APPENDIX - VII

Memorial by the Zamindars of Goalpara personally presented by them to H.E. Lord., Chelmsford, VICE ROY, at Amingaon, Assam, 1920.

To

H.E. The Hon'ble, Federik John Napier Thesiger, Baron Chelmsford, Viceroy and Governor General of India,

May it please your Excellency,

1. We, the few Zamindars who have the honour of waiting on your Excellency, beg respectfully to extend on behalf of all our fellow Zamindars of Goalpara, a most hearty and cordial welcome to you. Your august presence amongst us to day gives us another opportunity to repeat our deep loyalty and devotion to the person and throne of H.M. The King Emperor and Y.R.'s Govt. This is, if we mistake not, the third occasion in the course of almost half a century when a Viceroy has condescended to give Assam the honour of an official visit. Our humble selves would certainly have been happier had we been able to welcome Y.R. in our own District. That, we presume, is more than we can hope for and we beg your Excellency's leave to permit us to offer our most respectful thanks for having graciously consented doubtless at great personal
inconvenience, to receive a deputation from us at this place.

2. Few as we are, the shortness of time has not enable all of those few even to join in this deputation. Although but six families, we represent the whole of the district of what we call Goalpara proper, about two-thirds of the Dist. as constituted after the Bhutan War. The present occasion hardly gives us an opportunity to lay our grievances fully before Y.E. and we trust that should we be unable to convince you of the justice of our cause and sincerity of our prayer second hearing may be conceded to us at Calcutta during your usual Cold Weather stay in that place.

3. The Reform Scheme was conceived in the spirit of bestowing a boon to the just aspiration of the people of India but we have been in great apprehension and passing a most anxious time in view of its effect on our humble selves— the few permanently settled Zaminars in Goalpara. When we submitted our first Memorial to Y.E. in March, 1919, it was with a full knowledge of the pronounced opinion expressed in the Reform Report that territorial redistribution should not precede or accompany the reforms. We sought to point out in that Memorial that we had absolutely no chances of redress after the reforms are instituted and
it is to emphasise to the point that we have ventured to
trouble Y.E. again on this occasion.

4. We came to learn of Y.E’s views about our
Memorial for the first time, in the Ninth Despatch.
we respectfully beg to submit that the information before
the Hon’ble the C.C. at that time, which led him to con­
clude that there was no evidence about any general desire
for a transfer was neither full, nor are we aware of
any special inquiry having been made on the subject.

5. May we now be permitted, in the very short
time at our disposal, to place only a very few of our
humble submissions in connection with the opinion expres­
ased in the letter of the Govt. of Assam, No. 356 W., Ut.
Shillong, the 12th March, 1919. We could not have thought
it necessary to dwell on the other Memorials submitted by
Babu Hariprasad Nath and 505 other mentioned in the Govt.
letter above referred to, had it not appeared that the
Hon’ble the C.C. was perhaps influenced to some extent
by that memorial in coming to the conclusion that there
is no general desire in his Dist. for a transfer to Bengal.
We do not know if the Hon’ble C.C. has changed his views
on the subject subsequently on receipt of a counter memo­rial submitted by Mahamopadhya Sri Adyanath Maya Bhusan,
Lakherajdar and 6863 others of this Dist. If not, we
would most respectfully submit that he may be pleased to
give us a full opportunity of exposing the inaccuracies and misstatements contained in the Goalpara Memorial referred to above (submitted by Babu Hariprasad Nath & Ors).

6. Reverting to para 1 of the letter referred to in which our memorial is stated to have been submitted by "certain" Zamindars of Goalpara, we beg to state that the memorial was signed by all the Zamindars excepting one share holder out of 12 in the Mechpara Estate. When however we recall the fact that the Ranee of Bijnee during her life time had joined us, in all these movements we may assert that the signatories practically represented all the Zamindars of the Dist. of Goalpara. We may be permitted to add here that when we submitted the memorial to Your E. we did so with full consciousness of our duties and responsibilities.

7. It is needless to touch on the statements in our memorial which are admitted as correct as regards the comments contained in the letter on para 11-15 of our memorial.

8. With reference to para 3 of the letter commenting on para 16 of our memorial, it would come to light that all wanted to be placed under the same administration and laws as in the North Bengal Districts.
9. We would presently discuss our hopeless position in Assam under the Reformed Govt. and several other benefits which might come to us under the same scheme in Bengal.

11. The Reformed Council is to consist of 52 members. The Govt. of Assam is opposed to a special electorate of the Zamindars from the beginning and although the Franchise Committee recommended 2 seats with a special electorate for the landholders, Y.E. did not accept them. In the Reformed Report it is stated that—"where the great landholders formed a distinct class in any province we wish that there will be case for giving them an electorate of their own" the Govt. of Assam, while admitting our humble selves to belong to the class of "Great Landholders" is unable to recommend a special electorate for us for our numerical inferiority and is of opinion that we should stand for election by the general electorate and should we fail one of us would be nominated wherever an important Bill connected with the dist. is about to be discussed.

The Local Govt. would not exclude any community from representation on the Council for their numerical inferiority but would not extend the same concession in the case of our humble selves. Although the principle of communal
representation was condemned in the Reform Report, it has nevertheless been introduced for various reasons—one of which undoubtedly is the need of special representation for important minorities. Then again while Y.E.'s Govt. would encourage the small Zamindars to feel themselves part of the ordinary electorate, the Govt. of Assam is of opinion that the great Zamindars also should seek elections by the general electorate. The representation of the Zamindars of Goalpara in the Council by nomination, we respectfully submit, will hardly meet our requirements and a nominated member may not be really representative of our interest nor have that sense of responsibility, freedom or carry the same confidence which a member elected by us, will have.

12. While considering the recommendations of the Franchise Committee about special representation of the landholders, Y.E. was pleased to state that you would like to re-examine with the local Govt. the proposal for Assam. When the final announcement about the composition of the Assam Council was made we found to our dismay that the recommendation of the F.C. for 2 elected members for the landholders of Assam have been overruled by Y.E. Our humble selves were given no opportunity of placing our case before either the local Govt. or before Y.E. and our claims to a special electorate were once more passed
over just as it had happened during the inauguration of the Assam Council in 1912. During the Eastern Bengal and Assam Council we got special representation along with the Zamindars of Bengal. When however the province of Assam got the boon of Legislative Council of her own under the Morley-Minto Scheme, the Zamindars not only got no special representation but were merged with the Govt. White Mahal Landholders notwithstanding their protests. And now just when we were hoping for our grievances to be removed, our existence as Zamindar has been completely wiped out of consideration under the Reform Scheme. This came as a rude shock to us and caused keen disappointment as we had felt sure that we would have atleast a special electorate of our own. We are not aware what reasons weighed with Your E. in coming to this decision that of numerical inferiority or because Y.E. did not accept the view of the local govt. that our humble selves belonged to the category of Great Zamindars. The result is that in the reformed Council in Assam, the Zamindars, would be without a single representative of their class and in such a Council how would it be possible for us, either to protect our special interest or to ventilate our grievances. If any legislative measure is introduced in such a Council, the members would be either different or opposed to our interests and what is more keenly felt is that few could be expected to do full justice to the intricacies of land tenures foreign
to them. Goalpara has conflicting interests peculiar to the Zamindars and the several grades of tenantry requiring separate representation by each; and it is that dist. which has been treated just like all other districts of the Assam Valley where the interests of all the electorate are almost identical.

13. We have stated before that the grievances enumerated in para 18 of our first memorial would be removed by our transfer to Bengal and there would then be so many benefits bestowed on us by the transfer. In the reformed Bengal Council the Zamindars will be represented by a number of the ablest members of our class. Besides the special representative of the Zamindar Class there are bound to be some members from the other constituencies as well. The officials and members from the general electorate would be experts in Bengal land tenures and even European members representing Commerce and Industries—in fact each of the members in that Council could be conversant with the laws and peculiar interests of all classes and grades of tenants.

14. When again we come to the composition of the legislative Assembly and the Council of State, we find no representation in any of them for the land holders of Assam. In Bengal, on the other hand, there would be representatives of land holders in the Legislative Assembly as well as in the Council of State. Many of the Legislative
Enactments affecting ourselves will be decided in the Legislative Assembly where our case would be well represented from Bengal where as if we are in Assam, we will have absolutely no chances of even being heard.

15. The benefits by our transfer to Bengal would not only come to the Zamindars but to all grades of Raiyats, who have every chance of being returned to the Bengal Council by the general electorates, for the reason of their being educated and advancement from each grade of tenantry who would carry the confidence of the electors and be competent to ably represent the need of their classes. Thus, rather than not having any chance of being benefited by our transfer to Bengal we along with our tenantry would benefit at every stage, have our past grievances removed, be able to share fully in the blessings conferred by the Reform Scheme and reap all the advantages of association with the much advanced neighbours of our own class.

16. It is admitted that historically and ethnologically we differ considerably from the rest of Assam and it is but too true that we get little charity from them. Goalpara proper was transferred against the wishes of its people in 1874 and the prayer for transfer had been repeated from time to time when ever occasion had arisen. Yet in the former regime of Assam, our position was better in as much as it were possible to gain the ears of a Govt.
who had powers to protect our rights and confer benefits; but now after the new regime our fate will be in the hands of Govt. bound by constitution to ministers and members of Council, who cannot be expected either to appreciate the need of a minority who are not considered important enough for any special consideration or to do justice to questions requiring special knowledge and experience.

17. The Premier Associations in Bengal representing the Zamindars viz.,—The British Indian Association and the Bengal Landholders' Association, claim ourselves as belonging to their class and prayed for our reunion with them. We are eager to join them not only for sentiment alone but for numerous and grave reasons, some of which we have striven to lay before. We earnestly beseech Y.E. to pause to consider the treatment accorded to us in the matter of representation in the Council, from the time of the partition of Bengal up to the present time and see how our claims have been considered to be of less and less importance at every succeeding stage. Would it, under these circumstances, be strange or unreasonable if we apprehend that our very existence as permanently settled Zamindars would be gradually wiped out and merged into the Khas Mahal? The western and southern portion of the Dist. is the most thickly populated and we ensure to repeat that a public enquiry by a specially appointed Commission would disclose what the popular desire is.
18. It is with humble pride that we respectfully assure Y.E. that the instinct of loyalty is part of our nature. We have always done our best to cooperate with Govt. in every direction in which our humble services have been sought. We have always striven to do our best to spread education, give relief to the sick, foster good relations and ameliorate generally the condition of the tenantry in our care. This is now a critical period for our humble selves when we seek your E's protection. It is in your gift under the old Act to transfer our portion of the Dist. to Bengal. If we are able to convince Y.E. about the sincerity of our prayers, the truth of our statements and the validity of our reasons— as we hope to do should a fuller opportunity be given to us— may we not hope that Y.E. would be graciously pleased to consider whether the protection of the rights and interests of a helpless minority, the representatives of a few ancient families of great Zamindars entrusted to Y.E.'s care, if not of greater concern than that of having to take the trouble of readjusting administrative inconveniences? The Upper Dists. would not support a proposal for the special representation of the Zamindars (vide proceedings of special sitting of the Assam Legislative Council for the consideration of Reform Scheme). At the same time they opposed the transfer of this Dist. with a vehemence which is startling (vide Appendix IV, 9th
... despatch). Thus they would neither care to see that our special interests are protected in this province, nor approve of our going to Bengal where our interests would be safer. We have absolute faith in British justice and we appeal to Y.E. that we may not be sacrificed for the sake of others through no fault of our own.

19. The unique privilege of placing one's grievances before the august presence of the representative of the King Emperor, occurs but seldom in a man's life; we are fortunate that such a chance has come to us and that near our own homes by your high sense of duty which must have actuated Y.E. to take up this arduous tour at great personal discomfort and sacrifice. We crave Y.E.'s indulgence if we have exceeded the limit of decorum and propriety or took more of your time than could be conveniently spared for us. Our only excuse and justification are that hard pressed as we are, we could not resist the temptation of taking this opportunity of freely open in our heart before Y.E. in the sure hope that our prayer would receive your personal attention ... ...

AMINGAON The 13th Nov. 1920

Sd/- Raja P.C. Barua and Others.