VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN BRITISH INDIA

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WITH A PREFACE

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE object of this preface is simply to acknowledge obligations. My chief debt is to the Professor of Public Administration for his interest in this study and for the great help which I have derived from his extensive knowledge of the ideas and machinery of Local Government. My next obligation is to the Librarian of the India Office and his staff for the abundant facilities which they gave me for access to books and records, and for their kindness and courtesy during the two years I worked there. Among those who have been good enough to help me with suggestions and criticism, I must mention especially Mr. S. C. Hill, late Superintendent of the Imperial Records Office, Calcutta; Mr. R. W. Frazer, Lecturer in Dravidian Languages at the Imperial Institute; and Mr. J. S. Cotton, Editor of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. On village administration in North India, of which my knowledge is to a large extent second-hand, I have had the advantage of some talks with Sir James Wilson and Sir J. M. Douie, which have been distinctly illuminating.

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PREFACE

I HOPE that this little book, which Mr. Matthai has written with so much research and insight, may open the way for many further studies on Indian Local Government.

The fragments of an indigenous Local Government that are still to be traced in Indian village life seem to me full of interest and suggestion. They are, it need hardly be said, easily overlooked. One able collector of long service in Central India informed me that he had been, until a few months before, totally unaware that anything of the sort existed in any of the villages over which he ruled. But being led to make specific inquiries on the subject, he had just discovered, in village after village, a distinctly effective, if somewhat shadowy, local organization, in one or other form of *panchayat*, which was, in fact, now and then giving decisions on matters of communal concern, adjudicating civil disputes, and even condemning offenders to reparation and fine. Such a Local Government organization is, of course, "extra-legal," and has no statutory warrant, and, in the eyes of the British tribunals, possesses no authority whatever. But it has gone on silently existing, possibly for longer than the British Empire itself, and is still effectively functioning, merely by common consent and with the very real sanction of the local public opinion. Mr. Matthai's careful descriptions enable us to realize what this Village Government has been, and probably often still is, and the subjects with which it deals.

I may perhaps be permitted to cite a similar experience of my own. In England there are about three hundred local authorities, styled Commissioners of Sewers, who have been appointed by Royal Authority, in some places for six or seven centuries, and who derive their powers to protect the land from floodings, and to tax and to fine, exclusively from Parliament and the King. Underlying these august dignitaries, however, the careful observer may discover, in one county after another, still existing fragments of another and an older local organization against floodings, unknown to the statutory constitution and never yet described in any book, in the form of juries of local residents who make their own rules, exercise their own primitive "watch and ward" of the embankments and dykes, carry out the minor precautionary measures that they themselves devise, and stand in a curious and ever-varying relationship, unprovided for by statute, to the official Commissioners, who naïvely regard themselves as the sole Local Authorities. Mr. Matthai rightly draws attention to another analogy, in the common blacksmith, the common innkeeper, the common miller, and the common carrier of rural England—immemorial village officials, bound to village service, long unknown to the lawyers of the King's Courts, and entirely unauthorized by Parliament.

One suggestion that these fragments of indigenous Indian Local Government seem to afford is that we sometimes tend to exaggerate the extent to which the cleavages of caste have prevailed over the community of neighbourhood. How often is one informed, "with authority," that the *panchayat* of which we catch glimpses must be only a caste *panchayat!* It is plain, on the evidence, that however frequent and potent may be the *panchayat* of a caste, there have been and still are *panchayats* of men of different castes, exercising the functions of a Village Council over villagers of different castes. How widely prevalent these may be not even

the Government of India can yet inform us. But if people would only look for traces of Village Government, instead of mainly for evidences of caste dominance, we might learn more on the subject. Now, whatever may be the advantages of caste divisions, it is plain that they constitute, for the most part, an obstacle to the development of Government, central or local. The gradual substitution of territorial for tribal organization in Europe, which it took many centuries to accomplish, and the equally gradual supersession of family law by the law of the geographical neighbourhood, lie at the roots of European progress. Local Government, at any rate, must, to be effective, nowadays be based, in the main, not on tribal or family but on neighbourhood groups. The common services that it provides, the common rules that it enacts, and the common fund that it administers must, in practice, be those of the village or the district as a whole. Where caste lines are strong it is doubtless practically impossible to ignore them, however disastrous may be the cleavages that they cause. But we see that, even where caste exists, it has, in fact, permitted a great deal of common life, and that it is compatible with active Village Councils. It seems important, therefore, to emphasize, not to ignore, all the common life of the Indian village, in which the necessities of neighbourhood have held their own, or have prevailed against the divisions of caste.

It is not for me to dwell upon the advantage, on which various Government Resolutions and Minutes have insisted, of making use of, and developing, such fragments of indigenous Local Government as exist in India; and of shaping the new upon the lines of the old. But I may be permitted to draw attention to the extent to which the newest thought, in France as well as in England, is emphasizing the importance of not resting content with even the best possible development of National, Provincial, or Municipal Government,

organized merely "from above," in large geographical districts. What is now being urged, with convincing authority, with regard not to India but to Western Europe, is that any such government, however mechanically perfect, will fail to take root in the minds of the mass of the people—will fail to gain from them the life without which it will be but a clog upon their own development—unless it is in some way grafted on the spontaneous groupings of the people themselves, whether these be groupings by vocation or by race, by community of religious belief or by propinquity of neighbourhood; and this however incongruous may seem the conceptions and the procedure of these spontaneous popular groupings, with the theoretical conclusions of our political science. For instance, in England as in France, we still habitually think of Democracy as being, or at least as necessarily involving, the Popular Election of representatives or rulers: the Indian village, like the Russian mir, may remind us that Vote by Ballot and Party Government are only two among several expedients for bringing administration under public control. We make much, in Western Europe and America, of Decision by Majority Vote: the Indian village offers us, like the Quaker meeting, a possibly higher alternative, if we believe in Government by Consent, in Decision by the General Sense of the Community. In England our lawyers and statesmen are still encumbered with the Austinian pedantry of a century ago, which taught them that obligations are but the obverse of rights, and that nothing is a right which is not enforceable by judicial proceedings—the inference being that there can be no binding obligation to the public at large, to the village as a whole, to the craft to which one belongs, to all the members of one's family, or to future generations. The Indian Village, like the Early English Manor, emphasizes obligations rather than rights; and far from confining itself to rights on which some particular

person could take action for his own benefit, devotes itself largely to the enforcement of obligations to the public.

If one who knows, at first hand, next to nothing about the country may be permitted any opinion at all, I would suggest that, as a factor of effective social progress in India, the development of Local Government stands second in importance to scarcely any whatsoever. The routine administration of the common affairs of the Village, the Municipality, and the District—even putting aside for the moment those of the Province; how these are actually being organized in the different parts of India, and with what result; the way in which more social tissue is being, or can be, developed for the communal management of the school and the temple, the relief of the helpless and distressed, the maintenance of the public health, the execution of public works and the organization of public services, the protection of life and property and the settlement of disputes—all this presents a field for study which is likely to be of real use to India; and, indeed, to the world. We are accustomed, in Europe, to take as a rough test of the social administration of any nation the changes in its annual death-rate; or, rather, in the average expectation of life of the whole population. The first and most important business of a Government is, after all, to contrive that its people should live and not die! In the long run, in the judgment of history, it is by this test that Governments will be judged. How does India stand this test? In the most civilized parts of Europe, during the past three-quarters of a century, *mainly by a development of Local Government*—using only that scientific knowledge which is equally available to all administrations—we have about doubled the average expectation of life of the whole population. Seeing that in India, where the circumstances are more adverse, the average expectation of life of the people is only somewhere about one-half that of the people of

England,[r] there is perhaps no direction in which the community could more profitably invest its thought, its effort, and its money, than in a wise development of its Local Government. I am glad to think that this idea is more and more engaging the attention of the thoughtful European or American missionary and British official. But in this as in other matters it is to India itself that, in the main, India must look; and there might with advantage be a much greater turning of attention, among Indian students and their instructors, to the problems of Local Government. I do not know how many of the couple of hundred university colleges in India have even one course of lectures each session describing the history, the organization, and the functions of Local Government in India or elsewhere. I have not heard of the foundation of any Professorship of Local Government. I wonder how many books on Local Government are to be found in the libraries to which the Indian college students have access. How often have Provincial Directors of Education called attention to this omission? It would be interesting to inquire how frequently any problem of Local Government has been given as a subject for an essay, or made the topic for discussion at a debating society.

Local Government, it is only fair to say, though as old as the hills, and a practical success for more than half a century, is a relatively new discovery to the professor of political science, as it is to the politician. Right down to the end of the nineteenth century, august treatises on the British Constitution, and solemn surveys of the functions of government, confined themselves exclusively to the organization and development of the National or Central Government, which is decorated

[r] What a loss, what a tragedy it is that so many of India's most valuable citizens die before they are fifty! A deliberate scientific investigation into the causes of premature death in India, of adults subject neither to privation nor to industrial accidents or diseases, might be of great value.

with the trappings of royalty, and made the subject of Parliamentary discussion. In common talk we followed suit, and usually refused to regard as "government" all that vast part of the governmental machinery of the community which is administered locally. We have discussed endlessly, in England as in India, the shortcomings of "the Government," and the need for its reform, in this way or that. But we do not give sufficient heed in England—and I suspect that this is even more the case in India—to that part of Government which really concerns us most, because it is merely Local Government.

This neglect is, I venture to think, a grave mistake. In the nations which, in the twentieth century, regard themselves as the most advanced in civilization, or the most highly developed in social life—whether we take the United Kingdom or Germany, France or the United States—we find that by far the largest part of government is now that which is not carried on in the capital cities, by Departments of State, at the bidding of Parliaments; but that which is being administered locally, in village or parish or commune, in municipality or county or district, by the direction and for the advantage of the people of these localities. In times of peace, indeed, Local Government has become, in these advanced countries, in the aggregate, actually more extensive than the Central or National Government; apart from the payment of interest on old debts it often spends more money and has many more officials in its employment; it usually carries on more enterprises and conducts more services for the common good; it even enacts, in its by-laws and regulations, a greater volume of laws that we have to obey than the National Legislature. This is not because Parliament has become less energetic or less important. On the contrary, it is busier and more important than ever. But the other branch of Government, Local Government, has, during the past half-century, enormously grown, so that in England all the

aggregate of parish councils, district councils, borough councils, and county councils come to be, in magnitude or volume of business, greater than all the Government Departments put together. This, I apprehend, is very far from being the position in India to-day. But if India is to advance in civilization and prosperity as other countries have advanced, it seems probable that an analogous growth of Local Government—even to the extent of its doing more work, spending more money, employing more officials, and making more laws than the Viceroy and his Councils—will, in the course of the coming century, take place in India.

It has sometimes been said, as a reason why the business of government will never really enter effectively into the minds of the mass of the people of India, that they are "a people of villagers." Such a fact, as it seems to me, would be at least an argument for a great and far-reaching expansion of Village Government. But I suggest that it may not in reality be true (though non-Indians are sometimes reproached for their seeming ignorance on this point) that the people of India are a people of villagers, in the sense in which that phrase is commonly used. The Census, indeed, tells us that something like nine out of every ten of the dwellers between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin are found inhabiting villages of less than 5,000 population. But it is a mistake to assume that a land of villages necessarily means what is usually implied by the phrase, a people of villagers. In truth India, for all its villages, has been also, at all known periods, and to-day still is, perhaps to a greater extent than ever before, what Anglo-Saxon England, for instance, was not, or the South African Republic in the days before gold had been discovered, and what the Balkan Peninsula even at the present time may perhaps not be, namely, a land of flourishing cities, of a distinctly urban civilization, exhibiting not only splendid architecture, and the high development of the manu-

facturing arts made possible by the concentration of population and wealth, but likewise—what is much more important—a secretion of thought, an accumulation of knowledge, and a development of literature and philosophy which are not in the least like the characteristic products of villagers as we know them in Europe or America. And to-day, although the teeming crowds who throng the narrow lanes of Calcutta or Benares, Bombay or Poona, Madras or Hyderabad, or even the millions who temporarily swarm at Hardwar or Allahabad or Puri, may include only a small percentage of the whole population, yet the Indian social order does not seem to be, in the European understanding of the phrase, either on its good or on its bad side, essentially one of villagers. The distinction may be of importance, because the Local Government developed by peoples of villagers, as we know of them in Anglo-Saxon England, in the early days of the South African Republic, and in the Balkan States, is of a very different type from that which takes root and develops, even in the villages, in those nations which have also a city life, centres of religious activity, colleges and universities, and other "nodal points," from which emanate, through popular literature, pilgrimages, and the newspaper press, slow but far-spreading waves of thought and feeling, and aspirations which it is fatal to ignore. It is very largely through the development of Local Government that such a people becomes an organized nation.

It seems a pity that the aspirations of so many Indians for "Indian Self-Government," and especially those of Indian students, should contemplate so exclusively that part of Government which concerns India as a whole. After all, even in such "self-governing" Dominions as Canada and Australia, the part that is played in the government of the country by the Dominion Governor-General, the Dominion Legislature, and the Dominion Civil Service, is not by any means so large as it is conspicuous. It is the Local

Government of Village or Municipality that touches most nearly the lives of the people. It is because they themselves run their Local Government, much more than in respect of any real share that they have in the Dominion Governments, that these peoples are essentially "self-governing." I do not in any way deprecate the desire or belittle the claim that India, like other parts of the British Empire, should be administered in the main by Indians in accordance with Indian public opinion. But in India, as elsewhere, it is Local Government that is destined to grow, at a much greater rate than Central Government, and the importance of the field thus opening out should not be overlooked. There is here, as it seems to me, a greater and certainly a more accessible sphere for the exercise of autonomy. In practice it will be found, as the century advances, that by far the greater part of "Indian Self-Government," and more and more of the part in which the daily lives of the Indian people are most intimately concerned, will lie, not in the sphere of His Excellency the Viceroy in Council—not even in that of the Provincial Governments—but in those of the Village Council, the District Board, and the Municipality, or of any Local Authorities that may supersede them. In the fully organized India of a century hence, as in the England of to-morrow, it may well be that it may be these, or some analogous bodies, that will be found exercising actually the larger part of all the functions of government, expending the larger part of that share of the people's income which is administered collectively, appointing and controlling the majority of all the salaried servants of the community, and even enacting, in the aggregate, in their by-laws and regulations, a greater volume of the laws that the people obey.

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CONTENTS

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN BRITISH INDIA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

1. THIS essay is mainly an attempt to bring together the chief facts about village local government which have been noticed in Indian official publications, especially during the past fifty years. Some very able and informing books have been written, notably by the late Sir Henry Maine and Mr. B. H. Baden-Powell, on the Indian village community as a system of landholding and economic association. It was Sir Henry Maine's work[1] which first drew the serious attention of European students to the place of the village community in the progress of society in the East and the West. His aim was not to describe the constitution of the village community in any detail, but rather by insisting on some of its broader features to show its relation to a study of early communities in general. The collection of official information in India had not proceeded very far in Maine's time; and he had to depend to a large extent on personal observation and informal reports. This necessarily left some of his data open

[1] 1. *Village Communities in the East and West*; 2. *Early History of Institutions*; 3. *Ancient Law*; 4. *Early Law and Custom*.

to question, as judged by the light of subsequent information. But it would be hardly right to say that this has in any serious measure taken away from the value of Maine's writings on the Indian village. They are still, in a real sense, the classical authority on the subject; and they are likely to remain so whatever additional information on specific questions may be brought out by future research.

2. A full and possibly exhaustive account of the village community on its economic side was produced by Mr. B. H. Baden-Powell in his two well-known books.[1] It is a detailed and accurate description of the methods of landholding met with in the various provinces of British India. As the village is still the administrative unit in revenue matters, there is necessarily a great deal of valuable information to be found in the book, on the position of the village—its officers and institutions—in the scheme of Indian administration. Baden-Powell relied mainly for his materials on the official reports of land settlement in India and on the valuable series of *District Gazetteers* in the different provinces, some of which had already been compiled and others were in process of being compiled. His book is that of a patient and careful student working upon an extensive range of materials, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country, but accessible in a reliable and more or less definite form. His work has rather supplemented than superseded Maine; and though in certain important details his researches have shown up the defects in Maine's data, on the whole his contribution is to be regarded as filling in the comprehensive outline sketched out by Maine's master hand. The one was telescopic in his vision, the other microscopic.

3. Both these authoritative writers, however, have

[1] 1. *The Land Systems of British India.* 3 vols. Clarendon Press, 1892. 2. *The Indian Village Community.* Longmans, 1896.

to a large extent confined their attention to the village community in its relation to the holding and cultivation of land. This, of course, is the primary interest of the village community and by far the most complicated and difficult problem in connection with it. Nevertheless, it cannot but be that when a wandering tribe settles down to a stationary occupation on a definite plot of land, other interests and problems must arise besides looking after and improving the means of living. Their first concern must needs be how to till the land and make the best use of its resources, and if they have reached the stage of living under the protection of a king, to give him his dues from the produce of the land. But while these things occupy the largest amount of attention, the ordinary human relationships into which men are brought in a settled society will bring in their wake such questions as the settlement of disputes, the prevention of crime, and the improvement of the means of general well-being. In the way in which these questions are met, between the primitive village community and the most highly developed modern state, the resemblances are perhaps as striking as the differences. The object of this essay is to present a connected picture of the methods adopted by the village community to meet these simple administrative needs, *so far as they may be gathered from the relics which have survived and have been recorded.* It also aims at showing how far these simple expedients have been retained or refashioned under British rule. But it lays no claim whatever to any special understanding of the Hindu village community in its palmy days, or to having made any research in that direction.

4. It is necessary at the outset to point out some of the limits which have been set to this work. The meaning which will be given throughout to the term *Village Government* is that part of the government of a village which is carried on by means of individual

officers and public bodies exercising jurisdiction, as a rule, within the local limits of a single village. This by no means represents the whole administrative work done in a village under present conditions, for a very considerable share of the work—and often the more important—is done by means of government officers and local boards having charge of larger or smaller groups of villages. Unless this fact is remembered, the following pages will be found to provide a very one-sided picture of village administration in India. The question which it is sought to answer here is, not how a village in British India is administered, but rather in what parts of this administration and to what extent are the local officers and institutions of the village community utilized.

5. Again, this study of village government is confined to British India. That is, it excludes from its survey the Protected States and Agencies, what are called the Native States. This, even in point of sheer magnitude, is to make a considerable deduction, because while the area enclosed within the geographical boundaries of India is about 1,800,000 square miles inhabited by more than 300,000,000 people, the area covered in the Native States is about 824,000 square miles and the population 70,000,000.[1] But the extent of the deduction is more than merely numerical. It is probable that in the Native States where archaic institutions possess on the whole a more sheltered life, the old village institutions will be found in a less disorganized form than in British India. To exclude the Native States, then, is to exclude what is possibly a more fruitful field of study from our point of view. But this has been thought necessary, partly for reducing the compass of the survey, there being much greater diversity in the

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. iv, pp. 59, 61.

Native States than in the provinces of British India; and partly because of the comparative absence of reliable recorded materials in the vast majority of the Native States.

6. A third limitation is the exclusion from this essay of the whole subject of land revenue and the allied subject of the rights of a village community in adjacent forests. In the administration of land revenue, village communities and officers play an important part, both in the collection of the taxes and in maintaining the necessary accounts. This, in fact, is their most important share in village administration. Every other thing they do comes a long way behind in importance. The subject, however, is dealt with in such detail in Baden-Powell's book[1] that it is profitless to attempt a less full and clear account here. Besides, the subject of land revenue in India is so enormously complex that on a short and second-hand study it seems much the safer thing, in spite of its obvious disadvantages, to leave the subject alone as far as possible. The other question, namely, that of giving village communities the right to cut fuel and graze cattle in neighbouring forest areas and to make their own arrangements for enjoying the right, has often engaged the attention of provincial governments. Recently the Madras Government took steps to organize village forest committees in selected areas. But the whole matter remains more or less tentative.

7. The importance of the village in Indian administration consists in the fact that the vast majority of the inhabitants still live in villages. It is difficult to lay down precisely the distinction between a town and a village in India, though to an observer on the spot the distinction may appear fairly easy. Some rough idea of the difference may be got by

[1] *The Land Systems of British India.*

following the Census definition of the terms "town" and "village." A town was held to include—

(1) Every Municipality.
(2) All Civil Lines not included within Municipal limits.
(3) Every Cantonment.
(4) Every other continuous collection of houses inhabited by not less than 5,000 persons, which the Provincial Superintendent (of Census operations) may decide to treat as a town for Census purposes.

Of these (2) and (3) are of relatively little consequence and may safely be left out of account. The two main factors, then, which according to the Census standard determine whether a locality is a town or a village are: (1) whether a Municipal Council has been set up in the locality, and (2) whether the population exceeds 5,000. With regard to the former, there is a provision in most provinces against the introduction of Municipal Councils in areas in which a large proportion of the population depend on agriculture for their subsistence. Therefore, the chief distinction between a place which possesses a Municipal Council and one which does not is that the first is mainly industrial, while the second is mainly agricultural. This, though on the whole true, must be taken with a considerable degree of qualification. With regard to the second, namely, the standard of population, it has been urged that the minimum of 5,000 fixed for an Indian town is too high. The following comment on the point in the last Census Report is instructive. "In Germany 'landstädte' or places with a population of 2,000 to 5,000 are included in the urban category; in America the same category is used to include all 'incorporated' places with a population of 2,500 and upwards, and in England all sanitary districts with

3,000 or more inhabitants. In fixing the standard for India at 5,000, however, we have certainly not erred in the direction of over-exclusiveness. The local conditions are wholly different from those prevailing in Western countries; and the great majority of places with that number of inhabitants, whether municipalities or not, partake rather of the nature of overgrown villages than of towns as the term is understood in Europe. Trade and industry are still to a great extent monopolized by the larger towns. With the spread of railways and the general improvement in means of communication, the smaller towns are growing in importance as distributing centres, but the process is a slow one and comparatively little progress in this direction has yet been made." [1]

8. Understanding a village in this sense, it will be found that there is a fairly uniform distribution of population between towns and villages in the different provinces of British India. The proportion who live in villages varies from about 85 to 95 per cent. The general rate of distribution for the whole of India per thousand of population is as follows:—

	Villages.	Towns.
British India	905	95
Native States	900	100

If we divide villages into four classes, as below, according to the number of inhabitants: (1) over 5,000, (2) from 2,000 to 5,000, (3) from 500 to 2,000, (4) under 500—we get the following distribution for every thousand of the village population:—

	5,000 and over.	2,000 to 5,000	500 to 2,000	Under 500.
British India	18	138	483	360
Native States	10	114	454	422 [2]

[1] *Census of India*, 1911, vol. i, part i, p. 29. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 52, table iv.

9. It must not be assumed that in all the areas noted as villages in the Census Report, there were in existence in the past village communities in the sense of close corporations of agriculturists living a more or less common life. It is true that the village community must have existed in some form or other in nearly every part of India; and evidences of its survival are still found, though less easily distinguishable in some places than in others. There are certain regions, however, where the system of village communities does not appear to have existed at all. And, therefore, when we speak of village local government here, we mean what is almost entirely an artificial creation. Whatever local unity there is in these places is the result of the new administrative machinery. Three such areas have been noted. First, the British Himalayan districts which contain a limited area of flat land and occasional patches of good soil on the hill-side. People live here in single homesteads or in very small groups of two or three families.[1] Secondly, along the west coast towards the south—the districts of North Kanara, South Kanara, and Malabar—the land here lying between the sea and the Western Ghat mountains is constantly intersected by hills and rivers and wide ravines. The inhabitants generally live in isolated homesteads, each with its own garden.[2] Thirdly, the districts in the South Punjab below Multan where the country is so rainless that permanent cultivation is possible only under exceptional circumstances.[3] To these may be added the tract of country along the North-West Frontier —Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province, and parts of Sind—where society is still organized in tribal rather than in village communities. The introduction of settled administration has tended to the formation

[1] *The Indian Village Community*, Baden-Powell, Longmans, 1896, p. 57.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 62. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

of villages as local units. But whenever the term "village" is used, it must be understood to mean little more than the administrative area occupied by a subdivision of a tribe and does not necessarily connote any settled corporate life.

10. The systems of landholding met with in village communities in different parts of India show an immense variety of principle as well as detail. But amid all this extraordinary diversity, two main types may be distinguished with a certain degree of clearness. They have been called respectively the Landlord and the Non-Landlord type. The former is met with in the Punjab, the United Provinces, and the greater part of the Central Provinces, while the latter is found principally in Madras and Bombay and, we may add, Burma. The characteristic of the Landlord village is that there is in it a powerful joint body of proprietors who form a close oligarchy in relation to the general mass of inhabitants. They claim jointly the entire village site, the cultivated land and the waste; and the other inhabitants pay rents to them for permission to hold and use land. Here the revenue was formerly assessed on the village as a whole, and the incidence was distributed among the members of the proprietary group. In the Non-Landlord village there is no joint ownership and no communal responsibility for paying the revenue. Each cultivator holds his own land and pays the tax on it directly to the State. According to Baden-Powell, the difference between the two types may possibly be traced to their respective origins. In the first case, it may be inferred that the village community was founded either (*a*) by a body of men knit together by ties of blood or association who originally colonized the village or conquered it—or (*b*) by a single proprietor who obtained the village by grant or purchase. In the second case, the village was probably founded by individual settlers clearing the jungle, each for himself, a bit here and a bit

there, sufficient to satisfy the separate needs of each settler.[1]

11. The differences between the two types of villages need not detain us here, because so far as the administrative system is concerned, the differences, though great, do not call for a separate treatment of the two types. The main contrast in point of local administration appears to lie in the relative importance assigned to the village headman under the two systems. In villages of the Non-Landlord class, where there is a large mass of smallholders of equal position and influence, it becomes sooner or later necessary to appoint a single leader and to entrust him with sufficient powers to keep the community together. In the other class, a close oligarchy of large proprietors do not lie under the same necessity to secure the services of a common chief. And besides, the mutual jealousies which arise in such a narrow circle would render a choice difficult even if the necessity were proved. The result is that in the former, the headman has always been part of the original constitution, holding an important position in every sphere of village life, while in the latter the headman is a comparatively recent creation of Government and the original purpose of his appointment was simply to act as an intermediary in revenue matters between the proprietary body and the Government.[2]

12. It is perhaps superfluous to seek for any deeper explanation of the origin of village communities than the necessity for combination in order to satisfy certain elementary needs. The principal need was probably that of mutual defence against different kinds of adverse forces. To men settled in a dense jungle the greatest danger might arise from wild beasts and plundering

[1] *Land Systems of British India*, Baden-Powell, vol. i, pp. 144-54. Maine's ideas of the Indian village were probably derived altogether from the Landlord type of village.

[2] The term "Lambardar" used to denote a headman in a Landlord village means really one who bears a number, the number relating to the register of village landholders in the collector's office.

tribesmen, while to those living in an open country, the danger might arise from other groups of men like themselves. And then when a tract of country is settled and brought under the authority of a central power, there comes the need of meeting the demands of the king's revenue agents. Each common need of this sort, we may suppose, would furnish an incentive to unite. In his book, *The Economic Transition in India*,[1] Sir Theodore Morison points out the analogy in this respect between the village communities of India and of France—an analogy which perhaps will hold good between village communities everywhere. While this sense of some strong common need must have been the prevailing cause, we may also believe that whenever a wandering tribe settled down, the mere tribal instinct of association would lead to the formation of compact groups, apart from any pressing necessity for combination.[2]

13. In addition to these causes, we find that under ordered and centralized governments, the king himself might originate and direct the formation of new village communities. In the *Arthaśāstra*, an ancient Indian political treatise commonly ascribed to the time of the Emperor Chandragupta Maurya[3] (d. 297 B.C.), the following reference occurs to new villages: "Either by inducing foreigners to immigrate or by causing the thickly populated centres of his own kingdom to send forth the excessive population, the king may construct villages either on new sites or on old ruins. Villages consisting each of not less than 100 families and of not more than 500 families of agricultural people of the Sudra caste, with boundaries extending as far as a *krosa* (900 feet) or two, and capable of protecting each other shall be formed.

[1] Murray, 1911, pp. 35–6.

[2] *Land Systems of British India*, Baden-Powell, vol. i, p. 108.

[3] "We may accept it (the *Arthaśāstra*) as an authoritative account of political and social conditions in the Gangetic plain in the age of Alexander the Great, 325 B.C."—*Early History of India*, V. A. Smith, Oxford, 1914, pp. 136–7.

Boundaries shall be denoted by a river, a mountain, forests, bulbous plants, caves, artificial buildings (*sētubandha*), or by trees." [1]

14. A similar instance of the king taking the initiative in the formation of a village community appears in a South Indian inscription of the thirteenth century A.D. The village in question was intended to accommodate 108 Brahmans. Sufficient land was purchased for the village site, which was to contain room for the erection of a temple, and for the house-sites of the 108 Brahmans, of the village servants and of the men in charge of the village library (*Sarasvatī-Bhāndhāra attar*). The lands were bought from the old title-holders and tenants with all the benefits and appurtenances which belonged to them; and these were transferred in their entirety to the new settlers. A right of way was secured over certain lands outside the village for the Brahmans to walk to the tank for the performance of the daily prayers (*Sandhyā Vandana*). Land was also provided for grazing cattle, for the maintenance of the families of the new settlers, each of whom appears to have received a definite piece of land, and for the remuneration of the village officers and artisans.[2]

15. It is probably to artificial villages of this kind which were established under the direction of the king that the detailed regulations for planning and building villages, laid down in the *Manasara Silpasastra* [3] would be found to apply. There is an interesting summary of these regulations in a recent book by Mr. E. B. Havell, *Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India*.[4] Elaborate rules are laid down for the selection of a

[1] *Mysore Review*, February 1907.

[2] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1913–14, p. 92.

[3] An architectural treatise "stated to be the production of a sage named Mānasāra and of great celebrity in the south of India as affording copious information on every branch of the art on which he treats." *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*, Rām Rāz, London, 1834, p. 3.

[4] Murray, 1915, pp. 4–15.

proper site, for the alignment and construction of streets, and for the erection of houses and public buildings. But it must of course be unsafe to infer that these rules represent the general condition of Indian villages at the time. If we take any particular kingdom built by conquest, as most of these kingdoms must have been, it must be very difficult to say how many of the villages, if any, were built newly on the plans of the *Silpasastra* and how many had been there already in the more or less primitive and diversified condition of naturally formed village communities. It seems reasonable to suggest, in the absence of stronger evidence to the contrary, that even in the most highly developed kingdom, the latter class of villages must have far exceeded the former in numbers. Mr. Havell's statement, in speaking of the King's Highway in the Empire of Chandragupta Maurya, that it linked together "the hundreds of single villages planned on the principles of the *Silpasastras* which lay between the seat of the central government and the farthest confines of the Empire," [1] however attractive, seems somewhat wide.

16. The formation of new village communities has proceeded in India even in our own time. A remarkable instance is the Canal Colonies of the Punjab, where immense tracts of waste land have been brought under irrigation and rendered cultivable. These are settlements of peasant lessees, to a large extent resembling the Non-Landlord type of villages. Their holdings are "Crown tenancies" without rights of transfer; and of late years there has been a not imperceptible growth of communal feeling among them. Somewhat similar are the experiments in village settlement which have been carried on in recent years by the Church Missionary Society in parts of Bengal and the United Provinces. One of their most success-

[1] P. 25.

ful efforts has been the settlement of a colony of Sahtal Christians in Jalpaiguri in Eastern Bengal. The present area of the colony is about 14 square miles. It is divided into ten villages, each of which has a headman chosen by the villagers and appointed by the superintending missionary. The affairs of the colony are managed by a council presided over by the Indian pastor, of which the headmen are members. The people have built their own school-house and church, and pay their own teachers. At present there are about 1,500 Christian and 500 other colonists. "Those who are not Christians sign a pledge to abstain from intoxicating drink and heathen sacrifices and to abide by the rules of the colony." [1]

17. It may be useful in an account of village institutions to add a description of the external features presented by a modern Indian village. But to attempt such a description would be to presuppose a uniformity of appearance which does not exist in actual fact. Not merely between one province and another, but sometimes even within the area of a single district, differences are met with which render fanciful the idea of a single uniform type. So far as it is possible to form a picture by piecing together a few outstanding common features, the following brief description in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* [2] will be found to be a true portraiture. "The typical Indian village has its central residential site, with an open space for a pond and a cattle stand. Stretching around this nucleus lie the village lands, consisting of a cultivated area and (very often) grounds for grazing and woodcutting. The arable lands have their several boundary marks, and their little subdivisions of earth ridges made for retaining rain or irrigation water. The inhabitants of such a village pass their life in the midst of these simple surroundings,

[1] *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers*, Jalpaiguri, pp. 44–5. [2] Vol. vi, p. 279.

welded together in a little community with its own organization and government, which differ in character in the various types of villages, its body of detailed customary rules, and its little staff of functionaries, artisans, and traders."

18. The "staff of functionaries, artisans, and traders" by means of which village communities carried on their internal government have survived in a recognizable form almost everywhere. A list of officers and public servants in a Madras village at the beginning of last century is contained in a report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, issued in 1812, commonly known as the *Fifth Report*.[1]

The *headman*, who has the general superintendence of the affairs of the village, settles the disputes of the inhabitants, attends to the police, and performs the duty of collecting the revenues within his village.

The *accountant*, who keeps the accounts of cultivation and registers everything connected with it.

The *watchmen*, of whom there are two kinds—the superior and inferior. The duty of the former is to gain information of crimes and offences and to escort and protect persons travelling from one village to another. The province of the latter is more immediately confined to the village, consisting among other duties in guarding the crops and assisting in measuring them.

The *boundaryman*, who preserves the limits of the village or gives evidence respecting them in cases of dispute.

The *superintendent of the tanks and water-courses* distributes the water therefrom for the purposes of agriculture.

The *priest*, who performs the village worship.

The *schoolmaster*, who is seen teaching the children in the villages to read and write in the sand.

[1] Parliamentary Paper, 1812 (377), vii, 1, pp. 84–5.

The *astrologer*, who proclaims the lucky or unpropitious periods for sowing and threshing.

The *smith* and *carpenter*, who manufacture the implements of agriculture and build the dwellings of the ryot.

The *potter*.

The *washerman*.

The *barber*.

The *cowkeeper*.

The *doctor*.

The *dancing-girl*.

The *musician and poet*.

19. The village artisans mentioned in this list may be taken as fairly typical of the greater part of the country.[1] It is practically, though not wholly, identical with the more recent descriptions of village services which occur in the *District Gazetteers* of the various provinces.[2] In South, and parts of Central, India, tradition has fixed twelve[3] as the usual number of artisans in a village. But this is seldom, if ever, found to correspond to the actual number, though twelve may be regarded as a fair mean between the variations in different localities. The origin of the services is probably to be found in the isolated condition of villages when communications were scanty and undeveloped and the individual village was thrown largely on its own resources to supply the needs of daily life. Each of the professions represented in a village has in the majority of cases become crystallized into a caste with its customary duties and monopolies. The original method of remunerating the village servants was *either* by giving them a grant of land free of rent and sometimes free of revenue, *or* by giving them definite shares out of the common heap of grain on the threshing-

[1] This organization of village artisans is not found in Burma or Assam, and is hardly perceptible in Bengal proper.

[2] E.g. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Jullundur, pp. 211–12; *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Patna, p. 45; *United Provinces District Gazetteers*, Basti, pp. 105–8; *Central Provinces and Berar District Gazetteers*, Raipur, pp. 174–5.

[3] *Burra Bullootee*, Elphinstone, *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa*, p. 20 Wilks, *Historical Sketches of South India*, Madras, 1869, p. 75 (footnote).

floor or from the individual harvest of every villager, *or* by combining grants of land and of grain—supplemented in each case by various occasional perquisites. All these forms of payment have survived to this day, in varying degrees. But payment by cash is becoming increasingly common; and there has been noticeable, in common with other sides of village life, a growing weakening of customary bonds and assertion of individual rights. Originally, at any rate, the idea must have been that the artisans were public servants of the village,[1] and in return for their grants of land or grain they were required to serve every member of the community on demand. In this respect they seem to afford an interesting parallel to the common innkeeper, the common hogman, the common farrier, and other communal servants of early England.[2]

20. The three principal officers of the village—the Headman, the Accountant, and the Watchman—though still in charge of important administrative duties have become more the servants of Government than of the village community. The hereditary principle is still largely recognized, but the revenue officers of Government may exercise their discretion in accepting or rejecting a candidate. The importance of the headman in the Non-Landlord villages of Bombay, Madras, and Burma has been noticed before. His specific functions will be described more fully in succeeding chapters. It is sufficient to notice here that in these provinces there is scarcely a department of village life into which his duties do not penetrate, while in the Landlord villages of Upper India he is almost exclusively a revenue official. The accountant's main duties are to maintain the records and keep the accounts connected with land revenue. He may be

[1] From a South Indian inscription of the tenth century A.D. it would appear that each village owned a certain number of looms in common, and the weavers who worked them were maintained out of the village fund. Any other looms would be unauthorized.—*Epigraphia Indica*, Calcutta, vol. iv, p. 138.

[2] *The Common Law*, O. W. Holmes, Jr., Macmillan, 1882, Lecture v.

looked upon, at least in the villages in South India, as the financial and ministerial assistant of the headman, as the village watchman may be regarded as the executive assistant. The watchman everywhere holds an inferior position. He is drawn, as a rule, from the menial castes, who live on the outskirts of the village. Some of his duties as general servant to the community are so degrading that the doors of village society are shut against him. The remuneration of all these officers now takes the form, to a large extent, of payment by cash, either by fixed salaries or by a certain percentage of commission on the revenue.[1] The old method of payment by grants of land or in kind has, with a few exceptions,[2] been done away with.

21. The most characteristic feature of the government of a village community was the *panchayat*, or village council. The word *panchayat* possibly indicates that the number of those who originally constituted the council was five. But there is no evidence that this number was adhered to with any regularity. The term has almost completely lost its numerical connotation and means only an association of people for doing administrative or judicial work. The learned writer of the last *Punjab Census Report*[3] points out that the number five is one of frequent occurrence in Indian sacred literature. He seems to imply, though he does not say it, that the term *panchayat* was chosen for its sacred associations rather than for any definite numerical indication.[4] And this seems to receive corroboration from current proverbs regarding the

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. IV, pp. 227, 281.

[2] E.g. village watchmen in Bombay and the Central Provinces are still paid by land or in kind.

[3] Pandit Harikishen Kaul, *Punjab Census*, 1911.

[4] See note by Sir F. Pollock (Maine's *Ancient Law*, 1896, Note P to chap. viii): "We are free to hold as a pious opinion that the Indian village council still known as the Five (*Panchayat*) . . . may go back to the same origin as our own reeve and four men, who flourish in Canada to this day. Robuster faith might be needed to find more than accident in the number of five hearths and five lawful men on Horace's estate."

divine sanction of the *panchayat*. One of the commonest is—"There is God in the *panch*."[1] There is no doubt, however, that in spite of their great traditional sanctity, *panchayats* have now dropped considerably out of use. At the last census in India, the provincial superintendents were specifically directed to investigate the existence of village *panchayats*; and most of them returned the opinion that practically no trace of them was left.

22. It, however, remains true that there are various local matters which the inhabitants of a village manage among themselves without materially seeking the assistance of outside authorities. The management of private schools, the construction and repair of school buildings, tanks and wells, the distribution of water in lands under irrigation, the settlement of small disputes, the common enjoyment of grazing and woodcutting in forests, the administration of village co-operative credit societies—these are some of the matters in which village communities even now show a perceptible amount of common life and purpose. In face of these, it seems somewhat too facile to say that the old communal institutions of the village have died out altogether. The facts, at any rate, warrant a very careful inquiry.

23. The writers of the *Bombay Census Report* (1911), finding numerous traces of caste or professional *panchayats* but none of the village as a whole, ventured the suggestion that all *panchayats* have been caste *panchayats*, that the myth of the village *panchayat* has probably arisen from the fact that a village is generally, if not invariably, formed by several families of some one caste settling in one spot.[2] The suggestion is rendered plausible by the fact that in the two cases of artificial village communities noted before (Paras.

[1] Compare Russian proverb, "What the *Mir* has settled, is God's own judgment" (Leroy Beaulieu, *The Empire of the Tsars*, App. to Part I, Bk. VIII).

[2] *Bombay Census Report*, 1911, p. 100.

13 and 14), the villages were in each case made up of families belonging to the same caste (Sudras in the *Arthaśāstra* and Brahmans in the South Indian inscription). But over against this must be set certain other evidences which point in a different direction. In the *Manasara Śilpasastra* to which Mr. Havell refers, among the different plans for laying out a village is one designed explicitly for the accommodation of a village community composed of different castes.[1] Similarly in the so-called Code of Manu the committees for interpreting the sacred law might be composed of people belonging to any of the first three orders.[2] According to the *Madras Epigraphic Report for* 1912–13, there were village assemblies in South India in the tenth century A.D., which "appear to have consisted of all the residents of a village, including cultivators, professionals, and merchants."[3] In the *Private Diary of Anandaranga Pillay*, who served as agent to Dupleix, the French Governor in South India in the middle of the eighteenth century, there is an entry referring to a village meeting to consider a case of desecrating the village temple "in which people of all castes—from the Brahman to the Pariah—took part."[4]

24. The term *panchayat* might denote either a general meeting of the inhabitants or a select committee chosen from among them. The two forms are very often found side by side in the same community. But on the facts under observation, the suggestion may be made that, as a rule, general meetings of villagers are more in evidence in less developed communities like those of the aboriginal tribes, and select committees in the more highly

[1] *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*, Rām Rāz, pp. 44–5. *Ancient and Mediæval Architecture of India*, Havell, p. 15.

[2] *Mahava Dharma Sastra*, ch. xii, pp. 109–13 (Jones & Haughton, Calcutta).

[3] P. 28.

[4] *The Private Diary of Anandaranga Pillay*, J. F. Price, Madras, 1914, vol. i, pp. 332–3.

organized communities. If we take two such aboriginal races as the *Santals* in Bengal and the *Oraons* in Chota Nagpur—both of whom show evidences of a vigorous system of village communities—we find that whenever there is an important matter requiring decision, the headman summons a meeting of all adult males belonging to the village.[1] On the other hand, if we take village communities in settled kingdoms like those pictured in the Code of Manu, or in South Indian inscriptions of the tenth century A.D., we find in each village a small select body or bodies chosen on some recognized principle to whom local administration is practically entrusted. While this broad difference between developed and undeveloped communities may to a large extent be tenable, in the great mass of village communities it would be futile to trace anything approaching to a clear administrative organization. The *panchayat* is often a nebulous thing which appears, in the minds of the villagers, to drift between the idea of a meeting of the whole community and the idea of a more or less select council.

25. Sir Henry Maine, in one of his Lectures, remarked: "India has nothing answering to the assembly of adult males which is so remarkable a feature of the ancient Teutonic groups, except the Council of Village Elders."[2] The general gathering of villagers among such communities as those of the *Santals* and the *Oraons* would perhaps correspond in a rough way to the Teutonic assembly and be an answer to Maine's remark. His explanation of the absence of the assembly of adult males in India is noteworthy. The Indian village community was rarely a community in arms, like the Teutonic; and there was not therefore the same inducement to assign importance to the younger men. All that was required

[1] *Bengal Census Report*, 1911, pp. 472, 474.
[2] *Village Communities in the East and West*, Lecture iv, p. 122.

was civil wisdom, for which they resorted to a close group of village elders. From this point of view it is interesting to observe that among the *Santals* the general meeting of villagers often takes place in connection with the big hunting expeditions undertaken during the hot weather. The convener of the hunt sends word round "notifying the date and place of the hunt and also the place where the people are to spend the night. They reach the spot at sunset after the hunt is over, cook their food, and then take up any matter which may be brought before the people in council assembled." [1]

26. But general meetings of villagers, and sometimes of whole groups of villages, might also be traced, though rarely, among more advanced communities in early times. In one of the reports of the Madras Epigraphic Department, there is an account of some inscriptions relating to the administration of criminal law in South India in the twelfth century A.D. "A certain individual shot a man belonging to his own village by mistake. Thereupon the *governor and the people of the district* to which the village belonged assembled together and decided that the culprit should not die for the offence committed by him through carelessness," but should instead burn a lamp in the temple. In another inscription dealing with a similar matter, the governor is not mentioned, but only the people of the district. "Consequently the people of the district appear to have played a more important part at such trials than even the governor himself." [2] An inscription of about A.D. 1054 sets out the following incident. A village officer demanded taxes from a woman, who declared she was not liable. The former seems to have put her through an ordeal. The woman took poison and died. A meeting of the people from "the four

[1] *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Santal Parganas pp. 106–12.
[2] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1899–1900, p. 11.

quarters, eighteen districts, and the various countries" was held. The man was declared guilty and fined.[1]

27. A good example of a select committee is found in the Code of Manu in the appointment of small boards for interpreting doubtful questions of law. When we bear in mind that law as understood in the Code of Manu covers social and administrative matters besides law proper, a committee of this kind appears to bear a strong resemblance to the ordinary village *panchayat*.[2] It was to consist of from three to ten members, preferably of Brahmans or of men belonging to the three highest castes, of whom in any case there was to be a minimum of three. The chief qualification for membership was proficiency in the sacred writings. The committee, which was probably appointed by the king, was to meet under the direction of a headman. If there was difficulty in getting a sufficient number of men together, the following provision was laid down for guidance: "Even the decision of one priest, if more cannot be assembled, who perfectly knows the principles of the Vedas, must be considered as law of the highest authority; not the opinion of myriads who have no sacred knowledge."[3]

28. For the decision of disputes between two villages or between inhabitants of the same village, rules for the appointment of judicial boards are laid down in some of the early books. The *Arthaśāstra* contains the following: "In all disputes regarding the boundary between any two villages, neighbours or elders of five or ten villages shall investigate the case on the evidence to be furnished from natural or artificial boundary marks." Disputes arising in the same village "shall be decided by the elders of the neighbourhood or of the village. If they are divided in their opinions, decision shall be sought for in such a place as is noted

[1] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1906–7, p. 71.
[2] *Census of India*, 1911, vol. i, p. 395.
[3] *Manava Dharma Śāstra*, ch. xii, pp. 109–13 (Jones & Haughton).

for a number of pure and respectable people. Or, the disputants may equally divide the disputed holding among themselves. If both of these methods fail, the holding under dispute shall be taken possession of by the king."[1] The *Śukra-nīti* lays down: "Foresters are to be tried with the help of foresters, merchants by merchants, soldiers by soldiers, and in the village (?) by persons who live with both parties."[2]

29. On this subject of disputes regarding boundaries, the Code of Manu has some detailed provisions:—

"If a contest arise between two villages, or landholders, concerning a boundary, let the king or his judge ascertain the limits in the month of Jyaishṭa,[3] when the landmarks are seen more distinctly.

"Should there be a doubt, even on the inspection of those marks, recourse must be had, for the decision of such a contest, to the declaration of witnesses.

"These witnesses must be examined concerning the landmarks, in the presence of all the townsmen or villagers, or of both the contending parties.

"If there be no witnesses, let four men, who dwell on all the four sides of the two villages, make a decision concerning the boundary, being duly prepared, like the witnesses, in the presence of the king.

"If there be no such neighbours on all sides, nor any men whose ancestors had lived there since the villages were built, nor other inhabitants of towns who can give evidence on the limits, the judge must examine the following men who inhabit the woods:—

"Hunters, fowlers, herdsmen, fishers, diggers for roots, catchers of snakes, gleaners, and other foresters.

"Should the neighbours say anything untrue, when two men dispute about a landmark, the king shall make

[1] *Mysore Review*, July 1908.

[2] *Sacred Books of the Hindus*, vol. xiii (Allahabad, 1914), ch. iv, sec. v, pp. 44–5. The *Śukra-Nīti* is a political composition somewhat similar to the *Arthaśāstra* but probably much later.

[3] May–June (Wilson).

each of these witnesses pay the middlemost of the three usual amercements." [1]

30. By far the fullest account of early village committees which we possess is contained in South Indian inscriptions relating to the Tamil kingdoms of the tenth century A.D., recently brought under notice. The most important of these are two inscriptions discovered in a temple in the Uttaramallur village in the Chingleput district.[2] The Chola King Parāntaka I was then reigning over the greater part of the Tamil country. It was during his reign, which probably lasted from A.D. 907 to 947–8 that the events recorded in these inscriptions transpired. There had been gross mismanagement of communal affairs in the village for some time, and it became necessary to interpose the royal authority. The village was a Brahman settlement, perhaps of the kind noticed in paragraph 14. The king at first sent a royal commissioner of the Sudra caste to arrange a settlement. This is the arrangement recorded in the earlier of the two inscriptions. But partly on account of the inexperience of this officer and partly owing to the caste prejudice against him, the settlement did not work, and so the king had to interfere again. This time he sent a Brahman officer, who apparently succeeded with the support of the villagers in framing a satisfactory constitution. The later inscription, which is the fuller of the two, sets forth this new constitution. The differences between the two inscriptions are comparatively matters of detail. It will be sufficient for our purpose to notice the chief features brought out in the second inscription, which is the clearer and fuller of the two.

31. The main fact which we get out of the inscriptions is the existence of several small committees for

[1] *Mānava Dharma Sāstra*, ch. viii, pp. 245–63 (Jones & Haughton).

[2] *Archæological Survey of India*, 1904–5, Calcutta, p. 130. *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1898–9, p. 23.

local administration in the same village. The designation of each committee gives some rough indication of its sphere of work. The following is a list of six committees:—

(1) Annual Committee.
(2) Garden Committee.
(3) Tank Committee.
(4) Gold Committee.
(5) Committee of Justice.
(6) A Committee styled *Pancha-Vara.*

There is evidence that the fifth committee, that of Justice, was not perhaps a separate committee but one of the other committees sitting in a different capacity. The term *Pancha-Vara* which occurs in the name of the last committee has not been clearly explained. Two meanings have been suggested: (*a*) that it is a committee for general supervision, and (*b*) that it is entrusted with the collection of a special tax.[1] The second seems more likely, since the first committee which occurs in the inscription without a specific description of its work would more probably have the work of general supervision in its hands. It has been suggested that the village officers were members of the Annual Committee, in which case there would be some likelihood that they must have constituted the premier committee in the village. In an inscription from another district there is mention made of five other committees.[2] It is, therefore, possible that there was no fixed rule on the point, but the needs and opinions of each locality determined the number of its committees.

32. On one point we are still looking for clear light. And that is, whether these committees were sub-committees of a larger assembly or whether they were independent and unco-ordinated committees. The

[1] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1912–13, p. 104.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1904–5, p. 49.

former seems more probable. In the two inscriptions under consideration, the casting of lots for electing members to the various committees is to take place before "a full meeting of the great assembly, including young and old." An inscription of King Rajaraja Chola I (A.D. 985–1013) in the Tañjore district mentions forty villages "where the villagers, as a body, seem to have managed their affairs."[1] These cases would suggest the possibility of a larger council in the village, perhaps comprising the whole of the adult community. The wording of what are known as the *Ukkal Inscriptions*, noticed in an earlier Epigraphic Report, has been held to represent these committees rather distinctly as sub-committees of a larger assembly.[2] If this suggestion is true, we have yet to know anything, even tolerably definite, about the constitution of the larger assembly—whether it included all the residents, how often it met, or what its duties were. On this last point we get some glimpse in the fact that every member of the committees was bound to give "an account of his stewardship" immediately before or after the expiry of his term of office. Probably the account was rendered to the general assembly.

33. The mode of election to the committees was as follows: The village with its twelve streets was divided into thirty wards. Every one who lived in these wards wrote a name on a ticket. The tickets were first arranged in separate bundles representing the thirty wards. Each bundle bore the name of the ward to which it belonged. The bundles were then collected and put into a pot and placed before the general body of inhabitants both "young and old" in meeting assembled. All the priests were required to be present. The oldest priest among those present then took the pot, and "looking upwards so as to be seen by all people" called one of the "young boys"

[1] *Archæological Survey of India*, 1904–5, p. 130.
[2] *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. iii, part i, pp. 1–22, Madras, 1899.

standing close by "who does not know what is inside" to pick out one of the bundles. The tickets in this bundle were then removed to another pot. After it had been well shuffled, the boy took one ticket out of this bundle and handed it to an officer called the *Arbitrator*, who received it "on the palm of his hand with the five fingers open." He read out the name, and it was then shouted out by the priests present in the assembly. Thirty names were thus selected representing each of the wards. Out of these thirty, twelve were appointed to the Annual Committee (1), twelve to the Garden Committee (2), and six to the Tank Committee (3). For the other two committees, Gold and *Pancha-Vara*, (4) and (6) (the Committee of Justice (5) was probably not a separate committee), the whole process was gone through again from the beginning. Of the thirty names thus chosen, eighteen were eliminated. The rest, twelve, were divided equally between the two Committees. The process by which out of the thirty names this elimination and further selection takes place, here as well as in the first three committees, or at least two of them, is denoted in the inscription by the Tamil phrase *Karai-Kātti*. For the present it may be explained, according to the tentative meaning put on it by the late Superintendent of Epigraphy, as an "oral expression of opinion." What this may mean will be indicated later.

34. The chief qualifications for membership in the committees may be summarized thus :—

(1) The person must own more than a quarter *vêli* [1] of tax-paying land.

(2) He must live in a house built on his own site.

(3) He must be below 70 and above 35 years of age.

[1] *Vêli* is about five acres—Winslow.

(4) He must have knowledge of the *Mantras* and the *Brahmanas*. Knowledge of certain specially important sacred writings will make up for a defective property qualification.

(5) He must be conversant with business.

(6) He must be virtuous and his earnings must be honest.

(7) He must not have been on any of the committees for three previous years.

(8) One who has been a member before, but failed to render a proper account, and all his relations, must be excluded.

(9) Those who have been guilty of certain grave sins are also ineligible.

There are references here and there to women members on village committees, and apparently women were under no absolute prohibition.[1]

35. It would be interesting, if materials were available, to form some idea of the procedure followed at a village meeting. But hardly any materials are available, and all that can be attempted is to indicate what it might be. It is perhaps necessary to get rid of the notion that the forms of Western democratic communities, or anything really akin to them, were in operation in the Indian village community. From the days of Lord Metcalfe, the village communities of India have been frequently described as "little republics";[2] and some confusion has undoubtedly resulted by applying to them a term which has come to bear certain concrete political associations. From the facts set out in the early books and inscriptions, it appears that where village committees were not appointed by the king or his officers, as they probably were in the *Arthaśāstra* and in Manu, they were

[1] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1909–10, p. 98.

[2] For Metcalfe's famous description of the Indian village community, see Baden-Powell, *Land Systems of British India*, vol. i, p. 170.

appointed by the villagers casting lots. In neither case have we a system of election which aimed at determining the collective will of the community. The will which prevailed in the appointment of village committees, so far as these facts can guide us, was either the Will of the King or the supposed Will of the Supernatural.

36. Nor shall we be safe in assuming that there was anything like a process of division at village meetings with a view to letting the majority decide. That there was ample discussion, loud and eloquent, we may be sure. In one of the Telugu inscriptions eloquence at village meetings is extolled as a special merit.[1] The *Hitopadesa* lays down "eloquence in assembly" as one of the qualities of the "perfect, high-minded" man.[2] But what perhaps happened when a decision was necessary was that in the course of the discussion the opinions of the more influential and wise gradually, and perhaps unconsciously, overbore the rest. The result was a unanimous decision—the product of two things, the assertion of the stronger and the acquiescence of the weaker. A unanimous decision rather than a majority was the thing aimed at, and very often secured. An inscription of the ninth century A.D., discovered in Tinnevelly, lays down as a rule for the conduct of the village assembly that members should, in no case, persistently oppose by saying "nay," "nay," to every proposal brought before the assembly.[3]

37. Sir Herbert Risley once expressed this point with great clearness as follows: "The method by which the *Panchayat* is elected cannot be expressed in terms of European political phraseology. The people get together and they talk, and eventually an opinion emerges from their talk which is the opinion

[1] *Archæological Survey of India*, 1904–5.

[2] *Hitopadesa*, "Acquisition of Friends," sec. 32 (Francis Johnson, 1847). The *Hitopadesa* is an ancient Sanskrit work, classed by Hindu writers as a work on *Niti* or polity, and designed for the instruction of princes, to prepare them for the duties of their future lives.

[3] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1912–13, p. 98.

of all of them. There is no majority, for they are unanimous; there is no minority, for the minority has been talked over and casts in its lot with the majority. The process can only be described as selection by acclamation, in the way the earliest Greek and German popular bodies were selected, the oldest mode of election in the world." [1] It may be suggested here that it is this process of selection which is possibly referred to in the Uttaramallur inscription by the Tamil word *Karai-Kattu*, if the tentative meaning, "oral expression of opinion," holds good (para. 33). In the first instance, as we saw, thirty names were chosen by casting lots; and then for allotting them to the different committees, what took place was perhaps what Sir Herbert Risley has called "selection by acclamation." The suggestion is at least plausible. Some support will be gained for the point by considering the provision in the *Arthaśāstra* on settlement of village disputes. According to the rendering furnished by a distinguished Mysore scholar,[2] if the elders are divided in their opinion, a decision shall be sought for at the hands of "pure and respectable" people in another village, or the property is divided between the disputants, or it goes to the king (para. 28). There is no reference here to decision by a majority. If there was a division of opinion, the thing to do, apparently, was not to take the opinion of the majority but to have the matter settled by certain other means specified in the rule.[3]

[1] Speech, Bengal Legislative Council, July 23, 1892. There is an interesting note on the point in Maitland's *Township and Borough* (pp. 34-5), "one of the great books that remain to be written is The History of the Majority . . . In the earlier Middle Ages it is unanimity that is wanted. . . . A shout is the test, and in form it is the primary test to-day in the House of Commons. But the few should not go on shouting when they know that they are few. If they do, measures can be taken to make them hold their peace. In the end the assembly has but one voice, one audible voice; it is unanimous."

[2] Professor Sama Sastry.

[3] A different rendering of this passage was given by a learned writer from Bengal in the *Modern Review* (Calcutta) June 1913 (footnote to p. 666), by which in case of a difference of opinion, the question was to be settled by "an honest majority." One ventures to think that this is based on a slight misconception.

38. On the connection, if any, which existed between the local government of the village community and the central government of the king, there is before us no satisfactory evidence. It is fairly clear that during the period of Muhammadan rule, the village communities were left more or less to their own resources; and practically no connection was maintained with the king's government, except the due payment of the taxes. So long as these were paid regularly, there was no inducement for a government, almost entirely fiscal like that of the Mughals, to interfere in matters of local administration. "This separation has stamped itself in the language of the people. The terms for the village and its internal life are almost everywhere taken from the vernacular Indian speech; but beyond the village stretched the Persian *Zila* or district, and beyond the *Zila* the Persian *Sūbah* or province, whose capital formed the residence of the remote government or Persian *Sirkar*." [1]

39. During the Hindu period, however, there is evidence that the isolation of the village was, at any rate, not quite so pronounced as in Muhammadan times. And in the little glimpses which we are allowed into some of the Hindu kingdoms of the past, the impression arises that the village was regarded in a real sense as part of the realm, and entitled to the protection and constant care of the king. There were officers of the king, of varying degrees of authority, through whom the king maintained watch over the villages. But it does not appear that, as a rule, there was "anything of the nature of a political institution between the village and the Central Government," [2] nor any administrative unit between the village and the kingdom which had a recognized place in the consciousness of the people. In explaining the law of sacrifice, the *Hitopadesa* says: "A man should leave

[1] Sir W. W. Hunter, speech in the Imperial Legislative Council, September 12, 1883.

[2] *Ibid.*

a single person for the sake of a family; for the sake of a village, he should abandon a family; a village he should renounce for the sake of a country; and the whole world for the sake of his soul." [1]

40. In the Code of Manu, the connection of the king with the village is of a very direct kind, the headman himself being appointed by him.[2] The *Arthas'āstra* describes a vast arrangement of espionage by which the king might be kept in touch with the affairs of the village.[3] The *S'ukra-Nīti* requires the king to inspect the villages personally every year. He "must know which subjects have been pleased and which oppressed by the staff of officers and deliberate upon the matters brought forward by the people."[4] The South Indian inscriptions mention various facts to show the more or less intimate connection which existed between the village community and the king. A village assembly misappropriated some money which had been ear-marked for the temple. The temple authorities thereupon complained to the king. The king sent for both the parties, and after due inquiry satisfied himself of the guilt of the assembly. They were fined and the money was restored to the temple.[5] An inscription of about A.D. 1291 speaks of a village assembly which made a report to the king about the misconduct of a Brahman member who brought a "widow from a foreign country" and lived with her. The king's decision is not given.[6] In another inscription the same village assembly wishing to pay their respects to the king alienated some land to raise money for the cost of the journey.[7] An inscription of A.D. 1303 refers to a successful appeal made to the king by a village assembly against a man

[1] *Hitopadesa*, "Acquisition of Friends," sec. 158 (Francis Johnson).
[2] *Mānava Dharma Sāstra*, ch. viii, sec. 115 (Jones & Haughton).
[3] *Mysore Review*, February 1908
[4] *Sacred Books of the Hindus*, vol. xiii (Allahabad, 1914), ch. i, secs. 751–2.
[5] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1906–7, p. 71.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1908–9, p. 83. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

who intruded into the village and succeeded in intimidating the assembly and confining the members in the temple.[1] Then there is a case of a village appropriating some of its revenues towards securing the friendship of the king's agents.[2] And another raising money for the performance of public prayers on behalf of a sick member of the royal family.[3] Treason against the king was severely dealt with in the villages. In A.D. 1230 we read of a village where lands belonging to certain persons who were the declared enemies (*drohin*) of the State were sold by public auction, the price bring fixed by eight officers of the king.[4] In another case the king is mentioned as appointing a new headman in a village for the specific purpose of dealing with certain persons who were traitors to the king (*Raja-drohin*).[5] The usual practice for the king when he thought interference necessary and possible was to send a special commissioner to the village to act in his name. The arrangements recorded in the Uttaramallur inscriptions were the work of such commissioners. In other inscriptions we read of the clerk of the village assembly writing down its proceedings while "the magistrate (i.e. the royal officer) was walking about."[6]

41. When Sir Henry Maine said that "in the almost inconceivable case of disobedience to the award of the village council, the sole punishment or the sole certain punishment would appear to be universal disapprobation,"[7] he made what, to a large extent, appears to be a true statement. But in the light of such facts as those set out above, showing how the king interfered, and was asked to interfere, in various village matters, it seems reasonable to infer that in kingdoms which had reached a certain degree of organization, the ultimate

[1] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1908–9, p. 83.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1912–13, p. 114.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1899–1900, p. 20.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1910–11, p. 75.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1912–13, p. 110.
[6] *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. iii, part ii, p. 173.
[7] *Village Communities in the East and West*, Lecture iii, pp. 68–9.

sanction was not merely the disapprobation of the community but punishment by the king. According to the *Arthas'āsira*, defamation of one's village is an offence punishable with a fine.[1] It may be inferred, therefore, that disobedience to an award of the village council would be an equal, if not a greater, offence, and punishable by the king. In one of the South Indian inscriptions, of about A.D. 1230, a village assembly decided that any one who did anything against the interests of the village or the temple "should suffer as the *grama-drohins* (injurers of the village) do."[2] The use of the expression "should suffer as the *grama-drohins* do" would show that to injure the interests of the village was a recognized form of offence in the kingdom, corresponding to the offence of *Raja-droha*, or injuring the interests of the king. A similar term, *Grama-Kantaka*,[3] is used in the Uttaramallur inscription. The provision that such men are to be debarred from certain temple ceremonies points to a religious sanction in addition to the other sanctions.

42. A good picture of a sitting of a present-day village *panchayat* in one of the Tamil districts is contained in a sketch of South Indian life published in Madras some time ago, *Thillai Govindan*.[4] The business before the meeting was to consider the misconduct of the village schoolmaster in inflicting an exceptionally severe form of punishment on one of the boys (who is the hero of the story). The meeting was held in the house of the boy's grandfather, one of the most respected men in the village. "The parliament consisted of about twenty-five members, of whom eighteen were Brahmans and the rest *Sudras*. It was very slow in coming together,

[1] *Mysore Review*, January 1909.
[2] *Madras Epigraphy, Annual Report*, 1910–11, p. 75. [3] Village pest.
[4] *Madras*, ch. v. The author is an Indian officer in the Madras Excise Department, and is well known in South India as a careful observer of Indian social life and a thoughtful and original writer.

and many a member had to be specially sent for; so that, though its sitting was announced for 3 p.m., it was nearing 5 when about twenty members had gathered. . . . The Brahman members sat on the raised [platform] and the others on the verandah below —they were all chewing [betel leaves] at our expense, and tobacco snuff was also handed round freely. My grandfather opened the proceedings by saying that they had met to punish the conduct of the schoolmaster who had treated me cruelly, that the punishment of a fine of one rupee once before inflicted on him seemed to have had no effect, and that though he had decided not to send me to his school any longer . . . it was necessary, in the interests of the other pupils, to guard against such occurrences in the future; and he recommended the dismissal of Sundaram Iyer (the schoolmaster). This speech was preceded by a preamble dwelling on the speaker's absolute indifference to mundane affairs, and his entire disinterestedness in what he was going to utter. . . . On hearing this, the schoolmaster, who was also present, expressed his great remorse at what had happened, promised most solemnly to behave better in future, dwelt on his long service of nearly thirty years, and the fact that several of his present judges were once his pupils . . . stating in conclusion that if they dismissed him in his old age, he and his family would have to starve and die at the doors of the members. A Sudra member insisted on the teacher's dismissal, and informed the assembly that a more learned and capable teacher was available for service in the next village. Another member spoke of the foolishness of sparing the rod with children, and heroically boasted that he had suffered the punishment (i.e. of the form complained of) thrice during his schooldays. 'And all to no purpose,' muttered another, and those around him laughed gaily. In the end the schoolmaster was fined five rupees and advised to treat his boys better

in future. The parliament having assembled and being ready for business, a case of house-breaking and theft was brought to its notice. This had occurred a month ago in a Brahman's house, and had been immediately reported to the police-station. The police then inquired into the matter, and finding the complainant unwilling to help them as they proposed, and seeing no chance of detection, had 'referred' the case as false. . . . This case was now taken up, and as the members were aware of the truth of the theft, the parliament called on the four *Marava* headmen [1] of the village to make good the lost property, which was valued at nearly four hundred rupees. The headmen pleaded that the matter had in the first instance been reported to the police instead of to them, that they had thereby suffered some trouble and loss of money, that the crime was committed by the members of a gang from a distant village, and that in these circumstances they could not be held liable for the property. Their objections were partly recognized, and the complainant was fined twenty rupees for seeking police help without the permission of the village parliament, the fine to be credited to the village parliament. Then the value of the jewels lost was discussed at length, and was finally reduced to three hundred rupees. The headmen were required to make good this amount within a week, and they agreed to do so. It was nearly dark by this time, and the assembly then broke up gradually." [2]

43. The village community has now lost much of its internal cohesion. Many of the administrative duties which in more leisurely and less exacting days were left to be done by the village commuity have

[1] Headmen of criminal tribes engaged by the villagers privately for police purposes.

[2] There is a rather striking resemblance between this description and that of a village meeting in Russia given in Wallace's *Russia*, ch. viii (1912).

had necessarily to be taken up into the hands of the Central Government and its subordinate agencies. The progress of education and the rising spirit of individualism are helping this process from within. Nevertheless, as an administrative organ of great potential usefulness for the rural population the village community is by no means dead. In the words of the Royal Commissioners on Decentralization in India, "the foundation of any stable edifice which shall associate the people with the administration must be the village as being an area of much greater antiquity than (the new administrative creations) and one in which people are known to one another and have interests which converge on well-recognized objects. . . ." [1] Two great movements in India in recent years lend a new significance to the question—the growth of co-operative credit societies and the extension of primary education. When the load of indebtedness has been lifted off his shoulders and his mind awakened to the meaning of the things around him, we may well hope that the Indian villager may develop a new desire to make his personality, however feeble and broken, enter in some positive way into the government of his little world. Even amid the sound of war and the birth-throes of a new world, there is no higher call in India to the men of our generation than to see this process go forward.

[1] Parliamentary Paper, 1909 (Cd. 4360), pp. 238–9.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION

1. THE history of village education in India goes back perhaps to the beginnings of the village community. The schoolmaster had a definite place assigned to him in the village economy, in the same manner as the headman, the accountant, the watchman, and the artisans. He was an officer of the village community, paid either by rent-free lands or by assignments of grain out of the village harvest. In all likelihood, the earliest schoolmaster was the Brahman priest of the village who offered worship to the village deity on behalf of the different classes of people who lived in the village. From this function discharged by the priest followed his subsidiary function of imparting instruction to those castes who were either of the "twice born" (the superior castes), or were in any way connected with the "twice born" and felt the obligation of acquiring letters. The earliest injunctions bearing on the duties of priests laid upon them the obligation not merely of ministering to religion, but of imparting instruction in the rudiments of knowledge. The lands which supported the priestly schoolmaster were the lands set apart for the village idol, and this income was usually supplemented by free-will offerings from the scholars and their parents.[1]

2. The outstanding characteristics of the schools of

[1] The first four paragraphs of this chapter are practically based upon the *Bengal Report of the Indian Education Commission* (1882–3).

the Hindu village community were: (1) that they were democratic, and (2) that they were more secular than spiritual in their instruction and their general character. The first of these characteristics was apparently a result of the process of absorption with the indigenous population which followed the first stages of the Aryan conquest. The caste system, we read, was extended so as to include non-Aryans, and their deities were accorded places in the Hindu pantheon. It was a characteristic which was shared by the Muhammadan schools which sprang up throughout the country in the Middle Ages, and subsequently by the religious schools started by the Sikhs in the Punjab. Nevertheless, when we speak of the democratic character of these early Hindu schools, it is to be understood that they were democratic only in this sense, that they were open not merely to the priestly caste but to all the four superior castes alike. There was never any question of admitting into the schools those who lay outside the regular caste system whose touch would have meant pollution, nor to the great aboriginal populations of the country. Throughout the long history of indigenous education in India, it is impossible to find any indications that these classes ever came within the range of the vast system of public schools which existed in the country from ancient times.

3. The second characteristic of the schools of the village community, namely, that they were secular, is surprising when we consider that religion has entered so largely at all times into the life of the people and that the earliest instrument of education was the village priest. The reason for this is probably to be found in the circumstance that the teaching of the *Śastras* was forbidden to all but the priestly class, and that from the earliest times the village schools were meant for the instruction of all the superior castes without distinction. It is likely that prayers might

have been offered in the course of the day's work, and that moral precepts were strengthened by the teaching of sacred legends, but anything in the nature of direct religious instruction was unknown. The principal ingredients of the village curriculum were reading, writing, and arithmetic in the vernacular, with occasionally a dose of Sanskrit grammar and poetry. The secular character of the schools was strengthened by the advent of Buddhism. The immense influence which was exercised on Hinduism by the new faith led to a certain disintegration of the position of the Brahman priest, which necessarily reacted on the character of the schools in which he taught. "It is to the Buddhistic time, in all probability, that we must trace the beginnings of that change under which the village schoolmaster is not found to be invariably the village priest and Brahman, as he certainly was in early Hindu times." [1]

4. The effect of the Muhammadan invasions upon the national educational system was twofold. In the first place, they led to a widespread disorganization of the indigenous schools by interfering with the customary rights of the village community and by the exactions of new landlords who were ignorant of their immemorial privileges. The introduction of Persian as the new official language of the country was not also without its effect. The ancient institutions of learning which prized the study of Sanskrit and the vernaculars grew less popular, and only the lower classes who were content with the bare elements of letters were found to resort to them. In the second place, the growth of a large Muhammadan community in various parts of the country led to the institution of Muhammadan schools in villages where they predominated. It is probable that these Muhammadan schools, *Maktabs* as they are called, were started

[1] *Indian Education Commission* (1882–3), *Bengal Report*, para. 6.

in imitation[1] of the ancient Hindu schools. They differed from the latter in the insistence they laid upon the religious character of their instruction, but in the position of the schoolmaster, the methods of teaching, and the financial arrangements by which they were maintained, the two systems bore a striking resemblance to each other.

5. The political unsettlement which attended the decline of Muhammadan rule in India and preceded the establishment of the British Empire witnessed a gradual decadence of the village community as an effective form of local polity. The causes which led to this decadence belong to a wider subject than can be covered in this study, but it is obvious that when the British took possession of the country in the different provinces they found that, though in most parts of the country except Western and Central India, there existed a widespread system of national education, so far as they could trace, the position of the schoolmaster had in many cases changed from that of a village servant with a defined position in the community into that of a casual worker—honoured in the village by reason of his sacred calling but not sufficiently identified with the village to hold his ancient place on the village staff. This statement is true in the main, but nevertheless there were various traces left which pointed to the original connection of the schoolmaster with the village economy. The Court of Directors of the East India Company were anxious from the first to utilize whatever had been left of the ancient system and to incorporate it into their own scheme of education. A dispatch issued by them to the local government, which bears the date June 3, 1814, has the following reference to the

[1] This suggestion, which occurs in the *Report of the Indian Education Commission* (1882–3), *Bengal*, is open to question. Baron Haxthausen noticed Muhammadan village schools in parts of Russia (*The Russian Empire*, Haxthausen translated by R. Farrie, Chapman & Hall, 1856, vol. i, ch. xv). See also Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 167.

village community and the schools connected with it. "This venerable and benevolent institution of the Hindus is represented to have withstood the shock of revolutions, and to its operation is ascribed the general intelligence of the natives as scribes and accountants. We are so strongly persuaded of its great utility that we are desirous you should take early measures to inform yourselves of its present state and that you will report to us the result of your inquiries, affording in the meantime the protection of government to the village teachers in all their just rights and immunities, and marking, by some favourable distinction, any individual amongst them who may be recommended by superior merit or acquirements; for humble as their situation may appear, if judged by a comparison with any corresponding character in this country, we understand those village teachers are held in great veneration throughout India."[1]

6. Though attempts had been made earlier in the century in Madras and Bombay to make a preliminary survey of indigenous schools, it was in Bengal that the first systematic attempt was undertaken by the British Government. The Rev. W. Adam, who was chosen by Lord William Bentinck to report on the vernacular schools of Bengal, presented his reports[2] during the years 1835–8, and they still remain among the most valuable records we have regarding indigenous private schools in India. The information has since been supplemented by similar reports from other provinces, by the labours of the Indian Education Commission of 1882–3, presided over by Sir William Hunter, and by the more recent annual and quinquennial reports of the Education Department of India. But before we proceed to describe the main features of indigenous schools, it is necessary to

[1] *Education in British India*, A. Howell, Calcutta, 1872, p. 6.

[2] *Adam's Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar*. J. Long, Calcutta, 1868.

describe in outline the present system of village education as a whole in order to bring out more clearly the place of indigenous schools in that system. For, though in some provinces indigenous schools are still responsible for a large share of village education, they are by no means the only agencies of rural education, nor are they often the most important. It will also be necessary, before finishing our survey of indigenous schools, to consider in what respects these schools may be said to come within a purview of village local government.

7. Rural instruction in India is in the hands of either public or private agencies, the latter still constituting the more numerous type. Public agencies in charge of rural education are mostly District Boards, which are the local authorities constituted for each district under the Local Self-Government Scheme of Lord Ripon. Occasionally the educational duties of a District Board are found delegated to a Taluka Board, which is the corresponding local authority for a subdivision of a district. The Provincial Government is seldom in direct charge of primary schools, except in areas where there are no local boards such as the Agency Tracts of the Madras Presidency. The Government, however, retain their control over Board primary schools, partly by rules framed for the guidance of local boards and partly through the inspecting agency of the Education Department.

8. Private schools fall into two classes—those which are aided out of public funds and those which are unaided. A considerable proportion of the aided schools are under the management of foreign missionary and other philanthropic societies, the rest, including the unaided schools, being either indigenous schools or "venture" schools. Indigenous and "venture" schools are found in practice so largely to merge into each other that it is hazardous to attempt a sharp distinction between them, but, broadly speak-

ing, indigenous schools may be said to be the descendants of the old village community schools which, though considerably disorganized and fast disappearing, are still; wherever they are found, in a very intimate way associated with the internal life of the village. "Venture" schools are recent growths. They are started in most cases as business enterprises or in response to a demand by the wealthy inhabitants of a village, by men who merely wish to make a competence out of them. The teachers of indigenous schools come of the ancient hereditary class of *gurus*, but "venture" schools are the products of "uncertificated" teachers whose failure to pass the qualifying examinations laid down by the Education Department debars them from employment in any schools of recognized standing. We are more directly concerned here with the former class of schools, but it may be observed that the distinction between the two classes is fast tending to vanish, the operation of the rules regarding grants in aid and the transformation of the old village life resulting in a gradual assimilation of the two classes of schools towards each other.

9. The following statistics relating to the year 1912–13 of the three oldest provinces will throw some light on the relative numbers of the different classes of schools. In Madras the total number of public elementary schools was 25,211 and of aided elementary schools 14,463. Of the latter about a fifth are under the management of missionary societies. The number of *pial* schools, i.e. unaided indigenous schools, stood at about 4,000 in 1906–7, but must have been reduced considerably in recent years. In Bombay the total number of primary schools was 13,368, of which the number of private aided schools was 2,394 and of private unaided schools 200. The aggregate number of primary schools in Bengal was 36,334, of which 35,899 were private schools—27,474 aided and the rest unaided.

10. The indigenous elementary schools which have