

## **Introduction**

Transport and communication system is one of the main ingredients on which economic development of a nation depends. The extension of facilities of transportation is the most essential condition for the successful commercial development of a country. A good system of communication by land, water and air is one of the most important of all the requisites for the prosperity of a nation. This system is not only related to economy but an inevitable organ of socio-cultural assimilation that helps to exchange the views of people with others.

The transport and communication system in the beginning of civilization was very simple. Initially man, then assisted by animals were the only means of transport. Presently, man calls to his service water, wind, stream, electricity, light, fossil and even the power of atoms for carrying goods locally and distantly. As a result, a journey which required months a hundred years ago can be completed to-day in a few days or even in a few hours.

Transport and communication system of the world can basically be divided into three major heads- land, water and air. These are also subdivided into several categories. Of various modes of transport, because of relief and climate, only in a few countries all the systems are present, while in others only two or three types are existed. Though all of these three broad categories of the said system are available in India; the regional variations also persist equally.

Indian civilization is now regarded as one of the earliest civilizations of the world. Several empires had been grown up in India through the centuries. Changes in internal and external boundaries of India had been occurred accordingly. Modern Indian internal and external administrative structure is the by-product of British rule. However, last

remarkable internal and external changes were occurred by the British Government in India. While internally, India's provincial and district level boundaries were demarcated in modern form by the British Government in India; its external boundary has also been shaped its present form by the same Government. Despite of this, the provincial administrative system created by the British Government in India and adopted by the independent Government of India later, is not proved to be a suitable division from geographical and social-cultural perspectives. Many of the provinces in India inherit the heterogeneous identity from these two perspectives and the present state of West Bengal is the best example of this kind.

The transport and communication system of West Bengal in ancient times remained in obscurity due to lack of sufficient reliable data. Yet, several references are found in historical texts on ancient internal and external trade and trade routes of Bengal most of which were connected by land or water through Tamralipta, the ancient port of Bengal. In pre-medieval period when regional powers began to flourish in different nook and corner of India, new roads were constructed and new water routes were discovered for the smooth conduct of inter-state foreign policy and trade. It seems that Bengal under the Palas and the Senas was not the exception.

Chronological references on construction of *Shahi Sharaks* or royal roads were found since the consolidation and expansion of the Sultanate in Bengal. This trend of building royal roads had been taken forward by Muslim rulers of Bengal. However, in the early days of the Company Raj when its surveyors were restlessly travelling through different parts of Bengal, they found the land almost as roadless. Bengal, at that time, as they viewed, was mostly river centric in terms of transport and communication with a handful existence of *Shahi Sharaks* which were passable only in dry season. Different

types of bullock carts, horse carts, palanquins, doolies were principal road vehicles of that time. Different shapes and sizes of boats with different names e.g. Kosa, Bazra, Mayurpankhi, Saptadinga, Pansi, Dingi, Pinnace, Bhaulia, Soona Mooka and many others sailed on rivers of Bengal throughout the year.

There was no clear transport policy of the Government of the English East India Company not in Bengal but all over India till the first half of the nineteenth century. A few roads constructed and maintained under the direct control and supervision of the Military Board of the EEIC till that time, were targeted to meet the urgent needs of the cantonments and towns or to fulfil imperial demands. However, the Company tried to follow a concrete transport policy in the Bengal Presidency with the establishment of the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1854. Gradually the roadways, railways and waterways were developed. But this process of development had gone through a series of evolution. Several factors in the course of Indian history held responsible as the determinates towards the transport policy of the Government. Two World Wars were the best suited example of this kind in colonial period. Similarly, the transport policy of independent Government of India had been equally modified due to the Partition in 1947 and equally for the Sino-Indian War of 1962.

In recent times the word North Bengal has often been used by the popular newspapers, electronic media, academic scholars and most of all by the Government. Though this term was coined by the colonial officialdom to describe the land of the north of the river Ganges and Padma i.e. presently the districts of Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Cooch Behar of West Bengal; this geographical region mostly inherits the similarity of the Rajshahi Division of undivided Bengal Presidency; comprising eight districts e.g. Rajshahi, Pabna,

Malda, Dinajpur, Bogra, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. In spite of special status of Cooch Behar as an independent native state, it was also regarded within the periphery of North Bengal. In fact, North Bengal geographically and strategically inherits some special characteristics which give itself unique identity from other parts of Bengal. Geographically it is a mixture of three heterogeneous geo-climatic zones which are associated with the sub-Himalayan region, Terai-Duars region and Gangetic plains respectively. Hence, this region produces so many agricultural commodities and forest resources. Strategically, while it is internally surrounded by three provinces of India; it is externally bounded by four foreign nations. Thus, it truly becomes a corridor. Therefore, the transport and communication system of North Bengal bound to be unique from any part of Bengal.

The history of research on different facet of North Bengal is not as old as Calcutta-centric South Bengal. The academic and scholastic pursuits on North Bengal have so far been dominated by socio-cultural and political themes. Though today's world seeks to measure the development or non-development of a particular region by economic perspective, it can be said that this region as a whole has rarely been seen from the point of modern economic angle. Transport and communication system, being a vital part of economy and commerce, seems to be a neglected area of study when North Bengal is concern. Though some research works have been carried out on the issue of transport and communication system of the Gangetic West Bengal, no scholarly attention is visible in respect of northern part of West Bengal. A few writings on local periodicals and popular journals have been published on transport and communication of North Bengal. Neither any of these documents has perfectly followed the proper methodology of scholarly pursuit nor depict a concrete picture of the entire region. In this back drop, this project i.e. 'Growth and Development of Transport and Communication of North Bengal (1854-

1962)' has been chosen as the topic of thesis. The period what has been selected for study, covers the period starting from 1854, whence for the first time the EEIC wanted to formulate a specific policy towards the development of transport and communication in the then Bengal Presidency and proceeds up to the year 1962, after which the independent Government of India once again realised the need to renew the transport and communication system of North Bengal.

It must be mentioned that the references of some parts of present nation of Bangladesh will be made very frequently in the proposed dissertation because of the interconnection of both the lands in respect of transport and communication for a long time. Though, North Bengal now comprises of eight districts due to division of districts for administrative purposes, old district jurisdiction have been generally followed for averting the confusions. Besides, the analysis has been confined to the limits of various modes of transportation e.g. the roadways, the railways, the waterways and the airways. Though, the Telegraph and Postal communication is a vital part of communication system, it has been excluded from the discussion.

The aim of this dissertation is to identify the changes in Government policies during the period from 1854 to 1962 and their effects on the transport and communication system of North Bengal. The indigenous reaction as well as impact on regional economy due to introduction of modern transport and communication system in that region is to be examined. Whether there was any sub regional variation in the progress of development also is to be investigated.

Literature review is an important part of a thesis. But it can be stated without any hesitation that the transport and communication of North Bengal is mostly an unexplored

area in the field of intellectual world. Insufficient materials mostly compel the historians and researchers to overturn from historical enquiries on North Bengal in respect of transport and communication.

Before over viewing literature it is worth mentioning that there is no literature directly related to this proposed dissertation area. Till now no major publication has covered up the proposed area completely. Never the less, two published dissertation papers which are partly related to this proposed area of study are mentioned below. Firstly, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India : A historical survey focusing North Bengal* by Dr. Narayan Chandra Saha, (Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003) where Dr. Saha has studied the Marwari Community as a business community of North Bengal. Though he has tried to explore the periphery of business of the said community with a minimal introduction of transportation, its angle of study is totally related to trade and commerce. Secondly, *Colonial Economy in North Bengal: 1833-1933* by Sujit Ghosh (Paschimbanga Anchalik Itihas O Loksanskriti Charcha Kendra, Kolkata, 2016) where he has studied the economy of North Bengal within a part of colonial frame. In his book, Sri Ghosh has included two descriptive chapters on railways and communication set-up of North Bengal within his time frame. Despite this, neither the time frame of the book nor the aim of the author for writing this book, fail to fit with this thesis in toto, The strongest drawback of this book perhaps lies in the absence of logical queries behind the development communication system of the region.

Some of the related dissertation papers of Department of History, University of North Bengal are also worthy for mentioning. These are-

1. Utpal Roy. *Growth and Development of Railways in North Bengal and its Impact on Society and Economy (1870-1950)*. 2014.

2. Bhawna Rai. *History of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and Its Socio-Economic Impact on Darjeeling (1880-1999)*. 2014.
3. Ashim Kumar Sarkar. *Social, Economic and Political Transition of A Bengal District: Malda (1876-1953)*. 2010.
4. Ananda Gopal Ghosh. *The Factory of the English East India Company of Malda (1757-1833)*. 1981.
5. Sujit Chandra Guha. *Silk Industry of Malda and Murshidabad from 1660 - 1833: A study of Its Production, Organization, Production Relations, Market and the Effect of Decline on the Economy of the People*. 2005.

The above mentioned research projects, excluding first two, though do not directly deal with this area of study; have thrown much light on the transport and communication system of colonial North Bengal. The researchers have studied the transportation of the region as a part of trading activities of the colonial masters. Accordingly, first two theses, though are unique primary works in their field; these are a minimal part of this study. In this connection different works at the other branches of social sciences viz. Geography, Economics and Commerce have been examined. Although several dissertation papers related to transport and communication system of North Bengal is available, all of these are beyond the time frame of this study. Some of these are mentioned below.

1. Chaya Rani Paul. *Problems of Development in Darjeeling Hills with Special Reference to Rural Areas since Independence*. N.B.U: 1996.
2. Krishna Ghosh. *Industrial Development in North Bengal* N.B.U: 1981.
3. Partha Chandra Chakraborty. *Performance and Appraisal of North Bengal States Transport Corporation from 1967-68 to 1987-88*. N.B.U: 1990.

4. Purnima Saha. *Problems and Prospects of Development of Siliguri and Jalpaiguri Towns: A Comparative Study*. N.B.U: 1991.
5. Ranjit Roy. *Economic Changes in Siliguri and Problems of Its Urban Development*. N.B.U: 1985.
6. Shyamal Mukhopadhyay. *Urban Development in North Bengal: Its Process, Character and Future Trends*. N.B.U: 1977.

After reviewing all the above dissertation papers it is perceived that this proposed area of research i.e. the Growth and Development of Transport and Communication of North Bengal (1854-1962) is a virgin area of study. However, some secondary sources, where the references of transport and communication of North Bengal are made rarely are also reviewed. Some of these are written in 'Queen's Language' and some are in vernacular. These are overviewed in the following.

Sunil Kumar Munsil. *Geography And Transportation In Eastern India Under The British Raj*. First Edition. Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi & Company. 1980.

This is one of the most valuable books on transportation in Eastern India under the colonial hegemony. The total work has been done depending on the primary sources or government records those have been included to its bibliography. He starts his journey with an introduction on 'inherited base' where he includes the experiences of colonial surveyors like Major James Rennell, Francis Buchanon, W.W.Hunter and many others on the then Bengal's geography and transportation and then comes forward with the development of roadways, stream navigation and railways under the company and the Raj. Side by side the full work has been enriched with the addition of maps, tables, diagrams.

The writer has confined his journey within the framework of colonial rule. He has travelled only within the boundary of main imperial line of transportation. The general mode of transportation, which was carried out through indigenous bullock carts on road, through country boats on river are out of his analysis. Side by side the air transportation has been excluded. Though the term Eastern India has been used, the author mainly has confined his journey within the periphery of the then Bengal Presidency. He has studied all the matter as the competition against the railways.

Sukla Bhaduri. *Transport And Regional Development: A Case Study Of Road Transport Of West Bengal*. First Edition. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. 1992.

This work is a nice attempt by the author to establish the notion of inter-relationship between 'transport and regional development' through a case study of road transport of West Bengal. The author has made her journey from the very beginning of the twentieth century till 1974. She starts with the historical development of roads in colonial Bengal and after a careful journey she has come to conclusion with the view that regional development mostly depends on good transportation. Though she has made her journey on different facades of road transportation of modern Bengal, she avoids spending not even a single line on railways and other modes of modern transportation. In fact she has studied the developmental process deeply connected with the roadways transportation and her district wise analysis on the present picture of roadways through different sources like PWD Road map, Lead Bank Survey, Annual Administrative Reports, RTO Reports and many others support her hypothesis. She has agreed with the govt. attitude which was clearly recognized by the *Annual report on the Administration of the Bengal Presidency for 1860-1861* indicating govt. intentions to connect the districts as well as provinces through metalled roads for the benefits of communication. But the author

bypasses the other motives of the govt. i.e. to suppress the uprisings and to communicate the districts in urgency like during draught and flood and so many others at an early ease. However, this is a nice effort by the author to look into two separate issues with a separate angle.

Amitabha Roy. *Sanko Theke Setu (A chronological outline of the road bridges of West Bengal)*. First Edition. Kolkata: West Bengal State Book Board. July, 2000. (In Bengali)

In introduction the writer claims that it is not a ‘history’ book rather a collection of information relating to bridges of Bengal in a chronological order. It deals with general information in relation with the history of bridges built in different parts of Bengal since the unknown past to the construction of Second Hugli Bridge or Vidyasagar Setu. Besides it provides valuable information on major rivers of West Bengal in the annexure.

The writer emphasizes much on the bridges constructed on various rivers of southern part of west Bengal and concentrates deeply on two bridges i.e. the Howrah Bridge or the Rabindra Setu and the Second Hugli Bridge or the Vidyasagar Setu. The writer ignores to mention or puts the instance of step motherly in the cases of bridges particularly of North Bengal. He does not provide even a single line on the Farakka Barrage without which one cannot imagine to reach Calcutta from that of the Northern part of Bengal.

Narendra Krishna Sinha (Ed.). *The History Of Bengal (1757-1905)*. First Edition. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Publication. 1967.

After the publications of two rich volumes of ‘History of Bengal’ edited by Ramesh Chandra Majumder and Jadunath Sarkar respectively by the University of Dhaka on ancient and medieval Bengal, the readers had been waiting anxiously for the third

volume which would be on history of modern Bengal. This volume minimizes the hopes and aspirations of the readers. It is an enriched volume on modern Bengal viewed mostly from socio-political and economic angles of the then Bengal (1757-1905). Its three sections cover all the above segments. In this edited volume there are three chapters related to economic history, viz.

1. Administrative, Economic and Social History (1757-1793) by N.K.Sinha,
2. Agrarian Relations in Bengal (1859-1885) by Binoy Kr. Choudhury,
3. Foreign and Inland trade by Dr. Nilmani Mukherjee.

Amongst these the third chapter depicts an overall picture of trade pattern of nineteenth century Bengal. Here he adds a subtitle entitled as ‘the transportation system’ where he remarks that the transportation was mainly river oriented. For North Bengal, he quotes, “The main river routes of the region were the rivers of the Ganges and of the Brahmaputra. Almost all other rivers of Bengal were tributaries or distributaries of these two main lines of communication”. While he mentions some ‘hats’ or marts of each district which were flourishing centres for trade and commerce of the then Bengal; he does not describe how the trade or commodities were carried out between Calcutta and these centres i.e. the author keeps silence mentioning the trade routes. He even does not mention the land routes.

Subodh Kumar Mukhopadhyay. *Prak Palashi Bangla (Social and Economic Life-1700 to 1757)*. First Edition. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi Publication. 1982. (In Bengali)

It’s a very useful work on pre-Plassey society and economy of Bengal. The author has tried to depict the socio-political scenario of Bengal (1700-1757). It contains twelve chapters related to previously mentioned subject. In its fourth chapter entitled as ‘*banijya*

*o jogajog*'(trade and communication) he gives valuable information on trade and communication. Though there were some roads in West Bengal, North Bengal and the eastern part of Bengal, he adds, “was mainly river centric”. He comes to conclusion with the view that the roads which were existed then were mainly mail roads. He mentions some routes of communication. Amongst these his hints for Calcutta-Dhaka trade route through the river Atrai attracts and grows doubt simultaneously to his work. The chapter on ‘mail runner’ is also very informative.

Gokul Chandra Das. *Banglar Nauka*. First Edition. Calcutta: Pragatishil Prakashak, April, 2011. (In Bengali)

This work is a valuable addition to the history of river transportation or particularly to the boat industry of Bengal. The author refers many quotes from the extract of the travelogues of European sailors, Christian missionaries, general visitors, higher officials even honourable ladies of some dignified officials who travelled by boats. Above all he collects some sketches of James Hornell and James Princep on Bengal Boats and all of these are included to this book. In conclusion the writer hints to some points which are the probable causes behind the degradation and disappearances of this indigenous and eco- friendly industry i.e. the boat industry. Had there been a chapter relating to various water routes of Bengal, the effort of the writer may be fulfilled.

There are also some vernacular books on regional history which throw light upon various themes on the related areas of the concerned. Most of these are journals and periodicals and written in Bengali. But most of these are Some of these are as follow-

1. Dhananjoy Roy. *Dinajpur Jelar Itihas*. First Edition. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi Publication. 2006.

2. Ichhamuddin Sarkar (Ed.). *Darjeelinger Itihas* by Sree Harimohan Sanyal (1880). Kolkata: Mitram. 2005.
3. Malay Sankar Bhattachartjee (Ed.). *Maldaha Charcha(1)- A collection of essays on Malda*. Malda: Bangiya Prakashak O Pustak Bikreta Sabha. 2011.
4. Onkar Bandyopadhyay. *Jana Ajanar Maldaha*. Malda: Fifth Edition. 2006.
5. Pradyot Ghosh. *Maldaha Jelar Itihas* (First Part). Calcutta: Pustak Bipani. 2004.
6. Binay Barman and Kartik Chandra Barman (Ed.). *History and Culture of North Bengal*. Kolkata: Pragatishil Prokashak. 2015.
7. Anandagopal Ghosh and Supam Biswas (Ed.). *Paribartaner Dharai Tista-Banger Jalpaiguri Jela*. Kolkata: Pragatishil Prakashak. 2016.

These volumes and many others are mainly the efforts from their writers or editors to look the concerned region on various angles. All of these may inform the readers to these concerned areas or districts, but these writings are not beyond suspicion in all occasion as most of these have not followed proper references and mostly relied upon local oral data. Here, in this connection, I would like to mention two efforts from the little magazines of North Bengal and one from Calcutta. The first is *Madhuparni's* (a Bengali periodical) special six volumes related to six districts of North Bengal. These volumes under the general editorship of Ajitesh Bhattacharjee thrust upon almost all the aspects of society, polity, economy and culture of North Bengal through the ages. Many scholars have tried to write the communicative history of North Bengal in different volumes. But in many of them we find the absence of using proper references. Secondly, several volumes of *Kirat Bhumi* (a Bengali periodical of Jalpaiguri) are also too much remarkable for the northern part of North Bengal.

*Swadesh Charcha Lok*, another socio-cultural journal in Bengali also must be mentioned in this respect. Its two special volumes i.e. Book Fair-2006 and that of 2007 entitled as '*Sekaler path ghat*' (antiquated roads and harbours) have made its special journey to cover up all the roadways and waterways since the unknown past to post colonial India and Bangladesh and present a more distinct picture than all the others to the readers. Amongst the articles enclosed '*Prak Oupanibeshik Yuge Uttarbanga-Bhutan-Assam Sarak Banijyapath*' by Partha Sen, '*Cooch Behar Jelar Sekaler Path*' by Abhijit Das, '*Lokgane Path O Ghatir Byanjana*' by Dinesh Roy, '*Gour-Maldaha Jelar Atit-kaler Path Parichay*' by Kamal Basak, '*Jalpaiguri: Smrity Bismritir Ghatir Katha*' by Goutam Guha Roy and '*Je Path Gekhhe Sabkhane*' by Dhananjoy Roy are very informative but special references should be made to the last one. Mr. Roy through his article has covered all the six districts of North Bengal and describes the developmental process of road ways and railways in these districts in the colonial period. But the major drawback of this article is that the writer avoids mentioning any reference to his support.

All the above mentioned books, journals, periodicals, little magazines are very useful materials from where we may be able to get valuable information and we can imagine the overall picture on transport and communication of North Bengal. All the above might be great efforts to give a new addition to the knowledge world, but all of these have some drawbacks and also the research gaps simultaneously. For example, all the discussed works fail to depict the clear picture or 'road map' both on land and water of colonial Bengal or North Bengal. Besides who were involved with those various systems? - No one attempts to answer. Again when the mode of communication of this particular region was mainly riverine, why the govt. did not continue it or why did the Government encourage the establishment of roadways and railways in lieu of traditional system- these questions must be answered.

From the above discussion it is clear that a detailed study on the growth and development of Transport and communication of North Bengal has not yet been done. Thus a detailed analysis on the pre-mentioned work may be a unique opportunity to discover North Bengal from a separate perspective. The study has attempted to search for the answers of the following queries through the chapters.

1. What were the characteristic features of traditional transport and communication system of North Bengal in pre-colonial era?
2. What were the causes behind the establishment of Public Works Department in 1854? How far the transport policy of the colonial Government of Bengal was differ from that of the pre-colonial age?
3. What were the developments in the sphere of transport and communication of North Bengal since the establishment of the Public Works Department in 1854?
4. What were the impacts of new system of transportation on society, economy and politics of North Bengal?
5. Did the Second World War compel the colonial Government to initiate a new transport policy in North Bengal?
6. Was the post independent phase a major dislocation in respect of transport and communication in North Bengal?
7. What were the effects of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 in respect to the transportation and communication in North Bengal?

This doctoral dissertation has been divided into seven chapters. In CHAPTER-1 entitled as 'PRE-COLONIAL SET UP' a journey has been made to explore the pre-colonial transport and communication set up of North Bengal aiming at comprising and contrasting it with the system of later times. Although, the word 'Pre-Colonial Age'

literally denotes for the period before the advent of colonial rule, it is unjust to regard the term always as a political phenomenon when the political hegemony shifted to the hands of colonial powers from their indigenous counterpart. Infact in Bengal, as accepted commonly, the process of political control had been started to be shifted to the hands of the English East India Company in 1757, though it was not till 1765 when the said Company was granted the '*Diwani*' for achieving the supremacy which afterwards influenced and overpowered all other fields of society and economy of indigenous uniqueness. Most of the Western measures were accepted and adopted for all the human needs accordingly. Thus the indigenous society and economy as like political field, had been colonised gradually. As the study begins with the establishment of the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1854, which seems to be the turning point of the introduction of modern ways towards transport and communication system of the then Bengal on colonial line based on European methods and techniques; it is not illegitimate to regard the pre-1854 era as the Pre-colonial Age in this perspective. Hence, in this chapter Pre-colonial set up relates to all of the transport and communication system of North Bengal till 1854.

CHAPTER-2 of this thesis thrusts upon the changed administrative policy of the Colonial Government which had formulated the road policy as well as the transport and communication policy of the colonial Government of Bengal. This chapter deals with the perspective of establishment of the PWD and its administration in Bengal Presidency emphasising special importance to North Bengal.

CHAPTER-3, entitled as 'DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION' mostly relates to the quantitative description of development of transport and communication system of North Bengal since the middle of nineteenth century till the beginning years of thirties of twentieth century. This chapter has been

subdivided into four sub-chapters viz. ROADWAYS, INLAND NAVIGATION, RAILWAYS and TRANSPORTATION IN HILL REGION. The objective of this chapter is to search how far communicational development had been occurred in the concerned region during the proposed time frame. The issue of Government strategy towards the development of various ways of communication e.g. roadways, waterways and railways in North Bengal have been analysed.

Next to CHAPTER-3 i.e. CHAPTER-4 deals with consequences of introduction of new system of transportation on society, economy and culture of North Bengal. This chapter also aims at searching for indigenous reactions towards the implementation of the Government policy in the transport and communication sector.

CHAPTER-6 surveys the nature of transport and communication system of North Bengal in the perspective of the World War II. This chapter also makes its journey to have a query on the reflection of Government policy which was adopted due to the outcome of the World War II or more precisely due to probable Japanese invasion in that region.

The Great Partition of Bengal followed by the independence of India in 1947 and its impacts on transport and communication of North Bengal is the basic point of concentration of CHAPTER-7.

Lastly, the consequences of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 on the transport and communication system of North Bengal is the chief area of study of CHAPTER-7. It aims at seeking the developments in the sphere of transport and communication system of North Bengal as the result of outcome of the war.

Concentrating upon the issue of ‘Growth and Development of Transport and Communication of North Bengal (1854-1962)’ following hypotheses have been developed for testing.

1. The geographical location, economic and strategic importance of North Bengal were the most valuable factors that compelled the colonial Government of India to follow the specific policy towards the transport and communication of North Bengal since the establishment of Public Works Department (1854).
2. The tragic Partition of the country in 1947 and specifically the Radcliffe Award that trifurcated India and bifurcated North Bengal had abruptly destroyed the transport and communication system of North Bengal. This was the most valuable factor that affected the rail, road and riverine communication of the region.
3. North Bengal had received the attention of the country and the Government of India in 1962 when the Sino-Indian Border conflict was appeared to be a war. It revealed the hollowness and weakness of the transport and communication policy of the Government of India in relation to the defence of the region. So, the transport and communication system of North Bengal became an integral part of the national defence.

In order to understand the transport and communicational pattern of North Bengal, following methodology has been adopted for collecting data.

- A. The proposed research work is designed depending on empirically testable documents. Data have been collected from primary and secondary literary sources. The records of various missions led by reputed officials to the courts of different rulers of northeast India and neighbouring countries from Calcutta, travelogues

dealing with North Bengal have been scrutinized in order to know the traditional system of transportation in the proposed region. Different enquiry committee reports, survey reports, PWD reports, Railway Board reports, Annual Administration reports, District Administrative Reports, Revenue Board Reports, Central and State Legislative Assembly Proceedings and many other Government records are consulted. Apart from these references and valuable notes from West Bengal State Archives (Kolkata), National Library (Kolkata), The Asiatic Society (Kolkata) have been collected as research materials. Personal records, Zamindari family records, traditional merchant family records are also been scrutinized.

- B. Celebrated works of eminent scholars are consulted as secondary works. Articles, journals, unpublished documents, reviews, periodicals are extensively used.
- C. Oral sources have also been utilized. Interviews of retired Government officials, members of different merchant families, carpenters who are engaged themselves in boat building hereditarily, boatmen, fishermen, retired servicemen who were in the job of different modes of transportation and of many others are taken to reach into a logical and empirical conclusion.