

**SUGGESTIONS ON FRANCHISE
FOR**

The Bengal Presidency

**BY
SRINATH DUTT.**

To

The Chief Secretary to the
Government of Bengal.

SIR,

I have the honour to request you the favour of submitting through their Excellencies the Governor and the Governor-General in Councils the following suggestions on franchise to the Franchise Committee, that have been recently appointed to frame electorates and constituencies to advance Constitutional Reforms in British India.

"DILKUSHA"
Bhowanipur,
Calcutta.
October 22, 1918.

I have the honour to be

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

SRINATH DUTT.

Senior Gilchrist Scholar of
the year 1871.

Recipient of Coronation
Certificate of Honour for
Loyalty.

First Manager of National
Tea Company, Assam.

Late Honorary Magistrate
and Municipal Commis-
sioner in Burdwan, (1897-
1901).

Late Manager and Assistant
Manager under Court of
Wards for 27 years in Mour-
bhanje State, Burdwan,
Ranchi, Hathua, Calcutta
(Gopal Seal's Estate), &c.,
&c.

Suggestions on Franchise.

A.

Village Committees.

All tax-paying and cess-paying villagers should have the right of voting for members of the Village Committees from amongst themselves. The number of Muslim members should be two-fifths of the total elected members in all divisions, and no member should be nominated.

2. A village unit must consist of an area inhabited by 1,000 persons or 200 house-holds, more or less, and every such unit may elect two leading men (yeoman-farmers) to the Village Committees from amongst cess-paying and tax-paying fellow-villagers. The records of the Village Committees should be kept and proceedings and correspondence be maintained in the Vernacular.

3. Ten village-units or 10,000 people may be placed under a single Village Committee. There will be about 50 such Village Committees in a Sub-Division of about 500,000 people.

4. All present and past members of the Village Committees should be endowed with direct votes for electing members to the provincial Legislative Assembly.

B.

Provincial Legislative Assembly.

5. There should be 150 elected members in the Assembly of the Bengal Presidency. They should meet

their constituents once every six months during first 12 years. Two-thirds of them or 100 members should be elected by $42\frac{1}{2}$ millions of the rural population, and one-third or 50 members by learned men and the 3 millions living in towns, including British Europeans and Eurasians.

C.

Rural Areas.

6. Every Sub-Division should be considered an electoral unit, returning one member to the Provincial Assembly.

7. The rural constituents should be,

(a) All members of the Village Committees and

(b) All past members of the Village Committees, Circle Boards and District Boards, residing within the limits of the Sub-Division outside towns. The direct voters will thus increase automatically.

8. The number of constituents in no single constituency should exceed 1,000 during the first six years; 2,000 during the second 6 years; and 5,000 afterwards at the rate of two, four, and ten per thousand of population. Male literates are already over 110 per thousand in rural areas.

9. Two-fifths of the elected members should be Mussalmans in rural areas in all Divisions and be elected by rural constituencies with general electoral roll under para 232 of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, unless the

Mussalmans give up at any time the proportion fixed for them by the Congress-League Scheme for Bengal.

10. If the Zemindars be granted special electorates, those electorates should include all persons whose names are found in Collectorate Register "A" for revenue paying Mahals. It will be open to a Zemindar to decline a place in a special electorate.

11. Persons in special electorates of Zemindars, Mussalmans and Englishmen should have no place in the general electoral roll, and will be disqualified to be representatives of rural areas in the general interest.

12. The number of Zemindar representatives should not exceed 10; 1 for Chittagong Division, 3 for Presidency Division, 2 for each of the Burdwan, Rajshahi and Dacca Divisions.

13. Of the 10 Zemindar representatives, 4 should be Mussalmans.

14. The electors should not be restricted in their choice of members, except that during the first six years they should elect one residing in the Sub-Division; during the second six years one residing in the District, and afterwards in the Division.

15. The Zemindars and Europeans who elect special Zemindar and European representatives will be disqualified to become members of rural constituencies.

D.

Town Areas and Learned Bodies.

16. One-third of the elected members (50) should be

allowed to towns and learned bodies and be distributed thus :—

17. I. (a) 15 members to represent British and Eurasians Merchants, tradesmen, planters, miners missionaries, mill-owners, and lawyers. Franchise is to be given to individuals and not to associations. Eurasians born of the loins of the Britons are Britons by nationality.

(b) 5 members to be elected by working-men of mills, factories driven by steam power, and by labourers and coolies on tea gardens, sugar and indigo factories and mines, and by Khalasis on boards the steamers and railways.

(c) Europeans will be disqualified to vote for non-European members or to represent non-European ratepayers of towns.

N. B.—In case it is considered undesirable to enfranchise mill-hands and tea-garden coolies now, these members may be added to the Governor's nomination of non-officials, or may be added to representatives of British community temporarily. (*Vide* paragraphs 20 and 21.).

18. II. 20 Members are to be elected by rate-payers (and not by commissioners) of Municipalities of towns in the following manner :—

(i) 8 by Calcutta ; 2 by each District.

(ii) 1 by Howrah.

(iii) 1 by Dacca—Narainganj.

(iv) 3 by towns of the Presidency Division.

(v) 2 by towns of the Burdwan Division.

- (vi) 2 by towns of the Dacca Division.
- (vii) 2 by towns of Rajshahye Division.
- (viii) 1 by towns of the Chittagong Division.

19. In no case should the individual constituents be less than 2,000 or 3,000 persons in any Municipal constituency during the first 12 years. The electorates for the Assembly shall be distinct from those for Municipalities. Marwari and Bengalee merchants should seek representation through urban electorates. Special electorates (which are necessary evils) should not be multiplied or made permanent.

III. Various (10 members) Learned Bodies.

- (a) 4 by special Musalman interest or electorates, each of 5,000 voters (learned men, Mullahs, Ulemas, &c.).
- (b) 1 by the Senate of the Calcutta University.
- (c) 3 by the graduates of the University, 2 Hindu and 1 Mahomedan.
- (d) 2 by Professors and title-holders of Sanskrit Tols recognised by Government.

E.

Government Nomination.

20. If the Governor should nominate 40 members
13 should be non-officials and
13 should be officials, while,
14 members should be *ex-officio*.

Please see N. B. in paragraph 17, *ante*

21. Any special representation for backward and special classes, and any expert members, not provided for in

the rural and urban electorates named above, should be arranged for from the Governor's reserve of 13 or 18 nominated non-officials, with full powers to vote in any way they please.

F.

Restriction on Choice of Members.

22. Electors of Calcutta should be at liberty to elect any resident of Bengal. Electors of Muffasil towns should be restricted in their choice of members to the residents of the Division in which the town lies

Safeguard against break-down.

23. The danger of an excessive number of direct voters, leading to the breakdown of the electoral machinery, should be guarded against, while indirect elections should be done away with as far as possible. As the members and chairmen of Village Committees are persons, who live and reside and socially mix with other cess-paying villagers, the evil of indirect elections will be reduced to a minimum in their cases. As all rural cess-payers cannot be admitted now to the electoral roll of the Legislative Assembly, the direct voters should be men who live amongst them and *belong to them and are trusted by them*. The present and past members of the Village Committees would approach this ideal most.

G.

The Indian assembly.

24. The Indian Assembly should consist of 120 members instead of 100, and 90 of them should be elected as

follows by various provinces, instead of 67, as suggested in para 274 of the Report :—

Bengal Presidency	...	14	instead of 11.
Madras	„	14	„ 11.
Bombay	„	14	„ 11.
The United Provinces	...	14	„ 10.
The Punjab...	...	9	„ 7.
Behar and Orissa	...	9	„ 7.
The Central Provinces	...	6	„ 5.
Burmah	...	6	„ 3.
Assam	...	3	„ 2. and
Delhi	...	1	„ nil.
Total	*	90	67

25. The following constituencies may elect 14 members proposed above to be allotted to Bengal :—

- (a) 4 members by the present and past *Chairmen* of Village Committees of 4 Divisions, Dacca and Chittagong being treated as one.
- (b) 1 member by 5,000 leading rate-payers of Calcutta barring Europeans and Eurasians.
- (c) 1 member by the present and past Commissioners of other Municipalities.
- (d) 2 members (one Hindu and one Mahomedan) by the leading Zemindars (land-revenue paid by a voter exceeding Rs. 500 a year).
- (e) 2 members by the leading Mahomedans, an electorate not to exceed 5,000 for each member, one for Burdwan and Presidency Divisions and

another for Rájshahye, Dacca and Chittagong Divisions.

(f) 2 members by the British (not European) and Eurasian merchants, planters lawyers, &c., paying income-tax on Rs. 2,000 and over. No Chamber or Association, but individuals with right of direct voting should have the franchise in these constituencies.

(g) 1 member by Bengalee merchants and mill-owners, paying Income-tax on Rs. 2,000 and over, in Calcutta, Howrah, Cossipur, Chitpur and Maniktallah.

(h) 1 member by the Senate of the Calcutta University.

26. Four or five members to represent the cultivating and pastoral classes should be elected by the Chairmen of Village Committees, who will be always men of substance—yeoman-farmers, lakhirajdars (freeholders), ayámdars and jotedars. The Zemindars of the zemindary electorates should no more represent cultivators than the mill-owners should represent the mill-hands, or the planters should this tea-garden coolies.

27. Except for the British and Eurasians and the Zemindars and the Mussalmans, caste or class-electorate are very difficult to organise in Bengal. Franchise should not be given to Chambers of Commerce, Trades Associations or Anglo-Indian Leagues, as that would emphasize and combine all the evils of plutocracy and oligarchy, but to individuals or individual firms, from whom Income-tax is collected. The determination of the English and

Eurasian merchants and tradesmen to have their representatives elected by men of their own nationality is a great misfortune both for them and the Indian community, as it will not only perpetuate but widen in every respect the gulf that separates Englishmen in India from Indians. While Indians are reducing the number of castes in India, Englishmen will be adding to it.

H.

There is Little of Caste Untouchableness in Bengal.

28. As to the Hindus of Bengal, owing to six hundred years of Muslim rule, preponderance of the Muslim population, 150 years of English domination and 60 years of University education which has extended more in this Presidency than in any other, not to mention teachings of Sri Chaitanya and Keshub Chunder Sen, caste rules are practically confined to marriage. So-called touchable and untouchable castes have worked and voted together in the British Indian Association of Zemindars and in the National Bengal Chamber of Commerce. The Brahmins and Sunris have jointly elected members of District Boards, Municipalities and Legislative Council these 30 years. Touchables and untouchables attend the same College to-day. There is hardly a caste which does not live by four or five callings, as subsidiary Table VIII of the Bengal Census Report testifies; there is hardly a large family which has not a subsidiary calling as Table XV goes to prove; and there is no principal calling, which is not followed

by a large section of all the large castes. For instance, the calling of cultivation or farming is followed by—

22·5 per cent. of Baishnabs (nearly half a million).

22·4 per cent. of Brahmins (priest) (over a million).

36·0 per cent. of Dhoba (washermen) (one third of a million).

37·6 per cent. of Goalas (milkmen) (half a million).

34·0 per cent. of Jogi (weavers) (over one third million).

76·0 per cent. of Kaibartya Chasi (over two millions).

74·2 per cent. of Baruis (nearly a fifth of a million).

26·2 per cent. of Jalia (fishermen) (a third of a million).

36·7 per cent. of Kayasthas (writers) (over a million).

40·9 per cent. of Namasudras (boatmen) (over million and a half).

80·0 per cent. of Rajbansi (a million and a half).

52·1 per cent. of Tili (oil pressers and sellers) (nearly half a million).

81·0 per cent. of Sad-gops (half of a million).

15·2 per cent. of Chamars and Muchis (cobblers) (one third of a million).

36·1 per cent. of Bagdis (agricultural labourers) (over a million).

43·4 per cent. of Indian Christians (about 83,000).

I.

The Electoral Units for Bengal.

29. So a class-electorate for the agricultural community practically means a general electoral roll for all the castes in rural areas. Of the Brahmins 22 per cent. are cultivators; 20 per cent. priests; 15 per cent. landlords;

7 per cent tradesmen; 5 per cent. professional; 4 per cent. contractors; and 27 per cent. domestic servants etc. Neither caste units nor class or calling units will do in Bengal. No other units than territorial units with a general roll are therefore feasible or practicable for this Presidency, except for the Zemindars, English community and the Mussalmans.

30. There are 84 Sub-Divisions which are likely to be raised to 100 in accordance with the suggestion of the Bengal District Administration Committee Report; and there are 385 thanas or revenue units, which are likely to become head-quarters of Circle Boards under Village Self-government Act. As we cannot expect more than 150 elected members in the Legislative Assembly at the start, or more than 100 elected members for the rural areas, a Sub-Division will necessarily be the smallest territorial unit for "single" constituencies for the present.

J.

Special Mussalman Electorates not indispensable.

31. If 20 Sub-Divisions be retained as "single" constituencies, and 80 Sub-Divisions be turned into 40 double constituencies, of which one elected member must be a Mussalman, the necessity of separate electorates for the Mussalmans disappears. Similarly two-fifths of the Zemindars representatives should be Mussalmans. Of the three representatives proposed for graduates, one should be a Mussalman. There is nothing easier in Bengal than to arrange proportionate representation of the Mussalmans for the Provincial Assembly without separate electorates.

32. Proportionate representation of the Mussalmans is the substance and separate electorates are the mere shadow of the Mussalman demand for adequate representation in the elected Legislative Councils. A general electoral roll will save the trouble of a separate set of polling booths, one at every Sub-Divisional town, if the proportionate number of Muslim members, fixed by the Congress-League Negotiation, be reserved in plural constituencies. This can be arranged for one or two castes at a place or polling station or constituency, but not for every caste, as suggested at the end of Para. 232 of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. This can be easily arranged ~~for rural areas and~~ for the Mussalman Zemindars and graduates.

33. The Zemindars that have special representatives in the Indian Assembly should be disqualified for membership on behalf of rural constituencies, Hindu and Muslim.

K.

Intelligence and Literacy of rural classes.

34. The rural direct voters should not just now on account of their vast numbers exceed 1 to 3 per thousand of the people, and the male literates in the vernacular exceeded 110 per mile in 1911, and must be much larger to-day. There were found 8 years ago amongst the *cultivators* ("Actual workers." Appendix in Table XVI,) alone 7,902 Hindus and 9,775 Mussalmans, literate in English—a sufficient number to carry on the Magistrate's and Munsiff's work of the Village Committees. Male literates in English likely exceed 250,000 in rural areas of Bengal. The rural people understand, and are sensible enough to mind, their

own business, and cannot be misled more than the communities of small farmers and cottage-artisans in any other country of the world, when choosing their representatives for Legislative Assembly.

L.

Minimum Representation of Villages.

35. I submit that the rural people keep up the *Zemindars* and their cousins in affluence, contribute most to the revenue of Government and maintain the vast export and import trade on which rests the prosperity of the European commercial and trading communities, by supplying raw-produces and consuming imported articles. They form the overwhelming majority of the total population. Two-thirds of the total elected members of the Provincial Assembly must therefore appear to all reasonable and right-minded men as the *minimum* number of members that should be allotted to the agricultural, pastoral, industrial and trading classes—18 millions of the Hindus and 24 millions of the Mussalmans—that live in rural areas of Bengal.

M.

The Danger of Under-representation.

36. Otherwise you (The Franchise Committee) will confirm and strengthen an obnoxious town oligarchy in the Assembly, which it will be difficult to mend or end, when it has once taken root. You may extend, and are bound to extend, rural franchise *gradually*, as education spreads, but you should from the very start give the rural popula-

tion—the yeoman-farmers and artisans—the right of electing the major share—two-thirds at any rate—of the total elected members. No price that the Government may pay is too high to prevent the growing evil of the rural people looking up to towns—specially Calcutta—for political guidance. This evil will grow, unless the rural population be given the minimum share of representatives that I have ventured to suggest.

37. I may finally add that in pleading for a fair share of representatives for the rural and agricultural community, I plead for those to whom I belong by birth.

SRINATH DUTT.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN INDIA ARE CASTE ELECTORATES PRACTICABLE IN BENGAL ?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "ENGLISHMAN."

Sir—In my letter to the *Englishman* on special representation of the Muhamedans of Bengal I suggested that a Sub-Division should be the minimum electoral unit just now in the Bengal Presidency, when Government will not possibly sanction more than 100 or 110 elected members for the 42½ Millions of people that live in rural areas.

According to the latest Civil List of Bengal we have 28 districts, 84 Sub-Divisions and 381 thanas or revenue units. In order to prevent false personation that is made easy by bringing voters a long way from home, the territorial unit of a thana would suit Bengal better; the average area would be about 125 sq. miles with a population of 125,000 and a tax-paying electorate of 5,000 to 8,000 persons. They could come to the polling station and return home for breakfast or dinner.

But this is not feasible just now; we cannot expect 381 elected members for rural areas, unless 500 members are allowed to be elected for the whole Presidency.

Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu have laid down in para 228 of their joint Report :—

"We consider in the first place that the system of indirect elections should be swept away. It is one main cause of the unreality that characterizes the existing.

councils, because it effectually prevents the representatives feeling that he stands in any genuine relation to the voter."

We have now a quadruple system of election. The leading village people elect members of Local Boards, the members of Local Boards elect members of the District Boards, the members of District Boards elect delegates, the delegates elect members of the Provincial Councils and finally members of the Provincial Councils elect the members of the India Legislative Council. This is the essence of the Minto-Morley reforms. This travesty of election system is naturally revolting to every Englishman, high and low.

But Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu have "been warned against any such inordinate and sudden extension of the franchise, as might lead to a break down of the machinery through sheer weight of numbers."

My submission is that you cannot sweep away absolutely the system of indirect elections at once—at the very start—but may reduce it from the fifth degree to the second degree by endowing with direct votes the members of village committees, elected by the cess-paying and tax-paying villagers *from amongst themselves*. These members or mandals always live amongst their constituents and have some knowledge of budget estimates, etc., when managing the affairs of the village committees. A constituency consisting of about 1,000 of these members—one for each Sub-Division—will be of manageable size. The cess-paying and tax-paying villagers will at the same time be secured control over the management of village committees, with

which they are deeply and daily concerned, by being given the right of electing their members on them.

Against this system of territorial units in which the cess-paying persons of all *castes and classes* in the Sub-Division will join in voting with a general electoral roll, there is the counter proposal of *caste-electorates*. At one time I was in favour of it ; but a close examination of the way, in which even a small caste is scattered over a vast area and which makes it difficult to bring the voters together without conniving at false personation, has led me to abandon the idea.

Mr. O'Malley gives in para 519 of his Bengal Census Report of 1911, a list of 37 castes, who suffer from what he calls "religious disabilities" and includes into this list respectable castes like the Subarnabaniks of Calcutta and Shahas of Dacca. One "disability" is that a caste is served by a set of priests different from those that serve the Brahmins or Kayasthas. In that case an Anglican Protestant is under a "religious disability" because he is not ministered to by a Roman Catholic priest. The Brahmin and the Subarnabanik alike offer poojah at Kalighat and burn their dead at Nimtolla Ghaut, but the Anglican and the Roman Catholic have different burial places and distinct places for worship. I mention this to point out the great unfairness of placing the Subarnabanik, the Shaha and other respectable castes in the same list with the Doms, Haris etc., on the excuse of service by different priests or attending different temples.

Mr. O'Malley, however, does not call them "depressed" or "oppressed" or "downtrodden."

If you or your readers will kindly refer to table XIII of Part I of the last Census Report, you will find how the Namasudras (2,000,000), Bagdis (1,015,000), Muchis and Chamars (550,000), etc., are to be found in almost every District of Bengal. So if you go for caste electorate for every "disabled" caste mentioned by Mr. O'Malley, you must have 37 separate polling stations at almost every Sub-Divisional town.

You cannot possibly expect more than 130 or 150 elected members for 45 millions of the people. If you go by population only, you cannot have more than one entire member for one-third of a million people. So the castes that number less than 330,000 will have no place in the electoral scheme. This means exclusion of the Brahmos, Baidyas, Subarnabaniks and Indian Christians of Bengal (the four most literate castes in the Presidency both in the vernacular and English) from the proposed Reform Scheme. I am sure you do not mean to punish them for their literacy. Kindly refer to Table XIII to find out how many of the castes who suffer from Mr. O'Malley's *religious disabilities* and who supply labour to Tea Gardens, Indigo Factories, Railways, Jute and other Mills and Steamers, managed with English capital, will be excluded from the franchise, when you in India and the Indo-British in London are demanding caste electorate for them with the earnestness of John Bright and Joseph Arch of our younger days.

I shall be told that when a caste claims a smaller population than what would entitle it to an *entire* member, let us combine two or more castes until their numbers exceed the minimum limit to which one member will be allotted. I

put it to you whether that would not defeat the very object of caste electorates? You urge that the interests of castes in the Legislative Assembly are hostile and therefore they should have separate caste electorates, and in the next breath you add that they may be clubbed together, because any system of caste electorates is impracticable with the small number of elected members placed at your disposal by Government and with the small size of over 75 per cent. of the castes.

Castes electorates are therefore impracticable now, because the castes are so many, because each of them is so widely scattered, and because the number of elected members is so small.

You must have gathered from the presidential speech of the Rajah of Mahmudabad at the Special Sessions of the Muslin League at Bombay that the Mussalmans have likely abandoned *special electorates* for their community and have gone only for *proportionate* communal representation as settled by the Congress League compact at Lucknow, very likely out of deference to the opinion of Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu. This is very significant. The Mussalmans have then voluntarily relieved Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu from a very awkward position, in which they had been left by the solemn pledges of their predecessors, Lords Minto and Morley. Here is a practical instance of a "deadlock" being quietly removable by the goodness of a great political party.

If you would excuse introduction of my personal experience, I may tell you that I was first Manager of the National Tea Co., in Darrang from 1877 to 1883 and my

coolies were Bauri, Bagdi, Bhumij, Sontal, Muchi, Chamar etc., the castes and classes that the European's, Association of Calcutta have made up their mind to enfranchise along with the Europeans, Eurasians and Indian Christians. As a quondam tea-planter I venture to request you to consult the Managers of tea estates and employers of labour in jute mills and cotton mills, whether this advocacy of enfranchisement of agricultural and mill labour has their support. More than half a century passed between Lord Johu Russell's First Reform Act and Sir George Traveleyan's Agricultural Labourers' Enfranchisement Act. But you, Englishmen in Bengal, propose to introduce the Managers of tea gardens and their coolies to the Legislative Assembly of Bengal on the very same date. Are you not in too great a hurry to enfranchise the agricultural labourers in Bengal, Behar and Assam? Why not introduce artisans, tradesmen and occupancy cultivators first, and bring in agricultural labourers' 12 years hence?

SRINATH DUTT,

First Manager of the National Tea Co., Assam.

Bhowanipore, Sept. 5, 1918.

YEOMEN TENANTRY OF BENGAL AND RURAL ELECTORATES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "CAPITAL."

SIR,—Would you allow me to invite the attention of your readers who have accepted heartily the announcement of the British Government on 20th August last, about gradual introduction of responsible Government in India,

to the following passage in para. 136 of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms:—

“On the other hand is an enormous country population (42 millions out of 45 millions in the Bengal Presidency) for the most part poor, ignorant, non-politically minded, and unused to any system of elections—immersed indeed in the struggle for existence. The rural classes have the greatest stake in the country, because they contribute most to its revenues; but they are poorly equipped for politics and do not at present wish to take part in them. Among them are a few great landlords and a larger number of Yeoman farmers. They are not ill-fitted to play a part in affairs, but with few exceptions they have not done so.....No one who has observed Indian life during even the past five years can doubt that the growth of political life is rapid and is real.”

The Yeoman tenantry of Bengal is not a mere figment of imagination on the part of Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford. The zemindars and their gumastas call their punyah-patras or leading ryots of old repute, and offer them a pair of clothes and a head-dress once every year when they start rent collection anew, and are bound to give them the further honor of paying rents first. This class of Yeoman cultivators are not recognised by the Police or Magistrates' Agents, who help in the formation of the village panchayet under Chowkidari Act or Village Union under Local Self-Government Act. Then there is a class of stout tenants who are called Mandal or Modol, because they are respected by their fellow villagers, (Ganye mane Modol). They are generally hereditary and

often selected by the people. For a small village there is one, and for a large village more, there being one for each pada or tola (section of it). The Police and the Magistrates' Agents do try to put them in the Village Panchayet and Village Unions mentioned above.

So the village yeomanry is not dead or without influence even to day. A village yeoman may be an owner of small zemindaries, or free-hold (lakhraj) lands or of rent-paying tenures, which he cultivates partly with hired labour and of which he lets out the rest. He may be of any caste from the Brahmin to the Namasudra, so the punyah-patras (leading tenants of the zemindars) and the Mandals or leading men of villages do not represent any particular class or community. All castes, classes and creeds of rural areas are represented through them. All of them are not exclusively cultivators or exclusively handicraftsmen or professional or trading men. In villages all crafts and callings—cultivation, trading, handicrafts, etc.,—are often to be found in many families, and are certainly followed by most of the leading ryots and Mandals.

The system of election or selection of Panchayets and Village Unions during the last 40 years under the Chowkidari Act and Local Self-Government Act has made the rural yeomanry familiar with election system, as it is they who are mostly members of those institutions which impose Chowkidari cess and collect and spend it for improvement of villages which they represent.

If you will agree to start with these Mandals or leading

ryots as your first electorates for village areas, you shall, I think, meet with fewer difficulties than otherwise.

I shall take a Sub-Division, of which there are about 84 now and will be 100 or 105 later on in the Bengal Presidency. The average population of a Sub-Division is about 500,000 divided into 100,000 families more or less; of this number, nearly a half or 50,000 families will be found paying cesses of some kind or other. Now if there be 500* Village Unions in a Sub-Division, there will be formed out of them about 50 Village Committees under Sir S. P. Sinha's village Self-Government Bill, when it becomes Act with 3 Circle Boards. For every village union of 1,000 people, 200 families and 100 cess-payers, we may have 2 mandals or yeomen elected first to represent them on the Village Committee, the lowest rung in the ladder of Local Self-Government institutions. There will be 1,000 mandals or members in a Sub-division—all substantial ryots, trusted and respected by their fellow villagers—gaining experience of public business in miniature from their village committees. Let these 1,000 men return a member to the Provincial Legislative Assembly. If you, Britons, will work in the spirit of sympathy, as our believed Emperor has enjoined, you may frame for every sub-division, a workable electorate that is trusted of the people and that will under proper assistance both from the Indian Civil Service and the educated classes improve every sixth year.

* The average population of a Bengal Village is 332, so three average villages will form a village union, with a population of about 1,000 people. A village with 2,000 people should elect 4 members of a Village Committee.

I say assistance of the Indian Civil Service, because no reform is possible in India without their hearty co-operation. The solemn pledges of Queen Victoria during the Sepoy mutiny failed, because they had not the support of the Indian Civil Service. Lord Ripon's resolutions on Local Self-Government of urban and rural areas nearly failed, because the Indian Civil Service had no heart in improvement of "Local Slough" institutions as they were called by their representatives in the English Press in India. The support which the India Council and the Executive Council of the Viceroy have given to the proposals of Indian Constitutional Reforms leaves one to hope that responsible government both in rural and urban areas as well as in the Provinces, may not be a mere dream now. The rural yeomanry supply more than a half of the youngmen who pass through University tests every year in this Presidency. When you have embraced them in the rural electorates, you shall have secured the hearty support of the educated classes, a major section of whom hail from rural areas. If there be 120 elected members of the Provincial Assumbly at least 80 of them should be elected, one for each of 80 Sub-Divisions of the Presidency, by the leading ryots or mandals or yeomen who enjoy the confidence of villagers.

Srinath Dutt.

APPENDIX.

A.

Distribution of seats for rural areas.

BURDWAN DIVISION.

(19)

		for		Sub-Divisions.
1. Burdwan	4	4		
2. Midnapur	6	6*		"
3. Bankura	2	2		"
4. Birbhum	2	2		"
5. Hoogly	3	3		"
6. Howrah	2	2		"

PRESIDENCY DIVISION.

(22)

1. 24 Perganas	5	5	"
2. Nuddia	5	5	"
3. Murshidabad	4	4	"
4. Jessore	5	5	"
5. Khulna	3	3	"

RAJSHAHYE DIVISION.

(21)

1. Rajshahye	3	3	"
2. Malda	1	3	"

* According to recommendations of the Bengal District Administration Committee.

3. Dinajpur	3	"	3	Sub-Divisions.
4. Darjeeling	4	"	4	"
5. Jalpaiguri	2	"	2	"
6. Rangpur	4	"	4	"
7. Bagra	1	"	1	"
8. Pabna	3	"	3	"

DACCA DIVISION.

(25)

1. Mymensing	9	"	9*	"
2. Dacca	6	"	6*	"
3. Backergange	6	"	6*	"
4. Faridpur	4	"	4	"

CHITTAGONG DIVISION.

(10)

1. Chittagong	2	"	2	"
2. Noakhali	2	"	2	"
3. Tepperah	5	"	5*	"
4. Hill Tracts	1	"	1	"

B.

Distribution of seats for ^{urban} ~~upper~~ areas.

1. Calcutta ... 8 at 2 for each District.
2. Howrah ... 1
3. Midnapur, Bankura,
Jehanabad ... 1
4. Burdwan, Berbhum
and Hoogly minus
Jehanabad ... 1

5. 24 Perganas ... 1
6. Nuddia and Murshidabad ... 1
7. Jessore and Khulna ... 1
8. Dacca, Naraingange ... 1
9. Mymunsing and rest of Dacca ... 1
10. Faridpur and Backergange ... 1
11. Rajshahye, Malda, Dinajpur and Darjeeling ... 1
12. Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Pabna and Bogra ... 1
13. Chittagong, Tepperah and Noakhali ... 1

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY P. C. DASS, AT THE KUNTALINE PRESS,
61, BOWBAZAR STREET, CACCUTTA.