

## **Chapter-IV**

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### **Status of the Industry in Birbhum, Burdwan, and Hooghly during 1757-1857**

The three districts, viz, Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly are the districts under the jurisdiction of Burdwan Division. In the period under review the three districts were primarily agricultural districts with a large percentage of the population being dependent on agriculture. But rural manufacture and industry grew as an adjunct to agriculture.

In Birbhum district, cotton cloth, silk cloth, sugar, lac bracelet, stick-lac, brass-ware and iron-ware were produced. Silk was woven at Baswa, Bishnupur, Karidha and Tantipara and at Gunutia there existed a silk factory of the East India Company. Brass-ware was manufactured at Dubrajpur, Tikarbetha, Ilam Bazar, Hazratpur and Nalhati. Iron-ware was manufactured at Dubrajpur, Kharun, Lokpur, Rajnagar and Rampur Hat. Lac bracelets and stick-lac were manufactured at Ilam Bazar and Surul. Besides, the East India Company had a sugar factory at Surual. Beside these, Birbhum was well known for its lac-rearing industry, manufacture of indigo, iron and shellac.

Silk and cotton weaving were the important industries of the Burdwan district. Beside these, brass utensils, cutlery, indigo, shellac and lac dye were manufactured in the district. Radhakantpur and Memari were the important centres for silk weaving. Brass-ware was manufactured at Dainhat, Begunkhola and Banpas. Cutlery was made in Burdwan town and Shellac and lac dye were manufactured at Dignagar.

In Hooghly district, the main manufactures were cotton and silk clothes. The other manufactures were brass and bell-metal utensils, jute and hemp rope and gunny clothes. At Serampore silks were dyed and color-printed. Gunny cloth was manufactured at Balughat. Jute and hemp ropes were produced at Chatra, Sankarpur, Nabagram and Khalsini. Brass and bell-metal utensils were manufactured at Bansbaria and Kamarpara.

Among the above products of the three districts, cotton piece-goods formed by far the most widely manufactured article. When the European traders had come to the districts new markets and trade circuits opened up. The entry of the European merchant capital into the districts enhanced to a great extent the productive potentialities of the rural cotton industry. A growing market in abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom and Europe led to a large increase in the production of cotton piece-goods of the districts. The cotton industry of the districts grew rapidly due to extensive export trade by the British East India Company in the period under review.

With this background, this chapter will seek to review the status of the cotton industry in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly during 1757-1857. There will be six sections in this chapter. Section one discusses the different places of the districts where the cotton industry was concentrated. Section two describes the organization of the factories and the procurement process of the East India Company. Section three describes the income of the persons associated with the production, the production cost, and the price of the products. Section four concentrates on raw cotton production in the districts. The number of people employed in the districts' industry has been discussed in section five. The Section six is a concluding part.

## I

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the European traders carried on extensive business in Bengal. The Portuguese were the first settlers in Bengal. They settled at Chittagong, Satgaon and Hooghly. Around 1530, they established Porto Granda (big Port) at Chittagong and established Porto Piqueno (small port) at Satgaon. They founded the town of Hooghly-Chuchura in 1579. They dominated Bengal trade till the end of the seventeenth century. Beside the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English, the French and the Danes were the other European traders in Bengal in seventeenth century. To procure cotton goods from Bengal, the European traders established factories in all the important cotton manufacturing centres. The Dutch had factories at Chinsura and Cassimbazar. They founded the Chuchura factory in 1656. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, more than half of the total value of textiles the Dutch exported from Asia was in the form of Bengal textile.<sup>137</sup> The French began their trade in Bengal as early as in 1674. They came to Chandernagore, as also to Bengal, for the first time in 1673. They established factories in some commercial centres, like Chandernagore, Cassimbazar, Saydabad (near Cassimbazar), Jugdea, Dhaka, Supur, Khirpai, Mohanpur, Chittagong and Maldah. Like other Europeans, the Danes built a factory in Hooghli in 1676, and their business was confined there. But their relation with the then Government of Bengal was very bitter, and they were virtually forced to shut down their business in Hooghli in 1714. Around 1755, the Danes re-established themselves at Serampore and their business was not significant. The English trade in Bengal started since 1633. They founded the Hooghly factory in 1651. Their Dacca factory was founded in 1660.

In the first four decades of the eighteenth century, the British East India Company gradually reinforced their strong hold on Bengal trade. They achieved an imperial *farman* from the Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1717 for duty-free trade on payment of Rs 3,000 per annum. Since then a significant development of the

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<sup>137</sup> Chaudhury, S., *From Prosperity to Decline*, p.29.

Company's trade in Bengal took place. They took the administrative and economic power of Bengal after the Battle of Plassey, and after that they started to successfully outclass the other Europeans, as well as the indigenous traders from Bengal.

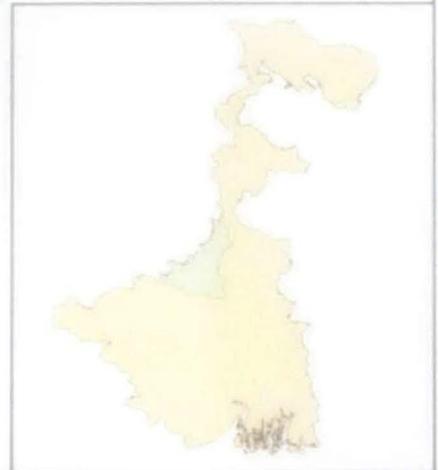
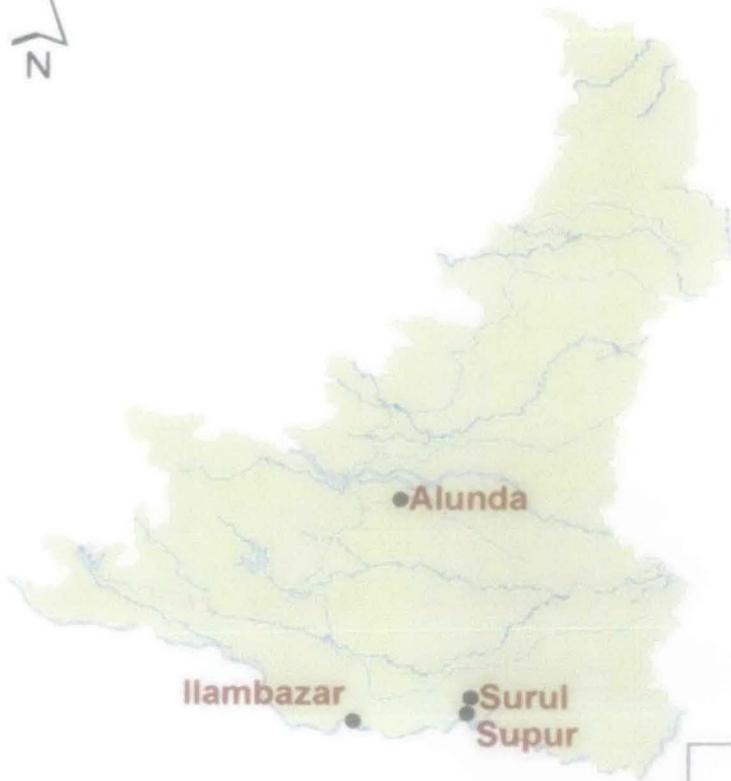
The British Supremacy in trade in Bengal enabled the English East India Company to establish many factories in different manufacturing centres of cotton piece-goods in Bengal. Since then, the cotton piece-goods of the districts formed the principal stuff of export by the British East India Company, and the Company built up different factories or *aurungs* to procure piece goods in different production centres of the three districts. The important *aurungs* of the districts were Haripal (in the Hooghly district), Gollogore (in the Hooghly district), Katwa (in the Burdwan district), Soonamooky (in the Bankura district). The Company also had subordinate factories under an *aurung*. Since the foundation of Sonamukhi Factory in 1783, it had been the head factory of Somanukhi Commercial Residency with many subordinate *aurungs* spread over the districts of Birbhum and Burdwan.<sup>138</sup>

The following maps show the location of the British factories in the three districts for the procurement of cotton piece goods in the period under review.

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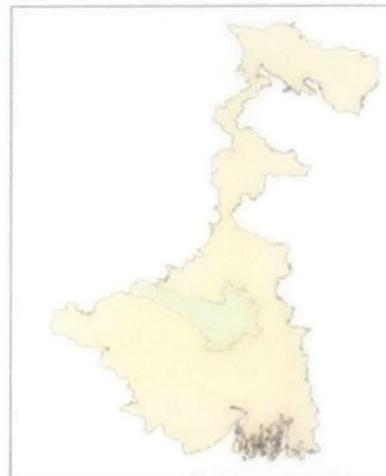
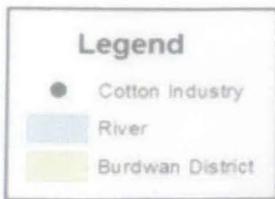
<sup>138</sup> O'Malley, L.S.S., *Bengal District Gazetteers Birbhum*, P. 23.

## Cotton Manufacturing Centres, 1757 - 1857 (Birbhum District)



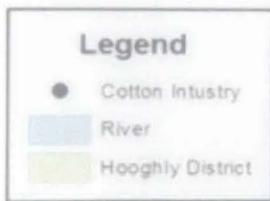
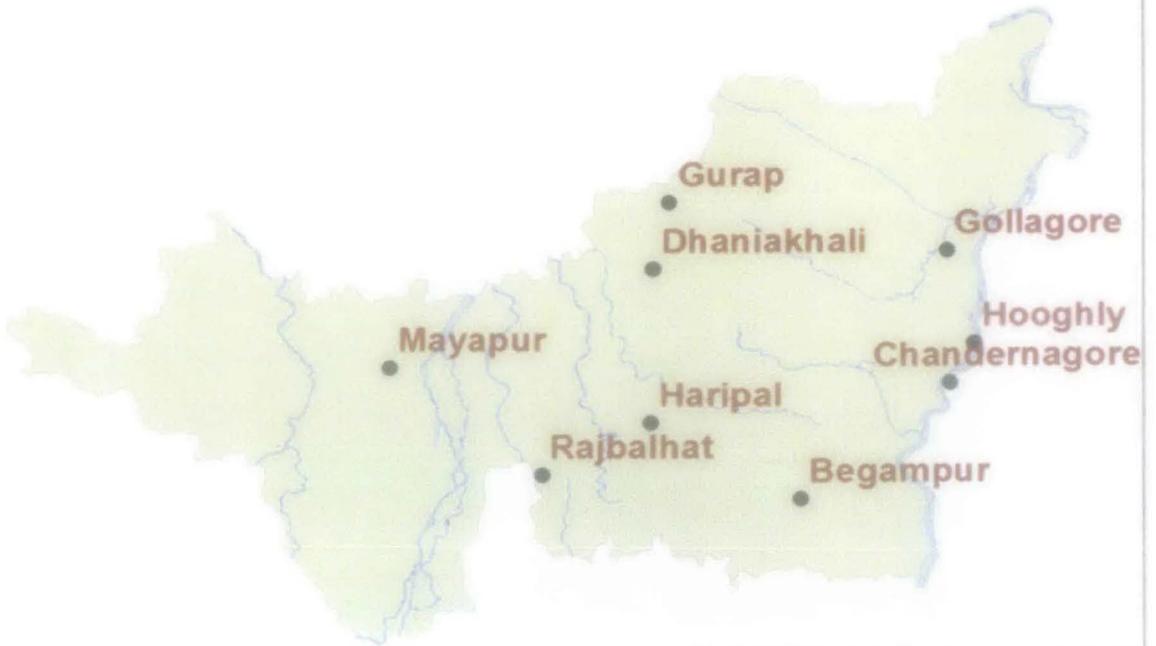
**STATUS OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN BIRBHUM,  
BURDWAN AND HOOGHLY DISTRICTS OF BURDWAN  
DIVISION DURING 1757 -1857: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW**

# Cotton Manufacturing Centres, 1757 - 1857 (Burdwan District)



**STATUS OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN BIRBHUM,  
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# Cotton Manufacturing Centres, 1757 - 1857 (Hooghly District)



**STATUS OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN BIRBHUM,  
BURDWAN AND HOOGHLY DISTRICTS OF BURDWAN  
DIVISION DURING 1757 -1857: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW**

In the district of Birbhum the production of cotton cloth was concentrated in Supur, Alunda, Ilambazar and Surul. However, a report from the Danish factory in Serampore shows that the district was almost solely inhabited by the weavers.<sup>139</sup> Supur was a small village which was located at a distance of 14 km from Bolpur on the bank of river Ajoy. In eighteenth century, beside the English, the French traders also established their base at the site. In the year 1768, the French gentleman Mon. Le Seigneur came into Birbhum and built a factory at Supur where he hoisted the French colours, appointed guards and made advances for *garhas* (cotton cloth) through *dalals* to the amount of Rs. 1,25,000 annually.<sup>140</sup> Some time about the year 1774 he left the factory and from the period of his departure no advances were made under the sanction of the French name.<sup>141</sup> Alunda was a village under Suri sub-division which was located at the south-eastern part of the district on the bank of the Ajoy River. The principal industries of the village were cotton and silk weaving. Another important village under the Suri sub-division was Ilam Bazar which was also located on the bank of the Ajoy River. It was a considerable trade centre and was celebrated for its manufacture of cotton piece-goods. Surul was a village in the neighbourhood of Santiniketan under the Suri sub-division which was located about five miles north of the Ajoy River. The cloth factory of the English Company here was known as *Bara Kothi* (bigger factory) within the commercial residency of Sonamukhi.<sup>142</sup>

In Burdwan district, the cotton manufactures were concentrated in Burdwan town and villages within the radius of twenty mile with Katwa as centre.<sup>143</sup> Katwa and its surrounding villages were situated between the Ajoy River and the Hooghly River in the North-eastern part of the district, and were famous for cotton textile production.

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<sup>139</sup> Feldback, Ole, 'Cloth Production and Trade in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal' *Bengal Past and Present*, , vol. 86, 1967, p. 130.

<sup>140</sup> O'Malley, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Mitra, G., *Birbhum Itihas*, vol.II, p. 128.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in Chaudhury, S. op. cit., p.136.

In 1810, as the return of investment of English East India Company 8,160 pieces of cotton piece-goods were sent to the Export Ware House of the Company from this *aurung*.<sup>144</sup> Cotton carpets were manufactured in Burdwan Town.<sup>145</sup> The centres of the cotton industry in the district were Purbasthali, Kalna, Manteswar, Memari, Jamalpur, Mundalghat. Purbasthali was a village and a cotton manufacturing centre under the Katwa *aurung*. It was located at the south-eastern part of the Katwa *aurung* and at a distance of 32 km or 20 mile from Katwa town. Manteswar was a village and also a cotton manufacturing centre under the Katwa *aurung*. It was located at the south-western part of the Katwa *aurung*, and at a distance of 32 km or 20 mile from Katwa town. Kalna was located at a distance of 60 km from Katwa, and was famous for cotton manufactures. Memari was located at a distance of 28 km from Burdwan town. It was famous for the manufacture of silk and cotton *sarees* and *dhoties*.<sup>146</sup> Jamalpur was a village near Memari and was an important cotton manufacturing centre. Mundalghat was a famous cotton manufacturing *aurung* of the English Company. Here, in 1793 the investment for cotton piece-goods of the Company was C. Rs 2,02,407.<sup>147</sup>

In the district of Hooghly, the cotton industry veered around Haripal, Durhatta, Dhaniakhaliu, Mayapore, Chandoolea, Khursurroy.<sup>148</sup> Beside these places, Gollagore, Gaulpore, Khawnpore, Gurup, Mazenan, Hooghly, Barnagore, Farashdanga (Chandernagore) were also famous for cotton manufactures.<sup>149</sup> Haripal was located at a distance of 34 km towards west from Hooghly-Chuchura and close to the Hindu shrine of Tarakeshwar. In 1810, as the return of investment of English East India

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<sup>144</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 18 May 1810.

<sup>145</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. I, p. 272.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 Nov. 1792.

<sup>148</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 8 March 1808.

<sup>149</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 May 1808.

Company 3900 pieces of cotton piece-goods were sent to the Export Ware House of the Company from this *aurung*.<sup>150</sup> Gollagore was an important *aurung* of the district. In 1810, as the return of investment of English East India Company 26,290 pieces of cotton piece-goods were sent to the Export Ware House of the Company from this *aurung*.<sup>151</sup>

In Burdwan district, different types of clothes were produced: *nyansooks*(soothing to the eyes), *mulmuls*(fine soft cotton muslin), *seerbati*(semitransparent like sherbet), *dooreans*(striped cloth), *terrاندams*(clinging to the body), *cutanies*, *soosies*(a kind of fine coloured cotton cloth), *garah*, *guzzy* and *doosootas*. While the *garah*, *guzzy* and *doosootas* were coarse varieties, the remaining were fine varieties of cloth. *Nyansook* was thick muslin, apparently identical with the fabric called *tunsook* in the Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl and the price of which was Rs. 80 per piece. The dimension of *nyansook* cloth was 10 to 24 yards by 1 yard. *mulmul* was the best quality muslin. The number of threads in the warp in *mulmul* was 1800 to 2000. *Terrاندam* was used for the making of shirts. The dimension of *terrاندam* cloth was 20 yards by 1 yard. *Seerbati* was worn as a turban. The dimension of *seerbati* cloth was 20 to 25 yards by ½ yards.

The district of Birbhum was popular for its *garha* production. Three sorts of *garha*, namely, fine, middling and coarse were produced in the district. According to the Danish report, in the late eighteenth century the average annual production of Birbhum *garhas* was estimated at 400,000 pieces of which 160,000 pieces were annually exported on average to Europe.<sup>152</sup> Beside *garah*, *dhoti* (men's cloth), *chadar* (wrapper), *ganji* (vest) were also produced in the district which were used by the indigenous people.

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<sup>150</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 18 May 1810.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Feldback, Ole, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

The district of Hooghly had long been noted for the production of plain white muslins and different types of calicoes. The muslin of this district was *khasa* ordinary, *mulmul* ordinary and *duriyas* where as the calicoes were *bethilas* (fine calico) and *chowtars* (fine calico). A large volume of cotton piece-goods of Hooghly district was exported by the European traders since the middle of the eighteenth century. In the mid-eighteenth century the Dutch and the English companies exported more than fifty per cent of the total value of their textiles from the Hooghly area.<sup>153</sup>

## II

From above, we see that the British East India Company built up different factories or *aurungs* to procure piece goods in different production centres of the three districts. The chiefs and the subordinate officers of the factories used to work under the full control of the Council in Calcutta. According to the order of the Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1745, no factory could employ any Indian as a servant of the factory, although they could do any private work of the factory.<sup>154</sup> The Chiefs of the factories and their assistants used to draw small salaries and they were allowed to carry on private trade which used to give them handsome profits.<sup>155</sup> Some soldiers and *sepoys* were appointed in each factory to guard the factory and escort the products from the production centres to the factory and thence to Calcutta.<sup>156</sup> The list of merchants, *gomastas* and all others who were engaged by the factories should be duly forwarded to the Council.<sup>157</sup> The Council used to inspect the products which were supplied by the factories. The council also demanded explanations about the products from the chiefs of the factories if they supplied products of inferior quality, and even these inferior products were sometimes returned back to the Factories with strong orders

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<sup>153</sup> Chaudhury, s., op.cit., p.208.

<sup>154</sup> Quoted in Datta, K.K., *Alivardi and his times*, Letter to Court, 4<sup>th</sup> Feb., 1746, para. 18, p.190.

<sup>155</sup> Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, p.87.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Quoted in Datta, op. cit., Letter to Court, 4<sup>th</sup> Feb., 1746.

and instructions to improve the quality of products in the future. On the 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1753, the Council returned a parcel of clothes which was sent by the Dacca factory because the clothes in the parcel had not been properly dressed.<sup>158</sup>

The advances made by the company's factories to procure goods were called by the company's investment. The Council in Calcutta used to prepare a list of investment in each year for the factories and the listed investment or money was sent to each factory usually in the beginning of each year.<sup>159</sup> The Council also used to send the Masters (samples) of cotton piece- goods to the factories according to which piece-goods were purchased by the factories. The factories of the English Company procured goods through merchants who used to receive *dadni* or advance money. The weavers were directly paid advances later on. The advances of the Company were made on the basis of prior right of the goods for which they contracted the weavers.

The piece goods of the districts' factories were sent to the export ware house first and then were exported to the European market. The investment in different *aurungs* and their sub-ordinate factories of the districts gives us an idea of the quantity of cotton goods production in those districts. The following table shows the investment list of 1793 where the price shows the quality.

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter to Court, 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1754, para. 77.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter to Court, 19<sup>th</sup> Feb, 1741, para.17 and 18, p.189.

Table – 4.1: Investment list of 1793 of the English East India Company in different *aurungs* of the districts

	Quantity Pieces	Price C.Rs.
Haripal and Katwa	52,950	4,70,631
Soonamooky	59,800	3,23,454
Mundalghat	31,800	2,02,407
Gollagore and Barnagore	71,700	5,29,601

Source: Quoted in Sinha, N.K., *Economic History of Bengal*, Proc. B.O.T Comm.  
29 Nov., 1792, p. 178.

The production of cotton piece goods in different *aurungs* of the districts can be shown by the following tables which show the investment of English East India Company in different years.

Table 4.2: Investment of English East India Company in different years in Gollagore and Haripal *aurung*

Year	Gollagore Investment Sicca Rupees	Haripal Investment Sicca Rupees
1776-77	53,879.31	N A
1780-81	1,46,870.69	4,52,394.83
1787-88	2,04,556.036	2,56,250.001
1793	5,29,601	4,70,631(Katwa included)
1798	4,88,953.2	2,52,419.2
1810	28,730.23	17,135.25
1816	2,452.44	1,324.13
1817	3,04,407	1,19,562
1821	35,268.27	35,145.416
1824	53,400 (Santipur included)	1,276.10
1828	27,000 (Santipur & Barnagore included)	695.8

N A: not available

**Source:** Proc. B.O.T. Comm. 18 Jan. 1776. Proc. B.O.T. Comm.20 Feb. 1782 Proc. B.O.T. Comm.26 Feb. 1790. 1793, from N. K. Sinha, *Economic History of Bengal*, p. 178. 1798, Proc. B.O.T. Comm.13 Mar. 1798. 1810, Proc. B.O.T. Comm.11 May 1810. 1816, Proc. B.O.T. Comm.5 Sept. 1817. 1817, Proc. B.O.T. Comm.10 May 1817. 1821, Proc. B.O.T. Comm. 19 Feb. 1822 & 22 Feb. 1822. 1824, Proc. B.O.T. Comm.26 Feb. 1790. Proc. B.O.T. Comm. 4Jan. 1825. 1828, Proc. B.O.T. Comm.22 Feb. 1828 & 22 Jan. 1828.

Table 4.3: Investment of English East India Company in different years in Sonamooky *aurung*

Year	Sonamooky Investment Sicca Rupees
1793	3,23,454
1798	2,94,244.16
1810	15,443.56
1815	97,150
1819	11,070
1821	7,340.10
1824	185.62
1827	2.72

Source: 1793: Proc. B.O.T Comm., Nov. 29, 1792. 1798: Proc. B.O.T Comm., Mar. 13, 1798, 1810: Proc. B.O.T Comm., May 11, 1810, 1815: Feb. 16, 1815 1819: Proc. B.O.T Comm., Feb 12, 1819. 1821: Proc. B.O.T Comm., 19 Feb., 1822. 1824: Proc. B.O.T Comm., 10 Feb., 1824. 1827: Proc. B.O.T Comm., 12 Jan, 1827

Table 4.4: Investment of English East India Company in different years in Katwa  
*aurung*

Year	Katwa Sicca Rupees
1776-77	21,551.72
1793	4,70,631(Haripal included)
1798	2,20,422.4
1810	17,958.27
1819	6523.2

Source: 1776-77: Proc. B.O.T. Comm. 18 Jan, 1776, 1793: Proc. B.O.T Comm., Nov. 29, 1792. 1798: Proc. B.O.T Comm., Mar. 13, 1798, 1810: Proc. B.O.T Comm., May 11, 1810, 1819: Proc. B.O.T Comm., Sept.5, 1819.

The table 2, table 3, and table 4 exhibit the prosperity of the cotton industry of the districts in the second half of the eighteenth century as well as its decline in the first quarter of nineteenth century.

The English Company in case of '*dadni* merchants' always tried to maintain a strict control over the merchants. The merchants had to give securities to get '*dadni*'. They were warned against supplying clothes of inferior quality and sometimes even exacted penalties from them if they failed to supply goods in time and in appropriate quality according to their contract.<sup>160</sup> At that time, the other European traders also procured the cotton piece goods by the same *dadni* merchants.

<sup>160</sup> Quoted in Datta, K.K., *Studies in the history of the Bengal Subah*, p. 116, Letter to Court, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov., 1746, para. 9.

The English East India Company used to procure cotton goods by means of contract with the native *dadni* merchants. A Danish Report shows that the Birbhum *garhas* were procured in this way.<sup>161</sup> The merchants made advances to the weavers. The weavers were registered to work for the Company and committed to supply goods at a price which was lower than the market price. The registered Company weavers were not allowed to work for others as long as their contract period was not over. The native merchants used to exact 2 to 3 rupees and more from each weaver as *selami* or 'respect money'. In Birbhum district a native merchant who had contract with the English Company for the supply of the *garhas* earned Rs 16,000 to Rs 20,000 as '*salami*' (respect money).<sup>162</sup> The Company's support and protection to the merchants helped them to practise such illegalities.

The *dadni* merchants very often could not maintain their contracts, and since 1746, the English Company tried to procure goods by ready money. But the merchants were not interested in this system. Because most merchants used to operate on a large scale and used to place orders and lay out part of the purchase price before the beginning of production where further payments used to be offered just before the end of the production. So, in the system of advance payment to the weavers, the merchants used to have full control over the quantity, quality, and price of products. In this new system the merchants had low control over prices and quality of product. So, the merchants did not fulfill their commitment to the English Company. The Company suffered from the uncertainty to procure goods in expected quantity, quality and in expected time. So, this system did not last for long.

Since 1753 the method of 'investment' through *dadni* merchants was completely abolished. Because, despite all help from the Company the *dadni* merchants often failed to fulfill their commitments. At this time the English Company had switched over to the system of purchase through the Commercial Resident instead of native

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<sup>161</sup> Feldback, Ole, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid*, p.131.

*dadni* merchants.<sup>163</sup> Since then, the East India Company introduced the practice of getting the goods directly from the *aurungs* through '*gomastas*' or native agents.<sup>164</sup>

So, during the period under review, the *dadni* merchants disappeared from 'investment' business of Bengal and the English East India Company introduced the new method of engaging the weavers to work on a system of advances where the weavers were bound to give their total produce to the Company. At this time a large number of *gomastas* were employed at every *aurang* or factory. One head *gomasta*, one *mohuree* or clerk, one cash keeper and some *tagaders* (peons) were posted for an *aurung*. The *gomasta* gave direction to the weavers. They used to control the weavers and compel them to follow the contracts strictly. Here, the English East India Company's investment in different cotton manufacturing centres was carried on through the Export Warehouse Keeper. A Commercial Resident was appointed for one or more *aurungs* as the chief executive of the investment business of the company. For example, R. W. Cox, John Cheap and Thomas Philpot were the Commercial Residents of the Gollagore, Sonamookhy and Haripal factory respectively. The Commercial Residents were directly subordinate to the board of trade at the headquarters. A Commercial Resident was in charge for the management of a commercial residency which contained a head factory with a number of subordinate *aurungs*.

In this new system the *gomastas* used to play vital role in procurement. They had good knowledge about the weavers' capacity and specialty of their production. In some particular months they used to appear in the weavers' hamlets to distribute advances. He would be accompanied by a *mohure*, a cashier, three or four *tagadeers* and some *paiks* (armed guards) to enforce his order. The *gomasta* used to appoint some *dalal* (sub-agents) for the successful operation of the procurement. These *dalals* used to watch on the weavers so that they could not misuse the advanced money or

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<sup>163</sup> *ibid*, p. 131.

<sup>164</sup> Quoted in Datta, K.K., *Studies in the history of the Bengal Subah*, p. 124, Letter to Court, 18 Jan, 1754.

became a defaulter. Again in scheduled months, the *gomasta* used to reappear to the weavers' villages to collect the cotton piece-goods for which he made advance.

In the new system, the advances were supplied by the Commercial Resident directly to the weavers. The Commercial Resident made the weavers registered. The weavers had to attend the *aurung* once a year to settle their accounts, and make new engagements with specifications as to rate, weight, size and quality of the cotton clothes. The acceptance of orders was formalized by the weavers signing *kistbundi* papers. Like the former system, a company weaver was strictly forbidden to undertake engagement with any other person or concern offering even a higher rate or better terms.<sup>165</sup> The clothes brought to the *aurungs* used to check carefully by the servants of the Company, and if they detected any cloth as below the mark, they would reject it. The damaged clothes were returned to the weavers who were bound by their engagements to provide substitutes.<sup>166</sup> The weavers appealed to the factory to price their damaged clothes at a lower rate. These kinds of requests were not always entertained. So, very often at the end of the year, after having worked on the loom many weavers fell into the debt burden to the Company.<sup>167</sup> Further, continuation of work of these weavers with the Company used to enhance their indebtedness. Those weavers who could not meet their debts to the Company used to abscond from their place of work, either to another *aurung* or into less dependent occupations. Some of them left their traditional occupation and engaged themselves as cultivators or fishermen. Due to this event, an overall decrease in the number of looms and weavers occurred in Dhaka factory in 1786-87.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ghosal, H.R., *Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency*, p. 8.

<sup>166</sup> Hossain, H., 'The Alienation of Weavers: Impact of the Conflict between the Revenue and Commercial Interests of the East India Company, 1750-1800', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1979, vol. 16, no. 3, p. 333.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Quoted in Hossain, H., *op. cit.*, I.O.R., Home Miscellaneous, 795, p. 20.

The weavers were paid advances for two to four pieces at a time and not exceeding forty in a year.<sup>169</sup> The advances were paid in small installments because of the fear that the weavers sometimes spent the money on food and delivered no clothes or ran away to other place.<sup>170</sup> The total advances were divided in four installments, such as, one-fourth in February, one-fourth in April or May, one-fourth in July, and the remainder after the arrival of the first consignment, which corresponded to half the expected goods.<sup>171</sup>

The *tagaders* (peon) used to keep watch on the movement and work of the weavers. The *tagaders* used to accompany the weavers to the market to observe that the Company's advances were properly disposed of in a due proportion being appropriated to the purchase of thread.<sup>172</sup>

Now, let us consider the income of the *gomasta*, *dalal* and others who were associated in cotton trade. A *gomasta* usually used to earn a monthly salary which varied from Rs 15 to Rs 20. In addition to his salary, he appropriated certain amount of commission on the total investment. An efficient *gomasta* could make a business of, say, Rs. 12,000 to Rs.16,000 in ten months and procure 3,000 to 4,000 pieces of clothes.<sup>173</sup> Here, one *muharer*, one cashier and 3 to 4 *tagaders* or *paiks* were associated in the business. The *gomastas* used to earn a lot of money from illegal and clandestine business, as also from the exaction from the weavers. The salaries of a *muharer*, a cashier and a peon were Rs 12, Sa Rs 10 and Sa Rs 3, respectively. A

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<sup>169</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 3 Feb 1792 and 12 May 1795..

<sup>170</sup> Feldback, Ole, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid*

<sup>172</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 12 May 1795.

<sup>173</sup> Feldback, Ole, op. cit., p. 130-33.

*dalal* worked on commission, the rate being  $\frac{1}{2}$  *anna* on a rupee or 3.13% on purchase.<sup>174</sup> He also had some underhand income.

The system of investment through the Commercial Resident in the period under review was a very convenient mode of procurement of goods by the English Company where the weavers were bound to supply a stipulated quantity of goods of standard quality and within a given time. By this system, the Company overcomes the uncertainty of ready money purchase and the fluctuation of prices as the rates were fixed long before the actual procurements.

Now, we let us consider the transport facilities of the three districts. The transport was not favorable for the all parts of cotton manufacturing centres of the three districts which created great difficulties in procurement. The district of Hooghly was well connected with Calcutta port by the river Bhagirathi. Hooghly was a great port since seventeenth century. Some other small rivers like Swaraswati, Damodar, etc. were used for transports which were only navigable for a few months in the year. In Burdwan district the two small rivers, the Ajoy and the Damodar were the two river routes of transport which were only navigable for a few months in the year. Katwa and Kalna were well connected with Calcutta port by the river Bhagirathi. In Birbhum district, the Ajoy and the Mor were two rivers which were navigable only for a few months (namely, July to September) in a year. As many weavers' hamlets were situated in the interior of the districts and far away from water courses, the principal means of transport of cotton piece-goods was pack bullocks where *coolie* (porters) and bullock-carts were the subsidiary ones. The caravan passed throughout the year, although it increased in number between October and February. Since the foreign-bond vessels left the Presidency ports mostly between November 10 to March 10,<sup>175</sup> the merchandise had to be dispatched so as to reach the port well ahead of the time of their departures.

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<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, p. 134.

### III

Like the other places of Bengal, the cotton industry in those districts was a domestic rural handicraft industry and carried on with the rudest and cheapest apparatus where neither any huge capital nor any large factory was required.

There were many stages of production. The first stage was freeing the raw cotton from the seeds. The second stage was the bowing the cotton to clear it from dirt and knots. The spinning was the third stage. After spinning, the next stage was weaving, other two stages being washing and dyeing of clothes.

In the stage of spinning, it was spun without any carding by the women. The cotton yarn was spun by thread wheel or by metallic spindle. In a letter to the Board of Revenue, the Collector of Burdwan in 1789 stated that threads were produced both from the spindle and the wheel, the finest kinds being made by the spindle and worse by the wheel in the district of Burdwan.<sup>176</sup>

Many households in the village had a spinning wheel. The women of the household used to spin at their leisure hours. These women spinners belonged to all castes, the highest as well as the lowest.<sup>177</sup>

In the district of Burdwan, the female members of the families, by whom the cotton plant was cultivated, as well as those who employed labours in the cultivation and spin, used to produce thread what was sufficient for the production of clothes for their own families. There exist scarce instances where they made thread for sale. The residual of the produced cotton by the families, which was not used in the production of thread, was usually sent to market in the form in which it was collected. The whole cotton whether produced in the district or imported, used to be purchased by all

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<sup>176</sup> Guha, R and Mitra, A.(Ed.), *West Bengal District Records New Series Burdwan Letters Issued, 1788-1800*, p.20.

<sup>177</sup> Ward, W., *A View of the History, Literature & Mythology of the Hindoos*, vol.I, p.93.

the poorer class, or indent natives of all ranks and descriptions. The women of those families who from their infancy were brought up in an exposure to spinning employed their leisure for sustenance. The women of numerous poor Brahmin families used to begin spinning from their infancy, and their expertise made it possible to earn proportionate profits for their good quality of threads.<sup>178</sup>

The thread thus prepared was sold by the spinners in the *Haut* or market and had to pay a *Haut* duty of 2 *couries* on every *tolah* weight of thread for both fine and coarse quality. That was purchased by the weavers. The women of a weaver family seldom spun, as their leisure hours were fully engaged in various assistances which they were able to render to the weaver in the manufactory of his clothes.<sup>179</sup>

In Burdwan district, the average earning of a spinner varied from 1 Rupee 6 anna to 1 Rupee 4 anna in a month around. A seer of *kapas* equal in weight to 60 Sa Rs yielded cotton of the weight of 11 Sa Rs 4 annas. In the general manufacture of thread a loss of 2 Sa Rs weight arose in the cleaning. So, the net quantity of cotton fit for thread remained 9 Sa Rs 4 annas weight. Of this quantity, 3 Sa Rs 12 annas was used for the production of finest thread which was produced by the spindle. The residue of the cotton weighing 5 Sa Rs 8 annas was used for the production of coarse thread. The coarse thread was produced by the wheel and was used for the manufacture of clothes which were usually worn by the natives.<sup>180</sup>

In the District of Birbhum, a spinner used to spin 7 seers of yarn a month.<sup>181</sup> Generally one rupee procured 2 ½ seers of cotton, one could earn 1 rupee 10 annas and 1 rupee 9 annas and 9 gandas per month by spinning the middling and ordinary sorts of

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<sup>178</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 10 Jan. 1818 and Guha, R and Mitra, A. (Ed.), *W B. District Record, Burdwan, Letter Issued*, P. 20.

<sup>179</sup> *ibid*

<sup>180</sup> *ibid*

<sup>181</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Revenue*, 15 June 1789.

thread, respectively.<sup>182</sup> For the spinning of fine thread, greater skill and time were required. In this case, a spinner used to prepare 4 ½ seers of the first class yarn which yielded her 1 rupee 11 annas a month.<sup>183</sup>

The weaving was done in the weavers' loom where very rude and simple apparatus were used. Weavers used to weave under the shade of a tree. Martin describes that the practice of weaving under the shade of a tree was common in Burdwan, like many other places of Bengal.<sup>184</sup> The requirement of capital by a weaver was very small. The cost of making a loom was about two rupees and a half, sticks for warping and wheel for winding worth two annas, a shop costing four rupees and yarn for two ready money pieces about five rupees in value, constituted all the capital.<sup>185</sup>

Unlike spinning, weaving was confined to a particular caste of Hindus (*Tanti*) and a particular section of the Muhammadans (*Jola* and *Momin*). But when the demand for clothes expanded, the caste barrier had broken down and many people of higher or lower castes joined in the weaving industry.<sup>186</sup> But, if we consider the Danish Report of Serampore, we see that weaving was confined to the weaver's caste only. The Report described that a weaver could not be a member of other caste or tribe if his father was not a weaver. Thus a son of a weaver was bound to follow his father's trade and would never become anything else than a weaver.<sup>187</sup>

The weaving was carried on along with agriculture, and the capital requirement was small. So, it is not impossible that weaving was also spread among the castes other

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<sup>182</sup> *ibid*

<sup>183</sup> *ibid*

<sup>184</sup> *House of Commons* (P.P. 1840, vol. 8), p. 278.

<sup>185</sup> Martin, M., *History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, vol. 3, pp. 974-75.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas, P.J., 'The Indian Cotton Industry, about 1700 A.D.', *Modern Review*, Feb., 1924, p.45.

<sup>187</sup> Feldback, Ole, *op. cit.*, p.126.

than the weaving caste. A joint petition of some weavers was submitted to the Board of Trade on 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1798, where the weavers were Nittoy Luchun, Joogul Luchun, Ramjeebun Luchun, Rajeeb Ghosh, and Ramnaut Kundu. They were the inhabitants of Mozah Battirish Bigha of Cusbeh Sellimbad in Parganah Havellee under the Burdwan district<sup>188</sup> who belonged to the castes other than *Tanti*. A great number of both of the low caste Hindu and Mahammadan farmers used to have a loom in their house where both men and women used to work during their leisure hours and make ordinary coarse cloth.<sup>189</sup> Actually, the people of different castes like *Pramanik* (barber), *Nath* (*Joggi*), *Telly* (oil grinder), *Kamar* (blacksmith), and also the people of so-called higher caste like *Bramhin*, *Kayestha*, etc. were engaged in weaving industry. Here we can infer that weaving was not confined to a particular caste but we have no sufficient information about the percentage of the other caste people in the weaving industry.

The average earning of a weaver per month in the districts varied from 3 to 4 sicca rupees. A weaver was paid 10 to 12 annas for a piece of cloth which was the fruits of the labour for  $5\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 days of a skilled weaver. Some work-days lost due to holidays and festivals. A weaver used to manufacture  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 pieces per month at most and used to earn 3 Sa Rs. When time was best, a weaver used to earn 3 and half rupees at most.<sup>190</sup> Here,  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{5}$  of his income generated from the labour of minors and female members of the family.<sup>191</sup>

According to the estimation of the Danish Head Factor of Serampore, the highest earning of the best weaver of Birbhum was Rs 3 to Rs 4 per month when he was fully

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<sup>188</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 20 Feb. 1798.

<sup>189</sup> Martin, op cit, p. 974-75.

<sup>190</sup> Feldback, Ole, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.*

employed. From the said amount certain percentage was lost for the payment of various exactions and commission to the 'dalal.'<sup>192</sup>

Now we consider the washing of clothes. The Danish report on textile production described that in highly specialized system of production of Bengal cotton industry, there was a separate group who were specialized in washing, and there were certain washer men in all weaving districts.<sup>193</sup>

In Birbhum district the usual rate of a washer man was 1 ½ annas per piece of garha or 2 rupees a corge (20 pieces), that is 10 rupees per hundred. In the lean season, the production of *garhas* was small and the rate of washing reduced to 9 rupees or 8 rupees 12 annas per hundred.<sup>194</sup>

Now we consider the dyeing of cloth. The cotton clothes was coloured by the indigenous dyers of the districts. They used indigo, lac, mulberry, etc. for the purpose. A yellow dye resembling madder was used in the district of Burdwan which was extracted from the seed of a shrub called the *Cumla Gooree*. The *Cumla Goorees* were found in the jungles of Bissenpore and in the Talooks of Dulbhoom, Sheekerbhoom, and Balrabhoom where it was cultivated. Its market price was one rupee for 2 seers. Sometimes, an indigenous variety of yellow dye was used which was extracted from the fibres of the root of *auch* trees.

The cost of production of cotton piece goods was calculated from the costs in all stages of production up to when the articles became ready to be dispatched from the districts' production centres to the European settlement. These costs used to make the *aurung* price of cotton piece-goods. It was the sum total of prices of cotton yarn, weaver's wage, *dalal's* commission, washer man's remuneration, employee's salaries, and other incidental charges.

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<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

The cotton goods were dispatched from the *aurung* to the Calcutta port and so some other expenses or costs used to add with the *aurung* price. These costs increased due to packing, road or river transport, custom duty, wages of armed guards, and other persons necessary to supervise the goods and sundry costs. Such charges were termed as “charges merchandise” which were calculated at 2 ½ % to 5% on the *aurung* price, depending on the distance from the *aurung* to the ports.

In the district of Birbhum, in ordinary good season, the *aurung* price of 20 pieces of *garhas* was estimated at Sa Rs 67 and 11 annas only.<sup>195</sup>

In the district of Hooghly, the price of the piece-goods of Haripal was 117 Sa Rs 3 annas and 10 pies (including of charges merchandise) for 14 pieces and it was sold at 147 Sa Rs and 10 annas after imposition of profit of Sa Rs 30.39.<sup>196</sup>

In Mundlegaut of Burdwan district the price of 138 bales of piece-goods was 43,414 Sa Rs 5 annas and 10 pies when it was shipped for England.<sup>197</sup>

#### IV

The production of cotton piece-goods in the three districts required a large amount of raw material. The cotton industry of the districts collected its raw material from the districts' production of cotton, or imported from different parts of India.

Different varieties of cotton were cultivated in all three districts. In the district of Burdwan three sorts of cotton were produced which were *caur* or *nurmah*, *muhree*, and *bhoga*. The *nurmah* cotton was the finest quality and the thread from that cotton was used in the manufacture of *nyansooks*, *mulmuls*, *seerbati* and *dooreas*. The *muhree* was inferior to *nurmah* in quality and the thread from which was used in the

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid*, p.132

<sup>196</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 13 Feb. 1798..

<sup>197</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 9 March 1798.

production of the finer *dhoties*, *guzzees*, and *garhas*. The *bhoga* was coarser than *muhree* and yielded threads which were used in the production of coarser *garhas* and other cloths of similar quality.<sup>198</sup> The price of *nurma kapas* which was the cotton as plucked from the plant before it was freed from the seed was on average 6 Rupees per maund. This *kapas* yielded clean cotton about one-fifth of its quantity.<sup>199</sup> The price of a maund of the *muhree kapas* was on average about 5 Rupees which yielded clean cotton something less than one-fourth of its quantity.<sup>200</sup> The price of *bogah kapas* varied from 3 Rs to 4 Rs 2 annas and 10 gundas per maund which yielded clean cotton about one-fourth of its quantity.<sup>201</sup>

The *nurma kapas* was cultivated on high spots of land called *dangah* land. The *muhree kapas* was cultivated only in the Pergunnah of Mundulgaut. The *bogah kapas* was cultivated on land denominated the *dow tuffussully* where the *Aus* paddy was cultivated before the cotton. The rent of land where the *nurma* was cultivated varied from 1 - 4 annas to 3 Rs per *bigah*. The rent for land for the *muhree* cultivation was about 2 Rupees per *bihga* and the rent was about 4 to 6 Rs per *bigha* where the *bogah kapas* was cultivated. The net profit in a favourable season, to the cultivator of the *nurma kapas* was Rs 2 to Rs 2 and 8 annas in a year, to the cultivator of the *muhree kapas* was Rs 2 to Rs 2 and 6 annas and to the cultivator of the *bogah kapas* was Rs 3 to Rs 4 to 8 annas.<sup>202</sup>

Beside its own production, considerable imports annually took place in the district of Burdwan from Nagpoor, Ammarabatty, Pulpurrah, and Bombay. The price around 1790 was Rs 17 per maund for the Nagpooree cotton, Rs 16 and 12 annas per maund for the cotton of Ammarabatty, Rs 14 to 16 for the cotton of Pulpurrah and Rs 17 and

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Guha, R and Mitra, A. (Ed.), *W B. District Record, Burdwan, Letter Issued*, P.19.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

4 annas per maund for Bombay cotton. The Bombay cotton was of a superior quality and was used for the production of finer piece-goods like *mulmul*, *nainsooks*, *co SSAhs*, etc. The rest three types of imported cottons were used for the production of coarse cloth like *garhas*, *guzzees*, etc. The gross quantity of import exceeded the actual production of the district at least by 50,000 maunds.<sup>203</sup> We see that 2 lakh maunds of *kapas* were produced in the district, and if we assume the *kapas* yielded cotton one-fourth of its quantity, the district production of clean cotton was about 50,000 maunds. So, we can say that gross import of the district was nearly 1 lakh maunds per year.

In the district of Burdwan, a Report of the District Collector in 1848, shows that the total area of land under the cultivation of cotton in the district was 16,000 *bighas*.<sup>204</sup> The yield per *bigha* was 35 lb. and the average price was 3.80 d per lb.<sup>205</sup> The total production of the district was 560,000 lb.

In the district of Hooghly, three sorts of cotton were produced which were *caur*, *muhree* and *bhoguee*. The *caur* cotton was used for the production of fine cloth where as the coarser clothes were produced by the other two sorts, the *muhree* and *bhoguee*. The total quantity of cotton production was about 15,000 to 17,000 maunds a year.<sup>206</sup> In Haripal of the district, two sorts of cotton were produced which were *bogah* and *corree*. The first sort or *bogah* was inferior in quality and used to produce *guzzees* which were the coarsest clothes worn by the poor people. The Company's assortments were made from the *corree* cotton.<sup>207</sup> The time for sowing the *corree* was from the end of September to the 20<sup>th</sup> October and was gathered from the 12<sup>th</sup> May to

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Medicott, *Cotton Hand Book for Bengal*, p. 93.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, p. 95.

<sup>206</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade (Commercial)*, 10 Aug. 1790.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

the 20<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>208</sup> Here, the cotton was cultivated on high spots of land and give more profit than the profit from the cultivation of other crops.<sup>209</sup>

In 1848, the Report of the District Collector shows that the total area under the cultivation of cotton in the district of Hooghly was 9,000 *bighas*.<sup>210</sup> The yield per *bigha* was 55 lb and the average price was 3.15 d per lb.<sup>211</sup> The total production of the district was 495,000 lb.

An inferior quality of Cotton was cultivated in the district of Birbhum which was called by *bhoga*.<sup>212</sup> Here, the cultivators of cotton were used to derive a profit of 60 per cent.<sup>213</sup> The district's production of raw cotton was less than the requirement of its cotton industry. Around 1789, 80,000 maunds of *kapas* of inferior quality were produced in the district. Around 40,000 maunds were produced in Birbhum proper and the rest equal amount was produced in Bishnupur.<sup>214</sup> This *kapas* yielded clean cotton about one-fourth of its quantity or 20,000 maunds which were used in the manufacture of cotton clothes.<sup>215</sup> The expense of cleaning was defrayed by the sale of husk, seed, etc.<sup>216</sup> The Company's *aurangs* alone consumed about 25,000 maunds of cleaned cotton.<sup>217</sup> So, a large quantity of cotton had to be imported from outside the district. In 1790, about 17,000 maunds of *kapas* or 4,250 maunds of cleaned cotton

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<sup>208</sup> *Reports and Documents connected with the proceedings of the E.I.C., p. 303.*

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Medlicott, op cit, p.160.*

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Reports and Documents connected with the proceedings of the E.I.C., p. 302.*

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *ibid. and Medlicott, op cit, p. 160.*

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *O' Mally, op. cit. , p.18.*

<sup>217</sup> *WBSA, Proceedings of Board of Trade (Commercial), 10 Aug. 1790.*

were imported by the way of Murshidabad and Patna.<sup>218</sup> Some amount of cotton was imported from Mirzapur.<sup>219</sup> Around 1800, the then English Commercial Resident, John Cheap compelled the *ryots* to cultivate cotton.<sup>220</sup>

In the district of Birbhum, a Report of the District Collector in 1848, shows that the total area of land under the cultivation of cotton in the district was 1500 *bighas*.<sup>221</sup> The yield per *bigha* was 66.6 lb. of clean cotton and the average price was 2 d per lb.<sup>222</sup> The total production of the district was 99,900 lb.

## V

Cotton spinning and weaving were the popular occupations of a considerable section of the total population of the three districts. A large number of people were engaged in weaving as a part-time occupation beside their normal engagement in agriculture. The spinning was carried on by the women who used to spin besides their household works. There existed many weavers who used to engage themselves in weaving as whole-time workers. Actually, the part-time weavers used to engage in the production of coarser clothes. But, the fine muslin or fine calicoes were produced by the specialized whole-time weavers only. A *ryot* used to quit his plough to work at the loom or used to leave the latter in order to resume the former, but this was a common practice, especially among those who used to made coarser clothes.<sup>223</sup>

In the district of Hooghly, many people were engaged in cotton industry. In 1810, John Forsyth, Resident at Gollagore factory, stated that there were 1400 weavers at Chandernagar. Two to three hundred among them received advances from the

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Medlicott, *op cit*, p.92.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Taylor, *A Descriptive and Historical account of cotton manufacture in Dacca in Bengal*, p. 73.

Hooghly *aurung*. According to an enquiry of the Resident, the remaining weavers, i.e. about 1000 to 1200 who used to produce the best clothes never received the Company's advances<sup>224</sup>. Now, we assume one loom was required to give full-time job to 5 to 6 weavers.<sup>225</sup> Here, there were 1400 weavers and so the number of looms at Chandernagar was 233 to 280. From Gollagore factory, in July 1804, a petition had been sent to the Board of Trade which was signed by 1052 weavers of Gouripur, 700 weavers of Khanpoor, 470 weavers of Gurup, 1400 weavers of Gollagore, and 380 weavers of Majenan. In other words there were 4002 signatories or weavers. Presumably, there existed some weavers who did not sign the petition in those places. So, the total number of weavers was more than 4002.<sup>226</sup> If we assume 4002 weavers in Gollagore factory, the number of looms under the factory was 667 to 800.

In the district of Birbhum, all the *aurungs* were under the Resident, John Cheap of Sonamookhy. During a long period of time, Sonamookhy (Bankura-Bishnupur) had been the head factory of the Sonamookhy Commercial Residency with 31 subordinate *aurungs*.<sup>227</sup> During 1786-87 these *aurungs* were scattered over the districts of Birbhum-Bishnupur, Burdwan, Murshidabad and Rajshahi.<sup>228</sup> Cheap stated that about the year 1789, the number of weavers' houses under the Sonamookhy Residency was about 3000 and the number of weavers was 4000.<sup>229</sup> The number of looms under the Sonamookhy Commercial Residency was 667 to 800.

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<sup>224</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 16 Feb. 1810.

<sup>225</sup> Prakash, Om, *The Dutch E.I.C. and the Economy of Bengal*, p. 241.

<sup>226</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 17 Aug. 1804.

<sup>227</sup> O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p.39.

<sup>228</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 10 Aug. 1790.

<sup>229</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 15 Dec. 1789.

In the district of Burdwan, during 1813-14, the total population of the district was 14,44,487. Among them, the total number of people belonging to *Tanti* (weaver) caste was 27,180.<sup>230</sup>

## VI

In the districts cotton textile production followed agriculture as the most productive sector from the view point of its scale and general significance in the economy. The cotton textile industry had developed in the districts prior to the establishment of the district administration by the English. The entry of the European merchant capital into the districts enhanced the productive potentialities of the districts' rural cotton industry to a great extent. A growing market abroad, particularly in England and other European countries led to a large increase in the production of cotton piece-goods in three districts.

The cotton weavers of the districts produced their commodities at home with implements of their own. That is, a traditional pre-industrial production method was used. The noticeable features of this method were its extensive use of human labour and the extreme simplicity of the mechanical aids. But the quality of products was not due to the sophistication of the tools used, but was exclusively a function of manual dexterity and was far better than the machine-made British product in the period under review.

The cotton industry of the districts gave employment to a large portion of the population in the districts. Though it is not possible to estimate accurately the exact number of people engaged in the industry but it may be inferred with some certainty that production of cotton goods formed the employment of the bulk of the total population in the different stages of production either as a part-time or full-time engagements. Weaving was a whole-time occupation for a considerable section of the

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<sup>230</sup> Bayley, W.B., 'Statistical View of the Population of Burdwan', *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 12, 1816, p. 566.

population of the districts, although, to some people, it was a part-time occupation. As a part-time occupation the people used to earn remuneration which enabled them to supplement their income.

The cotton industry in Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly districts thus played a very important role in the economic life of those districts.