to be related. There may be several causes for this high concentration. The first and perhaps the foremost of them was the fact that the majority of the investigators worked in South Calcutta or rather within the jurisdiction of District IV. This may naturally explain the high percentage of residence of the units within this district.

The position of 24 Pargannas in our sample may be due to the following causes — (1) The southern part of 24 Pargannas suffered severely from the flood and cyclone of 1942 which destroyed the crops over a large part of this area. Midnapur was devastated even to a greater extent. (2) Insect pests destroyed the crop of this area along with other parts during 1942. (3) There was a minor flood over some parts of Diamond Harbour Sub-division during the rains of 1943 which destroyed a part of the early paddy crop. These were the special circumstances from which 24 Pargannas and Midnapur suffered in addition to the causes which were common over all other districts. As a result people of the southern parts of 24 Pargannas and Midnapur were dislodged from their homes earlier than the inhabitants of other districts and they began to move towards

By courtesy of *The Statesman*

PLATE VII

HOUSING



Thousands of destitute families lived like this one on the pavements of Calcutta.



Calcutta in large number (4) Calcutta is within easy reach of the southern part of 24-Pargannas but not so of the similarly affected areas of Midnapur. There is excellent railway communication between Calcutta and several points of the south of 24-Pargannas such as Diamond Harbour, Canning, Budgebudge, Laksmikantapur and Falta. But the flood-affected area of Midnapur has not the same facility. As a result the inhabitants of the flood and cyclone affected parts of 24-Pargannas found it easier to reach Calcutta and consequently they came in larger number. Moreover, many of them had been coming to Calcutta for a long time for purchasing rice in control-shops. They carried the information to the interior parts that food was being distributed free in Calcutta to the destitute population. This induced a large number of people from these parts to come to this city. Though Midnapur suffered more from natural calamities yet its inhabitants could not avail of the opportunities held out by Calcutta owing to difficulties of communication. In spite of this, we find Midnapur occupying the second place in our sample and is comparatively far above the other districts which surround Calcutta such as Howrah, Hooghly and Nadia. Khulna and Jessore do not appear in our sample at all though more distant districts, such as Dacca, Faridpur, Burdwan and Tippera, are represented in our sample. To these factors we may also add that the common people of 24-Pargannas have comparatively better knowledge of Calcutta as they have to come to Alipur, the district headquarter, on many occasions. Therefore we may conclude that greater distress, better communications, quicker transmission of information about availability of food in Calcutta and better knowledge of the city were the reasons for the influx of an overwhelming number of persons from the 24-Pargannas. But this does not preclude another factor which has, at least partially, inflated the number of persons from the 24-Pargannas in our sample. Those who came from the south of the 24-Pargannas naturally got down at the Ballygunge Railway Station and gradually spread over South Calcutta. Now, as the majority of our investigators worked in South Calcutta, so, naturally we have got a proportionately larger number of persons from this district in our sample. The second position of Midnapur, however, in our sample definitely points out that undue stress on one particular area of Calcutta in recording cases is not the sole cause of the high percentage of the inhabitants of 24-Pargannas in our sample. Had it been so Midnapur would not have occupied the second position in our sample.

Is our sample a true index to the condition of the different districts of Bengal so far as destitution is concerned? This is the next question with which we are faced in Appendix II. The answer to this question can neither be given in the affirmative nor in the negative. If we say that our sample is a true index then we hold that the district of 24-Pargannas was ten times more affected by famine than Midnapur, which is apparently a mistake. If, on the other hand, we proclaim that our sample does not give any indication of the food crisis of the different districts of our province, we shall be equally mistaken. The absence of



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any unit from Khulna and Jessore which are adjacent to 24 Pargannas, and its presence even from Dacca and Faridpur which are relatively more remote from Calcutta, surely give some indication at least of the comparatively greater acuteness of the famine in these two parts of the province

The food crisis of 1943 prevailed over entire Bengal but its intensity varied in different districts. Our sample certainly gives at least some indication of this variation provided we take into consideration all the factors which guided and controlled the movement of destitute population. Calcutta with all its private charitable institutions and Government free-kitchens attracted the destitute population from the surrounding tracts. The force of this attraction gradually decreased as the radius increased. Thus distance was an active factor in the attraction of destitutes. All other factors being equal the districts nearer to Calcutta would be more largely represented among the Calcutta destitutes than those remote from it. But acuteness of distress and facilities of communication influenced the distance factor in the flow of destitutes to Calcutta. Transmission of news about availability of food in Calcutta and knowledge of the city are factors of secondary importance in this matter. Now if we draw four circles around Calcutta with four different radii viz 25 miles, 50 miles, 100 miles and 150 miles, we find the different districts included in different circles behaving in different manners under the influence of the factors indicated above.

The first circle (that with a radius of 25 miles) includes the major portion of Howrah district and big allées of Hooghly and the 24 Pargannas. No other district is included in this area. This area is characterised by a net work of railway lines connecting Calcutta with a multitude of interior centres. Though all the three districts have got very great facilities of railway communications within this circle yet 24 Pargannas is much better placed in this respect than the other two districts. This district also occupies a greater area of this circle than the other two districts combined. This naturally explains the high percentage of destitutes from the 24 Pargannas but does not, at the same time account for the low percentage from Hooghly and Howrah unless we assume that the distress was much less keen in these two districts as compared with 24 Pargannas.

The second circle around Calcutta which has a radius of 50 miles includes parts of five new districts viz. Midnapur, Bardhaman, Nadia, Jessore and Khulna. Facilities for communication with Calcutta are not similar for each of these five districts, nor does any one of them stand on the same plane in this respect with the districts of the first circle. The district of 24 Pargannas still occupies a greater part of this circle than any other district and has better railway facilities. Though Midnapur falls within this circle yet the cyclone affected parts are far beyond the railway lines. In spite of this, it sent a larger number (703) of destitute-units to Calcutta than any other district of this circle. Bardhaman has better facilities for railway communication than any

yet the number of destitute units from the latter district is higher than that of the former. Jessore has almost similar facilities for railway communication as Burdwan, yet we do not find any destitute from this district in our sample. So, a comparison between Midnapur and Nadia on the one hand and Burdwan and Jessore on the other gives at least some indication about the degree of distress prevalent in these two areas. We have no destitute unit from Khulna in our sample. This indicates that the food-crisis in this district was less severe though it may also be partly due to lack of facilities for communication.

When we increase the radius of our circle 50 miles more and make it 100, four new districts are added viz Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bankura and Balasore. All of them have got almost similar facilities for railway communication with Calcutta yet Murshidabad and Bankura do not figure in our sample at all while Birbhum presents 12% and Balasore 36% of the units.

If we now increase the radius 50 miles more and make it 150, we introduce eight new districts viz Buckergunge, Faridpur, Dacca, Mymensingh, Pabna, Rajshahi, Manbhum and Singbhum into our circle. So far as direct railway communication is concerned, Singbhum, Manbhum, Santal Pargannas, Rajshahi, Pabna and Faridpur fare better than Dacca, Mymensingh and Buckergunge. But in our sample we have 110% of the units from Dacca and 49% from Faridpur. Other districts of this group are not at all represented in our sample. This probably gives us an indication of the comparative force of distress and distance. Dacca, even with the Padma intervening, sent out her destitutes to Calcutta almost in the same proportion as Burdwan (134%). Jessore, Khulna, Murshidabad and Bankura, though placed nearer to Calcutta and provided with better communication facilities are not represented in our sample at all. This proves beyond doubt that the distress in Dacca was much more acute than in any other of the districts mentioned above. Thus our sample gives at least some indication of the degree of food-crisis in different parts of Bengal.



TABLE 2

SHOWING PERIOD INTERVENING BETWEEN ARRIVAL IN CALCUTTA  
AND DATE OF INQUIRY

(The upper figure in each pair of lines gives the actual number of units and the lower one is the percentage of 820—the total number of units investigated.)

No. of paired lines.	Period intervening between arrival in Calcutta and date of inquiry	Names of Districts.											Total.
		24-Pargannas.	Midnapur.	Howrah.	Nooua.	Hooghly.	Burdwan.	Dacca.	Faridpur.	Birbhum.	Tippoca.	Districts outside Bengal.	
1	0.7 days	338 47.32	25 3.05	9 1.10	10 1.22	5 .61	6 .73	3 .36	3 .36	1 .12	1 .12	4 .49	455 55.49
2	8-14 days	44 5.36	11 1.34	7 .85	8 .97	8 .97	2 .24						80 9.76
3	15 days to 1 month	82 10.00	21 2.56			2 .24	1 .12	2 .36	1 .12				110 13.41
4	1 month to 3 months	69 8.41	6 .73	1 .12			2 .24	1 .12				1 .12	80 9.76
	Total of pairs 1 to 4	583 71.10	63 7.68	17 2.07	18 2.19	15 1.83	11 1.34	7 .85	4 .49	1 .12	1 .12	5 .61	723 88.41
5	3 months to 6 months	29 4.76											29 4.76
6	6 months to 1 year	23 2.80										1 .12	23 2.80
7	Above 1 year	8 .97	2 .24					1 .12				1 .12	11 1.34
8	Total of pairs 5 to 7	0 0.00	2 .24					1 .12				2 .24	2 .24
9	Grand total of pairs 1 to 7	673 82.03	65 7.93	17 2.07	18 2.19	15 1.83	11 1.34	8 .97	4 .49	1 .12	1 .12	7 .85	820 100.00
10	No record	16 1.95		2 .24				1 .12				1 .12	19 2.33
11	Total number of units from each dist. and their percentage to 820	673 82.03	65 7.93	19 2.33	18 2.19	15 1.83	11 1.34	8 .97	4 .49	1 .12	1 .12	7 .85	820 100.00

## II CAUSES OF ABANDONMENT OF HOME

Why did the destitutes leave their home? What forces led to their dislodgement from the home of their fore-fathers? The answers to these questions reveal at least a part of the causes of the famine. The rural folk of Bengal are generally unwilling to leave their home even temporarily. They do not like the idea of going to a new place even for earning a livelihood when local employments fail to meet their demands. Under such circumstances they generally try to adjust their necessities according to the decreased income, though it may cut across the line of minimum subsistence. They are ready to be satisfied with one meal a day if they can remain at home. Their ideal is to live and die where they are born. The only exceptions to this rule were the Muhammadan adventurers who went to Assam and who even now settle in the newly formed char lands in the deltaic regions of Bengal. Among the Hindus this section is not well represented, a few may be found here and there, endowed with this spirit of adventure, but they are mere exceptions. So, when we found thousands of these rural folk disrupted from the home of their fore-fathers we could easily perceive the strength of the pull and tried to ascertain the nature of it from the people themselves directly. The causes dealt with here, therefore, are those mentioned by the destitutes themselves. We have merely classified and tabulated them. Sometimes they mentioned more than one cause of their dislodgement. In such cases we tried to get their idea about the chief one of them which had only been entered in the record sheets. We do not propose to set forth here our own view regarding the causes of the famine.

On classification, the causes of destitution and dislodgement according to the destitutes themselves are the following five, viz, (a) lack of food and work, (b) flood and cyclone, (c) failure of crops, (d) family dissension due to causes other than lack of food and (e) military occupation. The first one of these causes may be regarded as a general condition which was present side by side with cyclone and flood, failure of crops and military occupation. Family dissension due to causes other than lack of food is sometimes responsible for dislodgement of parts of families. More often the women folk with immature children were thus turned into destitutes as they did neither possess any property nor could maintain themselves by working in the villages. Thus, they also suffered from lack of food and work. Table 3 on the next page shows the part played by each cause in driving the destitutes from their home in different districts.

Out of 820 units studied by us we have no record for 20 or 2.44%. Among the rest, lack of food and work drove 65.73% of the destitute-units of our sample from home and this cause is stated to have operated in all the districts from which the destitutes came except Cuttack and Gaya. This happened to be the most acute and widespread of all the causes advanced by the destitutes. Next in importance were cyclone and flood which affected the people of 24-Pargannas, Midnapur and Burdwan. It drove out of home 17.44% of the total

destitute units of our sample. This cause was far more important in Midnapur and Burdwan than in the 24 Pargannas. Out of the Midnapur and Burdwan destitute-units of our sample 52.81% and 51.54% respectively were dislodged by this cause while those from the 24 Pargannas suffered only to the extent of 15.40%. Only the 24 Pargannas people of our sample referred to failure of crops as a cause of dislodgement and destitution of 6.83% of the total units of our sample. We did not meet with it in any other place and in the same manner military occupation of land affected 2.07% of the total destitute units and it operated in the 24 Pargannas alone. Family dissension due to causes other than lack of food was a more widespread cause of destitution which affected 5.49% of the total units of our sample and operated in the districts of 24 Pargannas Midnapur Howrah Nadia Hooghly Faridpur Cuttack and Gaya.

TABLE 3

SHOWING THE PERCENTAGE OF DESTITUTE-UNITS DISLODGED FROM HOME BY DIFFERENT CAUSES

Name of district	Lack of food & work	Cyclone and flood.	Failure of crops	Family dissension due to causes other than lack of food.	Military occupation of land.	No record	Total.
24 Pargannas	54.85%	12.06%	6.83%	3.29%	2.07%	1.95%	81.59%
Midnapur	4.94%	4.15%		8.0%			7.9%
Howrah	1.70%			30%		1%	2.31%
Nadia	1.95%			24%			2.19%
Hooghly	1.55%			21%			1.83%
Burdwan	61%	73					134
Dacca	27%					1%	110%
Faridpur	1%			1%			4%
Balasore	36%						3%
Cuttack				1%		1%	1%
Murshidpur	1%						1%
Gaya				1%			12%
Birbhum	1%						12%
Tippura	1%						12%
TOTAL	65.73%	17.41%	6.43%	1.42%	2.07%	11	

## CHAPTER VI

# MAIN OCCUPATIONS OF THE UNITS

### I CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

We collected data on what had been the main occupations of the destitute-units. We did neither try to get the occupations of individuals nor the subsidiary occupations of the units. Our primary idea was to get a picture of the economic and social status of these units. The main occupation of a family gives a satisfactory indication both of its economic condition, as well as its social position, as these two sides are linked up to a great extent in Bengal. The following Table 1 shows the main occupations of the destitute-units of our sample.

**TABLE 1**  
**MAIN OCCUPATIONS OF THE UNITS.**

Serial No	Types of occupation	Actual number of units	Percentage of the total units, i e., 820
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>			
1	Cultivating owners	96	11.71%
2	Tenant cultivators	53	6.46%
3	Combined owners and tenant cultivators	25	3.05%
	<b>Total of Nos 1 to 3</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>21.22%</b>
<b>DAILY LABOUR</b>			
4	Farm labourers	83	10.12%
5	Ordinary day-labourers	168	20.49%
6	Combined farm and ordinary day-labourers	83	10.12%
	<b>Total of Nos 4 to 6</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>40.73%</b>
7	Combined cultivators and day-labourers	93	11.34%
8	Dependents on income from land, service and liberal professions	27	3.29%
	<b>Total of Nos 7 and 8</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>14.63%</b>
<b>ARTS AND CRAFTS</b>			
9	Blacksmiths	1	12%
10	Goldsmiths	2	24%
11	Braziers	1	12%
12	Potters	4	49%
13	Masons	2	24%
14	Carpenters	5	61%
15	Tailors	5	61%
16	Basket-makers	2	24%
17	Weavers	1	12%
	<b>Total of Nos 9 to 17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2.80%</b>

TABLE 1 (Contd.)

18	Manufacturers of treacle from date-palm and palmyra	4	49%
19	Manufacturers of salt	1	12%
20.	Fishermen	23	280%
21	Milkmen	1	12%
22.	Paddy huskers	8	97%
23	Petty traders	38	463%
24	Factory labourers	3	36%
25.	Domestic servants	30	366%
26.	Washermen	1	12%
27	Barbers	2	24%
28.	Transport-workers	3	36%
29	Beggars	26	317%
30.	Miscellaneous	29	354%
	Total of Nos. 18 to 30	160	2061%
	GRAND TOTAL	650	

## II. DAILY LABOUR

This Table clearly shows that the day labourers form the highest proportion of the destitutes (40.73%). In this group are included farm labourers ordinary day labourers and combined farm and ordinary day labourers as it is often very difficult to draw a line of demarcation between farm labourers and ordinary day labourers. If we add to this group combined day labourers and cultivators it rises to 52.07%. The combined day labourers and cultivators are those units each of which has a little plot of land which is not sufficient to maintain its members throughout the year. Therefore the members of such units work as day labourers in other people's houses or farms during the off season. Some of them even work throughout the year as day labourers leasing their plots of land to others or working on them whenever necessary. So we may say that more than half of the destitutes of Calcutta were day labourers.

## III. AGRICULTURE

Out of the remaining destitutes agriculturists form 21.22%. There are three classes of them viz. cultivating owners tenant cultivators and combined owner and tenant cultivators. The cultivating owners who were evidently well-to-do farmers depending on the produce of their own land alone for all purposes formed as high a percentage as 11.71% of the sample. Next to them are the tenant-cultivators who had no land of their own but cultivated the land of other people on share basis and they formed 5.45%. The third group of agriculturists was the combination of the former two classes and they contributed 30% of our sample. The members of none of these agricultural classes worked as day-labourers on hire basis. All of them had sufficient land to maintain themselves throughout the year. If we now add the day labourers (of whom were connected with land) to the agriculturists we find that families

connected with land in some way or other, formed 73.29% of our sample. This is a very significant factor.

#### IV. OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Of the remaining 26.71% of the destitute-units petty traders (4.63%), domestic servants (3.66%), those who depended on income from land, service, and liberal professions (3.29%), beggars (3.17%), artisans and craftsmen (2.80%) and fishermen (2.80%) together contributed 20.35%. The remaining 6.36% were composed of makers of molasses from sap of date-palm, factory workers, transport workers, barbers, milkmen, washermen, salt-makers, and others. There is one point of significance in this group. The low percentage of artisans and craftsmen (2.80%) among the destitutes is rather strange in view of the fact that from later press reports we came to know that this group had suffered severely throughout Bengal. Our sample, however, does not show this.

TABLE 1 (Contd.)

18	Manufacturers of treacle from date-palm and palmyra	4	40%
19	Manufacturers of salt	1	12%
20.	Fishermen	23	2.80%
21	Milkmen	1	12%
22	Paddy huckers	8	97%
23.	Petty traders	38	4.63%
24	Factory labourers	3	36%
25	Domestic servants	30	3.66%
26.	Washermen	1	12%
27	Barbers	2	21%
28.	Transport-workers	3	36%
29	Beggars	26	3.17%
30	Miscellaneous	20	3.54%
	Total of Nos. 18 to 30	169	20.61%
	GRAND TOTAL	820	

## II DAILY LABOUR

This Table clearly shows that the day labourers form the highest proportion of the destitutes (40.73%). In this group are included farm labourers ordinary day labourers and combined farm and ordinary day labourers as it is often very difficult to draw a line of demarcation between farm labourers and ordinary day labourers. If we add to this group combined day labourers and cultivators it rises to 63.07%. The combined day labourers and cultivators are those units each of which has a little plot of land which is not sufficient to maintain its members throughout the year. Therefore the members of such units work as day labourers in other people's houses or farms during the off season. Some of them even work throughout the year as day labourers leasing their plots of land to others or working on them whenever necessary. So we may say that more than half of the destitutes of Calcutta were day labourers.

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## CHAPTER VII

# ASSETS OF THE DESTITUTES

### I NATURE OF ASSETS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

We have already seen that more than 73% of the destitute-units of our sample pursued the occupations of day labourers and agriculturists. A day labourer in a Bengal village generally possesses a piece of homestead land a hut a few domestic utensils of brass and bell metal and possibly a few domestic animals. In rare cases he may give his wife one or two silver ornaments. This is all that he possesses under normal condition. The condition of the agriculturists differs according to the land they own or may secure on lease. There are well to do farmers who own 40 to 50 bighas of land (13 to 16 acres) which they themselves cultivate. Such families lead a life of comparative ease and comfort and are never in want of the ordinary necessities of life unless hampered by failure of crops. They have good comfortable houses, domestic animals of various kinds ornaments of gold and silver and extra domestic utensils which are kept in reserve and for which womenfolk feel proud. From this standard the farmers come down to the border line of day labourers. On this side of the scale we may find a man cultivating a few bighas of land secured on half-share basis from a non cultivating owner on whose caprice his fortune stands. He has no capital of his own and therefore no reserve. So long as he can secure land from others and there is no failure of crops he can meet both ends but hardly finds it possible to lay by something as reserve. In Bengal cultivating owners with 40 to 50 bighas of land are limited in number. Most of the cultivators own 2 or 3 bighas of land and secure on half-share basis a few bighas more say 6 or 7 bighas from non cultivating owners. With the help of his sons and a pair of bullocks the farmer of such a plot manages to get the bare necessities of life of his growing family. Gradually this becomes more and more difficult as the number of members of the family increases. The result is that one or more of the sons have to turn out day labourers in course of time. On the death of the farmer his own land is divided among the separated sons and the reserve or capital per family is thus further reduced. This goes on generation after generation. The result is that the descendants of even a well-to-do farmer are reduced to the position of day labourers or to the lowest class of agriculturists in one or two generations owing to the fragmentation of holdings. The cultivating owners of our sample are in most of the cases farmers of this type.

We tried to collect information on the assets possessed by the destitutes when they came to Calcutta. We also tried to ascertain what amount of assets

they disposed of during the famine and before the famine but within the war-period. The assets are classified under the following heads, viz., (1) cultivable land owned by the farmer, (2) homestead land, (3) houses, (4) domestic animals, (5) domestic utensils, and (6) ornaments. We tried to collect the number and valuation of these objects but were not successful. The people who came here were so much stunned by death, disease and economic distress that many of them had even forgotten the names of their parents and children, not to speak of other things. They were a bewildered lot who required very careful handling to get reliable accounts. They did not wilfully fabricate false statements but were often unable to give a coherent account. The other reason which stood on our way in collecting the quantity, number, or area and valuation of assets was the fact that most of our informants were women (67.43%), who were mostly ignorant about the area of land—cultivable and homestead—possessed by the family and its value. They succeeded in giving us a good account of the number of houses, domestic animals and domestic utensils owned by the units but they could say nothing about their price. Under the circumstances, we had to give up the idea of collecting data on the number, quantity or area, and valuation of assets. We have therefore simply noted the possession of such items of assets as each unit owned or parted with before they left their native home. The following Table 1 shows the percentage of the destitute-units of our sample which possessed or parted with assets under different conditions.

**TABLE 1**  
SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF UNITS OF OUR SAMPLE WHICH POSSESSED  
OR PARTED WITH ASSETS UNDER DIFFERENT CONDITIONS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nature of assets	Percentage of units which disposed of the particular type of asset before famine but during war	Percentage of units which disposed of the particular type of asset during the famine	Total of columns 2 and 3	Percentage of units which had the particular type of asset at the time of inquiry	Percentage of units which had no asset of the particular type at the time of inquiry	Percentage of units about whose assets we have no record
Cultivable** land	2.08	8.46	10.54	11.32	88.42	26
Homestead land	1.43	3.38	4.81	44.14	55.47	39
Houses	1.69	7.81	9.50	58.59	41.02	39
Domestic animals	26	11.84	12.10	7.94	91.80	26
Domestic utensils	39	25.65	26.04	3.51	96.10	39
Ornaments	13	3.77	3.90	26	99.48	26

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Cultivable** land	2.08	8.46	10.54	11.32	88.68	.20
Homestead land	1.43	3.38	4.81	44.11	55.89	.30
Houses	1.69	7.81	9.50	58.50	41.50	.30
Domestic animals	.26	11.84	12.10	7.91	92.09	.26
Domestic utensils	.39	25.65	26.04	3.51	96.49	.30
Ornaments	.13	3.77	3.90	.26	99.74	.26

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of our units to part with them even before the war? We think, here also the same causes had operated which rendered nearly 50% of our units homeless before the war. Many of our informants repeated the pitiful tale that they could not reconstruct their houses after the cyclone or could not collect enough money to thatch the cottages during the war-period. The mud-walls melted away before their eyes in the absence of proper thatching and the owners had to depend for shelter on their more fortunate neighbours and relatives.

When the Government of Bengal, two months later, decided to lead the destitutes back to their home in the blissful ignorance of the real state of affairs and organised a very successful drive, more than 55% of the units had no home and 41% had no house to go back to. The Government of Bengal virtually led at least half of the Calcutta destitutes to the only resting place from which neither man, nor his society, nor even his Government could drive them out.

#### D. ORNAMENTS, DOMESTIC ANIMALS AND DOMESTIC UTENSILS

Ornaments, domestic animals and domestic utensils are forms of property which can be more easily acquired and disposed of. Therefore, these were gradually sold away, one after another, as the pressure for food increased. The price they fetched was, in most cases, nominal not even one-fourth of their normal market-price. We heard numerous tales of how these poor persons had been despoiled by their neighbours—those who could have saved them from starvation and death. Among the destitutes of our sample nearly 92% had no domestic animals, 96% had no domestic utensils and more than 99% had no ornament. We have seen men, women and children by thousands in wretched rags moving about with earthen pots, kindly given by some charitably disposed housewives, for receiving gruel from private houses or public free-kitchens. They had not even an iron pot to receive food. Many of the women could not come to us as they had not even sufficient rags to cover themselves. Often two or three women used to share one piece of cloth. If one of them went out in search of food or for any other purpose, the others had to remain inside the house. In fact, we did not try to collect any data on the possession of clothing by the destitutes as they possessed none worth the name.

### III DISPOSAL OF ASSETS BEFORE AND DURING FAMINE—COMPARED

Comparison of Columns 2 and 3 of Table I reveals the intensity of the urge for food during the four months of famine. Column 2 shows the percentage of sellers of different kinds of property during 45 months of war preceding the famine and Column 3 shows the percentage of the four months of famine preceding our inquiry. The sellers of homestead land during the four months of famine numbered twice that of the 45 months of war preceding famine. This kind of property changed hands in the least number of cases during the famine. Next in

order comes cultivable land which was sold in course of the four months of famine by four times the number of units which parted with this kind of property during the war period preceding famine. Houses were also sold during the famine by five times the number of sellers during the preceding war period

When we come to compare the sale of movable property in the two periods considered above we find an unusual condition. For each unit selling ornaments during the war period of 45 months there were 99 units selling such goods during the four months of famine. In the case of domestic animals the ratio between the war and famine periods was one to forty five and in domestic utensils one to sixty six. It reveals to what extent the people parted with the little reserve they had accumulated throughout their life

Thus Table I shows that 99.48% of the destitute units of our sample had no ornaments at the time of inquiry, 96.10% had no domestic utensils, 91.80% had no domestic animals, 89.42% had no cultivable land, 55.47% had no home-stand land and 41.02% had no house to take shelter. We do not say that the famine alone reduced them to this condition. Nor can we hold war wholly responsible for it. The root of the malady lies deeper. The real causes which led to such a devastating condition of the class which lies at the foundation of the nation are the systematic economic drainage by the capitalists on the one hand and utter negligence of the Government on the other.

## CHAPTER VIII.

# INDEBTEDNESS OF THE CALCUTTA DESTITUTES

### I. AMOUNT AND DISTRIBUTION OF DEBTS

Two of our investigators did not collect any data on indebtedness. Therefore the number of units studied from this aspect was 670 only. As in case of assets, our data on indebtedness of the Calcutta destitutes are, on similar grounds, incomplete. The women informants could not give the exact amount of debt or the interest paid on it. Even with this handicap we get from Tables 1 and 2 a picture which is appalling. Though a part of their debt was incurred during the famine yet the major portion of it was contracted before the famine as an inevitable result of their hopeless economic condition.

We have divided the destitutes into four classes according to their economic position at the time of recording. Those who had homestead land (HL), house (H), cultivable land (CL), ornaments of gold and/or silver (ORN), domestic animals (DA), domestic utensils of brass and bell-metal (DU) are classed as A. Those who had HL, H, DA and DU but no ornaments of valuable metal nor any cultivable land are classed as B. Those who had HL, H and DU (non-metallic mainly and some of base metal, e.g., iron) are grouped as C and those who had nothing of the above mentioned types of property are classed as D. (For justification of this type of classification see Part II, B Earning and Dependence.)

Out of 670 units dealt with in this section 288 or 42.98% had simple loans (Table 1). The amount of loan varied from Rs 2/- or Rs 3/- to more than Rs 500/- in individual cases. This range of variation has been divided into six groups, *viz.*, (a) up to Rs 10/-, (b) Rs 11/- to Rs 25/-, (c) Rs 26/- to Rs 50/-, (d) Rs 51/- to Rs 100/-, (e) Rs 101/- to Rs 500/-, (f) Rs. 501/- and upwards. In calculating the amount of loan for each group in each economic class we have multiplied the mean of each group by the number of borrowing units. Though it does not give the exact amount of loan yet it is not very far removed from it. In fact, we have been compelled to take resort to this unsatisfactory method of calculation as most of our informants were women who could give only the approximate amount of debt and not the exact one. So, a total of the mean of all the cases of borrowings of each group in each economic class will be nearer to the correct figure than the total of the exact figures of the same cases.

In class A, which is the most affluent group of the destitutes, 73, or 10.89% of the units had incurred simple debts to the extent of Rs 5,327/- — the largest number of units having incurred debts between Rs 11/- and Rs 25/-. In class B there were 50 borrowers who secured about Rs 3,764/- by this form of loan. Here also the highest number of units borrowed between Rs 11/-



TABLE  
SHOWING THE MORTGAGES OF  
( Total number of

Status ( economic )	AMOUNT BORROWED												
	Homestead Land						Cultivable Land						Total
	Up to Rs. 10/ Rs. 11/ to Rs. 25/	Rs. 25/ to Rs. 50/	Rs. 50/ to Rs. 100/	Rs. 101/ to Rs. 500/	Total	Up to Rs. 10/ Rs. 11/ to Rs. 25/	Rs. 25/ to Rs. 50/	Rs. 50/ to Rs. 100/	Rs. 101/ to Rs. 500/	Total			
A	Number of units which mortgaged property			1	1			1	1			2	
	Percentage of 670 units.			15	15			15	15			30	
	Approximate amount of money borrowed.			Rs. 75/	Rs. 75/			Rs. 37/8	Rs. 75/			Rs. 112/8	
B	Number of units which mortgaged property	2	1		1	4	1	2	3			6	
	Percentage of 670 units.	30	15		15	60	15	30	45	0		89	
	Approximate amount of money borrowed.	Rs. 35/	Rs. 37/8		Rs. 300/	Rs. 37*8	Rs. 8/	Rs. 35/	Rs. 112/8			Rs. 152/8	
C	Number of units which mortgaged property	1	3		1	5			3		2	6	
	Percentage of 670 unit	15	45		15	75			45		30	75	
	Approximate amount of money borrowed	Rs. 5	Rs. 11 8		Rs. 300	Rs. 417/8			Rs. 112/8		Rs. 200/	Rs. 712 8	
D	Number of units which mortgaged property								1			1	
	Percentage of 670 units								15			15	
	Approximate amount of money borrowed								Rs. 75			Rs. 75	
	Number of units which mortgaged property	1	3	4	1	0	10	1	2	3	2	2	14
Total	Percentage of 670 unit	15	30	60	15	20	145	13	30	104	30	200	
	Approximate amount of money borrowed	Rs. 5	Rs. 11 8	Rs. 300	Rs. 75	Rs. 300	Rs. 417 8	Rs. 8	Rs. 35 8	Rs. 112 8	Rs. 200	Rs. 712 8	

BY MORTGAGING

Domestic Animals					Domestic Utensils					Ornaments				
Up to Rs 10/-	Rs 11/- to Rs 25/-	Rs 26/- to Rs 50/-	Rs 51/- to Rs 100/-	Total	Up to Rs 10/-	Rs 11/- to Rs 25/-	Rs 26/- to Rs 50/-	Rs 51/- to Rs 100/-	Total	Up to Rs 10/-	Rs 11/- to Rs 25/-	Rs 26/- to Rs 50/-	Rs 51/- to Rs 100/-	Total
		1		1	3	4	3		10	1	4	4	1	10
		15		15	45	60	6		111	1	60	60	1	119
		Rs 37/8		Rs 37/8	Rs 15/	Rs 70	Rs 112/8		Rs 197/8	Rs 7/	Rs 70/	Rs 170/	Rs 7/	Rs 247/
1	1	5		7	3	6	5	1	15		2	3	7	12
15	10	75		101	45	80	75	15	215		0	4	3	119
Rs 5/	Rs 17/8	Rs 157/8		Rs 210/	Rs 15/	Rs 105/	Rs 157/8	Rs 77/	Rs 220/	Rs 7/	Rs 70/	Rs 112/	Rs 7/	Rs 247/
7	10	6		23	16	12	6		34	12	10	7	1	30
100	100	80		280	70	170			240	17	140	140		317
Rs 10/	Rs 100/	Rs 100/		Rs 400/	Rs 10/	Rs 100/	Rs 100/		Rs 210/	Rs 10/	Rs 100/	Rs 100/	Rs 10/	Rs 310/

where loans may be available at the lawful rate of interest against usual securities accepted by the village creditors

TABLE 3  
SHOWING RATES OF INTEREST PER RUPEE PER MONTH PAID BY  
DIFFERENT UNITS IN DIFFERENT ECONOMIC STATUS

	1 pice	2 pice	3 pice	1 anna	2 annas	3 annas	4 annas	5 annas	Total number of units.
A	2	2	1	21	7				33
B		2		16	5		2	1	27
C	1	4	3	15	4		1		28
D		4	2	10	3				19
Total	3	12	6	62	19		4	1	107

### III GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have recorded 288 cases of simple loans and 206 cases of secured loans in our sample consisting of 670 units. Together they number 494 cases but this is not the true position as some of the units at least had borrowed by both methods and their names occur therefore in both the lists. But we have other categories of borrowers to deal with. Twenty three units borrowed in kind i.e. paddy or rice. They have not been entered in either of the lists. Again there were 59 cases where either the amount of loan was not mentioned by the informants or was not recorded by the investigators. If we add these 82 cases to both the lists of secured and unsecured loans then their number rises to 288 and 370 respectively or 42.95% and 55.22% of the total number of cases investigated in this respect. Comment is unnecessary.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOCIAL PICTURE OF THE DESTITUTES

In the preceding three chapters we tried to give an idea of the economic condition of the destitutes. We shall now try to draw a picture of their social condition which also is mainly the product of their economic condition. For this purpose we shall utilise the data collected on (1) the nature of the leaders of the units, (2) relationship subsisting within each unit, (3) disintegration of the families, and (4) observance of social restrictions on food.

#### I LEADERS OF THE UNITS

Each unit came under the leadership of one of its members. We have already stated how we found out the leader in each case. The age, sex and community of the leaders give indication of the pressure of hunger on the destitute families. The following Table I shows their position in respect of the three factors noted above (for details see Appendix III)

**TABLE I**  
SHOWING AGE, SEX AND COMMUNITY OF THE LEADERS OF UNITS  
(Percentage of the total number of units, i.e., of 820 is given here)

Age-periods.	Scheduled Castes		Caste Hindus		Muhammadans		Christians		Total		Both sexes
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
0 to 10			24%			12%			24%	1%	36%
10 to 20	1.22%	5.30%	1.70%	1.58%	.73%	2.56%			3.65%	9.50%	13.15%
20 to 50	9.63%	28.41%	5.85%	7.56%	7.93%	15.49%	.61%		24.02%	51.46%	75.48%
Above 50	1.22%	2.68%	1.34%	1.10%	1.70%	.85%			4.26%	4.63%	8.89%
Age un-specified	24%	85%		12%	12%	.73%			36%	1.70%	2.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.31%</b>	<b>37.30%</b>	<b>9.13%</b>	<b>10.36%</b>	<b>10.48%</b>	<b>19.75%</b>	<b>.61%</b>		<b>33.25%</b>	<b>67.41%</b>	<b>99.94%</b>

In the rural parts of Bengal women generally observe *purdah* though its rigidity decreases as we go down the social scale. Among a substantial section of the people, from which the destitutes were derived, *purdah* is not strictly observed. So, women of this class are found to come out of the house when

necessary but they never think of leaving their village and coming over to Calcutta or similar other distant places. They are generally afraid of towns and townsmen. When we find that more than 67 per cent of the destitute units were led to Calcutta by women we may easily estimate the force which drove them out of their seclusion. Those who had never stepped out of their village, were forced to move into this city about which they had very vague ideas. In every community the women exceeded the men in leading the units. Among the Scheduled Castes this reached the climax—the female leaders in this community (37.30%) were more than three times the male leaders (12.31%). Among the Caste Hindus the difference was not so great among them male leaders formed 9.13% and female leaders 10.86%. Among the Muhammadans again the difference shoots up—the female leaders (19.75%) were among them slightly less than double the male leaders (10.48%). Among the Christians we find only male leaders.

Coming to the age of the leaders we find that there were even children of both sexes (36%). Adolescents between 10 and 20 years led 13.16% of the units and even among them the females were nearly three times the males. The adult group (20 to 50 years) naturally holds the largest number of leaders and among them the females were more than twice the males. But in the old group (50 upwards) the male and female leaders were almost equal in number. These facts show the intensity of the blow which broke down all social conventions and psychological predilections. Those who could never dream of crossing the threshold of their house travelled hundreds of miles, accompanied only by immature children or acquaintances of the road. The real significance of this situation can only be realized by those who have long acquaintance with the rural folk of Bengal.

## II RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE UNITS

An analysis of relationship within each family unit is helpful to understand the nature of the units themselves. It shows the composition of the units and how far they are biological or sociological. The different individuals of each unit are related to one another in a particular manner. The unit may be composed of biologically related persons such as mother and children, father and children, grand-parents and grand-children and so on. Or it may be made up of sociologically related persons such as husband and wife, brothers with their wives and children, etc. In classifying the units we have generally taken into consideration their basic part, i.e. the core around which the individuals are attached. On this principle we have divided the units into the following 10 categories—

- (1) Husband and wife (HW)
- (2) Husband, wife and children (HWC)
- (3) Mother and children (MC)
- (4) Father and children (FC)
- (5) Grand-parents and grand-children (G P G-C)
- (6) Grand-parents, parents and grand-children (G I P G-C)
- (7) Brothers (B<sub>2</sub>)
- (8) Sisters (S<sub>2</sub>)
- (9) Brothers and sisters (BS)
- (10) Brothers with their wives and children (BWC)



Father and son in search of food at Ballygunge Place,  
a fashionable quarter of the city



(11) sisters with their husbands and children (SHC), (12) brothers and sisters with their consorts and children (BSCC), (13) sisters-in-law with their children (SLC), (14) uncles and nephews (UN), (15) sisters' children (SsC), (16) more distant relatives by blood (MDRB), (17) more distant relatives by marriage (MDRM), (18) more distant relatives by blood and marriage (MDRBM). Henceforth we shall use the abbreviations given at the end of each category in the preceding lines. In our sample, besides the family-units, we have also a large number of units consisting of only one person. Naturally they cannot be included in these categories (for details see Appendix IV).

TABLE 2

SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES AND SINGLE-PERSON UNITS AMONG THE DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES.

( The total number of units considered here is 722 )

Serial No	Categories	Percentage of Scheduled castes units	Percentage of Caste Hindu units.	Percentage of Muham-madan units	Percentage of Christian units	Percentage of total units
1	Single person units } Male	8 10	24 53	11.50	20 00	12 74
	Female	10 05	6 29	9 00		8 86
	Total	18.16	30 82	20.50		21 61
2	HW	1 68		2 00		1 38
3	HWC	18 99	15 72	20 00		18 42
4	MC	43.30	30 19	38.00	20 00	38 78
5	FC	2 79	3 14	7 00	20 00	4 15
6	G-P, G C	2 79	1 26	1 50	20 00	2 22
7	G-P, P, G C	3 91	6 92	3 50	20 00	4 57
8	Bs	2 23	2 51	1 00		1 94
9	Ss	84	1 26			69
10	BS	28	1 89	50		69
11	BWC	84		2 50		1.11
12	SHC		63			.14
13	BSCC	28	1 26			.41
14	SLC	.28				.14
15	UN					.28
16.	SsC	84	63	1.00		.55
17.	MDRB	.56		50		41
18	MDRM	56				28
19	MDRBM	1 67				83

From Table 2 it is clear that our sample holds 21.61% single-individual units of which 12.74% are males and 8.86% are females. This is a very significant fact. These men and women were surely members of certain families.



But starvation had forcibly broken their ties and set them adrift. It was a tremendous shock which severed the ties of relationship through blood and marriage and the ties of affection which are the foundations of human society. Some of them had forsaken their parents, some their consorts, some even their children, brothers, sisters and other dear relatives. These tales of woe will be revealed in the next section of this chapter. The influx of nearly 9,000 women who came singly to Calcutta indicates the pressure for food in the villages. They had no knowledge of the city and its innumerable sharks. God alone knows how they fared here.

Among the units the mother-children category holds the largest number (38.78%). This is true of all the communities except the Christians who contributed a very insignificant number to our sample. Among the Scheduled Castes it is 43.30%, among the Muhammadans 38.00%, among the Caste Hindus 30.19 per cent and among the Christians 20.00%. In comparison with this father-children composition is far below these figures in every community. The Muhammadans top the list here with 7.00% followed by the Caste Hindus (3.14%) and the Scheduled Castes (2.79%). This category occupies the fourth position in our sample and holds only 4.15% of it. Husband-wife-children composition, i.e. the biological family has a much better place and in fact holds the second position in the sample as well as in each community except the Christians. This category holds 18.42% of the entire sample and 18.09%, 15.72%, and 20.00% respectively of the Scheduled Castes, Caste Hindus and Muhammadans. The third position is held by the grand-parents-grandchildren category (4.57%) followed by the father-children category which again is followed by the grandparents-grandchildren (2.22%). This Table 2 further confirms our previous hypothesis that the incidence of immaturity forced the women to come out of their homes in large number.

### III. DISINTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY

The effect of the famine on the family life of the destitutes had been simply staggering. There was no end to the tales of misery which our informants repeated about the break up of family life. Husbands had forsaken wives and wives had deserted ailing husbands at home. Parents stealthily left immature children to their fate and drifted away to seek for food. Children reached in the very same manner. Sometimes a mother left her baby at the gate of some wealthy man in the hope that it would be saved by the owner of the house. When caught red-handed and accused about her behaviour she wept and told that she had no milk in her breasts and no solid food to offer her child. Moreover she did not even possess enough strength to carry it on her hips. His thought that by keeping the baby she would neither be able to save it nor save herself. So she left it on the aforementioned place. There were plenty of cases of this kind. This is only a type-specimen. It is difficult to imagine what tremendous forces engendered such a psychological state. Widowed women who had been

produced on the destitutes could not be measured. Besides these, we had to reckon with the drive-out from Calcutta—the effect of which we felt even when we conducted our inquiries in the villages.

#### IV OBSERVANCE OF SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS ON FOOD

Food and drink are important magico-religious factors in India. As a rule orthodox Hindus do not take food or drink from people belonging to other religions. This restriction is also observed by each caste in respect of a number of other specified castes. This is not only observed at the top of the social system but is also equally prevalent at the bottom. A Brahmin does not take cooked food from any non-Brahmin. An orthodox amongst them avoids most of the persons of his own caste even in this respect. Among the Harijans also this food-taboo is rigorously observed. Under no circumstances this taboo is broken. The social penalty for breaking this taboo is generally excommunication. In the higher castes return is possible on the performance of the prescribed penances (*prayaschittas*) which are physically almost impossible. In the lower castes a heavy expenditure is involved for this purpose. It is true that under the influence of modern civilisation there has been a little softening of the rules in the higher castes, especially among those who have received western education. But in the lower strata matters have not moved far.

These food-taboos are not only observed by the Hindus, they are also prevalent among the Muhammadans and animists. The Muhammadans, especially the orthodox among them, refuse to take food from the hands of the non-kitabis. The animists observe it with the exception of a narrow circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances, *i e*, those who can be relied upon. In primitive society food-taboos are mostly based on magical considerations. Primitive man is constantly afraid of magical influences. Food is regarded by them as a very suitable medium for transmitting such magical influences. Therefore primitive peoples object to accept cooked food from persons who are not regarded as reliable. It is a question of life and death for them. This accounts for the rigidity with which primitive peoples observe the various food-taboos. In higher forms of culture, *e g*, Hindu and Muhammadan, this magic basis of food-taboos has been replaced by pollution-basis. Among the Hindus it is believed that cooked food taken from the hands of a person belonging to the tabooed circle would pollute the individual. This would ultimately destroy the religious merits possessed by the person which is a dire calamity to a Hindu who cares more for the next world than for this one. A comfortable berth in the next world is dependent on the religious merits possessed by the individual. This is the ultimate ground on which food-taboos among the Hindus stand. Dr J H Hutton is of opinion that observance of food-taboos is one of the basic sources from which caste-system itself has developed. Under these circumstances it is not difficult to imagine the force which upholds

food taboos in Indian society. But the famine delivered such a hard blow to this taboo that it crumbled like a house of cards.

The following Table 4 shows the effect of the famine on the observance of socio-religious restrictions on food. We investigated this point under question No. 21 of the Questionnaire. As one of the investigators did not enter any remark against this question in his forms we have to omit 98 units investigated by him from this Table 4. The answer to this question was so uniformly similar that at the latter part of our investigation some of our workers gave up recording the results of their inquiries. As a result we have no record for another 157 units. Thus the total number of units for which we have got definite records on this point comes up to 565 only.

TABLE 4

SHOWING HOW FAR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS ON FOOD WERE OBSERVED  
(Total number of units investigated—565).

(a) Number of units (b) Percentage of the total number of units, i.e., 565  
(c) Percentage of the total number of units of the particular community

COMMUNITY	SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESTRICTION ON FOOD			TOTAL
	2 Observed	3 Not observed now under pressure	4 No scruple	
1	2	3	4	5
Scheduled castes	(a) 25 (b) 6.19 (c) 11.86	(a) 159 (b) 28.14 (c) 63.89	(a) 101 (b) 17.87 (c) 24.4	(a) 285 (b) 50.21
Caste Hindus	(a) 29 (b) 5.13 (c) 23.28	(a) 53 (b) 9.35 (c) 42.74	(a) 42 (b) 7.43 (c) 23.67	(a) 121 (b) 21.9
Muhammadan	(a) 16 (b) 2.83 (c) 11.03	(a) 92 (b) 16.29 (c) 73.45	(a) 37 (b) 6.55 (c) 22.5	( ) 145 (b) 25.94
Christians			(a) 1 (b) 18 (c) 100	(a) 1 (b) 18
Grand Total	( ) 89 (b) 14.16	(a) 304 (b) 53.69	(a) 181 (b) 32.04	(a) 565

The answers to our query regarding the observance of socio-religious restrictions on food have been tabulated under three headings. Some of the units told us that they observed these restrictions even then. They have been put in Column 2. We find here that 14.16% of the units observed restrictions on food even at that critical time. On comparing the three communities in this respect we find that the Caste Hindus put the limit (53.69% of the total number). They are followed by the Scheduled Caste unit (11.86% of their total number).

and the Muhammadans ( 11 03% of their total number ). The difference between the Scheduled Caste units and the Muhammadans is very slight ( less than one per cent ) but that between these two groups and the Caste Hindus is considerable, *i e*, the latter have got nearly double the percentage of each of the former two groups

A large number of units admitted frankly that they had given up the restrictions on food for the time being under pressure of starvation but would observe them again with the improvement of food-situation and when normal condition would prevail. These units have been put in Column 3. Nearly 54% of the units investigated fall under this category. The Muhammadans top the list in this respect ( 63 45% of their total number ), followed by the Scheduled Castes ( 53 89% of their total number ) and the Caste Hindus ( 42 74% of their total number ) In column 4 we have put down the units which claimed that they had no scruple about taking food from anybody. They constituted slightly more than 32% of our units. The Scheduled Castes and the Caste-Hindus had more or less the same percentage each ( *i e* 34% of the total number of each ) and the Muhammadans had an appreciably lower percentage ( 25 52% of their total number ) which is rather an unexpected feature. It is difficult to say how far the claims of this 'no scruple' group would survive in normal times. It was not very difficult to put forward such a claim at a time when the whole social order was very rudely shaken by the famine. It will not be, therefore, proper to draw any conclusion regarding this aspect of our social life under normal condition on these data. But we are fully justified to state that during the critical period of the famine these socio-religious restrictions practically disappeared from the vast majority of the destitutes.

## CHAPTER X

### DEATH AMONG THE DESTITUTES

Death among the destitutes is the last topic that we intend to deal with in this section of the book. We tried to collect the number of persons dead in each destitute-family of our sample after it left home as well as within six months before its departure from home. Our intention was to find out the effect of famine on the death rate of the destitutes. We also tried to ascertain the causes of such deaths from the destitutes themselves. Naturally the data on the causes of death thus collected can not be scientifically dependable to the full extent. It may be argued that the destitutes were not medical men. Therefore their opinion on the causes of death cannot be regarded as perfect. There is, no doubt some force in this argument. But every intelligent adult can give and does give a reply when he or she is asked about the cause of death of any person in the family. This is given from common sense and is often more intelligible to the lay public than what a professional medical man would give. But both are correct in their own way. This is more so in famine period. When a man dies of starvation the true cause is known to the members of his family. The medical man can state the immediate cause but not the circumstances behind it which is the real cause of death. Suppose a man suffers from dearth of food for a number of days and is gradually debilitated. Soon he begins to fill up the stomach with wild products which he had never eaten before and which do not suit his stomach. In consequence of this his bowel is soon upset and gradually he succumbs to the malady. The physician would naturally diagnose it as a case of bowel complaint but the members of the family would attribute the death to starvation. Who is correct? I think each is justified in his diagnosis but in his own way, one gives the medical cause and the other the economic one. So when

disorder of the bowel as well as cases of dysentery, diarrhoea, cholera, etc. This group also contains a large number of sure cases of starvation but we have not included them under the 'Starvation' group as the informants themselves did not attribute this to be the cause of death.

There were 212 cases of death among the destitute-units of our sample. Of these, 87 cases or 41.04% occurred before the units left their home but within six months of it. The rest, *i.e.*, 125 or 58.96% died after they had left their home. Starvation accounts for nearly 46% of the dead of our sample. Before leaving home 16.04% died of starvation while after leaving home the death from this cause rose to 29.72%, *i.e.*, nearly double of the former, and that within a much shorter time. On analysing the two other causes of death we find that their percentages do not vary so greatly during the two periods, rather they are almost similar. Thus bowel-complaint caused the death of 8.49% before leaving home and 9.43% after departure. In the same manner the group 'Other causes' holds 16.51% in the former and 19.81% in the latter.

TABLE I

SHOWING THE ACTUAL NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF THE DEAD WITH CAUSES OF DEATH, BY AGE-GROUPS, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER LEAVING HOME

(a) Actual number of persons dead (b) Percentage of the total number of dead *i.e.* 212 (It does not include those who died of flood and cyclone)

Age-groups	Dead before leaving home but within six months prior to it				Dead after leaving home				Grand total
	Starvation	Bowel complaints	Other diseases	Total	Starvation	Bowel complaints	Other diseases	Total	
0 to 5	(a) 9 (b) 4.24	(a) 6 (b) 2.83	(a) 5 (b) 2.36	(a) 20 (b) 9.43	(a) 28 (b) 13.21	(a) 9 (b) 4.24	(a) 13 (b) 6.13	(a) 50 (b) 23.58	(a) 70 (b) 33.02
5 to 15	(a) 6 (b) 2.83	(a) 2 (b) .94	(a) 2 (b) .94	(a) 10 (b) 4.71	(a) 10 (b) 4.71	(a) 4 (b) 1.89	(a) 9 (b) 4.24	(a) 23 (b) 10.84	(a) 33 (b) 15.57
15 to 50	(a) 1 (b) .47	(a) 1 (b) .47	(a) 4 (b) 1.89	(a) 6 (b) 2.83	(a) 1 (b) .47	nil nil	(a) 1 (b) .47	(a) 2 (b) .94	(a) 8 (b) 3.77
Above 50	(a) 2 (b) .94	nil nil	nil nil	(a) 2 (b) .94	(a) 1 (b) .47	nil nil	nil nil	(a) 1 (b) .47	(a) 3 (b) 1.41
Age unspecified	(a) 16 (b) 7.54	(a) 9 (b) 4.24	(a) 24 (b) 11.32	(a) 49 (b) 23.11	(a) 23 (b) 10.84	(a) 7 (b) 3.30	(a) 19 (b) 8.96	(a) 49 (b) 23.11	(a) 98 (b) 46.23
Total	(a) 34 (b) 16.04	(a) 18 (b) 8.49	(a) 35 (b) 16.51	(a) 87 (b) 41.04	(a) 63 (b) 29.72	(a) 20 (b) 9.43	(a) 42 (b) 19.81	(a) 125 (b) 58.96	212

When we come to consider the age of the dead, we meet with a very significant fact. We have divided the life-period of an individual into four age grades *viz.*, 0 to 5 years or infancy and childhood, 5 to 15 years or adolescence, 15 to 50 years or adult age, and above 50 or old age. Table I

shows that the largest number of death occurred in the first age-grade i.e., infancy and childhood (33.02%) In the next age grade it is less than half (15.57%) of the first one Death in the third age-grade is nearly one fourth of the second one while that in the fourth age grade is about one third of the third age-grade Thus the number of deaths decreases very rapidly as soon as we cross over the period of adolescence This tendency is equally observable in both the divisions of the Table i.e. both before and after departure from home

The very high rate of death in the first two age grades will certainly cripple the next generation of the Bengalees. We have already seen that nearly 73% of our sample are connected with land either as agriculturists or as day-labourers (most of whom are really agricultural labourers) If famine had really depleted this stock in the manner suggested by this Table prices of agricultural products will remain at a very high level even long after it had passed away with its toll of human lives

TABLE 2  
SHOWING THE NUMBER OF DEATH AMONG MALES AND FEMALES OF THE DIFFERENT  
COMMUNITIES BY CAUSES OF DEATH.  
(Death due to flood and cyclone omitted)

Causes of death	Dead before leaving home but within six months prior to it				Dead after leaving home				Grand total	
	Starvation	Bowel complaint	Other diseases	Total	Starvation	Bowel complaint	Other diseases	Total		
Rebelinoid castes.	Male	8	6	12	6	20	8	18	46	7
	Female	6	"	4	10	15	5	6	26	38
	Total	14	6	16	38	35	13	24	78	110
Caste-Hindus.	Male	6	"	11	19	10	1	4	15	34
	Female	4	1	4	9	3	1	3	7	16
	Total	10	3	15	28	13	2	7	22	50
Muhamma- dians.	Male	9	3	4	16	7	1	7	15	31
	Female	1	4	"	5	8	3	4	15	20
	Total	10	7	4	21	15	4	11	30	51
Total	Male	23	11	27	61	57	12	72	141	177 + 1 (Christians) = 178
	Female	11	"	8	27	35	9	13	57	74
	Total	34	11	35	87	92	21	85	198	252

(The Christian boy aged 12 years died of bowel complaint after leaving home)

By courtesy of 'The Statesman'

PLATE IX

(To face page 92)



Away from home, on a public road of Calcutta, she was waiting for the last moment of her darling



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Scheduled castes.	Male	8	6	12	26	20	8	15	43	72
	Female	6	2	4	12	15	5	6	26	34
	Total	14	8	16	38	35	13	21	72	110
Caste Hindus.	Male	6	2	11	19	10	1	4	15	34
	Female	4	1	4	9	3	1	3	7	16
	Total	10	3	15	28	13	2	7	22	50
Muslims.	Male	9	3	4	16	7	1	7	15	31
	Female	1	4	2	7	8	3	4	15	22
	Total	10	7	6	23	15	4	11	30	53
Total	Male	23	11	27	61	37	10	29	76	137
	Female	11	7	8	26	26	9	12	45	71
	Total	34	18	35	87	63	19	41	121	208

(One Christian boy aged about 4 years died of bowel complaint before he was 12 years of age.)

By courtesy of 'The Statesman'

PLATE IX

(To face page 92)



Away from home, on a public road of Calcutta, she was waiting for the last moment of her darling



There is another factor which we should not fail to mention here. We have seen in a previous chapter how difficult it was to ascertain the age of the destitutes. This difficulty was further increased when we tried to find out the age of the dead persons. Many of the informants could not give it at all which accounts for the very high percentage of the "Age-unspecified" group (46.23%). In case of living persons we applied our own judgement in recording the age after seeing the subjects. But we could not do so in the case of dead persons. We have reasons, however, to believe that most of the cases of "Age-unspecified" group really belonged to the adult and old groups.

Coming to a consideration of the sex of the dead persons we find from Table 2 that for every dead woman there were nearly two dead men. To be more exact, out of every 1000 dead, 651 were men and 349 women (or for every 1000 dead men there were 536 dead women). This high mortality of the males is also seen both before and after leaving home. It may be attributed to the fact that those families which lost their male earning members and therefore were rapidly turned into destitutes in famine time came in a larger proportion than those families which lost their female members who, under ordinary circumstances, are not earners in Bengal. We cannot altogether deny the possibility of this bias in our sample. Thus, among persons who died before leaving home but within six months prior to it the percentage of males was 70.11 whereas that of females was 29.89. This, when compared with the next period, no doubt, supports the probable existence of the bias indicated above. But at the same time we have to take into consideration the percentages of the dead among the two sexes after their departure from home. Thus, among those who died after leaving home the males formed 61.3% and the females 38.7%. The preponderance of male death in this group cannot be attributed to the selection exercised by the bias already referred to. The very high proportion of male death both before and after leaving home is therefore to be attributed to the causes which we have discussed in the following pages. But the difference in the death-rate of the sexes between the two periods (before and after leaving home) perhaps gives a clue to measure the extent of the selective influence of the bias.

Even among those who died of starvation 61.86% were males and 38.14% females. This is also true in the case of the other two causes of death. This high percentage of male mortality is not a characteristic feature of the last famine alone. In an Appendix to Chapter VI of the *Census of India, 1911, Vol. I, Part I* (pp. 220-222), we find a number of extracts showing the excess of male over female mortality in previous famines occurring in different parts of India. In the Madras famine of 1876-1878 the proportion of the two sexes among the dead was 58.4 per mille of males to 48.04 females. Mr. W. C. Bennet, C. S., writing on the mortality in the Lucknow and Rae Bareilly Divisions during the famine of 1877-1879 observes "The only point which I wish to notice here, and perhaps the

personal experiences of our investigators when they carried on the survey in the villages. All of them reported that the Caste Hindus, who form the gentry of this Province were always unwilling to come out of their house and receive help from Public or Government charities. The high sense of self respect which characterises this community kept them away from begging for food and clothing and they remained within the four walls of their house as long as it was humanly possible. Without any complaint thousands of them submitted to their fate and offered their lives at the altar of self respect and family prestige.

The Scheduled Castes formed 53.68% of our sample and their percentage among the dead was 51.89. The Muhammadans and Christians contributed 27.63% and 7.9% respectively to our sample while their percentages among the dead were 24.06 and 4.7 respectively.



Far from her native home, alone and forlorn, she paid with her life the debt of imperialism,  
on a street of Calcutta.



# CHAPTER XI

## CAUSES OF THE FAMINE OF 1943

### I. GENERAL

This book is mainly concerned with placing before the reader some facts about the socio-economic condition of a group of people who might be regarded as the worst victims of the last famine. We, therefore, do not propose to deal with in detail the various scientific causes responsible for famines in Bengal. But, at the same time, we should not fail to note those causes of the famine which were evident from the data collected by us. This induces us to describe them as briefly as possible.

The causes of the last famine may be classified into two broad divisions, *viz.*, (a) basic causes and (b) contributory or immediate causes. The following is a list of them classified under the two divisions —

#### A. BASIC CAUSES

- (1) The staple food-grains produced in the province are insufficient for its population.
- (2) Majority of the Bengalees are connected with land and have a very small margin between subsistence and starvation.
- (3) Smallness and scatteredness of agricultural holdings.
- (4) Absence of mechanised industries in the rural areas and gradual decay of rural handicrafts.
- (5) Extension of the cultivation of jute at the cost of food-grains.
- (6) Physical degeneration of the people produced by malnutrition and malaria.
- (7) Absence of proper and sufficient irrigational and drainage facilities leading to dependence of agriculture on the caprices of climate.
- (8) Absence of scientific methods in agriculture.
- (9) Lack of education.

#### B. CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES

- (1) Failure of supply of rice from Burma, Thailand and Indo China.
- (2) Natural calamities like flood and cyclone in some parts of the province.



- (3) Hoarding of rice by farmers, merchants and well to-do consumers.
- (4) Half hearted attempts at price-control and ineffective food drive by the Government of Bengal
- (5) Removal of boats in pursuance of Denial Policy
- (6) War requirements i.e. hoarding of rice for industrial workers and soldiers. Denial Policy
- (7) General dislocation of transportation
- (8) Inflation of currency
- (9) Destruction of rural credit brought about by the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act
- (10) Official corruption
- (11) Moral degeneration of the people

Though these appear to be the most important causes of the last famine we are not in a position to substantiate all of them with facts and figures from the data presented in this book. As a result we shall not deal with all of them but limit our attention to those causes only which can be substantiated directly from our data our personal experience and from the extant literature

## II BASIC CAUSES

### 1 STAPLE FOOD-GRAINS PRODUCED IN THE PROVINCE INSUFFICIENT FOR ITS POPULATION

Rice is the staple food of the Bengalees. Therefore to ascertain whether Bengal can properly feed her people with her own produce of this food grain we are to find out at first, how much rice she annually produces. This depends on two factors, viz., (a) the total acreage under cultivation of rice in the province and (b) the average yield per acre

The area under rice cultivation and the annual yield from it in Bengal cannot be exactly estimated. Informations available from different sources vary enormously. Table I on the next page indicates the position of the different sources.

The estimates prepared by the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, India,<sup>21</sup> for the ten years period 1931-32 to 1940-41 give the average for this period at 21 661 900 acres. The estimated average yield for the same period was 8 892,200 tons of rice. According to the Report on Bengal of the Famine Inquiry Commission<sup>22</sup> the average area under cultivation of three different types of rice.—*aman*, *boro* and *aus*—for the same ten years period

21. *Estimates of Area and Yield of Principal Crops in India 1940-41* 43rd. issue. Tables 4 to 13 and 17

22. *Famine Inquiry Commission Report on Bengal 1945* p. 215.

(1931-1940) was 21,777,100 acres. The average yield for the same period according to the same Report was 9,811,100 tons of rice. In the Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal<sup>23</sup> published in 1940, the total area under rice cultivation is shown as 25,675,000 acres and its normal yield as 482,032,000 maunds of paddy (or 11,476,952 tons of rice). Prof. K. P. Chattopadhyay assesses the area under rice cultivation in Bengal at 274 lakhs of acres (wrongly printed as 274 million acres) and its yield at 138 million maunds of paddy (or 10.5 million tons of rice) on the basis of crop survey carried out by the Indian Statistical Institute for 1945-46 with an error of 3 to 1 per cent<sup>24</sup>.

TABLE I

TOTAL AREA AND YIELD OF RICE IN BENGAL ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT SOURCES

Sources of information	Area in Million acres	Yield in million tons of rice i.e., dehusked paddy	Average yield of paddy per acre in maunds i.e., 80 lbs
Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (Average for ten years i.e., 1931-32 to 1940-41).	21.7	8.1	16.21 (i.e., 10.83 mds of rice)
Famine Inquiry Commission Report on Bengal (Average for ten years i.e., 1931 to 1940)	21.8	9.8	16.62 (i.e., 11.08 mds of rice)
Report of the Land Revenue Commission published in 1940. Data for 1935-36 based on Settlement Reports	25.7	11.5	18.8 (i.e., 12.52 mds of rice)
Crop Survey by the Indian Statistical Institute for the year 1945-46	27.4	10.5	16.00 (i.e., 10.66 mds of rice)
Congress Committee Report on the area served by the Damodar Canal Scheme			24.00
Quinquennial Report of Crop Cutting Experiments for 1932-37			19.00 (Aman paddy)
Figures from Settlement Reports			19.00

The difference in the area and yield of rice of Bengal among these four sources does not encourage anybody to rely fully on such statistics supplied by official and semi-official sources. In the matter of acreage the difference between the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, India, and the Report on Bengal of the Famine Inquiry Commission in the average for the same ten

23. Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal 1940 Vol. II p 105

24. A Plan for Rehabilitation in Bengal—by Prof. K. P. Chattopadhyay 1946 p 57

years is nearly 31 million acres. The difference in yield between these two sources is 14 million tons of rice. The difference in yield of paddy per acre between these two again is 38 maund

Let us again compare the remaining two sources namely the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal and the Indian Statistical Institute. The former has given figures as to area on the basis of Settlement Reports and as to yield mainly on crop cutting experiments carried out by Kanungoes on one year only and other factors. The latter has given figures based on crop survey carried out by it in 1945-46. The difference in area between them is 17 million acres and in yield one million tons of rice. The Land Revenue Commission gives the lesser acreage but a higher yield per acre (28 maunds of paddy) which accounts for an overall increase in the total output to the extent of one million tons of rice

When we come to compare all the four sources we find a difference of 57 million acres in area and 31 million tons of rice in yield between the maximum and minimum in these respects.

From these facts it is not unjustifiable to say that none of these sources can be fully relied upon. The methods of collecting data on area and yield of rice in Bengal pursued by the different sources are mainly responsible for the discrepancies. I am unable to resist the temptation of quoting the remarks made by the Land Revenue Commission Bengal, in this respect. At the outset it must be observed that no dependable statistics exist in Bengal which have been prepared on scientific basis to show the yield of various crops. In Bengal acreage figures are based upon reports from districts which are largely guesswork in their estimates of the area sown under a particular crop. The figures have been proved hopelessly wrong in comparison with the areas found in the latest settlement operations in Burdwan and Hooghly. In Burdwan the figure for the net sown area is 1 080 000 and in Hooghly it is 594 000 acres as against 501 800 and 284 100 shown in the agricultural statistics for these two districts respectively. The unreliability of the Agricultural Department's figures has been pointed out by the Royal Commission on Agriculture which described them as mere guesses, and not infrequently demonstrably absurd guesses and the Government of India referred to them as being largely conjectural. Commenting on the methods of collecting the statistics province by province the author of the 48rd issue of the *Estimates of Area and Yield of Principal Crops in India 1940-41* writes about Bengal in the following terms. In the absence of any revenue agency in the province the figures are based mainly on rough approximate estimates made by District Officers, and are more or less conjectural. The District Officers obtain information from the Sub-Divisional Officers through the

agency of the Police or Circle Officers where appointed as a permanent measure"<sup>26</sup> My personal experience may supply the last link of this chain who is no other than the ill-paid, illiterate village Choukidar. The utter uselessness of such statistics from Bengal has been repeatedly proved, from year to year, by the jute forecasts which "are always considerably below the actual crop, as proved by the figures of export." Under these circumstances it is not safe to base any conclusion as to the area and yield of rice in Bengal upon these figures. In view of this the Famine Commission's estimate that Bengal produced only 8,632,000 tons of rice in 1943 cannot be accepted without further reliable evidence. The Commission has thereby thrown the main responsibility of the famine on nature. It has not therefore more thoroughly gone into the other possible causes, *e.g.*, war-requirements, denial policy, official corruption, etc., which appear to us to be more important factors in the causation of the last famine in Bengal. Unfortunately information on these factors are not available to the outsiders and therefore we are not in a position to assess their true force at present.

But there is one solid fact which goes to show that Bengal could not produce enough rice to feed her people from the year 1934 to 1941 with the exception of 1937. This is revealed by the figures for import and export of rice. From these figures we find that there were more imports than exports during those seven years. The annual net imports during those seven years varied from 133,000 to 482,000 tons of rice. The figures for import and export being based on more reliable facts have no scope for 'conjecture' or 'guess-work' as in the case of statistics for area and yield of rice supplied by District Officers and Agricultural Department. Therefore they are more reliable and they reveal that even before the war Bengal had not sufficient rice to feed her people. But this deficit, at least for 1943, was not of the same magnitude as has been shown by the Famine Inquiry Commission.

To answer the question whether Bengal can feed her people with her own produce of rice we have to find out the quantity of this food-grain she annually produces and her annual consumption of it. Annual consumption depends upon two factors, *viz.*, (a) the population of the province and (b) the average annual consumption per head.

The population of Bengal in 1941, according to the Census of that year, was 60.3 million persons excluding the States. This figure is an unusually high one in comparison with what we find for 1931. Table 2 on the next page shows the variation in population of Bengal for the fifty years ending in 1941. It reveals that the population of Bengal unexpectedly increased by

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<sup>26</sup> *Estimates of Area and Yield of Principal Crops in India, 1940-41* 43rd issue, p. 48, Appendix II.

20.3 per cent during the decade 1931-1941. If we assume that this rate of increase had persisted during the two years preceding the famine then the population of Bengal in course of the famine period had been 63.7 millions. But there are difficulties in the acceptance of this assumption. Out of the total increase of 21.2 million persons in course of fifty years (1891-1941) one decade alone i.e. 1931-1941 accounts for 10.2 millions. The usual increase in each of the other four decades varied from 3.0 to 3.4 million persons with the exception of the decade 1911-1921 when there was a big drop (1.2 millions) owing to the first world war and the influenza epidemic which followed at its wake. The phenomenal increase of 20.3 per cent in 1931-1941 cannot be accounted for except on political grounds. During the Census of 1931 the Hindus boycotted the operation at the instance of the Indian National Congress while during the Census of 1941 both the Hindus and the Muhammadans tried to inflate the number of their respective community for securing political advantages. Owing to this it is unsafe to use the figures of 1941 in scientific discussions.

TABLE 2  
VARIATION IN THE POPULATION OF BENGAL FROM 1891 TO 1941  
(Census of India 1941 Vol. I pp. 62 & 69)

Year	Actual population	Variation	Percentage variation	Period of variation
1891	39,097,023			
1901	42,149,164	+ 3,052,131	+ 7.8	1891 to 1901
1911	45,491,030	+ 3,341,903	+ 8.0	1901 to 1911
1921	46,703,703	+ 1,212,646	+ 2.8	1911 to 1921
1931	50,115,548	+ 3,411,840	+ 7.3	1921 to 1931
1941	60,306,521	+10,190,977	+20.3	1931 to 1941
	Total	+21,209,603	+43.1	1891 to 1941

Let us now examine our position in relation to the annual consumption of rice in Bengal. This ultimately depends upon the quantity of rice daily consumed by an individual. But individuals vary in their capacity for consumption of rice on (a) age, (b) sex, (c) social status, (d) economic condition and (e) habitat. If an adult male of a particular locality and of a particular socio-economic status be taken as the unit for calculating consumption then on the basis of age and sex the rate of consumption of that particular community will be as follows—

Adult male	—	—
Adult female	—	—
Children	—	—
Infants		

Variation on the basis of the remaining three factors is even more difficult to calculate. Prof P. C. Mahalanobis's analysis of five different surveys, conducted between 1936 and 1942, gives the following figures<sup>27</sup>

PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF ALL CEREALS		IN SEERS PER WEEK		IN OUNCES PER DAY
General average rate for Bengal	—	3 58	—	17
Sectional Average Rates —				
(1) Rural population	—	3'65	—	17
(2) Calcutta middle classes	—	2 79	—	13
(3) Mofussil urban middle classes		2'75	—	13
(4) Industrial working classes	—	3 47	—	16
(5) Families whose monthly expenditure is Rs 10/- or less		2 95	—	14

This undoubtedly shows the variability of the rate of consumption among different social and economic classes and geographical areas. But we need not go into these details. Let us merely compare the general average rates of consumption as given by the different sources.

Prof Mahalanobis fixes the general average rate at 3 58 seers per week. The Food-grains Procurement Committee appointed by the Government of Bengal in 1944 discussed the various estimates submitted to it on this point and came to the conclusion that an adult consumes more than 4 seers of cereals per week which would work out at the rate of 3 20 seers per capita when all the sections of the population are taken together.

The Famine Inquiry Commission, without taking the trouble of independently ascertaining the general average rate of consumption of cereals in Bengal, adopted the rate of the Food-grains Procurement Committee as the lower limit (3'2 seers per week) and Prof Mahalanobis's rate, with slight modification, (3 6 seers per week) as the upper limit of consumption in this province. Commenting on the value of these rates the Famine Inquiry Commission stated "It may thus be concluded that the information available is such that any estimate of the annual consumption of the province based on population statistics and an assumed average rate of individual consumption is likely to err by as much as 2 million tons—or about 25 per cent of the estimate. So wide a margin of error blocks this method of approach"<sup>28</sup>

Summing up the position we find that —

- (1) the area under cultivation of rice varies, according to different estimates, from 21 7 to 27 4 million acres,
- (2) the estimates about the yield of rice varies from 8 4 to 11 5 million tons,

27 *Famine Inquiry Commission, Report on Bengal 1945* p 204

28. *Op. Cit.*, p. 205.

- (3) the estimates of average yield of paddy per acre varies from 16 to 18.8 maunds,<sup>29</sup>
- (4) the population of the province increased by 20.3 per cent in one decade (1931-1941) though the total increase for fifty years ending in 1941 was only 48.1 per cent.<sup>30</sup>
- (5) and the general average rate of individual consumption of cereals in Bengal varies according to different estimates from 3.2 to 3.6 seers per head per week

These facts definitely point out that we have no reliable data to prove that Bengal cannot feed her population with her own produce of rice. I do not say that Bengal does not require outside help in feeding her children but my point is that we have no reliable data to establish this fact except the figures for import and export of rice. The negligence of the Government of Bengal in collecting scientifically reliable data on each of the vital facts noted above is colossal. When we further consider the fact that famine is almost an annual occurrence in one or other part of the province and when we find that some sort of popular government came into being in this province more than five years before this famine this negligence amounts almost to a crime. The Bengal famine of 1943 as shown by these figures was not so much due to shortage in the production of rice by the province as to other factors.

But in spite of this the tale told by the gradually increasing rise of net imports of rice during the first part of the war and even preceding it should not be lost sight of. Measures to check this deficit, though small at present, must be found out and assiduously applied. But before all these we should find out our real position about the acreage under rice cultivation, its annual yield and the total annual consumption of the province. Scientific surveys should be organised immediately to gather data on these factors of vital importance. The real population of the province should also be found out by sample surveys if possible before the next Census operation as it is an important issue for the safety of the province.

- MAJORITY OF THE BENGALIES ARE CONNECTED WITH LAND AND HAVE  
A SMALL MARGIN BETWEEN SUBSISTENCE AND STARVATION

Agriculture forms the most important occupation in Bengal. According to the Census of 1931 the number of total earners in Bengal was 13.75 millions of which nearly 10 millions followed Ordinary Cultivation. Roughly speaking for

<sup>29</sup> A maund is roughly equal to 80 lbs. British avoirdupois weight.

<sup>30</sup> If the increase had been at the rate of 8 per cent which was highest for Bengal in course of the preceding four decades the population would have been 54 millions instead of 60.3 millions. The difference amounting to 6.3 millions would have cut down our requirement of rice by one million tons.

every earner there were 2.5 non-working dependents, or nearly 35 millions of the population of Bengal depended on cultivation as the means of livelihood. In other words, approximately 70 per cent of the people of Bengal depended on agriculture according to the Census of 1931. Of the 10 millions of earners by cultivation, 5.3 millions were cultivating owners, 8.7 million tenant-cultivators and 2.87 millions agricultural labourers. According to the Census of 1941 the population of Bengal was 60.3 millions, and of them 72% or 43.4 millions derived the whole or major part of their income from cultivation of land. But in our Calcutta data 76.70 per cent were ordinary cultivators according to Census classification. Therefore, according to our basis of calculation *ie.* 76.70%, nearly 46 millions of Bengalees depended on agriculture as the chief means of livelihood at the time of the famine. For our present purpose it is immaterial whether the number is 43 or 46 millions. The only point which we wish to emphasise is that a very very large number of persons of Bengal depend on agriculture. Now, on the basis of 5.4 persons per family, as may be found in the subsidiary table at page 4 of the *Census of India, Tables, Vol. IV*, we had in 1941, 8 million families dependent on cultivation of land. The Famine Inquiry Commission holds it to be 7.5 millions and the Land Revenue Commission 7.1 millions. In spite of these differences among the different authorities it is certain that each and every one of these families could not have a sufficiently extensive farm to meet all its demands and lay by something for evil days. In fact they lived on the narrow margin which separates subsistence from starvation. Whenever there was even a slight disturbance of the balance either through natural or artificial causes a large number of them fell victims of starvation. In Table 1 of Chapter VII of this book we find an analysis of the assets of the destitutes at the time of our inquiry and before the war. It shows that about 78% had no cultivable land, 51% had no homestead land, 32% had no house, 80% had no domestic animals, 70% had no domestic utensils, and 96% had no ornaments of gold or silver. This was their condition before the war. It gives some idea about the appalling poverty of at least a section of the 46 millions of Bengalees who depended on agriculture. If famine is to be avoided the condition of these people must be improved. The narrow margin between subsistence and starvation on which they live must be widened, *ie.*, they must have a reserve to combat with a crisis like the famine of 1943. Mere increase of production of food within the province or its importation from outside will not solve this problem. The malady lies deeper in the maldistribution of wealth which we have got to tackle with a strong hand.

### 3. SMALLNESS AND SCATTEREDNESS OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

The poverty of the agricultural population of Bengal is mainly due to two factors, *viz.*, (a) the smallness of the agricultural holdings and (b) the scatteredness of the plots held by each cultivator. According to the Census of 1921 each agricultural worker possessed less than  $2\frac{1}{4}$  acres of land on an average.<sup>31</sup>

31. *Census of India 1921, Bengal Part I* p. 382



- (3) the estimates of average yield of paddy per acre varies from 16 to 18·8 maunds,<sup>29</sup>
- (4) the population of the province increased by 20·8 per cent in one decade (1931-1941) though the total increase for fifty years ending in 1941 was only 43·1 per cent.<sup>30</sup>
- (5) and the general average rate of individual consumption of cereals in Bengal varies according to different estimates, from 3·2 to 3·6 seers per head per week

These facts definitely point out that we have no reliable data to prove that Bengal cannot feed her population with her own produce of rice. I do not say that Bengal does not require outside help in feeding her children but my point is that we have no reliable data to establish this fact except the figures for import and export of rice. The negligence of the Government of Bengal in collecting scientifically reliable data on each of the vital facts noted above is colossal. When we further consider the fact that famine is almost an annual occurrence in one or other part of the province and when we find that some sort of popular government came into being in this province more than five years before this famine this negligence amounts almost to a crime. The Bengal famine of 1943 as shown by these figures was not so much due to shortage in the production of rice by the province as to other factors.

But in spite of this the tale told by the gradually increasing rise of net imports of rice during the first part of the war and even preceding it should not be lost sight of. Measures to check this deficit, though small at present, must be found out and assiduously applied. But before all these we should find out our real position about the acreage under rice cultivation its annual yield and the total annual consumption of the province. Scientific surveys should be organised immediately to gather data on these factors of vital importance. The real population of the province should also be found out by sample surveys, if possible before the next Census operation as it is an important issue for the safety of the province.

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<sup>29</sup> A maund is roughly equal to 80 lbs. British avoirdupois weight.

<sup>30</sup> If the increase had been at the rate of 8 per cent which was highest for Bengal in course of the preceding four decades the population would have been 24 millions instead of 20·3 millions. The difference amounting to 6·3 millions would have cut down our requirement of rice by one million tons.

*i.e.*, those who possess 2—5 acres appears to be 28.6% in Table 3 whereas in Table 4 it is 14%, *i.e.*, less than half of the former. Again the group which holds above 5 acres forms 25.1% in Table 3 and only 7% in Table 4, *i.e.*, much less than one-third of the former. These differences between the two Tables cannot be ignored and it seems that they are most probably due to selection in one case and randomisation in the other. The sample surveyed by the Kanungoes under the direction of the D. I. R. was not a random sample while the other one was so. It is also possible that during the war and as a consequence of the famine the greater part of the rural population became further impoverished in course of the five years which passed between the two surveys. Therefore we would prefer to accept the results of the random sample survey conducted by Prof P. C. Mahalanobis and Prof K. P. Chattopadhyay. According to this survey the landless people formed 40% of the families dependent on cultivation. If this be applied to the whole of Bengal then there were three million families of this type in this province just after the famine. Those who had less than 2 acres numbered nearly another 3 million families. These two categories together formed 79% of the total number of families dependent on cultivation of land. This definitely proves that the average area owned by a family, as given by the Census authorities or the Land Revenue Commission of Bengal, does not reveal the true character of the farmers of Bengal.

TABLE 4

Size of agricultural holdings of agriculturists including agricultural labourers according to survey of nearly 16,000 families carried on by Prof P. C. Mahalanobis and Prof K. P. Chattopadhyay in 1944-1945

Area held by each family	Percentage of the total number of families surveyed <i>i.e.</i> nearly 16,000	Number of families in the whole of Bengal	
		On the basis of 8 million families acc to the Census of 1941	On the basis of 7.5 million families acc to the Fam. Inq. Comm.
Landless	40%	3.20 millions	3.0 millions
0—2 acres	39%	3.12 "	2.925 "
2—5 acres	14%	1.12 "	1.050 "
Above 5 acres	7%	.56 "	.525 "

A farm of two acres or less cannot even supply sufficient food, not to speak of other necessities of life, for the whole year to a family of 6 persons. The average produce of this farm would be about 33 maunds of paddy or 22 maunds of rice if only cropped once. Let us assume that a part of it is cropped twice (average 20%) which would add about 7 maunds of paddy<sup>32</sup>. Thus the total

32. A maund is roughly equal to 80 lbs British avoirdupois weight.

An English agricultural worker had ten times this land and in the Union of South Africa 38 times as much. The Land Revenue Commission of Bengal on the basis of the population of the province according to the Census of 1931 and the acreage under cultivation according to the Settlement Reports estimated the "average cultivated area in possession of the families of cultivating owners and tenants at 5½ acres. But the same authority reduces it to 4½ acres on the basis of the inquiries made by the Director of Land Records and Surveys on nearly 20 000 families all over Bengal. But if we follow the Census of 1941 then the size of an average agricultural holding comes to be 3.6 acres which increases to 3.8 acres on the basis of calculation adopted by the Famine Inquiry Commission. But this average does not give the real picture. Of the 8 or 7.5 million families living on cultivation of land many do not possess any land at all and a large number have much less than the average. This is revealed in the *Report of the Land Revenue Commission Bengal* as well as in the sample survey of nearly 16 000 families carried out in 1944-45 by Prof. P. O. Mahalanobis and Prof. K. P. Chattopadhyay to measure the after effects of the famine of 1943. Their findings are given in the following Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

TABLE 3

Size of agricultural holdings of families dependent on cultivation according to survey of nearly 20 000 families carried on by the Kanungoes under the direction of the Director of Land Records and Surveys in 1939

Area held by each family	Percentage of the total number of families surveyed i.e. 19,599	Number of families in the whole of Bengal.	
		On the basis of 8 million families acc. to Census of 1941	On the basis of 7.5 million families acc. to Famine Inq. Comm.
Less than 2 acres	40%	3.68 millions	3.45 millions
- to 3 acres	11.2%	.9 millions	.84 millions
3 to 4 acres	9.4%	.75 millions	.70 millions
4 to 5 acres	8.0%	.64 millions	.60 millions
Total 2 to 5 acres	28.6%	2.29 millions	2.14 millions
5 to 10 acres	17.0%	1.36 millions	1.28 millions
Above 10 acres	8.4%	.67 millions	.63 millions
Total above 5 acres	25.4%	2.03 millions	1.91 millions

There is considerable difference in the findings of the two surveys the results of which are given in these two tables. The group Less than two acres, which also includes the landless families, forms 46% in Table 3 but in Table 4 it forms nearly 79% (i.e. landless 40% plus 0-2 acres 39%). The next group

*i.e.*, those who possess 2—5 acres appears to be 28·6% in Table 3 whereas in Table 4 it is 14%, *i.e.*, less than half of the former. Again the group which holds above 5 acres forms 25·4% in Table 3 and only 7% in Table 4, *i.e.*, much less than one-third of the former. These differences between the two Tables cannot be ignored and it seems that they are most probably due to selection in one case and randomization in the other. The sample surveyed by the Kanungoes under the direction of the D. L. R. was not a random sample while the other one was so. It is also possible that during the war and as a consequence of the famine the greater part of the rural population became further impoverished in course of the five years which passed between the two surveys. Therefore we would prefer to accept the results of the random sample survey conducted by Prof P. C. Mahalanobis and Prof K. P. Chattopadhyay. According to this survey the landless people formed 40% of the families dependent on cultivation. If this be applied to the whole of Bengal then there were three million families of this type in this province just after the famine. Those who had less than 2 acres numbered nearly another 3 million families. These two categories together formed 79% of the total number of families dependent on cultivation of land. This definitely proves that the average area owned by a family, as given by the Census authorities or the Land Revenue Commission of Bengal, does not reveal the true character of the farmers of Bengal.

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A farm of two acres or less cannot even supply sufficient food, not to speak of other necessities of life, for the whole year to a family of 6 persons. The average produce of this farm would be about 33 maunds of paddy or 22 maunds of rice if only cropped once. Let us assume that a part of it is cropped twice (average 20%) which would add about 7 maunds of paddy<sup>32</sup>. Thus the total

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yield will be about 40 maunds of paddy or 26 maunds of rice. If the family consists of husband, wife, two children and two infants then their total cereal requirement for a year would be 25 to 28 maunds of rice according to the Famine Inquiry Commission or 32 maunds of rice according to Prof. K. P. Chattopadhyay.<sup>23</sup> The Land Revenue Commission of Bengal estimates the total cereal consumption of a rural individual at 9 maunds of paddy or 6 maunds of rice a year. An average family of 5.4 individuals would require on this basis of calculation, about 32 maunds of rice. Thus according to all the estimates the cultivators of farms of even 2 acres, not to speak of those who have less land, cannot have sufficient food for the whole year. This means that even among those who cultivate land there are more than 3 million families which have not sufficient land merely to feed them throughout the year. This clearly shows what a large number of uneconomic farms Bengal has at present.

This is only one side of the picture. The farms in Bengal are not only small but the different plots included in each are scattered over wide areas. The domiciles in rural Bengal are not situated in a scattered fashion in the midst of farms but are concentrated in particular areas which form the villages. In the riparian regions of Eastern Bengal this is due to the annual flooding. The people seek the higher belts for constructing their houses, leaving the lower parts for cultivation of crops. These higher belts are often converted sand dunes left by receding rivers which are responsible for the composition of a very large part of the province. In the highlands of West Bengal similar concentration of dwellings has been caused by the undulating nature of the country. The depressions between the ridges in this region are more fertile and hold water indispensable for the growth of paddy plants, for the longest period of time. This has led to the building of villages on the upper ridges, leaving the depressions for production of food. Thus in both parts of Bengal two different sets of causes have led to the construction of dwellings in areas away from the cultivated fields. Besides these there are other factors, e.g. security of life and property, amenities of social life, influence of well-to-do people, necessities of rural crafts, etc. which operated in favour of concentrated dwellings and against scattering of houses in the midst of farms. These latter factors also probably account for the absence of villages with scattered houses in the midst of farms, found in those parts of the province which neither have undulations nor annual inundations.

The arable land in Bengal lies around the village. It is divided into thousands of small plots varying in size from a *cottah* (720 square feet) to one or two *bighas* (33 to 66 acres). The plots are bounded on all sides by narrow strips of land, more or less raised above the plots which serve as boundary marks or as ridges for keeping water within the field. The ownership of these plots is vested in different individuals, some of whom are cultivators and others

23. *A Plan for Rehabilitation in Bengal*—by Prof. K. P. Chattopadhyay 1946, p. 49.

non-cultivating owners Generally speaking the adjacent plots do not usually belong to the same owner or are not cultivated by the same farmer In fact, in Bengal, we have nothing like a true farm with all its fields lying in contiguity and with the farm-house and all its appurtenances situated in the midst of it A farmer in Bengal generally possesses his plots of land in different parts of the village arable and their distances from his house or from one plot to another, may vary from a few feet to a mile or more This leads to the following disadvantages :—

(a) The cultivator is daily required to walk over a considerable distance with his bullocks and implements of agriculture to reach the field of operations from his home and to move from plot to plot The same difficulty is experienced in transporting manure to the plots and removing crops from them Mr B. P. Jain states "It is calculated that the expenditure for the cultivation of land increases by 53%, for every 500 metres of distance, for manual labour and ploughing, 20% to 35% for transport of manure, and 15% to 32% for transport of crops It has further been observed that on compact holdings the income from farming would be increased by at least 20% without any modification in the method of cultivation"<sup>34</sup>—

(b) The narrow strips marking the boundary of adjacent plots which are sometimes utilised for hedging and ridging increase in area with the progress of fragmentation of holdings A boundary mark one foot wide around a plot measuring a *cottah* (720 sq ft.) would require 112 sq ft or 15.5% of its land if it be 30' × 24' in dimensions. As this boundary mark serves the same purpose for adjacent plots on all four sides the area covered by it should be distributed over them as well Therefore we may assume that the space required for boundary marks of a plot of one *cottah* will be more or less 55 sq ft. or 7.6% according to the size of the adjacent plots A similar boundary mark around a plot measuring a *bigha* (33 acre) would require, on the basis of calculation given above, 245 sq ft or 1.7% of its land provided its length and breadth are 144 ft. and 100 ft. respectively This clearly shows the considerable difference in wastage of cropped land (nearly 6%) for boundary marks between small and big plots The wastage decreases with the increase in the size of plots In the Punjab it has been found that 1% of the land<sup>35</sup> is wasted in setting up boundaries, and fragmentation is at its lowest in this province If we assume 3% wastage for this purpose in Bengal, which to me seems to be quite a moderate demand, we lose in paddy land alone about 750,000 acres Mr B. P. Jain's statement that "A yard wide hedges round a rectangular field 242 yards by 100 yards occupies 688 sq yds or 2.8% of the area" is not accurate as it does not take into consideration the fact that each boundary serves two adjacent plots over both of which the area of

<sup>34</sup> *Agricultural Holdings in the United Provinces*—by B. P. Jain, M. A. 1937, pp. 44-45

<sup>35</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 46

wastage should be distributed. There are also other minor defects in the calculation \*\*

(c) Irrigation and drainage are equally affected by fragmentation of holdings. A cultivator having plots in different areas cannot irrigate all the fields from a tank or well excavated or sunk in one of the plots. In the same manner he cannot be present at two places simultaneously as is often required in canal irrigation.

(d) Injury of crops by cattle of neighbours also proceeds from this source as the cultivator cannot guard all the plots simultaneously. Cost of hedging increases beyond the means of ordinary cultivators in scattered plots of small size. Theft of crops also cannot be effectively stopped under this condition.

(e) Litigation increases owing to encroachment by neighbours.

(f) Mechanization of agriculture is impossible in such small plots.

(g) Use of improved seeds do not bring in the desired increase in production owing to fertilization by plants of inferior quality from surrounding plots.

(h) The cultivator is unable to grow any new crop which does not conform to the agricultural calendar of his neighbours. When the fields of his neighbours are vacant he cannot grow anything owing to the depredations of the cattle of his neighbours which are let loose. Many farmers have complained to the author about their inability to grow a second crop in winter owing to this difficulty.

These are some of the disadvantages which confront the cultivators of small and scattered plots and stand on their way to improvement of cultivation and economic condition.

Fragmentation of holdings is the joint product of the peculiar land tenure of the province and its laws of inheritance. The few *bighas* of land a man may possess remain in the family for generations if they are not sold out for some reason or other. In Bengal, among the Hindus the sons equally share the landed property of the father. Among the Muslims the daughters are also entitled to a share of it. As a result in every generation the family property in land is divided. This parcelling goes on indiscriminately until the plots are reduced to such an extent that cultivation is no longer possible or profitable. The sons often do not divide the holding as a whole but divide each plot so that each of the sons may get an equal share in quality and quantity. In our survey we found many cultivators who possessed merely a few *cottaks* of land of their own which were absolutely insufficient to maintain their families. Yet they stuck to such holdings and tried to supplement their income by working as day labourers. This fragmentation of holdings is a curse in the agricultural economy of Bengal. The Bengalee cultivator has no concept of a farm. Even a substantial

cultivator does not possess all his lands in one plot. Moreover, in the small holdings in Bengal, the cultivators have employment only for a few days during each of the agricultural operations such as ploughing, sowing, transplantation, weeding and harvesting, the remaining days of the year are passed in idleness. On the other hand they cannot leave their home in search of employment in places far away from their village as in that case the crops in the fields suffer. Again the farm is not large enough to keep them employed throughout the year. The result is an increase in overhead charges for cultivation which has made agriculture so unprofitable in Bengal.

#### 4 ABSENCE OF MECHANISED INDUSTRIES IN RURAL AREAS AND GRADUAL DECAY OF RURAL HANDICRAFTS

Though agriculture is apparently so ruinous to the peasantry of Bengal yet why have so many persons taken to cultivation of the soil? Is there sufficient land to give them a decent living? Are the farms big enough to be profitable? We have already seen that the answers to these questions are all in the negative. Yet the sons of the cultivators take up cultivation as the only and the inevitable avocation of their life. There is hardly any other occupation in the rural parts of Bengal which may attract them and turn more profitable.

There is no mechanised industry in the rural areas of Bengal to which the sons of cultivators may flock. In the opinion of the members of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, "it is obviously desirable to encourage industrial development with the object of diverting part of the population from agriculture to industry". The more important industries of Bengal like jute and cotton are centralised and they have not been able to attract the outflow from agricultural labour of Bengal. "More than 90 per cent of the employees are up-country men". The establishment of small jute spinning mills and cotton spinning mills in rural areas may supply employment to the cultivators during the off-season. If jute and cotton yarns are supplied to the cultivators they may manufacture gunny-bags, carpets, sataranchis, ropes, etc., from the former and cloths, towels, lungis, etc., from the latter in their spare time with a little training. Establishment of sugar factories in the rural areas may also help in providing more lucrative employments to the agriculturists. Rungpur and Jalpaiguri produce good varieties of tobacco about 99% of which went to Burma and came back as cheroots. This conversion can be easily done in Bengal. Silk and lac industries as well as fruit-canning may provide employment to many.

Here and there we meet with a few crafts and cottage industries which supply a fractional part of the needs of the rural folk. They cannot compete with the machine industries. Their own position is precarious. So, it is natural that they do not attract the overflow population from agriculture. Everyone who has visited the rural parts of Bengal knows how the blacksmiths, braziers, potters, masons, cobblers, carpenters, tailors, paddy-huskers and others



livo. They also have the same precarious existence which characterises the cultivators. Moreover many of these crafts are associated with particular castes wherein they are hereditary. It is difficult to get introduction and instruction in them. The caste scruples also stand on the way of their assumption in many cases.

Competition with the machine products of the west has spelled ruin to many of our cottage industries. The once flourishing hand loom industry of Bengal was stifled by systematic crude repression at the beginning of British rule. In recent years the same end has been achieved by finer methods. Silk industry has also shared the same fate. Brass and bell metal industries are also showing signs of inability to stand competition with aluminium wares. This is the story of many others of our rural crafts. The gradual decay of these rural crafts is partly due to foreign competition and partly to lack of imagination and adaptability on the part of the craftsmen. The responsibility of the Government in this matter is also not to be overlooked.

#### 5 EXTENSION OF THE CULTIVATION OF JUTE AT THE COST OF FOOD GRAINS

Jute is the most important cash-crop of Bengal at present. It had been an important agricultural product even at the beginning of British rule in India. Reports of the East India Company written at about the end of the 18th Century state that home-made jute cloth was the common wearing apparel of the people of North Bengal. Even at that period the attention of the East India Company was drawn to the commercial possibilities of this fibre. Jute used to be sold at Rs. 1/ per maund (80 lbs) in those days.

Wallace in *The Romance of Jute* refers to the use of this fibre for lines and cordages from very early times. According to him, in the first quarter of the 19th Century jute bags were used in India for transport of sugar, coffee, grains, etc. They were also sent to Java, Borneo and America for the same purpose.

Forbes Royce (*Fibrous Plants of India*, published in 1855) mentions the manufacture of gunny on handloom as the grand domestic industry of the people of the eastern districts of Lower Bengal. It pervades all classes and penetrates into every household. Men, women and children find occupation therein.

According to Dr. J. C. Sinha, raw jute was first forwarded to England in March 1791 by the Board of Trade in Bengal. Though sample bales of raw jute used to be regularly sent to England since 1795 yet the first commercial consignment reached Europe only in 1828. Before jute reached England there was a brisk manufacturing industry in flax imported from Russia. The Dundee spinners, who worked on flax at first found it difficult to adjust their machineries to jute fibre but this was overcome in about 1838 and thenceforth they were able to produce marketable goods of jute.

The Crimean War shut off Russian flax and gave an impetus to the jute industry in England which was further accelerated by the American Civil War which established jute cloth as the world's packing medium. "The first jute spinning mill was established on the Hooghly in 1855, but weaving was done by hand, and power-looms were not installed until about 1860"

TABLE 5

QUINQUENNIAL AVERAGE OF AREA UNDER JUTE CULTIVATION AND ITS YIELD  
IN BALES OF 400 POUNDS EACH

( Taken from the Report of the Bengal Jute Inquiry Committee, 1938, Vol I, pp 7 S )

Period	Acres in millions	Yield in lakhs of bales
1892-93 to 1896-97	2 17	
1897-98 to 1901-2	2 01	
1902-3 to 1906-7	2 79	
1907-8 to 1911-12	1 00	86 10
1912-13 to 1916-17	2 01	92 08
1917-18 to 1921-22	2 11	83 52
1922-23 to 1926-27	2 61	93 24
Average of 35 years	2 56	Average of 20 years 88 07

TABLE 6

ANNUAL AREA UNDER JUTE CULTIVATION AND ITS YIELD IN BALES OF 400 POUNDS EACH

( Taken from the Report of the Bengal Jute Inquiry Committee, 1938, Vol I, pp 7-8 )

Period	Acres in millions	Yield in lakhs of bales
1929-30	3 31	109 08
1930-31	3 18	101 53
1931-32	1 86	65 57
1932-33	2 14	87 06
1933-34	2 51	87 14
1934-35	2 49	97 93
1935-36	2 18	85 53
1936-37	2 86	108 61
1937-38	2 89	86 81
1938-39	3 15	66 95
Average for 10 years	2 69	89 71

The introduction of power looms (in the manufacture of gunny in about 1860) led to the complete destruction of the handloom industry in this line which the people of Bengal pursued from very early times. Thus a lucrative cottage industry was destroyed and this supplementary source of income dried up. Not only this, the handloom workers did not find employment in the jute mills which grow up on both banks of the Hooghly. More than 90 per cent of the jute mill employees come from outside Bengal.

TABLE 7

## ANNUAL AREA UNDER JUTE CULTIVATION

(Taken from *British India Agricultural Statistics* published by the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Government of India.)

Period	Acres
1839-40	2,503,800
1940-41	3,007,100
1941-42	1,532,855
1942-43	2,704,100
Average for 4 years	2,586,964

The increase in area under jute cultivation brought about by the development of this industry induced by the introduction of power looms has also adversely affected the economic life of the people of Bengal. The preceding three Tables (5 & 6 & 7) show the increase in acreage under jute from 1892-93 to 1942-43.

Mr H O Karr estimated the total area under jute cultivation in Bengal in 1872-73 at one million acres in round figures. Within the next twenty years it more than doubled its area,—the average for the quinquennium 1892-93 to 1896-97 was 2.17 million acres. The quinquennial averages from 1892-93 to 1926-27 ranged from 2.01 to 3.00 million acres and the average for the whole period of 35 years was 2.56 million acres. Thus in this stage too there was an average increase of more than 27 per cent in the acreage under jute. At the next stage, *i. e.*, between 1929-30 and 1938-39 the annual area under jute varied from 1.86 to 3.48 million acres—the average for these 10 years being 2.69 million acres. Therefore during this decade also the average acreage under jute increased by more than 6 per cent over the average of the preceding 35 years. In 1939-40 the area under jute decreased by about 6.5 lakh acres from that of the previous year. The Second Great War was declared after the sowing of jute of this year had been completed. So the peasants could not profit by it. But in 1940-41 there was a record rise in the area under cultivation of jute, which rose up to 3.6 million acres—a figure which it never reached in any previous year. The peasantry of Bengal, depending on their experience of the First Great War, expected to make

a record profit. But soon they were disillusioned. As a result in 1941-42 the acreage under jute dropped to 1.5 million acres but again it rose to 2.7 million acres in 1942-43.

The effect of increase in jute acreage in course of the last 70 years over the production of food-grains in Bengal was, no doubt, considerable in a general sense. Jute robbed the people of a large quantity of their food grains. During the 60 years from 1881 to 1941 the population of Bengal increased from 36.32 millions to 60.30 millions. In other words, for every 100 persons in 1881 there were 166 persons in 1941. But the area under cultivation of food-grains did not increase in the same proportion. On the other hand, increase in area under jute cultivation led to a shrinkage in the area under cultivation of food-grains. Not only this, the farmer devotes his best land for the cultivation of jute which has also indirectly contributed to a decrease in the production of food-grains. But these remarks are applicable in general terms only for the whole period of the development of jute industry. It cannot, however, be pushed too far logically as a serious immediate cause of the last famine.

During the decade 1929-30 to 1938-39 the average annual area under jute was 2.69 million acres and during this period Bengal did not experience any serious shortage of food-grains comparable to the famine of 1943. During the next four years (*i.e.*, 1939-40 to 1942-43) the average came down to 2.58 million acres, *i.e.*, there was a decrease of nearly 4 per cent in the area under jute cultivation. So, naturally, variation in the acreage under jute cultivation cannot be held even partially as an immediate cause of the famine. On the other hand it can be argued that during the four years preceding the famine there was a possibility of building up a stock of food-grains from the production of land abandoned by jute.

#### 6 PHYSICAL DEGENERATION OF THE PEOPLE PRODUCED BY MALNUTRITION AND MALARIA

The most important raw product of Bengal is jute. But the jute industry is centralised in a few places of Bengal of which Calcutta is the most important one. If the jute mills had been spread all over the jute-producing areas the sons of the cultivators might have found some occupation to turn to. But this is not to the interest of the jute mills which are mainly in the hands of the Europeans. In recent years only a few textile mills have been established in or near about some of the district towns and they have provided occupation to a part of the local population. But this is not sufficient to relieve the heavy pressure on land. In the mills and factories in and around Calcutta the sons of the soil do not get any preference. They have been elbowed out by the more energetic non-Bengalees. The latter are more hardy, more laborious, and more adventurous than the Bengalees. They put in more work. Therefore the employers naturally

prefer them to the Bengalee labourers—conveniently forgetting the fact that jute is produced with the sweat of the brow of the Bengalee farmer. In no other civilised country such a course would have been allowed. But why is the Bengalee labourer inferior to the non Bengalee labourer? To me it appears to be due to his poorer health. Continuous ill nourishment and repeated attacks of malaria have combined to ruin the health of the Bengalee labourer. We have very good evidence on this aspect of our life from a village in Howrah district which we surveyed in course of this work. Not more than thirty years ago Narullapara was the seat of a sturdy race of Bagdis who aroused awe and admiration in the minds of their neighbours for their bodily strength. They looked like giants according to local reports. But the sons and grandsons of this sturdy race of Bagdis have now turned into pigmies. They have neither health nor wealth. It is directly attributable to malnutrition and malaria. This is the story all over Bengal. So it now forms a vicious circle. Lack of sufficient land leads to malnutrition which in its turn makes the people susceptible to malaria which causes physical degeneration leading to failure in competition with non Bengalee labourers which again drives them towards land.

#### 7. DEPENDENCE OF AGRICULTURE ON THE CAPRICES OF CLIMATE

Agriculture in Bengal is dependent on the caprices of climate. We have sometimes too heavy a rain which causes flood and sometimes we have droughts. Paddy cultivation requires a regulated supply of water over particular periods of the year. This is only possible if we have a well co-ordinated irrigation and drainage system all over Bengal. So long as this is not completed at least local famines are sure to occur as a regular feature of the life of Bengal.

#### 8. ABSENCE OF SCIENTIFIC METHODS IN AGRICULTURE

Absence of scientific methods in the agriculture of Bengal is another important defect of our economic life. In a large part of the province manuring is unknown. The cowdung is burnt as fuel and with that they burn their own luck too. Even where cowdung is used as manure the cultivators do not know how best to preserve it and get the fullest benefit. The simple but efficient plant which has been devised and worked by the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute New Delhi for the production of fuel gas and better manure from cowdung is not known to the agriculturists of Bengal.<sup>57</sup> According to Mr S. V. Desai for a day "a family consisting of five or six members would consume 80 to 100 cft of gas for all his normal needs of cooking which can be obtained from the droppings of one or two animals like cows, buffaloes or bullocks. The cost of erecting a plant for the production of this fuel gas may stand in the way of ordinary cultivators. It has been found that the capital cost of erection may approximately be calculated on the basis of rupees eleven per 1000 cft per annum. On this basis the cost of the plant will vary from Rs. 320<sup>1</sup> to Rs. 400<sup>1</sup> approxi

mately In view of the fact that the waste product from the plant may be 'used as manure and has proved its superiority over farmyard manure by crop yields, N content and nitrifiability' this capital expenditure on the plant is not a luxury but a solution of the two most important problems of rural life, *viz*, supply of fuel and manure. <sup>38</sup>

The compost manure is practically unknown and the use of chemical manures is not even thought of. The necessity for selection of seeds is known but the methods employed are very crude. In many cases they cannot even exercise any choice in this respect. The Bengal peasant does not even think of improving his agricultural implements or adopting improved ones—not to speak of agricultural machines. His economic condition and conservative outlook stand on his way in this matter. He has no knowledge of the new improvements made in different directions of scientific agriculture.

### 9 LACK OF EDUCATION

Lack of education is perhaps another of the root causes of famine in Bengal. The people do not realise their situation. They are drifting from bad to worse condition, day after day and year after year. The irony of fate is that this plain truth was not known to most of the persons among whom we worked. We purposely recorded the opinion of our subjects about the causes of the famine. We found that practically none of them seriously thought about the real causes. Most of them attributed it to lack of food and work (See p 66, Table 3). When they were asked what led to lack of work and food, they could not reply. The true causes of the famine were far away from the view of the largest number of its victims. This is a direct effect of lack of education.

## III CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES OF THE FAMINE

The immediate causes of the famine are numerous, I have listed only eleven of them. Many of these causes were dealt with by representatives of different relief societies, political organisations, and individuals of eminence before the Famine Inquiry Commission. Causes like inflation of currency, general dislocation of transportation, and official corruption were thoroughly discussed and exposed by persons and organizations more competent to deal with them. Of the remaining eight our data can indicate the effect of two, *viz*, flood and cyclone, and Bengal Agricultural Debtors' Act. For substantiating the rest I shall depend on my experience of rural life in different parts of Bengal during the famine and also preceding it for a long time.

### 1 FAILURE OF SUPPLY OF RICE FROM BURMA, THAILAND AND INDO-CHINA

Burma, Thailand and French Indo-China were the chief importers of

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<sup>38</sup> *Developing Village India*, 1946 (A special number of *Indian Farming*) pp 140-143.

rice into Bengal before the Second Great War. Of these three countries Burma topped the list in this respect. During the three years period from 1938-1939 to 1940-41 the average annual import of rice into Bengal was 872 000 tons and the annual average export of rice was 648 000 tons. So there was a net import of 224 000 tons of rice into Bengal annually during this period (1938-39 to 1940-41). There had been a steady increase in the import of rice into Bengal for a number of years preceding this. So we may assume that Bengal could not get even this 224 000 tons of rice not to speak of more in 1943 as Burma, Thailand and French Indo-China came under the influence of the Japanese before 1943. But her need for rice import was more imperative in 1943 than in any previous year. According to the Report of the Food Grains Policy Committee 1943 Bengal's normal consumption including seed requirements may be taken as the mean of the average of 1935-1936 and 1938-1941 periods which works out at roughly 80 lakh tons per annum. The 1942-1943 crop was a small one of the order of 69 lakh tons (p. 14). So there was a shortage of nearly 11 lakh tons. A considerable portion of this shortage could have been met if the normal import could have been maintained and export stopped. Even if the export could not have been stopped a net import of nearly 2½ lakh tons of rice would have maintained at least 6 million persons for 12 weeks. This is the number which was very badly affected by the famine during those critical months and most of them succumbed either to starvation during the famine or to diseases of malnutrition which followed the famine. When the Government found that there was no chance of getting any supply from the east if they had stopped the export of rice even that would have maintained at least 6 million persons for 96 weeks.

#### — FLOOD AND CYCLONE

The flood and cyclone of 1942 caused havoc to a large slice of coastal territory in the districts of Midnapur and 24 Pargannas. The standing aman crop in this area was wholly destroyed. The salt water entering into the paddy flats not only destroyed the standing crop but also destroyed their fertility for a number of years by deposition of salt. In many parts where the fury of the cyclone was highest, the fields were covered with sand and permanently made unfit for cultivation. Besides these houses were destroyed, cattle drowned, domestic utensils, clothes, food grains and valuables washed away, nobody knew where. Even men, women and children were drowned in such a large number that even at the end of a year we met with stragglers who were the only remnants of once big families. A little over 52% of the Midnapur units and 15.40% of the 24 Pargannas units of our sample were forced to come here on this account. Burdwan was also subjected to a flood in 1943 and out of the units which came to Calcutta from this district more than 54% were driven by flood according to our sample. These facts prove that flood and cyclone substantially contributed towards accentuating the miseries of the people in at least these three districts.



Victims of the flood of 1942 swelled the number of destitutes in 1943  
A family of date palm tappers uprooted by this flood



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### 3 HOARDING OF RICE BY FARMERS, MERCHANTS AND WELL-TO-DO CONSUMERS

I shall now go over to my own experiences. There is no doubt that rice was hoarded by different classes of people in the towns and mofussil. It was hoarded by the well-to-do farmer themselves. At Brahmanbaria, a subdivisional town of Tippera, every day after the harvest the farmers used to bring rice to the market for selling. In the latter part of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 I personally observed that less than the usual quantity was coming to the market for sale. The farmers told me plainly that they expected to make more money by stocking than by selling it at that time. They were confident that the price of rice would increase as it had increased in the rainy season of 1942. But they had no idea to what extent it would increase. Even before price control was introduced, I noticed substantial farmers bringing to the market 5 or 10 seers of rice which was sufficient to meet the temporary needs of their families such as purchase of fish, spices, oil or cloths. I talked with them on the matter and they said that they need not have brought more rice to meet their requirements. This was not their habit in previous years. They used to sell the entire surplus within 3 or 4 months after harvest. The local cloth merchants reported that the cultivators were the best purchasers of their goods in that memorable year.

The well-to-do consumers also stocked rice at the beginning of 1943. They were in the habit of doing this every year. But in 1943 they had a special incentive. In the rains of the previous year they had seen the price of rice soaring high. Those who had expected that it would fall when the *aus* crop would be ready were rudely shocked. Therefore they stocked rice for the whole year and did not like to depend on the *aus* crop. This means that roughly they stocked one-third quantity more than in previous years. This was not a negligible quantity. We have no idea about the hoarding of rice by traders, and by the military and civil authorities.

In March 1943 the price of rice began to rise in an abnormal way. Everyday it increased by one, two or even three rupees per maund. This was an unusual affair. The petty dealers and farmers stopped coming to the market. They could sell their goods at home without undergoing any trouble.

### 4 PRICE CONTROL AND FOOD DRIVE BY GOVERNMENT

In this connection I shall try to place before you the effect of price-control in this particular area in October 1943. This is from my own experience. When the price control order on rice was published sometime in the last week of September 1943 (I do not remember the exact date) the commodity showed signs of decline in price in the local market. When the order came into force a few petty dealers of rice were forced to part with their goods at the controlled price, either by the police or by the public. I am not sure who took



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cases over three crops, are annually harvested there. The upper classes of the people of this subdivision are mostly engaged in liberal professions and service, and are scattered all over India. They are well known for their adventurous spirit. Bikiampur depends on Buckergunge and Sylhet for its supply of rice which is brought to its markets by big boats with a capacity of 300 to 700 maunds. As the subdivision is surrounded by the biggest rivers of India and as it has a network of canals connecting the different villages, the transport of rice is carried on by boats owned and managed by the local people. Owing to Denial Policy and stoppage of movement of rice from different districts and from Assam, Bikiampur fell an easy prey to the famine. The appalling death rate of this subdivision was the direct effect of this Denial Policy, stoppage of movement of rice from different districts of Bengal and from Assam, and the excessive fragmentation of holdings.

#### 6 WAR REQUIREMENTS

With the declaration of war by Japan and its conquest of Indo-China, Thailand and Burma, heavy reinforcements began to pour into Bengal from all possible places. They had to be fed and Bengal had to supply the required rice even at the expense of supply for her own sons. Calcutta became the most important centre of war-productions in India from the very beginning of the Second Great War and streams of workers poured into the factories organised for this purpose in and around the city. The workers had to be fed. They were regarded as essential for a victorious termination of the war as the soldiers in the front. Modern wars are not won or lost on the battle-fields but in the factories. This explains the importance of the war-workers and the solicitude of the Government to feed them and keep them in the best temper. Huge quantities of foodstuff were stocked in the factories engaged in war works and were supplied to the workers at a nominal price in comparison with the market price. The children of the soil did not profit by these bounties of the war-authorities because the labourers mostly came from outside Bengal and swelled the number of mouths to be fed. Bengal had not enough food to feed her own children in 1943 and under such circumstances free importation of labour from outside and hoarding of rice for them were preposterous measures which could be taken only by an imperialist government wholly unconcerned with the welfare of its subjects.

The Denial Policy of the Government, initiated at the instance of the military authorities, also deprived a large slice of Bengal of a huge quantity of rice. We have no data to measure the effect of this policy in bringing about the famine. Even the Famine Inquiry Commission has not been able to give any idea about it.

#### 7 GENERAL DISLOCATION OF TRANSPORTATION

We have no data in this respect from our survey. Generally speaking preference was given to movements of men and materials for war purposes over

the initiative as reports vary I myself was not present at that time on the spot but reached there four or five days later. It does not matter who took the initiative because he was within his legal rights. But the effect of this on the market was disastrous. Petty dealers stopped coming to the market and the permanent shops had no rice. Thus a market where hundreds of maunds of rice used to be sold everyday could not offer a *chhatal* even. One cannot think of it nor imagine. The consequence was that men of all positions had to go to the villages to purchase rice from the farmers and petty dealers and at once the price rose by ten to twenty rupees in a few days. There was no end of trouble. People could not bring rice to the town publicly as the police harassed them. They could not openly purchase it in the village as the villagers objected to removal of rice. So under the cover of darkness at night at great personal risk, rice had to be brought to the town. Such was the effect of the price control order of the Government of Bengal. It was criminal to control price without making arrangement for steady and adequate supply. But look at the condition of the market at Mogra, which is only about 15 miles from Brahmanbaria. I happened to go there in the first week of October and found the local market flooded with rice. Even immediately after the harvest the supply was never so large. The price of rice was not as high as at Brahmanbaria though it was much above the controlled rate. Such was the effect of price-control in the villages of Bengal. I may also indicate the effect of the food-drive, in at least one part of Bengal but as I am honour-bound not to divulge the secrets of police oppression in this connection confided to my investigator I desist from it. Moreover I plainly admit that I shall not be able to establish my charges now as the people themselves would deny it out of fear of the police. Moral degeneration is one of the most important effects of the famine.

### 5 BOAT DENIAL POLICY

It is admitted by the Government that boats had been removed from some parts of Bengal in pursuance of the Denial Policy. We may place before you the effects of such a policy on a particular area of Bengal that is on the Munshigunge sub-division of Dacca which is locally known as Bikrampur. This sub-division has got the highest rural density per square mile (2,418) in Bengal with the exception of Howrah Sadar and Barraokpore. The greater density of the last two is directly due to the industrial establishments on both banks of the Hooghly river. Therefore Munshigunge tops the list in the density of rural population among the sub-divisions of Bengal. This high density is due to the great fertility of its soil which is annually inundated by the two biggest river systems of India depositing the silt carried by them. The people of Bikrampur do not know the use of manure and never apply it to their fields. In spite of the great fertility of the soil Bikrampur cannot feed its own sons from its own produce. It is impossible to maintain such a high density under the present system of cultivation although two crops per field in a large number of

cases even three crops, are annually harvested there. The upper classes of the people of this subdivision are mostly engaged in liberal professions and service, and are scattered all over India. They are well known for their adventurous spirit. Birkampur depends on Buckergunge and Sylhet for its supply of rice which is brought to its markets by big boats with a capacity of 300 to 700 maunds. As the subdivision is surrounded by the biggest rivers of India and as it has a network of canals connecting the different villages, the transport of rice is carried on by boats owned and managed by the local people. Owing to Denial Policy and stoppage of movement of rice from different districts and from Assam, Birkampur fell an easy prey to the famine. The appalling death rate of this subdivision was the direct effect of this Denial Policy, stoppage of movement of rice from different districts of Bengal and from Assam, and the excessive fragmentation of holdings.

#### 6 WAR REQUIREMENTS

With the declaration of war by Japan and its conquest of Indo-China, Thailand and Burma, heavy reinforcements began to pour into Bengal from all possible places. They had to be fed and Bengal had to supply the required rice even at the expense of supply for her own sons. Calcutta became the most important centre of war-productions in India from the very beginning of the Second Great War and streams of workers poured into the factories organised for this purpose in and around the city. The workers had to be fed. They were regarded as essential for a victorious termination of the war as the soldiers in the front. Modern wars are not won or lost on the battle-fields but in the factories. This explains the importance of the war-workers and the solicitude of the Government to feed them and keep them in the best temper. Huge quantities of foodstuff were stocked in the factories engaged in war works and were supplied to the workers at a nominal price in comparison with the market price. The children of the soil did not profit by these bounties of the war-authorities because the labourers mostly came from outside Bengal and swelled the number of mouths to be fed. Bengal had not enough food to feed her own children in 1943 and under such circumstances free importation of labour from outside and hoarding of rice for them were preposterous measures which could be taken only by an imperialist government wholly unconcerned with the welfare of its subjects.

The Denial Policy of the Government, initiated at the instance of the military authorities, also deprived a large slice of Bengal of a huge quantity of rice. We have no data to measure the effect of this policy in bringing about the famine. Even the Famine Inquiry Commission has not been able to give any idea about it.

#### 7 GENERAL DISLOCATION OF TRANSPORTATION

We have no data in this respect from our survey. Generally speaking preference was given to movements of men and materials for war purposes over



the railways and steamer lines. This was natural under the circumstances. But the boat denial policy which could have been easily relaxed was not timely suspended. Moreover the boats destroyed or gathered in collection centres could not be returned to the people in times of their greatest necessity. They could have easily moved foodstuff in a large part of lower Bengal from surplus to deficit centres.

#### 8. INFLATION OF CURRENCY

We have no data on the effect of this condition. This has been already dealt with by more competent authorities. Therefore, I do not propose to discuss its effects.

#### 9. BENGAL AGRICULTURAL DEBTORS ACT AND THE DESTRUCTION OF RURAL CREDIT

The Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act of 1931 which was promulgated to give relief to the indebted agriculturists really proved to be a curse in disguise at the time of the famine. When the famine conditions set in the agriculturists who had practically no reserve, suffered most on account of this Act. They could not secure loan as before owing to two reasons. First of all money lenders as a class had suffered most owing to this Act as it had blocked their capital and deprived them of a large sum in the form of interest. Secondly it destroyed the trust and confidence which existed between the debtors and creditors in the villages. In addition it engendered a feeling of animosity between the two parties. So when the moneyed men found the opportunity during this famine they did not advance money on credit but bought up instead, land ornaments, domestic utensils, etc. at a nominal price. Where they advanced money against security generally no document was executed except in cases of land mortgage. But even then, only very few persons could secure money by mortgaging land. We got numerous evidences in village-survey how the poor owners of one or two *bighas* of land had to execute clear sale-deeds even where they were really mortgages. They received smaller sums on such occasions and depended on the honesty of the creditors for the return of land when the debtors would be able to pay off the money. Many families would have been saved from ruin if they could secure loan against their assets in time. The same effect was also produced by the Money lenders Act.

The Government by passing these two Acts destroyed rural credit but did not make any attempt to replace it by any other means. No one can support the high rate of interest of the rural money lenders who are considerably responsible for the ill fate of the Bengal agriculturists. But at the same time we cannot forget the fact that they supplied the capital required for cultivation and for upkeep of the cultivators during the months of depleted stock which is an annual occurrence in Bengal. The co operative movement might have proved beneficial but for reasons unknown it has not succeeded in Bengal.

The Punjab shows a better record in this respect. For every two villages in the Punjab there is a co-operative society. There are more than 17,000 co-operative credit societies in the Punjab at present with about 5½ lakhs of members and a total working capital of 536 lakhs of rupees<sup>30</sup>

#### 10 OFFICIAL CORRUPTION

We have no data on this point, and therefore we do not propose to deal with it

#### 11 MORAL DEGENERATION OF THE PEOPLE

The famine produced not only human misery but also human degeneration, which again accentuated the acuteness of the famine. The net-work of free kitchens organised by the Government of the province and the public did not produce the desired results. Wherever we carried on our survey we met with complaints about the quality of the food supplied, its quantity and the method of selection of recipients. At first we recorded such complaints but later on gave them up as they were universal. So far as the quality was concerned we found reasonable grounds for complaint almost at every place we visited. The complaints about quantity were not always true. The constant charge of dishonesty against the organisers of these free-kitchens could not be without some basis. I may give one example. At Singur (Hooghly) we found the free-kitchen well-organised but not so at Domjur or Baniban (Howrah). We did not receive any complaint at Singur but at the other two places we received numerous complaints against the management. If all the free-kitchens had been run in the same manner as at Singur I think a very large number of persons would not have met with untimely death. In the same manner dishonesty was rampant in every walk of life. It was perhaps highest in the commercial life of the province. So far as official corruption is concerned I have no data, but commercial corruption had every chance to be linked up with official corruption.

These are the causes of the famine which ravaged Bengal in 1943

### IV HOW TO COMBAT FAMINE

#### (A) LONG RANGE MEASURES

In the previous pages I have tried to give the barest outlines of the more important causes of the famine. Now I shall try to suggest only a few of the many remedies for it. We have already seen that the vast majority of the Bengalee people—more than 40 millions—live by agriculture. This heavy pressure on land must be relieved at any cost if we wish to avoid the ravages of famine. This can be done by two measures, *viz*, (1) improvement of agriculture and (2) development of industries. These two measures must be co-ordinated and undertaken simultaneously. One cannot proceed without the other.

We have already seen that an overwhelming majority of the agricultural holdings in Bengal are uneconomical by their very size. Over and above this the scatteredness of the plots in each holding has further aggravated the situation. Fragmentation of holdings has reached its last limit. There are very few agricultural holdings capable of keeping their owners at a tolerable standard of living. Most of the agriculturists cultivate three or four *bighas* of land which do not keep them engaged for more than two months, at the utmost, in the year. The remaining part of the year they pass in idleness. This condition must be changed if we wish to improve the position of the cultivators and cultivation. So we are confronted with two major problems

- (1) to organise proper sized farms with contiguous plots of land and
- (2) to provide employment to persons who are deprived of their land owing to the first measure and also to the cultivators during their off seasons.

There are two ways to solve the first problem. One of them is to divide the entire cultivable land of the province into a number of proper sized farms which are not to be allowed to be re-divided thenceforward into smaller fragments. Such a farm is to be leased to a bidder for a particular period of time. This will bring more money to the State. It will make the peasantry more arduous and keep them throughout the year and give them a good return. But a measure with strong sanction from numerous quarters will involve the payment of a huge amount. It will necessitate a large outlay. It will break the province at the prevailing rate of the country in a to at this time.

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maximum number of shares which an individual will be entitled to purchase is to be fixed according to the principle of co-operative organisations. The co-operative organisation will take up the management of the farm and factory. As a general rule the shareholders are to be employed in all the different types of work of the farm and of the factory, as far as possible.

Such a co-operative organisation will be able to carry on works of improvement which are impossible for small farmers. It will build embankments, dig canals, sink tube-wells, introduce improved machineries like tractors, construct roads, use improved seeds, apply the best type of manures and generally introduce scientific knowledge in agriculture. This will produce more crops, decrease overhead charges and give better return to the shareholders. In a word it will increase 'national wealth.' It will be able to command marketing facilities and to stand competition. What is impossible for individual farmers will be easily accomplished by such a big organisation. Moreover it will not require immediate changes in the land tenure and laws of inheritance.

But such a scheme will lead to the unemployment of a large number of persons who are engaged in agriculture at present. Arrangement should be made to absorb them in the industrial side of this co-operative organisation. Rice-hulling and hessian making may be profitably started in rice and jute producing centres respectively, for employment of labour not required for farming. Fruit-canning may be organised where fruit gardens are planted. Cheroots may be made where tobacco is cultivated. Silk and lac may also be utilised in the same manner in the area where they are produced. In this way there should be co-ordination and co-operation between the farm and the factory—one is to utilise the products of the other as far as possible.

We have already referred to the necessity of irrigation and drainage in connection with the causes of the famine. The bigger schemes of irrigation and drainage are to be undertaken by the State and the smaller ones by the co-operative farms in their respective areas and both are to be co-ordinated.

In order to increase the individual output of work the health of the people must be improved. The village co-operative organisations are to take the lead in this matter. Their work is to be co-ordinated by the Government.

Lack of education hampers progress in every department of life. We want more practical and less theoretical education. The co-operative farms and factories are to organise technical education according to their necessities with the help of the Government. Primary and secondary education should be remodelled in line with other advanced countries. There is too much of bookish education. More stress should be laid on the development of the power of observation. The scheme outlined in the preceding pages is not utopian in character. Not very far from the borders of Bengal, in the hills of Chota Nagpur, I have seen

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- (2) to provide employment to persons who are deprived of their land owing to the first measure and also to the cultivators during their off seasons.

There are two ways to solve the first problem. One of them is to divide the entire cultivable land of the province into a number of proper sized farms which are not to be allowed to be re-divided thenceforward into smaller fragments. Such a farm is to be leased to the highest bidder for a particular period of time. This will bring more money to the coffers of the State. It will make the peasantry more arduous and keep them engaged throughout the year and give them a good return. But such a measure will meet with strong opposition from numerous quarters. In the first instance it will involve the State in payment of a huge amount of money for compensation to the present owners of land. It will necessitate a thorough change of the laws of inheritance of the province. It will break the present socio-economic order of the province and go against the prevailing sentiments. The opposition will be tremendous and may involve the country in a revolution. Therefore, it is not advisable to adopt such a measure at this time.

The other solution is to organise co-operative farming. The innumerable fragments of cultivable land possessed by the inhabitants of a village or of any other similar territorial unit are to be pooled together into one gigantic farm. The capital of this co-operative organisation should consist of —

- (a) The value of the plots of land pooled together
- (b) Capital expenditure for bringing about improvements e.g. drainage, irrigation, improved agricultural machineries etc.
- (c) Capital expenditure for setting up village industries
- (d) Working capital for the farm and the industries.

All the villagers are to be members of this co-operative organisation. The capital of the organisation is to be divided into a number of shares. The owners of the plots of land will get shares of the organisation according to the market value of the plots of land taken from them. The remaining part of the capital is to be realised from the inhabitants of the village by selling the shares. The

require help equally urgently. In the press-reports we read about Government Schemes for the relief of artisans, petty cultivators etc. but nothing is heard about the lower middle class of Bengal which had been equally hit by the famine.

The immediate necessities of these people are (a) medicines, (b) food, (c) shelter, (d) clothes, (e) implements of occupation or accessories for it and (f) last, but not the least, work. Medical aid should be given throughout the country immediately. This can best be done by a sympathetic and systematic co-operation between the Government Departments connected with public health and medicine and the reliable private organisations set up throughout the country. The Bengal Medical Relief Co-ordination Committee has been doing excellent work in this line and there should be greater co-operation between them and the Government Departments concerned. So far as other points are concerned, e.g., food, shelter, clothes, implements of or accessories to occupation, and work, we shall have to find out the needs or potentialities of each and every occupation separately. For this purpose a temporary survey of a few affected villages of a particular occupation may be made with the definite object of finding out the immediate necessities and the local possibilities for solution. This is rehabilitation and not improvement. Our aim in this survey will be to find out the best means of bringing back the people to their former position. I shall try to illustrate my ideas by suggesting the methods to be adopted for one or two occupations which will be applicable to other occupations as well with necessary changes. For this purpose I shall take the petty cultivators, the fishermen and the potters. The first represents the largest group in the economic life of Bengal, the second deals with the largest rural industry and the third the most important artisan group so far as rural life is concerned.

### 1 REHABILITATION OF PETTY CULTIVATORS

At first a rapid survey of a number of villages is to be made in order to understand the present needs of the people. From our village survey we find different problems in different parts of the country. In Midnapur the fields have become infertile through deposition of salt and sand. In the cyclone-affected areas there is no draught-cattle and able-bodied men are lacking. In Howrah we found villages where the cattle had been largely sold away and there was a dearth of agricultural labourers through death. Both the areas were in need of seeds. People were found in rags and in the winter they had no covering for the body. Some persons were found wearing hessian. There is no way to improve immediately the salt-affected fields of Midnapur. Those who depended on such plots of land have to be provided with other temporary employments. The first necessity in both the areas is draught-cattle and seeds. Next an attempt should be made to group together a larger number of plots to form respectable farms so that the few labourers available may be employed throughout the year. Each village should be organised on this principle immediately. If necessary, labourers may be

a part of it realised through the efforts of a local gentleman helped by the Co-operative Department. In one village I found a big irrigation dam constructed by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages by co-operative labour without the expenditure of a single pie. It was meant to irrigate a few thousand *bighas* of land. I found in another village big masonry wells constructed by the villagers themselves which supplanted the insanitary village-springs. All the different kinds of work involved in this construction were done by the villagers and not a single pie was spent. The cement was supplied free by the gentleman who organised the work. A number of such wells were found in different parts of the village and the people were soon cultivating vegetables in surrounding plots with water from these wells in the month of April when even drinking water was scarce in previous years. In the same village I found a big house accommodating the primary school of the village run by the village co-operative organisation. This house was also constructed by the villagers without spending any money at any stage. Everybody worked in it. In another village I witnessed the decision of disputes by the village co-operative organisation. When all these improvements could be achieved in a number of primitive tribal villages through the initiative of a single man there is every possibility of the scheme detailed above proving successful in Bengal villages. We want men of imagination at the top and men of action below and both these classes should have an intimate knowledge of the villagers—their socio-economic problems.

This knowledge of the villages and villagers should be made the foundation of all attempts at long range improvements and even for immediate measures of rehabilitation. Scrappy information collected at random from individual villagers will not serve our purpose. No amount of statistical manipulation of such informations will give us the requisite socio-economic knowledge of the problems which confront the villagers of Bengal. Villages representing different types of socio-economic interest selected from different parts of the province representing different types of geographical features should be taken as units of study. The results of such village studies are to be co-ordinated at a later stage. This will give us a complete picture of the adjustments and mal-adjustments of a social group in a geographical area to its socio-economic problems. It is only on this type of rock bottom knowledge that all schemes of future development should be founded. We therefore emphasise the necessity of organising a village socio-economic survey at the very beginning of the work.

### B IMMEDIATE MEASURES.

Side by side with the long range measures of improvement, which will necessarily involve delay we are required to give immediate relief to a large percentage of our population which had been reduced to destitution by the famine. We find in this category people from almost every walk of life. Day labourers petty cultivators fishermen artisans, school teachers, office clerks and others

actually engaged in catching fish. With the rise in the price of rice in 1943 there was no similar rise in the price of fish. Thus the adults began to starve themselves and fed the children, as long as possible, with their share of the food. This rapidly devitalised them and made them easy prey to different diseases. With diseased body they tried to fight the elements and paid the penalty for it with their lives. This was the situation which caused so many deaths among the followers of this occupation.

To those who are still alive we have to provide boats and nets in order to reinstate them in their old occupation. The women folk of this community may be supplied with yarn, so that they may make a living by weaving nets or repairing them.

### 3. REHABILITATION OF THE POTTERS

Here also the same method is to be employed in ascertaining the needs of the community. This group has enough of raw materials. What they require is transport facilities which might have been seriously affected by the Denial Policy, as potters' goods generally move in big-sized boats. They also require colouring materials, as a section of them is engaged in the manufacture of earthen dolls and images of Hindu deities. So, by providing them with boats and paints we may solve their temporary difficulties. This brings us to the end of our discussion about rehabilitation.

## V CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to emphasise on the following points:—

- (a) The largest number of people affected by the famine belonged to agricultural avocations which give sustenance to more than 40 millions of people in Bengal.
- (b) There is too heavy pressure on land and too much fragmentation of holdings.
- (c) Co-operative farming and co-operative factories may build up suitable farms and provide occupation to the people relieved of agricultural works.
- (d) To implement this policy an intimate knowledge of the villages and villagers is absolutely necessary. For this purpose a socio-economic survey should be organised with a band of scientifically trained men. We have got archaeological survey, zoological survey, geological survey, botanical survey but no survey to understand man and his social, economic and psychological needs. This is an anomalous position. Government possesses



brought from places where the famine has not exterminated them. Before the winter sets in the people must be provided with warm clothing at a cheap rate or where necessary free. For this purpose the weavers who are sitting idle owing to lack of yarn may be employed to weave woollen rugs. The Government will have to provide the yarns. The wool that passes through Kallimpong may be secured by the Government for this purpose. The adult males died more than the adult females according to our survey. This had reduced many families to abject poverty through absence of earners. The women of such families must be provided with suitable work so that they may maintain themselves. Paddy husking is a widespread industry among the women folk of the agricultural classes. Facilities for pursuing this may be provided by regularly supplying them with paddy and finding a suitable market for their products. There is great demand for such rice in Calcutta. Women may also be employed in salt-making in those districts where sea water inundates the fields and deposits salt. I have seen women and children scraping salt from the fields in Howrah district. If they are allowed to sell the products freely I think a large number of families may be saved from starvation and the pressure on shipping relieved to some extent at least. These are some of the suggestions for rehabilitating the petty cultivators.

## 2. REHABILITATION OF FISHERMEN

As in the previous case a rapid survey should be made at the beginning. From our survey we find that death among this group was very high. The fishermen require (a) boats (b) fishing nets (c) fish baskets and (d) earthen tubs for keeping live fish. In order to set them up in their business these are the necessary things. There is no dearth of fish in the rivers, canals, beels and tanks of Bengal. At least there had been no sudden decrease in course of one single year. At the same time there is no dearth of market for their goods. The whole of Bengal is in need of more fish. The devitalised people require more protein food now than before to build up their health.

If dearth of fish in the market is due to death of fishermen then people from other walks of life should be induced to take up this profitable occupation. If it be due to difficulties of transportation or lack of ice attempts should be made to procure them.

The fishermen have the hardest life among all the peoples who depend on manual labour. They work all through the day and night. Perhaps they enjoy the least amount of rest among rural folk. They are equally to be found under the blazing sun and the pouring rains. Day after day they face the caprices of the seasons. When other people go to rest at night the fishermen are out to catch fish. Like fish water is their proper element. They go under water day and night—winter and summer. In spite of so much hard labour they are hardly able to build up any reserve. This is especially true of those who are

actually engaged in catching fish. With the rise in the price of rice in 1943 there was no similar rise in the price of fish. Thus the adults began to starve themselves and fed the children, as long as possible, with their share of the food. This rapidly devitalised them and made them easy prey to different diseases. With diseased body they tried to fight the elements and paid the penalty for it with their lives. This was the situation which caused so many deaths among the followers of this occupation.

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knowledge about the geological wealth of the country it is aware of the life-history of plants and animals It is even anxious to know the archaeological treasures of the country But unfortunately it has not yet felt the necessity of knowing man in his socio-economic setting. The result is that whenever the Government is confronted with a national catastrophe like the present famine it has no knowledge to guide its activities—no trained men to depend upon

PART II

TEST SURVEY OF FAMINE CONDITION IN  
BENGAL VILLAGES FROM NOVEMBER  
1943 TO MARCH 1944

I GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

After completing our sample survey of the destitutes of Calcutta we thought of extending this work to the villages. Our aim, here, had been to study the condition of the villages wherefrom the destitutes came—the causes of their disruption and the effects of the famine on the life of the rural people particularly of that section which formed the majority of the destitutes of Calcutta. The first difficulty that confronted us was about the selection of the villages. We perceived from the Calcutta survey that the acuteness of famine was not similar all over Bengal. On this ground we eliminated the entire Rajshahi Division. The districts of Birbhum and Bankura in the Burdwan Division, Jessore and Khulna in the Presidency Division, and Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Chittagong Division were also omitted on the same ground. We do not mean to say hereby that the peoples of these parts of Bengal did not suffer from scarcity of food or from high prices. It is far from that. But we, owing to our limited resources, tried to confine our attention to the most seriously affected districts only. In addition to the aforementioned districts, we also could not extend our operations into Buckergunge and Tippera though these two districts suffered equally with the districts we surveyed. In their case we were hampered by lack of men.

II NATURE OF THE RURAL SAMPLE

In the villages our survey was not even of the nature of a sample survey. The number of villages, for a proper sample of the 10 districts chosen by us, would run to three figures. This was beyond our means. It was not possible to carry on such a sample survey without any aid from the State. We were neither helped nor encouraged by the Government to carry on this work. We had limited men, money and time. So we tried to adjust our work to these limitations and decided to organise a *test survey* only.

Table 1 on the next page shows the districts and police stations of the centres of our test survey.

TABLE 1  
AREAS SURVEYED 40

Division	District	Police station	Centre of work	Number of families surveyed
BURDWAN DIVISION	Burdwan	Kalna	Kalna	75
	Midsapur	Ramnagar	Tegharia	178
		Contal	Darus	
	Hooghly	Singur	Singur	119
		Tarakeswar	Tarakeswar	
	Howrah	Domjur	Domjur	229
Uluberia		Narullapara		
PRESIDENCY DIVISION	24 Pargunnas	Jaynagar	Gocharan	121
	Nadia		Gadgacha	39
			Mazdia	
DACCA DIVISION	Dacca	Sibalya	Mahadevpur	104
	Faridpur	Gopalgunge	Manikhar	59
CHITTAGONG DIVISION	Chittagong	Raojan	Guxra	95
	Noakhall*			Total 1015

\* Not included as already published in *Science and Culture*

TABLE 2  
SHOWING SEX AND MARITAL CONDITION BY COMMUNITY  
Percentage of 4073—the number surveyed.

Community	Percentage of males				Percentage of females				Percentage of both sexes
	Unmarried	Married	Widowed	Total	Unmarried	Married	Widowed	Total	
Scheduled Castes	14.88	9.55	1.43	25.85	9.93	11.07	6.50	27.53	53.38
Caste Hindus	9.18	5.11	.98	15.27	4.86	5.57	2.80	13.24	28.50
Muhammadians	5.55	2.90	.39	8.84	3.68	3.39	2.21	9.28	18.13
Total	29.61	17.56	2.79	49.96	18.46	20.03	11.51	50.04	100.00

40. Another 95 families in Nadia and 30 families in Mymensing were surveyed but they could not be included in this report as they were received after the completion of tabulation.

In course of this test survey we studied a few villages in entirety such as Tegharia in Midnapur and Narullapara in Howrah. At some places data were collected from local free-kitchens alone where the affected families of the neighbouring villages assembled for food, e.g., Gocharan, Darua, Kalna, etc. In some centres, in addition to free-kitchen study, our investigators made house to house investigation of a number of families within the village. Table 1, on the previous page, shows that altogether 1019 families were studied in nine districts and they held 4073 persons or an average of 4 persons per family. In Table 2 we have tabulated the sex, marital condition and community of these 4073 individuals.

Table 2 reveals that 53·38% of the persons belonged to the Scheduled castes, 28·50% to the Caste Hindus and 18·12% to the Muhammadans. Here also, as among the Calcutta destitutes (53·68%), the Scheduled Castes topped the list and had almost the same proportion. But the position of the Caste Hindus and Muhammadans had been reversed. Among Calcutta destitutes, the Caste Hindus formed 17·89% but in the village survey they were 28·50% whereas the Muhammadans who contributed 27·63% to the Calcutta destitutes were only 18·12%. As the greater part of our data was collected at free-kitchens we are not astonished to find an almost equal proportion of the Scheduled Castes in both Calcutta and mofussil. The low percentage of the Muhammadans is perhaps due to the fact that only 279 families were studied from districts with a Muhammadan majority (Nadia, Dacca, Faridpur and Chittagong). The remaining 740 families were studied in districts with Hindu majority.

The proportion of the two sexes is almost the same in village data—49·96% for males and 50·04% for females but among the destitutes of Calcutta it is 47·3% for males and 52·7% for females. In the three communities of the mofussil the proportion of the sexes differs. Thus, among the Scheduled castes and Muhammadans we have more women than men but among the Caste Hindus there are more men than women.

Coming to marital condition we find that in the village data 48·07% are unmarried, 37·59% married and 14·30% widowed. Among the unmarried 29·61% are males and 18·46% females. In all the three communities the number of unmarried males is higher than the unmarried females. Among the Scheduled Castes this difference is highest, i.e., 4·96, and among the Muhammadans it is lowest, i.e., 1·87. When we consider the case of the married the position is reversed—the number of married men is lower than that of women in every community but the difference is not as high as among the unmarried. Again the percentage of widows is invariably higher than that of widowers and the difference is remarkable. The differences between the two sexes in marital condition among the unmarried and widowed are naturally due to the difference in the age of

marriage of the males and females in Bengal. But the differences between the two sexes of the married may be due to polygyny or absence of husbands from home at the time of inquiry. The Genealogical Tables show that the first cause is not operating here. Therefore the second one is the most possible one. This gives an idea of the disintegration of the family due to famine. The husbands left home either to save themselves or to avoid the sight of starving children.

This is only a general picture of the people whom we surveyed in the villages of Bengal. We shall next try to find out their economic position before the famine and after it. For this purpose we shall utilize the data collected on (a) occupations (b) earning and dependance, (c) assets of the families sold during famine (d) indebtedness and (e) reduction of economic status.

### III MAIN OCCUPATIONS

The occupations dealt with in this section refer to the main occupations of the families studied. Subsidiary occupations of the families were not noted. Where the different members of a family followed different occupations generally the occupation which provided the major part of the income of the family was recorded. Table 3 on the next page, shows the main occupations of the families.

From Table 3 it is evident that the labourers form nearly 31 per cent of the families studied in the villages. After them are the actual cultivators who contribute nearly 16%. If to these two groups, combined cultivators and day labourers and those who enjoy income from land liberal professions and service are added the percentage rises to 59.08. Thus more than half the people of our sample were related with land either as agricultural labourers cultivating owners, tenant cultivators or is dependent on income from land liberal professions and service. The difference between day labourers and farm labourers is not sharp in Bengal. Unskilled labourers of almost every kind participate in agricultural work in agricultural seasons. During other periods of the year they are engaged by the local people for various kinds of work such as house construction and repair digging of tanks making fuel etc. But in spite of this the major part of their income is derived from agricultural work.

The artisans who form nearly 18 per cent of our sample are the next important group. This heterogeneous lot is mainly dependent on the preceding groups and generally subsists by supplying their needs. In the village data we find a considerable proportion (8.84%) engaged in catching and selling fish. Though this group, in our sample, holds the third position in number i.e. they are below the agriculturists and artisans yet as producers of food they rank only below the agriculturists. They are followed by petty traders, communal servants, transport workers domestic servants and beggars.

TABLE 3  
SHOWING MAIN OCCUPATIONS OF THE FAMILIES SURVEYED  
( Total number of families—1019 )

	Main occupations	Number of families surveyed	Percentage of the total number of families
AGRICULTURE	1 Cultivating owners	93	9.13
	2 Tenant cultivators	53	5.20
	3 Combined owner and tenant cultivators	13	1.27
	Total agriculturists ( Nos 1 to 3 )	159	15.60
LABOUR	4 Farm labourers	45	4.42
	5 Day labourers	203	19.92
	6 Combined farm and day labourers	67	6.57
	Total labourers ( Nos 4 to 6 )	315	30.91
	7 Combined cultivator and day labourers	40	3.92
	8 Income from land, liberal professions and service	88	8.63
	Total families connected with land in some form or other (Nos 1 to 8)	602	59.08
HANDICRAFTS	9 Blacksmiths, goldsmiths, braziers, potters, masons, cobblers, carpenters, tailors, paddy-huskers, tappers of palm trees, weavers	132	12.95
HUNTING AND FISHING	10 Fishing and fish-selling	85	8.34
TRADE	11 Traders	52	5.10
COMMUNAL SERVICE	12 Priests, washermen, barbers, musicians, Pandas	52	5.10
TRANSPORT	13 Workers by land and water	41	4.02
DOMESTIC SERVICE	14 Servants, cooks & others	33	3.24
BEGGING	15 Beggars	22	2.16
	Total	1019	

#### IV EARNING AND DEPENDENCE

We have divided the families into four classes, *viz*, A, B, C and D on the basis of their assets at the time of inquiry. Those who had homestead land (HL), house (H), cultivable land (CL), ornaments of gold and/or silver (ORN), domestic animals (DA) and domestic utensils of brass and bell-metal (DU) were classed as A. Those, who had HL, H, DA and DU but no ornaments of valuable metal and no cultivable land are classed as B. Those who had merely HL, H and DU (non



TABLE 5

ASSETS SOLD DURING FAMINE WITH THE CAUSES OF DISPOSAL AND NATURE OF OBJECTS SOLD BY ECONOMIC STATUS

Economic status	Number of families which sold different kinds of property valued at rupees						Not sold	Value not given	No record	Total	Causes of disposal				Number of families which sold												
	0-10		11-25		26-50						51-100		101-500		500 up		I	II	III	IV	H	HL	IO	DA	ORV	CL <sub>1</sub>	DU
A	23	29	41	60	54	7	214	23	33	15	71	10	4	200	36	24	11	72	144	53	191						
	2.20	3.84	4.02	5.59	5.30	6.0	*1.0	2.20	3.24	1.47	6.97	0.8	3.8	10.63	3.53	2.35	1.08	7.00	14.12	5.2	16.74						
B	6	7	20	6	4	43	15	15	12	42	1	1	42	1	0	2	0	20	1	37							
	59	69	1.06	39	39	4.22	1.47	1.18	4.15	1																	
C	108	88	66	42	32	356	46	69	31	140	7	4	1	324	21	22	54	73	130	39	*43						
	10.60	8.63	6.48	4.12	3.14	32.97	4.51	6.77	3.04	14.23	60	39	1	31	9	2.06	5.10	5.31	7.16	13.64	3.82	23.95					
D	28	18	14	10	15	91	28	22	26	76	2	2	89	9	29	7	15	29	12	63							
	2.76	1.77	1.37	1.67	1.47	8.93	2.75	2.16	2.56	7.40	2	2	8.73	88	2.84	68	1.47	2.64	1.18	6.18							
	165	142	141	124	105	7	684	112	129	84	335	18	10	1	655	67	81	74	166	341	108	534					
	0.5	13.84	12.17	10.3	90	67.12	10.90	1.2.04	6.24	32.87	1.7	0.8	1	04.28	0.87	7.95	7.20	16.29	33.44	10.6	52.4						

Economic status the upper figure indicates the number of cases and the lower one its percentage to 1010 families.

\* One of cases here is 1371 which is much above the total number of families investigated i.e. 1010. This discrepancy is due to the fact that many have been recorded under different heads owing to its disposal of different kinds of property. In spite of this discrepancy the figures serve our purpose well as they show how many families sold each kind of property.

We have divided the causes of disposal of property into four classes, namely, I to pay off debts, II. to clear rents, III to meet social expenses and IV. to defray family expenses. We find that 64.28% of the families sold their property to meet the family expenditure for food. The other causes were practically negligible. Thus, of those families which disposed of their property during the famine 95.76% did so in order to meet the primary demand for food.

## VI INDEBTEDNESS OF THE FAMILIES

In Table 6 on the next page we have tried to show the extent of indebtedness of the families we investigated in the villages. It includes the cases of simple loans and mortgages, together with the rates of interest paid on them and the causes for incurring debts. Nearly 62% of the families incurred simple loans of which 53.97% borrowed sums ranging up to Rs. 100 and 7.95% above Rs. 100. Nearly 22% of the families borrowed by mortgaging HL (1.67%), CL (5.98%), DA (.1%), DU (9.81%) and ORN (4.21%). When we compare the cases of mortgage against different types of property with cases of sale of these types of property, we find that the latter far exceed the former. There was a market for sale of all kinds of goods, but not similar facilities for mortgaging such kinds of property. This perhaps gives some indication of the bad effect of the Bengal Agricultural Debtors' Act on rural credit though the high percentage of simple loans militates against it. An alternative explanation is that people preferred to sell outright whatever they had instead of mortgaging it, as they could never think of getting it back by repayment of the loan.

Coming to the causes of loan we find that more than 65% of the families incurred debts to meet expenses for food just as in the case of sale of assets. The other causes are negligible just as in the case of sales.

The rates of interest paid for the loans varied from one pice per rupee per month (i.e., Rs. 18/12/- per cent per annum) to 8 pice per rupee per month (i.e., Rs. 150/- per cent per annum). The lowest rate was found in 11 cases and the highest rate in 44 cases in our sample. Is it not sufficient to prove that usury is not yet dead in Bengal in spite of all the recent Acts against it?

## VII REDUCTION OF ECONOMIC STATUS

In the two Tables 5 & 6 we have shown how the economic condition of the rural families of our sample changed by sale of assets and by loans and mortgages. This has necessarily changed their economic status according to our classification. Families have been reduced by one, two or even three degrees, i.e., those who had been prosperous cultivators were reduced to paupers (from A to D). We are also putting here the causes of this reduction.



From Table 7 below we find that, at the time of inquiry, 30.72% of the families had already lost their former economic status which they enjoyed before the war. We have taken the pre-war economic status as the standard for studying reduction. The people lived a more or less normal life then. The period from declaration of war to the advent of the famine however did not affect the condition of our subjects to any appreciable extent. Before the war, 32.48% of the families of our sample enjoyed 'A' status but the famine reduced their percentage to 27.97%. In the same way 18.84% of the families enjoyed 'B' status before war, but after famine they were reduced to 8.34%, i.e., less than half the former percentage. But the percentage of 'C' class has increased after the famine owing to addition of the families which had been reduced to this class from A and B. In the same way D class has increased by receiving the reduced families from A, B and C.

TABLE 7  
ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FAMILY AND ITS REDUCTION WITH CAUSE

Economic status at the time of inquiry					Economic status before war					No reduction of economic status	Degree of reduction				Causes of reduction			
A	B	C	D	Total	A	B	C	D	Total		1 D	2 D	3 D	Total	I	II	III	IV
285	85	482	167	1019	331	192	407	89	1019	706	232	73	8	313	7	10	1	295
27.97	8.34	47.30	16.39		32.48	18.84	39.94	8.73		69.28	22.77	7.16	78.30	72.69	98.10	1.28	99.95	

The upper figure in each column indicates the number of cases and the lower one its percentage to 1019 families

Classification of economic status —

A—(includes)—CL (Cultivable land)—HL (Homestead land)—H (House)—DU (Domestic utensils)—DA (Domestic animals)—ORN (Ornaments)

B—(includes)—HL (Homestead land)—H (House)—ORN (Ornaments of base metal or non-metallic)—DU (Domestic utensils)—DA (Domestic animals)

C—(includes)—HL (Homestead land)—H (House)—DU (Domestic utensils—non-metallic mainly and some of base metals).

D— Nothing

Cause I—to pay off debts

II—to clear rents

III—to meet social expenses

IV—to defray family food expenses.



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Economic status at the time of inquiry					Economic status before war					No reduction of economic status	Degree of reduction				Causes of reduction			
A	B	C	D	Total	A	B	C	D	Total		I	D	2 D	3 D	Total	I	II	III
285	85	482	167	1019	331	192	407	89	1019	706	232	73	8	313	7	10	1	295
27.97	8.34	47.30	16.39		32.48	18.84	39.94	8.73		69.28	22.77	7.16	78	30.72	69	98	1	28.95

The upper figure in each column indicates the number of cases and the lower one its percentage to 1019 families

Classification of economic status —

A—(includes)—CL (Cultivable land)—HL (Homestead land)—H (House)—DU (Domestic utensils)—DA (Domestic animals)—ORN (Ornaments)

B—(includes)—HL (Homestead land)—H (House)—ORN (Ornaments of base metal or non metallic)—DU (Domestic utensils)—DA (Domestic animals)

C—(includes)—HL (Homestead land)—H (House)—DU (Domestic utensils—non metallic materials and some of base metals)

D— Nothing

Cause I—to pay off debts

II—to clear rents

III—to meet social expenses

IV—to defray family food expenses

Coming to the degree of reduction of status we find that 'A class may be reduced to B (i.e. one degree) C (i.e., two degrees) or D, (i.e., three degrees). In the same way B class may be reduced to one or two degrees and C class only one degree. On analysis we find that 232 families or 23.77% were reduced one degree 73 families or 7.16% were reduced two degrees and 8 families or .78% were reduced three degrees in their economic status. Reduction of one degree in the case of A families means loss of cultivable land and ornaments of gold and/or silver in the case of B families it means loss of ornaments of base metal or non metallic ornaments and loss of domestic animals and domestic utensils of valuable metal in the case of C families it means loss of homestead land dwelling house and even non metallic domestic utensils or those made of base metal. Reduction of two degrees for A families means loss of cultivable land ornaments of all kinds domestic animals and domestic utensils of valuable metal. For B it means loss of everything, i.e., house homestead land and non metallic domestic utensils and those of base metal. Reduction of three degrees is possible only in case of A families which means loss of everything i.e., house homestead land cultivable land ornaments, domestic animals and domestic utensils.

The causes of reduction again bring to the forefront the all important need for food. 295 cases or 28.95% of the families suffered reduction of economic status in order to supply food to their members. Among the rest 10 families 98% suffered loss of economic status in order to clear rent, another 7 families or 69% to pay off debts and only one family or 10% to meet social expenses.

#### VIII DEATH WITHIN SIX MONTHS FROM DATE OF INVESTIGATION

In the previous pages we have tried to measure the effect of the famine on the social and economic conditions of the families investigated. We also at the same time tried to make an estimate of its influence on the number of deaths in the families. We instructed our investigators to record cases of death within six months from date of inquiry as well as before that. In the present section we shall deal with only cases which occurred within six months from date of inquiry. Roughly speaking our test survey in the villages were conducted between November 1943, and March 1944. The major part of the data was however collected during December-January. Therefore deaths dealt with here occurred between July-August and December-January. Only in one case, investigation was conducted during the first week of March which has led to the inclusion of a few cases of death in January and February 1944 and exclusion of a number of cases which occurred before October 1943.

We followed the genealogical method in collecting death statistics. This method is regarded to be the best scientific means for collecting data on social

customs and manners as well as on vital statistics Cholera has been separated from bowel-complaint in this Table in order to find out its victims

Among 1019 families of our sample there were 510 deaths within the period mentioned before. In other words in every two families there was one death in average Of the total population<sup>41</sup> of our sample, six months before inquiry, 8.86% died of starvation, 1.50% of cholera and 7.6% of bowel-complaint These make up a total of 11.13% deaths in our sample Starvation accounted for 406 cases or 79.61% of the total number of deaths, cholera was responsible for 69 cases or 13.53% of the total deaths and bowel-complaint caused the death of 35 persons or 6.86%. It is clear that starvation had been the most potent factor in causing this havoc. Bowel-complaint and cholera are also the effects of starvation—especially the former. It is strange that no other disease had been mentioned by the people as the cause of death of any one of the persons We especially instructed our investigators to make careful inquiries on this point

TABLE 8

SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF DEATHS DUE TO DIFFERENT CAUSES BY ECONOMIC STATUS

(a) Percentage of 510, (b) Percentage of the total number of deaths due to each cause, (c) Percentage of the population of each economic status plus the cases of death in each,

Economic status	I Starvation			II Cholera			III Bowel complaint			Total of I, II & III		Total of both sexes
	♂	♀	Total	♂	♀	Total	♂	♀	Total	♂	♀	
A	63	46	109	15	11	26	5	3	8	83	60	143 (c) 10.47%
B	3	3	6		2	2		1	1	3	6	9 (c) 3.60%
C	126	102	228	21	11	32	17	4	21	164	117	281 (c) 12.08%
D	38	25	63	5	4	9	1	4	5	44	33	77 (c) 13.87%
Total	230	176	406	41	28	69	23	12	35	294	216	510
	(b) 56.65%	(b) 43.35%	(a) 79.61%	(b) 50.42%	(b) 40.58%	(a) 13.53%	(b) 65.71%	(b) 34.29%	(a) 6.86%	(a) 57.65%	(a) 42.35%	

From Table 8 it is apparent that among the two sexes, the males died more than the females—the number being 294 against 216 or 57.65% against 42.35%. This preponderance of the males is found among the victims of each of the causes of death. Thus among those who died of starvation 56.65% were men and

41 The total population here consists of the number of persons in the sample at the time of inquiry plus cases of death during the six months preceding the inquiry i.e. 4073+510=4583



43.35% women. Among the victims of cholera 59.42% were men and 40.58% women and among the proys to bowel complaint 65.71% were men and 34.29% women.

In the four different economic classes, i.e. A, B, C and D the same preponderance of men over women under different causes of death is found except in the case of B and also of D under bowel complaint. The relative position of D is worst among the four economic classes. 13.87% of its members died in the period under discussion. The next in order are C, A and B with 12.08%, 10.47% and 3.60% respectively dead in each group.

TABLE 9

SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF DEATHS DUE TO DIFFERENT CAUSES BY AGE

Age periods	Starvation			Cholera			Bowel complaint			Total		Total of both sexes
	♂	♀	Total	♂	♀	Total	♂	♀	Total	♂	♀	
0-5	67	50	117	15	14	29	1	5	6	83	69	152
5 to 10	26	6	32	2	2	4	2		2	30	28	58
10 to 15	5	12	17		1	1				5	13	18
15 to 50	50	23	73	10	3	13	0	2	2	66	28	94
50 upwards	12	6	18	2		2	2		2	10	6	16
Age not specified	70	50	120	12	8	20	12	5	17	94	72	166
TOTAL	230	176	406	41	28	69	23	12	35	294	216	510

When we consider the age of the dead persons (See Table 9) we find that the age of a very large proportion (32.55%) could not be ascertained. The highest number of deaths is found in the age-period 0 to 5 years, i.e. 152. In the next quinquennium it comes down to 58 followed by 18 in the third quinquennium. In the next age period i.e. 15 to 50 we find 94 cases of death followed by 22 in the old group. Thus the infants and children died most (210) in this sample as among the Calcutta destitutes. With the exception of the age-period 10 to 15 in all other groups the males died more than the females. But this tendency is more prominent among the adult and old groups than among the infants and children.

I do not wish to make any comment on the death statistics. They tell their own tale in a much better way than I can do. The devastating effect of the famine on the man power of the province needs no elaboration.

# APPENDICES

## BLAGAL FAMINE

## APPENDIX I

SHOWING AGE SEX AND MARITAL CONDITION OF THE POPULATION OF OUR SAMPLE BY COMMUNITY

The upper figure in each age-group is the actual number of persons and the lower figure is the percentage of the particular community

Community	Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
O A S T E S	0 to 1	41 3-01	28 2-00	69 5-0							41 3-01	28 2-00	69 5-07
	1 to 2	32 2-33	37 2-72	69 5-07							32 2-35	37 2	69 5-07
	2 to 3	33 2-70	30 2-20	63 4-99							33 2-79	30 2-40	63 4-99
	3 to 4	34 2-50	26 1-01	60 4-41							34 2-50	26 1-01	60 4-41
	4 to 5	37 2-7*	20 2-13	57 4-84							37 2-72	20 2-13	57 4-84
	Total 0 to 5	18 13-36	150 11-01	33 24-37							18 13-36	150 11-01	332 24-37
	5 to 10	134 9-84	111 8-15	45 17-09							134 9-84	111 8-15	245 17-09
	10 to 15	50 4-11	20 2-13	85 6-24	10	73	10 73				50 4-11	39 3-56	95 6-93
	Total 5 to 15	100 13-05	140 10-27	330 24-22	10	73	10 73				100 13-05	130 11-01	340 24-96
	to 20	28 2-06	1 -07	29 2-13	56 4-11	56 4-11		2 -13	2 -16		28 2-06	59 4-33	87 6-39
to 30	10 73	1 -07	11 81	45 2-30	108 7-93	153 11-23	5 37	10 1-40	24 1-76	60 4-41	128 9-39	188 13-80	
B O H E D U L	30 to 40				44 3-23	9 5-80	123 9-03	3 -23	22 1-60	25 1-83	47 3-45	101 7-41	148 10-87
	40 to 50				24 1-76	30 2-86	63 4-63	3 -22	23 1-69	26 1-91	37 1-98	62 4-35	89 6-53
	Total 15 to 50	38 2-79	2 -15	40 2-62	113 8-29	262 20-70	395 29-00	11 81	66 4-84	77 5-85	163 11-89	250 25-69	513 37-69
	50 to 60				6 -44	5 -37	11 81	3 -22	20 2-13	32 2-35	9 -66	34 2-50	43 3-16
60 upwards				3 -22	3 -15	5 -37	4 -29	2 -15	6 -44	7 -51	4 -29	11 -81	
Total 50 upwards				9 -66	7 -51	16 1-17	7 -51	31 2-27	38 2-79	16 1-17	38 2-92	54 3-93	
Age un specified	3 2-35	10 1-40	51 3-74	30 2-20	30 2-26	60 4-41	1 -07	12 -88	13 -95	63 4-63	61 4-48	124 9-10	
Grand Total	44* 32-48	311 22-83	753 55-28	183 11-16	329 24-15	481 35-31	19 1-39				313 55	749 55	1362

APPENDIX I (Contd.)

Community	Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS			
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
U S  D I N I S T R I C T S  C A S E S	0 to 1	7 1 54	6 1 32	13 2 86							7 1 54	6 1 32	13 2 86	
	1 to 2	7 1 54	12 2 64	19 4 19							7 1 54	12 2 64	19 4 19	
	2 to 3	13 2 86	8 1 76	21 4 62							13 2 86	8 1 76	21 4 62	
	3 to 4	3 66	7 1 54	10 2 20							3 66	7 1 54	10 2 20	
	4 to 5	12 2 64	10 2 20	22 4 84							12 2 64	10 2 20	22 4 84	
	Total 0 to 5	42 9 25	43 9 47	85 18 72							42 9 25	43 9 47	85 18 72	
	5 to 10	62 13 66	37 8 15	99 21 81							62 13 66	37 8 15	99 21 81	
	10 to 15	27 5 94	12 2 64	39 8 59		2 44	2 44				27 5 94	14 3 08	41 9 03	
	Total 5 to 15	89 19 60	49 10 79	138 30 39		2 44	2 44				89 19 60	51 11 23	140 30 83	
	15 to 20	15 3 39		15 3 39		22 4 84	22 4 84		1 22	1 22	15 3 39	23 5 07	38 8 37	
	20 to 30	8 1 76		8 1 76	19 4 19	25 5 51	44 9 69		2 44	4 88	6 1 32	29 6 39	29 6 39	58 12 77
	30 to 40	1 22		1 22	23 5 07	22 4 84	45 9 91		3 66	8 1 76	11 2 42	27 5 94	30 6 61	57 12 55
	40 to 50				8 1 76	12 2 64	20 4 41			9 1 98	9 1 98	8 1 76	21 4 62	29 6 39
	Total 15 to 50	24 5 28		24 5 28	50 11 00	81 17 84	131 28 85		5 1 10	22 4 84	27 5 94	79 17 40	103 22 68	182 37 88
	50 to 60				2 44	5 1 10	7 1 54		1 22	6 1 32	7 1 54	3 66	11 2 42	14 3 08
	60 upwards				5 1 10		5 1 10			2 44	2 44	5 1 10	2 44	7 1 54
	Total 50 upwards				7 1 54	5 1 10	12 2 64		1 22	8 1 76	9 1 98	8 1 76	13 2 86	21 4 62
	Age unspecified	1 22	2 44	3 66	10 2 20	10 2 20	20 4 41		1 22	2 44	3 66	12 2 64	14 3 08	26 5 73
	Grand Total	156 34 36	94 20 70	250 55 06	67 14 75	98 21 59	165 36 34		7 1 54	32 7 04	39 8 59	230 50 66	224 49 33	454

## BLANGAL FAMINE

## APPENDIX I

SHOWING AGE SEX AND MARITAL CONDITION OF THE POPULATION OF OUR SAMPLE BY COMMUNITY

The upper figure in each age-group is the actual number of persons and the lower figure is the percentage of the particular community

Community	Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
O A S T R E S	0 to 1	41 3-01	28 2-06	69 5-07							41 3-01	28 2-06	69 5-07
	1 to 2	37 2-35	37 2-7	74 5-07							33 2-35	37 2-7	70 5-07
	2 to 3	38 2-70	30 2-20	68 4-99							38 2-79	30 2-20	68 4-99
	3 to 4	34 2-50	26 1-91	60 4-41							34 2-50	26 1-91	60 4-41
	4 to 5	37 2-72	29 -13	66 4-84							37 2-72	29 -13	66 4-84
Total 0 to 5	182 13-36	150 11-01	332 24-37							182 13-36	150 11-01	332 24-37	
5 to 10	134 9-84	111 8-15	245 17-99							134 9-84	111 8-15	245 17-99	
10 to 15	56 4-11	29 2-13	85 6-24		10 -73	10 73				56 4-11	39 -86	95 6-98	
Total 5 to 15	190 13-05	140 10-27	330 24-22		10 -73	10 73				190 13-05	150 11-01	340 24-96	
15 to 20	28 2-06	1 -07	29 2-13		56 4-11	56 4-11		3 -15	3 -15	28 2-06	59 4-23	87 6-39	
20 to 30	10 73	1 -07	11 81	45 3-30	108 7-93	153 11-23		5 -37	19 1-40	24 1-76	60 4-41	188 9-30	
30 to 40				44 3-23	9 5-80	123 9-03		3 -22	22 1-60	25 1-83	47 3-45	148 7-41	
40 to 50				24 1-76	39 2-86	63 4-63		3 -22	23 1-69	26 1-91	37 1-93	62 4-55	
Total 15 to 50	38 2-79	2 -15	40 2-92	113 8-29	282 20-70	395 29-00		11 -81	66 4-84	77 5-65	162 11-69	350 26-69	
50 to 60				6 -44	5 -37	11 81		3 -22	29 2-13	32 2-35	9 -66	34 2-60	
60 upwards				3 -22	2 -15	5 -37		4 -29	2 -16	6 -44	7 -51	4 -29	
Total 50 upwards				9 -66	7 -51	16 1-17		7 -51	31 2-27	38 2-79	16 1-17	38 2-93	
Age un specified	32 2-35	19 1-40	51 3-74	30 2-20	30 2-20	60 4-41		1 -07	12 -88	13 -95	53 4-03	61 4-43	
Grand Total	442 32-45	311 22-83	753 56-28	152 11-16	320 24-15	481 35-31		19 1-39	109 8-00	128 9-39	613 44-86	740 55-13	

APPENDICES  
APPENDIX I (Contd.)

Community	Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS			
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
UNITED STATES	0 to 1	7 1 54	6 1 32	13 2 86							7 1 54	6 1 32	13 2 86	
	1 to 2	7 1 54	12 2 64	19 4 19							7 1 54	12 2 64	19 4 19	
	2 to 3	13 2 86	8 1 76	21 4 62							13 2 86	8 1 76	21 4 62	
	3 to 4	3 66	7 1 54	10 2 20							3 66	7 1 54	10 2 20	
	4 to 5	12 2 64	10 2 20	22 4 84							12 2 64	10 2 20	22 4 84	
	Total 0 to 5	42 9 25	43 9 47	85 18 72							42 9 25	43 9 47	85 18 72	
	5 to 10	62 13 66	37 8 15	99 21 81							62 13 66	37 8 15	99 21 81	
	10 to 15	27 5 94	12 2 64	39 8 59		2 44	2 44				27 5 94	14 3 08	41 9 03	
	Total 5 to 15	89 19 60	49 10 79	138 30 38		2 44	2 44				89 19 60	51 11 23	140 30 83	
	15 to 20	15 3 30		15 3 30		22 4 84	22 4 84		1 22	1 22	15 3 30	23 5 07	38 8 37	
	20 to 30	8 1 76		8 1 76	19 4 19	25 5 51	44 9 60		2 44	4 88	6 1 32	29 6 39	29 6 39	58 12 77
	30 to 40	1 22		1 22	23 5 07	22 4 84	45 9 91		3 66	8 1 76	11 2 42	27 5 94	30 6 61	57 12 55
	40 to 50				8 1 76	12 2 64	20 4 41			9 1 98	9 1 98	8 1 76	21 4 62	29 6 39
	Total 15 to 50	24 5 28		24 5 28	50 11 00	81 17 84	131 28 85		5 1 10	22 4 84	27 5 94	79 17 40	103 22 68	182 37 88
	50 to 60				2 44	5 1 10	7 1 54		1 22	6 1 32	7 1 54	3 66	11 2 42	14 3 08
	60 upwards				5 1 10		5 1 10			2 44	2 44	5 1 10	2 44	7 1 54
	Total 50 upwards				7 1 54	5 1 10	12 2 64		1 22	8 1 76	9 1 98	8 1 76	13 2 86	21 4 62
	Age unspecified	1 22	2 44	3 66	10 2 20	10 2 20	20 4 41		1 22	2 44	3 66	12 2 64	14 3 08	26 5 73
	Grand Total	156 34 36	94 20 70	250 55 06	67 14 75	98 21 59	165 36 34		7 1 54	32 7 04	39 8 59	230 50 66	224 49 33	454

## BENGAL FAMINE

## APPENDIX I

SHOWING AGE SEX AND MARITAL CONDITION OF THE POPULATION OF OUR SAMPLE BY COMMUNITY

The upper figure in each age group is the actual number of persons and the lower figure is the percentage of the particular community

Community	Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
O A S T R E S	0 to 1	41 3-01	*8 2-00	69 5-07							41 3-01	*8 2-00	69 5-07
	1 to 2	25 2-35	37 2-72	60 5-07							25 2-35	37 2-72	60 5-07
	2 to 3	38 2-79	30 2-20	68 4-99							38 2-79	30 2-20	68 4-99
	3 to 4	34 2-60	6 1-01	60 4-41							34 2-60	6 1-01	60 4-41
	4 to 5	37 2-72	29 2-13	66 4-84							37 2-72	29 2-13	66 4-84
	Total 0 to 5	18 13-36	160 11-01	33 24-37							182 13-36	160 11-01	332 24-37
	5 to 10	134 9-84	111 8-15	245 17-99							134 9-84	111 8-15	245 17-99
	10 to 15	56 4-11	29 2-13	85 6-24		10 -73	10 73				56 4-11	29 2-88	85 6-98
	Total 5 to 15	190 13-95	140 10-27	330 24-22		10 73	10 73				190 13-95	130 11-01	340 24-98
	15 to 20	28 2-06	1 -07	29 2-13		56 4-11	56 4-11		3 -15	3 15	28 2-06	59 4-23	87 6-39
U L L E D	20 to 30	10 73	1 -07	11 81	46 3-30	108 7-93	153 11-23	5 37	19 1-40	24 1-76	60 4-41	128 9-30	188 13-80
	30 to 40				44 3-23	9 6-80	123 9-03	3 -22	22 1-60	25 1-83	47 3-45	101 7-41	148 10-87
	40 to 50				34 1-76	39 2-84	63 4-63	3 -22	23 1-69	26 1-91	27 1-88	62 4-55	89 6-53
	Total 15 to 50	38 2-79	2 15	40 2-92	113 8-29	232 20-70	395 29-00	11 81	66 4-84	77 5-65	163 11-89	350 25-69	513 37-59
	50 to 60				6 -44	5 37	11 81	3 -22	29 2-13	32 2-35	9 -66	34 2-50	43 3-16
	60 upwards				3 -22	2 15	5 37	4 -29	2 15	6 44	7 51	4 -29	11 -81
	Total 50 upwards				9 -66	7 -51	16 1-17	7 -51	31 2-27	38 2-79	16 1-17	38 2-93	54 3-93
	Age un specified	32 2-35	19 1-40	51 3-74	30 2-20	30 2-26	60 4-41	1 -07	12 88	13 -93	63 4-63	61 4-48	124 9-10
	Grand Total	442 22-45	311 22-83	753 55-28	153 11-16	320 24-15	481 35-31	19 1-39	109 8-00	128 9-39	613 44-86	749 55-13	1362





BENGAL FAMINE  
APPENDIX I (Contd.)

Community	Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS			
		Male	Fe. male	Total	Male	Fe. male	Total	Male	Fe. male	Total	Male	Fe. male	Total	
M U H A M M A D A N S	0 to 1	11 1 57	12 1 08	23 3 28							11 1 57	12 1 08	23 3 28	
	1 to 2	20 2 85	10 1 08	3 4 50							20 2 85	10 1 08	32 4 56	
	2 to 3	17 2 38	15 2 13	3 4 56							17 2 38	15 2 13	32 4 56	
	3 to 4	16 2 04	10 1 43	26 3 71							16 2 04	10 1 43	26 3 71	
	4 to 5	20 2 85	18 2 52	38 5 4							20 2 85	18 2 52	38 5 42	
	Total 0 to 5	84 11 98	67 9 55	151 21 54							84 11 98	67 9 55	151 21 54	
	5 to 10	83 11 84	49 6 99	132 18 83							83 11 84	49 6 99	132 18 83	
	10 to 15	29 4 14	10 1 43	39 5 30		3 4	3 4		2 28	2 28	29 4 14	15 2 13	44 6 27	
	Total 5 to 15	112 15 97	59 8 42	171 24 39		3 4	3 4		2 28	2 28	112 15 97	64 9 1	176 25 10	
	15 to 20	6 85	1 14	7 1 00	2 28	20 3 71	8 3 00		4 56	0	6 85	10 1 43	41 5 71	
	20 to 30	6 85		0 85	16 28	47 0 71	63 8 99	3 42	14 1 99	17 2 38	6 85	31 4 42	88 12 27	
	30 to 40				31 4 42	30 5 13	67 9 55	8 1 14	22 3 13	30 4 28		39 5 50	58 8 27	97 13 83
	40 to 50				17 2 42	14 1 98	31 4 42	3 42	20 2 85	23 3 28		20 2 85	34 4 85	54 7 70
	Total 15 to 50	12 1 68	1 14	13 1 84	60 9 41	123 17 54	189 26 96	16 2 24	60 8 50	76 10 84	12 1 68	94 13 40	184 26 24	278 39 65
	50 to 60				14 1 99	7 1 00	21 2 99	3 42	6 85	0 1 38		17 2 42	13 1 84	30 4 28
	60 upwards				4 56		4 56	1 14	2 28	3 42		5 71	28 3 91	7 1 00
	Total 50 upwards				18 2 52	7 1 00	25 3 58	4 56	8 1 14	12 1 68		22 3 13	15 2 13	37 5 27
	Age un specified	11 1 57	5 71	16 2 28	23 3 28	13 1 85	36 5 13	1 14	6 85	7 1 00		25 4 99	9 1 28	59 8 42
	Grand Total	219 31 74	130 18 83	351 50 07	107 15 25	146 20 83	253 36 09	21 2 99	76 10 84	97 13 83		347 49 50	354 50 49	701

## APPENDIX I (Contd.)

Age in years	UNMARRIED			MARRIED			WIDOWED			ALL MARITAL CONDITIONS		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0 to 1												
1 to 2	1		1							1		1
	5 00		5 00							5 00		5 00
2 to 3												
3 to 4												
4 to 5		1	1								1	1
		5 00	5 00								5 00	5 00
Total 0 to 5	1	1	2							1	1	2
	5 00	5 00	10 00							5 00	5 00	10 00
5 to 10	1	3	4							1	3	4
	5 00	15 00	20 00							5 00	15 00	20 00
10 to 15		1	1								1	1
		5 00	5 00								5 00	5 00
Total 5 to 15	1	4	5							1	4	5
	5 00	20 00	25 00							5 00	20 00	25 00
15 to 20	2		2		1	1				2	1	3
	10 00		10 00		5 00	5 00				10 00	5 00	15 00
20 to 30	1		1	1	1	2				2	1	3
	5 00		5 00	5 00	5 00	10 00				10 00	5 00	15 00
30 to 40				2	1	3	1		1	3	1	4
				10 00	5 00	15 00	5 00		5 00	15 00	5 00	20 00
40 to 50												
Total 15 to 50	3		3	3	3	6	1		1	7	3	10
	15 00		15 00	15 00	15 00	30 00	5 00		5 00	35 00	15 00	50 00
50 to 60												
60 upwards				1		1				1		1
				5 00		5 00				5 00		5 00
Total 50 upwards				1		1				1		1
				5 00		5 00				5 00		5 00
Age unspecified		1	1								2	2
		5 00	5 00								10 00	10 00
Grand Total	5	6	11	4	3	7	1	1	2	10	10	20
	25 00	30 00	55 00	20 00	15 00	35 00	5 00	5 00	10 00	50 00	50 00	

BEINGA PAMINI

APPENDIX IA.

SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITIES BY AGE SEX AND MARITAL CONDITION

(Percentage given in each case refers to the percentage of the community)

Scheduled Castes—1302; Caste Hindus—454; Muhammadans—701; Christians—20 (omitted)

in years	Community	UNMARRIED						MARRIED						WIDOWED						P Total Male	
		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total			
		No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.	No.	P. C.		
1	Sch.	18*	13.36	150	11.01	332	24.37													13.36	
1	Ch.	42	0.5	43	0.47	85	18.70													0.25	
3	M.	84	11.98	67	0.85	151	21.54													11.98	
1	Sch.	131	9.84	111	8.15	245	17.99													0.84	
3	Ch.	62	13.06	37	8.15	99	21.81													13.06	
3	M.	83	11.84	40	6.99	132	18.83													11.84	
1	Sch.	56	4.11	29	2.13	85	6.24			10	7.3	10	7.3							4.11	
2	Ch.	27	5.4	12	2.64	39	8.69			2	4.4	2	4.4							5.94	
3	M.	29	4.14	10	1.43	39	5.56			3	4.1	3	4.1			2	2.8	2	2.8	4.14	
1	Sch.	28	2.06	1	0.07	29	0.13			56	4.11	56	4.11					15	2	15	2.06
2	Ch.	15	3.30			15	3.30			22	4.84	22	4.84			1	2.2	1	2.2	3.30	
3	M.	6	0.85	1	0.14	7	1.00	2	0.8	26	3.71	28	3.99	2	2.8	4	5.6	6	8.5	1.43	
1	Sch.	10	7.3	1	0.07	11	0.81	45	3.30	103	7.92	153	11.23	5	3.7	19	1.40	24	1.76	4.41	
2	Ch.	0	1.76			8	1.76	19	4.19	5	5.31	44	9.69	2	4.4	4	8.8	6	1.22	6.39	
3	M.	6	0.85			6	0.85	16	2.28	47	6.70	63	8.99	3	4.3	14	1.99	17	2.42	8.57	
1	Sch.							44	3.23	79	5.80	123	9.03	3	2.2	2	1.61	5	1.83	3.45	
2	Ch.	1	2.2			1	2.2	23	5.07	22	4.84	45	9.91	3	6.6	8	1.76	11	2.4	5.94	
3	M.							31	4.42	36	5.13	67	9.53	8	1.14	22	3.13	30	4.28	5.56	
1	Sch.							24	1.76	39	2.86	63	4.03	3	2.2	3	1.69	26	1.91	1.98	
2	Ch.							8	1.76	12	2.64	20	4.41			9	1.98	9	1.98	1.76	
3	M.							17	2.42	14	1.99	31	4.42	3	4.2	20	2.85	23	3.28	2.85	
1	Sch.							6	4.4	5	3.7	11	8.1	3	2.2	29	1.3	32	2.35	5.6	
2	Ch.							2	4.4	5	1.10	7	1.54	1	2.2	0	1.32	7	1.54	5.6	
3	M.							14	1.99	7	1.00	21	2.99	3	4.3	6	0.85	9	1.28	2.43	
1	Sch.							3	2.2	3	1.3	5	3.7	4	2.9	3	1.5	6	4.4	5.1	
2	Ch.							5	1.10			5	1.10			2	4.4	2	4.4	1.10	
3	M.							4	5.6			4	5.6	1	1.4	2	2.8	3	4.1	7.1	
1	Sch.	32	2.35	19	1.40	51	3.74	30	2.20	30	2.20	60	4.41	1	0.7	12	0.88	13	0.9	4.63	
2	Ch.	1	2.2	2	4.4	3	6.6	10	2.20	10	2.20	20	4.41	1	2.2	2	4.4	3	6.6	2.64	
3	M.	11	1.37	5	0.71	16	2.28	23	3.28	13	1.85	36	5.13	1	1.4	6	0.85	7	1.00	4.99	

Abbreviations:—Sch.—Scheduled Caste Hindus; Ch.—Caste Hindus; M.—Muhammadans  
No.—Actual number of persons; P. C.—Percentage.



SHOWING COMMUNITY SEX AND MARITAL CONDITION  
 (a) Actual number of loaders of units (b) Percentage of the total number of loaders of  
*i.e.* Scheduled castes—407 Caste Hindus—160

Age in years	SCHEDULED CASTES								CASTE HINDUS											
	MALE				FEMALE				TO TAL	MALE				FEMALE						
	Unma- rried	Married	Widow ed	Total	Unma- rried	Married	Widow ed	Total		Unma- rried	Married	Widow ed	Total	Unma- rried	Married	Widow ed	Total			
0 to 10	a																			
	b																			
	c																			
10 to 15	a				7	2		9	9	2	1	3	3	1				4		
	b				35	4		110	110	12	12	36	36	1				45		
	c				172	49		221	-21	1-25	-62	187	187	62				2-8		
15 to 20	a	8	2	10	1	31	3	35	45	11		11		9			9			
	b	-97	-24	1-22	12	378	30	427	549	134		134		110			110			
	c	1-98	-49	2-46	24	7-62	74	8-60	11-06	6-87		6-87		5-62			5-62			
20 to 30	a	7	16	5	28	83	18	96	124	5	15	1	21	15	5		20			
	b	-85	1-95	61	12	10-00	158	1171	1512	-61	1-83	12	256	1-82	-61		2-44			
	c	172	3-92	1-23	24	2015	319	3-50	20-47	312	9-37	-62	1312	9-37	312		12-5			
30 to 40	a		28	3	31	64	21	85	116	1	15	3	19	20	7		27			
	b		341	36	378	780	256	1036	1415	12	1-83	36	221	2-44	-85		3-29			
	c		688	74	762	1572	516	2088	2850	62	9-37	187	1187	12-5	4-37		1687			
40 to 50	a		16	4	20	31	21	52	72	1	7		8	10	5		15			
	b		185	49	244	278	256	634	878	12	85		-97	1-22	-61		1-82			
	c		3-92	-68	4-91	7-62	516	12-78	17-69	-62	4-37		5-00	6-25	312		9-37			
50 to 60	a		3	1	4	1	19	20	24	4	2	6		2	6		8			
	b		-36	12	49	12	231	244	2-92		-49	24	73	24	-73		-97			
	c		74	24	98	24	4-67	4-91	5-90		3-5	1-25	3-75	1-25	3-75		5-00			
60 up- wards	a		2	4	6		2	2	8	5		5		1			12			
	b		-24	49	73		24	24	-97		-61		-61				12			
	c		49	-98	1-47		49	49	1-96		312		312				-62			
Age un- specified	a		2		2	2	5	7	9					1			12			
	b		24		24	24	61	85	110					12			-62			
	c		49		49	49	122	172	2-21					-62			-62			
Grand Total	a	15	60	17	101	9	212	84	306	407	22	47	6	75	3	58	24	85		
	b	1-83	841	2-07	12-27	110	25-90	1024	3732	49-62	2-68	5-72	-78	915	-36	7-07	2-92	10-36		
	c	3-68	16-95	418	2481	2-21	52-22	2064	7518	—	1375	29-37	3-75	46-87	1-87	26-26	16-00	53-12		



## APPENDIX IV

SHOWING RELATIONSHIP WITHIN THE UNIT BY COMMUNITY

(Total number of units in this Table—723)

(a) Actual number of units, (b) Percentage of the total number of units i.e. 723, (c) Percentage of the number of units in each community i.e. Scheduled Castes—358; Caste Hindus—169; Muhammedans—200; Christians—6.

Community	One person units			HW	HWO	MO	FC	GP & GO & GO	Ba	Ba	BS	BWC	SHO	BSCC	MDRB	MDRM	MADRM	Sex	Sisters-in-law and children	Uncles and nephews	Total
	Male	Female	Total																		
Scheduled Castes	a	29	402	6	68	155	10	14	14	5	3	1		1	3	2	6	3	1	14	358
	b	4.02	4.99	0.00	9.42	21.47	1.38	1.94	1.11	4.1	14	4.1		14	28	83	41	83	41	14	49.58
	c	8.10	10.05	18.16	1.67	18.92	2.78	3.91	2.23	84	28	84		28	56	167	84	167	84	14	
Caste Hindus	a	30	10	49	25	48	5	2	11	4	2	3	1	2				1	14	6	169
	b	5.40	1.38	6.79	3.46	6.05	0.00	28	5.5	28	41	41	14	28				14	14	83	22.02
	c	24.53	6.20	30.73	15.72	30.10	3.14	1.26	6.92	5.51	126	160	63	126				126	126	83	
Muhammads	a	23	18	41	4	76	14	3	7	2	1	5			1			5	4	2	200
	b	3.16	2.46	5.62	0.55	10.53	1.94	0.97	28	28	14	50			14			14	4	55	27.70
	c	11.80	9.00	20.80	2.00	38.00	7.00	1.60	3.60	1.00	14	50			50			50	2	200	
Christians	a	1	14	15	1	14	1	1	1	1											6
	b	1	14	15	1	14	1	1	1	1											6
	c	30.00	30.00	60.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00											6
Total	a	92	64	156	10	133	30	16	33	14	5	8	1	3	3	6	4	6	6	8	723
	b	12.74	8.64	21.01	1.36	18.42	4.15	2.22	4.57	1.94	6.9	1.11	14	41	41	28	83	83	41	14	
	c																				

Abbreviations used in the Table —

1. H W—Husband and wife.
2. H W O—Husband and children.
3. M O—Mother and children.
4. F O—Father and children.
5. B—Brothers.
6. S—Sisters.
7. B S—Brothers and sisters.
8. B W O—Brothers together with their wives and children.
9. B H O—Sisters together with their husbands and children.
10. B S O—Brothers and sisters together with their consorts and children.
11. M D R B—More distant relatives by blood.
12. M D R M—More distant relatives by marriage.
13. M D R B M—More distant relatives by blood and marriage.
14. S C—Sisters with their children.
15. G P & G C—Grandparents and grandchildren.
16. G P, P G C—Grandparents, parents and grandchildren.



## ERRATA ET CORRIGENDA

Page 57,	line 15,	read 69	for 68	
" "	" "	" 8 11	" 8 29	
" "	" "	" 56	" 55	
" "	" 16	" 4	" 5	
" "	" 17	" 49	" 61	
" "	" 23	" 79 03	" 79 51	
" "	" 25	" 87 92	" 87 80	
" "	" 26	" 5 12	" 5 24	
" "	" 26	" 8 41	" 8 29	
" 83,	Table 2,	against Serial No 14 of Column 5,	insert 2 00 in the blank space	
" "	" "	" "	" " " " 7, read 55 for 14	
" "	" "	" "	" 15 " " 4, insert 3 77 in the blank space	
" "	" "	" "	" " " " 7, read 1 11 for 28	