

The Unpublished Part of Dufferin Report, 1888

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Abstract: *Dufferin Report is the product of an investigation into the conditions of the depressed classes of Bengal in the late nineteenth century which is very well-known to the economic historians of Bengal. But unfortunately the part of Dhaka could not have been included in it for unknown reason. Curiously enough, the author has discovered this part in the Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room. The object of this article is to inform the researcher about its contents which has hitherto remained unknown.*

Key Words: *Dhaka, Dufferin, Poor, Dowry, Lower Class, Rural, Cultivators, Agricultural labourers, Artisans, Charity*

The rural Bengal was the most neglected area during the British colonial rule. The recurring famines and sporadic peasant movements had, in fact, kept important bearing upon the British policy in the nineteenth century Bengal. Although the English writers and historians were apt to highlight the impact of the Scottish philosophy of 'Utilitarianism' as being the only positive force for the development activities in India, although the rural Bengal remained unnoticed for quite a long time. In the later part of the nineteenth century, there was a debate in press and also among the scholar-administrators of India centering round the question of the material condition of the people, especially of the lower classes of populations of Bengal. Probably the debate originated from the successive draughts, inundations and famines and also from the vigorous agrarian unrest. The local condition and the colonial interest were discussed in various platforms with a view to understand the magnitude of the problem. The outcome of the discussion

lies in the institution of an official survey about material conditions of the lower classes of population of Bengal.

The idea of collecting information on agriculturists, agricultural labourers and rural artisans was not exclusively an innovation of Lord Dufferin (1826-1902), the Governor General and Viceroy of India (1884-1888), for it had been sought by several statesmen before his arrival. For instance, Sir George Campbell (1824 - 1892) who became the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1871-1874), had joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1842. His academic achievements received high appreciation from both the Government and the contemporary intellectuals.¹ However, as being the President of the Orissa Famine Commission (1866-67) Sir George Campbell earned much experience on the condition of the agricultural population of Orissa. Sir Richard Temple, his successor, ascribed Sir George Campbell as "one of the most active-minded men in the Civil Service". As appreciation Sir Richard Temple had recorded in his memoir entitled *Men and Events of My Time in India* that:

The Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Campbell, was specially qualified for giving effect to Lord Northbrook's general instructions. Campbell had been for more than two years ruling the provinces under the Government of Bengal with a vigour rarely surpassed in Anglo-Indian history, acquiring among many other things an exact knowledge of their resources.²

Sir George Campbell had always emphasized on the necessity of collecting the correct statistics in different subjects throughout the whole term of his office as the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. In 1872 he urged the District Officers to compile the history of the district where they were employed

...to draw a full picture of the present agricultural state of any district; or say the condition and occupations of the people generally, including agriculture, as directly or indirectly the source of livelihood to the great mass of the population, who are either cultivators, or agricultural labourers and small artisans

and tradesmen supplying the needs of cultivators. It would be most interesting to know thoroughly for any district the ordinary modes and conditions of agriculture, the usual size of farms, and the sort of farm on which a family can be decently supported; how far the farms are compact, or how the fields are scattered about - and in the latter case, how the boundaries are recognised and maintained; how far the farmer is generally a laborer with his own hands; how far he employs hired labor, and how he pays for it; what are the respective positions and conditions of ryots and sub-tenants of various kinds of laborers, of rural artizans, which castes or classes of holders are the best and which the worst cultivators; how money is lent and borrowed; what crops are cultivated, and how, and what is the produce; what stock is kept, and how it is fed; whether stock is ever kept for the sake of manure; whether manure is made on system, or whether manure which accumulates without system is used or wasted; how harvesting is managed; who takes the produce to market, who sells it, and where, and who buys it; by what hands it eventually reaches the great marts; who prepares the jute for the market, who grows the mulberry, who rears the cocoons, and who makes the silk, and how they all go about it; what is the indigo system of the district; who keep the cattle, who poison them, who take their skins, prepare them and bring them to market; what cattle feed on; what are the breeds, and what attention is paid to them; in what shape rents are paid, how often and through whom; what is the practical religion (if any) of the cultivators, and who announces the lucky days for ploughing and sowing; what are the social habits; what they eat, and how they are clothed; how far they are thrifty or unthrifty; how they keep their accounts; whether they have large families; how soon boy work; whether girls and women work, or what they do; how long agricultural laborers live, and from what diseases they suffer; &c. &c. &c.³

Sir George Campbell found that the information regarding agricultural statistics at the disposal of Government of Bengal was vague and untrustworthy, and he resolved on an attempt to obtain, if possible, really valuable statistics. In order to obtain this object, he organized arrangements (1) by means of special establishments sanctioned in selected districts; (2) by the appointment of executive officers in every district now known as the sub-divisional establishment; (3) by utilising the full of the existing local establishments in certain parts of the country; and (4) by instituting exact inquiries in Wards' and Government estates.⁴

But Sir George Campbell had to leave Bengal owing to his illness before materializing these schemes for obtaining accurate agricultural statistics and Sir Richard Temple had to inherit the incomplete tasks of Sir George Campbell.⁵ Sir Richard Temple (1826-1902), Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (April 1874 to January 1877), felt it seriously when he was busy in handling the famine, cyclone and Kalaajar (a type of malarial fever).⁶ Phillip Woodruff commented about the idea of Sir Richard Temple on the society of India that:

He analysed Indian society and divided into classes, for each of which he gave a different answer. The largest class, two-thirds at least to its total population, are the peasants and agricultural labourers who for centuries have let the legions thunder past. They do not mind who rules them. They do however know when they are all well-off and on the whole they are now better off than they have ever been before. They may be regarded as 'loyal' but passively loyal; they prefer British rule to anything else they have known but regard it without enthusiasm.⁷

The Famine Commission of India had undertaken the strenuous task of collecting the useful evidence and valuable notes on the agricultural population of India. While Sir Richard Temple was the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, the whole matter of the material condition of the province was examined in a minute and prefixed it to the Report of the Administration of Bengal, 1874-75. Thenceforth onward a series of investigation into the causes of poverty and general economic condition of the rural population

of Bengal were undertaken by the Government. Officially it was that instructed:

...some enquiry should, if practicable, be made into the actual condition of the lower classes of the population, especially in agricultural tracts, and that the information collected, with concise summary of conclusions and results, should be submitted to the Government of India. The object of the enquiry is to ascertain whether there is any foundation for the assertion frequently repeated that the greater part of the population of India suffers from a daily insufficiency of food and if there is truth in the statement, in regard to any section of the people, to determine whether remedial measures can be devised.⁸

Sir Charles Alfred Elliot, an Indian civil servant, who had considerable experience and who served Bengal as Lieutenant Governor (17 December, 1890 - 29 May, 1893) declared in 1870s: "I do not hesitate to say that half of our agricultural population never know from one year's end to year's end what it is to have their hunger fully satisfied."⁹ Following the famine of 1877-79 and the report of the Famine Commission in 1880, the Departments of Land Revenue and Agriculture in the provinces had given order to collect complete information regarding the condition and prospect of every village or agricultural tracts of British India. But nothing comprehensive and positive result could have been achieved until the arrival of Lord Dufferin (1826-1902) as the Governor General and Viceroy of India (1884-1888). It was well-known that Lord Dufferin displayed soft but cautious attitude towards India, its administration and also towards the newly formed All India National Congress. In 1886 the second annual session of All India National Congress was held at Calcutta. A resolution was carried out to the effect that the All India National Congress "regards with the deepest sympathy, and views with grave apprehension, the increasing poverty of vast numbers of the population of India."¹⁰ This resolution had important bearing upon Lord Dufferin's policy of Indian administration. However, being instructed by Lord Dufferin, the Revenue and Agriculture Department of the Government of India issued a circular letter on 17 August, 1887, to all the

provincial governments of India in the following manner:

The attention of the Government of India having been called to the frequency with which the assertion has been repeated that greater portion of the population of India suffer from a daily insufficiency of food, it is considered desirable to ascertain whether this impression is wholly untrue or partially true, and in the latter case to attain some idea of the extent to which it is so, and how far any remedial measures can be suggested. I am directed, therefore, to communicate the wish of His Excellency in Council that some enquiry should, if practicable, be made into the actual condition of the lower classes of the population, especially in agricultural tracts.¹¹

It is worthy to note that in the Report of the Famine Commission of 1880 had suggested to collect extensive or complete information regarding the condition and prospect of every village or agricultural tracts of British India. In fact, such an undertaking would inexorably take many years to accomplish. Considering the given circumstances of the administration of India, Lord Dufferin had wanted the submission of quick statements from the different provinces of India about the question under review. As we find in the circular issued on 17 August that the first installment of such information, together with a summary of conclusions and results, should be submitted on or before 1 May, 1888. In response to the instruction of the Central Government, the provincial governments adopted different methods of enquiry using different format and as a result of this standard and modus of reporting varied considerably. It was found that some made only superficial enquiries and replied with bare-minimum qualitative and quantitative information, while other, particularly Bengal, the Punjab and the North-West Provinces and Oudh were much more comprehensive. However, the reports and returns of the provincial governments were published in 1888 under the title Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal.¹² The survey work was supervised and compiled by P. Nolan, it was officially entitled as Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal, 1888. But, in fact, the work was popularly known as Dufferin Report titled after the Governor General

and Viceroy Marquis of Dufferin, who instituted the inquiry to know and understand the conditions of the labouring classes

Considering the outcome of this report as politically sensitive, the Dufferin Report was kept confidential for long time. The enquiry initiated on the line had continued for some time as we find two more reports prepared at different times by two authors. The first one was edited by F.H. B. Skrine entitled as Memorandum on the Material Condition of the Lower Orders in Bengal during the years from 1881-82 to 1891-92, (Calcutta, 1892) and the second was edited by L.P. Shirres entitled as Memorandum on the Material Condition of the People of Bengal in the years from 1892-93 to 1901-02, (Calcutta, 1902).

Unfortunately the information regarding the condition of the Dhaka district could not have been appended in the Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal, published in 1888, because the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division had not received the report of the Dhaka district in time. W.R. Larmnie, the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division, clearly mentioned at the end of his letter to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department that "I have to apologise for the delay in forwarding this report, but I did not receive the required information from the Collector of Dacca till the 15th instant."¹³ It may be true that the Commissioner of Dhaka had not received the required information excepting a letter from the Collector of Dhaka in scheduled time, in spite of the fact that some efforts were undertaken by the instruction of the Collector of Dhaka. Being instructed by Collector of Dhaka, W. Rattray, the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj, had initiated some survey work and also submitted a small report along with some statistics of some villages in the proposed line as earlier instructed. It seems that the Collector of Dhaka had not sent this information to the Commissioner of Dhaka considering the insufficiency of materials that W. Rattray collected. Referring to an earlier correspondence the Commissioner of Dhaka informed that the Collector of Dhaka repudiated the "the possibility of finding such sample villages as would justify general conclusions. He says that circumstances vary so much that no statistics of any value could be derived from such

partial enquiries, and to construct theories of imperfect data would be like building a pyramid on its apex."¹⁴ It appears from the correspondence that the statistical data so far collected by W. Rattray, the Dub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj, had been sent to the Collector of Dhaka on 4 May, 1880 along with a brief report. It also appears from the letter of W.R. Larmini, the Commissioner of Dhaka Division to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, that he had not received required information from the Collector of Dhaka till the 15 May, 1880.¹⁵ The reason for not sending these materials to the Divisional Commissioner of Dhaka could not be known, for the file remained silent in this matter. However, whatever the causes may be, the materials so far collected by W. Rattray could not be included in the Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal, published in 1888.

Curiously enough that all the documents relating to the survey conducted by W. Rattray have been discovered all of a sudden by the author at the Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room. It is very difficult to give a proper description of the preservation system of old records in all the District Collectorate Record Room of Bengal. The record room, built in following the old English school model in the 19th century, is nearly in a dilapidated condition and the shelves are over-loaded with numerous valuable documents. But such condition may not prevail in every District Collectorate Record Room of Bengal.¹⁶ It is worthy to note that in most cases the District Collectorate Record Rooms are two storied and everywhere a space less than one meter is allowed in between the shelves. There is no place for the researchers to sit and take down notes. The condition of light or electrification is worst and beyond any description. Moreover there is the presence of highly venomous snakes that search rats at random. The sounds of the fury of the snakes can be listened to and the smell of their yawn can be sniffed immediately. However, in the above noted circumstances, the author had to copy the entire materials collected by W. Rattray, by his own hand having no option to get the photocopies of these materials. According to Record Room Manual, prepared during the colonial rule, the records of the District Collectorate Record Room cannot be carried outside the Record Room for any purpose.

But the materials collected by W. Rattray, the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj, through sample survey appear to be important source for writing on the economic history of rural Dhaka in the late 19th century, although the survey had not been systematically conducted. The nature of this survey and its limitation would be discussed later in brief. It is noteworthy that no comprehensive survey about the economic condition of rural Bengal had been conducted before the surveys mentioned above. The rural level surveys conducted during the 19th and 20th centuries were mostly topographic and revenue surveys. The Thakbast (1845-1877), the Revenue (1848-1866) and Cadastral (1886-1917) surveys conducted in the 19th and 20th centuries do not provide any significant information about the economic condition of rural Bengal. The Thakbast Survey provides information about the demographic situation (taking 5 persons as a standard size of family) and its communal distribution e.g., Hindus and Muslims, number of houses both kacha (not brick-built) and pucca (brick-built), portion of cultivable and uncultivable lands along with quality of land according to production and its nature of production, number of agriculturist and non- agriculturist, number of ploughs and cows needed for cultivation, huts (weekly market days) and bazars (market) of a mouza (revenue village) with an eye-sketched map or andazee (depending or guessing) map.¹⁷ The Revenue Survey also provides to some extent the similar information with a coloured map of the mouza mentioning 72 topographical items. The reports prepared and published in the later half of the nineteenth century e.g., James E. Gastrell, Report of the Revenue Survey of Dacca, 1860; A.L. Clay, Principal Heads of the History and Statistics of Dacca Division, 1868; Hem Chander Keer, Jute Cultivation in Dacca, 1874; Ambika Charan Sen, Report on the System of Agriculture and Agricultural Statistics of the Dacca District, 1889, also do not provide any statistical data which throw some light on the economic life and condition of the rural households of Dhaka district. In the absence of any statistical data on the economic life of the rural households of Dhaka district, it is pertinent to say that the statistical materials collected by W. Rattray on the individual households of different categories of people of rural Dhaka may be useful to the scholars of economic history of rural Bengal in general and rural Dhaka in particular.

The methodology suggested for conducting the survey was random selection, because the time sanctioned for this work was not enough at all for conducting any comprehensive survey. It was suggested by the Collector of Dhaka "that it is impossible to make a detailed survey for the whole District, sample average village should be selected and enquired into minutely, in the hope that the facts so obtained may be served as a guide for general condition of the district as a whole."¹⁸ On the other hand, for getting specific information on the condition of the lower classes of population, it was also suggested to classify the rural poor population into four categories e.g., cultivators, agricultural labourers, artisans and peoples who subsist on charity. Along with the proposed line of survey which was intended to collect data on the pecuniary condition of the lower classes of population of rural areas, instruction was also given to the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj to collect information regarding production and rent. In Addition to these, information on the extent of cultivation, average size of holdings and average profits remaining to the cultivators after paying necessary expenses of cultivation, rent were deemed essentially necessary to form an idea more or less accurate in regard to the condition of cultivator class. In fact W. Rattray, the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj, who conducted this survey, was given enough liberty to choice methodology and subjects, but with extremely limited time. W. Rattray was informed by the Collector of Dhaka about this enquiry on 1 February and he submitted his small report together with considerable statistical data on 4 May, 1888. But W. Rattray tried to do the best within the very short time, e.g., 94 days. Admitting this fact and also the lack of local knowledge on the part of a British civilian W. Rattray commented that:

I regret my knowledge of the people and of this part of the country is so limited as my tour has not been a very extended kind and the short time allowed me in treating on so important subject which I think need much time and local knowledge has prevented me from going into minute details which I would otherwise have done.¹⁹

Before introducing W. Rattray's survey the author expresses his inability to analyze the statistical data on the four categories of professions in this

brief article. The statistical data on the four categories of professions collected by W. Rattray would be published soon in book form. However, it is worthy to note that within the very short time 25 villages of 9 police stations of Dhaka district had been surveyed by W. Rattray's which encompassed 601 households of the four categories of professions as noted above. The distribution of the households among the different classes of population is the following:

Class	Number of Household	Percentage among total household
Agriculturist	284	47.25
Agricultural Labour	203	33.78
Artisans	80	13.31
People lives on Charity	34	5.66
Total	601	100

Despite previous cautionary note given by the higher authority W. Rattray could not avoid public inquisitiveness regarding the survey. But here the public inquisitiveness appeared centering round the survey as a means of imposition of new tax. The peasantry of Bengal was always liable to frequent taxation in the form of abwab (miscellaneous tax) levied by the zamindars, in consequence the tax-phobia was so common among them. It is noteworthy that the peasantry of Noakhali resisted firmly to the operation of the first Census of 1872 and they had beaten Captain Munro mercilessly. Such situation aroused out of the rumour of further taxation. It was reported by the Officiating Commissioner of Chittagong Division that "No amount of explanation will, however, serve to convince the millions of ignorant ryots that the enumeration of the people is not the precursor of a tax, and when the road cess has been introduced, the Government stand in their opinion convicted of bad faith."²⁰ Similarly the paranoia of imposing further tax aroused with the commencement of the survey by W. Rattray, who reported that "On commencing operations the very first question put to me by some of the cultivators whether Government was contemplating on raising

a new cess or tax, and it was some times before I could satisfy them that such was not the case, but I am afraid a suspension still hankered in their minds that something was going to take place."²¹ However, W. Rattray had succeeded to complete his survey without any bad occurrence.

Curiously enough, W. Rattray had collected some important information which was very much relevant to provide deeper dent into the economic condition of the rural poor of the Dhaka district in the late 19th century. Among these the yearly budget estimate of 25 families taking from heterogeneous social and economic background provided interesting information of rural economy. W. Rattray had picked up families from fisherman, cultivator, milkman, gardener, weaver, carpenter, potter, agricultural labourer, brazier, rural musical instrumentalist, masonary, goldsmith, tailor and dealer of conchshell etc. It is very interesting to go through the yearly budget estimate of the families having heterogeneous social and economic background since we have not found any such records dealing with such budget estimate in the late 19th century. Occasionally we come across the expenditure and receipts of some wealthy cultivators, but we do not see annual family budget of different class of rural people.²² It is noteworthy that the yearly budget estimate as recorded by W. Rattray may be, on the whole, tentative; because neither these estimates were prepared by systematic and meticulous calculation of the income and expenditure of individual holding, nor was it possible to do within the very short time. It appears from the correspondence that W. Rattray had collected these information through interviews of the concerned persons, where systematic and meticulous calculation of income and expenditure of several households were not possible. Notwithstanding such limitation, the annual family budget estimate of different classes of rural people as estimated W. Rattray provide important information about the social and economic life of the rural people of the Dhaka district..

However, the report prepared by W. Rattray is interesting from various points. With a view to ascertaining the subsidiary occupation of the people one fishing village was included in the survey work. Along with the statistical data of the enquiry, qualitative information regarding production,

consumption and indebtedness are also available in the report, though the report is very small. Before entering into the detail discourse about the report it is necessary to trace the condition of the rural population of the Dhaka district previous to this survey through the available materials. Sharply twenty years before A.L. Clay described the condition of the poor people of Dhaka in 1868 as the following:

The poor people of the district must have suffered severely during the worst months. Some lived on a half-meal of rice, to which they added China or kangan (a variety of rice), varieties of millet. Fruits, boiled pumpkins, barely powder, and the husk of paddy formed the diet of others. Some were even reduced to an allowance of food on alternate days. These cases do not appear to have been numerous. In several parts of Dacca food was liberally dispensed by the richer natives; and these charitable operations were only suspended when prices fell, and beggars decreased. The number of patients admitted into the Mitford Hospital, worn out by diseases resulting from starvation and scurvy, was greatly in excess of former years.²³

Ambika Charan Sen, Assistant to the Director of Agriculture, published the report entitled Agricultural Report of the Dacca District in 1880 which was nearly a contemporary report to the survey undertaken by W. Rattray. It appears that both Ambika Charan Sen and W. Rattray used the nearly similar classification of lower classes of population living in rural areas of Dhaka. Consequently the findings of both the study appear approximately similar. Ambika Charan Sen found the condition of the agricultural class of population of the Dhaka district to be

... better fed, better clothed and better housed, and have got more ready money in their pockets than was the case before, but still their condition is far from being satisfactory. The majority of them still live in mere huts, sleep almost on bare earth, put on mere rags and receive no education. They lead not only a hand-to-mouth living, but the majority of them are more or less involved in debt.²⁴

The question of hired labourers had also been dealt within the report of W. Rattray. Usually the poor families of rural Bengal could not afford hired labour in their agricultural operation. In most cases labour demand was met by within the family members. In fact, hired labour for agricultural operation was only used by the rich peasant occasionally. Ambika Charan Sen reported

... weeding the aus paddy and jute or harvesting the crops, and even this is often done on the ganta or co-operative system. The men hired for work are generally people living in the same village, or in the neighbourhood; but in the north or north-east of the district, men from western part of the district, or even from other districts came for work at the time of the paddy harvest. These men are paid by a portion of the paddy harvested, their share varying between 8 to 10 per cent of the produce gathered.²⁵

In consequence the labour market of Dhaka was dearer and wage was pretty high. The contemporary Report on the Condition of Lower Classes of Population in Bengal also explained the agricultural labourers of Dhaka district to be well-to-do. They had their own small holdings which supplemented their earnings. Moreover, some of them were engaged in subsidiary occupation like fishing when they were not otherwise occupied.²⁶

In this connection the information supplied by P. Nolen, Secretary to the Government of Bengal may be mentioned that

The wages of agricultural labourers are in many parts of the country paid partly in kind, and the custom by giving them food, or food and lodging, is also very prevalent. These circumstances must not be overlooked in calculating their wages. It is also to be remembered, with regard to all labourers, that they very frequently hold land, and thus possess an additional means of subsistence.²⁷

The artisan class here in Dhaka was consisted mostly of the Tantie (Hindu weavers), the Jolhas (Muslim weavers) and the Goalas (milkmen) who were, more or less, poverty-stricken. In regards to their wage W. Rattray

commented:

An adult who works as a labourer for other earns from 3/5 a month and about the same when they work on their own account. Boys from 5 years of age to 16 years of age are largely employed in this trade and receive from Rs. 3 to 3 a month. They don't seem to have any other source of income and appear to be fully employed. Carpenters, Goldsmiths, blacksmiths are on the whole a well-to-do class and receive high wages for their labour.²⁸

The persons subsisted on charity were few in numbers and consisted of the Bairagees (Vaishnava anchorites) and Bastoms (Vaishnava mendicants) among the Hindu community and Pirs (Muslim saints) and Fakirs (Muslim mendicants) among the Muslim community. They were not always professional beggars and some of them were well-to-do people in the society. W. Rattray remarked that:

The Bairagees, mendicants, Fakeers &ca. helpless widows, children, girl and old persons generally subsist on charity. The Bairagees, mendicants, Fukirs &ca. form a good number of the persons who live on charity - a considerable portions of themselves can earn well for their subsistence if they work - but they are precluded from their religious principle from doing any work.²⁹

It appears from the information collected by W. Rattray that many of the families, whom he surveyed, suffered from indebtedness. Indebtedness was a common feature in a monsoon based agricultural country like Bengal and it worked like a capital necessary for carrying out agricultural operation. But official reports always held the view steadfastly that the performance of social and religious ceremonies lay at the root of extravagance and improvidence. Rai Saheb Pandit Chandrika Prasad, a contemporary writer of agricultural co-operation, had challenged the official view and argued that "if these ceremonies were responsible for the agricultural indebtedness, other classes of people who observed and performed the same ceremonies with similar or greater expenses, should have been similarly involved in debt, which is not the case".³⁰ Empirically seen it appears that extravagance and improvidence did not play any remarkable role in the aggravation of rural indebtedness. The reasons for rural indebtedness, in fact, lay elsewhere.

Like industry agriculture also requires regular supply of both short and long term credit. The agriculturists of Bengal had never received any regular supply of cheap credit to meet the needs of their agricultural operation. Moreover, the peasants of Bengal lived in a natural world where droughts, inundations, cyclones, pestilence, epidemics and diseases visited them frequently and alternately and ultimately disturbed their economic equilibrium and forced them to borrow. The circumstances forced the agriculturists to go to the Mahajans (moneylenders) for loans at a remarkably high rate of interest.

One important point that comes out the materials collected by W. Rattray that the system of Pon or dowry existed among the Hindu community. Historically the system of taking or giving Pon or dowry was a long practiced tradition in Bengal, though its origin and root still remained obscure. At present giving or receiving Pon or dowry has been declared illegal by law, but it operates everywhere either secretly or indirectly with the help of negotiation. Even in the secret or indirect form the Pon or dowry is usually received by the bridegroom from the bridal party. But the Pon or dowry as mentioned by W. Rattray operated in quite diametrically opposite order, because in that system Pon or dowry was received by the bridal party from the bridegroom. This Pon or dowry was considered as an income of the bridal party and thus the system helped the family of the bride financially.

W.R. Larmnie, the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division wrote to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department on 18th May, 1888 about the over-all condition of the peasantry of Eastern Bengal that

My own personal experience which has been derived from such visits as were possible during a period of three years to almost every part of the division, has led me to the conclusion that, looking to their needs, the peasantry of Eastern Bengal are about the most prosperous in the world. There is a higher degree of average comfort, and less marked poverty than I have seen anywhere else. The people are, as a rule, well clothed, sufficiently fed, and comfortably housed. Wages are comparatively high, and labour is so scarce that the indigenous supply is not sufficient. Even the criminal population, as reported by Dr. Crombie, displays none of that squalid poverty which is to be found elsewhere.³¹

The remark about the pecuniary condition in relation to poverty made

by the W.R. Larmie, the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division, may somewhat well be fitted in the colonial attitude towards its subjects, but the statistics collected by W. Rattray depict quite different scenario of the rural economic affairs, if those statistics are taken into account.

It is also important to know and understand the nature and quality of the data collected by W. Rattray having been instructed by his superior authority. It seems that the authority of the Dhaka district could not provide W. Rattray with any type of format as promised earlier. So W. Rattray had left with no option or choice in so far as he could understand what to do. On the other hand, it is found that W. Rattray was quite unaware of the society, custom, manner and the culture of the subjects whom he ruled or dealt with. It is impossible to know how W. Rattray succeeded to collect so many materials, for he had never mentioned the name of any local person worked as his helping hand. W. Rattray could not even write the names of the persons in proper manner, rather he was used in cacophonous pronunciation of the place and personal names in his survey. However, the left-over portion of Dufferin Report (Dhaka portion) finally came to light nearly after 125 years. The readers and researchers of economic history of rural Bengal will certainly understand the importance of this left-over portion of Dufferin Report when it will be published in near future.

Notes and References:

1. Sir George Campbell wrote several books before joining as the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and among those Modern India (1852), Ethnology of India (1868), and Irish Land Tenure (1868), Tenure of Land in India (1870) are noteworthy.
2. Sir Richard Temple, Men and Events of My Time in India, (London: John Murray, 1882), p. 397.
3. Proceedings of the Hon'ble the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal During September, 1872, Revenue Department, Bangladesh National Archives.
4. Letter from H.J.S. Cotton, Officiating Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, 14th February, 1876. Proceedings of the Government of Bengal, Department - Finance, Branch - Statistics, Head - Trade and Traffic, February, 1876, pp. 161-62, Bangladesh National Archives.

5. "Shortly afterwards (in December 1873) Sir George Campbell's health became seriously impaired, and medical authorities warned him that he would not be able to bear up against the heat of the next spring and summer. He resolved, however, to sustain his toils despite illness until at least the spring; but it became necessary to choose a successor. At that time it had been arranged that I should resign my office of Finance Minister in the spring and return to England; but Lord Northbrook offered me the post of Lieutenant-Governor on Sir George Campbell's departure, which appointment I accepted." Sir Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India*, (London: John Murray, 1882), p.398.
6. Important materials on agriculture and economic condition of Bengal and various provinces of India are available in the various writings of Sir Richard Temple. His writings include *India in 1880*; *Men and Events of My Time in India*, 1882; *Oriental Experiences*, 1883; *Cosmopolitan Essays*, 1886; *The Story of my Life*, 1896; *A Bird's Eye-view of Picturesque India*, 1898.
7. Phillip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India*, (London, 1954), Vol. 1, p. 155-56.
8. Report of the Administration of Bengal, 1874-75.
9. A Brief Guide for Teachers, The British Library, (London,1987), p. 50.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. The report was compiled by P. Nolen, the then Secretary to the Government of Bengal or India .
13. Letter from W.R. Larmie, the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, 18 May, 1888. Quoted in Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal, p. 69.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Shekhar Bhowmik, "Some Aspects of Collection of Documents of Regional History", (in Bengali), Samir Kumar Bhadra and Shekhar

- Bhowmik (eds.), *Regional History*, (Kolkata: Indira Prakashani, 2007) p. 108-16.
17. It was reported that the "Thakbust were all done on the old principle, that is to say, andazee, and were, I believe very incorrect." *Annual Report of the Progress of the Revenue Survey in the Lower Provinces, 1855-56*, (Calcutta: Bengal Printing Limited, 1857) p. 10.
 18. Letter from the Collector of Dhaka to the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj, 1 February, 1888. Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room.
 19. Letter from W. Rattray, the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj to the Collector of Dhaka, 16 April, 1888. Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room.
 20. Officiating Commissioner of Chittagong Division to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department, 20 February, 1872. *Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, March, 1872, Judicial Department, Vol. 143, No. 9*, Bangladesh National Archives.
 21. Letter from W. Rattray, the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj to the Collector of Dhaka, 16 April, 1888. Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room.
 22. In this regard some statistical statements of some ryot of Mymensingh may be found in the Mymensingh District Records available in the Bangladesh National Archives. For a case see Haruo Noma and Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *Selection of Records on Agriculture, Land Tenure and Economy of Mymensingh District, 1787-1866*, (Kyoto University, Japan, 1987), p. 76.
 23. A. L. Clay, *Principal Heads of the History and Statistics of Dacca Division*, Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press Co., Ltd., 1864. (Report on Dacca was written by A.L. Clay, the Officiating Collector and Magistrate of Dacca in July, 1867. p. 128.
 24. Ambika Charan Sen, *Agricultural Report of the Dacca District*, Calcutta: Bengal Government Press, 1880, p. 21.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

26. Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal, 1888, p. 68.
27. From P. Nolen, Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Commissioner of Dacca, 9 December, 1887. Circular No. 35 Agri.
28. Letter from the Collector of Dhaka to the Sub-divisional Officer of Narayanganj, 16 April, 1888. Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room.
29. Report of W. Rattray, 4 May, 1888. Dhaka District Collectorate Record Room.
30. Rai Saheb Pandit Chandrika Prasad, A Manual of Agricultural Co-operative in Denmark and Hints for its Adoption in India, (Ajmeer, 1917), p. 231.
31. Quoted in Report on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in Bengal, p. 68.