APPENDIX - VIII

Extract from Bengal Regulation II of 1793, Passed on the 1st of May, 1793—The Assam Code, Calcutta, 1896, pp. 13-15,

Preamble: The Objective of the Permanent Settlement.

The objectives of the Permanent Settlement were summarised in the preamble to the Bengal Regulation:

"In the British territories in Bengal, the greater part of the materials required for the numerous and valuable manufactures, and most of the other principal articles of export, are the produce of the lands, it follows that the commerce, and consequently the wealth, of the country must increase in proportion to the extension of its agriculture."
But it is not for commercial purposes alone that the encouragement of agriculture is essential to the welfare of these provinces.

The Hindu who form the body of the people, are compelled, by the dictates of the religion, to depend solely upon the produce of the lands for subsistence, and the generality of such of the lower orders of the Natives as are not of that persuasion, are, from habit or necessity, in a similar predicament.

The extensive failure or destruction of the crops that occasionally arise from drought or inundation is the consequence invariably followed by famine, the ravages of which are felt chiefly by the cultivators of the soil and the manufacturers, from whose labours the country derives both its subsistence and wealth.

Experience having evinced that adequate supplies of grain are not obtainable from abroad in seasons of scarcity, the country must necessarily continue subject to these calamities, until the proprietors and cultivators of the land shall have the means of increasing the number of the reservoirs, embankments and other artificial works, by which, to a great degree, the untimely cessation of the periodical rains may be provided against and the lands protected from inundation, and as a necessary consequence the stock of grain in the country at large shall always be sufficient to supply those occasional, but less extensive, deficiencies in the annual produce, which may be expected to occur,
notwithstanding the adoption of the above precautions to obviate them.

To effect these improvements in agriculture, which must necessarily be followed by the increase of every article of produce, has accordingly been one of the primary objects to which the attention of the British Administration has been directed in its arrangements for the internal Government of these Provinces.

As being the two fundamental measures essential to the attainment of it, the property in the soil has been declared to be vested in the landholders, and the revenue payable to Government from each estate has been fixed forever.

These measures have at once rendered it the interest of the proprietors to improve their estates, and given them the means of raising the funds necessary for that purpose.

The property in the soil was never formally declared to be vested in the landholders, nor were they allowed to transfer such rights as they did possess or raise money upon the credits of their tenures, without the previous sanction of Government.

With respect to the public demand upon each estate, it was liable to annual or frequent variation at the discretion of Government.

The amount of it was fixed upon on estimate formed by the public officers of the aggregate of
the rents payable by the raiyats or tenants for each bigha of land in cultivation, of which, after deducting the expenses of collection ten-elevenths were usually considered as the right of the public and the remainder the share of the holder.

Refusal to pay the sum acquired of him was followed by his removal from the management of his lands, and the public dues were either let in farm or collected by an officer of Government, and the abovementioned share of the landholder or such sum as special custom, or the orders of Government, might have fixed, was paid to him by the farmer or from the public treasury.

When the extension of cultivation was productive only of a heavier assessment, and even the possession of the property was uncertain, the hereditary landholder had little inducement to improve his estate, and monied men had no encouragement to embank their capital in the purchase or improvement of land, whilst not only the profit, but the security for the capital itself, was so precarious.

The same causes, therefore, which prevented the improvement of land depreciated its value.