

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SETTING – II: GROWTH OF INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE

The economic importance of Bengal was due mainly to her extensive and varied manufactures of cotton and silk. From time immemorial, Bengal had developed silk manufacture into a great art. Indeed, silk and muslin fabrics were the two outstanding features of Bengal's past civilization and trade. At a time, when several modern civilized races were living in a state of barbarism or using the bark of the trees as their apparel, Bengal was producing these valuable stuffs and was sending them to the well-known marts of Dacca, Sonargaon and Satgaon for the uses of princes and noblemen. However, the fame of these silk fabrics was not confined to the shores of India, but spread to the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Ever since that period, the reputation of Bengal's silk fabrics remained unstinted<sup>1</sup>.

Malda was one of the important centres of silk manufacture and trade in Bengal from ancient times. It has been mentioned in the Arthashastra of Kautilya that the silk cloth manufactured in the Paundra (Pundravardhana or Gauda) country was black in colour and was as soft as the surface of a gem. The Paundra country was also famous during Kautilya's time for the production of the Kshauma cloth, which was another variety of silk cloth<sup>2</sup>. In discussing the place of origin of the silk called Patrona, it is stated in the Arthashastra that 'it comes from the Magadhas, the Paundras and Suvarnakudya<sup>3</sup>. Hunter wrote that there could be no doubt that there were silk in these parts during the reign of the last Hindu dynasty at Gaur. It appears that *patta bastra*<sup>4</sup> silk cloths were then exported to the important cities of

Dacca, Sonargaon and Saptagram<sup>5</sup>. Thus, it may safely be concluded that the manufacture of silk textiles in the district was carried on from ancient times.

The earliest reference to the manufacture of Malda is found during the time of Sher Shah who "gave to Sheikh Khalil (an envoy of Emperor Humayun) money and rich cloths and manufactures of Malda...and captivated his heart by these presents and favours". The next reference to the silk manufacture of Malda is available in the Ain-i-Akbari in which it has been stated that in the Sarkar of Barbakbad a fine silk cloth named Gangajal used to be produced<sup>6</sup>. It is recorded that Mirza Nathan, the Imperial Admiral in Bengal during the viceroyalty of Shaista Khan, bought a rare piece of silk cloth at Malda for himself at a cost of Rs. 4,000<sup>7</sup>. The products of Malda were highly prized in the overseas markets. There is evidence that in 1577, a Bengali trader named Sheik Bhik, who used to trade in Maldahi clothes took the sea-route to Russia with three ships laden with silk articles and that two of his ships were wrecked somewhere in the neighborhood of the Persian Gulf<sup>8</sup>.

The advent of the Europeans in the Malda silk market began in the early seventeenth century. The Dutch had established two business establishments<sup>9</sup>, one each at Cossimbazar and Malda. These establishments procured various silk articles from local markets as well as from the artisans<sup>10</sup>. The earliest mention of an English factory in Malda was in the year 1686<sup>11</sup>. A piece of land was purchased in 1686 from the zamindar in Makdumpur, a *mouza* situated in the present Englishbazar town. Here the company carried out their silk rolling, packing and despatching, thereby avoiding the levy of a tax on merchandise, which were the principal source of contention with the Fauzdar of Malda<sup>12</sup>.

Hunter gives further interesting details about the history of the manufacture of silk in Malda. According to him, a French whose name was not preserved, gave a great impetus to the raising of silk worms and the manufacture of silk around 1760. He was probably the precursor of the French factory, which was soon afterwards established in Englishbazar town<sup>13</sup>. It is reasonable to assume that due to the insecurity prevailed in the province during the reigns of the last Nawabs, silk manufacture along with other economic activities had received a setback and that with the restoration of some sense of security in the minds of the people after the battle of Plassey, it became possible for the Frenchman to revive the silk trade in Malda. The very fact that he went to Malda for reviving the manufacture of silk shows that at that time Malda was well-known as a centre of silk manufacture. The first silk filature factory in the district was built by Mr. Udney at Singatola. In 1770, Mr. Thomas Henschman built the Residency House of Englishbazar as a manufactory for sufeda or lace work on cloth. It was subsequently turned into an ordinary silk factory<sup>14</sup>. Buchanan Hamilton in 1810 recorded that the peculiarity of the cloths manufactured in Malda was that silk and cotton were used in almost equal proportions in making the cloths. According to him, the manufacture of cloths made entirely of silk was confined to the immediate vicinity of the town of Malda and was probably introduced into the district by Mr. Thomas Henschman who was the Commercial Resident for the English East India Company in Englishbazar<sup>15</sup>. Because of these efforts, there was a boom in the silk trade between 1760 and 1790; and the rearing of silk worms and the manufacture of silk fabrics became the general occupation of a large section of the people on both banks of the Mahananda in the neighborhood of Englishbazar<sup>16</sup>. This prosperity however was of short duration; and when Buchanan Hamilton

visited the region in 1810, the manufacture had already fallen into decay. At that time, only 4,000 looms were employed in manufacture of silk cloths<sup>17</sup>. Buchanan Hamilton also recorded the existence of about 120 houses of weavers in Malda and its immediate vicinity who used to make thin *muslin* (*mulmul*). The total value of *mulmul* produced did not exceed Rs.50,000. A substantial number of women were engaged in the town of Malda in embroidering flower on cotton cloths. The businessmen, who paid wages for the labour, supplied the cloths. These women were mostly Muslims and were known as Butadars<sup>18</sup>.

In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a complete diversion of the silk industry of Malda into the production of Khamru silk for the Indian market and filature and waste silk for the European market<sup>19</sup>. Meanwhile, the demand for Bengal silks had declined in the global market. In the global silk market, the re-emergence of China, Japan, Italy and France in the late 1860s with advanced technology reduced the demand for Bengal silks. The resultant fall in prices led to a chain of effects that caused its decay<sup>20</sup>. The fall of the raw silk branch adversely affected the economic viability of silk weaving in Bengal, and the latter was further constrained by the deficient demand in the wake of changes in preference patterns, both in Europe and in India, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century<sup>21</sup>. The change was from the pure silk, which Bengal supplied, to mixed silk. The new market was quickly grabbed by China and Japan while Bengal could not adjust. The new technology<sup>22</sup>, which was embedded in large-scale mechanization, ensured larger durability and brighter colours for finished products, reducing, at the same time, the cost of production. These product features suited the contemporary preference patterns, and extended the market to relatively non-affluent consumers.

Bengal did not adapt, and consequently Indian consumers, especially the poorer ones, began to prefer imported silks<sup>23</sup>.

Such was the picture of Bengal silk Industry in the 1870s from when we proposed to begin our study of the silk industry of Malda. At the beginning of our period, as we have seen, several factors were responsible for the decline of the Bengal silk Industry and Malda was of no exception. In the 1870s, as W. W. Hunter noted, the weaving branch of the silk industry was in a very dismal state, and the annual value of the manufacture was estimated by the Collector at not more than Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 6,000<sup>24</sup>. From this time onwards, the weaving of silk cloth from raw material became a small industry and the main industry was the production of raw silk.

Hunter supported this fact as he observed, 'the manufacture of raw silk or silk thread is, on the other hand, in a flourishing condition'<sup>25</sup>. It was largely carried on both with European and native capital. The European working concerns were seven in numbers, and the majority belongs to Messrs. Watson & Company of Rajshahi. The French firm of M. M. Louis Poyen & Cie of Lyons had recently established a factory and had introduced steam power in working the filature<sup>26</sup>. The European concerns, as estimated by Hunter, produced 620 *maunds* of raw silk per annum valued at Rs. 6,20,000. The number of filatures under indigenous management were as many as 3000. These were estimated to produce 1,500 *maunds* of raw silk per annum valued at Rs.9,00,000<sup>27</sup>. In addition, 25,000 *maunds* of cocoons were exported to Jangipur in Murshidabad and Benares. The annual produce of cocoons in the district was nearly 60,000 *maunds*. To rear this quantity of cocoons, as Hunter estimated, nearly 20,000 *acres* of land was used for mulberry cultivation. The silk reeled off in the European factories was exported almost entirely to Europe. The silk

thread produced under indigenous management, on the other hand, was purchased mainly by local *mahajans*, and sold in Calcutta, Benares and other large towns<sup>28</sup>.

## VARIETIES OF SILK CLOTHES

There were many varieties of silk clothes woven in the district of Malda. Buchanan Hamilton recorded in 1810 that there was a special type of cloth available in Malda, which was known as '*Maldehi cloths*'. This fine cloth was made of silk and cotton threads, the wrap being silk and the woof cotton<sup>29</sup>. At that time, there were 120 houses of weavers in the district who could produce fine *muslins*(*mulmul*).Moreover, there was also one weaver in Malda who was expert in weaving Jamdani cloth<sup>30</sup>. In 1820, Walter Hamilton noted that Gulthishi, Bulbulchasm, and other patterns of silk cloths were made at Shahpur and Shibganj, the two important silk-weaving centres of Malda. Besides, silk *saris*, *dhutis*, *rumals*,as also *matka* and *garad* were manufactured in various centres of the district<sup>31</sup>. In 1876, Hunter noted that four principal types of silk fabric were manufactured in the district of Malda.

These were:

- i) Mazchhar, or riplets of the river;
- ii) Bulbulchasm, or nightingales' eyes;
- iii) Kalintarakshi, or pigeons' eyes;
- iv) Chand Tara, or moon and stars<sup>32</sup>.

The other cloths made in the Malda district were *dhutis*, *saris*, *koras*, *alwans* (thick wraps worn in winter), *chadars* (ordinary wraps), *rumals*<sup>34</sup> and *jors*. *Jors*

had a considerable sale throughout India as they were required for ceremonial purposes, marriages, *pujas* and religious festivals. Malda and Murshidabad *saris*, *dhutis* and *matkas* had a great demand in Bengal<sup>35</sup>. The weavers of Malda produced three kinds of *taffetas*<sup>36</sup>, fine ordinary and brown. *Taffetas* and *rumals* were prominent among the exports to Europe from Malda and Murshidabad<sup>37</sup>. *Rumals* were also exported from Malda in large quantities to Northern India<sup>38</sup>.

### IMPORTANT CENTRES OF SILK MANUFACTURE

In Malda, cocoon rearing and reeling were conducted throughout the district, but silk weaving was carried on at Shibganj, Shahpur and Old Malda in the beginning of twentieth century<sup>39</sup>. In 1810, Buchanan Hamilton observed that silk weaving was concentrated at Shibganj, Bholahat, Sujapur near the ruins of Gaur, Shahpur and at Old Malda<sup>40</sup>. In 1820, Walter Hamilton observed that in Malda, Shahpur and Shibganj were two important silk-weaving centres<sup>41</sup>. That these silk producing centres were also active in the second decade of the twentieth century is testified by G. E. Lambourn. He noted that at Shibganj there were nearly 140 families of silk weavers with 180 looms, of whom nearly 50 families were engaged in producing *matka* and the rest *garad* of pure silk. At Shahpur nearly 200 families who manufacture Gulthishi, Bulbulchasm and other patterns of Malda silk cloth<sup>42</sup>. Towards the end of our period, Shershahi of Kaliachak became an important centre for silk weaving<sup>43</sup>.

## Thana-wise location of important sericulture villages of Malda

1. Kaliachak	Alinagar, Sujapur, Nabinagar, Jalalpur, Birampur, Kaliachak, Madhughat, Kadamtala.
2. Englishbazar	Amriti, Piasbari, Mahadipur, Milki, Jote Arapur, Kotwali, Chandipur, Ajamtola, Nagharia.
3. Manikchak	Mathurapur, Manikchak, Kalindri, Lalbathani.
4. Old Malda	Bachamari, Mangalbari, Sahapur, Old Malda, Muchia.

## SIZE OF THE POPULATION ENGAGED IN THE SILK INDUSTRY : THEIR SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Silk was manufactured in three separate branches. These were cocoon rearing or sericulture, winding and spinning of the raw silk branch and weaving. A large number of people of Malda were engaged in all the three branches of the industry. In 1810 Buchanan Hamilton noticed about 15,000 looms in Malda and if five persons were needed per loom the total number of persons engaged in weaving (both cotton and silk) would come to around 75,000<sup>44</sup>. However, the total number of *Tantubaya* i.e. weavers, traders etc., given in the census of 1872, was only 4,791<sup>45</sup>. However, this statistics is doubtful as the census of 1911 estimated that about 20,127 people were engaged in silk production<sup>46</sup>. A census of the people engaged in various branches of silk industry was taken in 1925-26 and showed that 18,324 families were occupied in silkworm rearing. The majority reside in Kaliachak *thana* and the remainder principally Englishbazar and Bholahat *thanas*. It also showed that there were 596 silk weavers in the district and 230 weavers of

*matka* or waste silk<sup>47</sup>. It is, however, to be noted that the number of persons given in the census report as engaged in the rearing of silkworms and production of cocoons and raw silk related to those persons only whose principal means of livelihood consisted of the rearing of silkworms and production of cocoons and raw silk. It was likely that these were persons whose principal means of livelihood was either cultivation or some other branch of economic activity but whose secondary means of livelihood was the rearing of silkworms and production of cocoons and raw silk. The total number workers employed in this industry as given in the census report did not take into account this latter class of persons.

Four classes of people were engaged in the silk industry of Malda:

- i) The cultivators of the mulberry plants.
- ii) Silkworm rearers.
- iii) Silk winders.
- iv) Silk weavers<sup>48</sup>.

Both the Hindu and Muslim people were engaged in cultivating mulberry trees and rearing the silkworms. In the medieval period, the mulberry cultivators were mainly Hindus and the rearers were Muslims. Even today, cocoon rearing was limited to the lower caste among the Hindus and the higher caste Hindus like Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas considered it derogatory to rear cocoons<sup>49</sup>. In Malda, Muslims in general and among the Hindus Pundas rear silk-worms<sup>50</sup>. The Punda caste was the hereditary silkworm rearing caste and they lived mainly in Malda and in parts of Bogra, Rajshahi and Murshidabad. They were the 'the best, the most intelligent and most

prosperous of all cocoon rearers<sup>51</sup>. In Bengal, the synonym of mulberry was 'tunt'; and the cocoon rearers were known as *tuntias*, *tuntia kaibartas* and *tuntiachasas*<sup>52</sup>. In Malda, there were over 25,000 silk weavers and majority among them belonged to the *tanti* caste. Muslims also took part in silk weaving in this district, especially in Kaliachak p.s.<sup>53</sup>.

## FINANCING THE SILK INDUSTRY

Silk reeling and weaving required a comparatively large capital, which was difficult to obtain from the ordinary moneylenders. It was not possible for the independent silk producers of Malda to cope with the increasing demands, which were also getting more and more sophisticated. For, production on wider scale necessitated larger capital resources to be penetrated into production, which they were unable to provide. Since the producers of silk of Malda always remained on the subsistence level of existence, they most urgently required advances regularly for each silk *band*<sup>54</sup> or even frequently<sup>55</sup>.

What was the economic condition of the weavers of the mixed goods and cotton piece goods? The data regarding this are meager. The Danish records inform us that a cotton weaver was generally estimated to earn three *sicca* rupees and in good times upto three rupees a month. During our period of study, the Marwaris of Englishbazar<sup>56</sup> mainly financed the silk industry of Malda. The silk producers were largely dependent on the Marwari merchant class for obtaining necessary advances, and for the marketing of their produce<sup>57</sup>. Indeed, this money lending Marwari merchant class had much control over the debtor silk producers. The reelers and weavers used to approach the Marwari merchants, who advanced money to purchase cocoons and yarns on the understanding that the products must be sold to them<sup>58</sup>. The

silk producers who had received advances were always given rates much lower than the prevalent market rates. This was designed to keep them in balances, and the defaulters were not allowed to work for others. Up to the third decade of the twentieth century, the silk producers of Malda had to bear the load of outstanding balances much to their irritation<sup>59</sup>.

Consequently, there was a regular loss to the producer who found himself heavily indebted to the merchants. Mr. Peddie, then the collector of the district, realized that the introduction of a collective system was essential to save the producers from the clutches of the silk merchants. It was due to his efforts the Malda Cooperative Silk Union Limited was formed in 1927<sup>60</sup>. The Union had a nominal capital of Rs. 1 lakh. It was financed by loan from the Provincial Bank, loans from the Government, interest on loans granted to rural societies, and the profit on sales on manufactured goods<sup>61</sup>. The principal object of the Union was to extend the system of rural cooperative societies and assist them in the production and marketing of their products. In 1930, the number of societies affiliated to the union was thirty three<sup>62</sup>.

The rural societies were helped by advances either in cash, implements on materials. The interest on loans was fixed at a general meeting and approved by the Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Bengal, but it cannot exceed 12.5 percent<sup>63</sup>. Loans were limited to a maximum of ten times the value of the share capital paid up by societies. The societies were under regular supervision, and provision was made for the recovery of cash or goods advanced in the event of a default in repayment<sup>64</sup>.

During the years 1928-30, the union purchased annually silk yarn and cloth to the value of Rs.1 lakh. This was sold in the most favourable markets through

the agency of *dalals*. The Union extended its business to almost all the silk districts of Bengal, as well as to the important silk centres outside Bengal – in the United Provinces, Madras and Bombay<sup>65</sup>.

## GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SERICULTURE

It has already been pointed out that the export trade of Malda silk began to decline after 1874. It was mainly due to the increased demand for *tasar* and wild silks and the technological and commercial improvements, which were being made in France and Japan<sup>66</sup>. Writing the District Gazetteer in 1918, G. E. Lambourn observed that the prices of manufacture were dropped and the industry was in a danger of stagnation<sup>67</sup>.

To meet this situation the Government attempted to stimulate the production of cocoons. Trained overseers were deputed to instruct the rearers how to use microscopes for the detection of diseased seed, and seed-raising establishment for the supply of pure seed, under Government supervision, was established in Rajshahi and Murshidabad<sup>68</sup>. Sons of silkworm rearers were given stipends to get training in the sericulture school in Rajshahi and if they completed the course successfully, they were supplied with capital to start their business as seed-raisers. By these measures, Lambourn observed, the district had been largely saved from diseased seed, the chief source of loss, and the industry appeared to be on a sound footing as far as the production of *khamru* silk is concerned<sup>69</sup>.

In 1920, the Sericulture Department was established in the district. Its chief aim was to revive the industry by educating the silk rearers in scientific methods, and by providing them with disease-free seed cocoons<sup>70</sup>. A useful innovation of the Sericulture Department was the introduction of the mulberry

tree to supplement the cultivation of mulberry bush. The mulberry bush was one of the most expensive crops to cultivate because the land required continual attention and regular manuring<sup>71</sup>. In 1929-30, the sericulture department proposed to spend Rs.35 per *bigha* on manure alone, because it was found that good manuring resulted in a marked increase in output. This was a sum, which was beyond the means of the average cultivator, and represented approximately his total cost of cultivation at that time. The mulberry tree, however, cost almost nothing to maintain and used to produce leaves after four years' growth<sup>72</sup>. Up to 1939, over two thousand mulberry trees were planted in the Piasbari and Amriti nurseries by the Sericulture Department. It was recommended that its use should be extended as far as possible among silk rearers in order to cut down the cost of production and correspondingly increase profits<sup>73</sup>.

It was not sufficient, however, merely to produce and sell disease-free seed. The knowledge of scientific methods should be imparted among the cultivators. With this object, a sericulture school was attached to the Piasbari nursery with a course of one year. Monthly stipends of Rs.10 were granted to the selected sons of professional silk-rearers for training in sericulture. Apart from this, Rs.250 was allotted to each passed student for the construction of a model rearing house and the conduct of sericulture on scientific methods under the supervision and guidance of departmental officers<sup>74</sup>. Primary sericulture schools attached to both the Piasbari and Amriti nurseries imparted elementary instruction in sericulture with practical demonstrations. A contribution of Rs.10 per month was made to the Kaliachak Middle English School, and Rs.5 to the Rustamnagar Upper Primary School for conducting sericulture classes<sup>75</sup>.

Apart from silk, some other indigenous handicrafts also existed in Malda district in the period under review. Mention may be made of cotton weaving industry, indigo manufactures, metal works, lac production and mango industry.

## COTTON WEAVING

Cotton cloth weaving occupied an important place in the traditional indigenous cottage industry of the district. Buchanan Hamilton mentioned that the weavers of cotton were numerous in the region. Most of them were employed in weaving coarse cotton cloth for country use<sup>76</sup>. The only fine manufacture was that of a beautiful white calico called Khasa, the cost of which was from 6 to 15 rupees a piece. This cloth had a great demand and the company used to advance money to the weavers on a regular basis. Apart from the company, several private Indian traders used to make advances to the weavers. They sent these fine piece goods to Dinajpur and Patna, and a good deal was consumed in the district. These weavers of calico lived mainly in the divisions of Kharba, Nehanagar, Dangrikhora and Gargariba, that is, on the low lands near the Mahananda and Nagar<sup>77</sup>. Buchanan Hamilton estimated that about 3,500 looms were employed in weaving these Khasa calicos in the area. Moreover, about 10,000 looms were employed in weaving ordinary cloth for country use. Among these weavers, there were in the north-west corner of the district about 80 houses of Chapals who were said to have employed 90 looms in weaving checkered cloth. Besides these professional weavers, there were more than 500 farmers in the area adjacent to Dinajpur who, in spare time, weave cotton cloths<sup>78</sup>.

This situation, however, began to change under colonial pressure. With the influx of machine-made Manchester cloth, the decaying process of this indigenous industry started not only in Malda but also in the province as a whole. The district reports in 1870s indicate towards the decadence of cotton-weaving industry in Malda. A large number of weavers gradually abandoned their looms to take up other pursuits<sup>79</sup>. As we have already noted that Buchanan Hamilton, in his survey of Malda in 1810, recorded that there were as many as 13,500 looms were employed in weaving cotton cloth. The number of looms came down to 4,000 when Hunter was visiting the district in the 1870s. A number of 4,654 persons only were engaged in different sections of cotton weaving industry in Malda at the time of the first census of 1872<sup>80</sup>. G. E. Lambourn, writing the District Gazetteer in 1918, noticed that the industry had declined owing to the competition of factory goods. It was, he observed, purely a cottage industry and most of the weavers took agriculture as a secondary occupation<sup>81</sup>. The District Board established a weaving school where boys were trained to use improved looms. The effort, however, produced no significant result<sup>82</sup>.

In 1920 on the recommendation of the Indian Industrial Commission, a permanent Department of Industries was set up in Bengal. It focused its full attention to cottage and small industries. However, it made a little headway as it suffered from fund-crunch from its inception<sup>83</sup>. However, on its instruction the district authority of Malda attempted to rejuvenate the weaving school already established in 1916 and drew up programmes of demonstrations in the art of efficient weaving with improved applications for improving the quality and standard of the finished products.

These improved appliances included the introduction of fly-shuttle looms, the supply of fly-shuttle sleys for pit looms, warping machines etc. Because of the activities of the department and due to inter-communication among the people themselves, the use of fly-shuttle looms and other improved appliances increased to some extent<sup>84</sup>.

However, financial problems and difficulties of marketing individual items of handlooms stood as barriers on the path of progress. The district administration attempted to organize Weavers' Cooperative Societies to solve these problems. However, it failed miserably due to financial reasons as well as due to lack of sustained effort on their own part<sup>85</sup>.

Until 1929, there were only 15 Weavers' Cooperative Societies having a total membership of 300 persons, which was only percent of the total number of weavers in Malda<sup>86</sup>. The industry in Bengal along with Malda thus remained, according to the Bengal Industrial Survey Committee, 'generally under the grip of the *mahajans* who in most of the cases act as creditors and suppliers of yarn to the weavers and also market the finished stuffs. The *mahajans*' interposition between the weaving community and the market is primarily due to the lack of any organization amongst the workers, whose principal difficulty is want of funds<sup>87</sup>.

## INDIGO

W. W. Hunter, writing in 1876, noticed that indigo also formed an important production of the district of Malda<sup>88</sup>. In fact, indigo was a new cash crop in Bengal at the time of its introduction by the European planters in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>89</sup>. With the passage of time, however, Bengal indigo firmly established its position. By 1810, as the court of Directors found, the

Bengal indigo 'supplies much of the consumption of Europe, and no rival to it seems likely to arise'<sup>90</sup>. The rate of growth of in Bengal indigo exports was, indeed, striking: from 4,952 Factory *maunds* in 1788-89 to 1,32,946 Factory *maunds* in 1829-30<sup>91</sup>. The biggest blow to the industry was the indigo revolt of 1859-60, which engulfed the whole of the indigo belt<sup>92</sup>. There was a sharp decline of indigo exports of 44.3 percent between 1855 and 1861.

In the beginning year of our study, there were twenty indigo factories at work in Malda. These factories belonged to seven different concerns, and the total production was about 4,000 *maunds*. At the prevailing price, the value of total production amounted to about Rs.8,00,000<sup>93</sup>. According to Hunter's estimate, to produce this quantity of indigo not less than from 23,000 to 26,000 acres of land must have been used. In Malda, Hunter noticed, a few wealthy local people owned indigo factories. The greater part of the indigo was, however, grown and manufactured by European capital and under European supervision<sup>94</sup>. The mode of cultivation and the processes used in the manufacture were the same in Malda as in other indigo growing tracts of Bengal.

Table 3.1 Average area, Annual Outlay and Out-turn of Four Indigo Concerns in Malda District.

Names of Concerns	Area under cultivation (in acres)	Annual outlay (in rupees)	Annual out-turn (in <i>maunds</i> )
Kaliachak	9,333	1,60,000	1,100
Mathurapur	4,333	75,000	500

Tantipur	5,000	1,00,000	600
Singatala	1,666	30,000	250
Source: W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. vii, London, 1876 (Indian Reprint 1974), p. 99			

## LAC PRODUCTION

It is not known when the lac industry originated in the district. From the absence of any mention of it in Hunter's Statistical Account, it may be presumed to be later than 1875<sup>95</sup>. This small industry seemed to have been established by the Santal immigrants after 1888<sup>96</sup>. The lac growing area was a strip, six or seven miles broad and about seventy miles long, following the bank of the Ganges. Commencing from Ratua p.s. in the north, it extended southwards through Manikchak and Kaliachak. The soil in this diara tract contained a large proportion of sand, and *babul* trees. The *pakur*, *peepul* and *dumur* trees were also suitable for *lac* production, but in Malda its cultivation was confined entirely to the plum tree<sup>97</sup>. The production itself was a resinous incrustation secreted by the *lac* insect (*Iaccipir lacca*). The method of cultivation was simple, and consisted of infecting the plum tree with brood *lac*. There were two crops – the *kartiki* and *baisakhi*. For the former the trees were selected in the latter part of February; for the latter they were generally pruned in the second half of April<sup>98</sup>. When the crop was ready the resinous substance was scrapped off the branches and collected for the first refining process. This was carried out by malting the *lac* and passing it through melting bags. The bag was held at either end and twisted in opposite directions, so that the molten *lac* was squeezed out, and the impurities remained.<sup>99</sup>

There was no market for *lac* in the district. The crude *lac*, or stick *lac*, was sold mostly at Kotalpukur, Pakur and Barharwa in the Santal Parganas; and on a small scale in Murshidabad district, where it was further refined and sent to Calcutta for foreign export<sup>100</sup>. Of the various industries, which consumed *lac*, mention may be made of gramophone record industry, spirit, varnish and electric paint trade, wax manufacture, leather and rubber finishing, photographic work etc.<sup>101</sup>. During the period following the First World War, *lac* industry of Malda leaped into prominence. At that time, *lac* was sold for Rs.80 per *maund* that was ten times of the price in 1935. The value of total production of the district was as much as Rs.32 lakhs<sup>102</sup>. However, this boom period was, however, short lived. The *lac* industry of Malda begun to decline rapidly since the Second World War. In 1935 the value of total production stood as low as Rs.1 lakh only, the price being Rs.8 per *maund*<sup>103</sup>. In the census report of 1951, it was observed that the *lac* industry of Malda was in a danger of total extinction<sup>104</sup>. The same views was expressed by M. O. carter in 1935 as he observed, the present condition of the industry was due to two factors – adulteration, resulting from the crude form of production (and sometimes deliberately carried out) and the competition of synthetic products. The commonest form of deliberate adulteration was to mix sand, ashes or even sugar with the grain *lac* in the melting bag, thereby increasing the weight of the product. Crude packing and refining tended further to produce an article that was unreliable in quantity; and this coupled with the great fluctuation in prices, had increased the demand for synthetic resins at the expense of natural *lac*<sup>105</sup>.

## BRASS AND BELL-METAL INDUSTRIES

Malda was also known for its metal work<sup>106</sup>. Englishbazar, Nababganj, Kaligram, Majpara and Arapur were the chief centres of the brass and bell – metal industries in the district<sup>107</sup>. Brass and bell metal articles manufactured in the district had a fair sale in and outside Bengal. The main articles were water vessels like *gharas* and *kalsis*, dishes or *thalas* and *jambati*<sup>108</sup>. The braziers of Malda had a great reputation all over Bengal for their spoons, ladles and *dabars* for keeping betel vine. The district, in fact, used to supply the bulk of Bengal's demand of brass and bell-metal spoons and *dabars*<sup>109</sup>. The artisans were mostly Musiims<sup>110</sup>.

Brass and bell-metal works were the only indigenous manufacture, which had not suffered from foreign competition, because these products were not imported from abroad. The primary reason for absence of this competition seems to be the fact that bulk of these articles would involve high cost of transport and would, therefore, raise the supply-price of any foreign competitor<sup>111</sup>. The condition of artisans and workers in this manufacturing works of Malda was better than that of others employed in other branches of cottage industry<sup>112</sup>. The number of persons, Lambourn estimated, depended on this industry was about 2,161, of whom 653 were actual artisans<sup>113</sup>. In 1939 Englishbazar was estimated to produce about 840 *maunds* of brass articles valued at Rs.22,000; Arapur produced about 1,200 and 1,800 *maunds* of brass and bell-metal articles valued at Rs.36,000 and Rs.1,40,000 respectively. Majpara produced about 110 *maunds* of bell-metal articles valued at Rs.6,600. In 1939, there were 70 family factories at Englishbazar employing 200 Hindu workers; Arapur had 100 family factories employing

about 1,000 Muslim workers, Majpara about 16 family factories with almost equal of Hindu and Muslim workers<sup>114</sup>.

## MANGO

In the economic development of the district of Malda, the cultivation and trade of Mango played a very vital role. Malda, in fact, has long been famous for its mangoes. It is recorded that the Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan used to send armed guards for the trees, the fruits of which were reserved for his use<sup>115</sup>. Writing of Nawab Mir Jafar, the author of *Riyaz-us-Salatin* observed that the Nawab employed a superintendent of mango-supplies who was posted in the Chakla of Akbarnagar (in the west of Malda district) and he sent delicious mangoes from Malda, Kotwali, Husainpur, Akbarnagar and other places to the Nawab<sup>116</sup>. Buchanan Hamilton wrote in 1810, 'the mangoes of Malda have a high reputation, and may be considered as one of the finest fruits in the world. The produce of the mango trees, even in its present state, is one of the most valuable in this district, for it cannot be of less annual value on an average than Rs. 4,50,000'<sup>117</sup>.

Mango was extensively grown over the whole district, with the exception of the *barind* tract where the red alluvium was not suitable for its cultivation, and the *diara* strip along the Ganges, where the proportion of sand in the soil was excessive<sup>118</sup>. Englishbazar was by far the largest and best mango-growing thana. The area covered by mango gardens was 15 square miles, or one-sixth of the total area of the thana. The other centers of mango cultivation were Ratua, Sibganj, Kaliachak, Kharba, Malda, Harishchandrapur, Gomastapur and Bholahat. The most thickly grown area situated along the banks of the Mahananda and Kalindri rivers<sup>119</sup>. The total areas covered by

mango orchards were roughly estimated at 15,000 acres<sup>120</sup>. In 1958, 44,000 acres of land were used for the mango plantations.

The planting of a mango garden required initially a certain amount of labour and attention. There was, in fact, a saying in the district that the nurture of young mango plants was as difficult as that of children<sup>121</sup>. The ground was first ploughed up thoroughly, and sometimes had to be drained by excavating ditches round it. It then had to be fenced to prevent damage by cattle. Transplantation took place in July, when the rainfall was ample, and each plant had to be separately fenced with a circular wall of bamboo matting. The plants were arranged in straight rows at intervals of about 10 yards<sup>122</sup>. During the first year they required regular watering and constant attention, and up till the sixth year, when the young trees began to bear fruit, the ground had to be regularly weeded or dug up to keep it clear of undergrowth. During the first few years, it was possible to grow crops on the same land; but thereafter the cultivation had to be stopped, in order that the trees might receive the full benefit of the soil. The initial cost of planting a mango garden was between Rs.40 and Rs.50 per acre. The rate for mango gardens, where separate rates prevailed, was generally Rs.6 per acre, which was distinctly higher than the average rate of rent for paddy land<sup>123</sup>. There were in the main two varieties of mango – the *guti* or ordinary mango grown from seed, and the *kalam*, which was grown from graftings. The latter was a superior quality, and fetched a higher price<sup>124</sup>. A good year of mango cultivation brought prosperity to a large section of the population. The owners of orchards made a handsome profit when prices were good, because once the trees had started bearing fruit, the cost of maintenance was negligible. The poor people also benefit, because there was a custom that windfalls were the property of the first comer. A good

season was of no small importance to the common people, as mangoes comprised half of their diet for about two months in the year<sup>125</sup>. They could also make a small income by selling various preparations such as *amchur*, which consisted of slices of green mango dried in the sun and *amsatwa*. It was made from the juice of ripe fruit, which had been pressed, spread out and solidified by the application of a drying agent. This preparation was exported in large quantities as far as Punjab and Madras. The mango trade was one of the most important in the district, and one, which had an important economic effect on the district<sup>126</sup>.

#### THE ACTIVITIES OF MANGO EXPORT COMMITTEE OF MALDA

Mangoes produced in Malda were exported chiefly to Eastern Bengal and Assam<sup>127</sup>. In 1948, the mango dealers of the district submitted a proposal to the District Magistrate for the formation of an association to securing facilities for exporting mango to the newly created East Pakistan and elsewhere. Asok Mitra, then the District Magistrate, saw in this proposal the opportunity to build up a local fund not only for the benefit of mango cultivation but also to undertake improvements of public institutions in the district<sup>128</sup>. Accordingly, in August 1948 a committee called the Mango Export Committee was formed of which the District Magistrate was made the president, the committee itself remaining purely non-official<sup>129</sup>.

It was decided that the district administration would endeavor to foster the export facilities for mango in recognition of which the Association of Mango Dealers would pay to the fund of the committee a voluntary contribution to the extent of one *anna* per basket of mangoes exported. In this way an amount of Rs.3,35,000 was collected by the Malda Mango Export Committee between

the years 1948 and 1952<sup>130</sup>. In 1949, the committee was renamed as Malda Mango Improvement Committee. The Committee decided to employ this fund for making grants to various public institutions according to their needs, and for keeping a part of this fund for the improvement of the mango industry<sup>131</sup>. In 1949, the Committee donated Rs.3,000 to the Jadavpur College of Engineering and Technology for carrying on research work on Malda mangoes<sup>132</sup>. The plans of the committee were:

- i) to start an industrial organization for manufacture of mango product.
- ii) to establish schools for vocational training including training in manufacture of mango products.
- ii) to make grants to public institutions<sup>133</sup>.

In 1948, the Committee made the following grants: District Hospital – Rs.2500; amenities for the police force of the district – Rs.1000; Barlow Girls' H.E. School – Rs.7000; Malda College – Rs.25000<sup>134</sup>. In 1949, a grant of Rs.15000 was made to Malda College and a grant of Rs.20000 was made to the Fruit Preservation Scheme. In addition, 9 H.E. Schools were helped with Rs.1000 or more. A sum of Rs.1000 was paid to the Association for the prevention of blindness in West Bengal<sup>135</sup>.

In 1950 and 1951, a sum of Rs.33500 was paid to the Fruit Preservation Scheme and a sum of Rs.28500 to the Malda College. There were 21 other recipients, mainly H. E. Schools, which received grants varying from Rs.1450 to Rs.2450. In addition, grants of Rs.1000 each were made for special purposes to the District Board, to Englishbazar Municipality and to the

B.R.Sen Public Library<sup>136</sup>. In 1952 Rs.30,000 was donated to the Malda College and Rs.20,000 to the Fruit Preservation Scheme. Grants varying from Rs.1,250 to Rs.2,000 were made to eleven H.E.Schools. A special grant of Rs.2,000 was made to the Old Malda Municipality and another special grant of Rs.1,000 to the District Board<sup>137</sup>.

## TRADE AND COMMERCE

The trade of the district of Malda was facilitated by its command over the trade routes up and down the Ganges and those linking the chief cities of Bengal. Indeed, Malda was well placed for both internal and external trade due to the great river highways of the district, their tributaries and canals. The biggest trade of the district was the mango trade. Perhaps a more profitable trade than mango in Malda district was silk<sup>138</sup>. The principal exports were raw silk and cocoons, mangoes, rice, pulses, oilseeds, brass and bell-metal utensils and jute, while imports were cotton piece goods, cotton yarn, sugar, salt, metals, timber and various articles of European manufacture<sup>139</sup>. Until the end of the nineteenth century, Indigo also occupied an important place in the export trade of the district<sup>140</sup>.

## SPREAD OF TRANSPORT NETWORK

From the earliest time rivers have been the most important means of communication in Malda on which the roads have converged. From November to July, however, nearly all parts of the district were accessible by bullock carts over a network of fair-weather tracks. In the rainy season, all the roads became largely impassable for wheeled traffic and communications were mostly by boat or with pack bullocks and ponies<sup>141</sup>.

## RIVER TRANSPORT

Until the introduction of railway in 1909, the export trade of Malda district was carried through the waterway and the country-boats and in some cases, the steamers were the only conveyance. Commodities were brought from the villages to the trading marts and there-from to the river ports by carts from where they would be exported to various places<sup>142</sup>. Parts of the district were well provided with river communications. The four main rivers – the Ganges, Mahananda, Kalindri and Purnabhaha were navigable throughout year for boats up to 100 *maunds*. Three others, namely, the Tangan, Pagla and Bhagirathi were navigable only during the rainy season for boats up to 50 *maunds*<sup>143</sup>.

The country boats were also used for carrying intra-district as well as inter-district passenger and goods traffic at different public *ferries* within Malda under the management of the local Boards, the District Boards and the government<sup>144</sup>. The District Board maintained a large number of *ferries* on its roads and there were a number of zamindari *ferries* as well. The larger *ferries* of Nababganj, Old Malda and Rajmahal were owned by the government<sup>145</sup>.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a line of steamboats ran throughout the year from Lalgola in Murshidabad to Nimasarai opposite Old Malda up the Mahananda in connection with the Ganges Steamer Service and the Eastern Bengal Railway Service. A steam ferry used to ply from Manikchak across the Ganges to Rajmahal, which in the rainy season became a ferry service from Rajmahal to Englishbazar via the Kalindri<sup>146</sup>. Indeed, it was the Ganges river system, which shaped the human geography and economic life of the district of Malda.

## ROAD TRANSPORT

The chief road was from opposite Nababganj through Sibganj, Gaur, Englishbazar, crossing the Mahananda at Malda and thence to Dinajpur. It connected with the *diara* from Kaliachak and Panchanandapur and with Gomastapur from Kansat. Outside Englishbazar it connected with what was, till the opening of the railway in 1909, the most important road in the district that from Englishbazar to Manikchak, called the Rajmahal road. Opposite Old Malda the road connected with a road running from that point through the Rajmahal road and connecting with the latter near Amriti; at Gajol it crossed a road which connected to the west across the Mahananda with the Ratua-Chanchal road at Samsi, and to the east across the Tangan at Bamongola, to Pakuahat, branching thence north to the Dinajpur district, and south via Habibpur to Aiho on the Mahananda<sup>147</sup>. The road from Murshidabad to Darjeeling via Dinajpur passed for a short distance through the district, connecting to the west with the marts of Nababganj, Gomastapur and Rohanpur on the Mahananda. From the Rajmahal road at Amriti a road crossed the Kalindri to Ratua and thence by a cold weather track across the Tal to Samsi, Chanchal, Kharba, to Churaman in Dinajpur in the east and to the Purnia border in the west. These roads were for the most part embanked<sup>148</sup>.

Therefore, it may be stated that pre-rail transport of Malda was in fact weak and insufficient. Apart from the natural advantages of water transport in a riverine region, the dilapidated state of the roads account for heavy dependence on boats for cargo carrying.

Panchanan Majumdar, a noted literati of the contemporary Malda, has left a graphic account of the condition of roads in the district in the beginning of the twentieth century: 'I came to Malda in February 1901. It was pre-railway time. The usual route was via Rajmahal, which was a railway terminus. One wishing to come to Malda from outside had to detrain at Rajmahal and cross the Ganges there. It took less than hour to cross the Ganges in a boat. On reaching the Malda side of the river passengers used to get down on a vast tract of land known as the Manikchak *diara*. A large number of bullock carts would remain in waiting in diara tract for the purpose of carrying passengers to the town of Englishbazar and other places. The usual fare for a bullock cart carrying passengers from Manikchak *diara* to Englishbazar town varied from Rs.1 – 8 to Rs.2. On leaving the Manikchak *diara* the cart would proceed in a northeastern direction and would pass through *diara* tracts and the village of Manikchak, and would halt at the village of Enayetpur situated at a distance of 15 miles from the town of Englishbazar. There was a *dhap* or sheet of water at Enayetpur where the passengers would bathe and prepare their midday meal in some shop. There were a number of such shops at Enayetpur where rice, *dal*, *ghee* and other eatables and fuel were sold. People prepared their midday meal and took it and after a short rest, the bullock carts started again and would reach Englishbazar, covering a distance of 15 miles at a stretch, in the course of about 6 / 7 hours. A good bullock cart would reach Englishbazar from Manikchak diara in about ten hours. Between Manikchak and Englishbazar the road passed among others through the villages of Mohona, Chowki, Nathinagar, Milki and Amriti. There was *dhap* at Amriti, the road bifurcated there, and one branch went towards Kotwali. The distance between Rajmahal and Englishbazar was generally taken to be 24 miles. There was a

man named Ganesh Gonri living at Baluchar who had several sons who possessed bullock carts. During the rainy season, a steamer plied from Rajmahal to Englishbazar. It was run by Sew Sahay Singh and after him by his nephew Rai Bahadur Chandraketu Narain Singh, the lessee of the Rajmahal Ferry under the Malda District Board. They enjoyed a subsidy from the Malda District Board for the purpose. The steamer started from Rajmahal and went up the river Ganges for some distance and it entered the Kalindri, and running along the Kalindri throughout its whole course entered the Mahananda at Old Malda and then reached the town of Englishbazar. On its way it stopped at Nurpur, Araidanga, Kotwali and other places'<sup>149</sup>.

## INTRODUCTION OF RAILWAYS

Introduction of railways in Malda in 1909 was an important landmark in the mode of transport and communication of the district. It had a great impact on the trade and commerce of the district as well. India's railway transport started in 1853 and expanded so rapidly that by 1910 it became the fourth largest in the world<sup>150</sup>. Once in operation, the railways offered substantial advantages over more traditional modes of transport such as pack-bullocks, bullock carts, camels, boats and human carriers. Not only were railways more readily available, faster and more reliable, they also provided substantial reductions in cost per ton kilometer. By reducing transport costs railways brought significant economic benefits to India<sup>151</sup>.

Bengal entered the railway era in 1854 with the East Indian Railway connecting Howrah and Hoogly<sup>152</sup>. In 1872, there were less than 900 miles of railway in the whole of Bengal. During the next nine years 407 miles were constructed. The total length of the railway lines completed during the decade

1881-91 was 1051 miles. By 1901, no less than 1614 miles of railway were opened linking up important trade centres with the existing railway system<sup>153</sup>.

The district of Malda came within the purview of the railway transport system in 1909 when the Katihar-Godagari meter gauge railway was opened<sup>154</sup>. From the south it runs northwards as far as Singhabad, then westward to Nimasarai, the station for Old Malda, and finally northwest into Purnia district. The length of the line within the district was seventy-five miles<sup>155</sup>. In 1929, the construction of the Chapai Nababganj – Abdulpur broad gauge section was completed. Amanura, the southernmost station in the district, was made the junction for the new line. Its length within the district was 9 miles.

Table 3.2 Railways in Malda in 1951

Name of Railway line and station	Distance from Old Malda (in miles)
Singabad	16
Bulbulchandi	10
Muchia	8
Malda Court	4
Old Malda	--
Adina	4
Eklakhi	8
Kumarganj	12

Samsi	18
Bhaluka Road	24
Harishchandrapur	30
Kumedpur	35

Source: Asok Mitra ed., Malda Census 1951, Government of India Press, Calcutta, 1954, P. 152

#### TRADE ROUTES AND STRUCTURE OF THE MARKETS: HATS, BAZAARS, FAIRS ETC.

The main trade of the district followed two routes: the railway and the rivers. M. O. Carter mentioned that until the construction of the Chapai-Nababganj-Abdulpur railway line in 1929, the produce from the Barind region was transported chiefly by boat and steamer; and that from the remainder of the district chiefly by rail<sup>156</sup>. Information is not available to show what was the position after the opening of the new railway line. But it was probable that the main export trade in rice and paddy by steamer up to the Ganges to Bihar had been largely unaffected, while that of jute and other commodities to other parts of Bengal had been partially captured by the railway<sup>157</sup>.

The most significant change in the markets during our period of study was their rapid growth in comparison to the earlier period. It reflected the changing nature of the demand for the articles of consumption as well as a pressing need for converting every bit of surplus into cash. The other notable change in

this regard was the penetration and control of traders and trading capital in the process of distribution. Apart from these, the basic structure of markets remained simple in nature.

Buchanan Hamilton, writing in 1810, mentioned that nearly all commercial transactions were carried on in market places called *hats*. Hats were used to meet once or twice a week where both wholesale and retail trade was conducted. There were also provisions of shops and *golas* in some of these markets. The wholesale trade consisted mostly of articles like rice, sugar and molasses, extracted of sugar cane, oil and tobacco. The retailers were usually vegetable sellers, potters, blacksmiths, weavers of cotton cloths and *gurwalas* or retailers in extract of sugarcane<sup>158</sup>. In the *hat*, the peasant sold his product directly to the consumers as well as to intermediaries. In Bengal, in the articulation of simple peasant marketing at the *hat* level with the superior market places, crucial roles were played by the itinerant trader (*phiriwala*), the village based trader who might also have been a wealthy farmer (*bepari*), and the buyer-up and merchants' agent (*paikar*)<sup>159</sup>. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we have this graphic description: at the *hats* - "all those from the neighbourhood who wish to buy or sell, assemble and dispose of their commodities by retail. The farmer brings the produce of his lands, the artist that of his workshop, and the fisherman that of his snares. Numerous small traders who attend to buy up goods for exportation, to sell those which have been imported, or to act as intermediate agents between the producer and the consumer... For this purpose is reserved a space of ground, divided by narrow paths into plots like the parterres of an old garden, and each plot is occupied by two or three venders, while the buyers walk about in the path"<sup>160</sup>.

A larger volume of trade in towns and large villages in the district led to the growth of a regular daily *bazaar* with traders' permanent establishments selling provisions and daily necessities. At the level above that was the mart (*ganj*) and river mart (*bandar*) containing warehouses (*golas, arats*) of wholesale dealers<sup>161</sup>.

During our period of study, the basic structure of the market underwent very little changes. From the account of W. W. Hunter in 1876, it is evident that *hats* were still the most popular place for marketing transactions. These were mostly held once or twice a week and were the meeting ground for the primary producer and the intermediary or *bepari* beside the buyers<sup>162</sup>. Attendance at these *hats* depended on the importance of the locality. A well-frequented *hat*, for example the Sunday *hat* at Balia-Nababganj in Old Malda, used to be visited about 6,000 to 8,000 people<sup>163</sup>. Villagers from a distance of 25 miles used to visit this *hat* with their produce and transactions used to be carried on in grain, vegetables, fish, betel nut and coarse homespun cotton cloth. Several big paddy dealers attended the *hat* and the annual sale of paddy and rice together amounted to about 35,000 *maunds*<sup>164</sup>. This is one example of an interior *hat* with a wide range of articles for transaction.

The chief silk mart in the district was Amaniganj-*hat* where buyers from the neighbouring districts of Rajshahi and Murshidabad used to come and make their purchases. Tuesday was the usual *hat* day and on that day, silk was often sold, according to the collector's estimate to the value of from Rs.20,000 to Rs.50,000<sup>165</sup>. In the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Amaniganj *hat* became the chief centers for silk trade and virtually controlled the prices of silk in the whole district. During this time, the daily turnover at Amaniganj *hat* amounted to a lakh of rupees<sup>166</sup>. Minor silk markets were also held at

Bholahat and Kasimpur<sup>167</sup>. Bholahat itself was a large centre of silk reeling on the right bank of the Mahananda. It was a calling station of the Lalgola Steamer Service and was a considerable centre of general trade for the surrounding villages<sup>168</sup>. Bholahat began to lose its importance as a trade centre after the introduction of railway in the district in 1909<sup>169</sup>. Because of the partition of Bengal in 1947, Bholahat went to East Pakistan.

One of the principal markets, which dealt with the river-borne trade, was *Meha hat* on the Kalindri in Harishchandrapur p.s. Extensive trade was carried on in paddy, pulses and jute, which were exported entirely by boat. Much of these articles transported to Dhulian in Murshidabad district<sup>170</sup>. Another important trading centre in the district was Aiho situating on the junction of the Mahananda and Tangan rivers. In pre-partition times, it used to be an important centre commanding the trade of both rivers<sup>171</sup>. At Aiho, the usual *hat* day was Sunday. The chief items of trade were rice and paddy transported by bullock-carts from the Barind and by boat down the Tangan river<sup>172</sup>.

Of the market where produce was carried chiefly by the railway, the most important was the *Samsi hat*, which was held on Thursdays. The principal exports were jute, pulses and paddy and the total export of these commodities was the largest of any market in the district. The amount of pulses exported, consisting chiefly of *kalai* and gram, was remarkable. *Gur* (molasses) was another product, which was largely dealt in<sup>173</sup>. The dealers made their purchase on *hat* days took their consignments by train. The rise of Samsi as an important trade centre in the district began after the introduction of railway in 1909. In the 1930s, Samsi was rapidly becoming a small town near the railway station. At that time, a large number of Marwari traders who were

engaged in business and moneylending, inhabited Samsi.<sup>174</sup> Samsi retained its importance as a trade centre also in post-partition days. During this time, Samsi emerged as the chief market for jute. The annual turnover of jute at this *hat* amounted to 1,00,000 *maunds*, pulses accounting for another 40,000 *maunds*<sup>175</sup>.

Further, up the railway line, the principal *hats* were Tulsihata, Malior and Mashaldaha. The commodities sold consisted chiefly of paddy, pulses and jute, and the biggest buyers were the Marwari traders. The produce was sent for export to Harishchandrapur and Bhaluka Road station<sup>176</sup>.

Apart from these, there were some other smaller but locally important *hat* in the *barind* region. At Pakuahat, there was a *hat* on Tuesday to which people come in from long distances. At Pakuahat the chief trade was that of cattle. There was also considerable trade in mustard seed and paddy, which was mostly taken for retail to Aiho. Cotton cloth, earthenware articles were also sold<sup>177</sup>. Twenty five thousand *maunds* of paddy and ten thousand heads of cattle were estimated to be sold at Pakuahat annually<sup>178</sup>. There was also a big *hat* at Gajol on Thursday. The staple article for business at Gajol was paddy; and cloth, pottery and other articles were sold<sup>179</sup>. The annual turnover of paddy at this *hat* amounted to 30,000 *maunds*<sup>180</sup>. Another large *hat* met at Nachole on Sundays. Rice and pulses were the principal agricultural products for business. There was also a cattle market; and agricultural implements, brass work and earthenware were sold<sup>181</sup>.

Apart from these *hats*, there was a larger volume of trade in same towns and large villagers in the district. This led to the growth of a regular daily *bazar* with traders' permanent establishments selling provisions and daily

necessities<sup>182</sup>. Hunter mentioned that the most important seats of commerce in the district where trade was extensively carried on were Englishbazar, Old Malda, Rohanpur and Nababganj<sup>183</sup>. Lalbihari Majumdar, a local literati, mentioned in his *memoirs* that most of the trading houses were established around these market towns. The bulk of the exports containing foodstuffs, raw silk, cotton cloth, jute, mango and the imported goods, used to pass through these towns. The imports were often unloaded there and sold<sup>184</sup>. Some of these towns had built-in *golas* or warehouses thereby facilitating transactions in such articles as salt, seed, lac, grain mango etc., which involved storing. Since long distance trade was carried on via these port-towns, they grew in importance with resident businessmen, mainly Marwaris and Tilis combining trade with petty usury in and around the town<sup>185</sup>. In Prabhudayal Agarwal's *memoirs*, there are references to a hundred of shops near the Mahananda river in Old Malda town from where rice and paddy were supplied to different directions down the river<sup>186</sup>. Being an enterprising businessman, Prabhudayal Agarwal had himself established big warehouses on the bank of the Mahananda for the transaction of rice and jute<sup>187</sup>.

As already stated, Englishbazar was one of the important seats of commerce in the district. This headquarters town of Malda district was situated on the right bank of the Mahananda. Hunter observed that this town consisted of a series of trading villages, which lined the bank of the river for a considerable distance<sup>188</sup>. Being an open elevated site on the riverbank in a mulberry-growing region, it was chosen at an early date as the site of one of the English East India Company's silk factories. The French and the Dutch had also settlements at Englishbazar<sup>189</sup>. Stewart, in his *History of Bengal*, stated that there was an English factory in Malda as early as 1686<sup>190</sup>. In 1770, George

Henchman built the commercial residency and factory of the company at Englishbazar. The modern town gradually grew up around it as the business in silk attracted people to reside at Englishbazar<sup>191</sup>. Englishbazar controlled a number of waterways and was accessible almost throughout the year to boats coming from most parts of the district. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Englishbazar became one of the chief trading centres of Malda, supplying the district with provisions and other necessaries from all parts of Bengal<sup>192</sup>. If the pre-1857 period Englishbazar, along with Dacca, Luckipore, Baranagar and Khirapai, became the chief cotton weaving centers in Bengal<sup>193</sup>. That Englishbazar continued to flourish as an important trading centers of the district in the beginning of the twentieth century is evident from the *memoirs* of two contemporary local man of influence, one was a businessman and the other a local literati. At that time, the principal trade in the town was in silk, mangoes, jute and cotton piece goods and the town had a considerable population of weavers<sup>194</sup>. The importance of Englishbazar was further increased after the introduction of railway in the district in 1909. The railway station (Malda Court Station) was set up on the opposite side of the Mahananda River and the town was a calling station for the railway steamer service. All these factors combined to help Englishbazar to become as one of the chief market towns not only in the district but also in Bengal as a whole<sup>195</sup>.

Another important market town in the district was Old Malda, which was situated on the left bank of the Mahananda at its confluence with the Kalindri. Old Malda was the most important town in the district prior to the coming of the British in 1680. It had an admirable position for river traffic, and probably rose to prosperity as the port of Pandua<sup>196</sup>. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was a thriving centre of cotton and silk manufactures

and the French and Dutch had factories there as well as the English. A Dutch report on (Old) Malda states that textiles worth Rs.0.8 to 1 million were sold in the district for export to places like Pegu, Agra, Surat, Persia etc.<sup>197</sup>. A similar report by Richards Edwards of the English East India Company in 1676 states that the 'chief trade' in the district was carried on by the 'factors of Agra, Gujarat and Beneres merchants who yearly send them 15 to 25 Patella (a large flat-bottomed boat) whose lading consists of *cossaes*, *mulmuls*, .....*mundils* and *elaches* (All piece-goods produced in Malda) of all sorts valued at about Rs. 1 lakh each patella and about the half of that amount by landing said goods and raw silk'<sup>198</sup>.

The prosperity of Old Malda, however, began to wane with the rise of Englishbazar. The English factory was transferred to Englishbazar in 1770 and by the time the district of Malda came into existence, its decline had almost become complete<sup>199</sup>. The town of Old Malda had lost its glory of a thriving centre of business in silk and cotton piece goods. In the second decade of the twentieth century, it was remained only as a distributing centre of manufactured goods of Barind and did a large export trade in rice and jute<sup>200</sup>.

The other chief market town was Nababganj on the east bank of the Mahananda in the south of the district. Buchanan Hamilton noticed ten market places at Nababganj from where a considerable quantity of goods, mainly rice, was exported<sup>201</sup>. In the 1870s Nababganj was a calling station of the Lalgola Steamer Service and a great centre of the rice traffic from Dinajpur and Rajshahi to the *diara* tracts. The town was noted locally for its bell metal and brass-ware<sup>202</sup>. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Nababganj was known as Barogharia-Nababganj. Baragharia, adjacent to Nababganj, was an

important centre of silk weaving and jute cultivation. Later with the decline of silk business of Barogharia, Nababganj became a separate entity<sup>203</sup>.

Nababganj was, M. O. Carter stated, a large market for winter rice, which was dispatched by cart from all over the Barind to the north and east of the town. Carts even come in from the Barind areas of Dinajpur and Rajshahi. A large quantity of jute from the southern part of the district – Shibganj, Kaliachak and Nababganj *thanas* – was marketed at Nababganj<sup>204</sup>. Mangoes were another important export-item of Nababganj. Barogharia, Kansat and Rohanpur of Nababganj were the chief centres for export of mangoes. Mangoes were exported from Nababganj to Khulna, Faridpur, Dacca, and Mymensingh on riverine routes<sup>205</sup>. Hunter mentioned Nababganj as the centre for manufacture of brass and bell-metal articles<sup>206</sup>. K. M. Mullick has pointed out that the best brass articles in the district were produced at Nababganj<sup>207</sup>. In the late nineteenth century, brassware valued at Rs. 20,000 was manufactured annually at Nababganj<sup>208</sup>. The brass articles of Nababganj were continued to be exported in considerable quantity to various parts of Bengal and to Agra and Benares in the third decade of the twentieth century as well<sup>209</sup>.

Apart from these three trading centres, the Rohanpur market was one of the biggest in the district and one of the biggest centres for the export of rice and paddy<sup>210</sup>. Rohanpur was situated thirty miles south of Englishbazar on the Punarbhaba just above its junction with the Mahananda. It was a place of considerable trade in the rice season and large quantities of rice passed through it, from Dinajpur to *diara* tracts. It was well served for communications being a station on the Katihar-Godagari line and a calling station of the Lalgola Steamer Service<sup>211</sup>. Hundreds of carts, loaded with paddy and rice used to come at Rohanpur market from distances of twenty or thirty miles.

The rush was so great that the approaches to the market were often blocked. In addition to the cart traffic, boats laden with paddy came down the Purnabhaba, bringing the produce from the northeastern corner of the district and from parts of Dinajpur district<sup>211</sup>. From the memoirs of Prabhudayal Agarwall and Lalbihari Majumdar it is known that the intermediaries or the middlemen played an important role in the paddy / rice trade at Nababganj, Rohanpur, Old Malda and Aiho. The paddy merchants or the *aratdars* had a control over this trade. Many substantial peasants or *jotedars*, who were also agricultural-creditors, were engaged in this trade and dominated this field too. Even the range of local prices was controlled by them<sup>213</sup>. Though there was a railway station at Rohanpur the bulk of the paddy / rice trade was carried by river. The export of this produce was made partly by steamer and partly by boats to Dacca, Faridpur and to Rajmahal, Purnia and other Bihar districts<sup>214</sup>.

## FAIRS

Apart from the permanent *bazars* and weekly or bi-weekly *hats*, trade was also carried on in the district by means of a number of fairs. The internal trade of the district was carried on by the periodic fairs that were held in different parts of the district. Altogether 125 fairs were held annually in different parts of the district. Most of them were of local origin and usually connected with religious festivals<sup>215</sup>. All of these fairs provided various amusements for the people, with swings, dances, *jatra*, *alkap* and *gambhira*, to add to their commercial importance. Such *melas* provided the show places for the skill and talent of the manufacturers, who spent many months there. Transactions at these *melas* were carried on in various articles like brassware, furniture, toys,

clothes, utensils, spices etc. These *melas* were attended by a large number of people, the big ones being attended by thousands and the small ones by hundreds<sup>216</sup>.

The most important *mela* in the district was the one that was held at Ramkeli near Gour on the occasion of the *Jyaistha Sankranti* to commemorate the visit of Sri Chaitanya in 1509<sup>217</sup>. It lasted for about ten days and was the largest in Bengal. Vaishnavas from all over Bengal assembled at this *mela* and the attendance was between 20,000 and 30,000<sup>218</sup>. Manufactured articles from the neighbouring western districts as well as local manufactures were sold in large quantities. A large number of temporary shops were set up by shopkeepers to sell finished articles like Jangipur blankets from Murshidabad, cooking utensils, furniture and mats and various other things<sup>219</sup>. The business done was calculated at sums amounting to Rs.2,00,000<sup>220</sup>. The next in importance was the annual Urs festival at Pandua, which was held in the month of Rajab on the death anniversary of the Persian saint Jalaluddin Tebrezi. Muslims from various places of the district as also from places in Bihar and U.P. used to attend this *mela*. Several *melas* were also held on the banks of the Ganges and Bhagirathi rivers in connection with bathing ceremonies on certain Hindu festival days. These lasted for a day or two and were well attended. The principal one those held at Sadullapur and Kansat on the bank of the river Bhagirathi and at Mathurapur and Narayanpur on the bank of the Ganges<sup>221</sup>.

#### PATTERN OF TRADE: IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Hunter in his account mentioned raw silk and cocoons, silk cloths, indigo, brass-metal, rice and other kinds of grain and pulses and fruits, especially

mango as the articles of export from the district<sup>222</sup>. Apart from these articles, later accounts of Lambourn and Carter mentions lac, jute, oilseeds as export-items of the district<sup>223</sup>. The principal imports in the district were cotton cloth and other cotton piece goods, kerosene oil, sugar, salt, metals, timber, spices and various articles of European manufacture<sup>224</sup>.

The chief commodities in export trade of the district were raw silk and silk cloth as well as cotton textile. The silk of Bengal had a flourishing trade both in and outside India. Indeed, "the fame of the silk fabrics of Malda and Murshidabad was not confined to the shops of India, but spread to the countries bordering on the Mediterranean"<sup>225</sup>. The testimony of Hunter to the effect that in 1577, a merchant of Malda, Sheik Bhik by name, sailed for Russia by the Persian Gulf with three ships laden with Maldahi silk cloths, fully substantiate the above view and evidently shows the size of the silk industry then existing in Malda<sup>226</sup>. Sushil Choudhury has consulted the material in both the Dutch and English archives and came to the conclusion that in the 1670s there was a thriving trade carried on by the Asian merchants in silk and textiles from Malda. Quoting a report by Richard Edwards of the English East India Company in 1676, Sushil Choudhury estimates the textile export of Asian merchants from Malda by riverine routes at 1.5 to 2.5 million and that by land at about Rs.0.75 to 1.25 million<sup>227</sup>.

The internal and inter-provincial market in Malda silk grew wider with time on, and on the eve of Plassey, it was most expanded. Malda and Murshidabad then exported large quantities of silk, raw and wrought, to the markets at Beneres, Mirzapur, Nagpur, Agra, Lahore, Multan, Surat, Ahmedabad, Chaul and other places in northern and western India and even to the ports of the Malabar and Coromandel. Raw silk exported to Surat, Ahmedabad and Chaul

was woven into various fabrics suited to the fashion of the inhabitants of the different regions of western and northwestern India<sup>228</sup>.

In the silk market of Malda the English Company had to face stiff competition from its Dutch and French rivals. The prices offered by the Dutch and French traders were often more than that of the English Company. The Company's men then resorted to unfair practices to eliminate the rival mercantile groups from the local market. A complain was lodged by the French from Chandernagore to Lord Cornwallis in 1787 against Mr. Udney, the chief of the English factory in Malda, who allegedly seized from their peons 'twenty one pieces of cloth that they were carrying to the French House of Commerce'. Sarkis Munassakar, an agent of the Armenian merchant in Malda, complained in 1787 to the Board of Trade that Mr. Udney forbade his *dalals* in collecting and purchasing cloths. Mr. Udney stationed his peons at the house of weavers and ordered that company's seal should be affixed on the cloths. In this way, he had collected 52 bales of cloths and 5,200 pieces for his personal trade<sup>229</sup>.

The period 1760 – 1790 witnessed a boom in the silk trade of Bengal as well as of Malda. During these years, the English Company was able by means of Bengal silk to compete with the imports into England from Turkey of raw and manufactured silk<sup>230</sup>. The Commercial Resident of Malda reported 1817 that the silk piece goods of Malda had an unprecedented demand in Europe. He further reported that in Malda the existing factories were enhanced, new filatures were added and a new silk station was established at Sahapur<sup>231</sup>. With the decline of competition from Turkey, that from France and Italy grew and the trade declined. Buchanan Hamilton in 1810 found it greatly depressed<sup>232</sup>. The subsequent course of the trade in the district was almost

complete diversion of the industry into the production of Khamru silk for the Indian market and filature and waste silk for the European market<sup>233</sup>.

In 1810, Buchanan Hamilton estimated the total value of Maldahi cloth exported annually was Rs.2,50,000. However, in the 1870s it had fallen to Rs.6000 only<sup>234</sup>. During this time, however, the manufacture of raw silk or silk trade was in a flourishing condition. The chief silk mart was Amaniganjhat, where buyers came from neighbouring districts of Murshidabad and Rajshahi. The value of transactions in silk in one hat day was estimated at lying between Rs.20,000 and Rs.50,000. The cocoons and the raw silk from the filatures owned by the local residents were chiefly exported to Murshidabad, while the European wound silk went straight to Calcutta on its way to France. The silk cloths found purchasers mostly in Calcutta and Beneres<sup>235</sup>. In the 1950s, Malda provided raw silk and cocoons for the silk weavers of Murshidabad, Birbhum and Bankura. Almost the entire quantity of silk cocoons and raw silk produced in the district was exported<sup>236</sup>.

Apart from silk and cotton textiles, extensive trade was carried on in other items as well. Indigo was exported direct to Calcutta even in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>237</sup>. However, when Lambourn was writing the District Gazetteer in 1918, the cultivation of indigo was totally ceased in the district<sup>238</sup>. The trade in brass and bell metal work was mainly centred in Nababganj and Englishbazar. The articles turned out were exported all over the province, large quantities being sold at various annual fairs in the Rajshahi Division<sup>239</sup>.

#### MARKETING MECHANISM AND TRADE IN PADDY / RICE.

The most important centres of commerce for foodstuff as it has already been stated, were Englishbazar, Old Malda, Rohanpur and Nababganj<sup>240</sup>. Rice was

the principal food crop of the people of Malda district. It was also one of the main trading commodities of the district. Paddy / rice were traditionally brought and sold in the village's *hats* and rice markets of the district mentioned above. It was exported to Calcutta and other places from the rice markets of the district<sup>241</sup>.

However, as the rice mills started operation in Calcutta from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the export of Dhenki – husked rice diminished largely and paddy began to move towards metropolitan rice mills from different district markets of Bengal<sup>242</sup>. The main centres of retail trade were the *hats*. The cultivators brought the produce at the nearest village hats where it was sold to village merchants or *paikars*, or *beparis* (primary collectors). The *beparis* acted on their own and sometimes as agents of the *aratdars* (wholesale traders). They brought the commodity to the big trading centres where *aratdars* had their establishments. Sometimes the cultivators brought their crop directly to *aratdars* with a view to getting more prices. In this stage the recognized broker or *dalal* acted as an *aratdar*<sup>243</sup>.

In this market-structure, the common *raiyyats* had little scope to operate in the open market. The middlemen in the existing marketing organization were indispensable to the growers and the wholesale merchants. The cultivators could scarcely bring their small amount of surplus paddy / rice to the distant centres of trade. Consequently, intermediaries like *beparis* and *aratdars* emerged in the paddy / rice trade of the district as well as of Bengal who deprived cultivators of a fair price for their crops.<sup>244</sup>

During our period of study, the trade in rice in Malda was remarkably expanded.<sup>245</sup> Numerous developments were stimulating the internal and

external trade in rice. The increasing size of the population was one. There was a steady influx of the *santal* people from adjacent Rajmahal into Malda after 1880. They were employed by the zamindars of *barind* to clean the *jungle* land made it cultivable. In Malda, the population growth was very rapid after 1901 as illustrated by the following table:

Table 3.3 Variation of population in Malda during 1901 – 1951

Year	Population	Variation	Net variation 1901 - 1951
1901	603,649		----
1911	698,547	+ 94,898	----
1921	686,174	- 12,373	----
1931	720,440	+ 34,266	----
1941	844,315	+123,875	----
1951	937,580	+ 93,265	+ 333,931

Source: A. Mitra ed. census 1951, op.cit., p. A2

A larger grain supply was thus necessary to feed this growing urban and rural population. Before the introduction of railway in the district in 1909, most of the surplus rice, which used to be exported, was moved by boats along the rivers<sup>246</sup>. Concerning the channels along which trade was carried on in the district in the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the collector thus remarked:

'The district possesses so great advantages of water communication, that the grain and commercial traffic is carried on entirely by boats'<sup>247</sup>. It was estimated that the surplus *aman* rice that was exported from the district in 1876 was not less than 250,000 *maunds*. Paddy / rice were exported mainly to Bihar, North Western Provinces and to Calcutta<sup>248</sup>. The traffic that passed up and down the Ganges was registered at Sahebganj, and the goods consigned to and from Calcutta were registered at Nadia for the Jalangi route. The Sahebganj register gives the total quantity of rice dispatched up the Ganges from both Malda and Dinajpur as 1,628,794 *maunds* or 59,625 tons in 1872, and as 1,538,898 *maunds* or 56,334 tons in 1873. The detailed return shows that Rohanpur on the Purnabhaha had the most extensive traffic in up country rice of all the Malda towns. In 1873, its export reached 407,489 *maunds* or 14,917 tons. The Calcutta trade of Malda consisted chiefly of the export of rice and the import of salt. In 1873, 53,000 *maunds* or 1,940 tons of rice were registered at Nadia as consigned from Malda to Calcutta, along the Jalangi route<sup>249</sup>.

The introduction and extension of railways in the district after 1909 and the resultant improvement in communication had a big role in the development of the Malda rice trade<sup>250</sup>. However, this situation did not last long. In the middle of 1920s a new development took place that had a direct impact on the Malda rice trade as well as Bengal. Bengal rice began to face increased competition from Burma rice, in both the Bengal market and the Indian market<sup>251</sup>. Bengal rice gradually lost its traditional markets in other parts of India to the rice from Burma, and the important rice-growing countries like Thailand and Indo-china. On the other hand, Burma rice increasingly intruded into the local market<sup>252</sup>. This situation was likely to have a critical influence on the rice trade of Malda

as shown by M. O. Carter in the mid-1930s<sup>253</sup>. The Great Depression of 1930 only aggravated the condition. During this period, the amount of export of paddy / rice from Malda underwent a dramatic decline. The Eastern Bengal Railway and the India General Navigation and Railway Company Limited supplied the following figures of exports of paddy, rice and other principal commodities from Malda:

**Table 3.4 Goods carried by Eastern Bengal Railway, 1930-31**

Goods	Weight (in maunds)
Paddy	19,793
Rice	37,644
Pulse and grain	105,489
Jute	197,694
Oil seeds	36,742
Sugar	3,432
All Goods	499,644

Source: M.O.Carter, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Malda 1928- 1935, op.cit., p. 18

However, even in 1930-31 the amount of export of rice by river was greater than that of railway. The following table would illustrate this:

Table 3.5 Goods carried by the Indian General Navigation and Railway Company Limited, 1930-31

Goods	Weight (in <i>maunds</i> )
Paddy	2,240
Rice	41,364
Seeds	22,338
Jute	11,790
Mangoes	94
Tobacco	4,885

Source: M.O.Carter, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Malda 1928- 1935, op.cit., p. 18

This extensive rice trade of Malda suffered a setback in the 1940s. First, the Famine of 1943 dealt a severe blow to the marketing mechanism and trade in rice / paddy. Beside silk, mangoes and paddy / rice, the chief exports from the district were lac, pulses, jute, oilseeds, *gur* or molasses, *san* or hemp, vegetables, wheat and to a small extent, tobacco<sup>254</sup>. Lac used to be exported to Dhulian in the Murshidabad district. *San* or hemp used to be exported to Chittagong and Calcutta. Vegetables were exported to Rajshahi and Murshidabad. Tamarind and tree cotton (*Simul tula*) were exported to Calcutta. Jute, wheat, pulses and oilseeds used to be exported to Rajmahal and Calcutta, some amount of wheat, pulses and oilseeds being also exported to Dhulian<sup>255</sup>.

The exports from the district, Hunter informs, exceeded the imports considerably in value, but instead of a steady accumulation profits used to be remitted away from the district by the traders hailing from Bihar and North-west Provinces<sup>256</sup>. The articles imported, Hunter states, consisted of cotton cloths, jute, coconuts, betel nuts, paper, *ghee*, oil, sal wood, salt, suger, ginger, spices of all kinds and pepper<sup>257</sup>. Apart from these, Lambourn included kerosene oil, metals, corrugated iron in the list of imported articles.<sup>258</sup> M. O. Carter in his Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Malda 1928-35 mentions that the chief imports were salt, cotton clothes and other piecegoods<sup>259</sup>.

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12. A. Mitra ed., *Census of 1951, W B District Handbooks, Malda*, New Delhi, 1954, p. 54
13. W. W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 95
14. *Ibid.*
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18. *Ibid*, p. 297
19. Silk reeled according to the European method was known as filature silk, that according to the native method was known as Khamru. The difference were, that in filature silk evenness of size throughout the skein, elasticity of thread, colour and appearance, are looked for, while in khamru reeling so much importance was not attach to these qualities. The result was that from a maund of cocoons which would produce two to three seers of filature silk, nearly half a seer more of khamru could be reeled – see G. E. Lambourn, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Malda, Calcutta, 1918*, p. 67
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32. W. W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 95
33. Made out of untwisted silk threads and used as ordinary *saris* and gown pieces.
34. In Bengal *rumal* is the word for a pocket-handkerchief. In the European trade, it was applied to their silk piece goods with handkerchief patterns.

35. N. G. Mukherjee, *A Monograph on the Silk Fabric of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1903, p. 83
36. The English knew Bengal silk fabrics by the name of taffeta or 'taffatie'. This word was current in medieval Europe to imply fine fabrics, usually of a silky or glossy quality.
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52. M. O. Carter, Malda Survey and Settlement Operation 1928-35, op. cit., p. 42; 'A Glimpse into the Sericulture Industry of Malda District, Department of Sericulture, Malda, 1958.
53. G. E. Lambourn, Malda District Gazetteer, op. cit., p. 69; N.G. Mukherjee, A Monograph, op. cit., p. 45
54. There were three seasons in a year, locally called *bands*, for rearing the silk-worms. The first season began with hatching of eggs in November, feeding the worms and collecting the cocoons they spun as adults in December. This *band* produced the best silk, for the silk worms thrive best in the cool winter season. The next in quality was the March *band*, while the July *band* with its adverse conditions of heat, rains and storms, only yielded inferior silk – see G.E.Lambourn, Malda District Gazetteer 1918, op. cit., p. 67.

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