

**“INDUSTRIES, TRADE AND TRADING COMMUNITIES
OF NORTH BENGAL (WEST BENGAL) 1833-1933: A
STUDY OF ECONOMIC HISTORY”**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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DECLARATION

The present Ph.D. Dissertation entitled "**Industries, Trade and Trading Communities of North Bengal (West Bengal) 1833-1933: A Study of Economic History**" submitted by me for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of North Bengal, is entirely based on original materials carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted in any academic institution for such degree or diploma for me.


Supervisor

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

This work has grown out of a special interest on “Regional History” in modern times keeping in view the modern trends in historical writings. As an inhabitant of North Bengal, I became very much interested with the Regional Economic History of this region. During the period of my intense investigations, I have been extremely fortunate to have assistance and cooperation from a large number of persons and institutions without which this task could not stand completed.

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Sujit Ghosh

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Glossary

Dafadar	: An officer placed over common watchmen for supervision.
Hat	: A village market held in specific days in a week.
Jotedar	: Owner of a considerable area of land for growing crops.
Jotes	: Big area of land under one management for growing crops.
Joteland	: Land for growing crops.
Khasmahal	: Commonly used of estates under public management.
Bazaar	: A market.
DHR	: Darjeeling Himalayan Railways.
EIR	: East India Railway
NBSR	: North Bengal State Railway.
Bepari	: Local trader.
Ganj	: Entrepot town.
Bandar	: Port, village market.
Aratdar	: Owner of a godown.
Faria	: Trading middleman.
Paikar	: An itinerant petty dealer.
Dalal	: Trading middleman.
Goladar	: A merchant who maintained a huge inventory of goods.
Ferry	: A kind of transport based on riverine transportation.
Mahajan	: Money lender.
Aratiya	: Owner of a godown.
Mela	: Religious fair.
Ghat	: Bank of a river.
Gur	: Molasses
Pat	: Jute
Hooka	: A smoking apparatus.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, studies in the local history has attracted the attention of professional students of history. About the validity of local history there can hardly be any doubt and its importance lies mainly in its contribution to our understanding of the history of the wider region of which the particular locality forms a part. Local or micro history deals with in-depth study of a locality, a village, a small town, a district or any culturally autonomous region. It provides a manageable geographical framework, approximated by the processes of wider socio economic change of the people and reaction of the masses to the socio-economic and political structure. This study is an attempt at analyzing the economic evolution of North Bengal between 1833 and 1933.

1. Before indicating its scope, one needs clarification of the area of the proposed dissertation. North Bengal had a rich and separate historical importance in Indian history from early ages. This region was familiar with different names, like, Pundrabardhana, Varendrabhumi, Kamtapur, Gour etc. In the historical context, the term North Bengal denoted a wider connotation. Though there was no administrative zone, but the term North Bengal has been used since nineteenth century. After the partition of India, the districts though belonged to Jalpaiguri division of West Bengal State administratively, but unofficially the term North Bengal came to be used in common parlance. Here an attempt has been made to investigate upon this restrictive sense of North Bengal which was under the colonial rule from 1833 to 1933. Though the analysis will remain confined to this restrictive sense of North Bengal, however, we may sometimes concentrate on the study of the neighbouring regions like Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Purnia district of Bihar. Though political and administrative identity of these regions were different but culturally and economically these regions were inter related.

2. The proposed dissertation will attempt to look into the economy of North Bengal and to evaluate the economic development based upon natural resources, agricultural produces, industries, trade and the role of

the different merchants and trading communities both foreigners and indigenous from 1833 A.D. to 1933 A.D. It is felt that the case studies at regional / local or micro-level will be helpful in highlighting many untouched corners of the history of this region. It is out of such idea that this work is proposed to be under taken. In fact an overall study on different aspects of economic history of this region during colonial rule is yet to receive scholarly attention. The proposed area of Bengal in the colonial era find little place in the main stream of the economic history. For this reason, a study of this region provides opportunities for investigating the impact of British rule after the passing of the historic Charter Act of 1833. Before the passing of this Act, the socio-economic institutions remained largely unchanged in this region like other parts of the country. Except Malda the economy of this region was subsistence economy. Most of the areas of northern parts of this region were covered with dense forests with thinly populated area. Shifting cultivation, hunting were the basic features of the local people. A slight different picture could be seen in Cooch Behar which was a Native state. Here too agriculture was the main occupation of the people of the state. Same is to be seen in the case of Dinajpur (undivided). In such a backward agricultural condition, this region saw very poor and stagnant economy. In this context, it should be noted that by the passing of the Charter Act of 1833, a new phase began on the economy of our country. The Charter Act brought a major change by abolishing monopoly of the East India Company and opened the climate for free trade. Thus, a new economic horizon opened and this region was not free from this characteristic. In this region, the economic changes and development started with the plantation industries, followed by inauguration of railways and cultivation and trade of different commercial cash crops. As a result the economy of this region took a new turn. Thus, it would be interesting as well as instructive to investigate the economic changes of North Bengal under the colonial rule during a crucial period of history. The importance of the beginning year of the study has already been mentioned. The closing period i.e. 1933 A.D. was also important in the sense that the world wide

economic depression which started in 1929, came to an end in 1933. During the economic depression, like other regions the economy of this region also felt adverse impact.

3. This research work is perhaps the first ever attempt to make a comprehensive study of the economic history of North Bengal, particularly industries, trade and trading communities of this region for a specified period from 1833 A.D. to 1933 A.D. Some studies have no doubt been undertaken on the economy in general for the specific district of this region, but no detailed study has so far been made of the economic history of this region. The fundamental published works available are-

- i) Economy Society and politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri 1869-1947 by Sree Ranjit Das Gupta.
- ii) The Marwari Community in North Bengal: A historical analysis of the selected Districts (19th and 20th Century) by Dr. Narayan Chandra Saha.
- iii) Silk Industry of Malda and Murshidabad from 1660 to 1833 by Dr. Sujit Chandra Guha.

Ranjit Das Gupta in his work partially touched the economy of Jalpaiguri district. Dr. Narayan Chandra Saha, though covered the three districts i.e. Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling, but dealt with a particular business community. Primarily, Dr. Saha's analysis focussed on Marwari Community of the three districts of North Bengal where he mentioned their commercial pursuits, trading activities and the achievements in the economy of North Bengal. Dr. Sujit Chandra Guha has fully emphasised to bring the silk industry of Malda and Murshidabad out of obscurity. He mentioned that upto 1833 silk economy was the mainstay of the people in the two districts. His analysis focussed on organisations, productions, market and the effect of decline on the economy of the people in the two districts. Barring these outstanding

publications, one finds some unpublished Ph.D. works on the economy of North Bengal. These are as follows-

- i) Emergence of Bengali Entrepreneurship in Tea Plantations in Jalpaiguri Duars, 1879-1933: A study in Indian entrepreneurship in tea plantation in North Eastern India by Dr. Shib Sankar Mukherjee.
- ii) The Factory of the English East India Company at Malda (1757-1833) by Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh.
- iii) Decline of the silk industry in Malda region: with special reference to the British period, by Dr. Anis Mukhopadhyay.

Though these works are more comprehensive and evident, but none of the scholars touched the whole North Bengal in their investigations. Dr. Shivsankar Mukherjee's work is based on tea plantation industry of the Duars region of Jalpaiguri district. He analysed in detail as to how the Bengalees took part in this commercial venture and became an emerging Bengalee planters' community. He partially touched upon the economy of Jalpaiguri and activities of the Bengalees in the economy of Jalpaiguri. Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, in his work investigated the economic activities of the English East India Company in Malda from 1757 to 1833. Dr. Ghosh showed the rise, growth, development and decline of the silk trade and industry of the East India Company in Malda. Dr. Anis Mukhopadhyay finds out several factors for the gradual decay of the flourishing silk industry of Malda during the colonial rule. All these works, though related to the economy of North Bengal, but focused on specific aspects or areas of North Bengal. Even some articles and papers related to economy of North Bengal, published so far in academic journals and magazines, focus on specific aspects of its economy and are by no means micro-level studies undertaken region or district wise. None of the scholars or academicians gave attention on industries, trade and trading communities of North Bengal from 1833 to 1933. Thus, North Bengal is

virtually virgin soil in this respect from the researcher's point of view. Here lies the relevance and importance of the present study.

4. In the research work the researcher has made a comprehensive and critical study about industries, trade and trading communities in North Bengal. In this work he has narrated how the major economic changes appeared as an effect of free trade policy in consequence of the Charter Act of 1833 in this region. A study of this region provides opportunities that the economic change begins with the establishment of tea plantation industry. In 1839, tea plantation started in Darjeeling, in 1862 in Terai and in 1874 in Duars. Within a short time commercialization of agriculture got a new dimension in this region. Due to free entry of traders and merchants, large capital, investments were made. Different cash crops were cultivated. Internal and external markets were opened by the inauguration and development of railway facility in this region. This economic development of North Bengal had a separate background and identity. Due to this economic development, the socio-economic structure of North Bengal was gradually changing. So, from this point of view, this issue is major hypothesis of the research scheme.

Due to the economic changes, the remote villages too, got exposed and introduced into the mainstream of the economy. Following the economic changes, various trading groups and communities emerged and participated in different trade and commerce in this region. As a result of the gradual penetration of the European Capital, both in trade and industry as well as the emergence of indigenous entrepreneurs, traders and merchants, local economy was developing and these constitute another theme of this work which were not studied earlier by the predecessors.

The third research hypothesis is to draw a hundred year complete picture of economic development of this region. Focus has been made on the role and importance of other means of transportation, commercialization of forest resources i.e. timber trade and the impact of

the world wide economic depression in the economy of this region, the role of Government with regards to production and trade of different cash crops and the policy of the Government for industrialization and so many unknown and untouched areas of economy which were not studied earlier but reflected in the Government Reports, Records with regards to this region during the concerned time. This would highlight the unique feature of the economic history of this region.

The historical method of research is useful to analyse these factors. The approach is of the micro-level type which is consistent with the present trend towards historical empirical research. However, micro-level research often suffers from lack of qualitative data or primary source material and the present study is no exception. So, in various ways secondary sources need to be used. This provided an opportunity to grasp the contextual peculiarities and historicity on the socio-economic movement of this region. The District Gazetteers, Government Records, Government Reports, Administrative Reports, Archives' Records have been extensively used in this research study. Besides these primary sources, several books on the subject have provided valuable supplementary information for the study. The researcher has also used local journals, magazines, souvenirs, news papers, historical journals to clarify the problem.

The whole study has been organised into eight Chapters excluding introduction.

The First Chapter entitled "Geographical location and historical profile of North Bengal", attempts to give a description of the Geo-historical profile of North Bengal and its commercial importance.

The Second Chapter focuses on the condition of industries, trade and trading communities due to free entry in these fields. Here a critical analysis is made on the impact of the free entry in industries, trade and commerce of this region. The main aim of this chapter is to analyse the

nature of the changes brought about in this region as a consequence of the free trade policy by the Charter Act of 1833.

The Third Chapter entitled, “Beginning of New Industries”, focuses on the growth of plantation industry, railways and their commercial importance in this region during the concerned period. Here an attempt has been made to know about the forces and factors that led to the growth of tea plantation in a vast area covering Hill, Terai and Duars region. At the same time, attempt has also been made to look into the effects of the inauguration and development of Railways in North Bengal. While narrating these two items a critical consideration has also been taken up to assess their impact in socio-economic milieu of this region.

The Fourth Chapter entitled “Growth of other Industries” highlights the production and trade of different agricultural crops and production and trade of natural resources. The British trade policy underwent a great change with the promulgation of the Charter Act of 1833. The free trade policy opened the Indian market to the International sphere. Consequently traditional mode of cultivation got superseded by advanced and scientific method of cultivation. Commercialization of agriculture got its robust form as cultivation and trade of commercial cash crops extensively expanded. In this chapter, attempt has been made to analyse production and trade of jute, tobacco, rice and also commercialization of timber and bamboo of this region. Here emphasis has been given upon the colonial policy and attitude with regards to these commercial crops, timber and bamboo.

The Fifth Chapter throws light on the Emergence of Modern Indian Entrepreneurs. As subsistence agriculture of the area gradually commercialized, it opened up opportunities for business ventures and induced various merchant groups to throng here. Here an attempt has been made to discuss the role and trading activities of both the indigenous and foreigners in this region.

The Sixth Chapter is entitled “Industrial Canvas in the opening of the 20th century”. After a thorough study of the railways and different trade and industry, it became evident that the process of development did not remain constant towards the close of the 19th Century. A new dimension followed with the beginning of the 20th Century which reflected the progress of the transport system specially road and riverine transport. These altogether contributed in the boom in the economy of this region. This chapter is restricted to delineating the progress of roads and riverine transport and its impact in the economic sphere of this sub-region under the purview of the period of the study.

Chapter Seventh highlights “Decline of the Bengalee Entrepreneurs”. Tea plantation industry was the only expanding industry of this region. The barren economy of this region became viable by the growth and development of this industry. Following the footsteps of the British Planters, the Bengalees gradually entered into this venture. During the world wide economic depression, this industry faced a severe crisis and the Bengalee entrepreneurs greatly suffered. Here an attempt has been made to analyse the different factors responsible for the beginning of the decline of the Bengalee entrepreneurs in this industry.

Chapter Eight notes the Epilogue or conclusion which sums up the research findings and analysis.

CHAPTER-I

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND HISTORICAL PROFILE OF NORTH BENGAL

CHAPTER - I

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND HISTORICAL PROFILE OF NORTH BENGAL

Before we enter into the detailed study of our problem, we have to determine the area or field over which our investigation is concerned. This chapter will attempt to give a description of the geographical area of North Bengal which had been changed its area and shape in course of time. The area represented by North Bengal is of recent creation, but it did not bear any separate administrative division or administrative zone. At present un-officially the six districts viz., Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar of the Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal State is called North Bengal. But the term i.e. Northern part of Bengal and 'North Bengal' has been used from the last decade of the 19th century. It is found that numerous government and non government offices and institutions have used the term 'North Bengal' and of its separate identity. From the sources it is to be mentioned that the term North Bengal was used in 1878 by the Famine Commission.¹ In the Brahma Public opinion the word North Bengal was also used in 1880.² In the beginning of the 20th century following the regular and gradual use of the Bengali word "Uttar Banga", British Officials started to use the term "North Bengal" in their different official documents.³ C.E. Buckland in his famous book, "Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors" used severally the term North Bengal in 1901 and in the Census Report of India 1901 G.A. Gait also mentioned the word North Bengal.⁴ J.A. Vass in his Gazetteer of Rangpur has mentioned the word North Bengal.⁵ The word North Bengal was also used by the Government. The Administrative Report of 1903-04 stated that there was a heavy rainfall on the 12th and 13th July in the northern districts and Lower Himalayan slopes, and generally along the hills, but most marked in North Bengal and West Bihar.⁶ F.W. Strong in his Gazetteer of Dinajpur though did not use the word North Bengal, but he used the term Northern Bengal. He wrote, "In 1873-74 the whole of

Northern Bengal from Champaran to Rangpur was visited by a severe famine.”⁷ In 1916 L.S.S. O’Malley in his “Rajshahi District Gazetteer” frequently used the word North Bengal and from the time the trend of frequent use of the word got started. In 1923, the British Government formed North Bengal Flood Committee. It is quite pertinent to mention that in the historical context of the 19th century the term North Bengal denoted a wider connotation and covered a wide geographical area of the districts of Rajshahi Division i.e. Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna, Malda. In this context it is to be mentioned that Hemchandra Roychowdhury in his History of Bengal mentioned, “North of the main branch of the Ganges, now known as Padma and west of the Brahmaputra lies the extensive region of North Bengal which embraces the modern Rajshahi Division and the State of Cooch Behar.”⁸ Thus it is found that this Northern tract lay between the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers, broadly speaking, this portion of the delta may be said to have extended from the 24th degree of the North latitude and from the 88th to 90th of longitude.⁹ Its eastern limit was the river Brahmaputra, on the west it followed more or less closely the line of the Mahananda, Ganges and Bhagirathi rivers, but the artificial limits of districts did not always conform to this natural boundary. The whole tract was in fact one great rice-producing plain, studded with large morasses or patches of uncultivable brushwood. In short this was the geographical boundary of greater North Bengal.

The history of North Bengal has a direct bearing on the development of its settlements, but it is difficult to construct a systematic picture where passage of time has left few evidence to built upon. As a matter of fact, the area known as present North Bengal, only Dinajpur (undivided) and Malda have a place in history, while the root of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling is not so deep. The existence of these three places was first recognised in a few survey and settlement reports written in the middle of the 19th century. Among the six districts comprising the present region, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar were not a part of British India for a long time. It was from the third

decade of the 19th century following several treaties with the rulers of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, these areas gradually merged with the British territory and the history of these areas are closely linked up with each other.

Malda has a rich historical background. The country originally formed a part of the kingdom of Pundra of Pundravardhana, the country of the pods and subsequently of Barendra region of Bengal. Pundravardhana was generally known as a region which lay from the north of the main branch of the Ganges or Padma to the west of Brahmaputra. In ancient period Malda got prominence by the name of Gauda. In the work of Panini, written in about the fifth century B.C., the existence of the Gaudapura is mentioned.¹⁰ The name of the city was also mentioned in the Arthasastra of Kautilya and in the work of other Sanskrit writers.¹¹ The Mahasthanagarh inscription which was written in Brahmi Character proved that the Maurya ruled over the province of Pundravardhana. Thus Pundravardhana and Gauda was a part of the Maurya Empire. Major Rennell mentioned that Gauda was the capital of Bengal 730 years before Christ was born.¹² The hold of the imperial Guptas being somewhat stronger over Gauda. In this context it is to be mentioned that in the Allahabad pillar inscription it is described that the eastern boundary of Gupta Empire during the time of Samudragupta covered an area of whole North Bengal as far east as Kamrupa. The region perhaps formed a part of the Gupta Empire since its inception. Gupta rule continued over North Bengal till at least the middle of the sixth century A.D. On the ruins of the Gupta Empire in Bengal, two independent Kingdoms rose into prominence viz., Vanga and Gauda. Sasanka who started his life as a Mahasamanta under a Gupta emperor (possibly identified with Mahasenagupta), became eminent as a ruler of Gauda in the history of Bengal. Bana in his Harsha Charita mentioned him as Gauda-adhipa.¹³ During Sasanka's reign the limits of Gauda were not confined within the district of Malda but extended in the South to the border of Orissa. Between 725 A.D. and 735 A.D. Gauda was ruled by Yasovarman of Kanauj. After Yasovarman Gauda came under the Sway of

Muktapida Lalitaditya of Kashmir and his grandson defeated the five Gauda chiefs. According to Taranath the Chandras also extended their Sway to the Gauda region.¹⁴ During the Pala and Sena region Gauda flourished as a city. In the history of Bengal the Pala kings were known as Lords of Gauda. It is well known that after Sasanka's death in Gouda, roughly in Bengal vassal kings became locally independent. As a result lamentable state of anarchy was started, bitterly known as *matsyanyaya*, which paralysed the life of the people. This situation was ultimately removed when Gopala, the founder of the pala dynasty, was raised to the throne of Gauda by the local chieftains. In the 12th century A.D. Pala dynasty was supplanted in North Bengal by Vijayasena of the Senadynasty. Vijayasena raised the status of the senas from the local chiefs of Radh to that of the king of Gauda. The sena ruler Ballal Sena made Gauda his capital and his son Lakshman sena made it the principal seat of his dynasty which took its name Lakshmanawati after his name.¹⁵

At the end of the twelfth century Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji invaded Bengal and expelled Lakshmanasena and moved the capital from Nadia to Gour. In the early Muhammedan rule of Bengal Gour and Pandua were the two important capitals. Pandua is situated about twenty miles from Gaur, and six miles from Malda. In the year 1353 A.D. Ilias Khwajah Sultan, the first independent king of Bengal, transferred his capital from Gaur to Pandua,¹⁶ where it remained about seventy years. But Jalaluddin transferred it again to Gaur. With this exception Gaur continued inspite of many vicissitudes to be the capital of Viceroys and kings of Bengal till 1564 when Sulaiman Karanani removed the seat of Government to Tanda, a few miles to the South west of Gour. It is to be mentioned that Gaur also came under the Sway of Sher Shah. After the desertion of Sher Shah, Humayun, the Mughal ruler, occupied Gaur and named it Jinnatabad (the heavenly city). In 1575 A.D. Munim Khan, one of Akbar's Generals, after defeating Daud Khan, the last Afghan ruler, occupied Gour. Abdul Fazal mentioned that Gour was an ancient city of Bengal and there was a Sarkar in Bengal Subah having the name Gaur during Akbar's reign. It is found that during the Mughal regime frequent

disturbances and revolts occurred in Gaur and the Mughal authority strongly suppressed the revolts. During the reign of Akbar Mansingha's grandson Mahasingh fought against a rebel of Jalal Khan who had been looting Malda. The district of Malda came into prominence once during Islam Khan's viceroyalty, approximately in 1611 A.D. when Ali Akbar, a petty Mansabdar of Malda suddenly rose in revolt. During Islamkhan's viceroyalty, the seat of Government was transferred to Dacca about 1612. This shifting of Capital to Dacca naturally left Malda in comparative obscurity. It is found that during the reign of Aurangzeb Gaur formed a part of the Jaagir of Saista Khan. But in 1660 Mirjumla, the first Governor appointed by Aurangzeb again transferred the capital to Dacca. With this shifting of capital Gaur lost its position as a centre of political glory of Bengal which she had enjoyed for several centuries. The geographical factor, the change of the course of the Ganges, also sealed the fate of Gaur.

Thus, it is found that under the Hindus and Muslim rule from ancient to medieval period Gaur, which is a part of present Malda district, enjoyed a prominent position and even rose to the status of a metropolitan city. At one time this place was known as Gauda, there after it came into prominence with the name of Lakshnauti, apparently after Lakshmanasena of the sena dynasty. During the time of Muhammedan rule it was the usual practice that Gauda was spelt as Gaur. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Gaur covered an area of approximately 20 square miles and was fortified with a rampart and a moat 150 feet wide. During the Mughal rule Gaur formed an important political and administrative unit. From a reference of the Ain-i-Akbari it revealed that one Quazi Yakub was appointed as the district Quazi at Gour.¹⁷ But Gour did not merely enjoy an eminent political and administrative position, it was also an important centre of trade and commerce, and used to be visited by Arabs, Abyssinians, Afghans, Portuguese and Chinese.¹⁸

The ruins of the city of Gaudapura is now situated partly in Rajshahi district and partly in present old Malda of Malda district of West

Bengal. The earliest reference to a place named Malda is found in nine inscriptions of Husaini epoch bearing the names of kings of this dynasty and ranging in date from 899 to 938 A.H. (1493 A.D. to 1531 A.D.).¹⁹ Malda is situated at the confluence of the river Kalindri. With the river Mahananda and the city is also mentioned in *Ain-i-Akbari*.²⁰ But the origin of the name Malda has been the subject of considerable speculation among the scholars. According to one tradition the name of Malda came into existence after the Muslim Conquest of Bengal. The word Mal in Arabic means Wealth and the name Malda probably signifies that during the Muhammedan period it was an important centre of trade, through which great wealth changed hands.²¹ According to another tradition, Malda signified a place of wealth, but it is a Persian word. The name of the town probably drew its origin from being the port of Peruya when it was the capital of Bengal, and became afterwards celebrated for its manufactures.²² There is also a third tradition which mentioned that an old woman brought up the entire stock of mercury of a merchant who had come to the place to trade and who had been unable to dispose of his goods (Mal). Her wealth was such that she was able to spend all her purchase in clearing on tank called "Parapukur" (mercury tank) to that day and thus gave the place the name Malda or place of wealth.²³ Thus from these traditions it is clear that the place Malda got eminence from its existence as a place of trade. It is found that one Richard Edwards was sent by the English East India Company in October, 1676 to Malda for ascertaining the prospects of trade at that place. In December, 1676 A.D. Edward sent a report in detail of the market prices of different commodities and transportation facilities of Malda and the report was well accepted by the authorities of the East Indian Company. Consequently the British connection with Malda began with the establishment of a factory in 1680 A.D. It is to be mentioned that when East India Company by establishing a factory in 1680 A.D. entered the economic venture of Malda, it was a part of the personal jagir of Shaista Khan. In 1696 A.D., Rahim Khan, the leader of the Orissa Afghans, occupied Malda. But

nothing of importance seems to have occurred in Malda during the time of Rahim Khan's occupation of the town.

After the battle of Plassey the Supreme power in Bengal passed into the hands of the British. In 1765 A.D., the East India Company obtained the Grant of Diwani i.e. the right to collect the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and Malda now came under the direct administration of the East India Company. The Commercial Resident of the Malda Factory was entrusted with the duty of collecting revenue from the surrounding areas. In 1771 the East India Company established a fortified Commercial Residency at English Bazar. Before the formation of the district, Malda was a part of Dinajpur district (undivided Dinajpur). Thus the revenue administration was carried on under the superintendence of the provincial council of Dinajpur. In 1780 the system of administration of civil justice was revised. According to the revised civil justice Moffassil Diwani Adalats were established in different places of Bengal and Bihar. Malda was included in the jurisdiction of the Sadar Diwani Adalat of Tajpur of Dinajpur district (undivided Dinajpur). In 1813 the district of Malda came into existence. The district was formed consisting of the eight thanas or police stations carved out from different districts namely Seebgunge (Shibganj), Kullea Chuk (Kaliachak), Bholahat and Gurgureebath from Purnea district, Malda, Bamongola from Dinajpur district (undivided) and Rahanpur, Chappue from Rajshahi district.

Thus, the district formed then, was infact, carved out of the districts of Rajshahi, Murshidabad, Purnea and Dinajpur. This newly formed district was included in Bhagalpur Division and was placed under the charge of a joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector. Mr. Braddon was entrusted with the task to perform as a joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector of the said Division. In 1859, the charge of the district was given to a Magistrate for the first time. It was in 1875 for the first time the district boundary was notified. In 1879, a total of 65 villages from Murshidabad and 237 villages from Dinajpur were transferred for annexation to this new district. In 1905 Malda district was transferred

from the Bhagalpur Division to the Rajshahi Division. In 1912, when the partition of Bengal was annulled, the district was included in the Rajshahi Division and remained within that Division till Partition of India (15th August, 1947). But the jurisdiction of the district was not clear and on the 17th August, 1947, Cyril Radcliffe declared that the district will be partitioned and the thanas of Sibganj, Nawabganj, Bholahat, Nachol and Gomastapur would be transferred to Pakistan (Bangladesh); again in 1950, the boundaries of the district were slightly modified.²⁴

Besides the great political admirable position, Malda had an important location significance also. The district of Malda situated between 20°30' and 25°32'30" north latitude and 87°48' and 88°33'30" east longitude. There are no mountains or even hills in the District. The whole area of Malda is flat in character and the lands are very fertile, according to the level of the land.²⁵ The district is classed as partly riverine and from the earliest times the rivers have been the most important means of communication. There are four important rivers, the Ganges, the Mahananda, the Kalindri and Punarbhaba which are navigable throughout the year. Buchanan Hamilton stated that the district is everywhere intersected by rivers. The Ganges and Mahananda river system determined the morphology and growth of the town. Geographically, the chief determining factor of the town's morphology was the river Mahananda and this river was the main artery of the town. Besides Mahananda the other rivers of Malda also determined the development of the district. Fergusson ascribed that, the Koshi which fell into the Ganges near Bhagalpur used to flow through North Bengal. The Kosi, therefore, might have contributed to the building up of the southern portion of North Bengal.²⁶ Again Fergusson hints at the possibility of the Brahmaputra flowing through North Bengal once before i.e. before it travelled eastward through Mymensingh district to meet the Meghna. The hypothesis of Fergusson is probably correct and the Brahmaputra must have contributed to the building up of North Bengal even in the olden days and not only since its last diversion through the Jamuna which occurred only comparatively recently. Before the diversion the Tista also

used to discharge her waters through the Purnabhava (a tributary of river Mahananda), the Atreyi and the Karotoya which used to fall into the Ganges. The Ganges and Mahananda enriched the country each year by deposits of mud that were left by the inundations of the Mahananda and the Ganges. Besides the deposition of mud, the large number of spill and drainage channels which intersect Malda were, in consequence, allowed to continue their beneficial activities and the area was healthy and prosperous. Thus it is found that the unique geographical location in the fork of the Ganga-Mahananda was determined to the development of Malda and its economy.

The early history of Dinajpur (undivided) rests on a number of vague traditions and legends. But from the discovery of several seals reveals that Dinajpur (undivided) was a part of the kingdom of Pundravardhana or Pundranagar. In ancient time the area of our study i.e. Indian portion of Dinajpur was also a part of the Pundravardhan which was ruled by the Pundras. The Sabhaparvan of Mahabharata, the Ramayana and even Patanjali in his Mahabhashya mentioned the Pundras.²⁷ The Maurya seal proves that this tract formed a part of the Maurya Empire. In this context it is to be mentioned that from the seal which was discovered in 1931 within the ruins of Mahasthangarh established the fact that Pundravardhana or Mahasthangarh was a centre of Buddhism in the Maurya period. Further, in 1937-41 a few clay seals found during excavations at Bangarh (now in South Dinajpur), may be assigned to the Maurya period. In addition to these it is to be noted that some terra-cotta figurines of the Sunga period and gold coin of the Kashana period have also been discovered at Bangarh; which proved that there was a good relation during the reigns of the Sungas and Kushanas with Pundravardhana. The discovery of a number of inscriptions of the Gupta and later Gupta periods bears ample testimony that Dinajpur (Indian Portion of Dinajpur) was a part of the province of "Pundravardhana Bhukti" of Gupta Empire. One of the copper plates was found in the village Baigram near Hili (now in South Dinajpur district). The name of 'Devkote' is inscribed on this copper plate, which



situated in the Gangarampur police station of present South Dinajpur District. Besides these, several inscriptions also discovered in different parts of Dinajpur (undivided) and other parts of North Bengal that North Bengal formed a part of the Gupta Empire during the reign of Kumaragupta-I, Buddhagupta and their successors. The reign of Pala and Sena kings occupies a glorious chapter in this region also. During Pala and Sena rule Dinajpur (undivided) formed principal part of the kingdom. The inscription of the Tapandighi Copper plate proves that Dinajpur (Indian portion of Dinajpur) was also under the kingdom of Senakings.²⁸ In this context it is to be noted that Mahipala-I was a great king among the Palas in the sense that he restored the fallen fortunes of his house and re-established the Pala power. The tank Mahipaldighi in Bangshihari (now in South Dinajpur) Police Station and the Pargana of Mahinagar were probably named after his name. Ramapala was another important ruler of Paladynasty who is said to have established the city of Ramavati. During the reign of Ramapala all the rulers of Pala dynasty maintained their administration from this city. It is believed that the location of this city was in the present Itahar thana of North Dinajpur of West Bengal.²⁹ Vijayasena, Vallasena and Lakshmanasena were the sena kings who ruled over the Indian portion of the Northern part of Bengal between the first half of the 12th century A.D. and the beginning of the 13th century A.D. It is to be mentioned that Pundravardhana-bhukti formed a part of the Sena kingdom in Bengal, but the area of the Pundravardhana-bhukti was bigger than that of the pala dynasty. It is found that at the time of Lakshmanasena, Pundravardhana bhukti included almost the whole of Northern parts of Bengal and Eastern Bengal upto Chittagong and the districts of the presidency Division situated to the south of the Padma. However, the rule of the Senas over this tract was rather short lived as the Sena Kingdom was replaced by the Muslim kingdom founded by Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji in approximately 1201 A.D.

From 13th Century A.D. to the mid 18th century A.D. Dinajpur (undivided) was under the Afghan and Mughal authority. Bakhtyar Khalji was murdered by one of his general named Ali Mardan Khalji, who

occupied 'Devkot' (Bangarh) very soon and became the viceroy of Lakhnawati. But Ali Mardan's reign was, however short lived as he was assassinated in 1213 A.D. It was Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din after taking the power transferred the seat of Government from 'Devkot' (Bangarh) to Gour. With the transfer of Capital to Gour, Dinajpur (undivided) became a part of the kingdom of Gour. But it is to be mentioned that though the seat of Government was transferred, Hemtabad (present North Dinajpur) and its surrounding areas did not form a part of the kingdom of Gour. It belonged to another kingdom, beginning from the immediate west of Hemtabad under a Hindu king named Mahesh Raja.³⁰ It is also to be noted that at the beginning of the 15th Century Ganesh, a Hindu Hakim or Raja of Dinwaj became powerful and seized the power from the Afghans for few years. Raja Ganesh took the title of Danujamardana-deva on his accession to the throne. Thus again Dinajpur (undivided) came under the Sway of Hindu dynasty. However, his son Jadu was converted to Islam and ruled as Jalal-ud-din. But no inscription of Ganesh and his successors have not been discovered as yet. According to Jadunath Sarkar till 1431 A.D. Dinajpur (undivided) was under Ganesh and his successors and this area was again reinstated to the Ilyas Shahi dynasty again. During the reign of Akbar, the great Mughal ruler, Dinajpur (Indian portion) was probably contained within the Sarkars of Tajpur (now in North Dinajpur) and Havelee Pinjara (Portion of Dinajpur now in Bangladesh). But no incident worthy of note appease to have taken place in Dinajpur (Indian portion) during the long period of about two hundred years, during which Bengal remained under the Sway of the Mughals. One thing is to be mentioned that during the reign of Akbar the first authentic traces of the great Zamindari system was found in Dinajpur (undivided) and during the next two centuries under the Mughal the history of the undivided Dinajpur was closely intermingled with this Zamindari system.

In 1765 the British East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal, consequently Dinajpur (undivided) came under the British administration. But the acquisition of the Diwani by the East India

Company did not bring about any major change in the administrative machinery. The Zamindari system was continued and a committee of revenue was formed by the East India Company. In 1773, the court of Directors ordered to withdraw the English collectors and it was decided that each district was to be superintended by a Diwan, or Aumil except such as had been let entire to the Zamindars or responsible formers. According to the decision the provincial councils were to correspond with the Governor and Council in the Revenue Department, and the Diwan with Roy Rayan. Thus a provincial council was established at Dinajpur (undivided) which have the charges of the Dinajpur, Silberries, Purnea, Rangpur, Edrackpur, Baharbund, Cooch Behar and Rangamati. In 1786 Dinajpur (undivided) district was formed.³¹

After the formation of the District, Dinajpur (undivided) has undergone several changes in its boundary. It is mentioned in the Major Rennells map that Dinajpur was a large estate under the control of the Raja of Dinajpur, with an area of three to four thousand sq. miles or eight to ten thousand sq. km. By the end of 1800 A.D. almost the whole estate of Dinajpur had been alienated and the East India Company took over its management. The representatives in India of the East India Company thought that with the weakening of the power and prestige of the Maharaja of Dinajpur it would become easier for them to strengthen their hold over the region. The boundary of the district was readjusted in accordance with the plan of the Governor General in Council. The district of Dinajpur was included in the Murshidabad Division which consisted of the districts of Bhagalpur and Purnea, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi, Birbhum and the city of Murshidabad. In 1905 Dinajpur was included in the new district of Assam according to the India's new scheme of partition of Bengal into two parts. In 1912 it became again a district of Bengal. During the time of Maharaja Jagadishnath, the district of Dinajpur was divided into two in accordance with the Radcliffe Award (15th August 1947). By the Racliffe Award major portion of the district, representing the Western portion of Dinajpur and having been sliced off the original district of Dinajpur, came to be known as "West Dinajpur", became a part

of Independent India of West Bengal. Within a decade according to the transfer of Territory Act in 1956, some areas from Purnea district of Bihar were annexed to West Dinajpur. The territory thus acquired formed a new sub-division in the name of Islampur. On 20th march 1959 the tract lying north of the river Mahananda was transferred to the district of Darjeeling. But the newly formed West Dinajpur district was rather peculiar in shape. From North to South it is a long tract covering approximately two hundred fifty km. and its width is between sixteen km. and fifty six km. Thus, due to administrative convenience the district of west Dinajpur was further divided into two halves i.e. North Dinajpur district and South Dinajpur district since April 1992.

The district of Dinajpur lies between 24°55' and 26°23' North latitude, 88°02' and 89°19' East longitude. On the north-east the district is bounded by Jalpaiguri and by Purnea on the north-west and west; on the east by Rangpur and by Bogra on the South east; on the south by Rajshahi and by Malda on the south-west. The country is flat which is situated in the Gangetic plain between Himalayas and the Ganges, consisting of very fertile soil. Several rivers flowing through this tract had linked with the Ganges and several river marts emerged basing on different rivers. River Nagar formed its natural boundary on the Purnea and river Karotoya separated the district from Rangpur. Bulk of the commerce of the tract was carried by several rivers flowing through this tract and considerable cultivation of different crops, especially rice cultivation was the general features of the economy of Dinajpur (undivided).

The area which is known as Darjeeling, previously was a part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim. The area which is under the Kalimpong sub-division of Darjeeling district, formerly being a part of Sikkim also, was occupied by Bhutan in 1706. At that time the relation the Raja of Sikkim and Nepal was also strained. In 1780 the Gurkhas of Nepal occupied the power of Nepal and invaded Sikkim. Within thirty years the Gurkhas overran Sikkim and annexed Terai. In the meantime war broke-

out between British India and Nepal concluded by the treaty of Titaliya (1817). According to this treaty Nepal handed over the occupied area of Sikkim to the British India. But the British Government handed over the whole tract of land between the rivers Mechi and Tista to the Raja of Sikkim and accepted his sovereignty over the tract. As the British Government reinstated the lost area of Sikkim to the ruler of Sikkim, a friendly relation was made between the British India and the Raja of Sikkim.

Ten years after the signing of the treaty of Titaliya frontier disputes again started between Nepal and Sikkim and the disputes were referred to the British Governor General. Consequently, in 1829 Captain Lloyd and Mr. Grant went to Sikkim to deal with the disputes. Lloyd, during his visit to the area was attracted by the advantages of Darjeeling as a site for a sanatorium. He reported it to the Governor General Lord William Bentinck. As a result Lloyd was directed to make friendship with the Raja of Sikkim. Thus, on the 1st February, 1835, a grant was obtained from the Raja of Sikkim, presenting the whole tract lying south to the Great Rangit river, to the British. The grant was worded as follows:- "The Governor General, having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the Sikkim puttee Rajah, out of friendship for the said Governor General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is all the land south of the Great Rangit river, East of the Balason, Kahail and Little Rangit rivers and west of Rungno and Mahanadi rivers."³²

In spite of that the friendly relation between British India and Sikkim gradually deteriorated. The increasing development of Darjeeling was the main cause for it. The increasing importance of Darjeeling under free institutions was a source of loss and frustration to the Lamas and leading men of Sikkim who had a great share in the monopoly of all trade in Sikkim.³³ Within ten years progress of development was rapid in

Darjeeling. A road was constructed from Pankhabari (old Military road). Besides the construction of road, hotels, bungalows and houses were erected. However, the rest of the ceded areas were still under forests and practically uninhabited. But the British Government in 1841 granted the Raja an allowance of Rs.3,000 per annum as compensation which was raised in 1846 to Rs.6,000 per annum. However, disturbance was going on due to internal rebellion led by Lamas and other leading men of Sikkim and Kidnapping was going on frequently. In November 1849, on their way to Sikkim Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell were kidnapped, though were unconditionally released after about a month (on the 24th December 1849). Following this incident an expedition was made to Sikkim in 1850, resulting in the accession of some portion of the hill tracts of Sikkim and the Terai (Morang). With the annexation of the Terai and the portion of the Sikkim Hills bounded by the Ramman and the Great Rangit rivers on the north, by the Tista on the east and by the Nepal frontier on the West. Now the area of 640 sq. miles or 1657.60 sq. km. was attached to Darjeeling. The whole area of Terai and hill territory was now handed over to the Deputy Commissioner.

The annexation of Terai brought about significant change in the relations between Sikkim and the British India. Before this annexation, Darjeeling was within the territory of Sikkim and to enter Darjeeling the British had to take permission from the Raja of Sikkim. But after this annexation the British territory in Darjeeling was connected with the British districts of Purnea and Rangpur in the plains and the Sikkim Raja was cut off from access to the plains except through British territory. However, the relations with Sikkim was not deteriorated, but raids on British territory was carried on by the Sikkimese. In 1860 when Dr. Campbell tried to cross the Ramman was attacked and forced to fall back on Darjeeling. Thus Sir Ashley Eden was sent with a force of 2,600 men. Eden with his force entered Tumlong, the capital of Sikkim and finally it put on end to frontier troubles with Sikkim (28th March, 1861). Eden secured full freedom for commerce throughout the Sikkim border. It is to be mentioned in this context that though the frontier disputes came to an

end with Sikkim, but the trouble was not over with Bhutan. Along their long frontier with India, the Bhutanese were responsible for a series of incursions in which property was plundered, lives taken and many innocent persons carried off into captivity. In 1862 it was informed that Bhutanese were preparing to make an attack on Darjeeling. Thus very quickly troops were sent from Dinajpur to restore confidence. This was followed in 1863 by the despatch of a special Mission under Sir Ashley Eden to Bhutan to settle differences and obtain the restoration of plundered property. But the Mission failed as Eden was treated with indignity. After that event negotiations continued fruitlessly and the Government of India decided to annex the Bengal Duars and such hill territory to prevent Bhutanese incursions into Darjeeling. In 1864 expeditions were sent into Bhutan and in November 1865, a treaty was signed by which Bhutanese incursions into Darjeeling was stopped and the Bhutanese hills were ceded to the British for an annual subsidy of Rs.50000.³⁴ What is now the Kalimpong sub-division was acquired from Bhutan as a result of the Anglo-Bhutanese War (1864-65) and included with Darjeeling. The inclusion of Kalimpong to Darjeeling gave birth to the Darjeeling district in 1866.

During the time of the formation of Darjeeling district the headquarters of the Deputy Magistrate of the Terai was at Hanskhawa near present Phansidewa. In 1880 it was transferred to Siliguri, a piece of land measuring 62.72 acres acquired from the Pargana Baikunthapur of Jalpaiguri district. In the meantime Kurseong had begun to develop and in 1891 it was made the headquarters of a new sub-division. Both the Terai and the lower hills west of the river Tista were included in this new subdivision. In 1907 Siliguri was made a subdivision and thus re-establishing the Terai Subdivision. In 1917 the Kalimpong sub division was created. The newly formed Darjeeling district was included in the Rajshahi division and remained within this division till the partition of India, except a little break for few years from 1905 to 1911.³⁵

After the formation of the District, Darjeeling was declared a non-Regulation district i.e. general rules and laws were not to be applicable in this district. Thus Darjeeling had no representative in the Legislative Council constituted under the Government of India Act 1919. This district was also declared a backward tract. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the district was made a partially excluded area. On 15th August 1947 the district with the rest of India, attained independence as a part of India and got recognition of a district within Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal State.

The district of Darjeeling is the northern most district of North Bengal lying between 26°31' and 27°13' north latitude and between 87°59' and 88°53' east longitude. The district is hemmed in international frontiers. On the west the district is bounded by Nepal and to the north the district is bounded by Sikkim. On the south the district is bounded by Jalpaiguri district and Bhutan and on the east to the village of Phansidewa on the Mahanadi River (Mahananda) and westward of Phansidewa by the Purnea district of Bihar. Of all the frontier districts of India, the boundary of Darjeeling is most complicated and the area of the district is not marked by any natural features as a region complete in itself. The district consists of a portion of the outlying hills of the lower Himalayas and stretch of territory lying along the base of the hills known as the Terai or plains. The upper portion of Terai i.e. nearest the hills was mostly covered with forests and jungle. It consists of alternating beds of sand, gravel and boulders brought down by numerous rivers and streams flowing out of the hills. J.D. Hooker in his "Himalayan Journal" defined the Terai as the region of forests trees and the soil is preferred for sal tree, the most valuable of Indian timber.³⁶ The soil of this area was very fertile and the Meches and Dhimals the two tribes chiefly inhabited in this portion connected with shifting cultivation. In comparison to upper terai, the lower terai was more open and cleared which had also a very fertile soil. In this portion Koch tribe, Rajbansi and Bengalee settled down permanently in connection with agriculture. But the hill portion of the district is a confused labyrinth of ridges and narrow valleys. Hills and

valleys were covered in many places with dense forests. These were the geographical features of Darjeeling.

Jalpaiguri had no existence as an administrative unit till 1869. By the amalgamation of the Western Duars with the Jalpaiguri sub-division of Rangpur district, Jalpaiguri district was formed in 1869. But before the formation of the district, the area was neither a unified politico-administrative unit nor a well-defined economic zone. As most parts of the area were outside the centralizing influence of the Mughal state and its successors in Bengal, there is a singular absence of written official documents relating to the area. The lack of interest of the earlier powers was because a greater part of the area was covered with dense forests and was inhabited by indigenous peoples like Mech, Garo, Rava etc. But it would not be correct to say that the entire area was unaffected by the impact of the British power since the battle of Pallesy. After the Grant of Diwani (1765) many parts of Jalpaiguri were well under the direct rule of the agents of the East India Company, while in the other parts interventionist and restrictive nature of Company's rule was evident.

At one stage Jalpaiguri formed a part of the kingdom of Pragjotishpur of Kamarup, extended as far as the Karotoya river in the west. This dynasty fell before an invasion by Husain Shah, the Afghan Governor of Bengal who ruled from 1497-1521 A.D. In the early part of 16th century Jalpaiguri was known as Baikunthpur or Battirishhazari, situated between the Teesta and Mahananda rivers and was direct paramountcy of Koch king founded by Visha Sinha. But the big Koch kingdom soon fell into decay and the Mughals acquired the whole of the territory of Koch kingdom in 1603. At that time a fierce struggle then took place for possession of the two parganas of Patgram and Boda which were ultimately ceded to the Mughals, though they were framed out to a cousin of the Raja of Cooch Behar who held them on his behalf. Under the Mughal rule, these conquests were included in the frontier of Zamindari of Fakirdundi or Rangpur and were transferred to the East

India Company with the Grant of Diwani to it in 1765.³⁷ Thus Jalpaiguri came under the direct administration of the British.

Jalpaiguri was a part of British Rangpur since the East India Company was granted the Diwani of Bengal. To the north-east of this region lay the area that later came to be known as the western or the Bengal Duars. This Western Duars or Bengal Duars was bounded by Darjeeling and Bhutan in the North, Sankos river and Goalpara district of the province of Assam in the East, native kingdom of Cooch Behar and Pargana Baikunthpur in the South and river Tista in the West.³⁸ Traditionally the Duars was supposed to have belonged to the kingdom of Cooch Behar, but by the beginning of 1765 it came to be run by the writ of Bhutan, lying to the north. This portion of the Duars is known as Eastern Duars. It extended from Sankos river in the west to Manas river in the East. The western and eastern Duars are jointly known as Bhutan Duars.³⁹ Besides the Duars, a Chunk of the region lay to the west of the Duars between the river Tista and Mahananda with Bhutan and Sikkim in the north and the district of Rangpur in the south. This was the Baikunthpur Raj of the Raikats, a collateral branch of the rulers of Cooch Behar, reduced to a Zamindari estate after 1793. In the last quarter of the 18th century the fate of Jalpaiguri was destined by the British. For several times the area of Jalpaiguri was to be cut up and distributed again and again among various British districts or territories. This behavioural process started with the commencement of hostility towards Bhutan in 1772 when the Bhutias invaded Cooch Behar which was a dependency of British Bengal. From this time; little intercourse took place until the occupation of Assam by the British in 1826. During that time it was found that the Bhutias had illegally kept several tracts of this region under their control which came to known as Duars or passes.⁴⁰ There were such 18 passes or Duars covering a narrow strip of country extending over twenty miles in breadth known as the Athara Duars or eighteen doors. The Bhutanese had access to the plains of Bengal and Assam through these doors. There were eleven such recognised Duars which were situated between Tista and the Manas, bordering on Bengal

frontier and were known as Bengal Duars. Of these eleven Duars five fell in the western Duars.⁴¹ The remaining seven passes were on the frontier of Goalpara and Kamarup district of Assam and were generally called the Assam Duars.⁴² The Bhutanese managed to overrun the Bengal Duars dispossessing the Muhammedan rulers but failed to obtain absolute possession of the Assam Duars.

The British in Bengal understood the Bhutanese by their activities were dangerously near the British district of Rangpur. At this juncture the British conceived two things (i) to annex the Bengal Duars from Bhutan and (ii) opening of commercial relation with Tibet and Bhutan. In 1774 a treaty was already concluded between the East India Company and the Bhutan Government. Thus, the company decided not to lay emphasis on total rupture with Bhutan and in this question three missions were sent respectively under Captain Tuner in 1783, Captain Pemberton in 1837 and finally Ashley Eden in 1863. But all these missions proved unsuccessful due to the highhanded behaviour and indignity shown towards the British envoys by the Bhutan Government. Thus when all the efforts to bring peace were failed the British took decision to use force against the Bhutan Government. In June 1864, the British Government addressed letters to the Bhutan Government, permanently annexing Ambari Falakata (Bengal Duars) and declaring the annual payments had ceased for ever (£200 as rent for Ambari Falakata and £1000 as revenue from the Assam Duars) previously made by the British Government to Bhutan. The Deb Raja, in whose name all official communications from Bhutan Government were usually made, paid no respect to these demands made by the British Government. However, a letter was received from Dharmaraja, offering no apologies for the gross insults offered to the British envoy, but proposing to receive a fresh intercession by the British. This action of the Bhutan authorities left no option to the company. Thus on 12 November, 1864 by a proclamation the British Government permanently annexed the Bengal Duars.⁴³ This annexation of Bengal Duars laid the foundation stone for the formation of modern Jalpaiguri district.

After the annexation of Bengal Duars, the British divided this tract into two parts – Eastern and Western – for administrative reasons. The Eastern Duars were merged with Goalpara district of Assam. The western Duars was divided into three tahsils viz., the Sadar comprising the tract between Tista and Torsa rivers with its headquarters at Mainaguri; the Buxa tahsil extending from river Torsa to the Sankos river with its headquarters at Alipur; and Dalingkot tahsil which includes the mountainous part of the annexed territory.⁴⁴ But in 1867, the Dalinkot region (present Kalimpong) was merged into the district of Darjeeling. At the same time they also separated Fakirganj (now Jalpaiguri), Boda, Sanyasikata (now Rajganj) and Patgram from Rangpur and amalgamated them to form the modern District of Jalpaiguri. On 1st January, 1869, the Titalya Subdivision was separated from Rangpur and incorporated with the Western Duars to form the district of Jalpaiguri. According to the Act XVI of 1869, the portion of the District which is composed of Thanas Jalpaiguri, Boda, Patgram and Rajganj and a portion of Mainaguri, being regulation, and the other part viz. the Duars, non-regulation the former administrated by the general revenue laws, and the later under a special revenue law of its own.⁴⁵ The Deputy Commissioner removed his headquarters from Mainaguri to Jalpaiguri town and the district was subdivided into two subdivisions- (i) the Sadar, which included the former Titalya subdivision and the part of Western Duars, lies between the Tista and Jaldhaka rivers and (ii) the Falakata subdivision comprising the rest of the Buxa subdivision. In 1874-75 Patgram was attached to the Sadar subdivision and since this change the Jalpaiguri district remained unaltered till the “Radcliffe Award”. Due to the partition of India the southern police station of Titalya, Pachagarh, Boda, Debiganj and Patgram, comprising a total area of 672 sq. miles, became part of Pakistan (now in Bangladesh). The present day district of Jalpaiguri thus consist of the old Baikunthpur Estate and the Western Duars. According to the Bengal Estate Acquisition Act of 1954, the Zamindari of the Baikunthpur Estate was abolished and Jalpaiguri became a district of West Bengal within Jalpaiguri Division.⁴⁶

The district of Jalpaiguri lies between 26°0' and 27°0' north latitude, and between 88°20' and 89°53' east longitude. The greater part of the district is covered by fertile soil. The district is bounded on the north by the district of Darjeeling and the independent state of Bhutan, on the south by Rangpur and the state of Cooch Behar, on the west by Darjeeling, Purnea and Dinajpur and on the east by the Eastern Duars. Topographically, this district has two distinct parts the upper portion was sub-mountain tract of some ten to fifteen miles in width from the Bhutan Hills downward. The lower part was plain lands and was comparably habitable. In the uplands to the north of the Duars the soil is practically well suited to the growth of the tea plant. Near the northern boundary line of the western Duars there is only mountainous tract known as Buxa. Nearer to the Buxa hills there are dense and extensive tracts of sal and other tree forests. In addition to this there is also a valuable and extensive sal forest, comprising an area of about fifty or sixty square miles which is situated about twelve miles north of Jalpaiguri town, came to be known as Baikunthpur jungle. Thus it is found that the Regulation Area was predominantly rural where a great deal of cultivation carried on, but in the western Duars most of the part is covered with jungle and wastelands.

The name of Cooch Behar means 'the abode of the Koches', the latter meaning a tribe. The king of Cooch Behar probably belonged to the non-Aryan tribe of Koch, presumed to be of Tibetan or Dravidian Origin. In the early times the territory of Cooch Behar was a part of Pragjyotishpur or, as it was afterwards called Kamarup. The name of Pragjyotishpur is mentioned in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Vishnupurana and the Harivamsa, however, there is no mention of Kamarup in any of these works. The earliest recorded king of Kamarup was named Mahiranga Denava who is regarded to have been the first king of the country and was succeeded by three kings. After them, Pragjyotishpura seems to have been occupied by a race of Kiratas. The expulsion of the Kiratas marks an epoch which by the settlement of a colony of Brahmans and other high caste Hindus in Pragjyotishpura. Bhaskar Barman was an important ruler of Kamarup who occupied the

throne of Kamarup in 639 A.D. After the Gupta and the Pala rule the country was overrun by the Koch, Mech, Garo and Bhot tribes. At this juncture the condition was favourable for the rise of upstarts and a person of humble birth somehow acquired power and proclaimed himself king and assumed the name Niladhvaja who founded Kamtapur as his capital. Nilambara, the last king of Niladhvaja house was a mighty ruler. But during his rule Kamtapur was conquered by the Muslim in 1498 A.D. However, the Muslim could not keep the Kamta Kingdom for long.

After the expulsion of the Muslim the Kamta Kingdom was engulfed in anarchy. The Koch chiefs were in the meantime gradually rising into power. In the 16th century the Koches under Vishva Sinha founded an empire which was extended from Darrang in the Upper valley of the Brahmaputra to the boundary of the Purnea district. Under Vishva Sinha the government began to be systematically administered. As a powerful ruler Vishva Sinha demanded tribute from the Deva and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan and in this question a war followed by which Vishva Sinha conquered the country upto the foot of the hills. Thus Deva Raja of Bhutan made a treaty with him, acknowledging his supremacy and agreeing to annual tribute as well as to help Vishva Sinha with troops in time of war and to administer the affairs of Bhutan under his orders. On the retirement of Maharaja Vishva Sinha Naranarayan became king who defeated the Governor of Gour and the country as far as the Ganges was conquered. During the time of Maharaja Naranarayan, Cooch Behar was an extensive kingdom. It comprised, in addition to the little state of Cooch Behar of the present day, almost the whole of Northern Bengal, Bhutan and Assam, as well as the modern states of Kachar, Jaintia, Manipur and Tipperah and extended upto the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Naranarayan was decidedly the most powerful of the kings of the large extent of the country which once formed the ancient Hindu Kingdom of Kamarupa. In this context it is to be mentioned that though Cooch Behar was a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarup, there was no separate existence of Cooch Behar prior to the division of the Kingdom between the two

brothers, king Naranarayan and Sukladhvaja, the latter known as Chila Roy, in the middle of the 16th century.⁴⁷

Naranarayan was the last Koch king of Kamrup. After Naranarayan his son Lakshminarayan succeeded to the throne who professed himself a vassal of the Mughal Empire. During his reign Ali Kooli Khan (Shere Afghan), one of the generals of Akbar, the great Mughal emperor, conquered Gour and other countries in the West of the Cooch Behar Kingdom. At that time the extent of the country was bounded on the east by the river Brahmaputra; on the south by Ghoraghat; on the west by Tirhoot; and on the north by the mountains of Thibet and Assam. Though there were frequent attack by the Muslim the independent Koch Kingdom of the western Kamarup remained upto 1714 A.D.

Maharaja Upendra Narayan was the first independent king of Cooch Behar who ascended the throne in 1714 A.D. He was not a powerful ruler and during his reign Bhutias gradually extended their conquest to the plains. From his time Bhutan's domination over Cooch Behar continued even till the last decade of the 18th century.

As the Bhutias gradually became very powerful, they extended their authority over the state. Once getting unrivalled access into Cooch Behar, Bhutan did not lose any time in establishing her supremacy over the state, and by 1765 her representative assumed power of authority over the whole territory. During this time the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was conferred on the East India Company by Shah Alam, Emperor of Delhi. Thus the intercourse between British India and Bhutan started on the issue of the state of Cooch Behar State. The Bhutias began to extend their authority and came down in force after the death of Rajendranarayan in 1772. The whole country came under the occupation of the Bhutia. The Bhutia general Jimpe, had a fortification thrown around the palace in the town of Cooch Behar, and occupied it with a strong Bhutia force. In that critical situation Khagendranarayan, Nazir of Cooch Behar state approached British help against the Bhutanese raids. The East India Company was watching with concern the growing power of

the Bhutias close to their borders. The East India Company took this opportunity, and an expedition was sent under Captain Jones who persuaded the Bhutanese through the Duars into the hills. On 5th April 1773 a treaty was signed between the East India Company and Dharendranarayan, the ruler of Cooch Behar. This treaty ensured the ruler of Cooch Behar to assist him against his enemies if necessary as against Rs.50000/- as the ruler would acknowledge subjection to the Will of the Company to be annexed to the province of Bengal.⁴⁸ Thus by virtue of this treaty Cooch Behar became a feudatory state of the British and at the time of crisis British Commissioners were sent to help the ruler of Cooch Behar in 1802 and in 1805, 1813 and in 1817.⁴⁹

After this teaty, war broke out between the British and Bhutan which continued for more than a year. In this war Bhutan was defeated and at this an appeal came from Dalai Lama of Tibet to the British Government and a treaty was signed between the British, the king of Bhutan and Darpa Deo Raikot, the Zamindar of Batrishjhari or Baikunthapur on the 25th April 1774. Darpa Deo was involved in this treaty because he joined with the king of Bhutan during the war. After this, Darpa Deo was compelled to pay Rs.10,000/- to the British as annual revenue.

According to the above contract the king of Bhutan was compelled to release king Dhairjendra Narayan and his brother and other captives along with various presents. Bhutan, however, was not satisfied with the terms and conditions of the treaty and it continued raids on Baikunthapur, forming a part of the Cooch Behar State. To this the British kept their eyes closed while, at the same time, for obtaining a direct access to Tibet via Bhutan, they ceded Baikunthapur as well as another tract of land of Cooch Behar to Bhutan in 1779 which remained in their possession for the following 86 years. In 1789 Henry Douglas was appointed British Commissioner for Cooch Behar and he introduced administrative procedures to be followed properly and regularly in the

state. By this way the state of Cooch Behar came into direct contract with the British administration.

Though smooth administrative system was introduced in Cooch Behar by the British, however, the Bhutanese disturbance over Cooch Behar was not stopped. In this context it is to be mentioned that after the conclusion of the first Anglo-Bhutan War (1774), the British Government had to make over all these Taluks to Bhutan with a view to secure peace with the government. But when Nazir Deo without understanding the obligation of the said treaty, sought to recover possession of the lands so lost to the state, this led to a dispute with Bhutan. However, this dispute was over come with British mediation and down to 1788 Bhutan had no complaint against Cooch Behar. But Cooch Behar had never willingly parted with the land which were ceded by the British in favour of Bhutan in 1799. Thus the old boundary dispute now again arose in 1801 and finally the Maharaja succeeded in recovering the greater portion of the lands which had previously been alienated from Cooch Behar. In December a brawl took place between Cooch Behar and Bhutan which was settled by the transferred of land as far as Bhagamalli, an old road passing through Tengnamari from east to west, from Bhutan to Cooch Behar. But the Bhutias, however, did not give up possession of the land, and furthermore committed encroachment upon Cooch Behar. The Bhutias made encroachment upon Cooch Behar in 1811, 1817, and in 1832. These frequent attacks upon Cooch Behar by the Bhutias was dangerous to the British. Further, the British observed that the Bhutias had illegally occupied several tracts of land at the foot of the hills and for this Bhutan agreed to pay tribute to the British Government. But the Bhutias did not pay the tribute regularly. On the other hand, they entered into the Indian territory and committed depredations. Thus in 1863, Mr. Ashley Eden was sent to Bhutan to make a contract against these outrages. But he failed to make a favourable contract. It is also to be note that at that time Tongsa Panto came into power in Bhutan who made Cooch Behar kings into mere puppets. On Mr. Eden's return Ambari Falakata taluk (the Bengal Duars) was annexed to British territory in

India. In the following year Bhutan made an abortive attempt at recovering the area, but finally was forced into a treaty (Sinchula Treaty, 1865). According to the terms of the treaty the rectangular area situated in the middle of the tri-junction of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet in the north, the Rangpur district with Ambari Falakata taluk and the area between Cooch Behar and the Kamrup district of Assam were annexed to British territory.

The direct contract of British administration made the ruler of Cooch Behar as feudatory chiefs of East India Company. In 1800 the East India Company stopped the coining of Narayani rupee, which was a symbol of supremacy of the ruler of Cooch Behar.⁵⁰ In this context it is to be mentioned that the Narayani rupee was one of the oldest coins of India which formed the coinage of ancient Kamarup, the kingdom of the Koch family. These coins were current in Assam, Bhutan and the neighbouring countries. In 1803, the British Government wanted to introduce in Cooch Behar the system of law and justice, but it was abandoned owing to the strong opposition by the then Maharaja of Cooch Behar. The British Commissioners, however, did something to improve the condition of the police in the country. In 1805 there were two Thanas in the state, one at Atharabenki, south of Dinhata, and the other at Mekhliganj. In the following year a third was also established near Balarampur. It was with the accession of Nipendranarayan to the throne (1863-1911) created the administrative machinery of the state on the model of a British district.⁵¹ During the reign of Nipendranarayan in 1893 the Cooch Behar state Railway was opened for traffic. Nipendranarayan was succeeded by Rajarajendranarayan who ruled only for two years. After the death of Rajarajendranarayan in 1913 Jitendranarayan became the ruler of Cooch Behar who was succeeded by Jagaddipendranarayan. Jagaddipendranarayan was the last Maharaja of Cooch Behar. After India got independence, on September 12, 1949, he signed the Instrument of Accession by which the state of Cooch Behar was transferred to India. By this transformation Cooch Behar State became a district of West Bengal under Jalpaiguri division.

The state of Cooch Behar lies between 25°57'40" and 26°32'20", north latitude, and between 88°47'40" and 89°54'35", east longitude. Geographically, the state of Cooch Behar was formed a part of the lower Provinces of Bengal, situated in the north east corner. The tract of the country lying between the foot of the hills, and its northern frontier being the western Duars or the eastern part of the district of Jalpaiguri; on the east by the Guma Duars, and Pargana Ghurla of the Assam District of Goalpara, and Parganas Gaibari and Bhitambar of Rangpur; on the south by Chakla Purvabhag, and Parganas Kakina and Kazirhat in the district of Rangpur, and Pargana Patgram in the district of Jalpaiguri; Pargana Kazirhat of Rangpur, and Chakla Boda in Jalpaiguri on the west. Several rivers Tista, Torsa, Gadadhar, Sankos, Jaldhaka, Kaljani, Dahrla flows through the state. The country is level and open, undiversified by hills or any large sheet of water. Generally the soil of Cooch Behar is very fertile and especially the eastern portion of the state richest and greatest fertile tract is situated. During the greater part of the year the climate of Cooch Behar is full of moisture. The land i.e. the soil and the climate is suitable for tobacco cultivation.

Thus, it is found that every district of North Bengal coming into its present shape has a history behind its creation. The historical evolution of the districts has given rise to the region of 'North Bengal'. This 'North Bengal' region has also a contrasting geographical picture in its land, climate, soil and rivers. In the southern portion of North Bengal, it is found that this part is flat, very fertile soil and rivers were suitable for navigation, while in the northern parts of North Bengal contained hills, down slopes, foothills and major parts of the tract covered with dense forests. These geographical variations determined the differences in economy and diversified settlement character of North Bengal.

Hence, as a whole it is found that for our present study North Bengal got a unique geo-historical profile. This geo-historical profile is simply to have an idea about the area of our study. But our major objectives are something different. Administratively this region was under

Rajshahi Division. When the East India Company obtained the Grant of Diwani, the district of Rangpur passed into the hands of the company and this region came under the British administration. Though politically East India Company got the authority over this region but its administration was not deeply imposed in this region till the second Anglo Bhutan War (1864-65). After this event several tracts of Bhutan came under the Control of British Bengal and finally the district of Jalpaiguri was formed in the year 1869. It is the opinion of the local historians that the area called here as North Bengal got its shape after the formation of Jalpaiguri district. The area mentioned here as North Bengal had a separate identity due to its geographical location and features. It is already mentioned that within this region Malda and Dinajpur (undivided) had different land formation in comparison to Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar State. Malda and Dinajpur, due to richest fertile soil, produced abundant agricultural crops like paddy, sugarcane, mustard, mango etc. Undivided Dinajpur was renowned for paddy cultivation and was familiar as the granary of North Bengal.⁵² Besides agriculture, a considerable quantity of indigo, cotton and silk produced in the Southern part of North Bengal i.e. in Dinajpur and Malda, especially Malda was famous for silk production and mulberry cultivation. Different references mentioned that cotton and silk industries were the chief industry of Malda which ran from ancient period.⁵³ With the passage of times silk industry flourished under the tutelage of European traders especially, the Dutch, French and English. Besides the cotton and silk manufacturing, indigo was also a staple product of Malda and Dinajpur which was developed both by European and Native capital. It is to be mentioned that several rivers which flowed over the Southern part of North Bengal determined the economic development of this tract. Nagar, Kulik, Mahananda, Punarbhava, Atrai rivers were not only suitable for navigation to carry goods but also originated different important trading marts. Malda became a flourished trade centre due to its geographical location on the banks of the Ganges and Mahananda. Thus the geographical features and location made this area of North Bengal an important economic zone.

Till the mid 19th century Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri were not a British Bengal. Cooch Behar was a princely State, Darjeeling was a part of Sikkim while the Duars or Jalpaiguri was under the Control of Bhutan. It was in the last quarter of the 18th century the state of Cooch Behar came into contact with the British Raj, in the first half of the 19th Century Darjeeling came under the British authority and in the second half of the 19th century Jalpaiguri also came under the direct British administration. Before the British tutelage the basic feature of economy of these areas was subsistence economy and this zone was in sharp contrast to the other parts of rural Bengal in British India. But this zone had a great commercial prospects due to its geographical features. The state of Cooch Behar had a source of economic vitality. Captain Lewan Writes in his, "Account of Kuch Behar State", that Kuch Behar forms a large, well cultivated plain. The greater portion of the state is fertile.⁵⁴ There were abundance of natural resources in Cooch Behar and several rivers have been flowing over the state. W.W. Hunter mentioned that at least six principle rivers of Cooch Behar had always been navigable throughout the year by trading boats with carrying capacity of 100 maund.⁵⁵ Cooch Behar was also an area of lucrative trade and commerce for tobacco. Since the formation of the district everything began to develop in Jalpaiguri. For revenue purpose the district was divided into two tracts. In the permanently settled Parganas, all farming lands were brought under cultivation. The land tenure of this area was based on *jotedari* system. Jalpaiguri district had large areas of arable waste lands where different agricultural copious crops could be produced. It is found that the vast areas of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, covered with dense forest containing sal and other valuable trees, had great prospects for timber production and timber trade. Ashley Eden, British Envoy to Bhutan admitted that although a portion of the forest - infested region was uninhabitable during the rains, at other times of the year, especially when the forest is cleared to enable free current of air, the region would be not only healthy, but healthier too, on account of the excellent natural drainage, and soil laden with rich black vegetable mould suitable for timber production.⁵⁶ From

stray references it is found that basing upon the forest resources this area was rich in timber trade. From the sources it is to be mentioned that there was a timber market at Jalpaiguri even before the arrival of the British in this area.⁵⁷ However the most striking economic significance was the growth of tea plantation industry in this region. The agro-climatic condition was favourable for the growth of tea plantation in the northern part of North Bengal. This new industry transformed the whole socio-economic complexion of North Bengal. Further, the communication system was geared up with the establishment of Railways in North Bengal. This modern and swift communication system greatly helped the growth of trade and commerce and changed the entire pattern of the economy of North Bengal.

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CHAPTER-II

CONDITION OF INDUSTRIES, TRADE AND TRADING COMMUNITIES DUE TO FREE ENTRY IN THESE FIELDS

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CONDITION OF INDUSTRIES, TRADE AND TRADING COMMUNITIES

DUE TO FREE ENTRY IN THESE FIELDS

The year 1833 was a turning point in the history of East India Company as well as of India, because in that year the historic Charter Act was passed. This Act was a landmark not only politically in the history of British India, but had great economic consequences, because this Act had completely abolished the monopolistic trade of the East India Company which was being assailed for more than a century and had already been shorn of some of its rich plumage. So, the East India Company now remained merely a political concern in Indian affairs. By this Act it was first time the principles of free trade were adopted and due to free investment the de-industrialization phase now gradually removed from the economic field of India and it also marked the beginning of the industrialization phase in India. Several Economists and Economic historians highlighted the post 1833 era a new vista for the investment of capital in India and the beginning stage of the emergence of industrialization in India.

It is a matter of discussion why by the charter Act of 1833 the British Government completely put to an end of the Company's function as a trading concern. The British Governments records and East India Company's Official papers mentioned that there was a pressure upon the Government to introduce the free trade policy in India.¹ It is to be noted that the historic Industrial Revolution of 1760's resulted in the growth of Surplus Capital and surplus production, created a powerful industrial and manufacturing class in England. This class increasingly got control of the state power in Britain. This industrialist capitalist class was becoming conscious of its power and interests. They wanted to participate in Indian economy and as the East India Company was still enjoying the privileges

of monopoly in Indian economic affairs, it was not possible for them to get entry in Indian economy and to wind up their business. Thus they raised the question that the abolition of monopoly would act as fetters on the full development of the new economic system i.e. the free entry of Englishmen in Indian economic fields. Thus in 1813 when the time of the renewal of the Charter was due, a strong demand was raised in the British parliament for a share of the Englishmen in the trade with India. Logically the demand was put forward in view of (i) the new economic theories of Laissez faire, (ii) and the continental system introduced by Napoleon which had closed the European ports to British trade. Further it was stated that as company's territories in India so much expanded that it should be considered whether the company could continue both the commercial and a political functionary. As a result the British Government passed the Charter Act of 1813 by which the East India Company was deprived of its monopoly of trade with India but it still enjoyed its monopoly of trade with China and the trade in tea. The twenty years intervening between the Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833 witnessed great changes in England. Cheap products of the new machines and their export overseas widened the outlook of the people and money flowed in giving birth to a new spirit of independence. At this juncture in 1830 the Whigs came into power and opened the way for the triumph of the liberal principles. The gospel of the Rights of Man was openly preached and in 1832 the great Reform Act was passed. The dignity of mankind was given due recognition and the doctrine of laissez faire was being widely accepted and finally by the Charter Act of 1833 it was passed in the British Parliament. Thus a new era had dawned as it brought the opportunity to the new bourgeoisie and capitalist to search for suitable field to invest in India. By the policy of Laissez faire the slow process of industrialization had taken place in colonial India in the post 1833 period and India was gradually connected with the global market.

It is quite pertinent to mention that the entry of the free traders, capitalists and bourgeoisie was facilitated by the two important innovations in the Act of 1833, viz., (i) removal of all restrictions on the

immigration of British subjects to India, (ii) and rights granted to Britishers to own land. The free traders, capitalists and bourgeoisie classes fully utilized the opportunity and were eager to invest in Indian economy. Besides trade, commerce and industry, they also found the scope to invest their capital in agriculture and thus a significant trend, namely commercialization of agriculture, emerged in India. Hence agriculture began to be influenced by commercial consideration for sale in the national and even international markets and it turned into a business enterprise. However, this new trend in Indian economy of the British merchants, capitalists and bourgeoisie was not for the elevation of the India's development, it was purely for the colonial needs and interests that they were interested to invest in Indian economy.

It is to be mentioned that a long debate raged among the scholars, economists and economic historians in connection with free trade policy and its impact in Indian economy. We badly defused this debate as it is not the area of our study of discussion.

Upto 1833 the period is roughly called the era of de-industrialiion.² Amallesh Tripathi writes, "The Charter of 1833 had opened the way for import of capital from England, so necessary for economic development..... The time seemed ripe for an industrial Revolution in Bengal under British management, financed by the joint resources of British and native capitalists....., divert capital from land to industry."³ In the post 1833 period the history of internal and external trade of India as well as Bengal was one of the opening of a vast market and India was drawn into the world capitalist market. Consequently a new avenue was opened for trade, industries and there emerged bourgeoisie and trading classes in India – all these were the by product of Colonial rule. Because prior to the advent of British and more specifically prior to the introduction of free trade policy by the British Government one did not find such type of Commercial Revolution or economic transformation in India and the involvement of Indian traditional trading caste and the emergence of non-trading caste in trade, commerce and industry in India

as well as in Bengal. Thus it is to be noted that from the post 1833 period a process of economic transformation began in India. In the second half of the nineteenth century developmental works were undertaken by the Colonial Government centering round the construction of railways, roads and bridges, ports and docks, telegraph, irrigation works etc. Though this policy was dictated by the commercial and strategic needs of the Colonial interest, a special type of colonial economy emerged by this policy which was reflected in the striking features of restricted industrialization under the patronage of the colonial predatory state. The construction of Railways not only promoted internal and external trade but it also heralded a new industrial age in India. It is to be noted that Governor General Lord William Bentinck was a practical minded man who encouraged the development of trade and industry in India.⁴ As a result India now entered into trade and industries in the post 1833 period. In this connection it is quite pertinent to mention that the process of industrialization was confined to certain areas of the country and the entire India did not reap the benefit of industrialization. It is found that most of the industrialization occurred in Western and Eastern India particularly in Maharashtra and Bengal region. The British investors strictly under their ownership started to establish different industries in India. Pursuing the Britishers the Indians also became investors in different industries, trade and commerce. In this context it is quite relevant to mention some remarkable features of the European entrepreneurs in India. Viz., (i) the British industrialists never wanted the development of heavy industries in India because that would be causing damage to their interest, (ii) further they never encouraged such type of industries that may compete with the industries of England because the free traders, merchants and capitalists were always afraid of losing control over Indian markets and raw materials. These were the circumstances that they invested more and more in the production of consumer goods and in the raw materials for the industries of their homeland. However, some industries developed in Bengal viz., Auckland Jute Mill (1855) at Rishra in the district of Hoogly, followed by paper

industry Bally Paper Mill (1870) on the bank of the river Hooghly and the Bengal Iron Works Company (1874). It is already mentioned that the Act of 1833 had given the opportunity to the Englishmen an easy entry in trade, commerce and industry by removing all restrictions on the immigration and also permitted them to own lands. As a result a new type of industrial development was started, though it can not be called in true sense an industrial venture. This was the plantation industries of indigo, tea and coffee which were started at large scale in India. In this context it is to be mentioned that commercialization trend reached the highest level of development in the plantation industry.

The most lasting impact of the colonial rule in the area under study especially in the post 1833 period was the growth and development of plantation industry particularly the tea industry in the Northern North Bengal (Darjeeling, Terai and Jalpaiguri). Apart from the tea plantation industry a boom in the production and trade of commercial crops like jute, tobacco, cinchona, cardamom, orange etc. were also started in the districts of North Bengal. Further production and trade of raw silk, paddy and rice also increased in the southern North Bengal (Malda and Dinajpur). Besides these, a striking feature was the timber trade which was developed in the Northern North Bengal. But before going into the history of the impact of the free entry on trade, commerce and industry of North Bengal, it is quite relevant to mention the economic condition prior to 1833 of the area of our study. On the basis of British sources and travellers account it is to be mentioned that prior to 1833 period and even upto the second half of the nineteenth century except Malda and some portions of Dinajpur (undivided) no significant or remarkable commercial intercourse or commercial activities were there in the area under study.⁵ It is true that Malda as a district is a British creation. But the growth and development of Malda as a flourishing trade centre was started from Sultanate period due to geographical reason and royal Patronage. The river Ganges helped a free commercial intercourse between Bengal and the outer world since the 13th century and helped the emergence and prominence of Malda. However, the frequent changes in the courses of the

river Ganges and her tributaries made the drainage condition worse for which Malda in the recent historical period lost its former importance. As a flourishing trade centre Malda was also referred by several foreign travellers who visited the city various times during the 17th and 18th century. From the description of Alexander Hamilton and Walter Hamilton it is found that Malda was well inhabited and frequented by merchants of the different nations and was a place of great trade and silk production.⁶ English merchants and travellers mentioned Malda was the main shopping centre in North Bengal throughout the 17th century and during that period the chief trade of Malda was conducted by the merchants from Agra, Gujrat and Benaras.⁷ Silk as a commercial item had great demand in European markets and outside India. W.W. Hunter mentioned that in the sixteenth century one Shaikh Bhik set sail for Russia with three ships laden with silk cloths of Malda.⁸ The reputation of Malda's silk was not unknown to the Europeans, thus different European merchants and traders thronged Malda and its neighbourhood in connection with silk trade. The silk trade was so profitable and lucrative that the British first established silk industry in 1686 at English Bazar in Malda and the French followed by the English also opened silk industry near about 1760 in Malda.⁹ Silk trade and industry so flourished that the rearing of silk worms and manufacture of silk fabrics was the general occupation of nearly all classes of people in Malda and its neighbourhood. It is found that upto 1790 silk manufacture in Malda was a flourishing enterprise. However, from the first decade of the 19th century the silk manufactured had already fallen into decay.¹⁰ With the passing of the Charter Act 1833 the Company's concern with Malda silk ended; but the despatch of silk continued till 1834-35. Apart from silk Malda had a traditional base of brasso-trade and industry. Till 1833 the area under study of Dinajpur (Present North and South Dinajpur) was purely an agricultural zone. The local Rajbangsis, Polia, Mallo were connected with land and agriculture was the main occupation of the people. However, some portion of undivided Dinajpur produced silk and there were some indigo factories owned by European planters.¹¹ Trade and commerce was conducted in

local *hats* and bi-weekly markets and the business was conducted by the traditional trading caste like Saha, Tili etc. Internal trade of agricultural crops was carried on by the river Kulik, Nagar, Atrai, Punarbhaba. Generally these were the economic picture of Malda and Dinajpur (present North and South Dinajpur) prior to the introduction of free trade policy by the charter Act of 1833.

Till 1833 the area of Darjeeling was under the dominance of the Raja of Sikkim and Jalpaiguri, a frontier tract bordering on Nepal, Bhutan and Cooch Behar, was administered as part of the British Rangpur district, the Bhutia's had seized several tracts of the area. So both these areas were under the control of respectively Sikkim and Bhutan. These two areas were economically barren and agriculturally infertile. Most of the areas of Darjeeling were covered by dense forests and till the middle of the 19th century the whole Duars was covered with dense jungle.¹² The local inhabitants of Darjeeling were the Lepchas connected with rough cultivation i.e. Jhum cultivation and collection of fruits from the forests. Jalpaiguri or the slopes of the outer hill of the western Duars were inhabited by the tribes like Meches, Garo, Totos etc. And in the plains settled the Koches, the Rajbansis – all connected with cultivation. In such condition no significant communication development was there both in Darjeeling tract and Jalpaiguri area and no remarkable trade and commerce was developed in the both areas. The economy of these areas was a subsistence economy. Cooch Behar was a British feudatory state (by the Anglo Cooch treaty 1773) whose economy was also dependent upon agriculture. Settled agricultural attempts were made by the rulers of Cooch Behar and agriculture was developed. It is mentioned that in the late 18th century a good quantity of tobacco was exported from Cooch Behar State.¹³ However, it is difficult to give an accurate picture of the economy of Cooch Behar as its economy was connected with Kamrup and Assam region. Up to 1833 except agriculture which was the only source of revenue of the state, there was no trend of remarkable progress of trade, commerce and industries in Cooch Behar state. However, Pemberton in his report mentioned that trade with Tibet was conducted through Cooch

Behar from 16th century till 1831-32 but later on this trade through Cooch Behar was reduced. Cooch Behar was the transit place for various merchants of Tibet, China, Bhutan etc.¹⁴

In this economical background of North Bengal we now turn to find out the changes of economy in the post 1833 period of the area under study. In 1835, Darjeeling, a small hill tract of 138 square miles was gifted by the raja of Sikkim as a token of friendship to the British. The British acquired this tract for establishing a good Sanatorium on account of its cool and excellent climate, with the purpose of enabling sick British troops and civil servants to recapture their health. But soon they discovered, that the climate of Darjeeling was quite suitable for plantation of tea, coffee, cinchona, cardamom, oranges etc. The Britishers began to take keen interest in how tea plant could be grown in this area. In 1837 the experimental tea plantation became successful in Assam. Such kind of venture immediately attracted the neo-British capitalist and in 1839 experimental tea plantation was started in Darjeeling. By 1856 the development of tea had advanced from the experimental to more extensive and commercial stage.¹⁵ The Government offered tax free land and other concessions to the foreign tea planters and in course of time tea became an important commercial product. By this way more and more tea gardens were opened in the hill tract. It is to be mentioned that though Darjeeling was gifted by the Raja of Sikkim to the East India Company, the Company annexed Terai in 1850 and Kalimpong in 1866 and by these annexations the district acquired of its present dimension. The annexation of Terai also brightened the prospect of tea. The vast area of Terai now came under tea plantation and in 1862 the first tea garden in Terai was opened out at Champita near Khaprail. By 1866 a good number of tea gardens had been opened out in the Terai.¹⁶ In the meantime the British Government permanently annexed the Bengal Duars (1865)¹⁷ and with this annexation the foundation stone for the formation of modern Jalpaiguri district was laid. After the successful tea plantation in Darjeeling and Terai the British found that Jalpaiguri district, particularly the Western Duars, was also suitable for tea plantation. Thus in 1874

they opened tea garden on the western part of the Western Duars at Gazaldoba. With the opening of tea gardens in Jalpaiguri district the industry now sprang up rapidly. As rapid progress was started in tea plantation industries in the district it influenced the indigeneous people to take part in this venture. Thus following the footsteps of the British planters, conscious and bold attempts were made by the Indians (mainly Bengalees) to establish tea gardens in Jalpaiguri district. In 1877 the first Indian tea garden was opened at Jaldhaka by Munshi Rahim Bask and by this bold attempt the Bengalis entered in this economic venture.¹⁸ Gradually more and more tea gardens were opened by the Europeans and Indians in Jalpaiguri district. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that except only one tea garden all the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district were opened in the western Duars which was once covered with dense forests.¹⁸ Thus with the opening of tea gardens in the western Duars miles after miles of dense forests now disappeared and became covered with green tea fields i.e. commercial tea field. The barren and infertile lands of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district were thus converted into a commercial cultivating zone. Tea cultivation or plantation was so rapidly extended in this region that probably in no district in India cultivation extended faster than this region. Following the tea industry there was an influx of settlers both in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district. In Darjeeling landless Nepali people immigrated from western Nepal and constituted the majority of the labour population in tea plantation industry. Besides the immigrated Nepali people, the remaining labour population was made up by the Lepchas, Bhutias and men from the plains. These people were encouraged to settle down on company's garden permanently, by assigning to them small plots of land unsuitable for tea, for cultivation of cereal crops such as maize, millet etc. In Jalpaiguri district or western Duars chief labourers were recruited from Hazaribag, Madhya Pradesh, Chotonagpur and Santhalpargana. Thus the thinly populated forest areas of Northern North Bengal gradually filled in with inhabited villages, tea gardens and small factories. Thus inauguration of tea plantation industry in this region brought about a great

transformation in the economic landscape, demography and the entire socio-economic pattern of this region. Thus in the post 1833 period North Bengal, particularly in the northern part of North Bengal, a new economic horizon was opened, something made possible by the free trade policy of the Colonial Government.

Further, the tea industry in North Bengal did generate a secondary or tertiary economic activity. Vast areas of Northern North Bengal i.e. Darjeeling, Terai and Jalpaiguri, was covered with dense forests. The Britishers saw a great prospect to use the forests resources of this region. Commercial potentialities of forests or timber trade were not unknown to the Britishers. It is known from modern research that the British officials were involved in timber trade in the middle of the 18th century and they operated this trade mainly in Morang Country (Nepal) and in Purnia forests.²⁰ After the complete occupation of the Northern North Bengal i.e. the occupation of Darjeeling and western duars, they found that the forest resource of North Bengal were numerous and valuable. The whole hilly tract between Kyal and the Balasan, Rangnu and Mahanadi (Mahananda), Mechi and the Balasan, Tista and Mahanadi contains valuable sal timber. Besides these forests also lie in a belt along the left bank of the Tista river and along the northern boundary of the Jalpaiguri district. In Jalpaiguri district there were numerous and valuable forests that covered an even larger area than those of the adjoining district of Darjeeling. The Buxa forest which was situated east of the Torsa river was the store house of maximum quantities of sal and valuable trees. Between Tista and Torsa rivers there lie vast forest areas in Jalpaiguri district. Besides these forests of Jalpaiguri district Baikunthapur was famous for its jungle Mahal which abounded in valuable sal tees. The major aim of the Colonial Government was to commercialize the forest resources of this region and to gain profit from it. The conservation of Forest Act which was passed in 1865 brought an opportunity for the colonial government to use the forest resources of this region. The timber procured from the forests of this region was mainly used for railway sleepers and for making tea-chests.²¹ Further on the basis of the demand timbers of this region were supplied

to the various parts of the country.²² European private traders as well as different European companies such as Hyall Company, Messrs Querios etc. now connected with timber trade of this region. It is also to be mentioned that when tea plantation industry was rapidly expanded in North Bengal, the entrepreneurs were establishing tea Estates in Duars by clearing the forests. This felling operation for making tea plantations also opened a path for timber trade in North Bengal.²³ Following the footsteps of the European timber traders indigenous people comprising both Hindus and Muslims of higher social hierarchy entered into this business. To invest in timber trade was a much profitable business-realising this truth Bengalee prosperous families invested more and more capital in this trade. Thus in the post 1833 period a new business field was opened following the timber trade in North Bengal.

Besides the large scale tea plantation, large areas of forest lands were brought under cultivation of new crops in the Darjeeling hill areas such as Cinchona, Cardamom, Oranges etc. In 1864, the first large Cinchona plantation was started at Rangbi and within a short time the industry was firmly established as a commercial enterprise.²⁴ In the plains extension of cultivation led to increase in agricultural produce. The cash crops such as jute, tobacco, mustard, rice also began to be cultivated extensively.

In the post 1833 period Bengal, particularly North Bengal, became an important jute producing area and the hand woven jute was an important subsidiary industry of the people of North Bengal.²⁵ It was the Colonial needs and credit that turned this non foodgrain crop as a commercial cash crop. It was the Colonial rulers who in the second half of the 19th century saw great prospects of this crop as a commercial crop. It is found that jute was the cheapest and most important of all textile fibres next to cotton and to be used extensively in the manufacture of different types of packaging materials for various agricultural and industrial products. So, much attention was paid by the Colonial master for its extensive cultivation to use it as a raw material from Bengal particularly

from Eastern and North Bengal.²⁶ Further due to the pressure of an international event i.e. the Crimean war (1854), cut off the supply of Russian raw flax and hemp and the Dundee market became dependent upon Indian substitutes i.e. jute. The Britishers soon found that except the hill tracts the agro-climatic condition of the whole North Bengal region was suitable for the cultivation of this non-food grain crop. Thus they inspired the peasants that to cultivate jute will provide them more remuneration than the other crops. The peasants found it true and took the decision to cultivate jute for its high prices. Consequently the inauguration of extensive jute cultivation was started in North Bengal. Thus year by year jute land was extending in North Bengal. In Jalpaiguri district vast areas of Mainaguri, Dhupguri, Rajganj, Ambari Falakata, Madarihat, became predominately jute cultivating areas. In Cooch Behar Mekhliganj, Haldibari, Tufanganj, Dewanganj, Jamaldaho, Chowrarhat jute occupied the major portion of the agricultural land. In Dinajpur (present North and South Dinajpur) vast area of Raiganj thana came under jute cultivation. However jute cultivation was not considerably extended in Malda district.²⁷ In 1855 with British capital the first jute mill was set up at Rishra (near Calcutta) and within a short time a good number jute mill also grew up in and around Calcutta on both sides of the Ganges. Now different jute producing areas of North Bengal started to supply the jute for these jute mills. Due to jute cultivation and jute trade different areas of North Bengal became prominent as jute marts and jute trading centres such as Balurghat, Raiganj, Dewanganj, Chowrarhat, Jamaldaho, Mainaguri, Mekhliganj and Haldibari. As jute became an important cash crop and North Bengal became a major supplier of raw jute, traders and merchants, both European and indigenous crowded in the major jute producing areas of North Bengal. There was an influx of population from Eastern Bengal and South Bengal in different jute producing areas of North Bengal. The European and indigenous traders and merchants firmly involved themselves in jute by establishing jute firms in different areas of North Bengal such as Raiganj, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and Haldibari. These jute firms now opened the job

opportunity to the local people of the areas. Thus the extensive cultivation of jute as a commercial cash crop was totally a new introduction in the economy of North Bengal changing the demographic pattern and economic picture of North Bengal due to the free entry of traders and merchants in the post 1833 period.

Next to jute another special non-foodgrain agricultural crop was tobacco which was extensively cultivated as commercial crop in North Bengal in the post 1833 period. This non-foodgrain crop was introduced in India in the first decade of the 17th century and its cultivation was speedily spread over the entire continent.²⁸ It is already mentioned that before the British attraction in tobacco in North Bengal it was a well known crop to the people of Cooch Behar. There was a great demand of tobacco in Burma and Eastern Bengal for making Cigars. There was also a high demand of Virginia tobacco in Britain. The Britishers soon found that both Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar were the suitable area where tobacco could be extensively grown. The British Government appreciated and influenced the peasants both in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri for the commercial cultivation of this non food-grain crop.²⁹ It is also noted that despite the British influence, the rules of Cooch Behar state also had taken much initiative to cultivate this crop for commercial purpose and several experiments were made by them for the development of this crop. Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj, Dinjata, Sitai, Sitalkuchi, Lalbazar in Cooch Behar state were found where best quality of tobacco was grown. From the records it is found that in Cooch Behar one sixteenth of the cultivated area was used for tobacco cultivation. Superior quality tobacco was also grown and also the lands lying between river Tista and Torsa. Besides these two areas, tobacco was also grown in Falakata and Dhupguri. To the peasants tobacco was a more paying crop and they were interested to cultivate more and more tobacco. The peasants were now not totally dependant on the subsisting crops only. Thus tobacco-cultivating land was gradually extended both in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. It is to be mentioned that despite Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, due to non suitable agro-climatic condition, commercial tobacco cultivation could not spread

considerably the other districts of North Bengal. Thus it is found that in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar tobacco became a staple crop and both the Colonial Government and the rules of the Cooch Behar state were responsible to make this crop an important commercial crop in the post 1833 period. Because from the second half of the 19th century tobacco was largely exported from both these two areas of North Bengal. Depending upon tobacco trade several *hats* or biweekly markets emerged and got importance, hence the gathering of merchants also started in the important tobacco marts of North Bengal. Dhupguri and Falakata of Jalpaiguri district became the chief markets for sale of tobacco and Baura hat emerged especially for tobacco trade.³⁰ Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj, Dinhata and Cooch Behar now got importance for tobacco trade. Merchants and traders from different Eastern markets, Dacca, Murshidabad appeared in these tobacco trading centres and carried on an extensive trade on tobacco. Besides the Eastern Bengalee merchants and traders, a large number of Burmese merchants and traders also used to be present in the tobacco trading centres of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and purchased maximum quantities of tobacco both from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.³¹ Thus due to exportation of tobacco, rolling of money, trade marts, *hats* local markets and immigration of people from different areas started in North Bengal.

Besides the cultivation of commercial cash crops such as jute, tobacco, etc. commercial production of paddy and rice was also started in North Bengal in the post 1833 period. Certain factors were responsible for the extension of rice lands and increased rice production in North Bengal. In the first place it is to be noted that from the second half of the 19th century the rapid growth and development of tea industry in Darjeeling, Terai and Jalpaiguri district population was increasing rapidly. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that tea industry is essentially a labour intensive enterprise, so when tea garden was extensively extended in North Bengal, there started an influx of labour in the Northern parts of North Bengal that considerably increased the population. As a consequence of tea gardens labour population a great demand for

agricultural produce was created. Secondly from the second half of the 19th century due to the development of communication easy exportation of agricultural product was started. Thus the commercial cultivation of agricultural products was felt for external and internal market. The soil and climate of southern North Bengal i.e. Malda and Dinajpur (undivided) was much more suitable for rice cultivation. It is quite relevant to mention that when commercial cash crops such as jute and tobacco ruled very high in the Northern North Bengal, staple food-grain paddy or rice ruled very high in the southern North Bengal. W.W. Hunter mentioned that due to favourable soil and climate even jungle lands were used in Malda for paddy cultivation.³² Thus rice was cultivated not only to meet the local demand as a subsisting crop but extensive cultivation was started for exportation. Besides tobacco and jute, abundant rice was also produced in Cooch Behar state. W.W. Hunter further mentioned that after the annexation of Western Duars, the area under rice cultivation had very considerably extended in Jalpaiguri district.³³ So, due to commercial cultivation of rice in the whole North Bengal region there started the exportation of rice to the different parts of the country. Through riverine route and road transportation and railway now surplus rice of North Bengal was exported to South Bengal, Up Country, North Western provinces.³⁴ As rice production considerably increased local *hats*, *bandars* (river marts), *ganj* (entre pot town) gradually grew up in different parts of North Bengal. Following extensive rice cultivation and rice trade there started the gathering of different strata among men of commerce such as *bepari*, *paikar*, *goladar*, *mahajan*, *aratiya* etc.

It is already found that in the area of our study Malda was the only area which flourished basing upon silk industries and silk trade and with the passing of the Charter Act of 1833 Company's concern with this industry ended. In the post 1833 period and onwards the process brought with silk an expansion of raw silk production in Malda. The East India Company after 1833 sold out its factories to private European Companies. The major firms which purchased the factories and filatures were Agency Houses for whom the avenue for acting as entrepreneur became widened.

These Agency Houses considered the export of raw silk profitable and more viable form of operation.³⁵ Thus in the post 1833 period Malda became prominent for raw silk. All the large silk establishments in Malda passed into the hands of big European Companies such as M/s Watson and Company, M/s Louis Poyen and Company etc. Besides the European Company, Native capital also rolled in silk production and silk trade.³⁶ Gradually trading communities from the North West provinces and Bihar were attracted to Malda Silk and established themselves as dealers of Silk here.³⁷ Marwaris, Agarwala, Oswal, Bhakat and the Bengali traditional trading communities such as Poddar, Satia now entered into this trade of silk in Malda.

The state of transport and communication system in North Bengal before the advent of the British was almost non-existent. The whole North Bengal region especially the northern North Bengal was in a sensitive and unsettled state without proper means of communication. But communication and transport system have always been key factors in economic advancement. It is worthwhile to mention that a communication network and transportation have a significant effect on the growth of economy and thus promoted industrialization and commercialization. Further, good communication network promoted migration, helped to supply raw materials, facilitated both internal and external marketing, exporting of surplus goods abroad and importing of scarce goods from abroad. In the whole North Bengal region upto 1833 and even in the second half of the 19th century the road system was not so well and no improved communication system was there. The bad road condition in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district was constant cause of worry for the planters because most of the tea gardens were linked by roads which previously were in a bad condition. Till 1838 there was no modern communication system and the means of communication for Darjeeling district were very rudimentary.³⁸ Sunder in his settlement report mentioned that during his tenure as settlement officer there was no metalled roads in Jalpaiguri.³⁹ According to the Revenue Surveyor's account of the roads, undivided Dinajpur district was not famous for good

roads.⁴⁰ The picture of Malda was more or less the same but here rivers have been the most important means of communications for transportation and exporting and importing of goods.⁴¹ In Cooch Behar state also till the second half of the 19th century there was no well-developed communication system.⁴²

Thus in the post 1833 period particularly in the second half of the 19th century when new industry i.e. tea plantation was already developed and commercial crops like jute, tobacco, cinchona, coffee, cardamom was abundantly cultivated in North Bengal, due to bad communication system the traders and merchants had to face much hurdle to carry on the trade both for exportation and importation. In that situation certain factors compelled the Colonial Government to look forward for the adoption of a well defined policy for the improvement of communication system in this region. The first factor was the pressure from the tea planters. The second factor was the smooth and quick exportation of cash crops from this region. After the successful experimental tea plantation, tea had developed remarkably and the industry had become firmly established both in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district. The planters both from Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri frequently urged the Government to take initiative for good communication system.⁴³ Further the production of commercial crops rapidly increased which had great demand in the international market. Thus a well-developed communication net work and development projects were taken by the colonial government in this respect. The first step to introduce modern communication system in Darjeeling was taken in January 1838.⁴⁴ After that event rapid progress in this field was started in Darjeeling. In 1839 Lord Napier constructed a road (old military road) from Siliguri to Darjeeling. In 1850 Tista Valley road which connected Siliguri with Rangpo was constructed. In 1869 Hill Cart Road from Darjeeling to Siliguri which was one of the best mountain roads in India, was constructed.⁴⁵ In Jalpaiguri district a good number of roads were constructed of which mention should be made from Damdim to Jalpaiguri, from Jalpaiguri to Fulbarighat and Damdim to Fagu tea garden of Darjeeling district.⁴⁶ In this connection it is to be mentioned

that all these constructed roads were metalled roads. In the Cooch Behar state real effort had been taken for developing communication after 1863. It was during the time of Maharaja Nipendra Narayan, Colonel Houghton, the British Commissioner of the Cooch Behar state took initiative for the progress and development of communication system in Cooch Behar state.⁴⁷ Between 1865 and 1874 the most important road in Cooch Behar state known as Emigration Road was constructed.⁴⁸ This bifurcated road served one from Cooch Behar, Mathabhanga, Haldibari, Purnia, Dinajpur with Titelia to Darjeeling and also bypassing Jalpaiguri to the North West. The other from Cooch Behar to Dhubri of Assam. Initiative was also taken by the Colonial Government for repair and development of roads in Malda. Here the principal road called Rajmahal road from English Bazar to Manikchak was repaired and initiative was taken for the development of road from Murshidabad to Darjeeling via Dinajpur which entered in Malda district. In Dinajpur (undivided) attempts were also made to repair the principal road i.e. Darjeeling high road, which traversed the Sikkim – Himalaya mountains with great Gangetic Valley.⁴⁹ The Balurghat Hili road was converted into metalled road for better communication with the rail road at Hili.

Improved communication system made it possible for the rise of trade and commerce in all aspects. The British occupation of Darjeeling in three phases and its subsequent conversion into a district in 1866 had some important objectives. Though there was a secret plan to establish tea garden in this region, the British had an objective to establish trade relation with Tibet and central Asia. The occupation of Darjeeling was essential also to to keep Nepal and Bhutan in control due to the strategic importance of Darjeeling as the gateway to Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. It is to be noted that with its international frontiers, Darjeeling district from time immemorial had been a partner in trans-Himalayan trade. Long before the British occupation of Darjeeling the Britishers had been in search of this classical trans frontier and trans Himalayan trade link. This is evident from the remark of W.W. Hunter. He remarked, “The establishment of trading relation between British India and Tibet and

Central Asia a subject that has long received close attention from Government.⁵⁰ O'Malley also ascribed that Mr. J.W. Grant when penetrated the hills in 1829, convinced Bentinck about the importance and advantages of Darjeeling as a centre of trade and its strategic importance owing to geographical location.⁵¹ Thus with the cession of the hilly tract, the British now had the golden prospect of Trans-Himalayan trade. The annexation of Terai and Kalimpong further brightened this prospect. Now the establishment and growth of adequate means of communication in the district helped them to make it a reality. The construction of trade route in Sikkim and its link with the Northern Bengal Railway fulfilled the British aspiration of establishing a trade relation with Tibet and Central Asia. This became possible by signing a friendly treaty with Sikkim in March 1861 and another with Bhutan in 1865. Thus Trans-Himalayan trade system grew up in this region in the post 1833 period and Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and even Central Asia came within the orbit of this international trade system.

Besides the construction and development of road communication, the inauguration of railways in North Bengal was a revolutionary step taken by the Colonial Government. There was no railway communication system in North Bengal upto 1876. It was the Colonial Government which first took initiative in this matter and the North Bengal State Railway opened station at Haldibari on the south of Jalpaiguri district.⁵² This line became the main line of the Eastern Bengal Railway which connected Calcutta with Siliguri. After that event on 28 August 1877 the North Bengal State Railway was opened to traffic between Atrai and Jalpaiguri.⁵³ In 1878 the North Bengal State Railway was opened upto Jalpaiguri. Mandalghat, Jalpaiguri and Belakoba were on the line within Jalpaiguri district and this whole tract was important for good jute producing area. In 1891 an agreement was made between the Government and Octavious Steel and Company of London consequently some lines were opened by the Bengal Duars Railway for the explicit purpose of opening of the whole Duars region to the outside world and in developing the tea industry. The Cooch Behar state railway was opened in 1891 and some branches of this

railway touched some areas of Jalpaiguri district. Between 1887 and 1891 the North Bengal State Railway opened its line in Dinajpur (undivided). In the area of our study this railway touched the area Hili, Radhikapur, Kaliyaganj, Bangalbari and Raiganj.⁵⁴ The mentioned areas were important for rice and jute production and especially Hili exported maximum rice and paddy and from Raiganj maximum quantities of jute was exported by rail. Rail came much later in Malda i.e. in 1909 as rivers have been the most important means of communication for exporting and importing from Malda. Thus with the innovation of better and modern communication network in North Bengal a remarkable change was started in all aspects of its economy. Transportation of agricultural products now became easier and it played a crucial role in promoting the state of trade and commerce of this region.

It is quite pertinent to mention that with the emergence of new industry i.e. tea plantations and the gradual development of the cultivation and trade of commercial cash crops such as jute, tobacco, coffee, cardamom, etc. and timber trade in the area of our study a new group of traders was emerged in the trading atlas of this region. These trading groups were not necessarily coming from the traditional vaisya community. It is to be noted that before the advent of the Muslims and Europeans Indian trade was normally conducted by the Vaisya (Bania) community. Specially the social system of Bengal does not permit the other castes to enter the trading profession. So, the trading community of Bengal was different from the composition of the same in rest of India. In the post 1833 period particularly from the second half of the 19th century when an all-round and gradual progress was started, a tremendous impact was found with the entry of the non vaisyas in trade, commerce and industries in this region. This picture was very prominent in northern North Bengal. So, a kind of social mobility, though not in a large scale have been started in this region. The basic reason of such kind of mobility was that many of the inhabitants were settlers or migrants. These migrant upper caste people entered into the trade of timber, jute and tea plantations industries. Besides these non-vaisyas, the predominant

vaisyas also migrated from Eastern Bengal and South Bengal in the northern North Bengal.⁵⁵ In the hilly area except Kalimpong, there was no traditional trading community. But in the southern North Bengal the picture was quite different from that of northern North Bengal. Here one finds the traditional trading communities, the Kangsha Banik, the Till, Teli and Saha of the Bengalee society. Besides the Bengalee trading communities, the Giris were also involved in trading activities in Malda, Purnia (now in Bihar state) and Dinajpur (undivided) region.⁵⁶ But the most striking feature was the entry of non Bengalee trading communities such as the Marwaris, the Biharis, the Punjabis, the Assamese, the Sikkimese and the Tibetans in this region. The Marwaris who had plenty of capital began to enter in different trade in the whole region of North Bengal. Among the non-indigenous the British, the Scottish and the American showed their presence as traders in this region.

Thus due to the free trade policy of the Colonial Government an infrastructural development was started in North Bengal and all the developments were linked with tea plantation economy, production of cash crops such as jute, tobacco, coffee, cinchona, cardamom and commercial cultivation of rice. By the development of road communication and opening of railways, North Bengal was linked with the outside capitalist market and such tendencies helped to transform at least economically the timid insular character of this region. And such tendency created a conducive atmosphere for carrying out trading and professional activities in North Bengal and attracted different trading communities from different parts of the country and even from abroad. Immigrant population did not hesitate to seize the opportunities which the Act of 1833 offered them and they began to settle in different parts of North Bengal in connection with trade, commerce and industry.

In this chapter we have tried to analyse the process of development of industries, trade and commerce specially after 1833. From this time onward it was evident that different traders, merchant companies and entrepreneurs became interested to open industries and to take part

different trades in India. Different companies selected some specific trade and industrial sector and for this reason they also chose specific areas in Northern parts of Bengal conducive to the production of tea and the trade of commercial cash crops like jute, tobacco, etc. In the following chapter attempts have been made to analyse the different facets of plantation, especially tea and at the same time with the development of agriculture, industry and the colonisers' concentration on the development of communication specially Railway both for economy and military purpose.

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CHAPTER-III

BEGINNING OF NEW INDUSTRIES

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In this chapter an attempt has been made to know about the forces and factors that laid to the growth of tea plantation in a vast area covering Hill, Terai and Duars region. At the same time, attempt has also been made about the development of Railways in the area under study. While narrating the different phases of plantation and progress of Railway organisation, a critical consideration has also been taken up for the importance of the two items in socio-economic milieu of the area mentioned. This chapter has been divided into two sections - firstly, progress and development of the plantation and in the second section, different factors of Railways have been discussed to know in details of the communication development and commercial activities.

TEA

British political and economic expansion in India, which had began in 1757, completed its formative phase by the Charter Act of 1833. It is found that during the seventy five years Britain not only won the paramount political power in India but more than half of Bengal's external commerce. Due to the advantages of the Industrial Revolution, the Britishers reinforced by free trade, seemed to invest them with absolute control of India's economic destiny. It is to be mentioned that the Charter Act, 1833 ended the remittance trade, but it opened India to the full impact of the Industrial Revolution. Besides the introduction of free trade the Charter Act, 1833 also recognised the Europeans' right to own land. This recognition of the Europeans' right to own land led to the introduction of the plantation system, when the tea plant was discovered in Assam and the Himalayan foothills by Lieutenant Charlton and Captain Jenkins in 1833.¹

Tea was the most valuable cash crop and the Colonial Government was interested for the inauguration of tea gardens because earning from

tea export played a vital role in Britain's international trade and capital flow relations and in the maintenance of the British imperial structure.²

In 1837, the inauguration of some experimental tea gardens in Assam brought so much dividends that such kind of venture immediately attracted the attention of some capitalists both in India and Britain.³ Thus in India, development of the tea plantation industry started on a large scale with large capital, big landholdings and in an organised manner. The Assam Company was the first tea company in India which took over part of the Government's experimental areas in 1839. In 1858, this tea company was incorporated in Britain and by 1865, there were 62 registered companies and 30 sterling companies in India. After the experimental tea cultivation in Assam with the favourable background, tea was first planted in Darjeeling areas in 1839, in the Terai in 1862 and in the Duars in 1874.

Thus it is found that the first thought of the possibility of producing tea in India came from the Britishers themselves. But the question arises as to why did the British take initiative to inaugurate tea garden industries in India? In this context, it is to be mentioned that the British very systematically took the plan to inaugurate tea garden industries. Tea had a great demand in European market and the East India Company started shipping tea from China to England as early as 1689.⁴ From about 1715, the East India Company or John Company as it was often called, took complete control of the tea export trade from China and in 1721 it obtained monopoly rights in that trade which lasted till 1833. During the period of monopoly, tea developed into a very popular drink not only in United Kingdom but also in American colonies. It is to be noted that one of the causes of American War of independence was the imposition of taxation upon tea. But regarding tea trade, it is quite pertinent to mention that during that time the East India Company was simply a buyer from China. The East India Company knew very little about the collection of the tea by the Chinese merchants from distance villages. Upto the end of the 18th century China was the only supplier of tea to Europe. Thus upto

the 18th century tea trade was controlled by the Chinese merchants and the Britishers had to depend upon the Chinese for tea trade. In this context it is to be mentioned that the trade agreement between the East India Company and the Chinese government was valid for till 1833 and the East India Company was apprehended if the Chinese Government would not agree to extend the trade agreement. As tea was a very profitable article the Britishers in India were in search for tea production which would free them from their dependence upon the Chinese. Thus, in 1833 with the loss of monopoly rights in the trade, serious attempts were made to find an alternative source for the supply of tea.⁵ In this regard, a real progress started in 1834 by Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor General. To investigate the possibilities of cultivating tea in India he appointed a committee called, "Tea Committee". The committee issued a circular to the local officials calling for information and on 24th December 1834, the tea committee reported to the government about the indigenous tea plant of Assam and about the possibility of its commercial success.⁶ Following this report tea was successfully planted in Assam and within a very short time with the pioneering zeal of Dr. Campbell, the superintendent of Darjeeling, tea industry took firm root in North Bengal.⁷ It is to be mentioned that the development of the tea industry was closely associated with the growth of Western market for tea and the Colonial Government encouraged and supported the tea plantations with foreign capital and enterprise. Thus, it is clear that though tea was associated with great advancement of commerce but it also was a typical foreign investment of the nineteenth century capitalist exploitation. It is quite pertinent to mention in this connection that though with a favourable background, tea was introduced in India in the nineteenth century but from the late eighteenth century, earnest efforts were taken by the Britishers in India for the cultivation of tea. In 1780 a few bushes from Canton were planted in Calcutta and serious thoughts were given in 1788 for the culture of tea as a commercial proposition in India, to replace the expatriated British monopoly tea trade in China.⁸ Percival Griffiths did a lot of research in tea and he showed that after the phase of short sighted

exploitation of Bengal by the East India Company's Servants had ended, the practical mind of Warren Hastings clearly realised that if the company were to prosper it must promote industrial development. Warren Hastings had taken initiative for the introduction of tea cultivation in India. Though no practical result seems to have followed but the general impetus to trade and industry given by Warren Hastings had resulted in many directions. It was in 1778 that Sir Joseph Banks was asked to prepare a series of notes for the East India Company on the cultivation of new crops and in them he advocated the cultivation of tea in India.⁹ Thus, it is found that serious attempts were taken by the Britishers for the cultivation of tea as a commercial crop in India in the late eighteenth century and with a favourable background, it was inaugurated in the nineteenth century in India.

We have seen that by 1837, experimental tea plantations were started by the Government in Assam. It is also to be noted that during that year experimental tea plantations were also started in Punjab. In the area of our study, tea was first planted in 1839 and the experimental growth of tea was started in 1840 at Darjeeling. But before going into the history of the development of the tea in the Darjeeling district, it will be rewarding to have a bird's eye view of the early history of the district. The whole of the district of Darjeeling was part of the Dominions of the Raja of Sikkim. In 1706 Kalimpong was forcibly occupied by Bhutan. In the year 1780, the Gurkhas of Nepal seized the power of Darjeeling, invaded Sikkim and occupied the remaining area of the district including Terai. The process of annexation continued for over 30 years. In the beginning of the nineteenth century (in 1816), war broke out between the East India Company and the Nepalese and by the treaty of Titaliya (now in Bangladesh), the entire area, wrested by the Nepalese from the Raja of Sikkim, was ceded to the East India Company. The Company restored the entire area to Sikkim and guaranteed its sovereignty. At the time of Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India, it was reported to him that the small village of Darjeeling could be developed as a sanatorium besides being utilized as a key Military station. A proposal to that effect

was initiated which was duly approved by the court of Directors of the East India Company. The Raja of Sikkim was approached and by a deed of grant dated 1 February 1835, he made an unconditional cession of Darjeeling area to the East India Company. At the time of the unconditional cession in 1835, the Darjeeling hill tract of approximately 138 sq. miles contained a population of not more than 100. Darjeeling soon became a favourite summer retreat for the officials of Bengal and their families, and it was established as a Sanatorium for invalidated European soldiers. In the year 1841, the company granted the Raja of Sikkim an allowance of Rs.3,000 per annum as compensation and this was raised in 1846 to Rs.6,000 per annum. In 1850, the grant of Rs.6,000 was withdrawn and the remaining hill area and the Terai were annexed. But there was recrudescence of troubles and as a result of a military expedition by the British in 1861, a treaty was concluded on 28th March 1861, between the British Government and the Raja of Sikkim. By this treaty, it put to an end to all frontier troubles between the British Darjeeling and Sikkim and secured for the British commerce across the Sikkim frontier. The existing district of Darjeeling was created in 1866.

It is to be noted that tea did not, however wait for the formation of the Darjeeling district. It must also be admitted that the rapid development of tea plantations in this district owed to a great extent to the consolidation of the British Empire in this region and the very active interest taken by the East India Company in the development of the Darjeeling district. The colonial Government encouraged and, infact supported the tea plantations with foreign capital and enterprise. Encouraged by the success of Government plantations, private foreign capital (invariably British) hastened the course of development of the tea plantations in Darjeeling district. In this context, O'Malley ascribed that due to the enterprise of Dr. Campbell, the superintendent of Darjeeling, in 1840, the possibility of starting and developing the cultivation and manufacture of tea in the Darjeeling under East India Company was given much attention. It was soon found that the plant thrived readily at this attitude others began to follow Dr. Campbell's example and seed being

distributed by Government to those who desired to cultivate the plant.¹⁰ Though experimental planting of tea started from 1840 in the Darjeeling region, but much headway was not made till 1853. It is found from the report dated 28th April 1853 of Dr. Campbell that he was pleading with the Government all along either for the establishment of experimental plantations directly by Government or for extension of trials by the native residents, in the Darjeeling region. In his report dated 30th March, 1853, No.123 Campbell expressed his hope that the tea cultivation in the Hills around Darjeeling would receive favourable consideration of the Government.¹¹

When W.B. Jackson, Esq. C.S. Judge of the Sudder Dewanny and Nizamut Adawlut, Calcutta, came to Darjeeling in 1854 he noticed only one tea plantation. Jackson did not think that there was very good prospect for tea in the upper regions of Darjeeling.¹² W.W. Hunter stated that in 1853, two or three gardens existed in Darjeeling region, but neither their names nor their location have been furnished by him. Hunter ascribed that the real date of the commencement of the industry may be taken at 1856-57. According to Hunter, of the existing gardens in the Darjeeling district, only two date as far back as 1856, viz., that of the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company, and one owned by the Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank.¹³ Thus it is found that after 1853 within three years, tea cultivation and tea industry began commercially in Darjeeling and since 1856 more and more tea companies registered for tea gardens and tea industries in Darjeeling region.

The largest tea concern in Darjeeling district was that of Darjeeling Company Ltd., which owned four gardens, established between 1860 and 1864. These gardens were called Ambutia, Ging, Takda, Phubserang. In the Terai, in 1862, the first garden was started at Champta near Khaprail by James White. The Lebong Tea Company opened Takvar and Badamtam before 1864 and Makaibari also opened during that period. During the four years following 1870, the tea industry in Darjeeling continued to develop at an even greater pace than before, and by 1874, the number of

plantations had increased from 56 to 113. The following table shows the growth of tea gardens in Darjeeling district from 1866 to 1935.

Growth of Tea Gardens in Darjeeling District (1866-1935)

Year	No. of Gardens	Area under Tea (in acres)	Production (in lb)
1866	39	10392	433715
1867	40	9214	582640
1868	44	10067	851549
1869	55	10769	1278869
1870	56	11046	1689186
1871	-	-	-
1872	74	14503	2938626
1873	87	15695	2956710
1874	113	18888	3927911
1885	175	38499	9090500
1895	186	48692	11714500
1905	148	50618	12447500
1910	148	51281	14137500
1915	148	54024	20303500
1920	148	59356	15850000
1925	148	59356	18732500
1930	148	59356	20870500
1935	148	59356	20798000

- Source :
- 1) D.H. Buchanan - The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India, New York, 1934, p.56
 - ii) A.J. Dash - Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, Superintendent, Government Printing, 1947, p.114
 - iii) Tushar Kanti Ghosh, Tea Gardens of West Bengal (A Critical Study of Land Management) B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987, p.26
 - iv) W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.X, Turbner and Company, London, 1876, p.165.

From the table it is found that between 1873 and 1874, there was rapid development of the tea industry in Darjeeling. The comparative statistics for these two years are quoted from the Bengal Statistical Reporter for November 1875:

Among the results of the operations of 1874 in Darjeeling district, the most remarkable are the number of newly opened gardens, and the immense increase on the out-turn of those yielding tea. The returns of 1873 showed 87 gardens at the end of that year, which the number returned for 1874 is 113. There were 26 new gardens opened that year. The total area shown under cultivation at the end of 1874 was 18,888 acres, this being 3193 acres more than the area returned for 1874 and 4385 acres more than the area returned as cultivated in 1872. The out turn of 1874 was 3,927,911 lbs as against 2,956,710 lbs. produced in 1873. The increase was 971,201 lbs. There can be no doubt that the average yields per acre throughout the district was much greater in 1874 than in former years. A comparison of the statistics of the last five years shows that in 1874 there were about 12,000 acres of plant yielding leaf. The average yield of an acre of the tea producing plant was therefore, about 325 lbs. It is to be feared, however, that improvement in the quality of the tea manufactured has not kept pace with the increase in quantity. The average quality of the tea produced in Darjeeling in 1874 was inferior to that produced in some other districts. It is believed that this evil has been recognised by many of the leading planters, and that we may look forward to successful attempts being made for the improvement of Darjeeling tea.¹⁴

It is found that within the short span of nine years between 1866 and 1874, the number of gardens under tea had almost exactly trebled, and the area under tea cultivation had increased by 82 percent; while the production of tea had multiplied itself nearly ten times. It is, however, to be noted that tea plantation industry did not start on a large scale in the Kalimpong portion of the district. In this context it is quite pertinent to quote O'Malley, "the latter portion (Kalimpong portion) of the district is

however, almost entirely closed to tea, both because the greater part of the tract is a forest reserve and most of the remainder has been reserved for native cultivation and unsuitable for the growth of tea plant".¹⁵ According to the Settlement Report of C.A. Bell, I.C.S. (1901-1903), there were only four tea estates in the Kalimpong sub-Division.¹⁶ (1) Sama Beong, (2) Ambiak, (3) Phagu and (4) Kumai. It is interesting to note that in the later years the position of tea gardens in this area had not substantially changed and at present there are six tea gardens in this area.

The table shows that in 1895, there were 186 tea estates but the number decreased thereafter. The reason is that from this time onwards, tea estates were more and more organised under big limited concerns so that although the total area increased, the number of separate gardens decreased. It also shows the total number of tea gardens has been more or less constant since 1905 and the total area under tea has been more or less constant since 1920. In this context, O'Malley ascribed that the number of gardens has been reduced in consequences of the amalgamation of several estates.¹⁷ It is found that in the year 1910 the total area under tea was 51,281 acres and in 1920 the area under tea had increased to 59,356 acres and was constant upto 1935. During the concerned time period under study, it is found that the area under tea rose to maximum in 1920 when it was 59,356 acres and the production of tea was maximum in 1930 when it was 20,870,500 lb.

With the successful venture in the hills and Terai belt, the introduction of tea gardens in Duars started in 1874 by Mr. Richard Haughton at Gazaldoba.¹⁸ In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that the Jalpaiguri District can broadly be divided into two distinct parts (i) the area to the west of the river Tista, and (ii) the area to the east of the river Tista. The area to the east of the river Tista was called the western Duars. The word "Duars" connotes gates or doors. There were certain gates or doors of Bhutan by which the Bhutanese had access to the plains of Bengal and Assam. There were eleven such recognised Duars and of

the eleven, five of them fell in the Western Duars. The Gazaldoba region was situated on the Western part of the Western Duars and the said garden was owned by Dr. Brougham. Richard Haughton, pioneer of the tea industry in the Darjeeling district, was appointed as manager of the garden.¹⁹ It is to be noted that after the annexation of the Duars in November 1864, the district of Jalpaiguri was formed in 1869. A few years after the formation of Jalpaiguri District, the Western Duars was included in the list of Scheduled District under the Scheduled District Act (Act XIX of 1874). In accordance with this Act the Administrative Head of the District was designed as the Deputy Commissioner. British understood the potentialities of this area and separated the area from the rest of Bengal and the land laws and regulation which were relevant in other parts of Bengal were declared inapplicable in this area. The British declared a large tract of land of this area as 'waste' and utilized the wasteland for cultivation and plantation of tea.²⁰ The Duars region was not attractive to all, except the boldest pioneers. It is stated that in the middle of the nineteenth century it was covered with dense jungle, giving shelter to all kinds of wild beasts and inhabited only by primitive tribes....²¹ Besides, this region was also one of the most unhealthy districts, in which malaria and black water fever were rife in the nineteenth century. The Britishers in India at that time were not unduly worried about the unsuitable condition of the Duars and Jalpaiguri, because climatically this region was much to recommend as a tea growing area. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that the considerable potential of Duars as a tea growing area was noticed as early as 1859.²²

Thus, it is found that after the opening of tea gardens in 1874, tea cultivation rapidly extended in Duars and the greater part of the primeval forest disappeared and miles after miles of it got replaced by the great expanses of tea gardens. In 1875, L.W. Barantee took the settlement for the tea cultivation and in the same year, two other gardens, Fulbari and Bagrakote were established. The Bagrakote tea garden, opened out by Mr. North and owned by Mr. S. Cresswell. Mr. Cresswell also started many more gardens in the Duars and subsequently started the renowned

Broking Firm of M/s Cresswell and Company. In 1878, more tea estates came up like Good Hope, Rancherra, Manabbarie, Balabbarie, Altadanga, Money Hope (Fulbari) and Patabari of Lish River. During that time the activities of Duncan Brothers in Tea started and they established Meenglass in 1884, Hope in 1885 and Jiti and Chalauni in 1886. Apart from Jiti and Chalauni, a number of Tea Estates were started by the European Planters like Nagrakata, Spring Field, Sukanbari, Bhagatpur, Looksan, Gatia and Tondoo in that year. In 1887 Patharjhora Tea Estate and Glencoe Tea Estate were started. In 1889 the Duncan Group established Carron, Nagaisuree and Lankapara Tea Estate. In 1890 Gairkata, Telipara and Hantupara Tea Estates were opened. In 1896, Duncan Group also established Kumargaon, Sankos and Phaskhawa in the eastern sector and Haldibari, Jayanti, Baradighi were developed as well as Hasimara Tea Co. Ltd. started its activities. In 1897, Garganda Tea Estate was opened by Duncan Group and Rydak Tea Company Ltd. started its gardens in Eastern sector. In 1899, Meheod and Company started their activities on a very large scale and Bhatkhawa was got established in 1900.

But the development of the tea industry in Jalpaiguri district presents a novel feature in that one finds the conscious and bold attempts made by Indians (mainly Bengalees) to establish tea gardens in the teeth of the unfair competition from the Europeans. It should be noted in this connection that the first attempt to compete with the Britishers was made by Maniram Diwan as the First Indian discoverer of indigenous tea plant in Assam.²³ Darjeeling and Western Duars was known as the non-regulated territory, in which the laws of land were not generally applicable, and when applied necessary modifications to suit the local conditions were made.

In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that from time to tome, the Government framed rules for the grant of wastelands for tea cultivation in the Districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. J.F. Gruning wrote in 1896 wasteland rules were issued by the government of Bengal.

Under these rules the applicant must satisfy the Deputy Commissioner and Superior Revenue authorities that he has sufficient capital at his command to enable him to open out the grant; he must deposit the cost of surveying the land calculated at the rate of one rupee an acre of the estimated area and is also required to execute an agreement to pay at a similar rate for any land in excess of what was originally estimated. When this has been done the Deputy Commissioner directs a detailed enquiry to be made in order to ascertain whether the land can be leased; if he decides to lease it, he directs a survey to be made and at the same time, a valuation of the timber is made by the Forest Department. The applicant is called on to pay any sum due on account of the cost of survey and also the value of the timber. When he has done so, he receives a preliminary lease for a term of five years, the land being rent free for the first year and after that paying a rental of 3 annas an acre for the second year and an additional 3 annas for each successive year upto 12 annas an acre. Each grant must be compact and capable of being enclosed in a ring-fence; it must ordinarily not contain more than 1,500 acres, but larger grants may be made for special reasons.²⁴ It is also said that on the expiration of five years, the lease was again renewed for thirty years after fulfilling certain conditions and so on and the rate would remain static for the next thirty years. Thus, if the areas were found suitable for the cultivation of tea, one could easily get the required lands. A large number of Indian enterprises sprang from the lawyer class in Jalpaiguri district. Since the native planters were law abiding people and had no ill motive, the British government could not but treat them at par with the British tea garden owners.²⁵ In spite of this hindrance in 1877, for the first time, Munshi Rahim Baksh, a Peshkar (clerk) of the Deputy Commissioner, probably taking advantage of his official position, was able to take a settlement of Jaldhaka Grant for 728 acres. In 1878, Kali Mohan Roy and Smt. Durgabati Sen got the Altadanga Grant for 310 acres, which was later on passed to Munshi Rahim Baksh. But actually, the first Indian tea garden started in 1879, the Mugalkata Tea Garden, the owners being the Jalpaiguri Tea Company Ltd., a registered joint Stock Company.²⁶ It was a

landmark in the history of "tea venture" by the Indians with the formation of joint stock company in Jalpaiguri. Bhagwan Chandra Bose, the father of the illustrious scientist Sir J.C. Bose, who was posted as Deputy Magistrate in Jalpaiguri district, took a good deal of initiative in the formation of tea gardens by the Indians. The settlements of lands in Duars to the Europeans for the purpose of establishing tea estates and successful opening of tea plantations by them made Bhagwan Chandra think as to whether or not the Indians could venture in this field. To get a tea lease he had proved that he had capital at his disposal by depositing the required cost and got a preliminary lease for five years and there after a thirty-year lease was granted. Thus by this a purely Indian concern, established in 1879, came to be known as Mogalkata tea estate, Jalpaiguri Tea company Ltd. and was the first Indian Tea Garden.

After this remarkable event of 1879 ten other tea grants were actually issued and some of the grants to the Estates already established. Thus the movement which started on the bank of Tista River, had covered Dam Dim and Mal area and reached Nagrakata area. Being emboldened with earlier success, the promoters of Jalpaiguri Tea Co. Ltd. established Northern Bengal Tea Corporation in Jalpaiguri. The Needeem Tea Estate started under this Tea Corporation. In 1884, there was a lot of activities and efforts by the Indians for the opening of tea gardens. During this time, an effort was made by Babu Chandra Kanta Das and Babu Prasanna Kumar Das to start two Tea gardens. However, being unable to start the Tea Estates they were transferred to the Chalsa Tea Co. Ltd. and Chalauni Tea Co. Ltd. respectively. In 1886, a number of Tea Estates were opened of which one was by Bibi Rahimannessa, wife of Munshi Rahim Baksh. The Estate was known as Mal Nuddy with 329 acres of land. Another Indian garden that started in the same year was Gurjunghora Tea Co. Ltd. This year also saw the Northern Bengal Tea Corporation, succeeding in getting a permanent lease in lieu of the preliminary five-year lease. Sri Gopal Chandra Ghosh with the help of Srinath Chakraborty, the then serastadar of Jalpaiguri court, along with few friends established the Jalpaiguri Tea Company with Mogalkata Tea

Estate. At that time people did not know what was tea business, or what was the benefit of starting business by joint Stock Companies. Therefore they had to experience serious difficulties in raising Capital.²⁷

In 1889 Gopal Chandra Ghosh established Anjuman Tea Company with two gardens under it viz., Mujnai and Makrapara. In 1891 Munshi Rahim Baksh extended his Jaldhaka Grant by further addition of 115 acres and the Hantupara Tea Estate was established. The Saha family of Amla Sadarpur (Nadia district) established Totapara Tea Estate in 1892. In 1896 Munshi Rahim Buksh started Rahimabad Tea Garden. In this year Gurjungjora Tea Company Ltd. was established at Jalpaiguri town. In 1895, the Kathalguri Tea Company Ltd. was established by Srimath Roy. In the year 1900 the Atiabari Tea Company Ltd. was registered at Jalpaiguri. From 1901 to 1910 the tempo of starting of tea estates in Duars went down. However, some Tea Co. Ltd. came into existence during that period. Though there was no activity in 1905 but in 1904 Atiabari was opened. In 1907, the Ramjhora Tea Co. Ltd. was registered and it started a tea estate with some lands which were earlier refused by the English Planters. Gopal Chandra Ghosh and his son-in-law Tarini Prasad Roy and Sashi Kumar Neogi, Waliur Rahaman and Mussaraff Hossain established this Company. Having successfully established the Totapara Tea Estate in 1892, the Saha family of Amla Sadarpur started Ambari Tea Estate in 1908. In 1909 the Dalmore Tea Estate was started by Needeem Tea Company and in 1910 the Dima Tea Company was registered by the Nawab group in Jalpaiguri. During that time the Bengalees of Alipurduar did not also lag behind and started Turturi Tea Estate. From the District Gazetteer of J.F. Gruning the development of the industry upto this period show how the acreage in tea increased.²⁸ It may strike someone as if some gardens were closed between 1901 to 1907 as the number of tea estates as plantation units went down. But actually, the number of gardens, namely, the grants issued were amalgamated with other plantation units and there was no reduction in the total acreage of lands under tea during that period.

How far the Jalpaiguri Bengalees advanced during the period between 1879 to 1910 will be apparent from the following table.

Indian Tea Companies

Original Capital	Present Capital	Name of the Company	Year of Origin	Gross Acreage Area under Tea
50000	700000	Jalpaiguri Tea Co. Ltd.	1879	1495/560
100000	400000	Northern Bengal Tea Co. Ltd.	1882	898/520
85400	841600	Gurjanghora Tea Co. Ltd.	1882	800/612
225000	775000	Anjuman Tea Co. Ltd.	1889	4026/1112
50000	500000	Chamurchi Tea Co. Ltd.	1891	2190/877
75000	787500	Katalguri Tea Co. Ltd.	1895	2325/778
75000	500000	Chuniajhora Tea Co. Ltd.	1963	1834/512
75000	525000	Atiabari Tea Co. Ltd.	1900	1823/1034
130000	897000	Ramjhora Tea Co. Ltd.	1907	1522/858
135200	1081000	Devpara Tea Co. Ltd.	1909	1500/900
124200	496800	Diana Tea Co. Ltd.	1910	1250/690
1124800	7503900			19663/8453

Source : B.C. Ghosh, The Development of Tea Industry in Jalpaiguri District, 1869-1968, Calcutta-1970, p.30

During the thirty one years (between 1879 to 1910) there were eleven purely Indian ownership Tea Companies with Indian Capital. But as all the available virgin lands were by now settled and the entrepreneurs, mostly Indians (Bengalees) now had to search lands which were settled after the Sunders settlement as Jote land and were clubbed together. After 1914, the Government by order prohibited clubbing of Jote lands in a ring fence for the purpose of plantation of tea.

In Duars in the year 1911 the Debpara Tea Estate, Dam Dim Tea Estate and the Diana Tea Estate started. The Dheklapara Tea Company was established in this year. In 1912 Lakhipara Tea Estate started. In this year a number of Jalpaiguri Tea Companies were registered viz., the Bengal Duars National Tea Company Ltd., the Eastern Tea Co. Ltd., the Friends Tea Co. Ltd. the Gopalpur Tea Co. Ltd., the Khayerbari Tea Co.

Ltd. and the Kohinoor Tea Co. Ltd. The promoters of Bengal Duars National Tea Co. were originally the Duars people.²⁹ The Registered office of the company was at Malbazar and most of the promoters were tea garden employees. In 1912-13 Gour Nitai, Monmohinpur, Halmari Tea Gardens and New Assam Tea Garden in Assam and Sukna Tea Garden were opened by the Jalpaiguri business people. In this respect, the initiative taken by the Raikats of Baikunthapur estate in opening the tea gardens in the Jalpaiguri District should be mentioned. Samarendra Dev Raikat (Taru) stated that Prasanna Deb Raikat inaugurated two tea gardens at Shikarpur and Bhandarpur.³⁰ In 1913 Hossainabad Tea Estate was started by Nawab Saheb, Jalpaiguri, Dheklapara by Karmakar family, Palashbari by Sashi Banerjee, Rheabari by Waliuar Rahaman and Radharani by Pal Choudhury of Nadia. By amalgamating *joteland* before the prohibition order came, the Alipurduar Lawyers started Patkapara Tea Estate Jalpaiguri enthusiasts, started the Dhowlajhora Tea Estate in 1915 and Kohinoor in 1916. The First World War gave a gap, but activities again started from 1917. In 1917, Saraswatipur Tea Estate was started and in 1918 Jaypur (sunny Valley) and Karala Valley Tea Estate were started and in the next year Bhandiguri Tea Estate was also started. It should also be noted that in 1917 Tarini Prasad Roy established the Saroda Tea Company. At the later date this company became the owners of the biggest garden opened by Indians in the Jalpaiguri district. In 1922, Alipurduar entrepreneurs started Turturi Tea Estate. In 1924 the Anandapur Tea Estate was started by Ananda Chandra Rahut. At the time of its opening keen difficulty was experienced in the matter of securing adequate finance from the Bank.³¹ In 1925, the Batabari Tea Company was started by Khan Bahadur Mokleshwar Rahaman and in that year Makhanlal Chakraborty opened out the Jadavpur Tea Company. In 1926 the Malhati Tea Estate was started by Jogesh Chandra Ghosh. From 1926 to 1929 a good number of Tea Company Ltd. and Tea Estates were started by the Bengalee planters of Jalpaiguri.³²

The above incidents clearly indicate that as the consequence of the Act of 1833 which allowed free entry in trade and industry, tea gardens in

the Duars increased by leaps and bounds during the concerned time period of the study. It is found that the inauguration of the tea plantation enterprise in the Duars was purely a European exercise; although some sorts of native capital began to pour in slowly. The following table illustrates the development of tea gardens in the Duars or in Jalpaiguri district.

Tea Gardens in Jalpaiguri District.

Year	No. of gardens	Total area under cultivation	Approximate Production (in lbs)
1874	1	NA	NA
1875	3	NA	5600
1876	13	818	29520
1877	21	4754	33129
1881	55	6230	1027116
1891	67	32325	NA
1892	182	38583	18278628
1901	235	76403	31087537
1907	180	81338	45196894
1911	191	90859	48820637
1921	131	112688	43287870
1931	151	132074	66447715
1941	189	131770	96604450

Source : For the year 1875, 1877, 1891 Subhajit Roy, Transformation on the Bengal Frontier, Jalpaiguri - 1765-1948, Routledge Curzon, London, EC4P4EE, 2002, p.-77, for the year 1874, 1876, 1881, 1892 and 1907, J.F. Gruning Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, Allahabad, 1911, p.103 and the remaining years census 1951, West Bengal District Handbooks, Jalpaiguri by A. Mitra, Calcutta, 1954, p.iii.

It is found that tea industry in Jalpaiguri district started commercially from 1874 and by 1876 there were thirteen gardens with an area of 818 acres and a yield of 29,520 lb. of tea. By 1881, the number of gardens increased to 55, and the acreage under tea to 6,230 acres. In other words, the number of gardens quadrupled and the area under tea

increased more than seven times within a span of five years. As we find from Gruning's Gazetteer, at the time of settlement in 1892, 182 gardens were established giving a turnover of 18 million pounds. The cultivation rapidly extended during the nineties and in 1901, the number of tea gardens had increased to 235. From 1881 to 1901, within two decades, the total area under tea in Jalpaiguri district was more than twelve times and during the period 1901 to 1931 the area under tea was nearly doubled. It is found that after 1901 the extension of cultivation became comparatively low. After 1901 the apparent decrease in the number of gardens was due to the fact that several gardens had been amalgamated and upto 1908, there were no applications for new gardens.³³ In 1931, the number of tea estates in the whole Jalpaiguri district touched the figure 151. Of these, 143 gardens were situated in the Duars and the remaining 8 were located on the western side of the Tista river near Jalpaiguri town.³⁴

It is to be noted that though the Britishers opened tea garden industries in North Bengal the headquarters of the tea companies were in London. The tea produced in India was brought to the auction market of London where primarily the prices of Indian tea was settled. The bulk of India's tea crop was to be auctioned in London, due principally to the fact that the U.K. was by far the largest consumer of Indian teas, and London offered a Central market for buyers in neighbouring countries of Europe. In the year 1838, the first auction was held in London and auctions have also been held in Calcutta ever since 1841.³⁵ By the colonial method the prices of tea was calculated and it was stated that through the auction of tea, it could bring free trade and free competition in the tea market. Thus, the prices of tea was not dependent upon the cost of production as the Auctioneers settled the prices of tea on the basis of the quality of the production of tea.³⁶ By this method, the Britishers totally controlled the prices of tea in India as well as the tea of North Bengal. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that in 1879 the Calcutta Tea Brokers Association was formed and in 1888 Calcutta Tea Traders Association was established which virtually framed the rules for auction of tea in

Calcutta. The word 'broker' in case of tea is actually a misnomer. They do a number of things. They are auctioneers and valuers and also consultants on tea manufacture and market prospects. During the concerned time period under study, there were four brokers viz. (i) J. Thomas and Co. Private Ltd., (ii) Carritt Moran and Company Private Ltd., (iii) W.S. Cresswell and Company Private Ltd. And (iv) A.W. Figgis and Company Private Ltd. who controlled the tea auction in Calcutta.³⁷ It is to be noted that it was only, after independence from 1947 onwards that Indian brokers entered this field. The table shows the trend rate of the average selling price of tea of North Bengal in Calcutta Auctions.

Average Selling Price (per lb) of Tea in Calcutta Auctions

Year	Darjeeling Ans Ps	Dooars Ans Ps	Terai Ans Ps
1	2	3	4
1910-11	9 6	6 11	6 7
1911-12	9 7	7 4	7 1
1912-13	9 7	7 0	6 0
1913-14	10 3	7 7	7 3
1914-15	9 7	7 3	7 0
1915-16	10 9	8 7	8 7
1916-17	10 9	8 4	8 0
1917-18	7 11	6 5	6 1
1918-19	9 7	7 0	6 10
1919-20	9 7	8 0	7 3
1920-21	7 5	5 0	3 10
1921-22	11 7	9 11	8 3
1922-23	0 1	12 9	11 10
1923-24	2 2	14 7	14 2
1924-25	4 3	15 4	14 8
1925-26	0 0	13 1	12 0
1926-27	0 8	11 9	10 9
1927-28	3 0	14 8	13 5
1928-29	14 8	10 11	9 11
1929-30	14 11	9 6	8 6
1930-31	14 9	9 1	8 0
1931-32	11 5	5 11	5 2
1932-33	9 8	4 8	4 4

Source : Annual Report for season 1932-33, published by M/s J. Thomas and Company, Calcutta, cited in Tushar Kanti Ghosh, Tea Gardens of West Bengal, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987, p.178.

From the trend of the rates of price movement, it is seen that during this twenty-year period, the price of Darjeeling tea almost doubled by 1927-8, though they fell substantially in the period of the Depression. The average price of Duars and Terai tea also showed great rise. The peak

period appears to be the 1924-5 season when all varieties of tea reached the highest figure. It is further to be seen that while the selling prices of Terai tea and Duars tea remained almost the same, the average price of Darjeeling tea remained almost one-and-a-half times higher than that of the Duars and Terai tea.

Tea plantation industry is essentially a labour intensive enterprise. The industry needed a sufficient number of workers to plant, pluck and finally process the tea leaves. For the tea plantations industries of Darjeeling, employment was offered to the people across the border of Nepal. It is to be noted that as the Gorkha ruler captured Eastern Nepal in 1780, a great number of Nepali people connected with cultivation like Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Damai, Kami etc. were uprooted from their lands and were living in a worse condition. Thus, when tea plantations industries were gradually opened in Darjeeling region, these landless Nepali people of the Eastern Nepal found the alternative way of living to connect themselves gradually as labour forces to this industry. So, by this way within a short span, the number of Nepali people increased in Darjeeling region. Thus, due to this easy way the Nepali population gradually increased in Darjeeling and the tea plantations industry gradually developed in Darjeeling.³⁸ In the Duars or Jalpaiguri the indigenous inhabitants of the area like the Koches, Rajbansis and Meches did not work in the tea gardens. The bulk of the garden labour force consisted of coolies recruited from Hazaribag, Chotonagpur and Santhal Parganas. Moreover, the castes of coolies employed in the tea gardens in the Duars were paharies who came from Nepal and Bhutan. The tea garden labours recruited in the Jalpaiguri district from outside, is not an isolated case. This pattern of recruitment from outside was more or less a rule.³⁹ It is found that in Assam, from the starting of the tea company, the main problem was how to recruit a large number of labour force on a low wage. As the local people of Assam had lack of interest to join in the tea plantations industry, the Britishers forced them to join in the tea plantations industry by adopting different policies. In this context, it is to be mentioned that in Assam the land revenue was not so high.

Consequently there was no scope for the creation of landless labour in Assam. Facing an acute labour shortage, the planters of Assam urged upon the Government to further enhance the land revenue rates, so, that the poor peasants could be flushed out of their village to work for wages on plantations.⁴⁰ It is found that due to indiscriminate land distribution for the extension of tea plantations industry the Kachari tribes were uprooted from their lands and were bound to join in the tea gardens of Assam.⁴¹ But the British planters and the tea companies of Assam faced very acute problem due to the frequent revolt of the Kachari labours.⁴² From these incidents, the Britishers took the decision that they should not be dependent on the Kachari coolies or local labours of Assam.⁴³ So, realising the situation of Assam the British planters did not take any risk to recruit the local people of North Bengal in the tea plantations industry. Sarit Kumar Bhowmik mentioned an interesting fact regarding easy recruitment of labours from outsiders to the tea gardens of Duars. He mentioned that initially the Nepali labours, settled in Darjeeling, were recruited in the Tea gardens of Duars. As the industry was developing rapidly, the Nepali labours proved insufficient. At this juncture, the planters turned to Chotanagpur for their labour supply in plantations as they were already serving a large numbers in Assam. The tribal society in Bihar during that time (in the 19th Century) was in a state of turmoil. In this context it is quite relevant to mention that in the 17th Century, the tribal Raja granted villages to the non tribals, like *dikus* (aliens) traders who became the powerful Zamindars in due course of time due to the British administrative policy. This practice dealt a severe blow to the tribal agrarian structure. It increasingly alienated the tribals from their lands. The Britishers took the opportunity of their poverty and recruited them in the tea plantations in Duars.⁴⁴ It is also to be noted that like Assam the local people of North Bengal were less interested to join as labours in the tea gardens and did not see this profession as a honourable profession. It is found that majority of the local people of North Bengal were cultivator and cultivation was a favourable profession to them and they kept themselves aloof from the tea garden industries of

North Bengal.⁴⁵ Further, there were some economic factors that made the local people disinterested to join as labour forces in the tea plantations industries. It is to be mentioned that in the tea plantations industries, labour probably got very low wage and the labour was less free than in another profession. Hence, it was necessary for the Britishers to use elaborate methods for recruiting labour from the poor parts of India. Since local labour in Bengal and Assam gradually earned higher wages than were paid by the planters.⁴⁶ However, Percival Griffiths mentioned that the labours in the Duars was always free because the labours in the Duars were not placed under any kind of contract and could live whatever they please.⁴⁷

The above discussion showed the growth and development of tea plantation industries in North Bengal. Particularly in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district, it is found that the tea plantation industry was purely an European exercise and the Colonial Government gave active support and sponsorship for the rapid growth and development of this industry. It is to be noted that the tea garden industries in the hills upto 1905 was almost entirely in the hands of the European.⁴⁸ It should also be mentioned that besides being the European tea plantations, some sorts of native capital began to pour in the tea plantations of Duars and Terai. It is found that during the concerned time period under study the enterprising Bengalees of Jalpaiguri were responsible for advancing and the development of the tea industries in the Duars and Terai and they had to sacrifice a lot to make the tea industries in the Duars a success.

From the above discussion, it should be acknowledged that the tea plantation industry had played a valuable role in the economy of North Bengal. It is said that Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts grew and developed due to Tea garden industries and these two districts were well known to the world for the tea garden industries. The unprecedented development likes railways, road and transport, shops, hat and bazaar, tourism, hotel and overall, the urbanisation, was primarily due to the impact of tea garden industries in North Bengal. The growth and

development of tea industries in North Bengal also made a great change of its population. D.H.E. Sunder in his survey and settlement reports ascribed that “the opening out and improvement of the Western Duars and the increase in population here is chiefly due to the tea industry.”⁴⁹ Due to the settlement of different communities, a new culture developed in North Bengal. In this regard, it is pertinent to mention O’Malley’s observation. He wrote – “The Nepalese on the tea gardens soon learn the mysteries of the engine room and the different processes of tea manufacture. This respectively is evident on a large scale at the railway workshops at Tindharia, where after a few months training hill lads are found to pick up very quickly different methods of work; and at the electric light works at Darjeeling they show a similar quickness to grasp the practical details of electrical engineering.”⁵⁰ A great number of European Tea Planters settled in North Bengal particularly in Darjeeling. The Bengalees also settled in Darjeeling as Babu or Clerk and also as shopkeeper. Marwaris and Beharis also settled as traders in Darjeeling. Following the tea garden industries, there emerged a New North Bengal and it was the beginning of a new epoch in North Bengal’s economy. Different tea gardens of the Duars were connected by railway from 1892 to 1914. Siliguri became an important town and business centre due to the growing tea garden industries. Different tea companies opened their head office at Jalpaiguri. Darjeeling and Kurseong became the centre place of the European economic activities. The tea industries of Jalpaiguri required not only the green leaf for making tea, but a lot of other materials. A number of industries grew for the supply of these ancillary materials. A large number of people were engaged in the trade for the supply of fuel wood and other timbers to the estates. Cane baskets were required for carrying green leaf and a number of businessmen were engaged in making these baskets. Plywood industry gradually came up and developed. It should be mentioned in this connection that in 1918, the first plywood factory “The Assam Saw Mill and Timber Company” was floated in India. Since then more factories were started in Assam and Bengal.⁵¹ A good number of plywood factories sprung up in North Bengal,

too.⁵² The development of tea garden industries also assisted the agriculture of the hill areas. The Lepchas left their nomadic life. Besides this, the inclusion of Kalimpong in Darjeeling district in 1865, also helped the agricultural development. In this regard O'Malley pointed out that the tea had great contribution for the agricultural development.⁵³ Thus the tea garden industry not only helped in the development of tea gardens, but led to an overall economic development of the region. In short, it means the economic development of whole North Bengal and Bengal and in turn, the economic development of the Colonial rule in India. With the export of Indian tea to the foreign countries, North Bengal's economy was connected with the world's economy. But it is pertinent to mention that the English tea planters traded for a century and earned heavy profit from the tea garden industries of North Bengal, but they had lack of interest for the development of North Bengal and the people of North Bengal. Rather, the tea era during the colonial rule was an era of exploitation and to earn extreme profit was the main motto of the British tea planters. According to Sarit Kumar Bhowmik the British tea planters exploited and tortured the labour classes indiscriminately due to their poverty.⁵⁴ But we have no detailed records regarding this due to the lack of evidences and documents during the period under study.

RAILWAY

Railway is an integral part of the life and landscape of India. To think of life without railways conjures up the picture of a very primitive state of existence. Railways did not exist in any part of the world before 1825. But it is found that Railed ways had existed centuries before the first railway train ran. The ancient Greeks had discovered that a man or a horse pulls a load eight times greater along railed ways than along a rough road.⁵⁵ The earliest reference to 'rail' appears in England in 1597.⁵⁶ This was also in England the first railways ran between Stockton and Darlington on September 27, 1825. In India the first railways ran over a stretch of 21 miles from Bombay to Thana on 16th April 1853. This event made history.

From its beginning in 1853, India's Railway System expanded rapidly. After 1870, Railway development was rapid.⁵⁷ Some £150 million of British Capital was invested in India's nineteenth century railways, the single largest investment within the nineteenth century British Empire.⁵⁸ Apart from the main trunk lines, between the year 1872 and 1890, a large number of branch and feeder lines were developed for protective, commercial and strategic purposes. By 1910, Indian Railway became the fourth largest in the world.⁵⁹ The introduction of railway in India had a revolutionary impact on the life, culture and the economy of India and her people, though strategic railway lines were planned to facilitate internal communication for the defence of India by the British. But it was not only for defence, but also for economic and commercial purpose that the Britishers were eager to open railways system in India. In this regard, the opinion of Lord Harding may be mentioned. He reported that the plains of Hindustan offered remarkable facilities for building railways and it would be of immense value to the commerce, government and military control of the country. However, the broad outline of the scheme laid down by Lord Dalhousie in his famous Railway Minute of 1853 which formed the basis for the future railway extension in India. He wrote that India could be a market for British Manufacturers and a supplier of agricultural raw materials, once its means of communication were scientifically developed, to the potentialities of India as a field of invest for British Capital, and to the great use of railways in enabling more rapid mobilization and movement of troops.⁶⁰

The introduction of Railways opened a new chapter in Indian history. Sir Edwin Arnold remarked as early as 1865 that Railways might do for India what dynasties had never done and railways might make India a nation.⁶¹ It should be acknowledged that India became a nation with its local centres linked by rail to each other and to the world by the introduction of railways. Railways, by establishing these links, had an impact throughout the Indian economy. It was so because prior to the introduction of railways, transportation was costly. In many regions commodities in bulk could be moved only by pack-bullocks. Railways, it

was believed, would assist the economic development of India and would provide a market for British goods and a source of raw materials.

Due to Railway transportation markets were not only widening but were becoming national markets. The agricultural sector of the economy was deeply affected by the widening of markets and the prices in India were susceptible to any significant shift in world prices. Agriculture began to commercialize. Railways unquestionably played a major role in increasing agricultural output, the growth of modern industry and new jobs. Thus, the British authorities in India took the decision to support the railways. That support was absolutely crucial on the economic side for the supply of raw materials to England and helped the marketing of British manufactures in India. It is to be mentioned that till the last decade of the eighteenth century, India had been a source of luxury trade goods for Britain. But by the nineteenth century, the situation was completely reversed. From the source of highly priced trade goods India became a source of raw materials for the British Industries and a profitable market for the British factory manufactured goods. This led to the age of railway construction in India financed almost entirely by the British Capital and India witnessed British Economic Imperialism in its full form. Thus, no longer after railway construction began in western countries, the government of India together with the British government decided to encourage the building of an extensive railway system in India.

British annexation of North East India was a gradual process and was very slow because the British economic and strategic interest in that region suggested mobilization for political integration of the area with the mainland of British India. The annexation of the entire North East India has been virtually completed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The development of the means of communication in the North East helped to discover the natural resources of the remotest corner of the region and ensured supply of commercial crops to important business centres. This free movement of agricultural produce was a great filling to trade and commerce in the region and regional trade was connected with

international trade by dint of easy communication. The state of Cooch Behar came into contact with the British Raj in the 18th Century and Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling in the 19th Century. The timber wealth of North Bengal and Assam drew some officials of the East India Company as early as the seventies of the eighteenth century that initiated the process to explore the commercial potentials of North Bengal and North East India. The North East region was very appropriate for tea cultivation and the first tea garden in Assam came into existence in 1839. In the Northern parts of Bengal, the first tea garden started in Darjeeling in 1840. After the annexation of Western Duars in 1865, the first tea garden was opened in Jalpaiguri in 1874. The planters of Assam urged upon the Government for quick transportation. Thus, the company started a number of steam service between Calcutta and Assam which expanded the navigational network in that region. It was almost simultaneous or little later of the introduction of steam service that Railways was introduced in India. The Greater India Peninsular Railways undertook the construction work in the Bombay region. Meanwhile, Eastern Bengal Railway came into existence in 1850 to construct a route from Calcutta to Kushtia (now in Bangladesh). During the same year, the importance of railways in North Bengal was realized in Jalpaiguri district by the British India Government.⁶² It is to be mentioned that agricultural crops in North Bengal were abundant. Darjeeling was famous for tea and cardamom etc., Jalpaiguri was considered as a flourishing centre of tea, timber, tobacco and jute, Cooch Behar was famous for tobacco and rice cultivation, Dinajpur was famous for its production of food-stuff, rice, tobacco, jute, molasses and Malda was famous for its raw silk. Besides these, the natural resources of North Bengal, particularly Tea, Timber and Tobacco became a special attraction to the Britishers.⁶³

Different letters of the proceedings of the Governor General mentioned the establishment of railway in North Bengal and of its perspective mentioned the trading probability in different regions of North Bengal. Chief Engineer of North Bengal Railway, Colonel H. Drummond wrote, 'The general feature of the country are favourable to the

construction of a railway, and the land is well cultivated and very fertile, I noticed good crops to tobacco and sugarcane. Besides these, rice and jute are largely produced; also ginger and betel nut, for a railway from Rungpore via Kishorgunge. Tenganmaree, Punga, Katkibaree, Kaseabaree and Mundalghat to a first... in the 3rd mile from Jalpaiguri on the Titalia Road. At Tenganmaree this goods from Ghoramara – an extensive mart on the Tista would reach the railway'.⁶⁴

Bengal entered the railway era in 1854 with the East India Railway (EIR) connecting Howrah and Hoogly.⁶⁵ The next phase was ushered in by the opening up of the North Bengal State Railway (NBSR) in 1878. In 1860, the East India Railway had been extended upto Sahebganj in Bihar. In this way the gate of Rail in North Bengal was opened. After crossing the Ganges at Sahebganj one had to travel by road which extended upto Siliguri from Karagolaghat and passed through Purnia, Kishanganj and Titalia of undivided Jalpaiguri district.⁶⁶ The excellent cart road was connected with a great road that had been built across the plains of Bengal for over a hundred and fifty miles from the Station of Sahebganj on the East India Railway; for in those days no rail road existed from Calcutta to the Northern confines of Bengal.⁶⁷ So, the travelers had to undertake a long journey by road from Karagolaghat to Siliguri. On 15th November, 1862, Sialdaha - Ranaghat line was extended upto Poradaha (a junction near Kushtia, now in Bangladesh). This was the Goalanda Rail line of Eastern Bengal Railway. The Poradaha junction that was situated south of river Padda was the gateway of North Bengal. So, it is clear that by 1862, the second door for railway was opened for North Bengal. In 1870 construction of railway in North Bengal was planned and for this reason measurement of land started.⁶⁸ The plan for constructing railway started particularly as a relief measure to the labour for road making as during that time there was food scarcity in the region.⁶⁹ The next story is the development and expansion of this railway. The Northern Bengal Railway constructed railway line from Poradaha to Siliguri. It was a meter gauge line and later this railway line was changed, from meter gauge to broad gauge. In 1878, the North Bengal State Railway was opened for

traffic upto Jalpaiguri and by the end of that year, it had been extended to Siliguri.⁷⁰ The route of North Bengal State Railway was stretched between Poradaha and Jalpaiguri via Parbatipur in Dinajpur district. From Parbatipur two branches then fanned out eastwards towards Rangpur, and westwards towards Dinajpur. After that, the Eastern Bengal Railway constructed the railway line between Siliguri and Darjeeling in 1878. In 1881, the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Company had opened its steam tram way for traffic upto Darjeeling. Prior to this construction of railway, the means of communication of Darjeeling were very rudimentary.

Darjeeling came into British possession in 1835. During that time the area of Darjeeling was almost entirely covered by forest and it was reported in 1830 to be totally uninhabited.⁷¹ The only road and bridges that existed were a few narrow rough tracts through forest and a few cane bridges over the torrents. A guide to Darjeeling published in 1838 mentioned 98 hours as the time the journey from Calcutta to Darjeeling. The whole journey to Darjeeling lasted five or six days from Karagola ghat on the Ganges to the foothills at Siliguri. The discomfort and expensive journey was graphically described by Sir Joseph Hooker in 1848.⁷² Improvement of communication with Darjeeling was first taken up by Lieutenant Napier and it culminated by the construction of old Military Road from Pankhabari to Kurseong in 1842.⁷³ Another road route was opened in 1869 that came to be known as Hill Cut Road. This route was very expensive and to open this route government had to spend rupees 1.5 lakhs per year. Thus, the Government was in search of a less expensive communication system i.e. the Railway system. This situation became favourable after Siliguri was included in the Meter Gauge Rail. The first railway line in Siliguri was opened on 10th June, 1878.⁷⁴ Siliguri became the terminus of the Eastern Bengal Railway and became the starting point of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (here after DHR). The cultivation of tea had by this time developed remarkably and the industry had become firmly established. The needs of this industry and the inconvenience suffered by the general public in the tedious ascent soon led to dissatisfaction. Thus, it was decided to construct a steam tram

along the road from Siliguri to Darjeeling. The construction of this tram way commenced in 1879 and in a couple of years was completed.⁷⁵ It developed into the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. The illustrated guide for tourists to Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and Darjeeling published in 1896 says : 'A magnificent Hill Cart Road (Now NH31A from Siliguri to Darjeeling) seems to invite the laying of a steam tramway. According to the 1896 guide, the DHR was perhaps the first attempt at private enterprise in the field of Railways. By this way communication by rail between Calcutta and Darjeeling was established within fifty years after the forest clad Darjeeling spur of the Sikkim Himalaya came to be embodied in the British Indian Empire. After that narrow gauge line was started under construction and within 1880 it was extended upto Tindharia and Kurseong and on 4th July, 1881 this line was extended upto Darjeeling.⁷⁶ But there was a great hurdle to continuous journey from Calcutta to Darjeeling as there was no bridge over the Ganges. Due to frequent claim to the Government, at last, the hurdle was won over by the construction of Hardinge Bridge on Ganges in 1915 and the broad gauge system was extended in 1920 through this bridge.⁷⁷ Thus, it became easier and shorten to communicate between Calcutta and Darjeeling. There was another branch of DHR that was opened between Siliguri and Kishanganj in the Purnia District shortly before the war of 1914-1918. The third branch of DHR was extended from Siliguri to Giellakhola (towards Kalimpong) through Sivok or Tistavalley Road in 1913.⁷⁸ The DHR also opened light railways in the hill. It is recorded that within 1921-22, 2'0 gauge of 51.00 miles in length light railways were constructed by the DHR.⁷⁹ The Tistavalley Road to Kalimpong ended upto Sikkim and Tibet Frontier at the Jelep La Pass, the East Indian border post. Jelep La Pass was an important trade route. It should be noted that after the annexation of Darjeeling, the Britishers soon discovered its boundless economic potentiality and the trans-Himalayan trade route between British India and Tibet.⁸⁰ Later on Matigara Kurseong Road, the Tirhana Naxalbari Road, Tirhana-Bagdogra Road were constructed by the DHR.⁸¹

Jalpaiguri was well in advance in the sphere of communications. This advancement was mainly due to two reasons – first, the Britishers did put their early foot prints in this region as it was once a part of British Rangpur. Secondly, Jalpaiguri's geographical location as an entrepot to reach both the North Eastern and trans-Himalayan countries with which the Britishers wanted to establish trade relations. Obviously, the promotion of communications here first caught the attention of the Britishers even before its formation as a district in 1869. After the formation of the district, the most potent factor which gave a big boost to the development of communications was the growth of tea plantations and tea industries.

The early rail roads traversed the district for journey to Darjeeling and for catering to the needs of the growing tea industry. It has already been mentioned that with the active support of the Government, tea plantation enterprises started but the poor mode of communication, nullified all their efforts. So, the Government as protector of tea planters' interest could no longer turn a deaf ear to the demand of the planters. Thus, it was an outcome of the pressure created by the tea planters for the construction of railways in Jalpaiguri district. The early Duars planters were fortunate in that they started their enterprises at the time when the Government was very much railway minded and the Jalpaiguri district was benefited by this 'progressive mood'.⁸² There was another factor that helped in the inauguration of railway in Jalpaiguri district. This was the existence of low agricultural prices of the region and the dismal performance of trade in the region. Commissioner E.E. Lewis described in detail how the lack of communication system affected the agricultural prices in Jalpaiguri and its adjacent areas.⁸³

Jalpaiguri district was well served by railways, mainly the Eastern Bengal State Railway or it was called the Northern Bengal State Railway, the Bengal Duars Railway and the Cooch Behar state Railway. The Northern Bengal State Railway was opened upto Jalpaiguri in 1878. The southern section of the Eastern Bengal state Railway, which was called

the North Bengal State Railway, opened its metre gauge line on 28th August, 1887 from Atrai to Jalpaiguri.⁸⁴ It was extended from Poradaha to Bheramara Ghat and from Sara Ghat to Atrai and further extended from Jalpaiguri to Siliguri on 19th January 1878. It was part of the through passage from Calcutta to Darjeeling. This rail also entered Cooch Behar district near Haldibari and in a northerly direction to the North West. This railway served the whole of the track to the west of the Tista river. At that time, there were the following railway stations on the line falling within the district, namely, Mandalghat, Jalpaiguri and Belakoba. At the time of Partition in 1947, a big slice of this railway fell within East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

The Bengal Duars Railways was opened for the explicit purpose of opening the whole of Western Duars to the outside world and to serve the growing tea industry. In 1891, the Government of India entered into an agreement with Octavious Steel for opening this railway. It was agreed upon that the railway would run from Barnes, in the eastern bank of Tista and to the opposite side of Jalpaiguri, to Dam Dim and that there would also be a branch from Lataguri to Ramshaihat on the Western bank of the Jaldhaka. It was also agreed upon that in future the line would run over a bridge on the Jaldhaka to the East from Ramshai hat. The Company was supplied with cost free land, slippers for the track and free use of the *ferry* service between Jalpaiguri and Barnesghat Junction. The season 1892-93 has been most unfavourable for the construction of railway in the Duars, because of unusual rainfall and extreme cold. However, Chalsa and Lataguri stations were opened for goods traffic on the 15th January, Domohani station on the 6th March 1893, and Ramshai station on the 15th of the same month. In the middle of 1893 branch line from Lataguri to Ramshai was opened.⁸⁵ In 1898-99 three extentions of the Duars Railways were started on that from Domohani to Lalmanirhat and the others – Malbazar to Tantapara and Damdim to Bagrakot.⁸⁶ In 1903-04, 38.60 miles metre gauge rail lines were constructed by the Bengal Duars Railways.⁸⁷ Further a new Branch line on the Bengal-Duars

Railway from Domohani to Barnes Ghat was opened to passenger traffic during 1933-34.⁸⁸

The following table shows the dates on which the different sections of Bengal Duars Railways were opened.

From	To	Distance (miles)	Year of opening
Barnes	Damdim	31	1893
Lataguri	Ramshaihat	5 ½	1893
Barnes	Lalmanirhat (now in Bangladesh)	66	1900
Barnes	Barnesghat	1	1900
Dam Dim	Bagrakot	7	1902
Mal	Madarihat	44	1903
Chalsa	Matiali	5	1915

Source : Barun De, et al., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, Calcutta 1981, p.167

However, eastward expansion of the railway could not be conceived in Jalpaiguri district owing to the huge cost involved in the construction of the bridge over the Jaldhaka. During the concerned period, the metre gauge (main line) from Katihar junction proceeded to Kamakhyaguri touching on its way several stations within the district, namely, Bagrakot, Oodiabari, Dam Dim, New Mal Jn., Chalsa Jn., Chapramary, Nagrakata, Caron, Changmari, Banarhat, Binnaguri, Dalgaon, Mujnai, Madarihat, Hasimara, Hamiltanganj, Kalchini, Garopara, Rajabhatkhawa Jn., Damanpur, Alipurduar Jn., Salsalabari, Samuktala Road and Chepani Hat.

The broad gauge (branch line) from New Jalpaiguri to Jalpaiguri passing through Ambari Falakata, Belakoba, Raninagar, Mohitnagar and Jalpaiguri extended to Haldibari in Cooch Behar district. It is to be noted that though railway came much later in Cooch Behar state, some branches of the Cooch Behar state Railway touched some areas of Jalpaiguri district.

Before 1876, there was no Railway within Cooch Behar state. Though Cooch Behar state came into contact with the British rule in

1773, it was not until 1863 that real efforts to develop a communication system was initiated. It is already mentioned that during the time of Maharaja Nipendra Narayan, the ruler of Cooch Behar, Colonel Houghton, the British Commissioner of the State had given much attention to progress the communication system of Cooch Behar State. From the Bengal Administration Report of 1874-75 the communication system of Cooch Behar prior to the introduction of Railways in the State highlighted very poor communication system. There were 115 miles of unmetalled road, with numerous good wooden bridges and thousands of carts. There were many steams and some boats, but water carriage did not seem likely to play an important part in the traffic of Cooch Behar. The state of Cooch Behar lies intermediate between two navigable rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Tista but there was very little trade through river traffic except during the rains. Thus, the introduction of Railway in Cooch Behar State brought about a change in the communication system. In 1876 the North Bengal Railways opened a station at Haldibari. This line later became the mainline of the Eastern Bengal Railway connecting Calcutta with Siliguri and Darjeeling. But as Haldibari lay at the extreme western end of the state, and the Tista river intervened, connection of Haldibari with other places in the state was not easy. Thus, in 1883 a plan was taken to connect Cooch Behar with Mogalhat of Rangpur through Kaunia and Dhubri line. But as the Government did not accept that programme, the plan was cancelled in 1884. Thus within a considerable progress was made in the construction of Cooch Behar state Railway line, which was opened for goods traffic on 15th September, 1893.⁸⁹ In the very next year, the Cooch Behar state itself constructed a railway of its own from Mogalhat to Cooch Behar in 1894.⁹⁰ The Cooch Behar State Railway now came into existence. In this connection it is to be mentioned that prior to the construction of railway from Mogalhat to Cooch Behar in 1891 a small feder line was built on a gauge of 2.6" ran from Gitaldah junction on the Dhubri branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway to Jaintia station. From Gitaldah junction it ran to Buxa Road station and from that point the railway line advanced towards Jaintia. The Cooch Behar State Railway

has been extended northward to the boundary of the state, and the line is continued thence through the Jalpaiguri district to Jainti near Buxa. This extension gives railway communication to numerous tea-gardens in the Jalpaiguri Duars, and will contribute materially to the income of the state railway. In 1898-99 special gauge (railway) 3.22 miles Torsa – Cooch Behar and 11.50 miles Cooch Behar – Alipurduar were completed.⁹¹ Between February and April 1910, the line from Mogalhat to Cooch Behar converted into a meter gauge. This linked up Cooch Behar with the railway system of the district of Rangpur (now in Bangladesh). At first, the railway stopped near Cooch Behar town to the south of the river Torsa. After the construction of a bridge over the Kaljani river in 1900, the line was extended upto Alipurduar and in 1901 the line was extended to Rajabhatkhawa and Jaintia in the Bhutan foothills. The meter gauge from Rajabhatkhawa to Hasimara was extended in 1914.⁹² Historically the Haldibari railway station was the first railway station of the present North Eastern India. Radharaman Mitra in his Calcutta Darpan stated that between 1875-76, a severe famine occurred in North Bengal and the Government for relieving the famine opened the railway in Cooch Behar.⁹³ But it is to be noted that though the famine was an immediate reason for the opening of railway in Cooch Behar, in general it was the Colonial interest that the expansion of railway started. Besides the Colonial needs, the Britishers were specially attracted to the jute and tea of North Bengal and Assam but the road and riverine transportation of these agricultural crops were both costly and hazardous.⁹⁴ Thus, with the introduction of the railways overall transport system was effected and the entire trade and commerce of the district, both export and import, got a tremendous boost. The Eastern Bengal State Railway, better known as the North Bengal State Railway, the Bengal Duars Railway and the Cooch Behar State Railway all traversed the whole district.

In 1872, there was no railway in the district of Dinajpur. Within a decade in 1881, however, only a few miles of the line passed through the district.⁹⁵ Between 1884 and 1891 Eastern Bengal State Railway and Northern Bengal State Railway opened railway line in Dinajpur district.⁹⁶

The mainline of the Eastern Bengal State Railway traversed the eastern angle of the district from north to the south for a distance of 31 miles. The Bihar section of the Eastern Bengal railway left the mainline at Parbatipur junction and runs from east to west across the centre of the district. The stations on the mainline from north to south were Parbatipur, Bhowanipur, Phulbari and Chonkai and those on the Bihar section from east to west were Parbatipur, Chirarbandar, Kallgaon, Dinajpur, Birol (all are now in Bangladesh) Radhikapur, Kaliyaganj, Bangalbari and Raiganj.

Dinajpur was purely an agricultural district and was one of the principal rice producing districts in the Bengal province.⁹⁷ The trade of Dinajpur with the North – Western Provinces consisted almost entirely of the exports of rice. Besides rice, tobacco, jute, salt, gunny cloth and molasses were the chief articles of trade of the district. A great portion of the grain produced in the rice field of Dinajpur was shipped to large river side produce depots in Malda. Large quantities of rice passed Sahibganj from Dinajpur through Malda. Most of the exports to Calcutta came by way of river route. Jute also was largely exported from Dinajpur by way of the river route. So, the trade of Dinajpur district prior to the introduction of railway was either river based or road based. However, Dinajpur was not a boat or sea faring district.⁹⁸

In comparison to other districts of North Bengal, railway communication was very poor in Malda district during the period under study. Malda District was classed as partly riverine. Besides the riverine route, road transportation was other important means of communication.

Thus, before the introduction of railways in Malda all the trade of the district carried through either riverine transport or by road transport. In the first decade of the twentieth century Malda was connected with some branches of railway line by East India Railway. In this context it is to be noted that Railway came much later in 1909 in Malda district among the districts of North Bengal. The introduction of railway in Malda district gradually lessened the importance of road transport. The opening of Katihar – Godagari line lessened the importance of English Bazar –

Rajmahal route.⁹⁹ This line which opened in 1909 gave railway communication to the district. A line was also opened from Rajmahal to English Bazar via Kalindri by the East India Railway. Besides this line, the Eastern Bengal Railway opened a line from Amnura to Kumedpur via Nachole, Rohanpur, Singhabad, Muchia, Nimasarai, Adina, Eklakhi, Kumarganj, Samsi, Bhaluka Road and Harischandrapur. The Godagari – Kathihar metre gauge line connected the north-west of the district with Purnea district of Bihar. In 1929, the construction of the Chapai-Nawabganj-Abdulpur broad gauge line was completed.¹⁰⁰ Thus with the introduction of railway in Malda, the traders preferred to use the rail communication and the principal articles were now exported through railway. Through rail, the bulk of rice and jute was exported to Calcutta.¹⁰¹ Fish were exported through railway from Rajmahal and Lalgola to neighbouring districts. Malda had long been famous for its mangoes. Mango was also exported by rail to Calcutta and other places.

The following table shows goods carried by the Eastern Bengal Railway from different stations of Malda (in maunds) during the year 1930-31.

Station	Paddy	Rice	Pulse and gram.	Jute	Oil seeds	Sugar	All goods
Amnura	780	881	42	-	-	-	8999
Nachole	3545	301	-	-	8	-	6072
Rohanpur	3349	3414	152	225	274	-	13362
Singabad	336	113	14	-	-	-	2316
Muchia	1172	145	25	-	16	-	2757
Malda	22	527	84	-	302	-	5038
Malda Out Agency	13	41	410	-	188	-	5920
Nimarasai	1038	2313	14518	43316	9268	3219	103216
Adina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eklashi	222	77	16	-	-	-	2654
Kumarganj	214	-	13	-	192	-	5316
Samsi	7671	21580	51404	80745	20518	49	199730
Baluka Road	455	2654	6467	33312	2361	-	55496
Harishchandrapur	1106	5498	32346	39690	3615	164	88062
Kumedpur	-	-	-	406	-	-	712
Total	19793	37644	105489	197694	36742	3432	499644

Source : M.O. Carter, Final Report on the Survey and settlement operations in the district of Malda (1928-35), Bengal Secretariat Press, 1938 Calcutta, p.18

North Bengal's economy, during the second half of the nineteenth century was primarily agricultural. So, an analytical survey of the opening of Railway system in this region may give a picture of the socio-economic impact of the construction of railways in North Bengal.

The following table shows the total amount of traffic conveyed by the North Bengal State Railway

Year	Down traffic (in mds)	Up traffic	Total traffic	Rs.
1886-87	4545846	1978767	6524613	55126765
1887-88	5229111	2443142	7672253	61018123
1888-89	6164795	2852942	9017737	65472446

Source : Report on the Administration of Bengal for the year 1887-88 and 1888-89, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, p.168 and p.181 respectively.

The mainline of the DHR carried the greater part of the produce of the Sadar and Kurseong Sub-division, the supplies needed for the towns of Darjeeling and Kurseong and for the tea gardens and industries of these sub-divisions as well as the traffic from Nepal crossing the frontier at Simana Basti and Northward. The principal commodities moved by the DHR on the mainline were rice and other food grains, cement, iron, salt and building materials, coal, provisions and miscellaneous merchandise in the upward direction and potatoes, tea cardamoms, orange and timber in the downward direction. The table shows the important part the Railway played in the economy of the district as well as areas beyond the district to the north.

Year	Mainline goods. Tons (000's)	S.K. Extension goods. Tons (000's)	T.V. Extention goods. Tons (000's)
1909-10	47	-	-
1919-20	62	46	29
1929-30	80	44	28
1934-35	76	45	30

Source: A.J. Dash, Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p.196

Rice was an important commercial items transported by the railways. The Siliguri-Kishanganj line handled timber, rice and jute. The cultivation of jute increased largely since the advent of the railway system of transport which ensured cheaper costs of export of jute.¹⁰² The Siliguri Kishanganj extention leaves the mainline at Panchanai junction, three miles from Siliguri, where it turned westwards and passed through Matigara, one of the biggest hat in the district between Mahananda and Balason river.¹⁰³ In the 1880's, the emergence of Matigara as a centre of trade and distribution was spectacular. It was stated in the annual General Administration Report of the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling for the year 1885 that the bazaar of Matigara became a centre of trade and distribution second only to Darjeeling not only for the Terai but also for the Hills.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, Matigara was an important Railstation under Katihar section of Northern Bengal Railways. The line from Matigara ran to Naxalbari, 14 miles from Siliguri. The importance of Naxalbari was that it was near the border of Nepal and was an outlet for rice and timber from the state. From Naxalbari, the line ran south west to Galgalia, 29 miles from Siliguri. Galgalia was a depot for paddy from Nepal. It is to be mentioned that most of the fertile tracts in and near the Terai tapped by the railway facilitated to receive in increasing quantities of foodgrains, of which more than half of the imports were from Nepal.¹⁰⁵ Besides rice, the other agricultural crops like raw jute was also exported from Galgalia. From Galgalia the line passed through Thakurganj, an important rice centre, upto Aluabari, a large centre for jute and rice. From Aluabari the line turned south west and joined the Bengal Assam meter gauge section at Kishanganj in Bihar, 70 miles from Siliguri. The Kishanganj branch of the DHR served the Terai tea garden via Siliguri and there was a certain amount of traffic with Nepal through Naxalbari station, some of which passed through Siliguri. The Kishanganj branch carried principally jute and paddy.¹⁰⁶ The whole import and export trade of the plains passed through the Bengal and Assam Railway at Siliguri. Further, timber logs were brought to the timber sawing industry at Siliguri by the Forest Department through DHR.¹⁰⁷ The Tista Valley

branch carried orange, cardamom, potato, timber and wool. Large bales of wool from Tibet and fresh oranges and cardamoms supplied through Gielle Khola near Kalimpong.¹⁰⁸ Kalimpong which was incorporated in British India in 1865 was an important trade centre on the trade routes from Sikkim and Tibet to Bengal. Pack Ponies arrived with wool from Tibet to Kalimpong and traders of many creeds and races jostled with each other in Kalimpong for trading purpose.¹⁰⁹ Dried chilli was a profitable trade and the Tibetan traders engaged in that trade. From Vunter, a place of Kulu valley of Himalayan province where from the dried chillies were purchased and brought by road and then by rail to Kalimpong via Calcutta and Siliguri. From Kalimpong, it was exported by pack ponies to Tibet. It is known that in 1930 the value of a price of dried chilly was to a silver coin.¹¹⁰ Thus, it is clear that the increased facilities of railway communication, gave an impetus to trade. But what is more important is that the tea gardens and tea industries grew rapidly with the rapid development of railway system in Darjeeling. Within fourteen years of the first commercial plantation in 1866, there were 39 gardens in existence and nearly 3000 acres of tea under cultivation where as in 1921 there were 150 gardens covering nearly 54,000 acres and the annual output of tea exceeded 17 million pounds in Darjeeling.¹¹¹ This was the outcome of the rapid development of railways in Darjeeling district due to very active interest taken by the British Government.

The increased facilities of railway communication had great impact in Jalpaiguri district also. The district which was well supplied with railways monopolised most of the trade. J.F. Gruning writes, "The development of the tea industry and the influx of a large cooli population into western Duars, combined with increased facilities of railway communication, have given an impetus to trade generally, and the large markets which have sprung up in the neighbourhood of the tea gardens, provides the cultivator with a ready market for his rice, vegetables and other products".¹¹² The Eastern Bengal State Railway served the permanently settled paragon west of the Tista, the Bengal Duars Railway and its branches ran through the tract between Tista and Torsa rivers

and the rest of the Alipurduar Sub-division was served by the Cooch Behar State Railway. The trade of the district was mainly with Calcutta. Jalpaiguri was an extensive plain yielding copious crops of rice, jute, tobacco, sugarcane, mustard etc. And there was no uncultivated or waste land in the regulation portion of the district except the tract known as the Baikunthapur Sal Forest.¹¹³ The principle exports were tea, jute, tobacco, rice, cotton, piece-goods. Tea and jute were railed to Calcutta.¹¹⁴ From 1883 to 1900 same percent of raw jute was supplied to Calcutta from Jalpaiguri due to the opening of railways in Jalpaiguri district.

The following table shows supply of jute from different parts of North Bengal to Calcutta.

Imports of Jute into Calcutta from supplying districts of North Bengal

Districts	Imports by all routes			Imports by rail		
	1886-87 Mds.	1887-88 Mds.	1888-89 Mds.	1886-87 Mds.	1887-88 Mds.	1888-89 Mds.
Jalpaiguri	326596	242829	459916	326596	242929	459916
Dinajpur	186660	169674	210099	59806	44806	99290
Malda	47848	56109	121141	-	-	-
Darjeeling	-	-	61261	24643	20304	61261

Source : Report on the Administration of Bengal 1887-89 & 1888-89, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1889 & 1890, p.135 & p.143 respectively.

The merchants of Baura hat, situated on a small tributary of the Tista, preferred to sent their goods by rail.¹¹⁵ It is recorded that through Bengal Duars Railway in 1907, 91,800 maunds of tobacco were dispatched from Baura Station out of 111,977 maunds and following six months 49,499 maunds out of 61,195 maunds were despatched from Baura Station.¹¹⁶ Thus, the river trade was gradually decreasing. But some particular items like timber trade did not loose its importance through riverine way. During that time timber was exported to Dacca and Sirajganj through the Brahmaputra river. Thus it is found that a great change took place by the opening of the Bengal Duars Railways. Before the construction of railways in Jalpaiguri district, the tea gardens of the area depended upon road transportation. The tea gardens of the Dam Dim and Phulbari Ghat used roads to send their tea to or get supplies from

Jalpaiguri and Siliguri.¹¹⁷ But with the opening of railways, nearly all the traffic was conducted through the railway. The introduction of Railway also led to the improvement of the roads. So as to ensure easy traffic from different stations. Jute cultivation and jute trade had increased by gigantic step with the opening of railways in Jalpaiguri district. During 1907, the railway carried 144000 tons of goods of which exports of jute was 17,106 tons.¹¹⁸ Long before, during the time of Warren Hastings, 'timber' was mentioned as one of the items of trading possibilities in North Bengal. Thus with the introduction of railways, timber logs were easily carried by railway transportation to different parts of North Bengal. Lataguri of Jalpaiguri district was an important timber depot and railway junction. There emerged great number of saw mills adjacent to Lataguri. Prior to partition of India, there were references of timber trade by railway from Rangpur, Parbatipur to Lataguri via Changrabanda, Bhotepatti, Mayanaguri, Domohani. From Lataguri there were branch lines to Neora and Ramshai which principally carried only timber logs.

The introduction of Railway in Cooch Behar State had great impact in its economy and in the economy of North Bengal as well. It changed the pattern of the economy of the district as well as the economy of North Bengal as it opened to trade and commerce. It transmitted commercial crops like jute, tobacco, foodgrains etc. from village to town. With the blessing of Railway, Haldibari became an important town and it greatly helped the economy of the state. Within 7 to 8 years after the introduction of railways the export trade of the Cooch Behar became double.¹¹⁹ With the establishment of jute company at Haldibari, it became a special trade centre. A very large quantity of jute were exported from the neighbouring station of Haldibari, which was one of the biggest centre of the jute trade in Bengal.¹²⁰ Jute from Boda, Pachagadr (now in Bangladesh) and Islampur came to Haldibari by bullock cart. The annual administrative report of Cooch Behar revealed as to how jute trade increased due to railway facility. The quantity of jute imported into Haldibari was 519010 maunds in 1911-12 as against 355620 maunds in 1910-1911 from different parts of North Bengal.¹²¹ Haldibari became a jute depot of North Bengal and

from Haldibari all the raw jute were exported to Scotland through Calcutta Port. During 1930s, everyday 60 wagon raw jute were exported from Haldibari by a special 'Mal' train called Jute special.¹²² However, in 1933, the opening of new railway line from Dinajpur to Ruhea had led to a diversion of jute traffic in that direction thereby affecting adversely the state Bundar of Haldibari.¹²³ The European Jute Companies Ralli Brothers, Barkmayer, Landen and Clark opened their firms at Haldibari and exported raw jute from there. Adjacent to the Haldibari and Chawrahat railway line, some European business firms grew up. Besides the Europeans, the merchants from other states particularly the Marawaris migrated to Haldibari for trading purpose. Within 1926, there were 7/10 European firm and 14/15 Marawari and indigenous firms connected with jute and tobacco trade at Haldibari.¹²⁴ It should be noted that Cooch Behar and its adjacent region Dhubri and Goalpara of Assam were the biggest jute growing districts of India and raw jute also came to Haldibari from these regions.¹²⁵ It is known that for the paper mill of Titagarh, bamboos were exported through Haldibari by Rail wagon and from Haldibari light wooden logs were exported to WIMCO.¹²⁶

With the introduction of railways in Dinajpur, the high costs of road transport, the risks and uncertainties typically associated with river transport came to an end. Now the trade lasted all the year on account of the opening of North Bengal State Railway in Dinajpur. The North Bengal State Railway improved the merchandise trade of Dinajpur in a large way.¹²⁷ Dinajpur district was noted for its rice exports and before the introduction of railway in this district, grain used to be carried on during rainy season only by boats. With the introduction of railway rice trade got much importance as the traders preferred to use rail route. In 1909-10, nearly four lakhs of maunds of unhusked and 178000 maunds of husked rice were exported by rail.¹²⁸ Traders preferred to export rice by the rail to the nearest railway station also. Thus, as a result of the gradual improvement in communication the prices of agricultural produce rose steadily. With regard to Dinajpur district, rice became the most marked commodity with the opening of the railway between 1884 and 1891.¹²⁹

Besides rice, the other important articles exported through rail from Dinajpur were rags and mustard seed, raw hides, jute etc. Raiganj was itself a railway station and was a principal mart from where jute was exported.¹³⁰ The exports of jute in 1909-10 were 3,72,000 maunds, nearly the whole of which was carried by rail to Calcutta.¹³¹ There was also a considerable export of chillies from Kaliyaganj railway station to the eastern district.

Thus, it is found that a great change was witnessed with the opening of Railways in North Bengal during the concerned period. It should be mentioned that before the introduction of Railways in North Bengal, the communication system of North Bengal was of primitive type depending mainly on bullock-Carts and river ports. But whatever development the British made in this field in India was not for meeting India's need for economic progress, but to serve the Colonial interests of their homeland. They found in India a good source of raw materials, a big field of investment and a growing market for their manufactured goods as well. In order to fulfill these objectives better, they paid necessary attention to open up a good and cheap communication system i.e. the Railways system. The Britishers had a pre-conceived notion that the communication of India needed to be developed to effectively convert India into agricultural firm. According to Rajani Palme Dutta by this way India thus turned to be an agricultural colony of the British.¹³² The districts of North Bengal were no exception to it. The gradual progress of railways in North Bengal obviously stimulated different agricultural crops and cash crops in this region and this sign of stimulation could easily be seen in jute, tobacco, rice, cardamom, orange cultivation and other agricultural crops. But the greatest achievement of the introduction of railway was the rapid expansion of the tea industries in Darjeeling and Duars areas. Due to the rapid growth of tea gardens in North Bengal, the wage earning population increased rapidly. Thus a great demand for agricultural produce was created, but without the opening of railway line that demand could not be met. With the opening of Railways in North Bengal, the transportation of agricultural goods became easier. The railway opened

this region to a great extent to trade and commerce and both exports and imports trade in this region were largely enhanced and transmitted commercial crops of this region like jute, tobacco, foodgrains etc. from the village marts to the towns and Bandars (Ports). Thus the markets were widened throughout this region as well as the other parts of India and the world also. The different Railways like Eastern Bengal State Railway, North Bengal State Railway, Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, the Bengal Duars Railway, Cooch Bihar State Railway etc. really created an excitement to exploit the whole region of both plains and hills economically. The hilly areas like Darjeeling and Kalimpong especially became important for trans-frontier trade. Siliguri became an international trade centre. The entire trade alongwith Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and also the vast North Eastern region passed through Siliguri and practically the whole of the import and export trade from the plains passed through the Bengal and Assam Railway via Siliguri. Like other parts of India and Bengal, the introduction of railways attracted the different entrepreneurial communities to migrate in this region for undertaking economic ventures. As E.E. Lewis, the then Commissioner remarked that a great change has been wrought by the opening of Northern Bengal State Railway for traffic. He also mentioned that before 1878, the Marwari businessmen used to establish their main business centres at main town of Jalpaiguri and set up business in their own account in the Duars¹³³ but with the opening of Railways, the Marwaris tookup courage to spread their activities across the district. So, the non regional Indian traders and merchants such as Marwaris, Beharis, Punjabees, traders from present U.P. and traders from other parts of Bengal began to rush to North Bengal for economic ventures. It also attracted foreign merchants and traders such as British, Scottish, American, Tibetan and others to take part in new economic ventures in this region. So, the opening of the Railway all over North Bengal brightened the economic prospects of this region.

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115. Ibid, p.121
116. Ibid, p.145
117. Ibid, p.116
118. Ibid, p.114
119. Mitali, op.cit., p.27
120. District Census Report Jalpaiguri, 1891, No.387J, op.cit., p.26
121. Annual Administrative Report of the Cooch Behar State, for the year 1911-12, Cooch Behar State Press, p.15
122. Mitali, op.cit., p.29
123. Report on the Administration of Bengal 1933-34, op.cit., p.2
124. Mitali, op.cit., p.32
125. The Statesman, an English daily, dt.17th December, 1999
126. Mitali, op.cit., p.35
127. Ian, J. Kerr (ed), Railway in Modern India, op.cit., p.36
128. F.W. Strong, op.cit., p.83
129. F.O. Bell, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Dinajpur, 1934-40, Bengal Government press, Alipore, p.49

130.F.W. Strong, op.cit., p.83

131.Ibid, p.83

132.Rajani Palme Dutt, India Today, Calcutta, 1983, p.123

133.Note on the proposals for fixing rates of rent in Mynaguri Tehsil,
E.E. Lowis, Commissioner, dt.5th July 1890 (West Bengal State
Archives).

CHAPTER-IV

GROWTH OF OTHER INDUSTRIES

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JUTE PRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the researcher has dealt with economic developments with regards to tea plantation industry and the inauguration of Railways. North Bengal had great commercial prospects. The introduction of Railways opened the Indian markets to the International sphere. As a result traditional mode of cultivation had been superseded by advanced and scientific method of cultivation. It paved the path for the steady growth of capitalistic entrepreneurship with regards to various commercial crops. Here attempt has been made to examine the production and trade of jute, tobacco, rice and rice mills and the production of timber and bamboo in the area under study. While narrating these entire forces attempt has also been made the economic importance of these produces and the attitude and policy of the Colonial Government in this regard.

Jute is an important non foodgrain commercial crop which occupies a key place in the economy of the Eastern States of India namely West Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa. During the Colonial rule in India due to the commercialization of agriculture, jute became an important cash crop. Regarding jute George Blyn remarked that in Greater Bengal the main non-foodgrain crop about half of the total was jute, since virtually all the jute was grown in this region.¹ It should be mentioned that the first form of commercialization was associated with plantation agriculture, especially tea plantation of the Northern districts of Bengal. The second type of commercialization came to be known as “subsistence commercialization” or the ‘jute phase’. Under this jute version of commercialization, peasants in search of minimum subsistence level of living turned to intensive cash crops, mainly jute in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Like that of other parts of Bengal, during the colonial rule, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, undivided Dinajpur and Rangpur (now in

Bangladesh) were familiar as important jute cultivating zone.² The agro-climatic situation of the Northern districts of Bengal helped this region to become an important jute cultivating zone. Commercial crops are more remunerative than foodgrains. As whole area of North Bengal was suitable for the cultivation of this cash crop, it became a principal cash crop of North Bengal. Prof. Sugata Bose reviews this jute phase in the following words: "Raising a cash-crop which promised a higher gross income seemed to the man of small holders the better bet for assuring subsistence in the early 20th century than growing insufficient quantities of rice.³ Due to the export of jute from India to Europe and with the growth of jute mills around Calcutta in the late 19th Century, jute cultivated area was extended in North Bengal. The opening of the Suez Cannel in 1869 and the growth of railway communications further stimulated the growth of market economy had great impact upon this cash crop.

Historical records show that this non-food grain agricultural crop known in India from ancient times. The word *patta* occurs in Manu and Mahabharata. Jute is also mentioned in Ain-i-Akbari and in the contemporary Bengali literature, Kavi Kankan Chandi by Mukundaram Chakraborty (1575 A.D.). It should be mentioned that the evidence of trade in jute cloth in the sixteen century in Bengal noticed by Jarret, the English translator of Ain-i-Akbari who identified sack-cloth (tat) with jute from the district of Rangpur and Mukundaram Chakraborty in his Kavikankan Chandi there were the references of both *nalita* the pot-herb and gunny bags made of jute.⁴ As early as the middle of the seventeenth century the European nations interested themselves very largely in the manufacture of canvas and cordage with fibres. Thus, in India during the reign of Jahangir soon after the embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, the East India Company was permitted by the Mughal government to establish a factory at Piple, twenty two miles from Balasore. The factory carried an extensive rope works and manufacture of fibre fabrics. But nothing of jute or jute made canvas or gunny cloth is found. It is also to mention that no only Sir Thomas Roe but in the earlier travels of Bernier, Fayrer, there

was no mention on jute and till 1766 jute did not occur in any part of the proceedings of the unpublished records of the government. The earliest record i.e. "commercial index to the proceedings, of the late Board of Trade, for 1796", in which mention is made of jute having been sent to the Hon'ble Court of Directors in more than one occasion. In this record it was mentioned that Dr. Roxburgh, an Englishman sent to England a bale of fibre prepared by himself from the bank of the produce of *Corchorus Capsularis*, which he described as "the jute of the natives". It should be mentioned that prior to Roxburgh in 1793, the company's officers had sent to England 100 tons of fibre under the name of *pat* and the court of Directors enclosed a report of the committee of warehouses stated that the fibre was superior in quality to any known in the trade. Thus the East India Company after establishing its stronghold in Bengal (1765) when found a good quality of fibre well appreciated in England tried to find out its prospects. Within a very few years i.e. in 1801 the commercial residents of Chittagong, Malda and Rangpur wrote to the Board of Directors about the prospects of the cultivation of this crop.⁵ Soon after that time the value of this fibre was immediately recognised and the expansion of trade of this crop has been constant and rapid. The modern jute industry of Bengal may be said to have had its origin in the year 1828. Because exportation to Europe was commenced in that year and 364 cwt of raw jute were sent to Europe for commercial purpose.⁶ After that event what is found that the British manufacturers started setting up jute mills in Dundee in Scotland in the 1830s and in the year 1833 raw jute exported to Europe was of 300 tonnes.⁷ But it is to be mentioned that though prior to the Britishers found commercial prospects of this crop locally its cultivation was not neglected. Though not extensively this crop was cultivated but for local use viz. for preparing gunny cloth, paper and various uses the crop was not unknown to the cultivators. In Dinajpur district paper was made by the local Mahomedans from jute. In this district there were between 80 to 100 families employed in making paper sufficient to meet the existing demand. The quality was very inferior and the people who made it required little or no capital usually carrying it

themselves to the markets, and the petty traders who brought it afterwards sold it by retail.⁸ Besides Dinajpur, Malda, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri also manufactured paper out of jute fibre.

Though the Indians were familiar with this non-food grain crop but it was not extensively cultivated in India till the beginning of 19th century. The Charter of 1833 had opened the way for import of capital from England and the arrival of the free traders had enhanced the prices of all most all Indian articles. Free trade wrought a further revolutionary change because British investors were very much interested to invest in different fields of economy of India. Thus with the participation of British investors in trade and agriculture a remarkable growth of trade in raw materials had to be seen and much more private capital had been invested in raw materials in Bengal. In agriculture certain specialized crops began to be grown not for consumption in the village but for sale in the national and international markets. Jute cultivation was profitable and the peasants cultivated it to meet their needs. It should be noted that to the Indian peasants, commercialization seemed a forced process. To meet the excessive land revenue demand of the state and high rates of interests charged by the moneylenders, the cultivator perforce had to rush a part of his cultivation for cash crop.⁹ In North Bengal the peasants preferred jute. Evidence shows that more than 90 percent of the total jute crop grown almost entirely in North and Eastern Bengal – was consigned overseas either in raw or in manufactured forms. From the last quarter of the 19th century for Colonial interest the Britishers inspired the cultivators extensively to cultivate jute due to the high demand of jute in Europe. For Colonial interest variety of experiments of jute were carried out in Rangpur and Jalpaiguri.¹⁰ There are less hazards in jute cultivation than the other crops. In consequence, eagerness among growers for jute cultivation had increased. It is found that acreage under jute in Bengal more than double between 1872-73 and 1899-1900.¹¹ The report of the Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar stated that jute trade was doubled in Cooch Behar in 1874 than 1872.¹² Different Officials records showed that jute cultivation extensively expanded in Rangpur, Dinajpur and

Malda in the late 19th century. Thus jute cultivation was expanding considerably in the Northern districts of Colonial Bengal year by year. Jute cultivation expanded and from the late 19th to the first half of the 20th century jute cultivation was smoothly continued in Bengal as well as North Bengal.

The expansion of Railway system ultimately widen the market for British goods in India, increased directly the demand for British manufactured in India and finally increased the flow of export of raw materials from India. It is the general opinion of the Economists that with the introduction of railways due to broader maker production of agricultural crops extended in a great extent. As the railways connecting Calcutta to the jute districts of North Bengal a sharp rise in the jute cultivation in North Bengal took place. It should be mentioned in this connection that Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri were the most important jute producing areas of North Bengal and the opening and expansion of railways in these areas jute became an important commercial cash crop of North Bengal. In this regard it is quite pertinent to mention that Haldibari was an important jute trading centre, Matigara, Galgalia and Aluabari were the important raw jute storage centres and Rajganj was also an important jute mart.¹³ With the introduction of railways jute producing areas were extended as it was easy to export and the peasants got a handsome profit from this cash crop.

It is to be mentioned that though jute occupied as valuable commercial cash crop in North Bengal, but prior to jute tobacco had also took an important place in the economy of North Bengal as a commercial non-food grain agricultural crop. Both W.W. Hunter and J.F. Gruning mentioned the economic value of tobacco cultivation and tobacco trade in North Bengal.¹⁴ In the eighty's of the eighteenth century when tobacco had already established as a profitable crop in North Bengal particularly in Cooch Behar, the cultivation of jute as a commercial crop was unknown to the people of that area. Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that in the list of several agricultural crops of Cooch Behar for

export and import putdown by Messieurs Merrer and Chauvet, the special commissioners of Cooch Behar appointed by the British Government did not mention jute at all.¹⁵ Thus as a commercial crop jute was latter introduced and to make it a commercial crop only to the credit of the Britishers in Bengal and North Bengal also. From the second half of the 19th century cultivation of jute as a commercial crop had been carried in Greater North Bengal and was extensively cultivated in Patna, Dinajpur, Purⁿ_xia, Jalpaiguri, Bogra.¹⁶ According to the Report of Hem Chunder Kerr, the Deputy Magistrate on special duty, Calcutta that jute was moderately cultivated in Cooch Behar and Malda and from the time of Sikkim War the cultivation of jute was carried in Darjeeling and in Cooch Behar one fifth of the population engaged in jute cultivation.¹⁷ Thus it is clear that jute became an important commercial crop during the second half of the 19th century in North Bengal. It is now relevant to mention that the extensive jute cultivation in India particularly in Bengal presidency was not the outcome of indigenous needs; it was a creation from the pressure of an international event i.e. the Crimean War which took place in the year 1854. During the war time hemp was extensively used in England, but the Crimean War brought a ban on the export of hemp from Russia to England. Where upon the British traders and manufacturers concentrated on jute, another superior natural fibre which was very recently known to them. The demand of jute was increased in Europe also from the time of Napoleonic War to the World War-I.¹⁸ On the other hand according to the report of Roberts Finlow (1906) that though jute cultivation expanding considerably year by year but that was not sufficient to meet the demand of the international markets and at the sametime in other countries notably Java, French Indo-China and West Africa apparently successful efforts were being made to introduce the cultivation of jute. So, it was highly advised if possible to extend considerably the jute growing area in India.¹⁹ Thus, like other parts of India jute cultivating land was increased in Bengal and North Bengal also for Colonial needs. From a statistical report it is found that from 1900 to 1919 export of raw jute was considerably increased in India.²⁰ The rapid

demand of jute increased its demand as a cash crop in North Bengal and thus jute cultivation and jute trade considerably expanded in North Bengal.

Let us observe the jute production and jute trade of North Bengal during the concerned time period. During the Colonial rule Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and undivided Dinajpur were the major jute producing areas of North Bengal. From different official documents it is found that between 1872 to 1930 jute cultivation in undivided Dinajpur district expanded in a large scale. According to the Report of cultivation of and trade in jute in Bengal in 1872 the area under jute cultivating land in Dinajpur district (undivided) was 117,629 acres. In 1909-10 ninety two thousand acres were reported as being under jute in Dinajpur district and in 1930 the area under jute in Dinajpur was 73,000 acres.²¹ Jute was principally grown in the Thakurgaon sub-division, and also in parts of the Kotwali and Raiganj thanas and in the Chirirbandar out post of the undivided Dinajpur. Raiganj was the principal jute mart in Dinajpur District. F.W. Strong ascribed that the crop had been well known in the district for over a century and during 1909-10 there had been a market increased in the cultivation of this staple.²² Strong also remarked that Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, mentioned jute was quite one of the less important crops of Dinajpur and was used for local consumption such as making cordage, gunny bag, and even coarse cloth. Whatever Sherwill mentioned but it is not easy to deny that a considerable quantity of jute was exported from undivided Dinajpur.²³ From Dinajpur jute exported to foreign countries through Calcutta via Parbatipur.²⁴

As cultivation of jute was profitable than that of other crops, cultivation of jute gradually expanded in Jalpaiguri also. The most vital factor which influenced presents decision to cultivate jute was its high price. It was commented by Commissioner E.E. Lowis that, "it is on the whole a more profitable crop than rice and the rise in price since 1880 has been considerable at the sadar and in the interior."²⁵ The farmers had no problem in getting loan from the money lenders and the latter being

assured of getting back the advanced money had no hesitation in advancing loans at high interests to the jute cultivators. All these factors prompted jute cultivation in the Jalpaiguri district. J.F. Gruning stated that the cultivation of jute in the Jalpaiguri district, "has increased at a very rapid and the area under this crop has more than doubled in the six years between 1901-02 and 1907-08."²⁶ But in the list of the Manager of Baikunthapur to the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri in 1891 it was stated that in the regulated portion of the district particularly in Baikunthapur jute did not figure among the list of crops.²⁷ However, the most striking advancement of jute cultivation took place in the western Duars in 1895 when Sunder submitted his settlement report that the area under jute was only 6,620 acres and the crop was confined mainly in the Mainaguri Tehsil. But Gruning pointed out that in the regulation portion of the district the cultivation of jute began slowly but soon the cultivation was extended and it absorbed twenty-five percent of the land where Bhadoi rice used to grow.²⁸ Gruning also mentioned that between 1901-02 to 1907-08 due to the increased area under jute it decreased the area under rice from 637,000 acres to 631,600 acres and he also mentioned that in the district jute cultivation increased from 59,800 acres in 1901-02 to 125,500 acres in 1907-08.²⁹ The most important jute producing areas of Jalpaiguri were Mainaguri, Madarihat, Alipur tehsil and Rajganj block. It should be mentioned that the best variety of jute was grown in the Rajganj block but in the whole district the condition of fibre was good. Following the extensive jute cultivation there emerged many European and Indigenous jute farms in Jalpaiguri district.

The following tables show the average price of raw jute per maund in the districts of North Bengal and in Bengal in different period under study.

Price of Jute per maund for six years at Jalpaiguri

Article		1884-85			1885-86			1886-87			1887-88			1888-89			1889-90			Percentage of increase
		Rs.	As	P																
Jute	Trader 1	2	4	6	2	2	0	2	9	0	2	11	0	2	7	6	5	2	0	122
	Trader 2	2	2	0	2	5	0	2	9	0	3	0	0	3	12	0	4	4	3	100
	Trader 3	2	1	6	2	9	0	2	11	0	3	7	0	3	14	0	3	14	0	81

Source: No.2C dated Camp Maynaguri, the 3rd April, 1890. From D. Sunder, Esq. Settlement Officer, Western Dooars, Jalpaiguri, to the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division, West Bengal State Archives.

Table : 2

Price of Jute per maund at Cooch Behar

Average price per maund of jute for the decade ending								Price per maund of jute in 1900	
1870		1880		1890		1900			
Rs.	As	Rs.	As	Rs.	As	Rs.	As	Rs.	As
4	8	3	8	3	2	4	0	5	0

Source : Harendra Narayan Choudhury, The Cooch Behar State and its land revenue settlement, 1903 Cooch Behar State Press, P.191

Table : 3

The average harvest prices of jute in Bengal

Period	Rs.
1911-12	7
1920-21	6
1921-22	9
1930-31	7
1931-32	5

Source: Report of the Indian Jute Mill Association for the year ended 31st December, 1949, Calcutta, p.116.

Cooch Behar was also an important jute cultivating zone and was extensively grown in the western portion of the state. Mekhliganj and Haldibari were the two important jute cultivating areas and jute trade centres of Cooch Behar. It is said that Mekhliganj takes its name from a fine jute fibres which were called mekhli. There was a great demand of fine golden jute fabric of Haldibari and Mekhliganj both in India and abroad. During 1872 the total area under jute production in Cooch Behar was 25000 acres and gradually its cultivation was extended.³⁰ According to the report of the Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar that jute trade was doubled within two years between 1874 and 1872 as it established an important cash crop in the economy of Cooch Behar. Commercialization also made impression to the economy of Malda and Darjeeling in respect of jute cultivation. In Malda the total area under jute in 1872 was 3500 acres and its cultivation gradually expanded in this district. G.E. Lambourn mentioned that during his time jute grew on a normal area of 30,000 acres approximately and the best quality of jute in Malda was known as poli jute grown in the low land of Gajol thana.³¹ G.E. Lambourn also mentioned that during his tenure jute trade had risen through riverine route in Malda. However, in Malda jute covers a comparatively small area and is not a very successful crop because the quality is very inferior to that of the other jute growing districts.³² Naxalbari, Kharibari, Matigara were the important jute cultivating areas of Darjeeling. O'Malley ascribed that the cultivation of jute increased largely since the advancement of the railway system of the transport which ensured cheaper costs of export of jute. Thus, it is found that due to commercialization of agriculture more or less every district of North Bengal produced jute.

The following table shows jute areas and jute production for the year 1872 and 1873 in North Bengal.

Table : 4

District	Total area of arable land in acres	1872		1873	
		Area under Jute in acres	Yield of Jute in maunds	Area under jute in acres	Yield of Jute in maunds
Dinajpore	1650400	117629	1764435	-	-
Jalpaiguri	1260800	50000	750000	50000	750000
Cooch Behar	600000	25000	375000	25000	375000
Malda	670080	3500	52500	3500	52500
Darjeeling	16462	1500	22500	1500	22500

Source: Report on the cultivation and trade in jute in Bengal, Hem Chunder Kerr, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1877, P.65.

Table: 4A

The following table illustrates jute area for the year 1907-08 to 1909-10, 1929-30 to 1930-31 and 1931-32 to 1932-33 in North Bengal

Districts	1907-08 to 1909-10	1929-30 to 1930-31	1931-32 to 1932-33
	Area under jute in acres	Area under jute in acres	Area under jute in acres
Dinajpore	92000	73000	41000
Jalpaiguri	125500	42000	26000
Cooch Behar	-	30100 to 31000	16000
Malda	30000	38000	16000
Darjeeling	3600 to 4000	4000	2000

Source :

- 1) F.W. Strong, Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers, Dinajpur, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1912, P-58
- 2) J.F. Gruning, Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911, P-59
- 3) G.E. Lambourn, Bengal District Gazetteers, Malda, The Bengal Secretariat, Book Depot, Calcutta, 1918, P-43
- 4) Trisrota, A Bengal Weekly Published from Jalpaiguri, Editor, Suresh Chandra Pal, dt.12.7.1931 and 1.3.1932.

5) Department of Agriculture of Bengal, Agricultural Statistics of Bengal for 1907-08 and 1909-10, Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1909 and 1911 p.11 and p.13 respectively.

6) Bengal District Gazetteer, B. Volume, Malda District Statistics 1921-22 to 1930-31, Table VII, Part-II, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1933, p.7

7) Report of the Administration of Bengal, 1930-31 and 1931-32, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot 1932 and 1933, p.2 and p.2 respectively.

In 1872-73 Mr. Hem Chunder Kerr estimated the total area under jute in Bengal at about a million acres. Within twenty years, the area had increased to nearly two millions acres. With the turn of the century the area began to increase, reaching the record figure of 3.88 million of acres in 1907-08.³³ From the table different records show that the area under jute had increased vigorously and the period 1907-08 to 1909-10 was the peak period of jute in North Bengal also.

During colonial rule jute was the single most important item in India's export trade and East Bengal and North Bengal were the base for only source of jute. The government was interested for developing this cash crop. Experiments in the cultivation of jute were carried out on the lines indicated by the Inspector General of Agriculture.³⁴ Further, in the Budget of 1920-21 the government had taken measures for improving this cash crop in Eastern Bengal and North Bengal and the effort of the government met with remarkable success. In the budget of 1920-21 the scheme for the distribution of improve paddy and jute seed had been taken. The Agricultural Department of Bengal sold 2,070 maunds of jute seeds to the cultivators in 1920.³⁵ The Government also proposed to establish four new District Agricultural Farms, at a cost of Rs.1,10,000 for agricultural development.³⁶ Variety experiments of jute were carried out by the government at Burdwan, Faridpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri. Thus, from the beginning of the commercial cultivation and export of this non foodgrain crop reached its peak upto 1928-29 and during that time it also reached a high price level.³⁷

The following table shows the selling price of raw jute in Bengal between 1914 and 1929.

Year	Rs.	Rate of influx
1914	207775000	100
1921	265943000	127
1922	285000000	137
1923	310500000	149
1924	547391000	263
1925	836762000	402
1926	548955000	264
1927	512910000	246
1928	502734000	241
1929	446950000	215

Source: Bartir Pathe Bangali, Binoy Kumar Sarkar, Calcutta, 1934, P.37

According to the estimate of Binoy Kumar Sarkar, it is found that the selling prices of raw jute in Bengal in 1914 was Rs.20,77,75,000 and prior to the depression in 1925 was the peak period of jute price. In that year the selling price of raw jute was Rs.83,67,62,000. He fixed the rate of raw jute in Bengal Rs.100 for the base year 1914 and calculated the rate of influx prior to depression in 1929 was Rs.215.

Most of the raw jute and output of the industry was intended for export to Europe and other Oceanic Countries through seas by Calcutta Port. The Britishers established jute mills located on the banks of the river Hooghly connecting Bay of Bengal. Various European Companies engaged in the transport of jute from the jute districts to the port of Calcutta and the steamship companies carrying jute and jute goods from Calcutta to the various parts of the world.³⁸ The shipments were made from Calcutta mainly as a commission basis and under this system, goods were purchased by Indian shippers in their own name. The shippers received a fixed commission for their services. As year passed by, there was a fundamental change in the character of jute trade conducted by the shippers; they gradually emerged from the status of commission

agents to the principal traders. In the jute trade itself, European businessmen were involved at almost every stage from the buying of jute upto the shipping of jute and jute fabrics to foreign countries. The reason behind the European dominance in jute is that the Imperial Bank makes advances to the European merchants on the hypothecation of the stock of jute stored in their *mufassal* godowns.³⁹ In the internal trade in jute, the Europeans were the dominant element where as *farias* (jute peddlers) and *beparis* (local traders) played a vital role. In the village the unfledged crop was brought by the *faria* who usually belonged to the cultivating class. This class while buying jute from the cultivators charged a deduction called *Dhalta*, i.e. a weight discount to compensate for the allegedly excessive moisture in jute and after getting this discount they sold it in the weekly primary markets or *hats* to the *beparis*. But the report of the Enquiry into Deterioration of jute mentioned that "It was the middlemen and not the raiyats who were entirely responsible for the deliberately watering the jute before sale."⁴⁰ Actually in the lower strata or locally the jute business was at the hands of *mahajans* or brokers. They were well to do people, being mostly the Marwaris, who have their godowns at the exporting centres. There are two other classes of middlemen sometimes intervene. The first is the *dalal* (broker) who is engaged by the exporter to induce selected *baparis* to bring their jute to one centre. He also acts as adviser when advances are made to the *beparis*. The second is the *aratdar* (owner of a godown) who lets out to the *beparis* on Commission. Although he does not become the owner of the jute, he retains an interest in the profit derived from it. Besides the Marwari community, the Saha Community also played a vital role as a creditor to this jute business as *mahajan* or broker. The Dinajpur survey and settlement Report mentioned that alienation of land was gradually increasing especially in the neighbourhood of big towns and big *hats* mostly resided by the Sahas and the Marwaris who were the money lenders and the amount of transfer was increasing more rapidly in jute areas than in other areas.⁴¹ The *mahajans* gave advance money to the *beparis* or sellers, the condition being that the latter must bring to the *mahajans* all the jute they can get

from the raiyats. The money is not realised from season to season, but is allowed to be in the hands of the *bepari*. When the jute is brought to the *mahajans*, he settles the price with the buyer secretly, the *bepari* having nothing to do with it and often not knowing at all what his jute sells for. He has only a general idea of the state of the market from the price other *beparis* receive for their jute on several occasion the way of price is settled between the *mahajan* and the buyer. The main European farms or companies connected with jute trade were Duffus, Steel, Landale and Clark, Ralli Brothers, Sarkies and Company, David and Company and R. Sim and Company. These bigger farms and companies through their agents controlled the whole jute trade of Bengal.

The introduction of railway transport system in North Bengal and the connection of jute districts of North Bengal with Calcutta invited different creditors both European and Indigenous to invest in jute more and more. The North Bengal jute comes from the tract embraced by the following towns: Purnia, Parbatipur, Kissanganj, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar which includes an area of about 15000 square miles.⁴² Both the European and Indigenous farms played a vital role in jute trade in North Bengal and this became possible with the satisfactory communication network which greatly helped to expand the span of jute area as well as jute trade in North Bengal. It is found that during the period 1870-71 to 1899-1900 exports of jute shipped from Calcutta port to Britain increased by an average value of Rs.6 lakhs per annum.⁴³

Besides the exportation of raw jute from North Bengal, a considerable number of hand made gunny cloth and gunny bags also exported from North Bengal to Calcutta market. The following tables show the supply of gunny cloths and gunny bags from the districts of North Bengal.

Supply of hand made gunny cloth to Calcutta market.

Name of the District	Year	No. of gunny cloth
Jalpaiguri	1886-87	23,33,660
	1887-88	29,52,390
Darjeeling	1886-87	8,98,520
	1887-88	10,52,660
Dinajpur	1886-87	2,55,300
	1887-88	4,74,500

Source : Report on the Administration of Bengal 1887-89, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1889, p.136.

Supply of gunny bags to Calcutta market in 1888-89.

Name of the District	No. of gunny bag
Jalpaiguri	13,49,880
Darjeeling	6,94,960
Dinajpur	14,25,315

Source : Report on the Administration of Bengal 1888-89, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1890, p.144.

It is quite pertinent to mention that before the opening of railways, nearly the whole of both inward and outward traffic used to be carried on by country boats. With the opening of railways in North Bengal now considerably diverted the traffic from the rivers and have almost monopolised the export of jute. W.W. Hunter mentioned that prior to the introduction of railways from Raiganj, an important trade mart, 28,310 maunds of jute was exported in 1873 through river route and he also mentioned that from Nov. 1875 to Feb. 1876, for the six months from Jalpaiguri 50,540 maunds and from Cooch Behar State 72,934 maunds of jute was exported through river route.⁴⁴ During the period under study a great volume of jute was exported from North Bengal through railway which also indicated how largely this cash crop was cultivated in North

Bengal. In the year 1888-89, from Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Darjeeling districts respectively 459916 maunds, 99290 maunds and 61261 maunds of jute exported through railways.⁴⁵ In 1891 through Eastern Bengal Railway 1,92,900 maunds of jute was exported from Jalpaiguri.⁴⁶ J.F. Gruning mentioned that in 1907 from Jalpaiguri 17,106 ton or 427650 maunds of jute was exported.⁴⁷ From Dinajpur 2,72,000 maunds of jute was exported in 1909-10.⁴⁸ Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that during his time. 3,00,000 maunds of jute valued Rs.12,00,000 was exported from Cooch Behar.⁴⁹ The Annual administrative report showed that during the period 1911-12, 5,19,010 maunds of jute was imported into Haldibari for exportation.⁵⁰

Thus upto the first decade of the 20th century due to the huge demand from Europe for raw jute there was a corresponding rise in jute growing areas and raw jute trade. But jute crop like other commercial crops witnessed many fluctuation in prices, in several phases and this fluctuation in price structure affected the cultivators.

Though jute cultivation extended in a large scale in North Bengal but the general jute growers were deprived from the real value of their toils. From jute high profits earned by the big merchants and dealer and also the Government. It was observed from the investigation on the cultivators in this region that they were bound to sale their output to various intermediaries namely, the *farias*, the *Mahajans*. The intermediaries controlled the price of raw jute. It should also be noted that the peasant indebtedness was due partly to the extension of the cultivation of jute at the expense of paddy, the subsequent crop.⁵¹ Because the profits from the sale of jute were easily squandered; and the ryots, having no money to harvest the subsequent crop, incurred debt. They entered a vicious circle, plunging deeper and deeper into debt and growing more and more jute. It was stated in an agricultural Exhibition that financial condition of the jute growers deteriorated in Duars because excess profit from jute inspired them to grow more and more jute.⁵² Consequently, overproduction decreased the price of jute. The Great

depression of 1929, affected jute exports and between 1930 and 1933 the prices of jute touched a low scale. The following table shows the fluctuation of jute price in Bengal between 1929 and 1933.

Year	Jute price
1929	100
1930	54.9
1931	50.4
1932	50.0
1933	43.9

Source: Sujata Mukherjee Journal of History, Jadavpur University, Vol.V, 1984, P.84.

The following table shows the fall in the world demand of raw jute and gunny.

Year	Raw jute export Vol.	Gunny export vol.
1929	100	100
1930	47	58
1931	36	40
1932	31	40
1933	35	39

Source: Omkar Goswami, Article – Then Come the Marwari, The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 22, 3(1985).

It is found that the prices of jute fell by about 56 percent in the year 1933. Owing to the drastic fall in the prices of jute the average cultivable areas of the rural family decreased in the jute growing districts and the districts of North Bengal were not exception of it. It is found that the net cultivable area per rural family between 1911 and 1931 decreased in Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Cooch Behar. In Jalpaiguri the net cultivable area per rural family in 1911 was 5.28 acres where as in the year 1931 it was only 3.72 acres area under jute cultivation per rural family between 1911 and 1931 was respectively 4.78 and 3.41 acres.⁵³ Due to the fall of prices the cultivators had curtailed the employment of hired labours as

far as possible. From the documents it is noticed that every where during the jute season groups of cultivators helped each other with the weeding of the crop.⁵⁴ In some parts of North Bengal due to this unprecedented fall of jute price the cultivators as there was no way transferred their lands to the non-agriculturists. It is observed by the survey and settlement officer of Dinajpur that "Transfer of land to non-agriculturists seems to have increased due to the fall in prices of jute".⁵⁵ During the depression period (1929-33) and onwards occurred the fall in the price of jute even below the cost of production. The jute growers were financially weak and the simple poor peasants could not understand the clever device of bringing about artificial rise in the price of jute at the time of the sowing season in order to induce the unsuspecting cultivator to put a larger area under jute.⁵⁶ Thus, the over production decreased the prices of jute. The inevitable result was that the mills were able to get their supplies at their own price and the poor cultivators suffered for their ignorance and simplicity. Bengal jute growers Association, Calcutta preliminary remarked (31st March; 1933) that due to monopolistic character of jute the government have fully benefited and those engaged in the jute trade and industry.⁵⁷ However, the jute merchants and *farias* expressed adverse views. The argument made by the jute merchants and *farias* was more or less uniform regarding the low prices of jute. According to their views that over production, financial crisis and the competition of hemp and paper with jute were the causes for low prices of jute. In this connection mention should be made of the opinions of several *farias*, merchants and the report of the district Board under the study of the region. Babu Sohanlal Agarwalla, *faria*, Thakurgaon, district Dinajpur dated 8th March 1933 argued that financial crisis was the most important factor to depress the price of jute and due to financial crisis the area under jute was becoming less and less every year. Babu Rasiklal Guha, merchant, Balurghat, district Dinajpur was of opinion over production is one of the factors for depression the price of jute, but that is not the only factor. Hemp and paper are two product in competition with jute. Babu Curudas Mukherjee, President, Shikarpur – Saldanga Union Board, district

Jalpaiguri dt. 1st April 1933, had opinion over production combined with financial crisis had helped to lower the price.⁵⁸ Due to the unprecedented fall in the price of jute the cultivators were unable to get more than even half of the cost of their production. The major jute growing areas of East Bengal like Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur and the northern districts of Bengal, the cultivators were left with little or no margin of profit and were unable to pay rent or debt of the *mahajans*.⁵⁹ It is reported that the market for jute, was especially bad in 1933 and about 12.5 percent of the previous year's crop and almost 75 percent of the current year's remained unsold in Jalpaiguri.⁶⁰ Though the jute growers were victimized, had no choice but to fall back upon jute as there was no alternative profitable crop which could meet the cash demand of the cultivators. Although during the jute price depression period sugar cane cultivation increased to some extent, it failed to occupy any substantial amount of jute land. It should be mentioned that sugar cane was not a seasonable crop like jute; but was a perishable crop. The report of the jute Enquiry Committee (1939) mentioned that due to the small number of sugar mills in the jute districts, the jute growers were reluctant to change over to sugar cane as a large scale.⁶¹ Notably, the fall in the acreage under jute and its cultivation during the depression, as pointed out by scholars did not seem to be as dramatic as the fall in the post war years. This was in spite of the fact that fall in the prices of raw jute was much steeper in the depression period. This indicates the absence of alternative crops for the jute growers.

Thus the sharp price fall during the depression period naturally reduced the purchasing power of the agriculturists. The primary producers in jute growing districts were particularly hard hit. Per capita net cash receipt in agricultural sector went down steeply, influenced by sharp down ward trend in cash earning from jute. Immediately after depression (1933) the average incomes of sample families fell drastically. A noticeable fact was that the position deteriorated more remarkably in the jute growing districts. In an agricultural exhibition named "Jalpesh Krishi Pradarsani" in Jalpaiguri district it was mentioned that the people

of Duars greatly victimized due to large scale cultivation of this cash crop.⁶² This low prices of jute not only affected the cultivators, but as a whole it also affected all the sections of the society. It is noticed that due to unprecedented fall in the price of jute not only the cultivators victimized, but the zamindars, *mahajans*, merchants, artisans, lawyer, and above all the sections of the society economically affected in the jute cultivated areas.⁶³ During the depression period, the area under jute year by year drastically fall. From the table 4A it is found that within two decades the area under jute in North Bengal decreased by half of the total jute land in different districts of North Bengal and particularly in Jalpaiguri district its production fell by one fifth.

It is already mentioned that the extensive jute cultivation in this region was not the outcome of indigenous needs; it was the British commercial interest and from the pressure of international events, high prices of flax etc. forced them to think about using jute as a viable alternative. The total result was the inauguration of extensive cultivation of jute in the Bengal presidency particularly in the riverine plains of Eastern Bengal and North Bengal. It was the most vital factor which influenced peasants decision to cultivate jute was its high price. But when the export of jute and jute products reached its peak (1928-29) at a high price level the world had begun seriously and intensively to search for substitutes from the Nationalistic point of view.⁶⁴ Thus, from 1930 onwards that so many countries began seriously to try to make themselves self-supplying in such products. During that time some foreign countries who were the importer of India's jute restricted the use of jute by law and some foreign countries decided to use cotton in lieu of jute. The report of L.R. Fawcus mentioned that in Germany the use of pure jute goods was prohibited by law during that time and United States of America which had been using jute for last 24 years decided to use cotton twine.⁶⁵

Thus jute market drastically fell and jute had no demand in the European market. As jute lost its market the jute companies in Bengal

gradually curtailed the jute trade. So, the area under jute is becoming less and less every year. Thus the fate of this commercial crop was depended upon the demand of European market and when that need was over it became valueless to the European traders. In this context it is quite pertinent to observe the role of the Government regarding jute question. The Draft Report Chapter VII stated that jute should be controlled by the state instead of by the ultimate consumers. The report stated that Indian Jute Mills Association who have been controlling the policy of pricing the jute do not look to the interest of the jute growers. Thus, the strong argument of the government was that jute should be controlled by the state to assure the price to the jute growers. Apart from this the government recommended for fixing the rate of jute respectively bottom to top grade raw jute.⁶⁶ But the fixing of raw jute price was not an easy task. Because in the absence of reliable costs data, particularly the data relating to the cost of manufacture of the jute goods and it was not practicable to fix a minimum price which will be appreciably higher than the prevailing price. Thus to fix it at the prevailing market price would serve no useful purpose, while to fix it at a lower price might be definitely harmful to the interests of the jute growers. The report of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee regretted that in spite of best efforts of the government, the government was unable to solve the jute price question as the jute mills Association was not cooperated on this subject.⁶⁷ Thus, it was urgently necessary for the government in the public interest to fix a minimum rate for contracts relating to raw jute futures and the immediate action should be taken for that purpose. To solve jute price problem the government took very rigid policy by passing an ordinance on jute question. It was said that jute should be restricted and after the commencement of that ordinance no person should make a contract relating to raw jute future at a rate of less than thirty six rupees and if any contract less than thirty six rupees be punishable with imprisonment may for one year or with a fine of thousand rupees.⁶⁸ After the passing of this ordinance the Bengal Provincial Government or the League Government passed an act and distributed licence to the cultivators for

compulsory restriction of jute cultivation. Through the agency of the president Panchayats and the union boards the Government distributed leaflets among the cultivators and strongly urging them not to sow with jute more than 50 percent of the area sown with that crop in the past season.⁶⁹ Due to the compulsory restriction of jute cultivation export of jute had become so restricted that there was no market of jute.⁷⁰ Apart from this the European Association under the auspices of Bengal Chamber of Commerce placed an Interim Report where more or less they did not want a jute future market at all.⁷¹ Due to this, jute cultivation became meaningless to the poor peasants and the sum total effect was the impoverishment of the peasants. Thus the grower of this commodity has never known except for a brief period what prosperity really means.

Though in the thirties of 20th century a drastic fall of jute price and consequently jute areas decreased, however, in the second half of the 19th century was indicated as jute era of Bengal. Within two decades from seventy's of the 19th century the area under jute in Bengal was doubled.⁷² Thus it was stated that the second half of the 19th century may well be called the golden age of jute.⁷³ As a result jute industry was developed year by year in Bengal. The first jute Mill in Bengal was set up in Rishra and started operating in 1855 under the name of "Auckland Jute Mill".⁷⁴ In 1881 there were 20 jute mills in the Bengal presidency and by 1901 the number rose to 36. In 1905 the number rose to 42 and prior to the World War II there were 62 jute mills located in Bengal.⁷⁵ It is noticed that jute manufactures remained an industry almost completely dominated by the British, more particularly Scottish business right upto the end of the Second World War. Among all the directors of jute mills it is found that only one Indian viz. Luchmi Narain Kanoria, the board of directors of the smallest jute mill named Soorah Jute Mill Company Limited.⁷⁶

It is now quite pertinent to observe that despite the favourable geographical condition i.e. suitable climate for jute cultivation, abundance of ponds for keeping the crop and the relative cheapness of labour, jute industry in any part of North Bengal did not turn into a plantation

enterprise like the tea industry. There was no hurdle in starting a plantation enterprise in this region with a combination of agriculture and industry as large quantities of jute was grown in this region but had no primary industrial infrastructure for starting a jute industry. One factor may have been the relative lack of power – coal was almost entirely absent in this region and there was no development of hydroelectricity. On the other hand there was no regional entrepreneurial group in this region. In North Bengal more or less ninety percent people depended on agriculture what is found from different census report. It should be mentioned that raw jute and output of the industry was exported to Europe and other oceanic countries and Calcutta and its adjoining areas enjoyed many advantages in terms of geographic as well as economic sphere. There was no such scope to the Colonial Government for starting a jute industry in North Bengal. It should also be mentioned that apart from Northern districts of Bengal, the Eastern Bengal region was the supplier of huge raw jutes to Calcutta from where jute could easily be exported to European countries. So, all these factors prompted the European and at a later stage, the Marwaris to invest in jute and with their capital jute mills were set up on the both sides of river Hooghly.⁷⁷ Presumably, existence of preconditions favourable to the growth of jute manufacturing industry in North Bengal was quite unthinkable.

TOBACCO PRODUCTION

Another cash crop which was grown in the districts of North Bengal was tobacco. This crop is found to be an important non-foodgrain crop of the agricultural economy. From the records it is believed that the first direct reference to tobacco in India is associated certain Portuguese Missionaries who introduced the plant and knowledge of its properties and its cultivation began in the beginning of the 17th century in Deccan plateau.⁷⁸ After the introduction of this crop during the reign of Akbar its cultivation speedily spread over the entire continent.⁷⁹ For a period of about 100 years, tobacco for commercial purposes was cultivated in Gujrat and Deccan areas, later on it spreaded to the rest of India. Like other parts of the world, tobacco passed through the period of persecution and its ultimate complete distribution through India was only an example of how rapidly this profitable new crop incorporated into the agricultural economy of India. Thus as a commercial crop tobacco cultivation became very popular in India. Although tobacco was grown in practically every district in British India, the important tracts were few in number and were situated in the provinces of Bengal, Madras, Bihar, Orissa, Burma and Bombay.⁸⁰ In Bengal the main tobacco growing areas were in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur and in the state of Cooch Behar.

Besides jute, tobacco was the most important cash crop of North Bengal. It was believed that the three Ts' e.g. Tea, Timber and Tobacco were the backbone of the economy of North Bengal. The favourable agro-climatic condition greatly assisted for largely extension of the cultivation of this cash crop in the two districts of North Bengal i.e. Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. Despite these two districts, in Dinajpur, Malda and Darjeeling more or less tobacco was cultivated. From the record it is found that tobacco cultivation in Malda, Dinajpur and Darjeeling was to be very limited extant and was grown for home consumption.⁸¹ It is to be mentioned that among the different crop plants tobacco holds an important position mainly for commercial non-food plant and an instrument of very high importance in economy. Because the traffic in

tobacco was large and the people made a good deal of money from it. Thus, tobacco became an important staple of North Bengal.

During the period under study Jalpaiguri was an important tobacco growing zone. It is quite relevant to mention the statement of J.F.Gruning. He ascribed that Tobacco was a very valuable crop and was grown largely in the western Duars and the best tobacco lands of Jalpaiguri district was lying between Tista and Torsa rivers.⁸² W.W. Hunter also mentioned in his Statistical Account of Bengal that good quality of tobacco was grown in Jalpaiguri district. According to W.W. Hunter the Baura area of Jalpaiguri produced superior quality of tobacco leaf and texture.⁸³ According to the report of the Deputy Commissioner of Duars that in the Terai and Duars tobacco grew splendidly and cultivators sown the first crop sown in the richly manured land begging tobacco. The District Census report of 1891 mentioned that tobacco was another special crop of great importance raised in Jalpaiguri district and its cultivation was very profitable. This report also mentioned that all lands however were not fit for tobacco cultivation; only the highlands were suited for tobacco.⁸⁴ D.H.E. Sunder mentioned that eight kinds of tobacco grown in Jalpaiguri District.⁸⁵ J.A. Milligan during his settlement operations in the Jalpaiguri District was not impressed about the state of agriculture in the Jalpaiguri region, but he mentioned that excellent tobacco was grown in Falakata Tehsil and in Patgram.⁸⁶ Thus it is to be mentioned that as Jalpaiguri was suited for the cultivation of this cash crop the Government greatly encouraged for the tobacco cultivation in this district. From the report of C.T. Metcalfe it is found that government was extremely interested for the cultivation of this commercial crop and tobacco cultivating lands were increased year by year.⁸⁷

Different varieties of tobacco grew in Jalpaiguri district. The great leaf or the lower leaves of the plant called *bispat* and the better kinds of leaf were known as *pakka-pat* and *hickat*. For the development of tobacco cultivation Colonel Haughton made some experiments of Virginia tobacco both in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts, but it resulted in failure.

The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri also devoted much attention to this subject. Thus the Britishers paid attention as they found a great prospect of this commercial crop and hoped that this crop could be run as a profitable commercial venture. In this respect it is quite pertinent to mention the view of C.T. Metcalfe, Esq officiating Commissioner of Cooch Behar who had seen a great prospect of trade of this commercial crop in the region under study. The officiating commissioner ascribed, "Tobacco grown in Jalpaiguri district, especially in the Duars was very fine, and when the amount of land available for its cultivation in the Duars, was remembered that it would be understood that tobacco trade was susceptible of being very largely opened up in Jalpaiguri district."⁸⁸ Besides the trading prospect, the commissioner also remarked that Jalpaiguri was the best place where Cigar manufactory could be established.⁸⁹ The tobacco of Duars was appreciated in different markets and most of the tobacco grown in Jalpaiguri district exported into Burma by the name of Rangpur tobacco and after manufacturing in Burma it came back to Calcutta as the best Burmese Cigars. Water carriage from the district of Jalpaiguri to Calcutta was easily and cheaply got by the Tista and Brahmaputra River. The gradual progress in the means of communication stimulated the tobacco trade and this sign of stimulation could easily be seen in tobacco cultivation. The statistical reporter of March 1876 reported that the cultivation of tobacco in the district largely increased. The tobacco packed up into bundles under gunny covers and forwarded by boat to Goalanda and thence to Calcutta by rail and it was also remarked that the value of this crop would greatly increase with the opening of the contemplated railway in this district.⁹⁰ The tobacco trade of Jalpaiguri district was chiefly in the hands of Arakanese who exported the leaves to Burma, where the Burmese Cheroots were made from tobacco leaves.⁹¹ Further, this crop was exported to Bhutan and also to Dacca and Calcutta.⁹² But this article passed through different hands for which the prices of tobacco also varied. Primarily the cultivators sold the produce to the *paikars* (an itinerant petty dealer) at his own door or at the nearest market and the latter able it to the nearest *goladar*, who exported

it in large quantities to the *arutdars*. D.H.E. Sunder mentioned that the chief markets of Jalpaiguri district for sale of tobacco were Falakata and Dhupguri where from a good quantities of tobacco exported during the tobacco season.⁹³ Tobacco of Jalpaiguri also exported by water to Sirajganj and other markets. J.F. Gruning mentioned that in the Patgram police circle, there were a number of merchants who carried on an extensive trade in tobacco and exported by way of the river to Dacca and other eastern market. From the report of C.T. Metcalfe it is found that the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri stated that in 1873, 30,000 maunds of tobacco was exported from Jalpaiguri district, valued Rs.1,80,000.⁹⁴ J.F. Gruning mentioned that for the year 1909 – 1910 the total production of tobacco in Jalpaiguri district was 10400 ton.⁹⁵

Tobacco was grown extensively in Cooch Behar state also. In the eastern portion of Cooch Behar State the crop formed one of the Staple crops. The chief localities where this crop grown were the southern and Western portions of the state. Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj, Sitai, Sitalkuchi, Western part of Dinhata, Sibpur were famous for producing good quality of tobacco. W.W. Hunter mentioned that in Cooch Behar state tobacco took about one sixth of the cultivated area and it became an established crop, grown extensively and produced and used by indigenous methods and equipments.⁹⁶ It is quite pertinent to mention that prior to the introduction of commercialization of agriculture by the Britishers, cultivation of tobacco for exportation was not unknown to the people of Cooch Behar. It is found that in the late 18th century tobacco already established itself as an important non-food grain crop of Cooch Behar for exportation. Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that during the time of Messieurs and Chauret (1788), the special commissioners appointed by the British Government, 40,000 maunds of tobacco was exported from the state of Cooch Behar.⁹⁷ As a cash crop tobacco cultivation was very profitable and the cultivators got a good deal of money and on the other hand with the opening of modern transport system i.e. the railway transportation, development of road transportation as well as the riverine facilities, the area under tobacco land gradually

extending year by year. The cultivation of this crop was very popular and was found to be an important non-food grain commercial crop of agricultural economy among the major crops. It is to be noted that tobacco was more paying both in terms of per unit of land as also per rupee of total investment. In consequence both the ruler of Cooch Behar and the Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar took initiative for tobacco cultivation. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that after 1773 a political negotiation was taken place between the Cooch Behar Raj and the East India Company. Writing on the official history of Cooch Behar, Harendra Narayan Choudhury stated that before the First Anglo-Bhutanese War (1772-74), the Bhutanese systematically took possession of a large number of 'taluks' (a land unit) in the western Duars which were formerly held in farm under Cooch Behar.⁹⁸ By the beginning of the 18th century the kingdom of Cooch Behar became very weak, and by 1765 Bhutan reigned practically supreme in Cooch Behar. Thus, to outwit the Bhutanese, the Cooch Behar raj entered into a treaty with the East Indian Company in 1773 and became virtually a feudatory state of the Company and after the queen's proclamation Cooch Behar became a princely state. Thus a good relation was established between the British Government and the Cooch Behar raj which also helped for the development of the Cooch Behar state. As it is mentioned that both the ruler of Cooch Behar and the British authority were not remained indifferent with regards to the cultivation of this commercial crop, the state encouragement and British appreciation was followed from the fact that a tobacco exhibition was held in Cooch Behar in August 1872 at which seven varieties all of them locally produced, were exhibited and prizes were given to several of the exhibitors.⁹⁹ It is also to be noted that Royal encouragement for tobacco cultivation may be mentioned from the writing of prince Nitendra Narayan (15th June 1915). He wrote that tobacco was a principal crop of Cooch Behar, and with a view to introduce in the state of Cooch Behar scientific methods of curing as followed in other countries, under the instruction of his father Maharaja Nipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, he went to Cornell University, New York where he specialized himself in

agriculture for sometime and he also went to Cuba, West Indies where he observed the method of the culture, curing and manufacture of the famous Havana tobacco. Nitendra Narayan also mentioned that Mr. I.B. Majumdar was deputed by his father to accompany him in his tours, a tobacco specialist who had already visited the different tobacco growing centres in Macedonia and Asia Minor, where the best Turkish tobacco came from.¹⁰⁰ The earliest attempt to improve Indian tobacco may be said to have begun with the establishment of Calcutta Botanical Garden where several types of tobacco were experimented in 1887.¹⁰¹ It should be mentioned that prior to the Britishers' experiment of tobacco in India experimental farm was established in Cooch Behar State in 1877 for scientific method of tobacco cultivation.¹⁰² Members of the royal family of Cooch Behar were entrusted for the supervision of that farm. But due to economic loss the farm closed with in a short time. But the efforts of the rulers of Cooch Behar for the development of tobacco cultivation were not stopped. Between 1905-1906 again an experimental farm was opened for tobacco cultivation in Cooch Behar state. During that time three kinds of American tobacco were sown viz. yellow prior, bright yellow and white. Among the three kinds of tobacco yellow prior tobacco was suitable in Cooch Behar. For the development of tobacco cultivation two American tobacco experts were appointed. The American tobacco experts of the Peninsular Company highly praised the tobacco of Cooch Behar state and remarked that they had seen in the market as the best Indian tobacco produced in Cooch Behar in 1909.¹⁰³ It was also stated in the Annual Administrative Report of the Cooch Behar state that the quality of the tobacco grown in the farms of Cooch Behar state to be almost as good as tobacco grown in America.¹⁰⁴ Several hundred maunds of yellow tobacco were successfully grown and cured from imported American seeds in Cooch Behar tobacco farms and sold to Madras, Munger, Rangpur and other factories. Several maunds of Sumatra tobacco were also grown at the Governmental Experimental farms in Cooch Behar.

Thus it is found that as a commercial non-food grain crop the cultivation of tobacco was encouraged both by the Britishers and the

Cooch Behar State. The prosperous *jotedars* in great number were very much interested to invest in tobacco. As a result year by year tobacco land increased in Cooch Behar and tobacco became the chief crop of Cooch Behar State. The Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar stated that during 1874 about 50,000 acres were cultivated with tobacco in Cooch Behar State. But C.T. Melcalfe's opinion regarding tobacco land was much below the rank of the Deputy Commission of Cooch Behar, though he acknowledged that the chief crop of the state was tobacco.¹⁰⁵ Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that during his tenure in 1902 the area under tobacco cultivation in Cooch Behar state was 105,898 bighas or about 35,000 acres which was a little above 7 percent of the cultivated and 5.2 percent of the total assessed area.¹⁰⁶ He also mentioned that the gross value about 26 lakhs of rupees which represented the amount of cash annually obtained by the people from this crop. He calculated that deducting a half of this for cost of cultivation the net income derived by the farmer was 13 lakhs of rupees.¹⁰⁷ From this statement one cannot denied of its economic value. The tobacco of Cooch Behar mainly exported through the merchants of Eastern Bengal to abroad. The main centres of tobacco trade were Manikganj, Narayanganj and Sirajganj. The merchants of Eastern Bengal purchased the tobacco of Cooch Behar from different *hats* of Cooch Behar viz. Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj, Sitai, Dinjata, Haldibari. Through river one lakh maund of tobacco exported every year to Dacca and Murshidabad.¹⁰⁸ It should be mentioned that tobacco trade was run entirely on credit and many persons were tempted to enter the trade as commission agents on traders. Hence, of course, they have to face tough competition from the old established middlemen, such middlemen were not only known to the tobacco growers but were also very sound in the trade with their long professional standing. Obviously, they did not like the entry of the new-comers. To prevent them, therefore, they adopted many malpractices and there by do not allow the new comers to stabilize in the trade. Thus, they just try to monopolize the trade. Thus it is clear that tobacco trade was a monopoly of the tobacco traders. Mathabhanga was famous for tobacco trade and the trade was

mostly conducted through the ports of Brahmaputra, Manikganj and Narayanganj. From Kalikaganj Bandar at Mathabhanga the quantity of tobacco exported abroad was 11285 maund in 1901-02 and the total quantity of tobacco exported through Kalikaganj Bandar in 1911-12 was 38,555 maund.¹⁰⁹ Thus it is found that within a decade tobacco exported three times and above from Kalikaganj, indicated how tobacco trade was extensively increased in Cooch Behar State. Mekhliganj was an important tobacco trade centre. Besides Mekhliganj, Lalbazar was also an important tobacco producing area and tobacco trade centre. The Burmese merchants annually took away thousands of maunds of tobacco from Mekhliganj and Lalbazar. In 1876 its export to Burma was valued at Rs.10 lakhs.¹¹⁰ Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that during his time in 1902, 400,000 maunds of tobacco was exported to Burma valued Rs.20,00,000.¹¹¹ The Burmese merchants used to come to Mekhliganj to purchase tobacco leaves and send those for Rangoon and other Burmese ports. A good quantity of tobacco also exported from Shibpur, Gosanimari, Chaurahat and Dinhata. Dinhata had its tobacco trade mostly along the Sahebganj, Gosanimari and Rangpur road. It is to be noted that the tobacco was exported in a raw condition in bundles by country boats through Dhurla, Tista, Curtoa and Mahanadi rivers principally to Calcutta and neighbouring districts. Regarding tobacco trade it should also be mentioned that tobacco was very rarely exported by railway, as frequent trans-shipments damage the leaves, and deteriorate the quality. Thus, it is found that tobacco became a profitable commercial crop in Cooch Behar and from Cooch Behar its exportation was abundant. It is to be mentioned that tobacco which was the most widely grown commercial non-food grain became an instrument of very high importance in the economy of Cooch Behar. The cultivators eager to cultivate this cash crop to meet the land revenue of the state. In this connection it is quite pertinent to mention that statement of colonel Haughton who remarked that the ryots mainly depended upon the tobacco crop to pay their rents in the Cooch Behar division.¹¹² Though the peasants cultivated this cash crop to meet the land revenue, the gradual

expansion of tobacco land and its abundant exportation flourished the economy of Cooch Behar.

The table shows for a period of tobacco cultivation in North Bengal and the total production of tobacco in Bengal for the year 1873-74.

Tobacco in Bengal 1873-74 Total area in acres / last 5 years	Producing District	Average area under cultivation in acres / last 5 years	Annual exports in maund
20,000	Cooch Behar	24000	287500
	Jalpaiguri	30000	30000
	Darjeeling	24	Nil
	Dinajpur	20000	30000
	Malda	1240	Nil
Total		75264	

Source: Report on the cultivation and curing of tobacco in Bengal, No.3725,
Dt. Calcutta, 29th December 1874, P - Appendix - A

And

Report of Govt. of Bengal, Agricultural Department, Cooch Behar
Division, No.144T, dt. The 21st August 1873, P.53.

From the table it is seen that during the year 1873-74 the total area of tobacco cultivation in Bengal was 2,00,000 acres and out of this 75,264 acres area tobacco was cultivated in North Bengal. The table shows that Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar were the major tobacco growing area of North Bengal. The table shows that 20,000 acres were under tobacco in Dinajpur. But in the later years the area under tobacco land had not been increased rather it gradually decreased. Though in 1873-74 from Dinajpur 30,000 maunds of tobacco was exported, but in the later years no remarkable figure of exportation of tobacco from Dinajpur is found. Its cultivation rapidly confined almost for local consumption and little of it was exported. Because the quality of the tobacco produced in Dinajpur was very inferior.¹¹³ F.W. Strong mentioned that during his time tobacco was principally grown in Parbatipur, Chirirbandar, Parkerhat, Khansama and Birganj thana (all are now in Bangladesh) and the area under tobacco land was 9,800 acres in 1910 and very little maunds of tobacco was exported i.e. 20,000 maund in the direction of Rangpur where it was used for *hooka* smoking.¹¹⁴ Malda and Darjeeling had no remarkable tobacco

land. The table shows that in 1873-74 the area under tobacco in Malda and Darjeeling were respectively 1,240 acres and only 24 acres. From the two districts no exportation was done and in the later years also any exportation is found from these districts. G.E. Lambourn remarked that tobacco grew in Malda as a garden crop for local consumption and the normal area under tobacco crop being 10,000 acres.¹¹⁵ In the later years tobacco land in Malda further decreased. The district statistic mentioned that in 1930 the area under tobacco land in Malda decreased by only 4,000 acres.¹¹⁶ It is found that Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar where tobacco cultivation and its exportation was extensively increased as both these areas produced good qualities of tobacco leaves. According to J.F. Gruning the total area under tobacco cultivation in 1901-02 in Jalpaiguri was 112,900 acres and in 1907-08 the area of tobacco land mentioned by him was 119,400 acres.¹¹⁷ It has already been mentioned that during 1902 the area of tobacco land in Cooch Behar was 35,000 acres and from Cooch Behar large quantity of tobacco was exported. From the records it is found that in the year 1913-14 the area under tobacco cultivation in Bengal was 318,000 acres and out of this 203,000 acres tobacco land was in North Bengal.¹¹⁸ During the period under study tobacco growing areas were greatly expanded both in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. It should be mentioned in this connection that besides Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, Rangpur of the Rajshahi division was also an important tobacco producing area. From Rangpur several thousands maunds of tobacco was exported to Burma.

Thus, it is found that the Britishers for their own commercial interest encouraged the tobacco cultivation in India. Repeated and persistent efforts have been made by the British Government since 1786, when Colonel Robert Kyd, in his letter proposing the establishment of the Botanical gardens at Calcutta referred to the improvement of tobacco as a desirable measure fit for export to the European market.¹¹⁹ The Britishers tried to improve the growth and curing of the leaf by the importation of skilled growers and cures from Manilla or elsewhere.¹²⁰ According to the Government Report which roughly estimated the gross annual value of

the tobacco harvest of Bengal during the period under study was 1,00,00,000 maund per year and Burma was the main consumer of Bengal tobacco. In the area under study it is found that bulk of the tobacco exported from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and the tobacco of the Duars was highly appreciated in different markets. Thus a proposal was placed by the officiating commissioner of Cooch Behar for the establishment of a Cigar manufactory in the Duars. However, during the prior under study any effort had been taken by the Colonial Government in this regard. It is seen that the rulers of Cooch Behar had taken much initiative and tried their best for the improvement of tobacco cultivation in Cooch Behar. With the active participation of the rulers of Cooch Behar for the development of tobacco cultivation scientific method of curing was introduced, even specialists of tobacco from foreign countries were appointed in the state farm of Cooch Behar. As a result good qualities of American tobacco were produced in the state farms of Cooch Behar which acquired high prices in comparison to indigenous product. In this connection it is to be mentioned that in 1911-12 the average price of Cooch Behar State produced farms of American tobacco was Rs.35 to 60 per maund against Rs.5 to 10 per maund of the indigenous product grown by the cultivators.¹²¹ Succeeding in this field the rulers of Cooch Behar saw an aspiration for the establishment of tobacco factory in Cooch Behar State, but no response had been seen from the Government.¹²² Thus, the sum total effect of the cultivation of this commercial crop was that it remained as a commercial crop merely for exportation. It is to be mentioned that the economic policy of the Colonial Government was to flourish their homeland taking raw materials for their industries from the colonies and industries were permitted to grow in colonies only so far as they did not compete with those of their homeland.¹²³ Thus it is no wonder that the Colonial Government could support in this respect, because in Virginia good qualities of tobacco grew and the Britishers had already established Cigar manufacturing industry in their homeland. Though, the basic policy of the Colonial Government was free trade which encouraged the activities of exporting raw materials for the industries of

their country. But in case of tobacco the picture was quite different as the demand of Indian tobacco in Europe was insignificant. In this connection it is quite relevant to mention the report of J.E. O'Connor. According to the report that little was Indian tobacco known in the English market, due to badly prepared and the English dealers would not look at it. The report also mentioned that nearly the whole of the tobacco produced in India was consumed in the country and the great bulk of it in the district in which it was grown and small quantities were transported to the neighbouring districts where the cultivation was not extensive.¹²⁴ Further, regarding its exportation the Report stated that Bengal exported tobacco in a small way to the Trans-Himalayan Country on its Northern frontier and to the Central provinces on the South west and in large quantities to Burma. Thus, the demand of tobacco of Bengal as well as North Bengal was insignificant to the European traders. It is to be mentioned that from India for the period 1871-72 a very little amount of tobacco was exported about 9,500 cwt valued in all at Rs.21,000.¹²⁵ The Britishers in India for the introduction of Tea, Chinchona, Rhee and Cotton which were all new industries did not hesitate to act as a pioneer and incur great expense in clearing the way for private enterprise. But tobacco was no new industry and it had been grown in India from a longtime ago and its cultivation was widely expanded. So, to make tobacco a profitable article of export to European market the Government could and should encourage and sustain the well directed efforts by which industry may be taken deep root in the region of our study. But that could not be happened from the Colonial sides. However, tobacco industry had been laid by the establishment of Rangpur Tobacco Company in 1909, financed and managed by Indians in Rangpur district of Rajshahi division.¹²⁶

RICE PRODUCTION AND RICE MILL

In the predominated agricultural economy of North Bengal, rice formed the staple agricultural product. But the state of rice production was not remarkable and the low prices of rice did not alter even after the advent of the British in the area under study. It is found that due to large traffic cash crops like jute, tobacco etc. grew extensively in this region from the second half of the nineteenth century. It is also mentioned that from the second half of the nineteenth century a rapid development started in tea garden industries in the northern parts of North Bengal. Due to this an influx of population increased the demand of rice. It was the modern communication system i.e. the construction of metalled roads, the inauguration of railways brought a revolution in the production of agricultural crops in this region. Thus, from the second half of the nineteenth century like the cash crops a considerable extension in rice cultivation also started in this region under study. Though paddy is primarily a consumption crop but it played a cash crop in a few district of north and central Bengal.¹²⁷

When Darjeeling was first taken over by the British administration the Terai was to some extent under plains cultivation. From the middle of the nineteenth century expansion of rice cultivation was rapid in Darjeeling district, but in the hilly portion of the district it was not grown extensively as that of the plains. W.W. Hunter ascribed that in 1870s a considerable extension had taken place in the area under rice cultivation in Darjeeling district.¹²⁸ It is to be mentioned that due to the rapid growth and development of tea gardens both in hill and Terai, the jungle lands of the Terai's were being rapidly taken up for rice cultivation for the influx population of the tea gardens both in hill and Terai areas. For the development of rice cultivation an attempt was made to introduce Carolina rice into the district. The picture was almost the same in Jalpaiguri district also. W.W. Hunter mentioned that the report of the Deputy Commissioner remarked that since its annexation of the western Duars portion of the district in 1864, the area under rice cultivation had

very considerably extended in Jalpaiguri district.¹²⁹ He further stated that rice land extended in the district owing to the influx of new settlers from Cooch Bihar and Rangpur district.¹³⁰ It is recoded that in 1892-93 36,288 people emigrated to Jalpaiguri from Cooch Behar.¹³¹ Maynaguri, Falakata, Ambari-Falakata, Rajganj, Dhupguri, Kumargram, Debiganj, Bhotepatty and Alipurduar were the chief rice produced area of Jalpaiguri District. In Cooch Behar state paddy grew all over the state. However, in Cooch Behar there were some special tracts known for the excellence and abundance of this agro crop. In this context mention should be made Western portion of Mekhliganj, Northern portion of Mathabhanga, North of Cooch Behar and almost the whole of Pargana Tufanganj, for well known paddy produced areas. W.W. Hunter mentioned a very considerable extension of rice cultivation in Cooch Behar and during his time the area under rice doubled within two decades.¹³² In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that from the early years rice was an important agro crop of the agricultural economy of Cooch Behar. Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that in the late eighteenth century 100000 maunds of rice was exported from Cooch Behar state.¹³³ From the seventies of the nineteenth century rice cultivation extensively started in Malda district. W.W. Hunter mentioned that during his time there were 250,000 acres of land under rice cultivation in Malda district.¹³⁴ The low land of Gajole Thana, Bholahat, Kashimpur, Chandipur, Jalapur, Sujapur, Dhantola, Mahadipur were the chief rice produced areas of Malda district. Of the region under study Dinajpur was specially famous for its rice production. As a great crop of Dinajpur Dr. Buchanan Hamilton mentioned that in the beginning of the nineteenth century different varieties of rice grew in Dinajpur district.¹³⁵ Raiganj, Hemtabad, Bansihari, Balurghat, Gangarampur, Kushmandi, Kaliyaganj were the important rice produced areas of Dinajpur district. It should be mentioned in this context that the fertility of the soil of Dinajpur district was very high than that of other areas of North Bengal. Of this district ninety one percent people engaged in agriculture and rice covered some 68.7 percent of the net cropped area.¹³⁶

Thus it is found that except the hill portion all the areas of North Bengal were suitable for rice production. The greater part of North Bengal covered with very fertile land and varieties of fine rice grew abundantly. It is quite pertinent to mention that of the districts of North Bengal rice grew abundantly in Dinajpur and Malda and both these two districts possessed great advantages of water communication for the exportation of this agro-crop. The geographical advantage of the cheap river traffic with Calcutta, carried by boats to and from these districts facilitated the export and import trade. Thus it is found that great trade of rice conducted through the riverine route of the various river marts of Malda and Dinajpur. In this riverine trade most of the traffics passed through Sahibganj, the registration station up and down the Ganges to Calcutta. It is to be mentioned that in 1872 the total quantity of rice passed through Sahibganj from Dinajpur and Malda district amounted to 1,628,794 maunds or 59,625 tons, and in 1873 to 1,538,898 maunds or 56,334 tons, but in 1874 due to famine the failure of the aman harvest caused the decreased of the exportation to no more than 53,275 maund or 1950 tons.¹³⁷ However, another report highlighted that the combined exports of Paddy from Dinajpur and Malda to be much higher in normal years 1872 and 1873 at 17 to 18 lakhs of maunds.¹³⁸ It is quite pertinent to mention that of the export of rice from the two districts, the maximum of it grew within the limits of Dinajpur district. The Statistic of the export of 1873 showed that out of 1,538,898 maunds or 56,334 tons of which 407,489 maunds or 14,917 tons were exported only from Malda district.¹³⁹ It is to be mentioned that Malda was a rice produce surplus district and even in the later years also from Malda a good quantities of rice was exported. It is recorded that approximately 3 lakhs of maunds of rice were exported annually of which 50,000 maunds came from undivided Dinajpur district.¹⁴⁰ Besides, the particular mentioned period in ordinary years also it is found that through Sahibganj the greater portion of the rice exported from Dinajpur. Nitpur on the Purnabhaha, Raiganj on the Kulik, Asani on the Tangan and Kalkamara on the Tangon, Kumarganj, Chandganj, Patiram, Balurghat and Hili were the important marts where from large

quantities of rice exported to Calcutta. It is evident that annually 29 to 32 lakhs of maunds of Paddy exported by railway from different stations of undivided Dinajpur district.¹⁴¹ Further, Gopalganj which did not appear in the Sahibganj returns, was a large mart and from that mart 180,000 maunds or 6589 tons of rice exported annually.¹⁴² Of the total surplus rice of Malda and Dinajpur, the great bulk of the rice were sent to up country and one half of the rice consigned to the North Western provinces. Besides, the rice of Dinajpur and Malda also exported to Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. W.W. Hunter mentioned that during his time the quantity of rice exported from Dinajpur to up country was 1,700,000 to 1,800,000 maunds or from 62,232 to 65,892 tons exclusive of the Malda rice.¹⁴³ It is also to be mentioned that the rice exported through different marts of Dinajpur, the whole of that were however, not only Dinajpur produce. A great deal of the rice of the west and the south – west of Rangpur district also collected at Dinajpur marts on the Atrai and Karatoya rivers and so sent to Calcutta. It is to be noted that the traffic from the Atrai river to Calcutta was transported almost entirely down the Matabhanga river and if the Matabhanga got dry it exported by way of the Eastern Bengal Railway. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that Patiram, Kumarganj, Chandganj and Balurghat were all on the Atrai River in Dinajpur district. In 1873, the total export of rice from these marts was 1,500,000 maunds or 54,910 tons of that, 800,000 to 1,000,000 maunds or 29,285 to 36,607 tons were consigned down the Matabhanga river to Calcutta. In that year it is also known that 200,000 maunds or 7,321 tons of rice was conveyed by the Eastern Bengal Railway.¹⁴⁴ Hili which was the than period in Bogra district largely exported Dinajpur rice. In 1873 120,000 maunds or 4392 tons rice was exported from the large rice mart of Hili. It is to be mentioned that the statistics of the river traffic of Jalpaiguri district for the six month ending February 1876, no rice or paddy was exported and from Cooch Behar a very little amount of rice was exported amounted 502 maunds and according to the estimate of the native merchants the value of the export of rice in 1876 was £10,000.¹⁴⁵ Thus, it is found that in the second half of

the nineteenth century exportation of rice was very insignificant in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that during the second half of the nineteenth century both in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar jute cultivation extensively extended due to the high prices of this cash crop. Thus, the cultivation of this agro crop suffered a set back during that period in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. It is to be noted that most of the expansion of jute took place in the Duars area of the Jalpaiguri district, but significant expansion also took place in the regulation or permanently settled part. In many areas this expansion took place at the expense of food crops. In the regulation part of the district, for example, 25 percent of the area which previously grew bhadoi rice came to grow jute by the first decade of the twenty century.¹⁴⁶ It is found that in 1901-02 the land under rice cultivation measured 637,000 acres but in 1907-08 the acreage decreased to 631,600 acres.¹⁴⁷ In 1907-08, the price of jute was very high in Jalpaiguri district and the cultivators grew large quantities of jute. But the price of jute fell and they did not make much profit what they had expected. Thus from that period there was a tendency of the cultivators to restrict the area under jute and to grow more rice in Jalpaiguri district.¹⁴⁸ However, the production of this agro-crop in Jalpaiguri district was not sufficient to meet the local demand and thus rice had to be imported from the major rice producing district of Dinajpur and from other provinces and neighbouring counties. The cheapest quality of rice also obtained from Ceylon to meet the demand of rice eating immigrant population in the Duars.¹⁴⁹ In this context it is to be mentioned that due to the rapid extension of tea gardens there was an influx of the population in the Western Duars as well as Jalpaiguri and the local supply of rice was not sufficient to meet the demand of the population. J.F. Gruning stated that the local supply of rice was insufficient to meet the increased demand of the large tea garden population, and thus rice was imported in considerable quantities from Dinajpur.¹⁵⁰ Besides Dinajpur, a considerable quantities of rice also imported from Rangpur to meet the demand.¹⁵¹

With the development of modern communication system i.e. the construction of roads all over North Bengal as well as with the opening of railways, area of rice cultivation was extensively extended and exportation of this agro-crop was also increased in North Bengal. It is to be mentioned that in Malda the opening of railways has given a value to land, practically value less a few years ago, rice cultivation was extended.¹⁵² In 1917, the area under rice land was 524,000 acres in Malda, in undivided Dinajpur district it covered an area of 998,700 acres or 79.6 percent of the net cropped area in 1911, in Cooch Behar state it was 7,79,000 bighas under rice in 1902, in Jalpaiguri district it was 637,000 acres in 1901 under rice, in Darjeeling district the area under rice in the Terai was 49,523 acres or 79 percent in 1925, in Kalimpong Estate the area under rice was 8,204 acres or 13.4 percent and in the Hill area of the whole Tista area, the area under rice was 528 acres or 3.3 percent in 1920.

The table shows the total area of agricultural land and total area of Paddy cultivation in different districts of North Bengal for the year 1915-16.

District	Total area of agricultural land (in acres)	District	Total area of paddy cultivation land (in acres)
Dinajpur	2525,440	Dinajpur	1174,000
Jalpaiguri	1868,160	Jalpaiguri	709,600
Darjeeling	744,960	Darjeeling	42,600
Malda	1215,360	Malda	598,000

Source : Agricultural Statistics of Bengal for 1915-16, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1917, p.11

It is to be mentioned that though jute ruled very high price in North Bengal and rice cultivation suffered a set back in some areas of North Bengal, the picture is somehow different in Malda and Dinajpur. In undivided Dinajpur inspite of the rise in importance of Jute, during the period under study rice was by far the most important crop of Dinajpur and Dinajpur was the chief rice growing and exporting district of North Bengal. The Commissioner of Rajshahi and Cooch Behar Division

remarked referring to Dinajpur rice exportation in 1880 that grain trade used to be carried on during rainy season only by boat from Dinajpur but with the opening of North Bengal State Railway the trade lasts all the year now.¹⁵³ It is found that with the inauguration of railway the picture was changed in inter-regional or inland trade of rice. Between 1900 and 1920 the ratio of the quantum's of the inland rice trade by country boat and railway fell from 11:7 to 5:15.¹⁵⁴ This agro-crop was exported to a greater or less extent from every important mart of North Bengal and every railway station was a collecting centre. Hili, Raiganj, Naxalbari, Matigara, Jalpaiguri, Haldibari and Cooch Behar became the principle trade marts and collecting centres of rice of North Bengal. It should be mentioned in this context that the Terai routes through Naxalbari and Adhikari did not carry any exports of rice but both these stations were important for importing considerable quantities of rice. From these two stations annually 100,000 maunds or 3,663 tons of rice imported.¹⁵⁵ In 1909-10 nearly six lakhs of maund husked and un-husked rice exported from Dinajpur by rail. Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that with the opening of railways in Cooch Behar state a considerable quantities of rice exported from different parts of Cooch Behar.¹⁵⁶ It is to be mentioned that Galgalia which is 29 miles from Siliguri just inside the Bihar border and only a mile from the border of Nepal, was a depot for paddy from Nepal and supplied rice to the whole Darjeeling district. The annual exports of rice and paddy from this station was about 14 thousand tons.¹⁵⁷ The trade of rice through Galgalia was railed to Siliguri and other stations on the main Darjeeling – Himalayan Railway. It is to be mentioned that the tea garden population of Jalpaiguri was accustomed to get rice locally from the villagers and if it was deficiency in the local supply, then to import inferior quality of rice. It is significant to note that in the later years also Jalpaiguri figured among the rice deficit district of Bengal. However, a little quantity of rice exported from Jalpaiguri district. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that by railway in 1919 the export of rice from Jalpaiguri district was amounted 17,000 maunds.¹⁵⁸ It is also to be mentioned that during the month of Sept. 1920 by the Bengal Duars

Railway the total amount of rice and paddy exported from Jalpaiguri to different districts of Eastern Bengal were 1,262 maunds and 1,696 maunds respectively.¹⁵⁹

It is quite relevant to enquire as to who controlled the trade of this agro-crop. In this context it is to be mentioned that rice had a multi-dimensional market structure extending from the village '*hat*' at the micro-level to the national market. Most of the internal trade of this agro-crop was carried on at the local markets or bi-weekly markets called *hats*. The *Paikars* who were all local men purchased this agro-crop from the cultivators and sold those off to the merchants. Sometimes the *Paikar* happened to be the cultivators himself, who sold his own crop as also those of his neighbours to the merchants. The merchants were very often petty traders. The Marwaris in a great number and in some little extent the up countrymen and the Bengalee Saha community controlled the upper strata of this trade.¹⁶⁰ The local grain dealers controlled the rice husking which was an important industry of North Bengal under study. Large quantities of cleaned rice prepared in different villages of North Bengal and the labours connected with this industry were almost entirely up country cooly women. But this husking industry greatly declined its importance in the later years as it is found expensive than machinery process. Thus un-husked rice was most commonly exported from different parts of North Bengal as the husking process was being performed elsewhere by machinery at reduced costs. It is quite relevant to mention that the successful commercial application of rice hullers in Bengal started some times in the 1890s and the mechanical processing of rice had started in Bengal sometime in the early nineteenth with small hullers operated by steam engines.¹⁶¹ But in the area under study upto 1920-1921 there did not emerge a single rice mill.

The following table shows the development of rice mill in North Bengal.
Development of Rice Mill in North Bengal

Year	Total number of Rice Mill in Bengal	Total number of Rice Mill in North Bengal
1920-21	137	Dinajpur - N.A. Jalpaiguri - N.A. Bogura - 3 Bakarganj - 1 Rajshahi - 1 Total - 5
1934-35	403	Dinajpur - 30 Malda - 2 Jalpaiguri - 1 Darjeeling - 5 Bogura - 2 Bakarganj - 4 Rajshahi - 2 Total - 46

Source : i) Report of the Census of India - 1921, Vol.V, Part-I, pp.408-409

ii) Report on the Marketing of rice in Bengal Senior Marketing Officer, Bengal, Appendix - XII, As reproduced in the Report of the Bengal Paddy and Rice Enquiry Committee Vol.I, Bengal Government Press, Alipore-1940, Chairman, M. Carbery, P.14

From the table it is found that upto 1921 there emerged 137 Rice Mill in Bengal of which there were only 5 located in the greater North Bengal and no Rice Mill emerged in the area under study during that period. After 1921 Rice Mill gradually emerged in the area under study and upto 1935 it is found from the table that of the total Rice Mill of Bengal i.e. 403 there were 46 located in greater North Bengal of which 38 was located in the area under study. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that rice milling industry of Dinajpur offered a case in point. It is to be mentioned that the industry though a late origin in this district had rapid progress within a short period. From the table it is found that upto 1921 there did not emerge a single Rice Mill in undivided Dinajpur but within fifteen years the table shows that there emerged 30 Rice Mill in the undivided Dinajpur. Needless to say that in the pre partition era there were 43 Rice Mill in Dinajpur district. Due to partition 24 now belonged to East Pakistan and remaining 17 mills belonged to the newly constructed

Dinajpur district. It is to be mentioned that 10 out of 17 mills belonged to West Dinajpur district which were located at Hili close to the border of Pakistan.¹⁶² In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that in the pre partition era due to the locational advantage of Dinajpur, rice mills got the abundant supplies of raw materials. Dinajpur mills had been mainly fed by the paddy coming from the districts of Bogura and Rangpur in addition to the local supplies of the district and the rice produced by these mills was regularly sent to the market of Bihar and North Western provinces.

It is found that in the area under study rice milling industry originated late in comparison to other parts of Bengal. After 1921 Dinajpur (undivided) flourished in rice milling Industry. Besides Dinajpur, during the period there emerged only one rice mill in Jalpaiguri district and two in Malda district, five in Darjeeling district and in Cooch Behar state there emerged not a single rice mill, though some of the areas of North Bengal were found surplus areas of rice production. In this context it is to be mentioned that the negligible growth of the rice milling industry in North Bengal region particularly in Jalpaiguri district and Cooch Behar State was perhaps attributable to the increasing importance of the cultivation of jute in these areas. It is also to be mentioned that the geographical advantage of a cheap river traffic of Malda district with Calcutta carried by boats to and from the district was remained the cheapest method of transport caused for not significant emergence of rice milling industry in Malda district. Thus, it is found that though rice was commercially cultivated, like the other industries rice milling industries were not developed in the area under study in a remarkable figure in comparison to the other parts of Bengal.

The following tables show the price of rice in Bengal and North Bengal.

Average price of common rice in Bengal per maund of 82.28 lbs.

Year	Price		Year	Price		Year	Price	
	Rs.	a.		Rs.	a.		Rs.	a.
1901	3	11	1911	3	12	1921-22	6	0
1902	3	6	1912	4	3	1922-23	5	8
1903	3	1	1913	5	5	1923-24	5	8
1904	2	15	1914	5	10	1924-25	6	7
1905	3	4	1915	5	13	1925-26	7	0
1906	4	12	1916	5	7	1926-27	7	3
1907	5	7	1917	4	11	1927-28	7	8
1908	5	8	1918	4	3	1928-29	6	10
1909	4	10	1919	7	6	1929-30	6	0
1910	3	10	1920	7	4	1930-31	6	0
						1931-32	4	1
						1932-33	3	5
						1933-34	2	10

Source : Report of the Bengal Paddy and Rice Enquiry Committee, Vol.I, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Chairman M. Carbery, 1940, p.24

Average price of common Rice in North Bengal per maund during the year
1875 to 1896

Names of places and prices of information	1875			1876			1877			1878			1879			1880		
	Rs.	A.	P.															
Matigara hat, mahajan's account																		
Siliguri sub-jail																2	6	4
Jalpaiguri jail	2	8	4	3	1	1	2	13	1	3	0	6	2	14	0	1	13	6
Alipur sub-jail																1	12	0
Rangpur from the settlement of Joydeb taluk	2	6	0	1	15	0	2	6	0	3	8	0	3	2	0	1	12	0
Dinajpur from Calcutta Gazette	1	8	6	1	9	6	1	7	0	2	10	0	2	14	10	1	11	0
Bogra from Calcutta Gazette	1	9	6	1	8	0	1	11	0	2	14	0	3	1	11	1	7	0
Jaipur settlement record	1	5	3	1	4	11	1	5	11	1	14	0						
Total	9	5	7	9	6	6	9	11	0	13	15	3	12	0	9	10	13	10

1881			1882			1883			1884			1885			1886			1887			1888		
8			9			10			11			12			13			14			15		
Rs.	A.	P.																					
2	6	8	2	5	2	2	0	3	2	12	0	2	6	6	2	4	0	1	14	5	2	3	0
1	12	4	1	13	11	2	4	5	2	8	7	2	11	0	2	0	1	1	15	2	1	15	11
2	1	0	2	1	2	2	9	0	3	0	10	2	14	4	2	6	8	2	11	4	2	8	0
2	0	0							3	8	0	3	2	0	1	12	0	2	3	0	2	12	0
1	4	9	2	7	9	2	0	0	2	9	0	2	7	3	1	13	6	1	12	3	1	13	0
1	2	6	1	6	0	1	13	0	2	10	6	2	6	0	1	13	0	1	10	6	1	11	0
10	11	3	9	2	0	10	10	8	17	0	11	15	14	9	12	1	3	12	2	8	12	15	11

1889			1890			1891			1892			1893			1894			1895			1896			
16			17			18			19			20			21			22			23			
Rs.	A.	P.																						
						2	1	0	9	3	1	0	3	9	0	2	9	11	2	10	1	3	5	3
3	1	2	2	1	3	7	3	6	2	4	2	6	3	13	4	3	5	9	3	7	4			
2	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	4	9	3	2	11	2	12	11	2	7	9	2	5	6			
2	8	0																						
3	3	0	3	2	0	3	8	0	3	14	0	3	9	6	3	5	4					3	6	9
2	6	3	2	5	0	2	7	9	3	3	0	3	1	0	2	15	6	2	9	0	2	14	11	
2	7	0	2	6	0	2	7	6	3	4	0	3	3	0	2	12	0	2	6	0	3	1	0	
									2	11	4	2	15	5	2	13	4	2	5	5				
15	1	5	12	1	7	16	6	1	23	6	9	23	0	2	20	5	7	15	11	4	12	11	11	

Source : Final Report on the Darjeeling Terai Settlement By Sasi Bhusan Dutt, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1898, P-Appendix IV, E.

Average price of Rice in the district of North Bengal in 1899 (from July to December).

District		Quantities per rupee in seers	
		S.	C.
Dinajpur	July to September	16	13 ¹ / ₃
Jalpaiguri		15	9 ¹ / ₃
Dinajpur	October to December	17	10 ² / ₃
Jalpaiguri		14	5 ¹ / ₃

Source : Price lists of Staple food crops in the local areas of Bengal, prepared under Section 39(1) of the Bengal Tenancy Act, VIII of 1885, 1899, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1900, p.3

Average Price of Rice in the districts of North Bengal in 1922 (from January to December)

District	Local areas	Marts which prices were taken	Quantities per rupee in seers (average price)	
			S.	C.
From January to March 1922				
Dinajpur	Balurghat	Balurghat	7	8
Jalpaiguri	Alipurduars	Alipurduars	8	6
	Sadar	Dinbazar	7	9
Malda	District of Malda	Balia Nawabganj	7	9
From April to June 1922				
Dinajpur	Balurghat	Balurghat	7	9
Jalpaiguri	Alipurduars	Alipurduars	7	10
	Sadar	Dinbazar	6	13
Malda	District of Malda	Balia Nawabganj	6	11
From July to September 1922				
Dinajpur	Balurghat	Balurghat	7	1
Jalpaiguri	Alipurduars	Alipurduars	7	0
	Sadar	Dinbazar	6	9
Malda	District of Malda	Balia Nawabganj	6	10
From October to December 1922				
Dinajpur	Balurghat	Balurghat	8	7
Jalpaiguri	Alipurduars	Alipurduars	8	0
	Sadar	Dinbazar	6	10
Malda	District of Malda	Balia Nawabganj	8	0

Source : Price lists of Staple Food Crops in the local areas of Bengal, 1922, Prepared under Section 39(1) of the Bengal Tenancy Act. VIII of 1885, Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1923, pp.3-4

TIMBER AND BAMBOO PRODUCTION

North Bengal region was covered with plentiful natural resources of dense forest. As the consequent of the Charter Act of 1833 the arrival of the free traders saw this region the prospects of this natural resources. It should be mentioned that economic exploitation of forest wealth for shipbuilding, East India Company was quite aware of the commercial potentialities of the timber. It is in the late 18th century the English traders paid attention to timber trade when they acquired the legal authority of the administration of Purnia region. In a letter dt. 13th August 1790 S. Heatly, Collector of Purnia, reported that the timber was one of the principal items from Nepal and the value of this import to Purnia, as per his estimate, was Rs. 70,000.¹⁶³ In 1797 Captain Hiran Cox, British Resident at Rangoon testified the durability of Burma teak ships. It is to be mentioned that Sal, Pine and Fir trees suitable for masts and spars of ships and also for other purposes were objects of pressing necessity to the Colonial interests of the company. These were imported from Burma at highly expensive prices. It was apprehended that supply of timber from Burma might receive serious setback. So, the company now turned towards Nepal. In 1801 Captain Cox, the first British Resident at Kathmandu, was instructed to endeavour to obtain the privileges of cutting and transporting timber on a contractual basis if he found the government of Nepal disinclined to come to terms over the cession of the forest lands.¹⁶⁴ Francis Buchanan has given a graphic narrative of the timber trade between Purnia and Nepal during the year 1809-10. He mentioned that the timber floated down the Kosi from Nepal. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton also mentioned the timber trade from Nepal. He wrote that as the woods of Bhutan were exhausted as those in the Company's territory, so that the greater part of the timber was brought from Nepal.¹⁶⁵ Huge quantity of timber was floated by various branches of the Kankayi into the Mahananda. For the timber trade a duty of four rupees on each boat loaded with timber was taken by the government of

Nepal.¹⁶⁶ It is found that in 1833 the Nepal Durbar asserted Rs.10 lakhs as revenue yielded by Terai regions out of which Rs.3 lakhs was from the timber of the Terai regions.¹⁶⁷ Thus it is not easy to deny that there was an extensive trade of timber from Nepal by the merchants of the East India Company. In the second half of the 19th century the import of timber from Nepal to India assumed a spectacular dimension. But from 1868 the Nepal Darbar employed their own officials to cut down timber which was afterwards sold by auction at different depots. It appears that by 1877 timber was no longer sold to contractors in the forests and the Darbar did not allow the merchants from India to fell and remove it from the forest for themselves.¹⁶⁸ The timber trade was smoothly continued but when the Darbar discovered extensive fraud committed by its subordinate officials it prohibited the sale of timber and was also trying to restrict excessive export of timber from Nepal. Thus owing to internal disturbances in Nepal and partly owing to alleged misconduct of some Indian traders, there was sharp decline in the trade in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As the English traders were familiar and close connected with timber trade at this juncture they were also conscious of the importance of the forest wealth of North Bengal. In this connection it is quite relevant to mention that realizing the value of the woods of Baikunthapur forest the British East India Company employed some people in this region for conducting timber trade at the beginning of the 19th century.¹⁶⁹

It should be mentioned that the northern areas of North Bengal i.e. Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri were covered with dense forest. The British planters already opened different tea gardens and the government now started to open railway in different parts of North Bengal. Thus, to meet the demand of the Indian rail road's for sleepers and that of tea plantation industries and for various construction works, the Colonial Government now turned towards the forest wealth i.e. the timber of North Bengal.

Among the vast forests the hills subdivision of the Darjeeling contains the following important forest tracts for supply of timber.

- i) Mahaldiram tract is well stocked with timber of all kinds – oak, magnolia, chestnut etc.
- ii) Panchar, a large tract of forest very well stocked with timber as Chilauni, fir, sal etc.
- iii) Outer hills, from Rangthang to the Tista river, were well stocked with sal, fir and other trees. The hills from Sivak up the valley of the Tista, had nearly all the good sal tree.

It should be mentioned in this connection that sal timber was very useful for the railway sleeper and fir timber was used for tea boxes. In the plains or Terai subdivision, the forest trees principally met with were sal, sisu, sisun and chilauni.

Besides Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri contains several extensive and fine forest tracts. In the regulation part of the district, in the extreme north, was an extensive and valuable sal forest known as Baikunthapur Jungle Mahal. It was under the possession of the Raikat or Raja of Baikunthapur. In 1809 Dr. Buchanan Hamilton commented regarding the importance of Baikunthapur that the woods of Battris – hazari or Baikunthapur have been nearly exhausted of sal and sisu, the only trees that are cut for exportation, although they contain a great abundance of timber in reality, perhaps more valuable.¹⁷⁰ It is to be mentioned in this regard that the total of forest area under Baikunthapur which was a private property of 219,227.5 acres or 342.54 square miles. W.W. Hunter mentioned seven forest tracts in the western Duars as (i) in Bhalka Pargana, (2) in Bhatibari Pargana, (3) in Buxa Pargana, (4) in Madari and Charoa Kshattriya Parganas, (5) in Lakshimpur Pargana, (6) in Maraghat Pargana, (7) in Mainaguri Pargana. The total area of the forest tracts of Jalpaiguri district exclusive of the Baikunthapur jungle Mahal was 41,737 acres.¹⁷¹ Most of the forests of Jalpaiguri district contained valuable sal and sisu trees and also many kinds of common jungle trees.

It is to be mentioned that when Darjeeling was taken over in 1835 from Sikkim the area particularly between the Kyal and the Balasan on

the east and the Rangnu and the Mahanadi (Mahananda) on the west, was entirely covered with dense forest and was practically uninhabited. In 1839 the cultivation and manufacture of tea in Darjeeling was started under the East Indian Company and from that time the expansion of tea gardens in Darjeeling areas the conversion of the forest into cultivated land for tea garden was started. Thus the rapid clearance of forest considerably extended in Darjeeling. The hill areas between the Mechi and the Balasan and between Tista and Mahanadi (Mahananda) were taken over in 1850 and the Kalimpong subdivision was annexed in 1865. Both these newly annexed areas there were the rapid clearance of forest for extension of cultivation as population increased due to an influx of settlers. But prior to 1863 the British government paid very little attention to the conservation of forests. As a result the areas had exploited the forest resources with gradual deforestation. As the prices of fuel and timber had greatly increased with gradual deforestation the Colonial Government was not remain indifferent about the commercial potential of timber. It should be mentioned in this connection that from late 18th century to the mid 19th century the traders and merchants of the East India Company had great attention to the timber trade of Burma and upto 1863 Calcutta had imported all the timber requirements from Burma and from Northern India.¹⁷² Besides this, upto 1877 the British merchants from India smoothly conducted the timber trade from Nepal to India. In 1858 with the queen's proclamation the administration of India was taken over from East India Company to the British Crown. As the British Crown now became governing authority, it took some constructive works for colonization. Realizing the over exploitation of the forests of India now the Colonial Government tried to save the remaining forests from total destruction and introduced measures of conservancy. In 1865 Government Forest Act inaugurated a definite Colonial policy regarding the forests in India. So, naturally forests of North Bengal too came under the purview of the Colonial Forest policy. In this connection it is quite pertinent to mention that to implement conservancy of forest in North Bengal in 1864 Dr. T. Anderson was temporarily appointed as

Conservator of Forest. Dr. Anderson was entrusted with the work of carrying out preliminary investigation and inquiries to the northern part of the province, i.e. the Eastern Himalayas including Sikkim and the belt of sal forest in the Terai and Duars at the foot of the hills. In August 1864 forest conservancy was inaugurated in Bengal and the first reserves were notified in 1865 in Darjeeling Division.¹⁷³ Though the reservation of Darjeeling Division was notified but till 1874 the Forests of Darjeeling District were within the Cooch Behar Forest Division. In 1875, the Darjeeling forests were taken out of the Cooch Behar Division and made into a separate Division and the hill portion of Kalimpong and Kurseong were included in Darjeeling Division. In 1878 the Reserved Forests of the Darjeeling district formed under three separate division viz. Darjeeling Division, Kurseong Division and Kalimpong Division and further the reservation was notified on Terai and Duars forests areas. In 1879 the first notification was published by which nearly 280 square miles of forest areas were declared to be reserved forest area in Jalpaiguri district.¹⁷⁴ The reserved forests of Jalpaiguri district were divided into two divisions, the Jalpaiguri and Buxa divisions. The forests of Jalpaiguri division situated between the Tista and Torsa rivers and the Buxa division was situated east of the Torsa in the Alipurduar subdivision. The forest area of Jalpaiguri division and Buxa division covered at the time of J.F. Gruning in 1911 respectively 182 square miles and 327 square miles. A.J. Dash mentioned that the total area of the three divisions of Darjeeling district covered 2,80,000 acres of reserved forests. It is to be mentioned that the Baikunthapur forest which was a private property of 342.54 square miles belonged to the Raikat of Baikunthapur, the Colonial Government tried to impose Forest Act to this forest. According to J.F. Gruning, for the preparation of map and record of rights in respect of estate's forest was one of the primary reasons for extending settlement in the Baikunthapur estate. So, in 1904 it was proposed to extend the Forest Act to this forest and in June 1908 a preliminary notification was issued for the reservation of the forest. But the manager of the estate strongly protested against the imposition of the Forest Act of the Government to the Baikunthapur

forest. Due to the strong protest the forest department gave up their control of the Baikunthapur forest in 1913. Thus it is clear that the British by extending the Forest Act in North Bengal tried to colonise the forest wealth, natural resources of North Bengal.

It is now quite pertinent to observe the utilization of forest wealth i.e. the uses of timber from different forests of North Bengal. It should be mentioned that long before, during the time of Warren Hastings "timber" was mentioned as one of the items of trading possibilities in North Bengal. Now by imposing the conservancy on the forests of North Bengal the motto of the Colonial Government was to commercialize the forests produce i.e. the timber of North Bengal by supplying them to the other parts of Bengal. It is quite clear in replied to the request of the Government for a report on the feasibility of forestry operations in Duars during the Anglo-Bhutanese War (1865) Dr. Anderson, the Conservator of Forests remarked that:

"The Western Dooars themselves are very thinly populated and the requirements of the people are very small indeed. On the other hand timber is much in demand in the districts south of the Dooars, especially in Cooch Behar, Rungpore and the Western part of the Dacca presidency".¹⁷⁵ The forest department was also optimistic that timber of North Bengal would replace the more expensive timber from Oudh and Nepal in the markets of East Bengal and would soon be able to generate a handsome profit from this trade. Despite the timber markets of Eastern Bengal it was the Construction of North Bengal Railways and other Railways and for tea industries the demand for timber provided the forest department with the much needed market for its products. In this context it is to be mentioned that from the outset the Colonial Government failed to chalk out a plan, but they had a wishful aim to use the forests of North Bengal for financial gain. At the primary stage the Railway Department was the main buyer of the timber of forest department. The Colonial Government hoped to commercialize the forests on the basis of the demand of the railway sleepers. But due to Peculiar Railway rule the

Railway Companies did not deal directly with the Forest Department. The Forest Department was compelled therefore to sell the railway sleepers to the contractors and the contractors sold it to the Railway Companies. It is found that about the year 1865 one Mr. Dear secured monopoly for working the whole of plains forest in the Darjeeling district for supply of railway sleepers.¹⁷⁶ Besides the European Contractors one finds the references of Native contractors contracted to deliver large number of railway sleepers.¹⁷⁷ Due to the Railway rule at the outset the Forest Department could not improve its timber trade. Thus, to improve timber trade and to save the Department from losses the Government thought of changing its policy and started departmental operations of the Forests of North Bengal. E.P. Dansey in his report mentioned that he informed the Government to take a systematic series of improvement for commercialization of the timber of both Jalpaiguri and Buxa division.¹⁷⁸ Thus it was an opportunity to the British Government that the forests of North Bengal could be run as a profitable commercial venture.

The three reserved Divisions of Darjeeling i.e. Darjeeling Division, Kurseong Division and Kalimpong Division and the two reserved Division of Jalpaiguri i.e. Jalpaiguri Division and Buxa Division now supplied the required timber in different parts of Eastern Bengal and North Bengal. Besides the reserved forests, the timber of Khas Mahal or unreserved forests and Baikunthapur forests of Jalpaiguri were also supplied timber. In this connection J.F. Gruning remarked that "Sal timber is cut in the forests of the western Duars and Baikunthapur and floated down to the Brahmaputra river, where the greater part of it goes to Dacca and Sirajganj."¹⁷⁹ Most of the Sal timber exported by water to the markets of Eastern Bengal and the purchasers of timber were mostly native merchants from Nator, Dacca and Rangpur. The timber exported from Jalpaiguri through river by the native merchants of Eastern Bengal chiefly for building boats. The streams available for floating timber in the western Duars were Tista, Jaldhaka, Mujnai, Torsa, Kaljani and Sankosh rivers. In the western Duars a timber depot was established at Domohoni. The Statistical Report for the six months ending Feb, 1876 showed the export

of 1310 loads and 1926 loads of timber from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar respectively.¹⁸⁰ Further, timbers were procured from the reserved forests for making tea chests and railway sleepers. In this regard it is to be mentioned that both the tea planters and Colonial Government were not remain indifferent about the commercial potential of timber. From the forests of Jalpaiguri the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri could obtain nearly all the timber and fuel according to their requirement from their own grants which were very large. There was also an almost unlimited demand of Sal timber for meter gauge sal sleeper from the Eastern Bengal State Railways, Bengal and North Western Railways and Bengal Duars Railways. Thus with the opening of Bengal Duars Railways, the Eastern Bengal Railways, North Western Railways were provided with abundant supply of timber from the Jalpaiguri forests areas. It is to be mentioned that Dacca and other places of Eastern Bengal took most of the heavy sal timber which instead of being cut into railway sleepers were taken by local purchasers to Alipurduar where they were sold to merchants coming from Dacca and Rangpur.¹⁸¹ The Cooch Behar Railway line for its Small Carrying Capacity due to 2.6" gauge there was difficulty in carrying forest produces. Thus, the timbers from the adjacent regions were brought to Gitaldaha Junction where it joins the Eastern Bengal State Railway.¹⁸² The reserved forests of the Buxa division were very compact with Sal, Sisu, Khayer and Magnolia trees. W.W. Hunter mentioned that much of the fine timber was cut from this forest before the tract came into the hands of the British Government.¹⁸³ From 1875 to 1888 nearly all the exploitation work was done departmentally, but during the next ten years departmental work was almost suspended and purchasers removed nearly the whole of the small outturn obtained from the forests. It is mentioned in the progress Report of the Forest administration that from Buxa forest division to meet the demand of the railways, the number of sleepers supplied in 1879 was 18,449, in 1880 it was 22,683, in 1881 it was 29865 and in 1882 it was 21,602.¹⁸⁴ Thus it is found that during the four years from 1879 to 1882 from Buxa forests 92,599 sleepers were supplied for railways. After 1888 in 1899-1900, again the departmental

operations began and sleepers were supplied to the Eastern Bengal State Railway. In this connection it is quite pertinent to mention that in 1911-1912 the Colonial Government supplied 1.5 lakh of sal sleepers for the Eastern Bengal State Railway and the Sara Bridge from Buxa and Goalpara divisions and earned a profit of about Rs.1,40,000.¹⁸⁵ In 1930-31 from Buxa division timber extracted departmentally amounted to 16.8 percent of the total outturn against 9.1 percent in the previous year owing to large supply of sleepers to railways.¹⁸⁶ In 1933, the most noticeable item was the establishment of a trade in matchwood trees. One thousand eight hundred and fifty eight tons of match wood were railed from the Buxa division to Calcutta during 1933-34. Further, from the North Borojhar Reserve of the Buxa division by an agreement with Messrs, Kanyalall Lakhiram of Beech Tea Estate 23,760 cubic feet of Khair trees extracted and the Government gained a royalty of Rs.5,197-8. In that year the total value of the sale of timber, fuel, bamboos, grazing and minor produce rose from Rs.3,80,075 in the previous year to Rs.4,52,414.¹⁸⁷ Sisu tree is another important tree of Buxa forests that wood's is suitable for tea-boxes. As the forest department sold this wood in a very high rate the tea garden owners had to import the tea-boxes. In this regard the Colonial Government took initiative measures to solve the problem and it was entrusted to M/s Davenport and Company for the extraction of timber within the Buxa Reserve to be used for the local production of tea boxes. At Rajabhatkhawa in the Buxa Division the Buxa Timber and Trading Company erected a veneer factory. The factory supplied the required three and five ply boards for tea boxes. During the World War-I the company had gone into liquidation but within a short time it ultimately achieved. E.P. Stebbing mentioned that in 1925 he had seen some beautiful three and five ply boards in the factory.¹⁸⁸ The table shows the outturn of timber from the forests of Jalpaiguri Division.

Statement of total outturn of Timber from the forests of Jalpaiguri Division from 1878-79 to 1887-88

Year	Green trees (cft)		Dry trees (cft)	
	Sal	Others	Sal	Others
1878-79	67083	284	29985	110
1879-80	7708	22660	38465	415
1880-81	35930	8061	30610	112
1881-82	48351	11590	35650	245
1882-83	67922	8354	38979	790
1883-84	113992	4850	38086	881
1884-85	31717	3383	32680	4910
1885-86	39065	483	36175	386
1886-87	82716	2670	29075	1278
1887-88	44108	5610	114499	4200
Total	538652	67945	424204	13127

Source : N.B., 25-38, File 10/3, October 1892, West Bengal State Archives.

The forests of the Darjeeling division had been used mainly to meet the local demands. The timber of the Darjeeling forests were mostly used for fire wood consumed by the tea estates, timber for tea box planking, timber for constructional works etc. The box planking from the departmental saw mill at Sukna was sold to the local tea gardens. The total outturn of timber of different kinds amounted to 7.75 millions of cubic feet during the year. In 1921 a departmental depot opened at Darjeeling for the continuous supply of charcoal gave quite satisfactory results.¹⁸⁹ It is to be mentioned that a large quantities of firewood consumed by the different tea estates and the Darjeeling division forests supplied large quantities of firewood for the cantonments of Jalapahar and Lebong and Town Darjeeling also.¹⁹⁰ This forest division supplied a small quantity of sal timber which exported from the Tista Valley. However, in 1920-21, large quantities of sleepers were sawn and supplied from this division to the Eastern Bengal Railway and Sal logs sent to Messrs, Martin and Co., Calcutta and to Messrs Howard Brothers, London for disposal.¹⁹¹ The Kurseong division also exported large quantities of sal timber. The export of sal poles took place by cart to Kishanganj and sal and other logs and scantlings by rail from Siliguri. It

is noted in the Progress Report of the Forest administration that the Kurseong division supplied large quantities of timber for the construction of bridges on the Ganges and for the Northern Bengal State Railway in 1877-78. In 1878, 12540 sleepers were supplied to Northern Bengal State Railway from Kurseong division.¹⁹² In the hills Kurseong and in the plains Siliguri were the main markets for the produce of the forests of the Kurseong division. In 1927, for timber business three saw mills were opened at Siliguri of which one owned and worked by the forest department of Government.¹⁹³ Of its opening year the Government saw mill gained a profit of Rs.15,458 and the mill got gross revenue on sales of sawn timber in 1929, Rs.125,943 and in 1930 Rs.110,759.¹⁹⁴ The forests of Kalimpong division supplied a means of extracting sal timber for the construction of the Tista Valley Cart Road and for the tea industry in Jalpaiguri District.¹⁹⁵ The export of the timber of this division consisted mainly of fire wood for tea gardens in the adjoining Jalpaiguri District for tea packing and particularly the sal timber for sleepers and house building in North Bengal. Despite these uses, there were local demand of the timber of this division for firewood, charcoal, timber for orange boxes in a large scale also. In this context it is to be mentioned that from 1906-07 to 1922-23, 1,186,383 cft sal timber, 3,732,675 cft other species of timber and 19,590,266 cft firewood outturn from Kalimpong division.¹⁹⁶ Thus, it is found that the Britishers fully utilized the forest wealth, particularly the timber of North Bengal for commercial venture and Colonial interest. Depression also hit to the timber business of the Colonial Government. In the Jalpaiguri and Buxa Divisions departmental operations were reduced due to the slump in the timber market and the decrease in the demand of railways for sleepers. The sale of round sal timber at the Government timber depot at Siliguri decreased from 21,077 cubic feet to 20,789 cubic feet, but the sale of sawn sal increased by about 8,000 cubic feet and in spite of considerable reductions in sale prices the gross revenue collected on mill account increased by nearly Rs.11,000. The trading account of the Siliguri Saw mill, however, showed a loss of Rs.982 on the years working.¹⁹⁷

It is quite relevant to mention that the local people had very limited requirement of the timber or the principal forest produce. Thus it was the British merchants and the Colonial Government both had a special attraction towards this natural resource to make it a profitable commercial venture. It is to be noted that besides railway sleepers and tea industries, there was a great demand of timber in Eastern Bengal for various uses. Sal and other hard-wood had a great demand for countryboats and pleasure boats, plough, yoke, bullock carts, carts drawn by horses and palanquin. Demand for 'sisu' was especially for furniture. In the construction of brick building, for supporting roof, the beam of 'sal' wood was essential in those days. To meet these many and various demands in Eastern Bengal the merchants from Dacca used to come at Buxa, Jalpaiguri, Baikunthapur and Eastern Duars to collect timber. As there was a great demand of timber in the market of Eastern Bengal and to the adjacent district of North Bengal timber trade was flourished in North Bengal. Thus Baura, Sukhani, Lataguri, Domohani, Ramshai, Khagrijan, Malbazar, Naxalbari, Siliguri became important timber trading centre of North Bengal. For easy carrying of timber logs, the forest department also paid attention for the maintenance of roads and the Colonial Government opened branches of railway line. In Jalpaiguri district between Rajabhatkhawa and Alipurduar, the road was maintained by the forest department, as much of the timber was carted to Alipurduar and floated down the Kaljani river from that place. There were certain roads maintained by the forest department of Darjeeling district. For carrying timber logs branches of railway lines were opened from Rangpur and Parbatipur to Lataguri and from Lataguri to Meteli hill. It is to be mentioned that the Colonial Government wanted to utilize the timber of North Bengal to generate a handsome profit from open market, but it was mostly used for serving the Colonial needs. Subhajt Roy in his book "Transformation on the Bengal Frontier, Jalpaiguri, 1765-1948" touched this issue and showed that it was the broader needs of the Colonial State, the forests in the Duars were utilized for their own exploitation.¹⁹⁸ His discussion was confined only one of the forest division

of Jalpaiguri district i.e. Buxa forests divisions. The picture was somewhat same in the Jalpaiguri Division and the three forests divisions of Darjeeling district. In this context it is to be mentioned that for the opening of Bengal Duars Railways in 1891-92, the Colonial Government made a free grant of mature sal trees and the value of this concession was amounted to Rs.30,000.¹⁹⁹ So, the sum total effect of the timber production of North Bengal during the period under study was that large quantities of timber was used for railway sleepers, tea industries for serving the Colonial interest. But the utilization of timber as commercial venture and the commercial outlook of the Britishers also paved the way for the involvement and emergence of the native Bengalees in timber trade of the area under study.

The following table shows the amount of net profit gained by the British Government from the forests of Jalpaiguri Division and Buxa Divisions.

Statement of Revenue, Expenditure and Net Profits from the forest area situated in Jalpaiguri and Buxa Division from 1882-83 to 1893-94 and 1898-99 to 1907-08.

Year	Jalpaiguri Division			Buxa Division		
	Revenue	Expenditure	Net profits	Revenue	Expenditure	Net profits
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1882-83	11805	17057	-	80443	68711	11732
1883-84	8077	14660	-	75045	64942	10103
1884-85	8993	16550	-	55641	65276	-
1885-86	7835	20589	-	27740	44742	-
1886-87	12421	20483	-	53503	50487	3016
1887-88	12060	14293	-	30589	26101	4488
1888-89	14328	12262	2066	12920	20004	-
1889-90	24635	15666	8969	31296	22725	8571
1890-91	31998	15967	16031	23398	23913	-
1891-92	23697	25656	-	12465	22188	-
1892-93	29189	29648	-	12556	23296	-

1893-94	40185	25705	14480	10185	23165	-
1898-99	54568	21131	30427	17452	23315	-
1899-00	56780	34378	22402	28826	33683	-
1900-01	55345	37101	18244	43228	37135	6093
1901-02	56774	449018	11856	62675	40032	22643
1902-03	68621	44089	27532	57334	55917	1417
1903-04	55199	31738	23161	63255	76691	-
1904-05	88521	50434	38097	120789	84783	36006
1905-06	99403	43807	55596	132434	91671	40763
1906-07	133630	48740	81890	215037	97351	117686
1907-08	104730	41662	63068	220893	121220	99673

Source : For the year 1882-83 to 1893-94 D.H.E. Sunder: Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri, (1889-95), Part-I, Ch.I, P.14, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta-1895 and for the year 1898-99 to 1907-08 J.F. Gruning, Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, Allahabad, 1911, p.71.

The following table shows the yield of revenue from the forests of Darjeeling District.

The statement of yield of revenue from the forests areas of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong division.

Year	Darjeeling Division	Kurseong Division	Kalimpong Division
	Timber fine wood and Box planking timber	Timber and fire wood	Timber and firewood
1925-26	Rs.1174,684	Rs.254,836	Rs.109,846
2930-31	Rs.1921,324	Rs.197,070	Rs.89,207
1935-36	Rs.1170,853	Rs.225,345	Rs.62,953

Source : A.J. Dash, Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, pp.132-33

BAMBOO PRODUCTION

Though the economic historians and the economists regard North Bengal as the region of Tea, Timber and Tobacco, it is also to be noted that bamboo is another Commercial Commodity of the region. In the early phase of the Colonial rule the bamboo is not considered as a commodity. With the passage of time it is found a change in the commercial and industrial policy of the East India Company and subsequently the British India Government. The development of the paper mill at Calcutta and surrounding areas has largely converted the bamboo as a Commercial Commodity. In the pre-industrial phase it was mainly used for the domestic purposes, but the growth of jute mills changed the character of the bamboo cultivation of the region under study. Like Jute industry paper industry was located on the banks of the Ganges, but there were no hinterland for the raw materials of the jute and paper industries. As a result the bamboos of northern North Bengal particularly exported to Calcutta though in a limited manner to cater the rising paper mill of the surrounding Calcutta. It is to be noted that the quantity of export of bamboo was not much noticeable; still it was opened up a new vista in the economy of northern North Bengal. We can precisely mentioned the case of the export of bamboos to Calcutta. Some local records gives us information about the exportation of bamboos from Haldibari to Titagarh paper mills.²⁰⁰ Apart from this another point is to be noticed here that bamboo was the part and percale of the cultural life of the Indo-Mongoloid people. From Jalpaiguri of the Bengal to the entire North East India as well as South East Asia we found the massive use of the bamboos in the domestic life of the people of these vast areas. W.W. Hunter mentioned that bamboos grew extensively in the norther parts of this region and formed the fuel supply of the people, besides being used largely in the building of houses, fences etc.²⁰¹ In the Terai dry bamboo and jungle twins were sold at the cost of 4 annas per cart.²⁰² Needless to say even today northern North Bengal is the Chief supplier of bamboos to the paper mills of Calcutta and its surrounding areas. In this context we must

mentioned that the bamboos of Goalpara of Assam region which was used in the paper mills of Calcutta.

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CHAPTER-V

EMERGENCE OF MODERN INDIAN ENTREPRENEURS

CHAPTER-V

EMERGENCE OF MODERN INDIAN ENTREPRENEURS

In the preceding chapter an account has been given of the production and trade of various agricultural produces of foodgrain and non foodgrain as well as natural resource, i.e., timber produce. In the present chapter, the researcher will deal with traders and merchants, both indigenous and non-indigenous, connected with various trade and commerce of the area under study. To examine their economic activities, the researcher deals with some related questions, namely, finance, communication, transport, nature of the demand of different agricultural produces of this region in different parts of Bengal, India and abroad, nature and character of the merchants etc.

A very positive role have been played by the Indian Traders in conducting both the national & international trade of India since long past. Although the tradition of trade & commerce in ancient Bengal seems like a fiction now, it is indeed a fact that artisan - industry & occupational specialization flourished in glory in agricultural Bengal .Not only did internal trade develop on surplus agro based products, but external trade flourished on exportable agricultural commodities. The trader community of Bengal did play an immense role in developing trade relations with foreign countries. The medieval Mangalkavya, inscriptions and manuscripts give us ample evidences of the existing trading class & their trade activities in ancient & medieval Bengal. It goes without saying that in the northern part of Bengal, too, the traders took great initiative in enhancing trade & economic prosperity. History has evidence that Pundrabardhan or ancient north Bengal maintained trade relations with foreign countries, especially Rome, Persia, Arabia, & Ceylon from the 13th to 16th century.¹ The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, written by an anonymous Greek navigator, has mentioned a trade route which ran through Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district of North Bengal, Sikkim and Chumbi Valley and reached Tibet and China. Through land routes, North Bengal had great trade links with Tibet and Bhutan in the 12th and 13th Century. Even in the Mughal age, North Bengal was within the purview of trade relations through the Northern

Passes. It is mentioned that during the Mughal age, trade system was directly linked with Bhutan, Tibet, Assam, Lasha and transactions were made even at the foothill or Terai.² Simultaneously, internal trade too gained momentum in this region. Since internal trade flourished, the region so prospered that a number of minor regional markets, popularly known as “ganj” (entrepot / town) grew up. Even now, many localities of North Bengal have the term “ganj” affixed to their name. In this context mention may be made of Mekhliganj, Tufanganj, Maruganj, Nishiganj, Bodaganj, Debiganj, Hamiltonganj, Rajganj, Premganj, Sovaganj, Raiganj, Kaliyaganj, Subhasganj, Raniganj, Shibganj, Amaniganj, Kumarganj, Bibiganj, Manikganj, Nawabganj, Dhapganj, Dewanganj, Chandganj, Gopalganj, Bandarganj. So, it can be well assumed that the affixation stands for prosperity generated from trade & commerce in the region in the last two centuries.

The battle of Plassey brought in a great deal of change in the economy of Bengal & obviously of North Bengal. Rangpur and Dinajpur fell directly under the Company’s rule after the attainment of “diwani”. However, Colonial trade & commerce in North Bengal centering Malda started towards the end of the 17th Century. The East India Company may British Indian Govt. had strengthened its administrative hold on North Bengal after the historic Bhutan War (1864-65), and specially after the formation of the Jalpaiguri District (1869).

The geographical uniqueness of North Bengal contributes much to the distinctive quality of its economy. Due to the abolition of the monopoly trade of the East India Company after 1833, this region, like many other regions, too, witnessed spread of trade & commerce mainly in the interest of the Colonial powers. North Bengal itself can be subdivided into two regions – the northern part including Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar and the southern part inclusive of north & south Dinajpur and Malda. Here, one finds the distinctive features of traders & probe is needed into the special role played by foreign traders, regional traders & immigrant traders in furthering the trade interests of the region during the period under study of this region. It should be mentioned in this respect that during the Mughal

rule, many foreign traders, regional traders, immigrant traders contributed in enhancing the trade interest of the region during the said time period. It should be mentioned in this respect that during the Mughal rule many foreign traders encouraged by the rulers had entered the sphere of trade & commerce. On the other hand, traders from Gujrat & Marwar also found their way into Bengal along with their European counterparts.³ It was in the 19th & 20th centuries that a great number of non-Bengalee traders and merchants emerged in the commercial scenario of North Bengal.

In spite of the fact that agriculture was the main occupation of the people of North Bengal, the region also prospered in trade & commerce. The southern districts of North Bengal i.e. Malda & two Dinajpurs traded in agro based products. This southern portion of North Bengal was famous for its abundant rice cultivation. Undivided Dinajpur district was almost entirely agricultural. According to the Census of 1911, ninety one percent of the total population was dependant on agriculture.⁴ Rice was exported from Malda & undivided Dinajpur & the Marwari & regional traders were associated with this trade. It is recorded that Marwari, Baisbania, Baisya, Gandha Banik, Subarna Banik were the most important trading caste of Dinajpur district.⁵ Trade in rice & grains was controlled by the Sahas & Tilis (Bengalee trading classes) while the Marwaris owned most of the rice mills. It is to be noted that in 1914 the first rice mill was started in Hili (present South Dinajpur district) by Sarat Kumar Ray. From 1921 rice mill rapidly spread in Hili and during the concerned period there were nine Bengalee owned rice mills at Hili and also one owned by Bengalee at Bangalbari (present North Dinajpur district), but the majority were owned by Marwaris.⁶ The Rajbansis, Malos, Sannyasis, were engaged in cultivation. On the other hand, a good majority of people from Murshidabad, Nadia, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh settled in this region making agriculture their main occupation. In ancient times, undivided Dinajpur was familiar as "Matsya Desha" or land of fish. During the Colonial period, especially in the first decade of the 20th century, fish trade was of immense significance in undivided Dinajpur. The main fish trading center was located at Durgapur, 7 km south of Raiganj of present North Dinajpur.⁷ The regional Malo, Hari

classes were the main suppliers of fish while the Sahas & Kundus were the whole sellers & retailers of fish trade. But during the first decade of the 20th century, manufacture on a large scale was practically non-existent because of lack of industries & only three percent of the population of undivided Dinajpur were supported by them.⁸ There was only one factory in undivided Dinajpur, that was a Jute press at Raiganj, owned by Ralli Brothers, a Greek firm which turned out Kaccha bales of 3½ mounds in weight for the Calcutta market. There was a small jute press factory at Khansama (now in Bangladesh) owned by a Bengalee firm and two oil presses for the manufacture of mustard oil at Phulhat and Parbatipur (both are now in Bangladesh) owned by Marwari Merchant.⁹ There were many jute godowns belonging to native merchants in undivided Dinajpur. Jute was a major agricultural non-foodgrain crop of Dinajpur & was collected in the village by *beparis* or middlemen who sold it to the *mahajans*. During the time under review undivided Dinajpur region was especially renowned for its weaving industry. According to the statistical reports, during the 1930's cotton cloth worth Rs.13 lakhs were produced by the 2000 weaving mills of this region.¹⁰ Most of the weavers belonged to the local Tantees, Jugi, or Polia classes. Although the growth of the weaving industry took place on a regional basis, it was agriculture that was more profitable & the trade in coarse textile could hardly merge with the greater trade activities of Bengal mostly because coarse fiber had little demand among middle class customers. Thus, it is found that this region remained virtually untouched by the wave of the swadeshi movement for the encouragement of indigenous industries.

Malda in the southern region of modern North Bengal was the center of silk production and silk trade in the said period. It should be mentioned that European traders assembled in great numbers in Malda during the 17th century lured by the silk trade.¹¹ Alexander Hamilton described Malda as a large town, well inhabited & frequented by merchants of different nations.¹² The most important manufactures of Malda were silk & indigo. Silk indeed, may be called the staple produce of the district. It is already mentioned that in the 16th century one Saikh Bhikh, who used to trade in Maldehi cloths such as Katar & Musri, set sailed for Russia with three ship laden with silk

cloths. During the second half of the 18th century, a great impetus was given to the raising of silk worms and the manufacture of silk by the French.¹³ After the abolition of the monopoly trade of the East India Company in 1833, raw silk production gained more importance in Malda. In this context, it is quite pertinent to mention that the production and export of raw silk from Bengal were exposed to the European demands. Raw silk was exported from Bengal as a semi-manufactured commodity. This commodity had a complicated agro-industrial structure depended upon the Paikars (middlemen). Thus, after 1833 the manufacture of raw silk or silk thread was in a flourishing condition & was largely carried on both with European & native capital. It is to be noted that in Rajshahi district cocoon production decreased to such an extent that the European firms had to depend since 1890's on cocoons imported from Malda.¹⁴ Cocoon raising, silk reeling and cloth weaving were the three divisions of the silk industry and a large number of people were connected with this trade in Malda district. Cocoon raising involved a small holding industry where small independent native capital was used. In silk reeling also the trade was in the hands of native revelers or *mahajans*. The Puro caste were the specialist in this trade. However, in English Bazar and Bholahat, a large number of people were engaged in this trade who directly purchased cocoons from the cultivators. Amaniganj, Subulpur and Jalalpur were the chief markets of cocoon trade. It is quite pertinent to mention that there were two kinds of silk reeled (i) according to the European method which was known as filature silk and (ii) according to the native method known as Khamru. The native filature owners were the affluent section of rural population and in most cases they were former *paikars* of the company. The buying of reeled silk was chiefly done by brokers and the price of cocoons varied with the silk market and the competition was between the European and Khamru markets. During Lambourn's time it was estimated that the annual production of concoon in the Malda district was about 80,000 maunds and the value of raw silk produced about thirty lakhs of rupees.¹⁵ In 1926-27, 596 silk weavers in the district produced fine silk fabric valued Rs.1.25 lakhs and 230 weavers produced matka valued Rs.80,000. Further, there were 12,000 matka spinners whose yarn was valued at Rs.1 lakh.¹⁶ The European silk market

was in the hand of French & English firms, whereas the Khamru market or the native method of reeling silk was largely controlled by Marwaris.¹⁷ Marwari merchants grew to be the prime dealers in raw silk and established for themselves an economic relation with the reelers similar to that between the *paikar* and the rearer. It may be noted that the Marwari traders began to infiltrate into the rural structure of Malda particularly since the permanent settlement when interests of local banias was shifted to land. But prominence of raw silk trade grew on since the mid 19th century when the East India Company extended its sway to Malda. Marwaris were gradually able to take a firm grip over such trade, because they knew the outside market better and had a good link with the traders of Benaras and other parts of India, including the exporters. The silk reeled off in the European factories was exported almost entirely to Europe. The raw silk of Khamru market under native management was principally brought up by the local *mahajans* & sold in Calcutta, Benaras & other large towns, and also exported largely to Nagpur, Madras and up country. Many of the Banias and Mahajans were native of the North West provinces of Bihar. English Bazar, Shibganj and Jotegram were the main producing center of Matka, & Tant. It is known that during 1930's, about 4000 mound spinning was produced in Malda & one Narendra Nath Roy of Jotegram got reputation in this business. G.E. Lambourn ascribed that till the first decade of the 20th century, local silk production of Malda was very cheap. According to him "in Malda silk saris, dhuties, sheets, pieces of coating manufactured sell at very cheap rates."¹⁸ It is recorded that at Shibganj there were nearly 140 families of silk weavers with 180 looms of whom nearly 50 families weaving matka and the rest garad of pure silk.

The Tilis of Burdwan, Poddar, Satier & Marwari communities were noteworthy dealers of raw silk produced in Malda.¹⁹ The emerging class of dealers also signified the growth and development of silk trade in Malda. However, along with indigenous investment, foreign capital too played a role in stimulating silk trade in Malda. Buchanan Hamilton's report confirmed that towards the close of the 19th century at least seven European companies were engaged in preparing raw silk from cocoon or silk worm in

Malda.²⁰ As in other parts of Bengal, the greater part of the Indigo was grown and manufactured by European capital & under European supervision in Malda. There were a few wealthy Natives also owning indigo factories in Malda. Hunter's account informed that during the eighties of the 19th century there were at least 20 indigo factories owned by European investors in Malda.²¹ The Giri & Sannyasi communities were local traders during the time under study in Malda and were renowned as traders of Motka, Tant & mostly Katari textile. It is known from the report of the survey & cottage industry in Bengal (1929) that brass & bronze industry also held an important position in Malda's economy.

Balia – Nawabganj, a market chiefly for the wholesale purchase of paddy and rice. Several big paddy dealers attended the market, and the annual sale of paddy and rice together amounted to about 35,000 maunds. Samsi became an important trade centre and a number of Marwaris took up residence there engaged in business and money lending. During the jute season Marwaris came to Old Malda. Further, the local Agarwalas had agencies for Cigarettes, Kerosene Oil, Washing Soda, Vegetable products and Corrugated iron sheeting. In English Bazar there was a small sugar, brick-dust and flour mill – belonging to a Marwari and oil mill owned by an Agarwala. Besides Marwaris, the Greek firm Ralli Brothers dealt in a variety of commodities in Malda.²²

Thus, it is found that traditional traders like the Sahas, Kundus of the southern part of North Bengal occupied a significant position in Colonial economy as dealers, stockists & whole sellers. On the other hand, big industries wrested in the hands of European & non-Bengalee traders. It should be mentioned that although the traditional tradesmen of this region had built considerable capital from trade, they refrained from investing in bigger ventures requiring huge capital.²³ Perhaps they avoided the risk of getting involved in spheres alien to their familiar & traditional sphere of trade, a quite common feature of traditional tradesmen. Amiya Kumar Bagchi rightly pointed out regarding the absence & late emergence of Indian Entrepreneurship particularly the Bengalee middle classes. To him, they were averse to trade & industry as it did not promise a quick return and as

such, they preferred the liberal profession.²⁴ However, different trading communities began to be acutely conscious of their uniqueness as they participated in the trade of this region. The 1911 trader's census report gives special recognition to the "Saha" traders as a separate business community. Mention must be made of the fact that in 1896 some influential members of the Saha community had formed "community welfare council" and claimed recognition as special business community.²⁵ On the other hand, the Marwari's & other non-Bengalee traders controlled most of the trade in perennial goods. According to J.A.Vass the lion's share of trade in Rangpur in East Bengal & undivided Dinajpur was controlled by the Marwaris & the Sahas.²⁶ Like the Sahas, the Marwaris too were pro-active in safe-guarding the interests of their community as a special trading class. On 25th November 1944, they too formed "Dinajpur Hindu Trading Council" under the leadership of Rameshwar Lalji Agarwal to safeguard their valid interests as Hindu traders.²⁷

In the process of analysis of the trading communities of North Bengal, specially the southern part particularly Indian portion of Dinajpur and Malda have been discussed. Similarly the role of trading communities in the bordering hill region, specially Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri deserve to be specially mentioned. Besides, the role of the trading communities of another sub-Himalayan region of Cooch Behar which was controlled by a princely ruler, demands separate attention. In the course of the study of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar, the frontier regions of Bhutan & Sikkim might also chip in for the convenience of discussion. In the hilly region, the local people were engaged in trade in Orange, Cardamom, Cinnamon, & other forest products.²⁸ The 'Mech' community in the plains & the Nepalis in the hills of Darjeeling district collected & traded in Jungle products. The important jungle products of Darjeeling District during the period under study were rhubarb, aconitum, palmature and from the roots of these a deadly poison was extracted. Pangya, a root with medical properties was used in cases of fever; and Deh, a plant from the bark of which paper was made by the Nepalise. Rambhi was an important entrepot town or business center. From Kalimpong, Sikkim and Bhutan different agricultural products,

forest products, tea, Orange etc. came to Rambhi on caravans of mules. Orange, Cardamom, potato, timber & wool were exported from Darjeeling through Himalayan rail route. In the plains of North Bengal, the Rajbansi community who were basically introvert mainly involved in agricultural production and they were in no way involved in trade activities.²⁹ Even the Nepalis in the hill were no significant traders. Retailing, animal farming were their special areas of interest. But the Pradhans of the Nepali community participated in trade.³⁰ There are striking areas of similarity between the Nepali Pradhans & Bengalee Sahas & other trading community of North Bengal. In 1848, there was considerable trade in musk, salt, gold dust, borax, soda, woolen clothes. But formerly trade was almost non-existent in Darjeeling.

By 1856, the tea industry advanced in Darjeeling from the experimental to a more extensive & commercial stage & the market of Darjeeling was on the whole well arranged & well supplied. Traders were coming from plains & trade was quite free. Thus from 1861 onwards Darjeeling as a commercial center attracted the attention of mercantile community and encouragement was given by the authorities to traders to settle at Darjeeling. The Colonial Government provided material support to the Marwari migrants & allowed them to establish their business at the remote centers of the country is clear from the fact that the Magistrate of Rangpur was instructed to induce the Marwaris & other merchants in his district to bring them to Darjeeling for trading purpose.³¹ The Marwaris dominated most of the exporting trades, viz. Cardamom, Orange and Potato and practically all the import trade of consumption goods. In addition, they had an almost complete control of the retail sale of consumption goods to and of the purchase of produce from the Small Consumer and producer. In 1845, a Marwari firm named Jetmull Bhojraj was established in Darjeeling.³² Marwari private banking firms which were registered under the Money Lenders Act were more closely concerned with actual trade financing and indeed often engaged directly in trading. Further, the Biharis to a much lesser extent also financed in trade, agriculture and commodity markets in Darjeeling. The Bengalees also to a much little extent financed in the

commodity markets in Darjeeling. In the first two decades of the 20th century Dozey saw in Darjeeling market Marwaris, Kashmiris, Punjabis, Nepalese, Parsees, as well as grocers from the plain & Bhutia pawn brokers & cheap jacks.³³

Thus the absence of local traders both in the plains & in the hills was a significant aspect in trade & commerce in the northern part of North Bengal. This vacuum of the locals in trade was filled up by the non Indian traders & the traders from other provinces and they engaged as the prime controllers of the business in this area. Towards the other half of the 19th century, the European traders initiated the trade of “Sal” timber & tea in the sprawling frontier regions of North Bengal.

In the economy of North Bengal, timber trade had great significance which was started prior to the tea plantation industry in North Bengal. But in the pre-Colonial phase, there is no sufficient evidence to prove that any attempt was made to commercialize timber in North Bengal. It was the British traders who first understood the importance of timber as a commercial product. In the initial phase of the British rule in North Bengal, English official Joseph Dalton Hooker beautifully described the state of timber trade in North Bengal. In his Himalayan journal, he ascribed that the supply of Sal & Sisu to Calcutta market from Morung & the logs being floated down the Konki & Cosi rivers to the Ganges.³⁴ Although North Bengal region was covered with dense forest areas but no tertiary industry or cabinet industry grew up in Colonial period in this region. However, the East India Company was quite aware of the commercial potentialities of the timber. The documentary evidences of the East India Company proved that from the end of the 18th century, the English traders turned their attention to timber trade especially after it got the right of administration of the Purnia region. The East India Company’s traders prayed to the Court of Directors at London for pursuing timber trade in the Morang region & their prayer was granted. Morang & Terai regions were adjacent to Purnia region covered with dense forest areas. It should be mentioned that one of the factors behind the Anglo-Nepal war (1814-16) was the control over the Terai forest areas. In this connection it is quite pertinent to mention that the

Treaty of Sagauli in March 1816 confined Nepal to the country between Kali and the Mechi Rivers and by this treaty Nepal ceded the Terai, subject to a payment by the company of Rs.2 lakhs a year.³⁵ During that time the English traders needed the steady supply of timbers for the sake of Shipbuilding industry.

In the statistical Account Vol.X, W.W. Hunter mentioned that in the forest tract of Baikunthapur, which was a private forest of Baikunthapur Raj Estate, the purchases were done mostly by native merchants from Deviganj in Jalpaiguri district, and from Kangtapukhuri in Natore in Rajshahi district. Hunter further mentioned that the timber merchants through *dafadars* to whom advances were made by the merchants, settled with the owner of the forest. Besides, *Charandars* were employed by the merchants for specific months to bring the timber home. Timber trade was performed by this usual process in and around 1876.³⁶ It is to be mentioned that to facilitate timber trade, the Zamindar of Baikunthapur had established several forest offices at Salugara, Bodaganj, Shikarpur, Lantong and Farabari.³⁷ Many timber merchants from different parts of the country used to go there for business transactions in timber. Regarding the timber trade of Baikunthapur of North Bengal, Barun Dey & Pranab Ranjan Roy in their "Notes for the History of the Darjeeling District" wrote that the Baikunthapur Estate was an important center of the timber – logging industry & trade and many merchants from Bihar as well as Giri Gosains of the Dasnami Naga Sects of Beneras invested in this timber trade.³⁸ The immense profit accrued through this trade also lured Bengalee traders to engage in timber & tea trade in this region. During the period under study none of the indigenous tea planters or timber traders belonged to this region. Rather, most of them came either from East Bengal or South Bengal. It is to be noted that the people had come to Jalpaiguri district generally from the districts of Nadia, Hoogly, Burdwan and 24 Parganas.³⁹ J.F. Gruning mentioned that most of the timber merchants came from Dacca & Rangpur.⁴⁰ During the period under study 90% of the timber traders were Bengalees coming from East Bengal & a minor share was held by the Bengalees from Burdwan.⁴¹ Even before the formation of Jalpaiguri District

timber trade had started in Jalpaiguri area through Sukhani area of Rajganj region. Lahiri family, of the Sukhani area was associated with timber trade. Rameswar Lahiri was a big timber merchant. Even today Lahiri family lives at Sukhani in 'Lahiri Para' (Locality of the Lahiris) named after the family. Besides the Lahiri family the other eminent timber traders of Jalpaiguri during the period under study was Beharilal Ganguli. In Baura Port of Rangpur region, Biharilal Ganguli had a center for timber trade. From Baura Port big canoes reached Jalpaiguri to carry timbers, and navigable Tista river helped to transport timber to Rangpur.⁴² J.F. Gruning mentioned Sal timber exported by water to Sirajganj, Dacca & Baura was the principal timber trading center.⁴³ It is to be mentioned that Dinajpur was famous for fish trading and here one finds maximum number of boats being imported from Jalpaiguri generally used for fishing.

After the historic Bhutan war (1865) and the formation of Jalpaiguri District (1869), timber trade in North Bengal started extensively. At this period the British Government started clearing the forest areas of this region to make the land suitable for tea cultivation. A large number of people also came to this area for timber trade. It is to be noted that Beharilal Ganguli who hailed from Jessore came to Jalpaiguri to purchase timber as he got the news of clearing of forests for tea plantations.⁴⁴ J.F. Gruning mentioned that the purchasers of timber were mostly native merchants. It is known that Durgamohan Basu was an important timber trader of Jalpaiguri who had enlarged his business in different parts of Duars. Besides Durgamohan Basu, Khitish Basu, Tulshi Charan Mukherjee, Satyen Ganguli, were important timber traders of 1930's in Jalpaiguri. In Siliguri during that time Abdul Gaffar Khan, Ganesh Roy, Atul Chandra Dutta, Nibaran Chandra Ghatak were familiar with timber trade. Pradyut Kumar Basu, a renowned pleader of Siliguri, noted that from the late 19th Century to the early decades of 20th century timber trade was a flourishing business of Bengalees in Siliguri.⁴⁵ He mentioned that in the second decades of twentieth century Manmathanath Sarkar, Bireshwar Chattopadhyaya, Promodranjan Bhowmick and Narendranath Roy were established Bengalee timber traders of Siliguri.⁴⁶ It is to be noted that with regards to timber trade, one finds a

similarity of the participation of the Bengalees in North Bengal with that of the participation of the Bengalees of Assam. Like North Bengal the influx of the Bengalees in Assam was due to timber trade and still one finds that both in North Bengal and Assam, it is the only trade where the Bengalees established monopoly. Due to timber trade, Lataguri, Odlabari, Chalsa, Damanpur, Gayarkata, became important timber trading center. Thus it is found that timber trade turned out to be a monopoly trade of the Bengalees. Chomong Lama, a free lance researcher on North Bengal comments that timber trade was one of the three main trading occupations of the Bengalees in the Terai region during the 19th century.⁴⁷ It should be mentioned in this connection that later many of the timber traders following their success in this trade, began to invest in tea plantation industry.

Tea plantation industry was extremely profitable to the English traders. They first initiated tea plantation industry in Darjeeling in 1840, in the Terai in 1862 and in 1874 in Jalpaiguri district. During that time the indigo plantation began to suffer losses, and hence, lured by the immense profit of the tea industry, many affluent English traders plunged forth into this trade in North Bengal. Tea industries were financed and controlled from Calcutta, but the local movement of funds required for the working of the industry was handled by the various commercial banks. In 1922, the Imperial Bank opened a branch in Darjeeling and in 1935 a branch of Lloyds Bank was opened in Darjeeling. Both the Banks had an important contribution for providing funds for tea gardens in Darjeeling. In Jalpaiguri district the Imperial Bank opened a branch in 1894.⁴⁸ Besides the Colonial Banks, one finds indigenous Banks like Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation, Lakshmi Bank, Arya Bank, Raikat Bank in Jalpaiguri district. In Cooch Behar state some sort of indigenous method of Banking flourished which met some of the needs of peasants, men of small means and merchants. On 1st July 1929 a full-fledged non-scheduled bank named Kamala Bank was opened in Cooch Behar.⁴⁹ In Malda the indigenous banks mainly lend money and also financed in trade.⁵⁰ Some Indian entrepreneurs too followed suit centering on this industry. Jalpaiguri & Siliguri witnessed a congregation of many Bengalee traders from East Bengal & South Bengal.

Though a few gardens were established by the Indians both in Darjeeling & Jalpaiguri districts but due to lack of fund, many of these tea gardens passed hands and ultimately went to the Britishers. Yet a number of tea gardens remained solid with Indian enterprise & capital. It is already mentioned that the year 1879 was a memorable year for Bengalee traders of North Bengal since it was in that year the Mugalkata Tea Estate affiliated to Jalpaiguri Tea Company Ltd, the first Tea Estate of Indian Entrepreneurship, was established with the united effort of the Bengalee traders. During the period 1879 to 1910 there were eleven purely Indian ownership tea companies with indigenous capital in Jalpaiguri.⁵¹ The important tea planters during the period under study in Jalpaiguri were Munshi Rahimbox, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Gopal Ghosh, Kaminikanta Rahout, Prasanna Deb Raikat. It is to be noted that the Muslim Society, unlike the Hindu, was not caste-ridden. It did not suffer from the economic disabilities of the joint family system. But the new spirit of commercial adventure was not to be found among Muslims in Bengal as well as in North Bengal. Bengalee Muslims in general were connected with the plough. It is found that the largest number of jute ryots in Eastern Bengal and North Bengal must have been Muslims. However, in the area of study, particularly in Jalpaiguri Duars, some Muslims owned tea plantations industry. For the establishment of tea plantations industries in Jalpaiguri district, the Daga family of Jalpaiguri also played a vital role. Though initially they confined themselves to providing financial help but later on joined many of the tea enterprises of Jalpaiguri. The immense success of Bengalee planters took even the English by surprise.⁵² However, following the great economic depression in the 1930's, the ownership of the tea estates & factories gradually began to runout of the hands of the Bengalees & fell in the hands of non-Bengalee traders. It should also be noted that the monopoly in tea plantation industry also began to runout of the hands of the European from 1930's. From that time the Marwaris entered into tea plantation industries. In this connection, Timberg rightly ascribed that Marwari store owners of tea plantations became major sources of capital for that industry & eventually they brought tea plantation in their own right.

The jute industry was developed mainly by the Scottish business houses in Calcutta & both its managerial personnel & capital remained largely European in the second half of the 19th century due to the establishment of different jute mills surrounding Calcutta. Thus, the jute trade flourished in the second half of the 19th century in the northern part of North Bengal & gained special significance in the 20th century, because the vast areas of the northern parts of North Bengal were the major jute producing areas. In this region, jute trade was mostly controlled by Marwari traders, but it is also evident that European traders too were associated with this trade.

Timberg in his book "The Marwaris From Traders to Industries" ascribed that jute became a Marwari Trade.⁵³ By 1870's, the Marwaris firmly entrenched themselves in the raw jute trade. The most significance index of Marwari presence in the jute trade was the phenomenal growth of "Fatka" (on speculation) in raw jute as well as gunny. By 1919 "Fatka" became so pervasive that the European controlled Indian Jute Mill Association begged the Government to ban fatka. From the very beginning, the Marwaris interacted with European managing agencies & the business buying jute from an area that stretched from Hoogly to Mymensingh. It is already mentioned that in Sirajganj (now in Bangladesh) a particular Marwari had become so important by 1877 that jute sold by him was called Choke Chandi Jute (after his name Chokechand Chamaria). From the report of the Calcutta Bale Jute Association (CBA), it is known that by 1918-19 Marwari expanding firms accounted for 63% of CBA's membership & in the roster were names such as G.D.Birla, Sarupchand, Hukumchand etc.⁵⁴ It is found that in 1920s the Marwari community entered into jute industry and they became a vital source of credit in the rural areas of Jalpaiguri district.⁵⁵ Thus the presence of a great number of Marwari in the business of raw jute astonished us. The jute of North Bengal exported to Calcutta from Purnia, Parbatipur, Kishanganj, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, & Coochbehar. The Marwaris of these regions who controlled the jute trade were either *Mahajans* or brokers.⁵⁶ The East Bengal Sahas & Tilis traders were involved in the lower strata of jute trade.

During the concerned time period in Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and Coochbehar, a number of European jute firms cropped up. It should also be mentioned that in the southern part of North Bengal too, jute trade and jute firms emerged extensively. Among the four important jute growing centers of Dinajpur, Raiganj thana was very important jute growing area. From the Report of Revenue Surveyer Major Sherwill, it is clear that during the first world war, the jute of Dinajpur was extensively exported.⁵⁷ During the concerned time period, a large number of jute firm under European and indigenous capital emerged in Jalpaiguri. It is known that a man named Jalpeswar leased 12 bigha land to a jute company under the ownership of Chandmal Bhatia and the name of this jute company was Bullion Company.⁵⁸ There were several jute companies who opened their firms both in Jalpaiguri and Siliguri. In Jalpaiguri town, near the Jalpaiguri Railway station, Ralli Brothers had a Jute godown. Besides, there was the godown of R. Sim and Landale & Clark near 4 number Ghumti. In Kadamtala, one indigenous Jute godown emerged under the name of Gosthi Estate jute godown.⁵⁹ In Siliguri, one European jute company opened its godown near Mahananda river at Burdwan road. The name of the jute company was Barkmayar. Besides this jute company, some European jute companies also opened their branches at Siliguri such as Ralli Brothers, Landale & Clarks, R. Sim etc.⁶⁰ The European jute companies purchased the raw jute from Matigara, an important trade center situated between Mahananda & Balasan river and exported to Calcutta through railway. It should be noted that most of the people served in these jute companies were Bengalees. During this time Coochbehar too, became an important jute trading center. Among the 25 bundars in the Coochbehar state, Haldibari was famous for its jute trade. The Eastern Bengal state Railway made the jute trade a brisk one. It is known from the report of Gruning that much of the jute from Jalpaiguri were taken to the markets on the Eastern Bengal State Railway to Haldibari.⁶¹ Thus Haldibari of Coochbihar became an important jute mart area. In Haldibari different trading communities established jute firms and were connected with jute trade. Within 1916, there were eight European jute firms and fourteen indigenous jute firms (including Marwari & Bengalee) connected with jute trade at Haldibari.⁶² In 1876 European traders came to

Haldibari. The first among the European jute company was Anglo Indian Jute Mill & Company. Kashiabari & Diwanganj were the two important trade center of Haldibari thana. Both these trade centers were well connected with the Eastern Bengal by river route. From 1787, with river Tista changing its way, Mekhliganj and Diwanganj became the two main Bandar (trade centre). Even traders from Tibet & Bhutan on their way to Rangpur halted at Diwanganj for trade. Prior to the outbreak of the World War-II, Haldibari was also an important whole sale business center of Dal, Salt, Mustard oil, Sugar, Kerosin. From Haldibari, all these essential goods were exported to Darjeeling by bullock cart controlled by the Marwaris. Hunter pointed out that nearly all the commerce of the state carried out at the weekly markets were in the hands of the foreign merchants, chiefly Marwaris from Bikanir, who were more energetic and enterprising than the Coochbeharis. Besides Coochbehar, a large number of Marwaris also controlled the trade of Malda, Rangpur and Dinajpur. Between 1920 and 1935, there were seven European, four Bengalee and five non regional jute firms which controlled the jute trade of Haldibari.

The name of the Jute firms were as follows:

European Jute Firm

1. Anglo Indian Jute Mill and Company
2. Ralli Brothers
3. Landale and Clark
4. Barkmayar Brothers
5. Dancan Brothers
6. Macklyoad and Company.
7. R. Sim

Indigenous Jute Firm controlled by regional traders

1. Dhawjar Uddin Pradhan
2. Rahamattulla Pradhan
3. Fakasha Muhammad

4. Sachindragopal Bhattacharya

Indigenous Jute Firm controlled by non-regional traders

1. Sri Kishen Chand Sarma
2. Meghraj Ram Gopal
3. Jeshraj Chaitanya Das
4. Chagmal Radhakrishan
5. Asharam Gobardhan

It is known from the Coochbehar "Desk Gazetteer" of 1934 that out of twenty eight jute firms there were three firms under Europeans, one under Bengalee and twenty four non regional Indian ownerships at Mekhliganj of Coochbehar state.⁶³ Thus, it is found that in spite of the European dominance, the non regional traders particularly the Marwaris had an important role in controlling the jute trade of North Bengal during the period under study. In this connection it should be mentioned that during the economic depression, the ownership of many European jute mills passed into the hands of the Marwari traders. Among the European jute companies the Ralli Brothers continued its activities in jute trade for some years in the post independence period in North Bengal. In 1950 they closed the jute trade in North Bengal and left the country.

During the period under study, trade & commerce also flourished considerably in the hilly regions of North Bengal. The dealers of commodities like Cardamom, Cinchona and Orange were mostly Nepalis or Bhutias, but the main control lay in the hands of Tibetan traders. Chomong Lama, a free-lance researcher ascribed that one can easily realize from the organization "Bhutia Cinchona Association" that local people participated in minor trade of the local goods.⁶⁴ Indigo as dyeing material was much appreciated in Tibet and in very great demand because the profit on it varied from fifty to one hundred percent on the cost of importing the article.⁶⁵ In 1866, Kalimpong was included into Darjeeling district which was the main Cinchona trading center. Besides Cinchona trading, Kalimpong was one of the flourishing trade center and that half of the entire trade between Tibet &

India passed through Kalimpong town. It is recorded that in 1881, trade between Kalimpong & Lhasa, the Capital of Tibet, took along a 21 days mule track through old silk route between Tibet & India. After the British Tibet war in 1886 at Tukula, almost the entire track became the monopoly of the British. Wool was the most valuable commodity imported from Tibet & Sikkim and it was the wool trade which has been mainly responsible for the importance of Kalimpong as a Business Center. J.F. Gruning mentioned that a lion's share of Bhutan's trade continued through Buxaduar and wool from Tibet, Bhutan and Central Asia came to India through this route.⁶⁶ During the period under study, it is recorded that over one lakh mounds of wool arrived annually in Kalimpong on caravans of mules conducted by Tibetans.⁶⁷ All these wool were despatched to Calcutta and after sorting, it was exported to Liverpool. None of the wool was consumed locally. Besides the Tibetans, the Marwaris were also engaged in wool trade.

Marwaris arrived in Kalimpong in and around 1870. A.J. Dash mentioned that soon after the annexation of Kalimpong from Bhutan, Marwari firms were established in Kalimpong. In Kalimpong, the Marwaris not only controlled the trade but they also provided agricultural capital to the local people. In this connection it is quite pertinent to quote A.J. Dash – “With the advent of the Marwari traders who started large scale buying of Cardamoms and the impetus derived from the larger demand for agricultural products, with increased pressure on land caused by an influx of Nepali cultivators after the tract became ceded to British India and with the cultivation by means of the plough, the need arose for agricultural capital and the Marwari was ready to provide it.”⁶⁸ Kalimpong then was an area where the aboriginals were completely ignorant of the intricacies of modern commercial transitions. The local people rather incompetent to exploit the new trading opportunities which the extension of British authority over the area had produced.

The traders from far away i.e. the Marwaris thus filled the commercial vacuum. It is reported that Rai Bahadur Ramchandra, the General Manager of the Jetmull Bhojraj Company, one of the largest Tibet trading houses was among the first traders who worked out a route from Kalimpong in Bengal to

Tibet through Jelep-la in South-eastern Sikkim that dates back to 1871, much before Nathula popped up on the business map.⁶⁹ Kalimpong was the main centre of commerce with Tibet and Jelep-la was the main pass. A number of Marwari soon became purchasers of Tibet wool and completely monopolized the wool market of Kalimpong. The following table shows the trade of wool from Tibet to Kalimpong.

Wool imports from Tibet into Kalimpong.

	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
January	Custom	5300	6232	7138	6189	5194	3050	1439	4024	5647
February	House	5134	4885	4076	875	4814	4210	4036	3366	5943
March	Opened	3360	4458	4117	5540	5973	5600	4528	3170	6030
April	1 st May	2564	2446	2421	4951	2790	3794	3845	3706	5571
May	3104	1212	2941	2904	4213	1615	2015	4811	4565	4685
June	2326	1175	2334	1798	2042	831	2276	902	1014	1550
July	1338	69	54	336	402	138	364	248	536	20
August	292	272	834	130	-	144	54	202	244	52
September	1164	1293	1551	1032	277	584	301	1170	300	1679
October	3491	3458	3523	2400	4758	3966	3100	3874	2898	1639
November	3775	4038	4163	6759	5582	3964	3198	5121	5235	-
December	4177	3119	4937	4925	3757	4216	4081	3805	5208	-
Yearly total	19667	30994	38361	40034	38586	34232	31748	33881	34261	32810

Source: C.A. Bell, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Kalimpong Government Estate in the District of Darjeeling 1901-1903, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1905, p. Appendix IX(C), Part-I, Chapter XIII.

It is found that Marwari and Tibetan merchants provided the working capital for sorting and baling of wool in Kalimpong with an annual turnover of Rs.5,00,000.⁷⁰ Wool were exported to Liverpool by the Marwaris from Kalimpong through the agents of M/S Gillander Arthbutnot and company. Marwaris also established wool godown at Kalimpong. In 1903, Fatechand Agarwal, a wool merchant of Kalimpong established first wool godown at Kalimpong for storing the wool purchased from the Tibetan traders.⁷¹ The number of wool godown in Kalimpong under Marwari control gradually increased. Between 1919 and 1921 there were eight godowns, five belonging to Marwaris, while in 1928 there were seven, four owned by the Marwaris at Kalimpong.⁷² Among the foreigners, the American merchants entered into wool trade since 1930 and Kalimpong bales were shipped directly to America.⁷³ In this connection it is quite pertinent to mention that formerly Kalimpong was only a receiving centre and all the wool received was

despatched in its original state to Calcutta where sorting and baling was carried out for export to Liverpool. But with the entry of American merchants in wool trade of Kalimpong, sorting and baling of wool started in Kalimpong itself and was made ready for shipment directly from Kalimpong. The price of wool gradually rose in and like jute, it also became the monopoly of the Marwaris. In 1928, the price of per maund of wool was Rs.11 which rose in 1938 to Rs.65.⁷⁴

Marwari participation in trade in Kalimpong increased particularly after the Younghusband Expedition of Lasha which forced open the gates of Tibet for British commerce. After this, Kalimpong presented a viable area of commercial activities. The Marwaris made their presence in Kalimpong as suppliers of consumption goods, particularly grocery items, rice, sugar, salt and cotton textiles. During the period under study, Kalimpong had a miniscule population a few original tribal inhabitants and their Nepali counterparts, together with a few plainsmen who came in connection with the newly established British administration. It is found that some Kayasthas from Bihar during that time started entering into the field of grocery items at Kalimpong. However, the Marwaris were the established merchants who traded the consumption goods bringing those up from the railhead at Siliguri for the consumption of the population of Kalimpong. They also used to collect the local products like cardamoms, oranges and a few medicinal herbs like aconite, Chirota, and Kutki etc. Among the different local products, Cardamom was one of the principal crop exported mainly to Punjab. The purchase and despatch of the crop was entirely in the hands of Marwaris. It was the Cardamom trade that first attracted Marwaris to Kalimpong soon after its annexation from Bhutan. The principal markets for Cardamoms were Kalimpong, Algarah, Gitbeong, Tista and Sombaria. Marwaris also connected with the trade of maize from Kalimpong and exported it to Calcutta. It is recorded that per year, 2,35,000 maunds of maize were exported to Calcutta from Kalimpong.⁷⁵ Due to caste norms Marwaris would not handle animal or animal produces, except wool. This ensured the entry of the other people in Kalimpong like Muslims Biharis and Kayasthas, from the plains of the Bihar and present U.P chiefly in

connection with petty trade. Besides these traders from plains, the Nepalis in good number entered into the trade of animal and animal products from Tibet to Kalimpong. Almost ninety percent of the trade of Musk, which mainly came from Tibetan province of Khan, was in the hands of Nepalis who purchased it from Tibet and distributed it at Kalimpong.⁷⁶ Further, import of slaughter animals from Tibet were conducted by Tibetans and Chinese. Gold dust in small quantities from Milu in Tibet and Silver from China were imported into Kalimpong by Tibetan and Chinese Muslims.

Apart from the above mentioned trade centres, the weekly markets and bi-weekly markets called *hats* and religious fairs were also important centres where the local trade was mostly carried on. In the districts of North Bengal through several *hats* and religious fairs assemblage of people with trading activities could be found and had great importance. In Darjeeling district, Namsu, Rohini, Kursong, Sukhia Pokhri and Mirik and in the Terai in Phansidewa, Bagdogra, Siliguri, Matigara, Naxalbari, Kharibari, Khaprail, Panighata, Tarbanda, Adhikari were the weekly markets. Sukhia Pokhri, 7 km. east of the Ghoom where weekly market was held every Friday. Traders from Nepal came to this *hat*. Necessary articles for households were carried to this *hat* from Darjeeling and Siliguri. Mirik *hat* was also an important *hat* in the Kalimpong sub-division where weekly market was held every Sunday and different goods were brought here from Aalgara, Pedong, Lava, Tista and Rambhi. Religious fairs were held at Namsu, Naxalbari and also Hanskhawa where different kinds of goods and household articles were sold during the period under study. Matigara emerged as a spectacular centre of trade and distribution centre. Besides the traders from Terai, Darjeeling, Nepal and Sikkim, during the cold weather, Matigara was thronged with Tibetan traders.⁷⁷ It is also mentioned that the Matigara *hat* where large scale of business transaction took place and a variety of commodities and livestock were sold, attracted vendors and customers from the hills, Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal and neighbouring districts of Purnea and Jalpaiguri.⁷⁸ Besides Matigara, Phansidewa was the only place in the Terai which boasted of a daily bazaar. The tea garden coolies were the largest consumers of the commodities offered for sale. Further, the jute firms at Siliguri provided a

ready market for all the jute produced locally. The *hats* at Naxalbari and Panighata transacted a bumper business in rice and butter.⁷⁹ Naxalbari was also noted for its market for the sale of pigs and buffaloes. All the *hats* and tea gardens of Terai were linked up with roads and some by railways. The important *hats* or weekly markets and religious fairs of Jalpaiguri district were Jalpesh fair, Falakata fair, Madari *hat*, Matiali *hat*, Ramshai *hat*, Maynaguri *hat*, Barnesh *hat*, Falakata *hat*, Chalsha *hat*, Aamguri *hat*, Changmari *hat*, Dhupguri *hat*, Jalpesh *hat*, Daukumari *hat*, Chamurchi *hat* etc. Dhupguri *hat* was the biggest *hat* of Jalpaiguri district where a bumper business in rice, tobacco and jute were conducted and traders were attracted from Assam, Bhutan and Burma. An old established fair was held at Jalpesh in February at the time of *Sivaratri festival* which lasted for about three weeks and was attended by people from all parts of the district as well as from Rangpur, Dinajpur and other parts of North Bengal. In that fair, Bhutias come from Darjeeling, Buxa and Bhutan with cloth, blankets, ponies and skins and they took away cotton and woollen cloths, betel nut and tobacco.⁸⁰ Religious fair was also held in Falakata every year from *Sri Panchami to Doljatra*. Traders from different areas such as Bhutan, Cooch Behar and different parts of Duars come through Mujnai river by boats.⁸¹ It should be mentioned that tea garden industries had an important significance to the economy of Jalpaiguri. Due to the gradual expansion of tea gardens in the Jalpaiguri district, the value of the *hats* in the district increased considerably. J.A. Milligan mentioned that in Jalpaiguri district most of the *hats* were held near the tea gardens. Naturally tea gardens' labours were the main customers of the *hats* and the value of the *hat* day was enormous.⁸² Matiali *hat* was a small bazaar (market) in the centre of the Chalsa group of tea gardens. A large market was held there once a week and was attended by thousands of tea garden coolies. In that *hat* the trade was mainly in the hands of Marwari merchants.⁸³ Madari *hat* was of some importance as a seat of trade and its market was held once a week. Trade of jute was extensively despatched from Madarihat railway station. The Chalsa *hat* was organised bi-weekly and several tea garden workers and agricultural population of the neighbouring areas attended in that *Hat*. The Chamurchi *hat* was mainly important for trade with Bhutan. There was a small bazaar

(market) and the *hat* was also important for jute trade. In Sheelbari *hat* tobacco, jute and other agricultural goods were sold adequately and traders from different district of North Bengal attended that *Hat*.⁸⁴ The total number of *hats* in the Cooch Behar state was 119 and the largest one was Dewanganj in Mekhliganj. Besides Dewanganj, Chowra *hat*, Mathabhanga *hat*, Changrabanda *hat*, Haldibari *hat*, Darowani *hat*, Nishiganj *hat*, Tufanganj *hat*, Bakshir *hat*, Chowdhuri *hat*, Lakshmir *hat* were also important *hats* of Cooch Behar. The Mathabhanga *hat*, Nishiganj *hat*, Tufanganj *hat* and Chowdhury *hat* were important for cattle trade. The Darowani *hat* (now in Bangladesh), Changrabanda *hat*, Haldibari *hat*, Mekhliganj *hat* were important for rice, jute, tobacco, oil seeds. In these *hats*, traders attended from Rangpur, Bihar and Bhutan and goods from these *hats* were exported to Purnia, Siliguri, Calcutta, Assam and Orissa.⁸⁵ The Dodeya *hat* of Cooch Behar state was famous for the large stock of food grains. It should be mentioned that jute and tobacco were the chief articles of valuable exports of Cooch Behar both for wholesale and retail purchase in the big *hats* and during jute and tobacco season, people assembled in a large scale in these big *hats*. It indicates the importance of the commercial crops like jute and tobacco in the economy of the district and the dependence of the people upon these commercial crops. During jute and tobacco season, big *hats* of Cooch Behar were thronged with *Paikars*, *Beparies* and Merchants of different communities. Harendra Narayan Choudhury mentioned that in the *hats* of Cooch Behar the average attendance varied from 100 to 3,000. However, during the jute and tobacco season the attendance of people in the *hats* rose between 4,000 and 5,000.⁸⁶ Besides the *hats*, different *melas* or religious fairs were also important for trading activities in Cooch Behar. W.W. Hunter mentioned that the Godadhar mela was an important fair of Cooch Behar State. The *mela* was held on a certain day in the month of Chaitra (May) at a place on the right bank of the Kaljani river which was about eleven miles from Cooch Behar town. The *mela* lasted for three days and there was an extensive trade of jute, tobacco, rice and mustard seed and local manufactured goods.⁸⁷ In undivided Dinajpur district, there, were 32 important *hats* during the concerned time period. It should be mentioned that in undivided Dinajpur

district, the Zamindars established numerous *hats* and markets mainly by giving away lands on the rent free basis for the purpose of considerable stimulation of agriculture.⁸⁸

During the period under study the important *hats* of the Indian portion of Dinajpur district were Kushmandi *hat*, Sympur *hat*, Jhitkia *hat*, Bangshihari *hat*, Patiram *hat*, Nazirpur *hat*, Thakurpara *hat*, Amrail *hat*, Chingispur *hat*, Tior *hat*, Chandganj *hat*, Samjia *hat*, Gopalganj *hat*, Kanki *hat*, Samaspur *hat*, Raiganj *hat*, Daulatpur *hat*, Chakalia *hat*. In Bangshihari *hat*, the oldest *hat* which was started since 1752, large quantities of Paddy and rice were brought and sold every Tuesday.⁸⁹ The principal agricultural commodities brought and sold in the other *hats* of Dinajpur district were jute, rice, paddy, mustard, chillies, tobacco, pulses etc. In undivided Dinajpur, at least forty seven *melas* or religious fairs were held annually and extensive trade of different goods were carried on in these religious fairs.⁹⁰ Alwakhowa and Nekmarad fairs were most important for cattle fair of undivided Dinajpur district. Alwakhowa fair was the second most important cattle trade centre of undivided Dinajpur district. The fair was held annually in October or November on the occasion of *Rashpurnima festival* and lasted for seven days. In this fair, traders attended from Bihar, Assam, Punjab and Bhutan.⁹¹

Besides the above two fairs, Dhaldighi, Islampur and Patiram *melas* or religious fairs were held every year where livestock transaction was the major part of the trade. Most of the livestock were of superior qualities to those obtainable in the district and the cultivators acquired animals of superior breed at these *melas* for improving their own stock. Camels were also brought for sale to these *melas* from distant provinces. The most important *hats* of Malda district were Pakua *hat*, Ratanpur *hat*, Samshi *hat*, Bulbulchandi *hat*, Nawabganj *hat*, Gazol *hat*, Kaliachak *hat*, Rathbari *hat*, Alampur *hat* and Kumedpur *hat*. Traders from Bihar and adjacent areas gathered in large numbers for trading purpose in these *hats*. Ramkeli Mela which lasted for four or five days was important for cattle and all sorts of articles. Besides the cattle trade, most noticeable article for trade was Jangipur blankets carried on by the traders of Murshidabad and the

business amounting to Rs.2,00,000 done in this Mela.⁹² There were also some minor melas in Katadiara, near Bhaluka, and at Bamongola, Gajol and Sadullapur where different kinds of goods and household articles were sold.

In spite of the Bengalees' traditional aversion to business, several Bengalee owned and managed firms were established in North Bengal during the first two decades of the twentieth century. This was largely the result of the nationalistic Swadeshi agitation that followed Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905. Besides, it was also a response to the slogan of economic nationalism of Jagadish Chandra Bose and Prafulla Chandra Roy. The renowned nationalist Ramesh Chandra Dutta inspired the Indian for indigenous industrialization in the "All India Industrial Conference" at Baranasi in December 1905. Prafulla Chandra Roy and Nil Ratan Sarkar took initiative for large scale industries and modern industries in Bengal.⁹³ In support of Swadeshi, the Pioneer Weaving Mill was established in 1906 at Jalpiguri by a Bengalee entrepreneur with a capital of five thousand rupees.⁹⁴ But this enterprise closed within a short time due to great financial losses. This loss was primarily due to selling of products at very cheap rate in pursuance of the Swadeshi call. During that time, there was another Weaving Mill at Jalpaiguri by the name of Silpa Samiti on the bank of the river Karala. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh a renowned tea planter of Jalpaiguri, took untiring effort for the development of the factory. He sent a man named Jogeswar Sanyal to Japan for modern industrial training for the smooth running of the factory. Competent labourers were brought from Madras region. But the factory could not run for long due to the gradual demise of the labourers. As the factory collapsed, Mohinimohan Chakraborty, a retired Deputy Magistrate, purchased all the looms of the factory and established Mohini Cotton Mill at Kusthia (now in Bangladesh) in 1908.⁹⁵ During that time some efforts were taken by the Bengalees of Jalpaiguri for establishing several small factories. In this connection, mention should be made of Match factory by Kumudini Chakraborty, Oil Mill by Manoranjan Dasgupta. But these efforts failed to make an impact. However, the efforts of Bengalees in Jalpaiguri for establishing tea garden industry reached its zenith during that time. Between 1906 and 1907, there

emerged a great number of tea gardens in the Duars under Bengalees ownership. In 1907 Jogesh Chandra Ghosh established the Ramjhora Tea company. Tarini Prashad Roy and Maulavi Musaraf Hossain, energetic young lawyers of Jalpaiguri competing with the British Planters, raised the Bengalees ownership gardens to a higher position during that time.

In Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and undivided Dinajpur young Bengalees spontaneously came out for the production and the trade of indigenous goods. In Darjeeling, an energetic young Bengalee Khagendranath Roy established a co-operative Enterprise.⁹⁶ The effort of Khagendranath was highly praised and appreciated in Amrit Bajar Patrika during that time.⁹⁷ In Jalpaiguri and Balurghat of present south Dinajpur, there emerged Swadeshi Bhandar, Jubak Bhandar. During that time indigenous Banks, insurances etc. also opened up in North Bengal. In 1908 Swadeshi- Bank Co-operative Hindustan was established with a share capital of 2 corer rupees. The Maharaja of Coochbehar was one of the organizers of this Bank.⁹⁸ It is to be mentioned that prior to the Swadeshi agitation, several banking organization came into existence in Jalpaiguri. In 1887, Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation was opened and in 1902 Raikat Industrial Bank was opened with the capital of Rs. 3,04,184.⁹⁹ In Malda, the most important centers of cotton cloth weaving, especially coloured masharies (netting), were Kaliachack thana and Kharba thana. Though the industry declined for the time being owing to the competition from factory-made goods, but showed signs of revival under the influence of the swadeshi movement. But Dinajpur district was not so active for the encouragement of indigenous industries during the Swadeshi movement, because the products of Indian Weavers did not seem to have benefited the local weavers much. The reason probably was that this demand began and ended with the bhadralok class, who had little urge for coarse material which the latter could supply.¹⁰⁰ However, during that time in undivided Dinajpur there emerged some cottage industries. In 1907 Nagendranath Majumdar established Manorama candle factory in undivided Dinajpur. Though similar attempts were made for the establishment of indigenous industries throughout Bengal, including North Bengal, during the Swadeshi movement,

but these failed due to several social and economic hindrances. Regarding this failure all over India and Bengal, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar pointed out that the lack of required capital and experience for the establishment of the industries were the prime factors for this unsuccess.¹⁰¹ Actually the business communities of Bengal were not conscious for the industrialization in Swadeshi wave. Further more, they would not want to make any loss of their own business in support of Swadeshi and indigenous industries.¹⁰²

For the European traders, Bengal was an alluring center for trade and commerce. In a journal of Bombay Council 1689, it was clearly stated that "Bengal trade was a jewel in the company's trade."¹⁰³ Hence, as time progressed, European traders firmly established themselves and became the main controllers of trade and commerce in Bengal as well as in North Bengal. As a result of the political pressure exercised by the private traders and the decline of merchantilist doctrines in England, the company's exclusive monopoly in Indian trade was abolished in 1813 and the company was debarred from trading altogether in 1833. With this event the period of real modern development in the history of Indian trade and commerce began. Bengal as well as North Bengal too availed this great opportunity. The Charter Act of 1833 underwent a great change as it opened the Indian markets to the international sphere. This paved the way for the development of a free trade system with a steady growth of capitalistic entrepreneurship in various industrial enterprises. In North Bengal, the gradual growth and development of plantation industries and the encouragement of commercial cultivation of different crops started. This new trade policy of the Britishers began to bear fruit very soon. In North Bengal, plantation was taken up on a big scale and the trade of different cash crops like Tobacco, Jute, Indigo etc. extensively increased. During the concerned time period, English traders played a significant role in North Bengal trading sphere. It should be mentioned that European trading interest centered on specific items. In North Bengal their interest were focussed on timber, tea and jute. There was good support from Government side and the European traders enjoyed enormous privileges in trade and commerce. There are enough instances of Government of India trying to widen the channels of trade and commerce to

the European traders and the companies. The development of the railways and the tea plantation industries were the best examples of Government response in the late 19th century in North Bengal. During the period under study, impetus was given for Colonial interest to the cultivation of various cash crops like jute, tobacco, tea, orange etc. and encouraged for exporting raw materials but no scheme for any agro-industries had been taken by the Colonial Government. So, the cultivation and trade of these commercial crops had extensively increased during that time in North Bengal. Regarding trade and commerce, various development projects had been initiated by the British in the hilly region of North Bengal. Darjeeling was made the trade center in connection with the frontier trades with the Himalayan and Sub-Himalayan countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. The British also had the great vision of opening up a trade link between Calcutta and China. Even trading with Central Asia was thought of through the Trans-Himalayan mountainous trade route. Thus, every aspect of the economy of North Bengal was geared up and trade and commerce began to flourish, especially export trade increased considerably in both volume and value.

With this progress various indigenous merchant communities, such as, the Marwaris, Biharis, Gujratis, Punjabis, from others parts of Bengal began to crowd around the North Bengal region in no time. As a result, business extended to all and any class of goods. Though there was the presence of some local traders in the southern part of North Bengal, there was complete absence of the local traders in northern parts of North Bengal. So, one finds a distinctive feature of traders in the two regions of North Bengal. But it is to be mentioned that North Bengal from time immemorial, had been a purely agricultural tract and the development of its economy was mostly agricultural based. As most of the people of this region earned their subsistence from agriculture, they took to agriculture rather than commerce as their profession. G.E. Lambourn mentioned that agriculture was the main occupation of the people of Malda and 68.8 per cent population of Malda were dependent on agriculture.¹⁰⁴ F.W. Strong mentioned that 91 percent of the population of the undivided Dinajpur were dependent on agriculture.¹⁰⁵ Regarding Jalpaiguri W.W. Hunter writes – “There seems to

be no tendency on the part of the people to gather into towns or into seats of industry or commerce. The population is a purely agricultural one and that forty nine out of every fifty persons live more or less by cultivation.”¹⁰⁶ J.F. Gruning also ascribed that the local population of Rajbansi, Muhammadan and Mech made a living too easily by cultivation to have any incentive to learn a trade.¹⁰⁷ W.W. Hunter also expressed the same view with regards to Darjeeling that the population of the district was entirely rural and lived solely on agriculture.¹⁰⁸ It is also mentioned in the survey and settlement operation report of the Darjeeling Terai that the local people being almost entirely agricultural, the manufacturing classes almost wholly engaged themselves in supplying their simple needs and thus produced little for export.¹⁰⁹ Same picture could be seen in the district of Coochbehar also.¹¹⁰ Naturally, no business community could emerge from among the native inhabitants of this region. So, this was the opportunity which was fully utilized by the non Bengalee traders and Bengalee traders from other parts of Bengal and they found their way into this region. Among these trading communities, the Marwaris were rich and affluent who controlled most of the wholesale trade of this region. But it is to be mentioned that the non-indigenous traders were well organized and were the main controllers of the export and import trade of this region. Like other parts of Bengal, though an attempt had been made in this region, with the inspiration from Swadeshi movement for the growth of small industries, but these failed with the end of the said movement. So, in North Bengal during the concerned time, trade & commerce passed to a great extent into the hands of the non-indigenous merchants and traders, especially the Britishers and the traders of the other Provinces of India and non regional Bengalee traders.

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CHAPTER-VI

INDUSTRIAL CANVAS IN THE OPENING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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Transport and Communication is the backbone of Industrial development of any country of any age. The Colonial Government had a pre-conceived notion to convert India into an agricultural farm. To serve this purpose, the interior of India was needed to be linked by a network of good transport system. North Bengal during the Colonial rule was not free from such type of general principles of transport and communication development. The introduction of modern transport system such as Railway, Road and Riverine had the most lasting impact in the economic sphere of North Bengal. It is to be noted that Railway was the most important effective communication system of the 19th century which stands for speediness and economic development. So, the Railway had greatly changed the Industrial canvas of the 20th century North Bengal. In addition to Railway, one can not ignore the road communication system and riverine transportation which also played an important part for the opening of industrial canvas of North Bengal. It is to be noted in this context that before the introduction of railways, roads and rivers were the prime ways and chief means of transport and communication. I have discussed the inauguration of railways and its commercial importance in North Bengal in Chapter-III. In that chapter it is already discussed how with the introduction of railway the economy of North Bengal flourished and improved the trade and industries like, tea plantation industry and also made cheaper the prices of agricultural produces, commercialized different food grains and non food grain agricultural produces, broadened the business sphere, encouraged to settle different trading communities and as a whole brightened the economic prospects of North Bengal during the period under study. In this chapter I am concentrating my attention upon the road and riverine communication system.

ROAD TRANSPORT SYSTEM:

It can not be denied that one of the greatest handicaps of Indian agriculture was the lack of adequate roads. Agricultural produces and perishable products can not as a rule be taken to market in good condition from villages in the immediate neighborhood of a town without a good metalled road. It is to be mentioned that in the 19th century road communication in North Bengal was very poor and there were very few miles of metalled roads in the southern portion of North Bengal. It was the Colonial need and requirements for commercialization of agricultural produces, trade and industries particularly tea industry and for transfrontier trade that impetus was given from the mid 19th century for the construction of metalled road in different parts of North Bengal. From the beginning of the 20th century this road development scheme got a vigorous form. From this time attention was not only paid for the construction of roads in different parts of North Bengal, but also new bridges were constructed and attention given to the proper repair of the roads. Due to the construction and development of roads North Bengal during the Colonial rule under study gradually developed as agricultural flourishing zone. In this context it is to be noted that metalled road greatly helped to flourish an area. It is mentioned that good metalled road was one of the factors behind the agricultural flourish of Punjab. Punjab during the Colonial rule was far in advance in regards to better system of metalled roads than any other province in India. Here one finds villages from which perishable farm produce is conveyed regularly by lorry to towns 50-60 miles distant.¹ But owing to the physical features of the land, heavy rainfall, numerous streams and rivers, road building was not only a difficult task in North Bengal, but also extremely expensive. On the other hand the devastating floods also created hindrances to road construction in North Bengal, particularly in the northern parts of North Bengal. In spite of these hindrances during the Colonial rule under study the Colonial Government paid much attention to the construction and development of roads in North Bengal.

It is already mentioned that when Darjeeling was gifted by the Raja of Sikkim to the East India Company in 1835 the means of communication was not so well in Darjeeling. It is recorded that upto 1835 there were only two routes viz. one was by the "Nagree" pass and the other by "Sabook Golah". Besides these two routes, there was also a third route by the Mahananda.² But this route was not used and was deserted since overgrown with jungle. Thus lack of well road communication system to reach Darjeeling was one of the many hurdles. After Darjeeling was gifted, with in a few years the Colonial masters started here tea plantation industry and saw great prospects of transfrontier trade with the adjacent states of Darjeeling. At first to the Colonial Government it was very urgent to connect the hill with the plains. Consequently from Siliguri to Darjeeling road construction was completed between 1839 to 1842. In 1864 from Kurseong to Darjeeling a cart road was completed. Thus within the hill and from plains to hill road communication was started. After that the Colonial Government took a broader scheme and a road of 126 miles long from Karagola Ghat on the Ganges opposite Sahebganj to Siliguri had been improved by construction known as Ganges Darjeeling road. Further from Siliguri a road had been constructed connected with hill cart road. Another road was constructed to link with the North East. This was the Sivok Bagrakot Road (9½ miles long) connecting Ganges Darjeeling road with North Assam. It is to be mentioned that in Darjeeling district road construction was very expensive and not easy due to several streams and rivers which was one of the factors for hurdles of road construction in Darjeeling district. However the Colonial Government took initiative to construct bridges over the important rivers to connect plains with the hill. In 1892-93 a bridge was constructed over the Panchanai river on the 4th mile of Darjeeling Hill Cart Road and was opened for both cart and railway traffic.³ Further bridges over Balasan river and Mahandnda river rendered great facility for well communication system of plains with hills.⁴

The importance of road communications in Darjeeling district had always been recognized locally and by the provincial government. It is

recorded that there were three agencies responsible for the supervision and construction of roads in Darjeeling. In this context mention should be made (i) Public Works Department, (ii) Through local fund under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner and (iii) under the supervision of the Municipality. These three agencies constructed different roads, both metalled and un-metalled, bridges were constructed and maintained. W.W. Hunter in his Statistical Account mentioned that in 1871 the total length of the roads under public works department jurisdiction was 93 miles of which 65 miles were unmetalled, the roads maintained from the local fund was about 234 miles and the roads which were under the Municipality was more or less 100 miles long totally unmetalled.⁵ Thus, it is found that in the late nineteenth century there were 427 miles roads maintained under these three agencies. Due to the gradual development of tea plantation industry and transfrontier trade from the eighties of the nineteenth century Colonial Government paid much attention to road development and construction projects in Darjeeling and Terai. From the beginning of the twentieth century as exports and imports were largely enhanced several new roads were constructed for transfrontier trade and military traffic between plains and hills.⁶ In the beginning of the twentieth century there were 642 miles of roads in Darjeeling.⁷

The Hill Cart Road which was 48 miles from Siliguri to Darjeeling was the most important road as because it connected plains with hills. The Colonial Government was conscious of keeping this road properly maintained and without any shortcomings. Needless to say that besides the Hill Cart Road the Colonial Government also paid attention of the development, construction, repairs both in hills and plains for several other roads in Darjeeling district. Among these roads the 15th miles Tista Bridge to Rangpo metalled road was an important road. In 1903-04 an amount of Rs.1,16,470 was sanctioned for the construction of a Cart road from Rangpo Junction to Gangtok and in that year Rs.75,377 was expended.⁸ From Kurseong to Darjeeling 19½ miles, long road was constructed which contained 300 bridges also an important road. But the most important road

was the Tista valley Road 18½ miles which connected Sivok to Tista Bridge. This road was continued therefrom to Sikkim and Tibet via Rangpo and to Kalimpong and Tibet. For the improvement of the first section of the Lachen Road from Tista Suspension Bridge to the Rungpo Junction was undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs.60,312 in 1905-06.⁹

From the beginning of the twentieth century the Colonial Government took further initiative and paid much more attention for trading with the transfrontier states like Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. In 1903-04 an amount of Rs.27,682 was sanctioned for Tista Valley trade route in connection with certain bridges and bungalows in Sikkim and Rs.21,695 was allotted for expenditure on the work during the year.¹⁰ In the same year upto 21st mile Tista valley road to Kalimpong and beyond was called Rishi Road which was 26 miles up past the Tibet frontier at the Jelep La Pass to Phari Dzong and Lhasa. In 1929-30 this route was improved considerably, to make it usable by heavy motor traffic.¹¹ In 1911 the 17 miles Pashok Road connected Tista with the Cart Road at Jorebunglow. To open out a route into Sikkim, the line from Labha via Richila to Lingtu was ordered to be laid out and surveyed.¹² Further, the Colonial Government for the development of trade with Tibet also paid attention. In this context it is to be mentioned that from plains or Siliguri to Jelep La there were two alternative routes, (i) one from Siliguri to Jelep La via Tista bridge, Rangpo, Pakyong and Rongli and (ii) from Siliguri to Jelep La via Tista bridge, Kalimpong, Argarha Labha, Pangola and Lingto. The Colonial Government took initiative for the repair of the first route and was opened at an expenditure of Rs.10,000. However, this route was deferred and finally the second route was sanctioned and ordered to open for the trade with Tibet.¹³ Besides these development works, in the same several other important works were done in connection with road. The following table illustrates the most important work completed in 1903-04 and the amount spent for the work.

Road Development works in Darjeeling in 1903-04

1.	Survey of a new alignment of the Tista Valley road, 13 th to 24 mile	Rs.29,000
2.	Permanent repairs to the upper section, Tista Valley Road	Rs.88,750
3.	Temporary Repairs to the Tista valley road from Sevoke to Riang	Rs.30,000
4.	Special repairs, Darjeeling Hill Cart Road, 1902-1903	Rs.71,000
5.	Special repairs, Darjeeling Hill Cart Road, 1903-04, 23 rd to 30 th Mile	Rs.26,000
.	High level Tista Valley Road (Estimate not prepared)	

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1903-04, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1905, p.88

In the Terai, the Siliguri Naxalbari Road connected with the three roads North Ward viz. (i) Matigara Kurseong Road 22¼ miles long, (2) The Tirhana Naxalbari Road 8½ miles long and (3) the Tirhana Bagdogra road 5¾ miles long. Owing to increase of traffic it became necessary to improve and metal Tirhana – Bagdogra Road in the Darjeeling Terai and on 31st March of 1905-06 an allotment of Rs.8,000 was expended.¹⁴ The Ghum Simana Road which was known as Nepal Frontier road was an important road connected with Nepal. In 1921-22 a Cart road from Ghum to Sukiapokri was completed and in the same year in connection with the development of Kalimpong as a hill station, the construction of the lower bridle road was completed at a cost of Rs.91,085.¹⁵

In this context it is to be mentioned that Kalimpong had a great strategical importance. Through Kalimpong much of the trade of the hill was conducted with the transfrontier states. Majority of the trade was conducted with Tibet through Kalimpong. The trading importance of Kalimpong earned for it the epithet of the king of the hills. Thus after its annexation to the British territory the Colonial Government kept in mind its prompt development with regards to road development for trade and commerce. At

the beginning of the twentieth century some six new roads were opened connecting Kalimpong.¹⁶

Besides, the construction of Panchanai, Balasan and Mahananda bridges, several other important bridges were also constructed and reconstructed during the concerned time period under study. In 1933-34, the Anderson Bridge over the Tista river was constructed which greatly helped opening of Industrial canvas in the Darjeeling district as well as North Bengal.¹⁷ In 1929-30, a bridge was reconstructed over the Mellikhola in Darjeeling, which was washed away in July 1927.¹⁸ Further, in 1930-31, a bridge was also reconstructed over the Bhalukhola in Darjeeling.¹⁹ For the development of communication in the Darjeeling district weighbridges were also constructed at several places in Darjeeling district. Besides proper metalled surface of different roads were widened. The construction of weighbridges by the Colonial Government, by which was necessary for the maintenance of the roads. Further, widening of metalled roads helped smooth and easy transportation. At Sukna in Darjeeling district a weighbridge was constructed to check, whether or not a vehicle was properly loaded in accordance with the concerned Acts before entering the hill.²⁰ In this context it is to be mentioned that road communication in Darjeeling district received a further impetus with the introduction of the petrol driven vehicles after 1918.²¹ From that time, the carrying capacity was tremendously developed and largely extended in Darjeeling district. Besides transportation of goods through petrol driven vehicles, light motor cars also started plying in the hill. It is mentioned that 'Austin-7', a very light motor car with low gear box began to ply on the streets of Darjeeling which ensured comfort and convenience to the passengers.²²

With the growing needs of the time, there developed in the district of Darjeeling, an all round and gradual progress of road communication. This is to be borne in mind that the well-knit communication system was the extension of the Darjeeling based tea industry but it also opened ample opportunity for transfrontier trade. As the district was the gateway of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet, the development of roads in Darjeeling

district greatly helped in developing the trade relations with the frontier states. As a result both export and import of goods gradually increased between the frontier states and North Bengal through different routes of Darjeeling. The tables below illustrate the value of external trade with frontier states.

Total value of external trade of Bengal with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan.

From	Imports into Bengal		Export from Bengal	
	1876-77 Rs.	1877-78 Rs.	1876-77 Rs.	1877-78 Rs.
Nepal	55,07,816	70,29,566	46,75,009	45,54,661
Sikkim	8,02,657	18,222	1,41,647	16,589
Bhutan	12,708	18,666	7,590	33,997
Total	63,23,181	70,66,454	48,24,246	46,05,247

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1877-78, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1878, p.149

The total value of external trade of Bengal with Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan

From	Imports into Bengal		Export from Bengal	
	1886-87 Rs.	1887-88 Rs.	1886-87 Rs.	1887-88 Rs.
Nepal	102,77,226	112,34,228	52,90,285	73,51,720
Tibet and Sikkim	3,23,102	3,65,262	3,92,295	2,50,834
Bhutan	77,072	1,28,913	1,54,725	1,80,677
Total	106,77,400	117,28,403	58,37,305	77,83,231

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1887-89, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1889, p.176

The total value of external trade of Bengal with Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and
Bhutan

	Imports		Exports	
	1902-03 Rs.	1903-04 Rs.	1902-03 Rs.	1903-04 Rs.
Nepal	141.79	146.94	91.33	88.98
Tibet	9.63	3.57	8.11	3.92
Sikkim	3.43	3.10	2.74	3.11
Bhutan	4.16	7.01	1.16	1.19
Total	159.01	160.62	103.34	107.20

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1903-04, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1905, p.88

Trade with Transfrontier countries in 1921-22

From	Article	Rs.	To	Export from Bengal
Sikkim	Fruit	50 lakhs	Sikkim	17 lakhs
Nepal		27 lakhs	Nepal	11 lakhs
Nepal	Animal (living)	32 lakhs	Tibet	3 lakhs
Sikkim		06 lakhs		
Tibet	Wool (raw)	18 lakhs	Others	4 lakhs
Sikkim	Spice	6 lakhs		
Others	Not mentioned	24 lakhs		
Total		163 lakhs		35 lakhs

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1921-22, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, p.231.

Thus it is found that the development of road communication helped to boost the transfrontier traders developing trading contacts with the plains. In this connection, it is quite pertinent to mention that Kalimpong was an important hill station and also an important trade centre. Even before Darjeeling got its importance, Kalimpong flourished as an important trading centre from where much of the frontier trade was conducted. Mules were imported from Tibet to Kalimpong, where Government bought them for transportation. It is recorded that more than 100 Tibetan mules were annually purchased in Kalimpong by Government for transportation purposes at an average price of Rs.150 each. Kalimpong was the entrepot of the trade between Bengal and Tibet.²³ From Kalimpong the wool and other goods from Tibet were unloaded from the mules and sent down to Siliguri by carts.²⁴ It is mentioned that wool was the chief import from Tibet to

Kalimpong which formed 83 percent of the total imports in 1903-04.²⁵ Besides wool, the other important imports through Kalimpong were cattle, hides, skins, fruits, spices, oil seeds. The chief staples of export to Tibet were cotton goods, brass, copper, petroleum, salt and sugar. The following tables illustrate export and import for some particular years from Kalimpong to Siliguri and from Siliguri to Kalimpong.

Amounts of goods carried during the five years 1898 to 1902 by the carrying Companies from Kalimpong to Siliguri.

Year	Wool	Yak's tails	Cardamom	Dyed wool	Miscellaneous	Total
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.
1898	46,620	1,440	2,465	613	162	51,300
1899	43,900	2,500	2,560	365	334	49,659
1900	40,005	1,160	1,760	335	289	43,549
1901	41,310	1,112	1,692	217	312	44,643
1902	34,200	815	640	215	143	36,013
Total	2,06,035	7,027	9,117	1,745	1,240	2,25,164
Yearly average	41,207	1,405	1,824	349	248	45,033

Amounts of goods carried during the five years 1898 to 1902 by the Carrying Companies from Siliguri to Kalimpong.

Year	Piece goods and twist	Bhutia stores (piece-goods, iron oilman stores, glass, rice, sugar etc.	Rice	Tobacco	Salt	Miscellaneous	Total
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.
1898	19,183	4,429	11,428	4,293	5,735	10,076	55,144
1899	25,452	9,857	10,177	7,422	8,028	15,549	76,485
1900	24,150	9,751	9,124	7,945	5,379	18,936	75,285
1901	11,615	7,255	7,651	5,993	5,437	13,767	51,718
1902	17,840	3,958	2,610	4,877	1,918	11,825	43,028
Total	98,240	35,250	40,990	30,530	26,497	70,153	3,01,660
Yearly average	19,648	7,050	8,198	6,106	5,299	14,031	60,332

Source: C.A. Bell, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Kalimpong Government Estate in the District of Darjeeling, 1901-1903, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1905, P.XXIX and XXVIII respectively.

The above figures show that the trade for the five years (1898 to 1902) from Siliguri to Kalimpong and from Kalimpong to Siliguri, respectively as carted by the carrying companies. From the Tables, it is evident that the average imports by these companies to Kalimpong from Siliguri amounted to 60,000 maunds, and the corresponding export to 45000 maunds. It is to be mentioned that besides the carrying companies, the traders too individually carried goods on their own. C.A. Bell further mentioned that the addition to the figures mentioned above 40000 maunds of goods needs to be added for traders who did their own carrying. Thus the total amount of trade passing through Kalimpong may therefore be taken at $(60,000 + 45000 + 40000) = 145000$ maunds. Of this amount, about 60000 maunds were exported to Siliguri and 85000 maunds were imported from Siliguri to Kalimpong and out of the 145000 maunds probably about 60000 maunds belonged to the Tibetan trade and the remainder represented the trade of Kalimpong with the plains probably, trading was carried in carts.²⁶ In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that the entire trade along the Tista Valley with Sikkim and Tibet and also with Kalimpong passed through Siliguri by road – transportation.

Regarding Tibetan trade Kalimpong was the transit station. Goods were carried on mule from Tibet to Kalimpong and there upon, they were transported to Siliguri on cart and vice versa. It was so because the cart road from Siliguri did not extend much beyond Kalimpong. The Tibetan traders and their servants made Kalimpong business headquarters between October and May. In this context, it is to be mentioned that Yatung was an important trade centre between Tibet and Kalimpong. The whole value of the Tibetan trade at Yatung, practically all of which passed through Kalimpong, averages about $15 \frac{3}{4}$ lakhs of rupees.²⁷ The table shows the value of trade passed through Yatung from 1898 to 1902.

Trade Passed through Yatung from 1898 to 1902

Years	Imports into Tibet Rs.	Exports from Tibet Rs.	Total imports and exports Rs.
1898	7,18,475	8,17,851	15,86,326
1899	9,62,637	8,22,760	17,85,397
1900	7,30,502	7,10,012	14,40,514
1901	7,34,075	7,83,480	15,17,555
1902	7,61,837	8,15,338	15,77,175
Total	39,07,526	39,49,441	78,56,967

Source : C.A. Bell, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Kalimpong Government Estate in the District of Darjeeling, 1901-1903, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1905, P.XXIX

Besides Tibet, a considerable amount of trade was carried on between Darjeeling and Nepal, both through hills and plains routes. From Nepal food grains, cotton pieces goods, manufactured wool and hides, sheep, goats, cattle and poultry were imported. In the hills, the Ghum Simana Road carried much trading from Nepal and in the plains the Siliguri – Naxalbari road was primarily used for trading with Nepal. The trade with Sikkim was as usual on a very small scale. Fruits, nuts, vegetables and cereals were the principal articles of import and cotton goods and salt of export. The trade with Bhutan was always insignificant. However, in 1902-03 the total amount of trading increased by 54 percent owing almost entirely to the increase in the imports of timber, the value of which amounted to Rs.4,45,609 against Rs.1,181,000 in the preceding year.²⁸

Though most of the traffic of the district was carried on by the Darjeeling – Himalayan Railway, but in the eastern part of the district transportation was primarily carried on bullock carts and pack ponies along the Tista valley Road to Siliguri. The Tista Valley Cart Road was used for the import of rice in the hills. Besides, the Tista valley Cart Road, the Rikyisum – Patharjhora Cart Road provided direct communication with the rice fields of Jalpaiguri district.²⁹ Due to developed road communication net work, several places of the district were interlinked. Consequently, Darjeeling town, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Siliguri, Naxalbari, Matigara became the chief

trade centres. On the other hand some places of the district became important for transfrontier trade centre like, Rhenok, Pedong, Sombari, Simana, Garidhura. In the Terai, Matigara, Bagdogra, Naxalbari, Kharibari got connected with each other and this route reached upto the border of Nepal. In the hills, Pedong and Lava emerged as important commercial centres. A large bazaar was established at Pedong where traders and vendors came from Tibet. Thus through developed communication system, a link was established between the plains and the hills as well as with the transfrontier states adjacent to Darjeeling district. At the beginning of the twentieth century the opening of the bridges over the Rilli at Pedong and over the Git at Longshor gave uninterrupted communication for ponies between Kalimpong and the Duars.³⁰ In this way road communication facilitated selling of the plains and Duars. From Kalimpong through road transport a good number of oranges were exported to the Duars and Terai.³¹

Besides Siliguri, the northern terminus of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, also became the terminus of the Cart Road from Kalimpong and Sikkim. Thus, it focused the whole trade of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Tibet. As Siliguri was interlinked through different routes with the hills the Colonial Government opened a bi-weekly government market at Siliguri. Several jute firms were established in Siliguri. Thus, it is found that developed road communication led to the flourishing market towns, specially planned to receive the vast surplus produce of the newly developed areas as well as opened a new horizon in trade and industry in the twentieth century in this region.

Before the formation of the Jalpaiguri district, there existed some important roads. However the roads in the district particularly in the western duars, were in a bad condition. It is already mentioned that during the tenure of D.H.E. Sunder as settlement officer, there was no metalled roads in the district and he urged upon the Government for opening up a road from Ghargharia to Jaigaon. He also, strongly recommended the extension of Jalpaiguri Gairkata road. The roads found in the Jalpaiguri district before 1869 were as follows:

From Darjeeling to Tetulia via Pankhabari and Phansidewa.

Siliguri to Jalpaiguri through Phoolbari and Baikunthapur.

Debgram to Sikkim via Sevoke and Kalimpong.

Rangpur to Jalpaiguri via Kargirhat.

Phuntsholing to Mainaguri through Buxa.

From Mongpong through Ambari Falakata to Rangpore across Tista.

From Kalimpong to Dam Dim and Mougaong through Algara and Gorubathan route.

Eastern Nepal to Panchanai through Rajarjhar and Nijamattara.

It is to be mentioned that like Darjeeling district, Western Duars region also was split by numerous rivers and the erratic changing courses of the rivers made the maintenance of the roads quite difficult. However, a good number of roads were constructed in the Western Duars region of the Tista river due to absence of heavy rainfall and resultant flood. W.W. Hunter has mentioned in his "Statistical Accounts of Bengal" that like Darjeeling, there were three agencies for the maintenance and construction of roads in the western Duars. The Public Works Department, the Local administration under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner and the Jalpaiguri District Board were entrusted with the construction and development of roads in Jalpaiguri district. The following three roads were under the management of Public Works Department.

1) The 27 miles of the imperial Cart road from Purnia to Darjeeling passed through Jalpaiguri. 2) the 29 miles long road from Jalpaiguri town to Titalya on the Purnia and Darjeeling road. 3) the 21 miles in length from Cooch Behar town to the military station of Buxa, in the Bhutan range in the east of the Duars subdivision.

There were nine roads maintained through the local fund under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner. (1) the 27 miles long from the station of Jalpaiguri through Western Duars to Eastern Duars. (2) the 26 miles long from Jalpaiguri town or rather village of Mainaguri via Ambari to

Bhutia Stockade at Chamurchi. (3) Mainaguri to Cooch Behar town of which 11 miles passed through Jalpaiguri district. (4) A short road from Jalpaiguri town to Dunga Hat and from thence to Domohani Hat. (5) Roads from Mainaguri to Dmohani Hat and Dunga Hat. (6) the 27 miles long from Jalpaiguri to Siliguri via Ambari Falakata, (7) the 31 miles long Jalpaiguri to Boda road. (8) the 29 miles long road from Jalpaiguri to Dalingkot Road from Jalpaiguri town to Cooch Behar was 26 miles in length.³²

Besides the public works Department and the office of the Deputy Commissioner, some roads were maintained by the Jalpaiguri District Board which are as follows:

- 1) Lataguri – Metali Road, 2) Ramshai – Sulkapara, 3) Sulkapara – Thaljhora Road, 4) Nagrakata feeder road, 5) Banerhat – Chamurchi Road, 6) Ramshai – Gairkata Road, 7) Gairkata – Birpara Road, 8) Gairkata – Dhupguri Road and 9) Gairkata – Binnaguri Road.³³

It should be mentioned that most of the roads in Jalpaiguri district particularly in the western Duars region were linked with tea gardens. Previously these roads were in a poor condition. As the British Government, was aware of poor condition of the roads in the district, it took initiative for the gradual development of roads in Jalpaiguri district. Besides tea planters, it also greatly helped in transportation of commercial agricultural produces to different places. After the opening up of railways in Jalpaiguri district, road construction and development projects got great impetus. J.F. Gruning remarked that after the inauguration of railways all the traffic were conducted through railway.³⁴ Consequently, the Colonial Government paid attention to the construction of feeder roads along with the general road construction. In this context, it is to be mentioned that several roads were constructed in Jalpaiguri district to serve as feeder to the Duars Railway.³⁵ It is to be mentioned that the road from Dam Dim Station to Fagu tea garden was constructed. This road, not only benefited several tea gardens, but also served as an important feeder to Bengal Duars Railway. Further, to the west of the Tista, the Boda – Domar railway station road was an

important feeder road which was used mostly during the jute growing season.

The Jalpaiguri District Board also maintained a total length of 802 miles road of which 24 miles were metalled roads. On the eastern bank of the Tista river opposite to Jalpaiguri town, was the principal road maintained by the district Board. This road stretched as far as the Eastern Duars region upto Alipurduar and was known as the Jalpaiguri – Alipur road and thence it was called as Alipur – Haldibari Road.³⁶ West of the Torsa river a road was constructed to Rajabhatkhawa Station within the Cooch Behar state Railway. This road was mostly used by the tea planters. In 1929-30, the Buxa Forest Road from Alipurduar to Rajabhatkhawa was re-aligned.³⁷

From the beginning of the twentieth century, as volume of trade of different agricultural produces increased, the Colonial Government took great initiative for construction, development and repair of the roads in Jalpaiguri district. In the year 1900 Rs.2,430 was sanctioned for the construction of the Ramshaihat – Gaikata Road.³⁸ In 1904-05 in the Duars, roads from Gaikata to Birpara from Banerhat to Chamurchi, from Ramshaihat to Gaikata, Jainti – Rydak road and Rajabhatkhawa – Jaigaon road were completed and Rs.253,949 was spent for the total works.³⁹ In the year 1905-06, road development projects were also under taken for the Duars in Jalpaiguri district. In this year, projects for two roads from Ramshaihat Station to Nagrakata and from Ramshaihat to Gaikata were sanctioned for Rs.68,945 and Rs.19500 respectively.⁴⁰ Thus, it is found that from the beginning of the twentieth century, road development programme was continuously going on. From 1899-1900, a grand project had been taken by the public works department for the construction of roads in Jalpaiguri district. The following table illustrates construction of works under taken by Public Works Department in Jalpaiguri district from 1899-1900 to 1918-19.

**Construction of roads in Jalpaiguri District from, 1899-1900 to
1918-19**

Name of the Estate	Amount of road and public works realized during last 20 years (1899-1900 to 1918-19)	Amount spent on the construction and repair of roads during last 20 years (1899-1900 to 1918-19)
Government khas mahal (western Duars)	551700*	1396253
Chaklajat Estates	1021093	508350
Baikunthapur Estate	604062	383092

*These figures are only for 12 years, viz. 1907-08 to 1918-19; those for the period 1899-1900 to 1906-07 are not available.

Source: Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council, Index to Vol.LII, January to December, 1920, Published by Authority of the Council, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1921, P.747.

Further, for the development of roads in Duars allotment of Rs.444000 was made for expenditure in 1921-22.⁴¹ In that year, work was done in the following road projects:

Construction of Dalgaon Lankapara Road Section II (7.16 miles)

Improving and metalling Barnes Mainaguri Road (5.28 miles)

Improving and metalling Lataguri Mainaguri Road (11.45 miles)

Improving and metalling Mainaguri Dhupguri Road and Construction of a major bridge over Jaldhaka river (12.19 miles).

The roads of the district were linked with different railway stations of the district and also several other places of the district. Further, the road routes of the district were linked with the Darjeeling district in the west and Cooch Behar in the east. The district, through road routes also got linked with the frontiers of British India in the South. The connection among various places of the district as well as with other districts of North Bengal and British frontier, promoted not only internal trade but also inter-regional trade with Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, Assam and Trans-Himalayan trade with Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet, China and even with Central Asia. Due to developed

road communication system, different agricultural produces now were easily transported from this district and this mostly benefited the tea industry of this district. On the other hand, various articles of trade, such as, cotton cloth, corrugated iron and various consumer goods now easily reached to the different remote areas of the Duars region. The roads of the Duars were also used to drive the cattle and sheep from one place to other places in the Duars and even from Duars to other regions. In this context, it is to be mentioned that cattle and sheep were driven from western Duars to Assam in great number through Central Emigration Road.⁴²

The road communication received a further impetus after 1864 with the British initiative in Cooch Behar State. The bifurcated Emigration Road made a link between the east and west of Cooch Behar with different parts of North Bengal. Besides the Emigration Road, Several other roads also connected Cooch Behar with other parts of North Bengal. Of these roads, (i) the Buxa road connected Cooch Behar with Buxa in the Western Duars via Alipurduar, (ii) the Lowkuty road connected the town of Cooch Behar with important *bundars* of Baxiganj and Haldibari, (iii) Rangpur road was going down through Dinhata to Mogalhat, (iv) the Goshanimari and Shitai road joined the town Cooch Behar with Goshanimari and Shitai. Besides these roads, there were a large number of cross roads for communication between different places within Cooch Behar State. Besides these roads, there were several others Cross roads for communication between different places of Cooch Behar state and Bhutan Duar like, (a) a road from Dinhata to Mekhliganj, (b) from Mathabhanga to Sitalkuchi, (c) from Cooch Behar to Goshanimari and (d) from Patgram to Bhutan Duar. After the opening of Railways in Cooch Behar State, a good number of Feeder roads were also constructed to get the railway facilities. Among the Feeder roads, mention may be made of road from Changrabanda to Mekhliganj, from Manikganj to Haldibari, from Balarampur to Dinhata and from Dewanganj hat to Emigration road.⁴³ Further, some feeder roads were also constructed which terminated at the railway stations of Chawra Hat, Cooch Behar and Baneswar.⁴⁴

It should be mentioned that with the growing needs of the time, road construction and development in Cooch Behar state gradually progressed. Upto 1874-75, there were 115 miles of unmetalled roads in Cooch Behar State.⁴⁵ However, within fifteen years, the roads in Cooch Behar state became three times as much in miles. It is recorded that in 1888-89, there were 355 miles roads existing in Cooch Behar State. During this period a 48 miles long road from, Dhubri to Jalpaiguri, passed through Cooch Behar state it was the principal road. Public works Department, Local Authority and the Cooch Behar State itself were responsible for the development, construction and repair of the roads in the state. The Public Works Department for the year 1887-88 had spent Rs.15,737, 7 Ans and 7 p as total expenditure for construction and repair of roads in Cooch Behar State.⁴⁶ The table illustrates different roads of Cooch Behar and bridges on running feet during 1888-89 in the Cooch Behar State.

Roads and bridges in Cooch Behar State in 1888-89

Sl. No.	Name of the Roads	Roads in mile	Bridge in running feet
1.	Emigration road west of Cooch Behar	46	3244
2.	Emigration road East of Cooch Behar	19	135
3.	Rungpore road	23	927
4.	Buxa Road	12	725
5.	Lowkutty road	26	978
6.	Kalighat road	2	48
7.	Purbabhag road	12	148
8.	Sitai road	06	134
9.	Sagardighi road	03	71
10.	Falakata road	06	121
11.	Cross road from Dinhat to Mekhliganj	40	386
12.	Cross road from Mathabhanga to Sitalkuchi	12	608
13.	Cross road from Cooch Behar to Goshanimari	14	366
14.	Cross road from Patgram to Bhootan Duar	15 ¼	696
15.	Feeder roads Changrabanda to Mekhliganj	5 ½	152
16.	Feeder roads Dewanganj hat to Emigration road	5 ½	91

17.	Feeder roads Manikganj hat to Haldibari	3 ½	214
18.	Feeder roads Kasiabari hat to Haldibari	2 ½	112
19.	Feeder roads Balarampur to Dinhata	12 ½	487
20.	Feeder road Toofanganj to Lowkuty road	4 ½	201
21.	Feeder road Chowdhurihat to Dhubri and Teesta roads	02	22
22.	Sitai to Durgapur	07	171
23.	Village roads Buxa road to Baressurhat	02	
24.	Village road town to Shuktahat	02	
25.	Village road Per Mekhliganj to Dewanganj hat	03	
26.	Fair Weather track from Bhoishkuchi to Garodhat	06	
27.	Portion of road from Emigration road west of Cooch Behar to Pondibarihat	02	
28.	From Chilakhana on the Lowkuty road to Bhatibari	07	
29.	From Fulbari on the low kuty road to Chilkiguri	10	
30.	Pundibari road`	12	
31.	Garodhat road	06	
32.	Majherdabri road	05	
33.	Kalighat railway line	02	
34.	Bhalka road	04	
35.	Haldibari road	10	
36.	Toofanganj road	02	
37.	Bengchatra road	01	
38.	Godadhar road	02	
	Total	355 miles	

Source : Annual Administrative Report of the Cooch Behar State, for the year 1888-89, Cooch Behar State Press, 1889, P.31

The process of road development project gradually developed and upto 1900, the State of Cooch Behar had 382 miles of road in addition to 187 miles of village roads.⁴⁷ At the beginning of the twentieth century it reached within 400 miles with high embankments.⁴⁸

In 1900 the following main roads were in existence and maintained by the Cooch Behar State.⁴⁹

- 1) A road from Gitaldaha through Dewahat, Koch Bihar, Baneswar to Alipurduar.
- 2) A road from Cooch Behar to Tufanganj and Passing on to Kharibari.
- 3) A road from Cooch Behar east-wards through Ghora-mara and Fulbari to Lawkuty and the turnining North and passing through Mahishkuchi to Garad hat (Guard hat).
- 4) A road going north from Ghoramara to Natabari. A road from Baneswar east wards connected at Natabari.
- 5) A road from Cooch Behar through Rajarhat west wards to Pundibari thence a branch went north wards to Patlakhawa forest while the main road went west wards through Chokhekata and Gitaldanga to Moranga.
- 6) A road from Koch Bihar West Wards through Rajarhat, Khattimari, Mathabhanga to Balarhat.
- 7) A road from Cooch Behar south wards through Ranidanga to Gossanimari and thence to Sitai. A branch went west wards to Lalbazar and then to Sitalkuchi.
- 8) A road from Coch Behar through Nishiganj hat and Sibpur to join the Mathabhanga - Sitalkuchi road.
- 9) A road from Giladanga going south through Matabhanga to Sitalkuchi.
- 10) A road from Mathabhanga to Nishiganj.
- 11) A road from Mathabhanga to Falakata through Chokhekata.

The network of Cooch Behar Roads were joined with the network of roads in the district of Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) and through them with Calcutta. This road scheme had also opened up the interior of the state.

The gradual progress of road development in Cooch Behar State generated a tremendous impact on the society and economy. The exports and imports in the state were largely enhanced. The chief exports from the state were tobacco, jute, mustard seeds, rice, etc. and the principal imports were piece goods, salt, brass, copper, utensils, sugar, molasses, spices, dried fish etc. Due to better road communication, the crops of the district, after meeting the local demands, were exported abroad. There was a large export of jute, tobacco, rice, mustard seeds and sugar cane.⁵⁰ Due to the developed communication system, every nook and corner of the state came in closer contact with each other. The progress of road communication now converted the remote corners into little rural towns and that into big towns. Cooch Behar, Dinhata, Mathabhanga, Haldibari, Mekhliganj turned into important trading centres due to better road facility. Cooch Behar itself became the principal centre of commercial activities in the state. It had commercial links with the *bandars* and the other market places of the state. Dinhata had its trade mostly along the Sahebganj, Gosanimari and Rangpur roads.⁵¹ Most of the trade in Changrabandha was carried out through road linked up with Patgram, Jalpaiguri, Mekhliganj and Ranirhat.⁵² Thus, with the development of road system in Cooch Behar, the export and import of the state gradually expended.⁵³

Though previously several roads existed in Dinajpur district were linked with the headquarters of other districts, but these roads were not used for commercial activities. Mostly the commercial activities of the district carried on by boats in the monsoon. W.W. Hunter mentioned the following roads were existed in the nineteenth century in undivided Dinajpur district.⁵⁵

- i) An imperial road from Baharampur via town of Dinajpur on to Darjeeling. The length of this road within undivided Dinajpur district was about 130 miles.
- ii) A 24 miles road from Dinajpur to Rangpur.
- iii) From Dinajpur to Bogra 36 miles long branch road.

- iv) A road from Dinajpur to Malda 40 miles long.
- v) From Dinajpur to Gangarampur 18 miles branch road.
- vi) From Dinajpur to Purnia a 48 miles long road.
- vii) From Dinajpur to Nekmard Fair road a 36 miles long.

With the growing needs of the time, the district was provided with many other roads. From the beginning of the twentieth century, roads were constructed in undivided Dinajpur district to connect various important centres of the district as well as with various railway lines. In 1909-10, in undivided Dinajpur district, there were 993 miles of roads, except village roads.⁵⁶ In addition to Rangpur road, Malda road, Bogra road and Purnia road, the Dinajpur – Kishanganj road was an important road. This road passed through Bochaganj (now in Bangladesh) and Nekmand and after crossing Purnia it entered Kishanganj.

Different places of the district were interlinked with one another by several roads. The Balurghat road which was one of the most important road in undivided Dinajpur district connected Balurghat with Dinajpur. A short road of 16 miles long from Balurghat to Hili was constructed as the nearest means of communication with the railways at Hili. In 1921-22, of this 16 miles road, the metalling of the first 8½ miles was completed.⁵⁷ This road was the only road of undivided Dinajpur district supervised and maintenance directly under the provincial government. This road was the most used road in the district and there was heavy cart traffic through this road to Hili railway station. As this road was most used road, the Colonial Government was aware of the constant development of this road. It is to be mentioned that this route was further strengthened and certain bridges were reconstructed on this route in 1930-31.⁵⁸ It is recorded that over a week, the daily average of bullock carts passing a point near Hili was 1,411 loaded and 1,247 unloaded carts.⁵⁹ The 18 miles Gangarampur road connected the village of Gangarampur with Malda. This road carried considerable trade in rice and other produces. Two miles away from

Gangarampur, there was a large village named Naya Bazar where many merchants resided and conducted a great volume of rice and paddy trade.⁶⁰

In the third decade of the twentieth century there were 39 miles of metalled roads and 1,081 miles of unmetalled roads in addition to 477 miles of village roads maintained by the Local Boards in Dinajpur district.⁶¹ In this context it is to be mentioned that some inter district roads were also important for commerce and trade. The road from Banshihari to Itahar, from Churaman via Bindole to Raiganj and Durgapur and from Kaliyaganj to Churaman via Durgapur carried heavy cart traffic, principally rice and jute. There was a considerable traffic by cart from Banshihari to Malda through Itahar. The Malda road also served as a feeder to the railway at Birol (now in Bangladesh) and from that place paddy was exported to Calcutta which was collected from Banshihari and transported to Malda.⁶² A small quantity of jute was exported through road transport, but major proportion of mustard seeds were exported by road. But with the inauguration of the railways, the old inter district roads got superseded by the railways. It is to be noted that the road from Dinajpur to Rangpur which was formerly the chief line of communication between Rangpur and Calcutta became less important after the opening of railways in undivided Dinajpur. The same to be found with regards to Purnia and Kishanganj roads.⁶³ On the otherhand through different rivers marts of the district in addition to rice and paddy, tobacco, jute, hides etc. were brought to the railway stations which were situated near by the river trading marts. After the inauguration of railways, a considerable amount of different goods like salt, kerosene oil, refined sugar, molasses, piece-goods, iron and steel, betel nut, jute etc. were imported by railways. Thus it is found that with the opening of railways, road communication slowly lost its importance in Dinajpur District.

From the earliest times, rivers were one of the chief means of communication in the Malda district. In the monsoon most of the rivers were used as the most important means of communication on which the road had converged. As means of commerce, thus, the roads in the district had no great significance. However, during the Muhamadan rule, some roads in the

district became important. In Muhamadan times, Pandua was the administrative headquarter. During the Muhamadan rule, there were two principal roads (i) one from Pandua via Old Malda and Gaur to the Ganges (ii) and another was from Pandua across the river Tangon to Dinajpur district. After the formation of the district in 1813, no major changes in road construction projects had been taken and till the second decade of the twentieth century the roads existed in the district were the same as shown in the Majour Rennell's map of roads for the district.⁶⁴

W.W. Hunter mentioned that there were 14 numbers of roads of 177 miles length under the supervision of local management. The roads existed within the district were (i) in the civil station of English Bazar 3 miles of metalled road, (ii) road from Amriti to Nimasarai 7 miles in length, (iii) the 25 miles Dinajpur road from Malda Ghat to Sankrol, (iv) from English Bazar to Nimasari 4 miles long, (v) a road from Tartipur to Baragharia, (vi) the 11 miles long Sastanitala to Kaliachak road, and (vii) the 2 miles long Sibganj road.⁶⁵

However, the principal road of the district was a road starting from Baragharia on the western bank of the river Mahananda opposite Nawabganj through Sibganj, Gour, English Bazar and after crossing river Mahananda at Old Malda it ran through Gajole to Dinajpur.⁶⁶ This route was the old main route. This road connected with Diara from Kaliachak and Panchananpur and with Gomastapur from Kansat.

Till the opening of the railway in 1909, the most important road in the district was from English Bazar to Manikchak. This road was familiar by the name of Rajmahal Road. This Rajmahal Road connected the important centres of the district such as Amriti, Mathurapur, Ratua and Samsi.⁶⁷ To the east this road connected Dinajpur district and on the west this road also connected Purnia border of Bihar district. Besides the Rajmahal Road, another important road was Murshidabad to Darjeeling via Dinajpur which entered the district near Jhelum. This road connected the west of the district with the marts of Nawabganj, Gomastapur and Rahanpur on the banks of river Mahananda. All these roads were maintained and supervised

by the District Board. G.E. Lambourn mentioned that there were 20 miles of metalled road and 512 unmetalled road in the district under the supervision of the District Board till 1918.⁶⁸ It is to be mentioned that Nawabganj was a great market for winter rice. A considerable amount of rice from Barind areas of undivided Dinajpur district and from Rajshahi District came to Nawabganj by cart. Besides rice, a certain quantity of jute from Sibganj, Kaliachak was also marketed at Nawabganj.⁶⁹ Rohanpur was one of the biggest rice trading centre and there was a rice mill at Rohanpur. Thus, from different parts of the district, paddy and rice came to Rohanpur by cart particularly in the '*hat*' day. It is to be noted that from Rohanpur, a great amount of rice was exported but not through the road route.

From the third decade of the twentieth century, motor services were introduced through the routes of English Bazar to Baragharia, English Bazar to Kaliachak, English Bazar to Ratua and English Bazar to Mathurapur.⁷⁰ However, it is found that the main trade of the district was carried by rivers and railways. Thus road transport with the inauguration of railways in the district, particularly the opening of the Katihar – Godagari line, lessened the importance of the English Bazar Rajmahal route which was the main road route for export and import trade.⁷¹ However, regarding road transportation, no statistical figure during the concern time period of the area under study in Malda district is available. Thus road transportation in Malda district during the concerned time period was insignificant. Rather, roads in Malda district were used as a feed to railways or river-borne trade and commerce.

Thus, it is found that the Colonial Government was aware of the poor condition of the roads in North Bengal under study which adversely effected the development of trade, commerce and industry. As such it made great efforts to improve upon the condition of road communication system in order to boost commercial activities in the region. At the same time the state of Cooch Behar also took the same initiative on its own as well as with the British assistance. It may be mentioned that under the earlier mentioned three agencies the road development projects got a grand success. The table

illustrates the road maintenance works done by public works department and Local Authorities in North Bengal, except Cooch Behar for 1892-93.

Road Communication of North Bengal maintained by Public Authorities in Bengal during 1892-93.

Name of the District	Length of metalled road maintained by Public Works Department	Length of unmetalled road maintained by Public Works Department	Length ;of metalled road maintained by Local authority	Length of unmetalled road maintained by local authority	Total of metalled road	Total of unmetalled road
	Miles	Miles	Miles	Miles	Miles	Miles
Dinajpur			20 ³ / ₈	1094 ³ / ₈	20 ³ / ₈	1094 ³ / ₈
Jalpaiguri	8 ¹ / ₂		27 ¹ / ₄	531 ³ / ₄	35 ³ / ₄	531 ³ / ₄
Darjeeling	127 ¹ / ₃	231 ¹ / ₂		337	127 ¹ / ₃	568 ¹ / ₂
Malda			3 ³ / ₈	538 ¹ / ₈	3 ³ / ₈	538 ¹ / ₈

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal 1892-93, Calcutta, printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1894, P.425.

RIVER TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Although Darjeeling district was split by several rivers like Tista, Mahananda, Balasan, Jaldhaka, Mechi etc., but all of the rivers were not suitable for navigation by trading boats. The beds of all the rivers in Darjeeling district were sandy in the plains and stoney in the hills. Due to these geographical features of the rivers in the Darjeeling district there was no scope for riverine trade and therefore trade through river in Darjeeling district was completely absent. However, on reaching the plains some of the rivers became navigable. Though navigation was very difficult and precarious, it is to be mentioned that during the concerned time period in the Terai, Mahananda was navigable and on reaching plains river Tista was also navigable for boats of 50 maunds or two tons burden. Besides, Mahananda and Tista in the plains river Balasan was also navigable that could be assumed from the name of two ghats on Balasan river i.e. Panighata and Patharghata and on the banks of Balasan river there emerged three hats (village market). It is recorded that there were a number of *ferries* in the Terai on the Mahananda river. Sasi Bhusan Dutta in the Darjeeling Terai settlement Report of 1898 mentioned that there were five *ferries* in the Terai viz. Old Duramari, Phansidewa Ghat, Domukha Ghat, Champasari

Ghat and Debiganj Ghat and the Colonial Government gained a revenue of Rs.632 in 1897-98 from the *ferries* of Terai.⁷²

Like Darjeeling district Jalpaiguri district was also split by several rivers and streams, but few of the rivers were fit for navigation. River Tista was navigable by large boats as far as Jalpaiguri, the Duduya upto the Jalpaiguri – Alipur road, the Mujnai as far as Falakata and the Kaljani upto Alipurduar, and the Torsa was navigable by Cargo boats during the rains.⁷³ The Baurahat, situated on a small tributary of the Tista, in the patgram police station, business transactions took place through the river Tista. From Baurahat there were a number of merchants who carried on an extensive trade in tobacco, rice and jute which they collected from all parts of the district and exported through Tista river to Dacca and other eastern markets.⁷⁴ Through Tista river, the nearest Sal timber of Darjeeling district, western Duars and Baikunthapur floated down to the Brahmaputra river and the greater part of the timber was passed to Dacca, Serajganj and other eastern markets. From Falakata tea was despatched in boats down the Mujnai river to Dhubri. But with the establishment of railways this river borne communication slowly decreased.

There were a number of *ferries* in the Jalpaiguri district. Town Jalpaiguri itself was connected with the Duars region through Barnes Ghat on the eastern side of the Tista river by ferry. J.F. Gruning mentioned that there were 125 *ferries* in the district of which 99 *ferries* were within the purview of the District Board and the rest of the *ferries* were within the provincial jurisdiction.⁷⁵ However, another report highlighted that there were 97 *ferries* in Jalpaiguri district of which 76 were under the management of the District Board and the rest 21 under the Government management.⁷⁶ The principal *ferries* were on the Tista and Jaldhaka rivers. Abden Ferry which was situated on the opposite side of the town Jalpaiguri was one of the most important *ferry* of Jalpaiguri district. This *ferry* was maintained and managed by the Bengal Duars Railway Company. Besides this *ferry*, on the Tista and Jaldhaka rivers there were some important *ferries* too. There were also other important *ferries* at Paharpur, Premganj,

Rangdhamali, Baikunthapur, Karchibari, Fulbari, Helapakri, Kantimari and Boalmari. But the most important *ferries* were at the “points where the Jalpaiguri – Alipur, Ramshai – Gairkata and Ramshai – Suklapara roads cross the river.”⁷⁷ The extent to which the *ferries* were important in the economy of Jalpaiguri could be assumed as it is recorded that the District Board earned revenue Rs.18,740 while the provincial *ferries* gained Rs.7.516 for a particular year in 1907-08.⁷⁸ Though the Colonial Government collected and gained revenue from the *ferries* of the district it also awarded for the maintenance of the *ferries* and the roads on the both sides of the *ferries*. It is recorded that of the 21 government *ferries*, two of the government *ferries* had government roads on both sides, 4 had district board roads on both sides, and 3 had district board or local board roads on one side; the remaining 12 had Cooch Behar state roads, tea garden roads or roads otherwise maintained on both sides.⁷⁹ It is to be mentioned that depending upon the river borne trade there emerged several trading centres in Jalpaiguri district. The chief trading centres of the district both in Duars and Regulation part were Jorpakri, Mainaguri, Falakata, Madarihat, Buxa, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri town, Tetulia, Rajnagar, Saldanga and Debiganj.

The state of Cooch Behar was divided into parts by numerous rivers, but seldom used for internal communication. W.W. Hunder mentioned that there was a very little trade on the rivers of Cooch Behar except during the rains.⁸⁰ There were at least six principal rivers flowing through Cooch Behar state such as Tista, Singimari, Torsa also called Dharala, Kaljani, Raidhak, Godadhar. These six rivers were navigable by trading boats of 100 maunds, through out the year. Besides these six rivers, there were twenty minor streams which were used for boat traffic of the lesser sort during the rainy season only. Town Cooch Behar lay between two channels of the Torsa. Tufanganj, an important trade mart was situated on the bank of the river Kaljani. In this context it is to be mentioned that Kaljani, a deep stream was carried a considerable river traffic Boat of 7 to 11 tons coming up all the year round. River Kaljani was used extensively to float down timber from the forests at the foot of the hills. At Alipurduar in Taluk Kholla the Government

Forest Conservancy Department had opened a timber depot. From this government timber depot the timber of the western Duars was floated in considerable quantities down Kaljani river to the Brahmaputra river. The rivers of the Cooch Behar state were directly connected with Rangpur (now in Bangladesh). So, some portion of the total volume of trade of Cooch Behar was carried on with the district of Eastern Bengal. From Balarampur, jute, paddy, mustard seed and oil were carried across by boat to Sirajganj.⁸¹ Further, tobacco trade at Mathabhanga was mostly conducted through the ports of Brahmaputra to Manikganj and Narayanganj.⁸²

Mekhliganj was an important standing place on the river Tista. From Mekhliganj a large tobacco trade was carried on by the Burmese merchants. The Burmese merchants purchased tobacco from Mekhliganj and sent it down by boats to Kaliganj in Rangpur and from there reshipped for the marts of Burma.⁸³ From Cooch Behar a good quantity of jute and tobacco was also exported to Serajganj by river Tista.⁸⁴ Jaldhaka was an important river and there was an extensive trade of jute and tobacco down the river Jaldhaka. Besides these rivers, in the rainy season Sankos and Dharla rivers could be traversed by boats of 1000 maunds. Through river the chief exports from the Cooch Behar state were tobacco, jute, mustard seed, rice, mustard oil and the principal imports were piece goods, salt, brass and copper utensils, sugar, molasses, pulses, dried fish etc.

From the earliest time in Malda district the rivers had been the most important means of communication and before the construction of the railway in 1909 the rivers were one of the chief means of communication in Malda district. Like the other districts of North Bengal, Malda district was also split by several rivers. The principal rivers of Malda were Mahananda, Kalindri, Tangan and Purnabhaha. The basic characteristic of these rivers was that all these rivers were navigable throughout the year for boats upto 100 maunds.⁸⁵ River Kalindri had a connection with the Ganges.

The rivers of Malda served as water ways for the export of a variety of commodities to market within the district, to other districts or to railway stations and steamer *ghats*. River Mahananda which came down from the

hill and through Terai entered Malda district. This river formed a most important channel of communication between Lower Bengal and the sub-Himalayan districts. River Tangan and Purnabhaha were the important tributaries of Mahananda. Both the rivers flow from Dinajpur into the North-Eastern Corner of the Malda district. A considerable amount of paddy with boats laden came down from the North Eastern corner of the district and from parts of Dinajpur district through these rivers.⁸⁶ On the banks of river Mahananda important trading centres emerged such as English Bazar, Malda and Rohanpur. These trading centres conducted a considerable trade in grain and other products which chiefly passed in boats up and down the Mahananda. Down the Mahananda to Calcutta a vast quantity of traffic was consigned consisting chiefly of rice, tobacco, gunny-bags and oil seeds and up traffic was mostly salt and cotton from Calcutta. Besides these up and down traffics, through Mahananda and its tributaries timber-rafts in great numbers used to be floated from the mountains of Nepal. Due to the change of courses of river Kalindri Haitpur became the principal river mart on the Ganges and also became the most important seat of river trade in the district. Through river a good quantity of mango was exported during the mango season to Dacca and other parts of Eastern Bengal.⁸⁷

There were a good number of *ferries* in Malda district also. The district Board maintained these *ferries*. Besides the Government maintenance there were also a number of *ferries* in the district maintained by some of the Zamindars of Malda. Besides, the *ferry* services some of the Zamindars of Malda also the owner of Steamer services. In this context mention should be made of the name of Rai Bahadur Chandra Ketu Narain Singh.⁸⁸ The Steamer owned by him run on alternate days from English Bazar to old Malda, and thence via Kalindri to Rajmahal. The *ferries* which were at Nawabganj, old Malda and Rajmahal were the property of the British Government. G.E. Lambourn mentioned that except Monday there were steam boats and *ferry* services from Lalgola to Nimasari up the Mahananda in connection with the Ganges.⁸⁹ There was also *ferry* steam from Manikchak across the Ganges to Rajmahal. Due to the river borne trade

some places of Malda district became important markets. Of the river borne trade centres Mehaghat on the Kalindri river, Balia – Nawabganj on the Mahananda, Rohanpur on the Mahananda and Chapai – Nawabganj on Mahananda were the principal markets. In this context it is to be mentioned that from Mehaghat a good quantity of Paddy, Pulses and jute were exported entirely by boats and much of the produce exported to Dhulian in Murshidabad district.⁹⁰ Besides Mehaghat, bulk of the trade particularly, export of rice and paddy is carried by river from Rohanpur, Balia-Nawabganj and Chapai – Nawabganj. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that though railway was inaugurated in Malda in the first decade of the twentieth century however the main export trade in rice and paddy by steamer up the Ganges to Bihar had been largely unaffected. The following table will show different produce exported through river route carried by steamer from Malda for the year 1930-31.

**Goods carried by Steamer from Malda District during the year 1930-31
(in maunds)**

Paddy	Rice	Seeds	Jute	Mangoes	Tobacco	Silk
2249	41364	22338	11790	94	4885	Nil

Source : Final Report on the Survey and Settlement operations in the District of Malda, 1928-1935, by M.O. Carter, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1938, p.18

From the table it is evident that of the various agricultural produces exported through river rice run highest. It is also to be noted that the figures for rice i.e. 41,364 maunds carried by steamer from Malda were higher than those of all the railway stations of Malda district together. It is recorded that in the same year from 15 railway stations the total number of rice exported was 37,644 maund which was lesser than that of the rice carried through river route and the most remarkable fact is to be mentioned that though there was a railway station at Rohanpur transportation towards export through railway from Rohanpur was only 3,414 maunds of rice. However through river route the greater portion exported from Rohanpur.⁹¹

Like the other districts of North Bengal undivided Dinajpur possessed many rivers, but none of the Dinajpur rivers was of great importance for navigable by large boats through out the year. Mahananda, Nagar, Kulik, Tangan, Chhiramati, Purnabhaha, Atrai, Jamuna and Karatoya were the principal rivers of undivided Dinajpur district. Though most of the rivers of Dinajpur district were not suitable for navigation by large boats but during the rainy season there was a considerable river traffic to and from every part of the district. It is reported that there were atleast thirteen important rivers navigable by large boats of hundred maunds and only two rivers navigable by boats of two hundred or three hundred maunds burden.⁹² During the rainy season the want of roads in the interior tracts and the heavy cost of land transport compeled the holders of grain and other staples to depend upon the river transport to send their produce to market. During the rainy season river Nagar was navigable by large Cargo boats and by small boats and canoes throughout the year. River Tangan was navigable by large boats throughout its entire course in undivided Dinajpur district. River Purnabhaha was also navigable throughout its course for large boats during the rainy season. It is to be mentioned that in the area under study boats of two hundred or three hundred maunds burden, came up the Tangan to Radhikapur⁹³ (an important trade mart of present North Dinajpur). Before the inauguration of railways in undivided Dinajpur district all the paddy exported from the district was carried off down the rivers Kulik, Nagar, Punarbhaba and Atrai. W.W. Hunters' statistical account recorded details of Water borne traffic at certain control points in the 70's of the nineteenth century of undivided Dinajpur district. The statistical records mentioned that in the area under study i.e. from Raiganj through river Kulik 80,460 maunds or 2945 tons, rice was exported in 1873 and 1990 maunds or 72 tons jute was exported in 1874, through river Atrai from Patiram 115,491 maunds or 4227 tons in 1872 and in 1873 the figure was 112,021 maunds or 4100 tons, from Kumarganj 94,875 maunds or 3473 tons and 114,818 maunds or 4230 tons in 1873, from Balurghat 34,383 maunds or 1258 tons in 1873 and from Hili in 1872, 234598 maunds or 8587 tons and in 1873, 38283 maunds or 1401 tons of rice, were exported.⁹⁴ Thus, it is clear that

through river a good quantity of rice was exported from different parts of Dinajpur district particularly the area under study during the concerned time period. The following table shows navigability of the river in the area under study of Dinajpur.

Name of the River	Length (miles)	Open (no. of months)	Maundage of Boats	
			Dry season	Rainy season
Nagar	68	12	40	1000
Kulik	50	4	500	1000

Source: Government of Bengal, Statement of Navigable Rivers, Canals and Khals in Bengal, Calcutta, 1866.

Though the above figures presents a partial picture of the navigability of the rivers in the area of our study with regards to Dinajpur district, it could be assumed that during the rainy season the rivers in the area under study of Dinajpur played an important role in connection with riverborne trade. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that even after the establishment of railways in different areas of Dinajpur district export of paddy was also continued down the different rivers of Dinajpur district. It is recorded that even after the establishment of railways roughly 10 lakhs of maunds of paddy was exported from different parts of Dinajpur district in a year.⁹⁵

The chief articles of trade of Dinajpur district were rice, tobacco, jute, gunny cloth, salt and molasses and there were numerous large produce depots scattered throughout the district along the different river banks. Churaman, Kaliyaganj, Raiganj, Hemtabad, Dhankail were the principal riverside trading villages and produce depots in the area under study of Dinajpur district during the concerned time period. These trading villages were important for considerable trade of rice, gunny cloth, sugar and jute.⁹⁶ Through Sahibganj a great portion of the grain produced in the rice fields of Dinajpur was shipped from large river side produce depots in Malda. Besides, through the Ganges rice of Dinajpur was exported to the North western provinces by way of the principal rivers of Dinajpur district.⁹⁷ A big

trade in gur (molasses), by country boat within the district was carried on down the river Purnabhaha from Kaharul for sale at Gangarampur (present south Dinajpur district) and neighbourhood. Further, from Nazipur which was a great gurbandar (molasses trading centre) was shipped down river to East Bengal to the tune of some 75,000 maunds a year.⁹⁸

It is found that in the area under study during the concerned time period besides railway and road transport, one can not ignore the importance of river transport. Except Darjeeling district, all the rivers of North Bengal during the concerned time period had played a vital role in river-borne trade. The Colonial Government was also aware of the riverine communication net work and maintained most of the *ferries* and steamer services. Consequently, a considerable amount of different commercial agricultural crops both foodgrains and non-foodgrains were exported from different parts of North Bengal through different rivers of North Bengal. Besides the export trade through different rivers of North Bengal, particularly the rivers of Jalpaiguri timbers were floated to Eastern Bengal. Further, a considerable amount of agricultural produces also exported from North Bengal to Calcutta through river transport. The following table illustrates the quantities of goods and its value exported from North Bengal through river transport.

Goods exported by river routes from North Bengal

Year	Quantity (mds)	Value (Rs)
1886-87	2948	25206
1887-88	3660	35614

Source: Report on the Administration of Bengal 1887-89, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1889, P.155.

ROPEWAY TRANSPORT SYSTEM

In addition to Road and River transportation the construction of Ropeways in the hills also caused some amount of economic progress in North Bengal under study. Before the construction of Ropeways the hill areas of Darjeeling district had to rely on carts and Coolies. In the year 1928 the Kalimpong Ropeway Company Limited was formed for the purpose of transporting commodities between the town of Kalimpong and the Darjeeling – Himalayan Railway in the Tista Valley.⁹⁹ The opening of the Ropeways in the hills not only reduced the carrying carts of the goods but also enhanced the facility of goods for transportation at a time. In the year 1930, the Kalimpong Ropeway was opened from Kalimpong to Riyang to the public carriage of goods.¹⁰⁰ Due to this Rope way transportation carriage of goods from Kalimpong to Tista Valley extension of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway had been greatly facilitated.¹⁰¹ The traded goods primarily transited were baled wool, oranges and timber outward and foodgrains, brick tea, cloth and building materials inward. The quantity of goods transported increased gradually and this means of transport proved to be an efficient and commercial form of transport, because the carrying capacity of the rope way was 10 tons per hour.¹⁰² In the latter years the Kalimpong Ropeway had been replaced by a new ropeway owned by the Samthar Co-operative Multipurpose Society Limited. As the Ropeway proved a success in transportation, the Colonial Government tried to open several ropeways in the hills. In 1939 the Darjeeling – Bijanbari ropeway was opened and following this efficient and economical form of transportation a number of private ropeways on the tea gardens also opened in the hills of Darjeeling district.¹⁰³

Apart from tea plantation industry, during the concerned time period the British found this region a big source of different cash crops and timber trade. Consequently, the Colonial ruler due to free entry of trade and commerce was aware of a well-developed communication and transportation system. Besides railways, much impetus was paid in road construction. At the same time, river-borne transportation which was the traditional mode of

communication was not ignored. North Bengal having many large rivers, with tremendous water course for the major portion of the year, had a good case for development of water transport. During the period under study the river-borne communication was further developed with the passage of time by the introduction of steamer services in this region. Thus, in the twentieth century with the better road-communication and river transportation domestic trade as well as inland and external trade grew fast. In the domestic trade weekly market or bi-weekly market and annual and bi-annual fairs became important due to better fabric of road and riverine system. Excellent road communication and river borne transportation helped reducing regional economic differences. On the contrary, it also helped the rise of prices of agricultural produces considerably and made the markets more and more competitive. Consequently, both the cultivators and the region under study benefited. Producers and consumers came into direct contact. To invest in different fields of economy of North Bengal, traders and investors, both indigenious and foreigners as well as different intermediate trading communities, thronged in different parts of North Bengal. The trade of jute, rice, tea, timber and tobacco got a new stature in this region. Thus, on the whole road construction and riverine communication also brought about a change in the socio-economic structure of North Bengal and this region turned towards urbanization.

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CHAPTER-VII

DECLINE OF THE BENGALIEE ENTREPRENEURS

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Tea is one of the most important industries of India. It is already discussed that in our period of study the Europeans showed the path for tea plantation industry in the northern North Bengal particularly in Darjeeling, Terai and Duars region. Following the footsteps of the European Tea Planters indigenous people both Hindus and Muslims of higher social hierarchy entered into this field in the eighties of the 19th century and inspite of unfair competition from the Europeans the Bengalee Tea entrepreneurs gradually prospered due to their conscious and bold attempts. However, one finds that during the world wide economic depression this important and only industry of North Bengal faced an acute financial crisis and ultimately marked the beginning of its decline. But due to paucity of sufficient data or materials at our disposal it is difficult to determine the different causes which contributed for the decline of the Bengalee entrepreneurs in the area of our study. However, there are stray references in this regard. At the very outset, one has to consider and analyse some of the pertinent issues related with Bengalee entrepreneurs, such as, the social and economic background of the Bengalee entrepreneurs, their class character, the sources of their capital, and the like. Besides, one also has to keep in mind the role and attitude of the Banks towards Bengalee entrepreneurs, the dynamics of market regarding sale and purchase of tea, effect of world wide economic depression in the tea industry and the like. All the above mentioned forces and factors combined together were responsible for the slipping out of the tea industry from the hands of the Bengalee entrepreneurs from 1930 onwards.

The conventional view is that the decline of the Union Bank which was the biggest Indo-British Banking venture with a capital of more than a million pound have signalled the decline of the Bengalee entrepreneurship. This view is historically true in the context of the Bengalee entrepreneurship in and around Calcutta in the second half of the 19th century. It was a great shock to the Indian businessmen when the union Bank was collapsed in 1848. After that the Bengalee businessmen practically withdrew from any

adventurous business activity. Due to the decline of the Union Bank Dwarkanath Tagor's 'Carr Tagore and Company' came down with a crash. During that period a distrust of European business became a part of Bengalee Business thinking. Thus in the second half of the 19th century there were of little significance of the commercial and nascent industrial efforts of the Bengalees. Thus the role of the Bengalee in the business world of Calcutta in the second half of the 19th century was confined to barren-clerk dom, petty speculation, short opportunism, peddling and merchandising. When this was occurred the area of our study particularly the extreme northern side of Bengal was not a part of Bengal. Naturally the observation of the historians and economists connected with Calcutta and surrounding areas were not aware of the fact that in the northern part of Bengal a new horizon of industrial development was taken place in the post-Mutiny era. It is true that this region brought under the purview of the Bengal presidency only after the conclusion of the second Anglo-Bhutan War (1864-65) and this new region was known to the contemporary Bengalee as new Bengal. This new Bengal was comprised by Jalpaiguri Durars, Darjeeling and Terai. The most interesting features of this region was that it was economically barren and agriculturally infertile. To make the region economically viable one the British Indian Government adopted various economic measures. One such measure was the introduction of Tea plantation Industry. At the outset the plantation industry was financed, managed and developed by the British entrepreneurs. It is to be noted that the administrative change made Jalpaiguri town as the most vibrant centre of the entire North Bengal and in addition to this administrative change the new land revenue system also provided an opportunity to the settlers Bengalee of Jalpaiguri. The census Report of 1921 mentioned both Bengalee Hindu and Muslim families from East Bengal particularly from Pubna and Rajshahi areas settled in the town and the professional background of the immigrant population was of bhadrlok nature due to their profession as Government clerks, lawyers contractors etc.¹ The settlers Bengalee purchased *joteland*, involved in timber business. The accumulation of capital had induced them to invest surplus money in tea gardens. Thus a

good number of highly educated Bengalees were engaged in plantation industry and with the entry of the settlers Bengalee in the plantation industry a new situation emerged in the economic atlas of Bengal. Thus it is found that when as a whole in Bengal there was a declining position of the Bengalee entrepreneurs, in the northern part of Bengal, there was the emergence of Bengalee entrepreneurs following the tea plantations industry.

Competing with the white entrepreneurs the settlers Bengalee of Jalpaiguri had tremendously challenged the hegemony of the white compradors. Dr. Shib Sankar Mukherjee, a researcher of tea plantations industry made a detailed analysis of the 'background' of the new Indian entrepreneurs. He mentioned that the class character of the Bengalee Tea Planters was either *jotedars* or successful timber merchant or as a supplier to the British Indian Government or lawyers.² He mentioned that the pioneer of Bengalee tea plantation Beharilal Ganguli was a successful timber merchant and Khan Bahadur Rahim Buksh was a Peskar (clerk) and also supplier to the Government. Prof. Binoy Kumar Sarkar, an eminent economist opined that Jalpaiguri's Bengalee lawyers were more interested in discussion on share market rather than the issues of laws. The Bengalee entrepreneurs though invested their surplus income in tea plantations industry for financial gains, they did not have capitalistic aim like the British Colonial entrepreneurs as also they did not belong to the traditional business community. This limitation of professional entrepreneurship made the stress for them unbearable during acute financial crisis of the economic depression period. As a result, it became nearly impossible to protect their entrepreneurial stake in tea industry.

In addition to this there were other factors which contributed to the gradual loss of the gardens from the hands of the Bengalee entrepreneurs. The gardens owned by Bengalee entrepreneurs were not of that quality as those owned by Europeans. Besides, there was lack of proper planning, scarcity of tea seeds and scanty use of scientific methods. Some Indian tea planters of Jalpaiguri alleged that the British administration was opposed to granting lands to the Indians for tea plantation and the land which they

acquired were actually rejected by the Britishers due to different reasons. However, Percival Griffiths strongly opposed this view and remarked that there is no evidence to justify the allegation.³ According to B.C. Ghosh, a renowned Tea Planter of Jalpaiguri, the lands secured by the early Indian entrepreneurs in raising joint stock tea planting and manufacturing companies were those which was first searched out by the Britishers but rejected for one or other reason.⁴ Dr. Shib Sankar Mukerjee also echoed the same view. He ascribed that there were definite discriminations by the British Government in Sanctioning lease of wasteland for tea plantations in Jalpaiguri district against the emerging Indian planting community.⁵ In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that the grant of Mughalkata Tea Estate (1879) was first searched out by the Britishers but was not used by them because of its small size. Within a short time the Jalpaiguri Tea Company group secured another grant which British Planters refused on grounds of its inaccessibility and promoted a second company on it, that is Northern Bengal Tea Corporation with Needam Tea Estate (1882). Thus, it is found that the Bengalee entrepreneurs established tea gardens in different areas which were rejected by the British planters were of inferior in quality.

From the very beginning the tea gardens of the Bengalee entrepreneurs were not financially stable. B.C. Ghosh, the veteran tea planter mentioned that the Bengalee entrepreneurs had to cross many hurdles to open the tea garden and also to maintain it. He mentioned that the Bengalee started with very small capital which they could gather as none could subscribe a large portion of the capital. It was an association of poor men determined to do a big thing. In this context one has to see the role and attitude of the Banks of that period to Bengalee entrepreneurs. Regarding financial question the Britishers were in advance than that of the Bengalee entrepreneurs. As because of the master of India, the British entrepreneurs and capitalist could easily get financial help from different Banks. The tea gardens of the British entrepreneurs were controlled and managed by the Managing Agencies. These Managing Agencies easily got the required money from different Banks. The Managing Agencies of foreign planters were taken over the interest of the British tea gardens. These Agency houses played a

vital role in financing the tea companies. Their guarantee not only enabled the companies to borrow funds, but they always invested capital whenever the same was needed. It is found that in the sterling group the success of one company enabled another one to get the funds. No report has been found that any sterling established a garden in Jalpaiguri district had any teething trouble for want of finance. If the original entrepreneurs could not husband the required resources, they readily transferred the assets to some other company or organisation.⁶ Many of the European gardens were financed by home people and managing agents made all arrangements for finance or other things. Finance is the life-blood of Industrial growth. Tea industry required careful nursing quite a number of years before they become profitable. The garden begins to yield crops from the fourth year and becomes a paying proposition in at least the sixth or seventh year. Thus a considerable amount of expenditure has to be incurred without any return during this period of development. The European tea industry is nursed by managing agents during all these barren years. Besides, attracting deposits and assisting industry directly by furnishing their own funds, the managing agents rendered invaluable financial assistance in an indirect manner as they arrange for and have to give their guarantee for all the bank loans, cash credits and overdrafts required by the industrial concerns under their management. Besides, sometimes the British Planters preference shares and sometimes they issue debentures.⁷ Where as the Bengalee tea entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri had to face difficult trouble in borrowing money from the Bank and bound to borrow money in high rates. In this context it is quite pertinent to mention that the Imperial Bank of India does not financed the tea companies directly or hypothecation of tea crop unlike other joint stock Banks and they required a guarantor usually a firm of repute of tea brokers or European firm of managing agents.⁸ In this context one has to see the rules and regulations of the Imperial Bank in regard to grant a loan. When the Imperial Bank opens a cash credit account in favour of an industrial concern, it requires a promissory note with two signatures on every loan. The second name on the promissory note is called the guarantor. The loan is further secured by hypothecation of stocks of raw and manufactured goods

which is demanded in addition to the two signatures. The Imperial Bank cannot lend except on two signatures because under the Imperial Bank Act of 1920, hypothecation is no security. The other Indian joint-stock banks generally followed the Imperial Bank and demand the additional guarantee besides hypothecation of stocks. Further, the Imperial Bank of India was debarred by the Act of 1920 from granting loans for a longer period than six months and even still 1934 though the Act was amended it could not make any loan or advance for a longer period except in certain special cases when the maximum is nine months only.⁹ The inevitable result of which is that most of the Indian concerns do not get finance from the Imperial Bank. Thus, finance is generally obtained on the hypothecation to some Indian Banks (Joint Stock Companies). Besides, they borrowed money from the Marwari money lenders and the local financiers who charged higher rates. It is found that if the company have not got good banks behind the Bengalee tea entrepreneurs, it had to borrow money at a high rate of interest 9% sometimes to go up 24%.¹⁰ It is to be noted that during the period under study there emerged several joint stock companies or loan offices in Bengal under Bengalee financiers. The loan offices played an important role in the banking organization and in the economic life of Bengal. The loan offices were under the Indian Companies Act and were really useful to trade and industries. It is recorded that still 31st March 1929 there were 782 joint stock companies or loan offices in Bengal with a total capital of 9 crores.¹¹ According to Binoy Kumar Sarkar, an eminent Indian economist, that upto 1929-31 there were at least eight hundred loan offices or joint stock companies controlled by the Bengalees in Bengal,¹² which were the great source of financial support for the Bengalees'. In Jalpaiguri district during the period under study there were 15 number of such type of joint stock companies or loan offices existed.¹³ In the area of our study the local banks of Jalpaiguri advanced money direct to the concerns without any such guarantor or hypothecation of crop at interest varying from 9% to 10%. In this context mention should be made of the bank like Jalpaiguri Trading and Banking Corporation, Lakshmi Bank, Raikat Bank, Rahut Bank etc. These local banks and loan offices play a part in the longer financing of tea

industry by advancing loans against mortgage of block and in that respect bear close analogy to the "trade banks". Among these "trade banks" the Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation and the Lakshmi Bank have indeed made a speciality of financing the tea industry. They made advances against mortgage of tea gardens and appurtenances and also on the security of tea shares. But such type of Banks or loan offices were not dependable as they emerged and declined every now and then. From 1914 to 1928 at least seventeen Bengalee joint stock company failed and during the depression period a great number of such type of Banks were either got closed or were on the verge of closure.¹⁴ As the finances of the Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation Ltd., the Jalpaiguri Lakshmi Bank and other local Banks were rather limited due to lesser number of deposits during depression. They became handicapped in financing in tea market during that period. In this context one has to see the financial strength or paid up capital of the local Banks. The Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation was established with a paid-up capital of Rs.50,000 only. The bulk of the necessary funds is obtained from fixed deposits running for two years, one year and six months and the rates of interest being 7%, 6½% and 4½%, respectively. During the depression period these tea banks fortunes bound up with one particular industry, have been hit very hard. Because a considerable portion of their loans to the tea industry has become unrealisable and frozen and some of them have closed their doors. In the depression period most of the tea gardens were unable to repay their debts and the banks have been compelled to restrict their assistance.¹⁵ It is found that Jalpaiguri Trading and Banking Corporation which was the principal financier of the Bengalee entrepreneurs of the tea plantation industry had already hypothecated Rs.41,96,326 in 1929 out of its total capital of Rs.54,60,679.¹⁶ Further, in 1931 the Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation made loans against mortgage of gardens amounting to Rs.11,60,000 at rates of interest varying from 9 to 12%. Loan on the security of tea shares amounted to Rs.1,78,000. There were further unsecured loans to the extent of Rs.5,57,000.¹⁷ The Jalpaiguri Lakshmi Bank also bankrupted during the depression period. Thus, the crushing of

the indigenous Banks or loan offices was a great blow to the Bengalee entrepreneurs of the tea plantation industries. In this context it is pertinent to mention that some of the old gardens have got some reserve funds and could manage themselves but most of the gardens got heavy financial crisis during the depression period.

N.K. Basu, once who was the convenor of Co-ordination Committee of Planters Association opined that the Bengalee planters earned maximum profit from tea plantations industry, but due to economic imprudency unable to overcome this financial crisis. According to him the Bengalee entrepreneurs earned maximum profit and extensively expanded the tea plantations area without keeping any reserve fund for which they had to face acute financial crisis. Further, the Bengalee entrepreneurs distributed very high dividend to the shareholders.¹⁸ It is found that the Bengalee entrepreneurs distributed upto 364 percent dividend to the shareholders.¹⁹ In this context it is to be mentioned that this high dividend attracted so many Indians to invest in tea. It is found that Bhabaranjan Gangopadhaya, a non residence Bengalee based in Bombay, was highly interested to invest in tea when he came to know the reputation of Jalpaiguri Tea Company in regards to high dividend in 1927, but it was not possible due to his illness and he expressed great repentance as he missed a great chance of financial gain for investing in tea.²⁰ Due to the distribution of high dividend there was shortage of fund and it was making impossible to overcome this financial crisis. Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghosh, member of the Executive Committee in the 13th Annual General Meeting held on 14th March, 1931 addressed regarding the high dividend that it was an idea prevalent amongst many people that the Indian Tea Companies suffer from superfluity of wealth and payment of dividend for some years in a case of few companies at the rate of Rs.200/- to Rs.300/- gave a very false idea on that point. However, he acknowledged that the few companies which declared such dividends were companies with very small capital.²¹ Thus, it is found that financial crisis was a vital factor for declining the Bengalee entrepreneurs in the area of our study.

As Tea plantations industry emerged with Colonial interest and Colonial capital, it had been decided that to the advantage of producer's tea should be sold in auction, either in the producing countries. It has already been discussed that by this Colonial system tea was auctioned either in London or Calcutta. It is to be noted that tea is a commodity whose quality varies from garden to garden and season to season. Different elevations and different soil conditions affect the quality of leaf. The quality of the tea produced by different producers and even the same producer from different areas of his estate will not be uniform and hence cannot demand the same price. The auction system is able to offer blenders who were able to take an intelligent decision on the type and quality of teas to buy. The blender would be able to sell a superior product at the same price or a similar product at a lower price or most likely a better product at a lower price. Thus, one set of the fears concentrated around the possibility of auctions being "rigged" by buyers combinations.²² In the tea market producers are many but buyers are few. Thus the buyers can 'rig' the market by collusion. So, many producers of tea have deep resentment against the auction system. Some producers have conviction that the auction system was being misused and some how to cheat them of prices they otherwise might have realized. It is clearly stated in the Report of Indian Tea Planters' Association, 1931, that buying of tea was mainly controlled by a few buyers and the Association believed that the low price of tea was partly atleast due to a combination of a few buyers who were effectively controlling the price.²³ It is evident that the buying of tea had been concentrated in the hands of a few people not more than 5 or 6 like, Brooke Bonds, Harrison and Cross fields, Liptons etc. And they paid discrimination prices i.e. high prices to some and low prices to others.²⁴ Further, the tea brokers received a commission from the producers for selling their tea. It is mentioned in the report of the Indian Tea Planters' Association that the brokers had to be paid brokerage commission, at 1% over and above all other charges.²⁵ Hence in auctions since the brokers income depends on price of tea, the brokers were suppose to represent the sellers. In Calcutta the brokers additionally receive a commission from the buyers. In this respect manipulation starts between the brokers and the

buyers.²⁶ The producers sent the tea to the broker who sells it on the tea sale market to the buyers. Therefore, the auctioneer had some control over the price at which he sells and could under sell. In this context it is quite relevant to mention that main purchaser of Duars tea were Kanada and Persia. Besides, a good quantity of Duars tea also exported to Bombay. It is found that in 1928-29 the prices of tea in Calcutta market was higher than that of London market, as because the Persian merchants could freely purchase the required tea from Calcutta market. But in 1930 due to their internal problem (without Bank facility) the Persian merchants could not purchase tea from Calcutta market. As a result, the other buyers controlled the dynamics of tea market of Calcutta according to their own wishes.²⁷ This monopoly and manipulation of other buyers led to a great financial loss for the Bengalee tea entrepreneurs. Thus many of the Bengalee entrepreneurs could not adjust themselves to the auction system of selling and consequently many gardens became sick and unwell.

After 1914 the next phase of entrepreneurial activity was started. As the waste land of the Government was exhausted and there was no bar to convert a *joteland* into tea land from 1914 onwards tea gardens emerged extensively on the *joteland*. Both Hindu and Muslim *jotedars* at this juncture came forward with their vast land for conversion into tea land. The Hindu absentee *jotedars* by virtue of their modern education and cultural background realised the economic significance of the tea estate as an asset. Hence whenever chance came they took the opportunity of converting their *joteland* to tea land. It is interesting to note that these *jotedars* promoted the tea gardens had lack of experience and knowledge in tea plantation industry in comparison to the former promoters of Anjuman Tea Company or Jalpaiguri Tea Company.²⁸ Unlike the Muslims these *jotedars* were mostly non-resident *jotedars*. They had no direct relation with the tea garden. Thus, the new entrepreneurs following the Britishers invested their surplus profit either by purchasing landed property or to invest in different small industries outside North Bengal. Chomong Lama, a free lance researcher mentioned that Bengalee tea entrepreneurs invested their excess profit in different industries at Soadpur, Khardaha, Panihati, Damdam or in other

places.²⁹ In the later days the tea entrepreneurs family like the Ghosh, Sanyal, Roy, Mitra, Niyogi and Bhowmick invested the surplus profit from tea in different industries and business like Sulekha Ink, Bengal Lamp etc.³⁰

The Bengalee tea entrepreneurs were divided into several groups according to the Tea Companies which they belonged like, Anjuman Tea Company, Jalpaiguri Tea Company, Gurjanjhora Tea Company etc. There was very cool relation with one group to another group. The Bengalee entrepreneurs were also divided into Hindu and Muslim group. Besides the Hindus and Muslims groups, there was also division in the Hindu group like, Barendra and Kayasta. The division and factionalism no doubt weaken the Bengalee entrepreneurs. There was strained relation between Tariniprasad Ray and Jogesh Chandra Ghosh on the question of share of the tea garden.³¹ It is said by some respected town dwellers that the Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation was established with the endeavour of Tarini Prasad Ray, but in the later days Tarini Prasad was criticised for defalcation of the deposited amount of this Bank.³²

The Bengalee Tea entrepreneurs were absolutely humanitarian. They did not confine themselves only in tea plantation industry. Some of them closely connected with national politics and later years became member of the Legislative Assembly, Minister and also formed "North Bengal Group" within the Coalition Government in Bengal.³³ They boundlessly contributed money in cultural and welfare development of Jalpaiguri. The Bengalee entrepreneurs were greatly responsible for the socio-economic development of Jalpaiguri Town which was started in 1900. In 1919, the Bengalee Tea Entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri founded the Indian Tea Planters' Association. This association was not only conscious for the welfare, medical facilities and sanitation of the tea labourers, but at the same time this association also had great contribution for the development of Jalpaiguri Town. It is found that from the beginning of the 20th century the Bengalee entrepreneurs contributed money for cultural activities, in education and in games and sports. In this context mentioned should be made of Ganganath Bagchi, Sashi Kumar Niogi, Ganesh Chandra Sanyal, Tarini Prasad Roy, Joy

Gobinda Guha, Makhanlal Chakraborty, Nalini Kanta Rahut who established boys' Hostel respectively in their houses and borne the expenses for the education of the students who came from different districts of Bengal.³⁴ By their endeavour the Jalpaiguri Aryanattya Samaj (1902) and Bandhabnattya Samaj (1925) were established. They also founded a Bengalee Club in Jalpaiguri named Jalpaiguri Institute. Bengalee entrepreneurs contributed much more money in football games. Besides the above activities, a noble tusk was performed by the Bengalee Tea entrepreneurs with the foundation of Jalpaiguri Jackson Medical School in 1930. The boundless contribution for socio-economic and cultural activities to some extent have no doubt affected their capitals.

The entire period from 1876 to 1896 was one of the significant eras in terms of acreage under tea production. Particularly between the year 1892 and 1896 the tea industry enjoyed an extra ordinary prosperity. But in the first world war eras the expansion of tea garden was very limited and after a serious slump in 1920 to 1922 tea prices steadily recovered and reached high levels in 1925 to 1927. During these years considerable areas of new tea were planted by the Bengalee entrepreneurs which began to come into bearing by about 1928-29.³⁵ But prices of tea then fell heavily, and it was clear that supplies were going to be greatly in excess of demand, produces in India. The table shows how gradually stocks of tea in London had become dangerously high.

Monthly figures of stocks of Tea in London from 1927/8 to 1930/1 (in million lb)

	1927/8	1928/9	1929/30	1930/1
April	175.0	220.4	245.0	252.0
May	157.1	195.9	215.0	236.0
June	144.5	179.2	205.0	227.0
July	136.5	170.5	203.0	218.0
August	146.6	179.1	213.0	231.0
September	163.8	194.6	225.0	244.0
October	185.1	207.7	243.0	260.0
November	213.8	224.7	255.0	260.0
December	239.0	233.1	275.0	288.0
January	252.9	251.3	283.0	296.0
February	249.9	253.7	282.0	293.0
March	239.8	259.6	267.0	269.0
Total	2304.00	2569.80	2911.00	3074.00

Source : The History of Tea Industry, by Percival Griffiths, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1967, p.188

The table shows that from 1927-8 to 1930-01, 10858.80 million lb tea was stocked in London market. However, other source mentioned that upto February 1931, there was 270,387,000 pound of tea stocked in London market.³⁶ At this juncture tea produced country India, Ceylon and Netherlands East Indies reached an agreement on a voluntary scheme to curtail output. This scheme was brought into operation early in 1930, but unfortunately the negotiations for its continuance after that year were not successful. In the meantime the decline in tea consumption, resulting from the world trade depression of 1929, was seriously aggravating the situation and tea stocks continued to rise until in 1932 the market was so depress as to be entirely un-remunative to almost all engaged in the tea industry.³⁷ The tables show the declining prices and decreasing of exports of Duars Tea in London during the depression period.

Selling Price of Duars Tea in London

Year	Rate (per kg.)
1929	1 shilling 0.47 Penny
1930	11.33 Penny
1931	8.29 Penny
1932	7.43 Penny

Source : Trisrota, a Bengali Weekly published from Jalpaiguri, Editor Suresh Chandra Pal, dt.9.11.1931/23.11.1931/24.5.1931 and 27.11.1932

Exportation of Duars Tea in London

Year	Number of Teachest (Box)
1929-30	350332
1930-31	311102
1931-32	334912
1932-33	293212

Source: Trisrota, a Bengali weekly published from Jalpaiguri, Editor Suresh Chandra Pal, dt.13.9.1932.

From the above tables it is found that both the prices and supply of Duars tea declined during the depression period. It is clear that as the demand fell off so seriously that tea prices decline dangerously. Thus several gardens fell into financial difficulties. Not only the Indian entrepreneurs suffered but as a whole in India tea industry was infact, in a precarious condition during the depression period. It is recorded that of the one hundred and forty five rupee companies reported by the Director General of Commercial intelligence and statistics, only thirty six paid a dividend, while of the eighty four, sterling companies reported in the Indian Tea Associations' Annual Report for 1933, forty one paid no dividends in 1932.

Of the companies so listed by the Association, thirty passed their dividends in each of the year 1930, 1931 and 1932. At this juncture the Indian Tea Association addressed the Government of India officially on the question of exports by means of an international agreement between the producing countries. Thus, an international Tea Committee was set up to co-ordinate all this action and in India the Tea Control Act to give effect to the agreement was passed in 1933.³⁸ The agreement stipulated that existing tea areas must not be extended during the period of five years exception in special cases. The Indian Tea Association and the Indian Tea Planters Association, Jalpaiguri considered that a voluntary basis was inadequate for a scheme of this character and asked the Government to give it legislative effect. This, however, was not done, partly because of the opposition of the united planters Association. In addition to this there were other factors which also aggravated the situation for the lowering prices of Duars Tea. A good quantity of tea was imported into India from China, Java and Sumatra. Besides, tea also imported into India from Ceylon. It is found that large tract of land have come under tea principally in Java and every year from Rs.20 lakhs to Rs.25 lakhs of Java tea imported into India.³⁹ As buying of tea has been concentrated in the hands of a few people, they exploited this boggy of over production. Thus the Indian tea had to face a competition with the imported tea and the buyers took this advantage for fixing the prices of tea. Further, the Bolshevik Revolution put an end to the import of tea from India and Ceylon into Russia. It is to be noted that in the pre-Bolshevik era Russia purchased good quantity of Indian tea. In 1903-04 tea exported from Calcutta which was purchased by Russian buyers amounted 11¼ million lbs, and including 4,905,000 lbs, consigned to Dalny, 9,452,000 lbs were shipped direct to Russian Ports.⁴⁰ In the post Bolshevik era the exportation of Indian tea decreased 100 million pound per year and even from that time Russia started to produce tea in her country. It is found that in 1930 Russia produced 900,000 pound tea.⁴¹ All these forces and factors were responsible for the lowering prices of Indian tea. The lowering prices of tea created some serious financial problem during the depression period. It is reported by the tea planters Association, Jalpaiguri, that during the depressing condition of

the tea trade they had selling their teas practically at the cost of production.⁴² Due to unremunative prices of tea the 'absentee owners' began to feel less attraction to their tea gardens.

Thus the period of great prosperity of tea was at an end and it was very difficult to protect the tea garden during the tea crisis followed by the world wide economic depression. During the depression period the Bengalee entrepreneurs faced an acute financial crisis, but they had no advantage like the British entrepreneurs to obtain money. However, it is found that Sir. R.N. Mukherjee, the builder of Industrial Bengal gave unstinted financial support to the tea company of Jalpaiguri. Sir Byomkesh Chakraborty was another personality; the Managing Director of the then Bengal National Bank, under his inspiration the Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation got the requisite support and could finance a number of Tea Companies. But with its limited resources Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation could not render much financial assistance.⁴³ It is to be noted that in India for Colonial need the tea plantations Industry emerged and the gradual extention of this industry was possible due to the free entry of European merchants and traders and when prices of tea was declining during the depression period it was for the Colonial interest they controlled the production and extention of tea plantation areas. In this context it is quite relevant to mention that in Jalpaiguri Duars 80% tea lands were controlled by the British entrepreneurs where as 20% tea lands were under the Bengalee entrepreneurs. It is found that the area under tea of the Duars planters' Association was 120,000 acres and where as the area under Indian Planters' Association was 25,000 acres.⁴⁴ The Bengalee entrepreneurs were totally deprived to get financial assistance from the Bank like the Imperial Bank of India. Even they have not secured any sympathetic treatment from the Imperial Bank. As the indigenious loan offices or Banks were unable to provide financial assistance, it was not possible for them to keep the garden in their possession for a long period of time. Thus, following the depression the financial crisis compelled them to mortgage a part of the garden or either sale a part of the garden. It is recorded that in the last week of April 1930 a part of a reputed tea Company was transferred.⁴⁵ In this way, the

declination of the Bengalee entrepreneurs started and the Bengalee tea planters gradually mortgaged a part or share of the tea garden as because they were unable to repay the loan taken of the mortgaged parts or shares of the garden were sold by auction. It is reported that six parts of Gurjanjhora Tea Company Ltd. i.e. from No.804 to No.809 had mortgaged to Sadananda Prasad Saha and as the owner of the said parts was unable to repay the amount taken with interest were sold by auction.⁴⁶ It is also reported that the parts of Kathalguri Tea Company Ltd., No.1458 to No.1464 (seven parts) were mortgaged on 20th April 1929 for an amount of Rs.5000/- were called for auction on 20th December 1930 by Babu Sri Lal Maheshwari.⁴⁷ Further, it is found that Joychandra Sanyal mortgaged 949 No part of Ramjhora Tea Company to Ramananda Maheshwari for an amount of 329 rupees 10 annas, was sold by auction as he was unable to repay the said amount with interest.⁴⁸

It is quite pertinent to see a reference to the part played by the state in the provision of financial assistance for the industries of the country. In the beginning of British rule in India, the industrial policy of the Government was buttressed by the English economic philosophy of laissez-faire, and it kept itself aloof from the indigenuous industries. But after the World War I the exigencies of the circumstances brought about a change in the industrial policy of the Colonial Government. Under the enormous stress of the war, the old doctrine of laissez-faire brokedown. The theory that interference by the state in the economic life of the country was injurious to its well-being came to be discarded. The Colonial Government which was so long the citadel of laissez-faire policy adopted an active policy of encouraging home industries in various ways. Thus in India, the Industrial Commission was appointed in 1916 and emphasised in its report the supreme importance of state aid to indigenous industries. However, in Bengal there was no legal provision for state-aid to industries still 1931. The State-Aid Act was passed in Bengal on 23rd July, 1931. The Bengal Act contains provisions not only for the grant of secured loans, guarantee of cash credits, overdrafts and guarantee of a minimum return on the whole or part of the capital of a joint-stock company but also provisions for guarantee of interest

on preference shares and debentures and for the supply of machinery on the hire-purchase system.⁴⁹ Thus, when the Act was passed it brought great hopes to many a budding industrialist in Bengal, but after all these years of working, the Act does not appear to have benefited any body. Upto March 6, 1935, the actual amount sanctioned by Government against five different applications was Rs.11,000, of which Rs.900 representing two small loans was refused by the applications. The most important thing to be noticed in this connection is that in two years and a half there was no actual disbursement of money. The working of the Act naturally came under a fire criticism in the provincial legislature from time to time. It was pointed out that though the Act was passed in July, 1931, it did not come to function still 1933. In 1933-34 no money was provided in the Budget for granting financial assistance under the Act.⁵⁰

Following the financial crisis of the Bengalee Tea entrepreneurs some western Indian Banias took the opportunity. By purchasing the parts of the tea garden they gradually entered into this trade. Thus, after 1930 there was substantial transformation witnessed of the ownership of the Bengalee tea planters. This picture became very prominent in the post partition era. In the post independence era the non Bengalee Bania with their accumulated capital became the promoter of the tea gardens. Manash Dasgupta, an eminent economist of North Bengal analysed in detailed how the non-Bengalee Banias very tactfully and close association with several Banks gradually became the owners of the Tea gardens in the laterdays.⁵¹ This new entrepreneurs were not at all tea planters and even some of them never had seen tea garden in their lifetime. Bengalee entrepreneurs also were themselves responsible for their declination. It is to be noted that the descendants of the renowned Bengalee tea entrepreneurs were not so competent and courageous like that of their predecessors. Most of them were attracted towards luxurious life and they did not pay much attention to the tea gardens which their predecessors once had established with much toil. It is also discussed that most of the *jotedars* who founded the tea gardens were non resident *jotedars* and did not devote much time for the development of tea industry. Hence one finds a similarity of the declination

of the Bengalee entrepreneurship in tea gardens in northern North Bengal with that of the declination of Bengalee entrepreneurship of the 19th century Calcutta. In Calcutta and its surrounding areas the descendants of the renowned Bengalee entrepreneurs were much more interested to invest in Calcutta house property, land, gold and silver plates, jewels, government securities, company's paper, Zamindaris and rent free land rather than to invest in industry.⁵² All the above mentioned factors ultimately paved the way for slipping out of the tea gardens from the hands of the Bengalee entrepreneurs. The declining phase of the Bengalee entrepreneurs thus started during the depression period and it became very acute in the post independence period.

Thus, it is found that gradually the ownership of tea gardens transferred from the hands of Bengalee entrepreneurs and it is still continuing.⁵³ However, it is not possible to put here the statistical figure as regards the number of tea gardens transferred from Bengalee entrepreneurs to non Bengalee entrepreneur during the period under study. It is so because till 1906 there was no tea Register. Even though Tea Register was maintained from 1906, but it was not systematically, properly and regularly recorded as regards to whom the lease was issued, the name of the promoters, the name of the Board of Directors etc. Consequently one is in the dark with regard to the statistics of the ownership of the tea garden. Thus, it is not possible to find out the actual figure of the transfer of tea garden from Bengalee to non-Bengalee entrepreneurs during the period under study.

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CHAPTER – VIII

EPILOGUE

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In the present study entitled “Industries, Trade and Trading Communities of North Bengal (West Bengal), 1833 A.D. – 1933 A.D. : A Study of Economic History.” The researcher has presented an analysis of the economic evolution of North Bengal during the concerned time period. The study primarily focuses on a hundred years economic changes and development during the Colonial rule since the passing of the charter Act of 1833. The study begins with the geo-historical profile of North Bengal. This geo-historical profile has been confined to the present atlas of North Bengal i.e. the districts within Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal State, popularly known as North Bengal which was once under the Colonial rule from 1833 to 1933. The Charter Act of 1833 was a watershed both in political and economic fields. This Charter Act not only completely abolished East India Company’s monopoly in trade and commerce but also opened a new trend i.e. free trade policy. The study analyses this new trend and its impact in this region. Due to free trade policy, economic changes started through tea plantation industry, inauguration and development of railways, development of roads and riverine transportation, cultivation and trade of different commercial crops like jute, tobacco, rice, cardamom, orange, cinchona etc. with the emergence of these new trade and industries different merchants, capitalists, entered in this region and also a new group of traders emerged in the trading atlas of this region. The effects of these also have been analysed. The study finally strives to explore the issues of the forces and factors of the declining phase of the Bengalee entrepreneurs in this region.

It is found that every district of North Bengal coming into its present shape has a history behind its creation. This region has distinct contrasting geographical features of land, river, soil and climate. The southern portion of the region i.e. Malda and Dinajpur (Indian portion) contained a flat area of very fertile soil with numerous navigable rivers. While the other parts of North Bengal i.e. northern North Bengal consisted of hills, downslopes and

foothills split by several streams and rivers. This tract was mostly covered with dense forests and the climate of the greater parts of this area was full of moisture. However, major portion of Cooch Behar was plains and open with very fertile soil. Except Cooch Behar, major portion of the northern North Bengal was commercially barren and agriculturally infertile. However, there were abundant of natural resources in this area and had a great scope to use the area suitable for different commercial cash crops. The district of Malda was formed in 1813. However, in the modern sense of the term of the district, Dinajpur (undivided) was formed in 1786. This southern section of North Bengal came under direct British administration after the Grant of Diwani. However, the northern part of North Bengal was brought under the purview of the Bengal presidency only after the conclusion of the second Anglo-Bhutan War (1864-65). Except Cooch Behar, this part was known to the contemporary Bengalees as new Bengal. Before the British tutelage, the basic feature of the economy of this region was subsistence economy. Agriculturally, this area was infertile. So, the British Government was very much anxious to make the region economically viable one. With this notion, the British East India Company adopted various economic measures to make the region commercially developed. Regarding Cooch Behar, one finds a little different picture. Prior to the contact with the British through Royal patronage, there was quite little trade of rice and tobacco in Cooch Behar State. However, the southern part of North Bengal had already been developed in trade and industries like silk, indigo, cotton and brasso under the tutelage of several European and indigenous merchants.

The historic Charter Act (1833) was a watershed in the sense that it opened our country for free trade. Consequently, it made easy for the entrance of the traders, merchants and capitalists with different habits, different ideas, and different principles to regulate British business in India. This trend was also found in this region. Thus new commercial avenues were opened and process of economic transformation started in this region. The Colonial Government was aware for the need of the economic development. So, through the policy of laissez faire process, the economic activities started in this region and this region gradually got connected to

the world trade. This new trend in economy also inspired the indigenous traders and merchants. Consequently, a new type of Industrial development started in this region. However, the comments and observations of the Nationalists and Marxists historians in the post 1833 period is not wholly applicable here because the industries which were developed in this region in the post 1833 period were mostly either agro-based or non-mechanical industries. These agro-based industries can not be called in true sense an industrial venture. Apart from this, the plantation industry was absolutely new, not only in this region, but also all over India. This plantation industry was the most expanding industry of this region. At the outset, the plantation industry was financed, managed and developed by the British entrepreneurs. Following the British footsteps, a good number of highly educated Bengalees engaged themselves in plantation industry. With the entry of the Bengalees in the plantation industry, a new situation emerged in the economic atlas of Bengal. Tea plantation was so rapidly extended in this region that probably in no district in India, cultivation extended faster than this region. The rapid growth of tea plantation industry changed the demography of this region. Thus the development of the tea plantation had changed the scenario of socio-economic atlas of this region. In this connection we can not overlook the development of the Colonial town Jalpaiguri. Though Jalpaiguri was the youngest town during the concerned period, it became the head quarters of the Rajshahi division. This administrative change made Jalpaiguri town as the most vibrant centre of the entire North Bengal including the North Eastern part of India. In addition to this administrative change, the new land revenue system also provided an opportunity to the Bengalee settlers of Jalpaiguri. Many of them purchased *joteland*, involved in timber business and earned enormous money. This accumulation of capital had induced them to invest in tea plantation. This resulted in the birth of a prosperous class in this region particularly in Colonial town of Jalpaiguri in the beginning of the twentieth century. This prosperity of the Bengalee settlers of Jalpaiguri saw the establishment of large number of commercial Banks at Jalpaiguri. No other

mofussil district or town of undivided Bengal had been such huge number of Banks like Jalpaiguri.

The inauguration of railways opened this region to new economic life. With the opening of a station at Haldibari (now situated in the present Cooch Behar district) in 1876, North Bengal got for the first time, a modern and swift transport system. Within the first decade of the twentieth century, most of the important areas of North Bengal came under the purview of railway facility. This railway network brought a remarkable change in the atlas of this region. This cheapest and swift system of transport greatly prompted the state of trade and commerce and changed the pattern of the economy of this region. It transmitted commercial crops like tea, jute, tobacco, foodgrains and other agricultural produces as well as natural resource timber. Thus, through railways the markets of this region widened and this region was connected with world trade cycles. Traders and merchants both regional and non-regional and even the foreigners took up courage to spread their business sphere in this region. Different trading and merchant communities established their main business centres in the district headquarters like Jalpaiguri, Malda, Raiganj, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and so on.

The construction and development of road routes further brightened the economic prospects of this region. Through road routes interiors of this region linked up with the main stream of the economy and broaden the business sphere. Further, transfrontier trade gradually increased. As the value of transfrontier trade increased the Colonial Government paid more attention to open new roads and took initiative for reconstruction and repairment of the existing roads. Though railway and road transportation got development, the importance of the riverine transportation did not loose its importance. Even after the opening of railway, maximum quantity of rice exported through river route from Malda. A considerable quantity of rice also exported from Dinajpur (undivided) through river routes. Steamer services were introduced in Malda. Timber floated down through the rivers of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. By these ways road transportation and riverine

communication brought about a change in the socio-economic structure of this region.

The gradual progress of railway in this region obviously stimulated different agricultural crops and this sign of stimulation could be seen in jute, tobacco, rice etc. However, the greatest achievement of the introduction of railway was the rapid expansion of the tea industry in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. The participation of British and indigenous investors in trade and agriculture a remarkable growth of trade and agricultural cash crops had been seen and much more private capital had been invested in this region. Jute trade became doubled in Cooch Behar and the area under jute land became doubled in Jalpaiguri. Further, jute cultivation extensively expanded in undivided Dinajpur and Malda districts. For Colonial needs i.e. demand of jute in European markets and to compete with the jute of Java, French Indo-China and West Africa, the Colonial masters were eager to extend jute land in this region. The suitable soil and climate encouraged them to take initiative for the cultivation of this cash crop. Consequently, jute became the single most agricultural non foodgrain crop of North Bengal. The jute of this region, specifically from Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur exported to foreign countries through Calcutta Port and also supplied to the jute mills of Calcutta and its surrounding areas. However, during the Great economic depression, the cultivators were severely victimized for its low prices which greatly affected jute cultivation and jute trade in this region. At this juncture the Government was indifferent on jute question or to protect the interest of the cultivators. Rather, the Colonial Government and Bengal provincial Government imposed rule for compulsory restriction of jute cultivation. In spite of major jute produced region lack of infrastructure facilities jute industry did not emerge in this region.

Like jute, as a profitable cash crop tobacco was extensively cultivated in this region in post 1833 period and became an instrument of very high importance in the economy of North Bengal. Besides the colonial encouragement, the royal families of Cooch Behar took great initiative for the production and development of this cash crop. They established tobacco

farms and tried their best for scientific method of tobacco cultivation in Cooch Behar. Besides, the scions families, the prosperous *jotedars* also took part in tobacco cultivation in Cooch Behar. Burma was the main consumer of the tobacco of this region and this produce was also exported in considerable amount to Rangpur, Dacca and other eastern markets. The abundant exportation of this crop expanded tobacco land in this region which ultimately flourished the economy of North Bengal. Though Colonial Government encouraged for its production but on the question of establishing a tobacco industry, no significant role of the Government could be seen. Thus, based upon tobacco, no industry emerged in this region. The gradual progress and influx of population, rice became a commercial produce of North Bengal. Vast lands of Malda, undivided Dinajpur as well as Cooch Behar commercially produced rice. The demand of rice in Jalpaiguri which was a rice deficient district due to the increase of jute land and influx of cooli population, Bengalee settlers was fulfilled by the surplus rice produced in the districts of Dinajpur and Malda. Malda and Dinajpur were surplus rice produced districts and considerable quantities of rice were also exported to Bihar, up country and North Western provinces. Though commercial cultivation of rice started, but due to geographical and other factors except undivided Dinajpur rice milling industry could not emerge in great number in this region. The Colonial masters also commercialized the natural resources, particularly the timber of this region. The Forest Act of 1865 provided the opportunity to make it a legal trade. Primarily the Government conducted the timber trade indirectly through both European and indigenous contractors. Later on to make the trade more profitable, it changed the method and started departmental operations. The timber of this region was mostly used for sleepers of the railroads. Besides the supply of timber for railway sleepers, timber of this region also used for making tea chests, plywood making, firewood, constructing works, charcoal etc. Utilization of timber as commercial venture and the commercial outlook of the Colonial Government opened a new field in the economy of this region. Needless to say, that all the mentioned industries were not found in other parts of India. It was concentrated in North Bengal and neighbouring

regions of Eastern Bengal and Assam. One could not find the jute industry i.e. jute production and jute trade, tobacco production and trade or tea plantation elsewhere in India in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Naturally, the condition of trade and industry of this region was different from the rest of India. What is more interesting is that such kind of industry did not exist before the advent of the Colonial rule in India or Bengal, particularly in North Bengal.

With the emergence of these new industries, there emerged different classes and groups of traders and merchants in the trading atlas of this region. Besides the European and non-regional traders and merchants, a new group of traders emerged in this region. Before the advent of the Muslims and the Europeans Indian trade was normally conducted by the Vaisya (Bania) community. Specially the social system of Bengal did not permit the other caste to enter the trading profession. This trend and custom changed during the Colonial rule. Thus the trading groups were not necessarily coming from the traditional Vaisya community. The traditional traders like Baisbania, Vaisya, Gandha Banik, Subarna Banik, Saha, Kundu, Tili etc. occupied a significant position in Colonial economy as dealers, stockists and whole sellers. On the other hand, industries and big trade wrested in the hands of Europeans and non Bengalee traders and merchants. The local people of this region were in no way involved in trade and commerce particularly in the northern parts of North Bengal. Though the predominant vaisyas were there but non vaisyas also showed their presence. So, a kind of social mobility started in this region. Naturally the non Vaisyas on many occasions could not follow the traditional rules or system of caste rituals. This was found specially in the colonial town of Jalpaiguri. Here many upper caste Hindus entered into the trade of timber, jute etc. What is noticeable is that a lion's share of the new tea entrepreneurs of Duars and Terai belonged to the Hindu Society. The Colonial town of Darjeeling showed the same picture. Here one does not find any traditional trading communities except in Kalimpong. In the early phase one does not find any Nepali traders or planters. But in the beginning of the twentieth century, one finds the presence of Nepalis in the field of timber,

Cardamom and Chinchona trade. In Kalimpong one finds a traditional Tibeto-Bhutia trader. They controlled the trade of the entire Eastern Himalayas including the foothills. In fact, Kalimpong was regarded as the most important trading centre till the invasion of India by China in 1962. But the situation of Darjeeling and Kurseong was totally different from that of Kalimpong. The trade and grocery of the areas was controlled by the non-Bengalees, chiefly the Marwaris. The Marwaris also controlled the trade of wool in Kalimpong. Dr. Narayan Chandra Saha had given a vivid description of this trading community in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar upto twentieth century. In addition to Dr. Saha's observation one finds that in the economy of Malda and Dinajpur (undivided) the Marwaris also played a vital role and grew to be the prime indigenous traders and merchants in this region. The Colonial Government provided material support to the Marwari migrations and allowed them to establish their business even at different remote centres of this region. In spite of the European dominance, the Marwaris had an important role in controlling the jute trade of this region. What is noticeable is that though the Marwaris controlled most of the trade of this region, they had no participation in timber trade. This trade was the monopoly of the Bengalees and even now the Bengalees monopolise timber trade in this region. The Maharajas of Cooch Behar also had allowed the Marwaris in their kingdom to take part in trade and commerce. Besides Marwaris, many scions of Royal family were indirectly engaged with trade, commerce and industry. The case of Malda and Dinajpur (undivided) was totally different from Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. Besides the European and Marwaris, one finds here a traditional trading community like Kangsha Banik, Tili, Teli and Saha of the Bengalee Community. Here the presence of the migrant or settler traders were very few. However, it is to be mentioned that since the time of the Sultanate period, a good number of Jain Marwaris and Kangsha Banik had settled in Gour, the Capital of medieval Bengal. Due to the development of silk industries and Silk trade, the Marwaris and traditional trading communities got connected with it. The Giris also played an important role in the trade of Malda and Dinajpur (undivided). Here one thing is noticeable that although the traditional

tradesmen of this region had built considerable capital from trade but they had lack of interest to invest in bigger ventures. But following the nationalistic swadeshi inspiration, industrial and trading activities of the Bengalees could be seen in this region also. Besides weaving mills, a good number of cottage industries emerged in this region. However, they did not last long.

The only industry of North Bengal i.e. the tea plantation industry became an established enterprise in the northern parts of North Bengal. During the world wide economic depression this industry faced a severe crisis. There came an economic blow upon the Indian planters (Bengalees). During this period price of tea rapidly declined. Lack of capital, reserve fund, distribution of high dividend to the shareholders and above all discriminating policy of the Colonial Government with regards to financial assistance, the Bengalee planters were unable to protect their gardens for a long time period. From this time, the beginning phases of the transfer or slip out of the tea garden from the hands of the Bengalees started. Despite this single trading and industrial declination, though not in a large scale, as a whole one finds a hundred years of economic development in this region.

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