

# Chapter - V

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### Onset of the Industry's Decline: Identification of the Period

The cotton textile industry of three districts of Bengal, namely Burdwan, Birbhum and Hooghly, grew prior to the advent of the European traders into these districts. The rural cotton industry of those districts used to meet mainly the local needs and that of the neighbouring districts. The fine muslins and calicoes of Burdwan and Hooghly districts had some market in different parts of India and foreign countries as well.

The arrival of European merchant capital into the districts integrated the districts' economy with the world market. The integration enhanced the productive potentialities of the cotton industry of the districts enormously. The growth of market in abroad, particularly in Europe, stimulated the production of the industry to a great extent in those districts.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the British East India Company acquired political authority of Bengal. Since then, the cotton industry had become dependent mainly on the investment of the British Company in the region. The vast trading network of the Company around the Globe led to a spectacular hike of demand for cotton piece-goods of Bengal for export and thereby its production. As a result, an unprecedented growth of the districts' industry was seen. But with the enlarged growth rate, the basic structure of the industry and the technology of production remained unchanged.

The districts' industry could not maintain its high growth rate, and started to decline as the English cotton piece-goods successfully captured the world market which used to dominate by the Bengal cotton goods previously. On the basis of available data and

evidences, this chapter seeks to identify the commencing period of the decline of the cotton industry in the aforementioned three districts.

The chapter is divided into five sections. Section I identifies commencement of the period of the decline on the basis of employment statistics. Section II considers the raw cotton related matters to find out the period of the decline. The commencing period of decline will be discovered on the basis of the investment figures of the English Company in different cotton manufacturing centres of the districts in Section III. Section IV takes into account some contemporary evidences which suggests the period of the decline. Section V is concluding part.

## I

We can identify the period of the decline of districts' industry on the basis of the size of population engaged in the industry through different periods. In the period under review cotton textile industry was the staple industry in the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum and Hooghly, and it generated employment for a large number of people either as a whole-timer or as a part timer. The employment in the industry increased after the mid-eighteenth century through the investment of the British East India Company. This prosperity gradually disappeared in the first half of the nineteenth century when export of the East India Company decreased considerably. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the machine made cotton products of England captured the World market, as well as the domestic market of India, leading to gradual reduction in the demand for Bengal cotton goods. This section tries to identify the period when the employment generated by the cotton industry in the three districts started to decline. This period of decline indicates the actual period of decline of the districts' industry.

The data about the employment generated by the industry of the districts are very scanty for this period. We shall evaluate the level of employment in the industry on the basis of the amount of investment made by the English Company in different *aurangs* of the districts. These employment figures show the employment of weavers

who were engaged in the production of goods for the English company. There existed some weavers who used to receive no advances from the English Company and used to work for private traders and other foreign companies. It is very difficult to calculate the numbers of those weavers because the employment data regarding those weavers are almost nil during this period. Thus to identify the actual period of the decline of the industry we have to depend up on the employment data of the Company's weavers. After the advent of the Company, the industry had become highly dependent on the investment of the Company, and the numbers of employment generated by the industry per year indicates the condition of the industry.

A few available employment figures for different *aurangs* of the English Company in the districts have been considered here. Haripal was an important *aurung* of the district of Hooghly. In 1807, the total number of weavers in the *aurung* was 5,209.<sup>231</sup> In 1810, John Forsyth, Resident at Gollagore factory of Hooghly district, stated that there were 1400 weavers at Chandernagar. Two to three hundred among them received advances from the Hooghly *aurung*. According to an enquiry of the Resident, the remaining weavers, i.e., about 1000 to 1200 used to produce the best clothes never received the Company's advances.<sup>232</sup> From the Gollagore factory in July 1804, a petition had been sent to the Board of Trade which was signed by 1050 weavers of Gouripur, 700 weavers of Khanpur, 470 weavers of Gurup, 1400 weavers of Gollagore and 380 weavers of Majenan. That is, there were 4002 signatories or weavers. Probably, there existed some weavers who did not sign the petition in those places. So, the total number of weavers was more than 4002.<sup>233</sup> In the district of Birbhum, all the *aurungs* were under the Resident, Mr. John Cheap of Sonamooky. As per a statement of Cheap in 1787, the number of weavers' houses under the Sonamooky Commercial Residency was about 3000, and the number of weavers was

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<sup>231</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 31 July 1807.

<sup>232</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 16 Feb. 1810.

<sup>233</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 17 Aug. 1804.

4000.<sup>234</sup> In Burdwan district, 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>235</sup>

It is estimated that the numbers of weavers in different periods in aforementioned districts on the basis of the investment of the English Company in different *aurungs* of the districts; first an investment-employment relation was calculated. The relation is as follows, investment of Sicca Rupees 12 gives the employment of two weavers.<sup>236</sup> On the basis of this relation, the employment of weavers in different *aurungs* in the districts was calculated.

In the district of Hooghly, Gollagore was an important *aurung*. Here, in 1776-77, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs. 53,879.31.<sup>237</sup> From the above investment-employment relation, the number of weavers employed in the *aurung* in this year was 8,980 (approximately). In 1780-81, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs. 1,46,870.69.<sup>238</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 24,478 (approximately). In 1787-88, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs.2,04,556.03.<sup>239</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 34,093(approximately). In 1793, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs. 5,29,601.<sup>240</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 88,267 (approximately). In 1798, the investment of the Company was Sa. Rs. 4,88,953.2. So, the number of weavers was 81,492

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<sup>234</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 15 Dec. 1789.

<sup>235</sup> Bayley, W.B., 'Statistical View of the Population of Burdwan', *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 12, 1816, p. 566.

<sup>236</sup> Martin, M., *Eastern India*, P. 974.

<sup>237</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 18 Jan. 1776.

<sup>238</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 20 Feb. 1782.

<sup>239</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 26 Feb. 1790.

<sup>240</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 Nov. 1792.

(approximately).<sup>241</sup> In 1810, the investment of the Company in the *aurung* was Sa. Rs. 28,730.2344.<sup>242</sup> So, the number of the Company's weavers in this year was 4,788 (approximately). It shows a drastic reduction of the employment of the Company's weavers during 1798 to 1810. In 1817, the investment of the English Company was Sa Rs 3,04,407.<sup>243</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 50,735 (approximately). In 1821, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs. 35,268.27.<sup>244</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 5,878 (approximately). In 1824, the investment was only Sa Rs 53,400<sup>245</sup> (Santipur included) and only 8,900 (Santipur included) (approximately) weavers were employed. In 1828, the investment was only Sa. Rs. 27,000<sup>246</sup> (Santipur & Barnagore included) and only 4,500 (Santipur & Barnagore included) (approximately) weavers were employed. So, the employment of the Company's weavers started to decline considerably since 1824 in the Gollagore *aurung* in the district of Hooghly.

Hurripal was another important *aurung* of the English Company in the district of Hooghly. In the *aurung*, in 1780-81, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs. 4,52,394.8.<sup>247</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 75,399 (approximately). In the *aurung*, the investment of the Company in 1787 - 88 was Sa. Rs. 256250.001<sup>248</sup> and the number of weavers employed in the Company was 42,708 (approximately). In 1810, the investment of the Company in the *aurung* was Sa.

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<sup>241</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 13 March 1798.

<sup>242</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 11 May 1810.

<sup>243</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 10 May 1817.

<sup>244</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 19 Feb. 1822 & 22 Feb. 1822.

<sup>245</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 4 Jan. 1825.

<sup>246</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 22 Feb., 1828 & 22 Jan. 1828.

<sup>247</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 20 Feb. 1782.

<sup>248</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 26 Feb. 1790.

Rs.17,135.26.<sup>249</sup> The number of the Company's weavers in that year was 2856 (approximately). It shows a drastic reduction in the number of the Company's weavers during 1798 to 1810. In 1817, the investment was Sa. Rs. 1,19,562<sup>250</sup> and 19,927 (approximately) weavers were employed. In 1821, the investment was only Sa. Rs. 35,145.6.8<sup>251</sup> and the employment of weavers were only 5858 (approximately). In 1824, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs. 1,276.10.<sup>252</sup> So, the number of weavers in this year was 213 (approximately). In 1828, the investment was only Sa. Rs. 695.81<sup>253</sup> and the employment of weavers was only 116 (approximately). So, as like Gollagore *aurung*, the employment of the Company's weavers started to decline in the Haripal *aurung* since 1824 also. From the above analysis, we can conclude that the perpetual decline of the cotton industry in the district of Hooghly started by 1824.

In the district of Burdwan, Katwa was an important *aurung*. Here, in 1776-77, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs.21,551.7243. The number of weavers employed in the *aurung* in that year was 3,592 (approximately). In 1798, the investment of the Company was Sa. Rs.220422.4. So, the number of weavers here was 36,737 (approximately). In 1810, the investment of the Company in the *aurung* was Sa. Rs.17,958.2760. So, the number of the Company's weavers in this year was 2993 (approximately). It shows a drastic reduction of the employment of the Company's weavers during 1798 to 1810. In 1819, the investment of the Company was Sa. Rs. 6523.2.<sup>254</sup> So, the number of the Company's weavers in this year was 1087 (approximately). So, the employment of the Company's weavers started to

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<sup>249</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 11 May 1810.

<sup>250</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 10 May 1817.

<sup>251</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 19 Feb., 1822 & 22 Feb. 1822.

<sup>252</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 4 Jan. 1825.

<sup>253</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 22 Feb. 1828 & 22 Jan 1828.

<sup>254</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 5 Sept. 1819.

decline in the *aurung* after 1819. From the above analysis we can conclude that the perpetual decline of the cotton industry in the district of Burdwan started after 1819.

In the district of Birbhum, all the manufacturing centres of cotton piece-goods were the subordinate *aurungs* under Sonamooky factory of the English East India Company. So, the employment figure of the Sonamooky factory for various years indicates the state of industry in the district. In 1793, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs.3,23,454.<sup>255</sup> So, the number of weavers in that year was 53,909 (approximately). In 1798, the investment of the Company was Sa. Rs.2,94,244.16.<sup>256</sup> So, the number of weavers was 49,041 (approximately). In 1810, the investment of the Company in the *aurung* was Sa. Rs.15443.5625.<sup>257</sup> So, the number of the Company's weavers in that year was 2574 (approximately). In 1815, the investment was Sa. Rs. 97,150,<sup>258</sup> and the number of employment of weavers was 16,192 (approximately). In 1819, the investment was only Sa. Rs. 11,070<sup>259</sup> and the employment of weavers were only 1,845 (approximately). In 1821, the investment of the English Company was Sa. Rs.7,340.<sup>260</sup> So, the number of weavers in that year was 1223 (approximately). In 1824, the investment was only Sa. Rs. 185.62<sup>261</sup> and the employment of weavers were only 31 (approximately). In 1827, the investment was only Sa. Rs. 2.72<sup>262</sup> and the employment of weavers was only 0.45 (approximately). It shows a gradual reduction of the employment of the Company's weavers since 1798. The employment of labour reached to only 31 in 1824. From the above analysis, we

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<sup>255</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 Nov. 1792.

<sup>256</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 13 March 1798.

<sup>257</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 11 May 1810.

<sup>258</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 16 Feb 1815.

<sup>259</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 12 Feb. 1819.

<sup>260</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 19 Feb 1822.

<sup>261</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 10 Feb 1824.

<sup>262</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 12 Jan 1827.

can conclude that the perpetual decline of the cotton industry in the district of Birbhum started by 1824.

Table: 5.1: No. of the weavers in different *aurungs* in the district of Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly

Years	No. of the weavers			
	Gollagore	Haripal	Katwa	Sonamooky
1776-77	8980	NA	3592	NA
1780-81	24,478	75,399	NA	NA
1787-88	34,093	42,708	NA	4000
1793	88,267	NA	NA	53,909
1798	81,492	42,070	36,737	49,041
1804	1400	NA	NA	NA
1807	NA	5,209	NA	NA
1810	4,788	2856	2993	2574
1815	NA	NA	NA	16,192
1817	50,735	19,927	NA	NA

1819	NA	NA	1087	1845
1821	5,878	5,858	NA	1223
1824	8,900 (Santipur included)	213	NA	31
1827	NA	NA	NA	Less than one
1828	4,500 (Santipur & Barnagore included)	116	NA	NA

NA: not available.

Source: As mentioned before.

From the table 5.1 we notice that the gradual decrease of the employment started since the early nineteenth century. This steady decline reached to a critical point around 1824 when the employment figures of the *aurungs* of the district reached to three digit numbers which was five digit numbers in 1793 or in 1798. Here we can infer that the districts' industry started to fall considerably around 1824.

## II

To identify the period of the decline of the cotton textile industry of aforementioned three districts we shall analyze the data regarding the consumption of raw cotton by the districts' industry, the production of cotton in the districts and the import of cotton into the districts. The decline of the use of raw cotton by the districts' industry which was either produced in the districts or was imported from different parts of India shows the decline of the cotton textile industry of the districts.

One of the significant reasons for the growth of cotton textile industry in different districts of Bengal was the availability of suitable raw cotton in those districts. When the production of cotton piece-goods had increased to a large extent due to its

growing demand from abroad the districts' industry had to depend on the import of raw cotton from different parts of India. According to Colebrook, at one time nearly the whole of the raw cotton required for yarn making in the province of Bengal was produced locally.<sup>263</sup> Later the raw cotton was imported into Bengal from Gujrat through the sea route prior to 1770.<sup>264</sup> During 1740 – 85, the raw cotton import from Gujrat was severally affected and gradually decreased. It was completely ceased by 1785. Since then, Bengal started to import raw cotton from the central part of Mirzapur where cotton used to come from Berar and Nagpur. Except Mirzapur, the raw cotton was also imported from Surat, Doab, Bundelkhand and Decan.

Cotton was also produced in three districts. In the district of Burdwan, three types of cotton were produced namely, *nurma*, *muhree* and *bogga*. In 1790, 50,000 maunds of clean cotton were annually produced.<sup>265</sup> The annual production of gross quantity of *kapas* (unclean cotton) in the district around 1789-90 was 2 lakh maunds which yield about 50,000 maunds of clean cotton.<sup>266</sup> In 1848, a Report of the District Collector shows that the total area of land under the cultivation of cotton in the district was 16,000 *bighas* and the yield per *bigha* was 35 lbs.<sup>267</sup> Thus, the total cotton production of the district was 560,000 lbs or 7466.7 maunds.

The following table shows the price of raw cotton in Burdwan district in various years.

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<sup>263</sup> Colebrook, *Remarks on the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal*, p. 84.

<sup>264</sup> Guha, A., 'Raw Cotton of Western India: 1750-1850', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1972, vol. 9, p.2.

<sup>265</sup> Medicott, *Cotton Hand-Book for Bengal*, p. 93.

<sup>266</sup> *Report and Document connected with the proc. of the E.I.C.* p. 300.

<sup>267</sup> Medicott, *op. cit.*, p.93

Table: 5.2: Price of cotton in Burdwan district in various years

Years	Prices(annual average) Pence per pound
1789	6.92
1836	4.00
1848	3.36
1854	3.41
1855	3.69
1856	3.20
1857	3.20

Source: Medlicott, p.159: In 1789, price was calculated from *Proc. B.O.R.*, 15 June 1789.

The production of cotton of Burdwan district had decreased from 50,000 maunds in 1789-90 to 7466.7 maunds in 1848. The above table 2 shows that the average price of cotton was 6.92 d/lb which became 4.00 d/lb in 1836. After 1836 price was almost stable. During 1789-90 to 1848 the cotton production of the district had decreased but price did not increase rather decreased. These decrease in both the price of cotton and the production of cotton shows that the decline of the cotton consumption of the district's industry or the decline of the district industry. From the amount of consumption of raw cotton, we can infer that the cotton textile industry of the Burdwan district started to decline in between 1789 to 1836.

As other districts of Bengal cotton was produced in the district of Birbhum as well. An inferior quality of cotton was produced in the district which was called as *bhoga*. The total production of *kapas* of the district was 80,000 maunds around 1789.<sup>268</sup> Around 40,000 maunds were produced in Birbhum proper and the rest 40,000 maunds were produced in Bishnupur.<sup>269</sup> From this *kapas*, about one-fourth of its quantity or 20,000 maunds of cleaned cotton were produced.<sup>270</sup> In 1848, a report of the District Collector shows that the total area of land under the cotton cultivation was 1500 *bighas*.<sup>271</sup> The yield per *bigha* was 66.6 lb of clean cotton,<sup>272</sup> amounting to the total cotton production of the district to 99,000 lb or 1332 maunds. The cotton production decreased from 20,000 in 1789 to only 1,332 maunds in 1848.

Price of clean cotton in the district market was 5.75 d/lb around 1789.<sup>273</sup> In 1836 the price of clean cotton was reduced to 3.64 d/lb and in 1848, the price of clean cotton in the district market became as lower as 3 d/lb.<sup>274</sup> It shows that the price of cotton had decreased with the decrease in total production of cotton. This trend clearly shows that the districts demand for cotton had decreased which indicates that the district's industry started gradually declining during the period between 1789 and 1848. Since 1836, price of cotton did not increase. Thus, we can infer that the cotton textile industry of the Birbhum district started to decline in between 1789 to 1836.

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<sup>268</sup> *Report and Document*, op. cit., p.300.

<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *Medlicott*, op.cit., p.92

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *WBSA, Proceedings of Board of Trade (Commercial)*, 15 June 1798.

<sup>274</sup> *Medlicott*, op. cit., p. 169.

Cotton was also cultivated in the district of Hooghly. Three types of cotton were chiefly cultivated in the district commonly known as *caur*, *muhree* and *bhoga*. The total quantity of cotton production of the district was 15,000 to 17,000 maunds in a year around 1790.<sup>275</sup> In 1848, as per a report of the District Collector the total area under the cotton cultivation in the district was 9,000 *bighas*. The yield per *bigha* was 55 lb and the total production of the district was 495,000 lb or 6600 maunds. During 1790 to 1848, the district production had considerably decreased.

The price of the cotton in the district of Hooghly around 1789 was 6.27 d/lb. It got reduced to 3.34 d/lb in 1836 and further decreased to 3.15 d/lb in 1848.<sup>276</sup> It shows that the total production of cotton and its price had decreased during 1789 to 1848. Since 1836, the price of cotton did not change. Thus, we can infer that the cotton textile industry of the Hooghly district started to decline in between 1789 to 1836.

The above analysis reveals that the cotton industry of the districts started to decline significantly in between 1789 and 1836.

Beside the drastic fall in the cotton production, the export of cotton from the Bengal presidency to foreign countries started increasing since early nineteenth century which also considerably reduced the supply of cotton for the cotton industry of Bengal. The cotton export from Calcutta to China was started in 1803. The quantity of export gradually increased. It was 26,666.66 maunds in 1803, 2,40,000 maunds in 1806 and 2,93,333.33 maunds in 1814.<sup>277</sup>

Around 1835, the price of best Buundecund cotton in Calcutta was C.Rs 16.<sup>278</sup> Ten years later, around 1845-46, such cotton was sold at C.Rs 7.08 to C.Rs 10.<sup>279</sup> In that

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<sup>275</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 10 Aug. 1790.

<sup>276</sup> Medicott, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>277</sup> Royle, J. Forbes, *On the Culture and Commerce of Cotton in India and Elsewhere*, p.41.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid*

<sup>279</sup> *ibid*

time, China stopped importing Indian cotton. Thus the price of cotton decreased with no sufficient increase in demand in the home market of Bengal. This shows that a huge decline of demand for cotton in the manufacturing industry of Bengal as well as our districts' industry. This observation directs us to infer that the districts' cotton industry started to decline considerably in between 1789 to 1835.

Mirzapur, the prosperous cotton mart of India started declining since 1820 due to lack of demand from the Bengal handloom cotton industry.<sup>280</sup> This decline occurred due to the fall of sale of raw cotton which was the result of a persistent crisis in the cotton handloom industry of Bengal.<sup>281</sup>

From the analysis of above facts, we drive the following inferences. The cotton industry of the districts started to decline considerably between 1789 to 1835, and the collapse of the Mirzapur cotton mart took place due to lack of demands of raw cotton from Bengal. From these observations we can conclude that the industry of the three districts started to decline considerably since 1820.

### III

In this section we shall identify the period of the cotton industry's decline of three districts, on the basis of investment of the English East India Company. The cotton industry of the districts had become dependent mostly on the investment of the English Company during the period under review. When the investment gradually started to decline, the districts' industry also started to decline.

The English Company used to pay advance money to procure cotton piece-goods from different *aurungs* of the districts. That system of advances was known as 'investment'. These investments were sent to each *aurung*, usually in the beginning of

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<sup>280</sup> Guha, A., 'Raw Cotton of Western India: 1750-1850', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1972, vol.9, p. 8.

<sup>281</sup> *ibid*

a year. These investments give insights into the state of production of the districts' *aurung*.

In the district of Hooghly, Gollagore and Haripal, were the two important *aurungs* of the English Company. The following table 5.3 shows the investment of the Company in various years in the above two *aurungs*.

Table: 5.3: Investment of the English East India Company in various years in Gollagore and Haripal *aurungs* in the district of Hooghly

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:** WBSA, *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, 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.* 4 Jan, 1825. 1828, *Proc. B.O.T. Comm.* 22 Feb, 1828 & 22 Jan, 1828.

Above table clearly shows that the investment of the English Company in the Gollagore *aurung* gradually increased from 1776 to 1793. Here the increase was 882.94%. This high investment trend continued till 1798. But from 1798 to 1810, the investment decreased to a large extent. Here the fall was 94.12%. Again from 1810 to 1816 the investment farther reduced and reached to only Sa. Rs. 2,452.44. During 1798 to 1816 the fall of investment was 99.49 per cent. The table shows the same trend of investment in the Haripal *aurungs* well. In 1816 the investment reached to very low level which was only Sa. Rs. 1,324.13. Here the fall of investment from 1798 to 1810 was 93.21% and from 1798 to 1816 was 99.47 per cent. After 1821 the investment started to fall steadily and reached in acute crisis by 1824.

In Birbhum district, all the cotton piece-goods manufacturing centres were under the Sonamooky Commercial Residency of the English Company. Thus, the investment of the Sonamooky factory indicates the state of the industry in the district. The following table 5.4 shows the investment of the Company in various years from 1793 to 1827 in the above factory.

Table: 5.4: Investment in various years from 1793 to 1827 in Sonamooky Commercial Residency of the English East India Company

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: WBSA, 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

Above table 5.4 clearly indicates that from 1798 to 1810, the investment decreased to a large extent. Here the fall was 94.75%. Again from 1810 to 1821 the investment gradually reduced and it reached to only Sa. Rs. 7,340.10 in 1821. In 1824 the investment became only Sa. Rs. 185.9.11. Since then, it gradually reduced farther and became only Sa. Rs. 2.72 in 1827.

All *aurungs* of the Birbhum district and some *aurungs* of the Burdwan district were under the Sonamooky Commercial Residency. So, the investment of the Sonamooky factory also indicates the state of the industry in Birbhum district and partially in Burdwan district. Here the decline of the industry in two districts started considerably around 1824.

In the district of Burdwan, Katwa was an important *aurung* of the English Company. The following table shows the investment of the Company in various years in the above *aurung*.

Table: 5.5: Investment of the English East India Company in various years at Katwa *aurung* in the district of Burdwan

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

Source: WBSA, 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.

Table 5.5 exhibits that the investment of the English Company in the Katwa *aurung* gradually increased from 1776-77 to 1798. Here the increase was 922.79%. But from 1798 to 1810, the investment decreased to a large extent. Here the fall was 91.85%. In 1819, investment decreased further and became Sa. Rs.6523.2.

The fall of investment in three districts in the first decade of nineteenth century can be explained by the Napoleonic war. From 1806, Napoleon largely restricted the continental markets of Bengal piece-goods. As a result, the English Company's export of Bengal piece-goods had been reduced to a considerable extent and the Company was forced to reduce their investment in the districts. After the conclusion of the European war, the investment of the English Company in the districts did not increase much, and was far lower than the investment in the second half of the

eighteenth century. In 1815-1816, the investment in the districts' *aurungs* was remarkably low. Here, the investment did not increase after the war because of the low export demand of Bengal cotton piece-goods in the world market. Around 1813-14, British calicoes started flooding the world market which, for a long time was dominated by Bengal cotton piece-goods. So, the districts' industry was in a crisis and started declining considerably.

Since 1813-1814, the British Industrial Revolution made it possible to produce good quality cotton piece-goods by the factories in England at a very low cost which successfully outclassed and supplanted the Bengal cotton piece-goods from the world market. The value of cotton piece-goods exported from Bengal to London by the English Company was Sa.Rs. 61,67,851 in 1792-93. This export gradually decreased after then. It decreased to Sa. Rs. 34,41,141 in 1813-14, to Sa. Rs. 5,43,376 in 1821-22 and to Sa. Rs 3,42,843 in 1823-24.<sup>282</sup> From 1792-93 to 1823-24 the fall of export was 94.44 %. So, the year 1823-24 was the clear turning point of the districts' industry as well as the cotton industry of Bengal.

#### IV

To identify the actual period of the decline of the industry in the three districts, some contemporary evidences will be considered in this section. These are as follows.

Since the early nineteenth century, the *aurungs* of the districts suffered from the lack of investment by the English East India Company which created problems in the production of cotton goods. Henry William, Resident of the Gollagore *aurung* of Hooghly district, the complained in 1806 that for last four years the Company's advances were not made regularly, and the investment in cloth production was made

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<sup>282</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 June 1827.

by the old outstanding balances.<sup>283</sup> This shows problem of growth of the district industry.

A petition of some weavers of Khattorah and Chaundolia under the Hurripaul *aurung* of Hooghly district shows a complaint against the cessation of the order for coloured cloth by the English Company. According to the petition, the order for the coloured clothes by the company had been stopped since 1824. Before then, since the establishment of the *aurung*, four or five hundred weavers' families of the *aurung* eked out their livelihood by making these coloured clothes for the Company for several successive generations. These weavers reported that they did not receive any advance money from the Company from the year 1824, and after the cessation of the Company's advances, they were very much distressed and had to support their families with difficulties by weaving clothes known as *Banee* and laboring in various other ways.<sup>284</sup> This indicates a great plight in the district industry.

Robert Brooke, Resident of the Haripal Factory of Hooghly district, stated in 1824, that in the district, six hundred weavers received advances from the Native Merchants for making of *Seersuckers* (a kind of cloth) to earn their livelihood since the discontinuation of the English Company's advances. When the weavers got the Company's advances, the Danes, French, Dutch and Portuguese also paid the weavers advances, but around 1824, all those channels were closed down. As a consequence, nine hundred other weavers borrowed money from the Native Merchants and made losses at the rate Rs 12 to Rs 13 per piece. Consequently in a distressed state, a few weavers borrowed money from the Native Merchants and employed people to plough the ground for them as it was against their custom to hold the plough.<sup>285</sup> This indicates a clear recession of the district industry.

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<sup>283</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 25 July 1806.

<sup>284</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 27 March 1827.

<sup>285</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 June 1827.

From the above analysis we see the distressed condition of the weavers in 1824 which clearly infers that the cotton industry of the Hooghly district started to decline considerably after 1824.

In the district of Birbhum, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the investment in the district cotton industry by the English Company had been suffering much due to the shortage of money. At that time, John Cheap, the then Resident of the Soonamoky factory, stated that he had been facing shortage of silver currency which was the then only medium for payment of advances to the weavers.<sup>286</sup> The situation gradually became adverse as the investment of the English Company did not increase later, and the weavers gradually lost their traditional occupation. Cheap stated in 1824, among the weavers who were thrown out from their profession, only a few weavers were able to stick to their jobs, while others became *Sunnassies*, *Byraggies*, *collies*, and agriculturists, but none of them became mechanics. Only a few women and children were able to engage themselves in filature while others might have died after the collapse of the industry.<sup>287</sup>

From the analysis of the above facts and evidences, the distressed condition of the weavers in 1824 is apparent which clearly testifies to the fact that the Soonamoky factory started to decline considerably after 1824. As all *aurungs* of Birbhum district and many *aurungs* of Burdwan district were under the Soonamoky Residency, it is inferred that the cotton industry of both the districts started to decline considerably after 1820, and that the evidences exhibit its depressed condition since 1824.

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<sup>286</sup> Feldback, Ole, 'Cloth Production and Trade in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal' *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. 86, 1967, p. 131.

<sup>287</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade* (Commercial), 29 June 1827.

The cotton textile industry of Burdwan, Birbhum and Hooghly districts grew remarkably through the investment of the British East India Company during the second half of the eighteenth century but the growth momentum did not persist for long. From the beginning of the nineteenth century the gloomy phase of the industry began.

The first, second and third section reveal that after 1798, the investment of the English Company gradually decreased, and thereby employment of the industry also decreased. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, raw cotton export from Bengal to abroad started and increased rapidly, but it did not create any upward pressure on the price of cotton in the districts' market which exhibits reduction of raw cotton consumption by the districts' industry. That reduction shows the decline of the districts' production of cotton goods.

The fall of the English Company's investment after 1798 and in early nineteenth century caused great distress to the districts' industry. The Napoleonic Wars and 'continental blockade' were the causes behind the distress. Napoleon strongly prohibited the entry of the goods produced in England and its colonies into the European Continent.<sup>288</sup> In those times, a large amount of Bengal piece-goods were dumped in the Warehouses of the English Company in England.<sup>289</sup> As a result, the Company stopped the import of Bengal piece-goods. Since then the Bengal cotton manufactures lost its vast English as well as European market and the British Company reduced its investment to a large extent in the cotton industry of the districts. The war ceased completely by 1813-14.

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<sup>288</sup> Ray, I., Identifying the woes of the cotton textile industry in Bengal, *The Economic History Review*, Nov. 2009, vol. 62, issue 4, p. 11.

<sup>289</sup> WBSA, *Proceedings of Board of Trade (Commercial)*, 17 March 1809.

After the conclusion of the European War, the investment of the English Company did not revive in the districts, and around 1824 the districts' cotton industry was in veritable crisis. After 1813-1814, English machine made calicoes started flooding the world market which at one time was dominated by the Bengal calicoes. The loss of the export market by the Bengal calicoes forced the districts' industry to shut down.

The above analysis shows that 1824 was the clear turning point of the districts' industry from its prosperity to adversity, and some contemporary evidences in Section IV confirmed the proposition.

Around 1824, the spread of English machine made cotton goods in the world market coupled with other forces, nearly ruined the hitherto most extensive and prospering cotton industry of the districts.