

Chapter- IV

Trade and Commerce

Until the late eighteenth century, when much of Asia was brought under effective European domination, the growing involvement of a number of Asian countries in world trade had profound effects on their economics and societies¹. Dutch and the English Companies were exempted from the payment of transit duties throughout Mughal India.

The Indian economy of the seventeenth century was predominantly agrarian in character. The bulk of the state revenue was provided by this very sector in the form of land revenue. Each of the other two sectors, the non agricultural sector producing manufactured goods and the services sector (including the trade sector) was much smaller. But although this conventional form of analyzing the structure of an economy has its uses, it would be misleading to measure the contribution of a particular sector to the efficient functioning of the economy by its size so defined. This was particularly so in the case of the Indian subcontinent with respect to both manufacturing and trade². The most important constituent of the manufacturing sector in the Indian as well as in Bengal economy was that producing textiles and silks for the European market³.

¹ Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1985, PP-3

² *Ibid*, p.258

³ *Ibid*, p.8.

In the 1660s, the French traveller, Francois Bernier, wrote: “In a word, Bengale⁴ abounds with every necessary of life; and it is this abundance that has induced so many *Portuguese, Half-castes* and other *Christians* to seek an asylum in this fertile kingdom⁵.”

The extent of commercial production and the direction of trade, changed between 1860 and 1900. The period saw an increase in the size of new population clusters based on non-agricultural activity. These included Calcutta itself, the Raniganj mining- industrial area, Serampur industrial area and North Bengal and Assam plantations. These towns were points of demand for rice. Rice was exported to other British colonies. In the eastern districts, from the 1850s, demand from the newly established jute mills near Calcutta, and demand for raw jute from jute mills elsewhere in the world stimulated jute cultivation.

Commercialization, with or without significant effects upon production or yield took place due to the railways and industrialization. The pre-railway transportation system consisted of overland or river-borne trade. The railway quickly drew trade away from the rivers, and increased the volume of trade⁶. So in this chapter we will discuss the trade and commerce of North Bengal through those lights mentioned above.

A. Jute Industry

⁴ To the European trading Companies, the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa together constituted a natural unit of operation denoted by the term “Bengal”.

⁵ Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, A.D. 1656-1668, ed. A. Constable (Oxford, 1934), PP. 438-439. Writing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Italian traveller Verthema had commented, “This country [the province of Bengal] abounds more in grain, flesh of every kind, in great quantity of sugar, also of ginger, and of great abundance of cotton, than any country in the world” (quoted in L.S.S.O’Malley and M. Chakravarti, *District Gazetteer Hooghly* [Calcutta, 1921],P.44) cited in Om Prakash’s book, *op. cit*,PP.25.

⁶ Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India 1857-1947*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012, PP.125

Under British rule, the principal items of manufactures in the Rajshahi Division, specially in the district of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur, were jute cloths and bags, molasses, tea, cinchona, a little silk and indigo, and country cloths. Jute cultivation in Bengal was a creation of international pressure for many events like Crimean War of 1854, during the time of Napoleonic War, high prices of flax etc. forced the Dundee mills to think about jute as alternative. As a result of which jute cultivation started to grow in the riverine plains of Eastern Bengal. The jute cultivation in North Bengal was due to the growth of world trade prompted the Europeans ; secondly the Marwari owners of the jutes had a linkages with the Marwari mill-owners in Calcutta through Calcutta port from where jute was exported to several countries. Even peasants' were agree to cultivate jute because of its high price⁷. It has been said that the Raiganj police-station of Dinajpur district was ascribed to the migration of foreign laborers who were attracted to the prosperity of the jute industry upto 1929. The extension of the broad-gauge railway beyond Parbatipur made an increase of trade here⁸.

During the time of the eighties of the nineteenth century, the manufacture of gunny-bags was in decline in Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri because they were supplemented by mill- made bags. About 19 millions yards of gunny-cloth were made at the Serajgunge jute mills. The manufacture of gunny-bags in Rajshahye, Bogra, and Darjeeling was very insignificant.

Molasses was manufactured more or less in every district, and was a thriving industry on the whole owing to the impetus given to the cultivation of sugarcane by the introduction of the sugarcane mills. They were largely made in Dinajpur, Rajshahye, Pabna, Bogra and Rungpore. More sugar was made in Jalpaiguri than in the other districts⁹.

⁷ Shesadri Prosad Bose, Colonial India, Predatory State: Emergence of New Social Structure in Jalpaiguri District (1865-1947), Readers Service, Kolkata, 2008.

⁸ Census 1931, p.47.

⁹ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No. 20.

B. Tea Industry

Under British rule native cultivation increased but on the western half, the district has given way to tea. The tea industry was started in 1856, and had gone ahead with great strides, until the greatest part of the culturable portion of the district in the hills and at the foot of the hills outside the Kalimpong sub division was under tea¹⁰. Before going into the discussion on tea industry, it's better to give a brief discussion on the interesting history of the introduction of tea industry. The establishment of the tea industry in Darjeeling was due to the enterprise of Dr. Campbell, the then Superintendent of Darjeeling. In 1834 the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, had appointed a Committee "for the purpose of submitting a plan for the introduction of tea culture into India." Before that in 1820s Major Bruce and Mr. Scott had discovered the tea plant growing wild in Assam. In 1839 the Assam Tea Company was formed¹¹. In the Annals of Indian Administration (1862) it was said: In Darjeeling the first trial of the tea plant was made in 1841 with a few seeds grown in Kumaon from China stock. It was not till 1856 that the first plantation was started at Kurseong, and another at Darjeeling, by Captain Samler, who was also the first to grow coffee¹². In that year the Alubari tea garden was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company, and another on the Lebong spur by the Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank; in 1859 the Dhutaria garden was started by Dr. Brougham; and between 1860 and 1864 four gardens, at Ging, Ambutia, Takdah and Phubsering were established by the Darjeeling Tea Company, and the

¹⁰ District Census Report, Darjeeling, 1891, p.1.

¹¹ LSSO'Malley,Op.Cit.P.72.

¹² Ibid, P.73.

gardens at Takvar and Badamtam by the Lebong Tea Company. Makaibari, Pandam and Steinthal tea estates were started at the early period¹³.

By the end of 1866, i.e., only ten years after the establishment of the industry on a commercial basis, there were no less than 39 gardens with 10,000 acres under cultivation, and on outturn of over 433,000 lbs. of tea. In 1870 there were 56 gardens with 11,000 acres under cultivation, employing 8,000 labourers and yielding nearly 1,700,000 lbs.; and in 1874 the number of gardens had increased to 113, the area under cultivation to 18,888 acres, the outturn to 3,928,000 lbs., and the labour force to 19,000 souls. Since that time the industry had progressed steadily¹⁴. The number of tea gardens in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, the area under cultivation in acres gross yield in pounds, and the average yield per acre from mature plants, are shown in the following table¹⁵:-

Table No. IV.1 Tea Statistics:

Districts	Number of Gardens			Area under cultivation in acres						Gross yield in pounds			Average yield per acre from mature plants		
				Mature plant			Immature plant								
	1883	1884	1885	1883	1884	1885	1883	1884	1885	1883	1884	1885	1883	1884	1885
Jalpaiguri...	63	106	123	6,091	7,648	8,441	3,129	5,615	8,907	1,983,124	2,673,884	3,583,999	32	349.6	414
Darjeeling...	169	170	175	26,992	29,127	30,771	6,825	6,395	7,728	7,628,825	7,955,987	9,090,298	22	273.1	329
Total...	232	276	298	33,083	36,775	39,212	9,954	12,010	16,635	9,611,949	10,629,871	12,674,297	...	...	...

The returns for 1890 showed 177 gardens, and an examination of the acreage contained in tea grants, shows that 242 square miles were comprised in tea estates¹⁶. In 1900 in Bengal the estimated outturn of

¹³ Ibid, P.74.

¹⁴ Ibid, P.74.

¹⁵ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No. 21.

¹⁶ District Census Report, Darjeeling, 1891, p.1.

tea was 46 ½ million pounds, valued at £976,187, against 27 ¼ million pounds, valued at £800,000, in 1891. So during the time of twentieth century this rapid expansion of tea cultivation made an immediate effect of its fall in prices and it was expected that the immediate future of that industry will far from reassuring¹⁷. We found from the Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling of O'Malley that in 1905 the number of gardens were 148 with 50,618 acres under cultivation and yielding nearly 12,447,471 Ibs¹⁸.

This was very thriving manufacture in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. The Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling observed that there was scarcely a planter who was not anxious to extend his garden, and he was constantly receiving applications for land in the small area reserved for native cultivation. In the East Teesta tract three new gardens opened at that time and three more about to be opened¹⁹. The expansion in this industry was noticeable because it was profitable on the one hand and the labour was free there, i.e., it was not controlled by any special legislative enactment, as in Assam. Black tea was planted here as the production of green tea was expensive²⁰.

Although the number of gardens fell back after reaching a peak of 235 in the Duars at the turn of the century the acreage under tea and the size of the labour force rose steadily until 1930²¹. A table is being shown here:

¹⁷ Census of India, 1901, Vol. VI, The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their feudatories, Part I, The Report, E.A.Gait, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902, Calcutta, p.8.

¹⁸ LSSO'Malley, op.cit. p.74.

¹⁹ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No. 21.

²⁰ Hurry Mohun Sannail, History of Darjeeling in Bengalee, Edited by Ichhamuddin Sarkar, Mitram, 2005.

²¹ Sugata Bose, The New Cambridge History of India III: 2, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.54.

Table No. IV.2 Tea Cultivation in the Jalpaiguri Duars²²

Year	Gardens	Acreage	Permanent Labour	Temporary Labour	Total Labour
1901	235	76,403	47,365	21,254	68,619
1911	191	90,859	56,693	18,622	75,315
1921	131(142) ²⁴	112,688	86,693	1,871	88,564
1931	151	132,074	112,591	4,262	116,853
1941 ²³	189	131,770	136,491	4,896	141,387
1951	158	134,473	-----	-----	178,009

Tea was grown and manufactured by Nepalese and Dhangur labour in the Terai. The supervision was almost entirely European. In the Terai, ordinary cultivation was carried on by the aboriginal Rajbansis, with an admixture of Muhammadan and other castes. Reclamation of land goes steadily, but it is still estimated that there is percentage of 45 percent of cultivated land²⁵. In the tea gardens actual workers greatly outnumbered dependents, for women and children found employment as easily as men. A table is given here to clear the idea²⁶:-

Table No. IV.3 Tea Employees Statistics:

²² Ibid ,cited in A. Mitra, Census of India 1951, Vol VI, Part IA(Calcutta, 1953), p.263 & also cited in Sharit Bhowmik, Class Formation in the Plantation system (Delhi,1981),p.53.

²³ 1941 & 51 data collected from Jalpaiguri District Handbook, p.III.

²⁴While it was 139 at Darjeeling with 56189 workers of which skilled labourer 1792, unskilled labourer(14 years & above) 40882 and unskilled labour (below 14 years)13003 cited in Rupkumar Barman, Contested Regionalism, Abhijit Publication, Delhi, 2007 and also from the Census of 1921, p.19.

²⁵ District Census Report, Darjeeling, 1891, p.1.

²⁶ Census 1921, p.388.

District	Number of employees			
	1921		1911	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Jalpaiguri	56,745	65,938	69,380	64,661
Darjeeling... ..	25,638	30,551	26,121	26,845

The planters had a role in public life they form a community prompt to devote their time and energies to the public service and to the development of Darjeeling. In the hills they constitute the agency for the construction and repair of roads, the establishment of schools and the improvement of sanitation; and, they were the backbone of the British Government in the district²⁷.

Mr. Dalton thought that the export of tea from Jalpaiguri “this year is nearly double what it was in the last,” and observed that “the tea concerns, the number of which is steadily increasing, are an important factor in the increase of trade of the district. On the one hand, with the continued success of the industry, larger and larger quantities of tea are exported year after year, and on the other many lakhs of rupees worth of machinery, with all the latest improvements and iron manufactures of sorts, sheet lead for packing, & c., are imported for use in the gardens, besides large quantities of food-grains, cotton-piece goods, and miscellaneous articles for the ever-increasing population of coolies employed in them.” The Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling estimates that about 77,704 maunds of tea were exported in 1885-86 against 72,570 maunds in 1884-85²⁸. The hide trade according to Mr. Dalton fell off in Jalpaiguri. It increased in Darjeeling. The trade in grains and pulses increased in Darjeeling.

²⁷ LSSO’Malley,op.cit., p.86.

²⁸Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No.28.

C. Timber

The timber was regarded to the colonial administrators and tea planters as the most essential items for making tea-chests and railway sleepers. By the Government Forest Act of 1865, with the beginning of Indian Forest Service, the Government began to make a definite policy regarding the Forest policy in India²⁹. Therefore the forest areas of North Bengal came under the Review of Colonial Forest policy. But Government was indifferent to save the forest rather we found the abundance use of timber for many purposes.

The following table compared the revenue and expenditure of the year with that of 1938-39 and the average of the preceding five years:-

	1939-40	1938-39	Average of 1933-34 to 1937-38
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Revenue ...	12,91,466	11,72,965	9,39,459
Expenditure_			
A ...	3,49,079	3,60,866	3,37,240
B ...	5,34,718	5,07,959	4,66,605
D- charges in England	33,101	37,901	...
E-Loss or gain in exchange	126	238	...
	_____	_____	_____
Total expenditure ...	9,17,024	9,06,964	8,03,845

²⁹ Shesadri Prosad Bose, Emergence of New Social Structure in Jalpaiguri District (1865-1947), Readers Service, Kolkata, 2008, p.181.

Surplus ...	3,74,442	2,66,001	1,35,614
-------------	----------	----------	----------

All the Divisions contributed to the increase in revenue. The increase was mainly due to a general improvement in trade. The large number of Sal trees sold in the previous year in the Jalpaiguri Division of which prices were paid partly by the purchasers during the year under report also accounted for the increase.

The decrease under “A-Conservancy and Works” was due to less departmental timber operation, re-classification of pay and travelling allowance of overseers, etc., under B- heads, less expenditure on fencing materials and climber cutting.

The decrease under “B-Establishment” was due to periodic increments and changing under this head pay and travelling allowance of overseers, etc., which were previously charged under A head.

The decrease under “D-charges in England” was due to few officers taking leave in England.

Account of timber and other produce cut or collected by Government Agency and brought to Depots, sold locally or otherwise disposed of, during the year 1939-40³⁰:

³⁰ Annual Progress Report on Forest Administration in the Presidency of Bengal for the year 1939-40, Chapter V.

Table No. IV.4 Timber or Other Produce Statistics:

Name of Division	Balance at commencement of the year in forests and sale depots.	Received during the year	Total	Disposed of during the year	Balance in hand at close of the year in forests a sale depots
Northern Circle.	c. ft.	c. ft.	c. ft.	c. ft.	c. ft.
Timber					
Darjeeling	797	6,501	7,298	6,742	556
Kalimpong	3,510	25,222	28,732	21,588	7,144
Kurseong	78,304	114,574	192,878	148,342	44,536
Jalpaiguri	2,564	12,390	14,954	13,189	1,765
Buxa	17,196	167,900	185,096	160,551	24,545
Total... ..	102,371	326,587	428,958	350,412	78,546
Fuel: Darjeeling ...	.....	875	875	875	...
Kurseong...	31,185	71,909	103,094	90,004	13,090
Buxa...	...	512,560	512,560	512,188	372
Total...	31,185	585,344	616,529	603,067	13,462
Bamboos					
	Nos.	Nos.	Nos.	Nos.	Nos.
Darjeeling...	...	687	687	687	...
Kalimpong...	...	160	160	160	...
Buxa...	1,123	24,986	26,109	26,109	...

Total...	1,123	25,833	26,956	26,956	...
Minor Produce.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Darjeeling...	...	559	559	559	...
Kalimpong...	500	46	546	46	500
Kurseong...	82	4,919	5,001	4,962	39
Jalpaiguri...	...	134	134	134	...
Buxa...	355	11,035	1,390	948	442.
Total...	937	16,693	7,630	6,649	981

The Forest Department expected that the timbers of Dooars will achieve the vast timber market of Oudh, Nepal and Eastern Bengal which will accelerate the financial profit³¹. For this timber trade in Northern circle as a whole, the Forest Department had built roads and bridges. At the end of the thirties and at the beginning of the forties of the twentieth century therefore three miles of Cart Road and two miles of bridle path were constructed at a cost of Rupees 16,176 and Rupees 200 respectively. While before that year it was 7 miles of Cart-road was constructed at a cost of Rupees 25,385. In support of this, following table will help us to understand the statement.

The lengths of roads and paths maintained at the close of 1940 is as follows³²:-

Table No. IV.5 Forest Road Service:

	Cart-Roads in Miles		Bridle paths Miles		Other paths Miles	
	1938-39	1939-40	1938-39	1939-40	1938-39	1939-40

³¹ Subhajyoti Roy, Transformation on the Bengal Frontier, Jalpaiguri 1865-1948, Routeledge Curzon, New York, 2002, p.-72.

³² Annual Progress Report on Forest Administration in the Presidency of Bengal for the year 1939-40, Chapter V.

Darjeeling... ..	23	23	259	259	33	33
Kalimpong	64	64	99	99	55	55
Kurseong... ..	81	81	155	156	...	...
Jalpaiguri... ..	164	164	4	4	1	1
Buxa	263	263	71	73	70	73
Total	595	595	588	591	159	162

With the construction of the North Bengal Railway in 1874, gradual demand for transporting tea and timber was appeared which provided the Forest Department with the much needed market for its products. Therefore there was growing demand for railway sleepers. In support of this a table is being shown here which along with deforestation procedure the demand from the railways also encouraged:

Table No. IV.6 Number of sleepers supplied from Buxa forest division, 1879-1882³³:-

Year	Number of sleepers supplied from the Buxa division
1879	18,449
1880	22,683
1881	29,865
1882	21,602

³³ Progress Report of the Forest Administration, 1880-81 & 1882/83 cited in Subhajyoti Roy's book, op.cit.

Even for many years there was little demand for fuel from tea gardens. As early as 1883 the demand for fuel made a problem and to solve this a working plan for the whole of the Jalpaiguri Division was outlined in 1892-93 by Manson and was sanctioned by the colonial Government in 1899³⁴. This was further devised in 1905 by the Bengal Government for providing large quantity of fuel to the tea-gardens and at the same time to obtain a fair supply of large timber trees. For tea-box planking Sissu trees were needed in Calcutta market³⁵.

D. Cinchona

The next in importance was the cultivation of cinchona. The first introduction was in 1862 at the Rangbi Valley. Then it was expanded to nearby spur of Rishap and Mangpu³⁶. In 1868-70 with the effort of Dr. Anderson a factory was established at Mangpu in connection with the Rangbi plantation. Before 1880 Dr. King, who was the then superintendent, initiated the policy of plantation on hybrid between cinchona succirubra and cinchona officinalis. The object of Government in maintaining these plantations was to supply the hospitals and the people with cheap remedy for malarial fever³⁷. The following statement

³⁴ Shesadri Prosad Bose, op.cit,p.183.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Hurry Mohun Sannail, op. cit. p.48.

³⁷ LSSO'Malley,op.cit., pp. 123-24.

regarding cinchona cultivation in Darjeeling was handed over to the Deputy Commissioner by Dr. King³⁸:-

Table No. IV.7 Cinchona cultivation Statistics:

	Number of plants			Gross yield			Profit		
	1883-84	1884-85	1885-86	1883-84	1884-85	1885-86	1883-84	1884-85	1885-86
Darjeeling	4,740,811	Not known	5,037,611	lb 8,714	lb 6,464	lb 210,153	Rs. 59,700	Rs. 37,582	Not furnished

In the Kalimpong subdivision there were only two gardens and two cinchona plantations developed in February 1891³⁹. In 1920s as had been said that Government established two cinchona plantations in the Darjeeling hills, but according to the industrial census they employed only 2,088 persons⁴⁰.

E. Tussur and Silk

The comparatively high percentage of industrial workers was mainly due to the silk industry, which was the staple of the Malda district. At the beginning of the 17th century the Dutch had an establishment at Old Malda and the East India Company had an agency in 1686 in that district⁴¹. The best quality muslins were produced at Sonargaon in the district of Dacca and the other important manufacturing centre was situated in Malda district⁴².

³⁸ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No. 21.

³⁹ District Census Report, Darjeeling, 1891, p.1.

⁴⁰ Census 1921, p.388.

⁴¹ Lambourne, p.59.

⁴² Om Prakash,op.cit., p.61.

In the eighties of the nineteenth century, there were five silk factories in the district of Malda under European management, besides numerous native silk filatures. The season was not a good one, as the worms were not so plentiful as usual, the mulberry having suffered severely owing to the drought and great heat during the first three months, and the heavy rainfall and floods during the latter portion of the season; this, too, was a gradual decaying branch of industry. The demand for silk appears to be falling off, and was insufficient to maintain the industry in its formerly prosperous condition⁴³.

F. Indigo, Saltpetre Brass and Bell-Metal Vessels & Country Clothes

Mr. Beadon discovered 11 small indigo concerns in Dinajpur under native management. The approximate outturn was 56 maunds and 32 seers⁴⁴. The manufacturing of saltpetre was carried on a small scale in the Beguserai sub-division of Munghyr and at Toolsihatta in Malda. The industry was not an important one in the Bhagulpur Division, and there was nothing new to notice regarding it⁴⁵. Nawabganje and English Bazar in Malda were the chief seats for the manufacture of brass and bell-metal vessels, the annual outturn of which was estimated to be worth about a lakh of rupees. During the year of 1884 a brick business was due to in the former place, many people being in temporary difficulties, owing to the floods sold their brass utensils, which, however, they re-purchased later on when in more prosperous circumstances⁴⁶.

Regarding country cloths, it was for local use only. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri observed that “there is no immediate prospect of the further development of any of the local industries, excepting tea. The railway brings everything so cheap to the local markets that there is no incentive to the Jalpaiguri manufacturer to extend his operations, as he cannot undersell the bonwallah or paikar.” It was

⁴³ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No. 53.

⁴⁴ Ibid, No. 21.

⁴⁵ Ibid, No. 56.

⁴⁶ Ibid, No. 61.

noteworthy that Messrs. Meeakin and Company opened a brewery at Sonada, in Darjeeling, for the manufacture of beer and porter. It can turn out 700 hogsheds of fermented liquor of different kinds and qualities each month of the working season, which was from November to April inclusive. It only supplied liquor to the Military Department⁴⁷.

G. Mine

The only mine was the copper mine at Suruk in Darjeeling. It was flooded and not worked in 1883. No attempt was made to work the numerous but very poor seams. The large copper mine near Rhenok, in Sikkim, continued to employ near 100 labourers daily⁴⁸.

Mica was used as a coating for boilers, though small a measure, in the conservation of stocks of wool and coal⁴⁹. Dr. Hooker had discovered the first coal near *Pankabarie* in 1849 and sample was sent to Calcutta. These were found in the beds of Gondwanas; at Kalijhora, Tista Valley; and at Dalingkote overlooking the Duars; but these were in a poor quality which was only used for bricket-making industry. Lime was found in the Duars, Buxa and Tertiary series, and Calcareous tufa⁵⁰.

The main traffic of North Bengal was carried on by means of river and railway communications. The registration block named “Northern Bengal,” which comprised the districts of the Rajshahye Division and the districts of Purnea and Malda, was served by the Northern Bengal State Railway and its extentions, the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway and the Kaunea-Dhurla railway. As the districts of Purnea and Malda were, however, at great distances from the railways mentioned., the trade carried on by these railways, i.e., the trade entered in the name of *Northern Bengal* block, almost exclusively

⁴⁷ Ibid, No.21.Ibid, No.21.

⁴⁸ Ibid, No.22.

⁴⁹ E.C.Dozey, op.cit., p.221.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

represented the rail-borne trade of the Rajshahye Division, excepting the district of Pubna. The internal trade of the several districts of the division was almost entirely carried on in the *bunders*, *gunjes*, and *hats* which abound in the division, carts, pack bullocks, and ponies being the means of conveyance to and from the centres of business, where the growers sell their produce and the merchants purchase it for export. The richer merchants of some districts also made the purchases directly from the ryots, to whom they made advances for the purpose. A large business was also done at the fairs, of which a good many were annually held in different parts of⁵¹ North Bengal.

It is found from a Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal for the year 1876, that a large market was held every Sunday in the Darjeeling Bazar, which was resorted to by a great many of the hill people and the laborers in the tea gardens. It was well sanitated⁵². The trade of Darjeeling district was conducted by means of weekly markets, held in the towns or large villages; and also by annual fairs or religious gatherings, where trade was carried on to a considerable extent. Ferry ghat and roadways were the only way for communication. The principal of these weekly markets were held at Darjeeling, Namshu, Rohini, and Kursiong in the hills; and at Phansideva, Baghdokra, Siliguri, Nuksarbari, Udaikari and Karaibari in the Terai sub-division. The four principle religious trading fares were held- (1) on the banks of the Great Ranjit river, and (2) at Namshu, on the banks of the Balasan river, both in the hills; (3) at Nuksarbari and (4) Hanskoa in the Terai sub-division. Of the local manufactures, tea and coarse bags woven from jute were chiefly manufactured for export. The crops of the district, with the exception of rice and potatoes, suffice for local wants only⁵³. Fish, grain and vegetables were largely brought to those markets from Purnea, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur, but no sanitary arrangements were made⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No. 23.

⁵² Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal for the year 1876, Section V.

⁵³ W.W.Hunter, Darjeeling, op.cit. p.158.

⁵⁴ Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal for the year 1876, Section V.

Except the presence of Bhutia and Lepcha, even some sellers and buyers came from Dacca, Murshidabad, Bhagulpur, Mungyer districts including the surrounding districts for gatherings in the fair. When Darjeeling was under the British, the then superintendent Dr. Campbell Sahib arranged a fair by Government aid at Tetulia, regarded as the important one in Bengal⁵⁵.

The different districts of North Bengal had trade with the independent States of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan on the north; with the other provinces of India on the west; with the other registration blocks of Bengal, and Calcutta; and with Assam on the north-east. It had also trade with Dacca. But the trade with Calcutta was the most important of all⁵⁶.

The following statement is a compilation from the quarterly returns of the rail-borne traffic of Bengal for the first three quarters of 1884-85:-

Table No. IV.8 Statistics of Rail-borne traffic of Bengal:

⁵⁵ Hurry Mohun Sannail, op. cit. p.53.

⁵⁶ Ibid, No.24.

External Trade of Northern Bengal by Rail and River with other Provinces during the first three quarters of 1885-86 as compared with the corresponding quarters of 1884-85.

IMPORTS.

	JUNE.				SEPTEMBER.				DECEMBER.				TOTAL.			
	1884-85.		1885-86.		1884-85.		1885-86.		1884-85.		1885-86.		1884-85.		1885-86.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.
	FROM OTHER PROVINCES.															
	854	.....	284	.....	205	.....	371	.....	1,152	.....	1,566	.....	2,271	.....	2,221	.....
	FROM ASSAM BY COUNTRY BOATS.															
	(a)2,32,403	(a)4,00,405	2,51,970	5,52,397	1,06,352	3,25,764	1,73,407	3,40,064	1,34,837	3,34,519	99,469	2,92,184	4,73,592	10,60,688	5,24,556	11,34,645
	FROM ASSAM BY INLAND STEAMERS.															
	.....	.....	2,536	10,355	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,336	10,355
Total Imports from Assam ...	2,32,403	4,00,405	2,54,506	5,62,752	1,06,352	3,25,764	1,73,407	3,40,064	1,34,837	3,34,519	99,469	2,92,184	4,73,592	10,60,688	5,27,672	11,34,645
Total Imports ...	2,33,257	.....	2,54,740	.....	1,06,617	.....	1,73,868	.....	1,35,989	.....	1,01,035	.....	4,75,863	.....	5,22,003	.....

EXPORTS.

	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	Mds.	Rs.	
		TO OTHER PROVINCES.															
		164	789	133	237	292	63	589	1,021
	TO ASSAM BY COUNTRY BOATS.																
	(a)75,995	(a)3,78,489	79,718	4,19,223	60,103	3,42,375	49,948	3,84,688	64,046	3,84,662	41,247	2,83,832	2,00,144	11,05,526	1,79,363	4,52,753	
	TO ASSAM BY INLAND STEAMERS.																
	(a)15,146	(a)89,735	44,607	2,53,283	38,680	1,46,528	59,301	2,61,650	7,156	45,729	66,797	1,03,737	60,982	2,31,300	1,70,575	2,34,300	
Total Exports to Assam ...	91,141	4,87,224	1,24,325	6,72,506	98,783	4,88,903	1,09,249	5,46,338	71,202	4,30,391	1,08,014	4,53,549	2,61,126	13,87,328	3,61,388	10,72,303	
Total Exports ...	91,305	.....	1,25,114	.....	98,916	.....	1,09,486	.....	71,494	.....	1,08,079	.....	2,61,715	.....	3,61,679	.....
GRAND TOTAL ...	3,24,562	.....	3,79,854	.....	2,05,583	.....	2,83,354	.....	2,07,483	.....	2,09,114	.....	7,37,378	.....	8,72,379	.....

(a) These figures relate to the quarter ending March 1884; those for the quarter ending June 1884 not being available, these figures have been taken to make so far an approximate comparison.

Table No. IV.9 Registered Trade of the Rajshahye Division:

It was observed that there were-		First three quarters	First three quarters
		1884-85	1885-86
		Mds.	Mds.
Imports from other provinces and Assam	...	4,76,868	5,29,693
Ditto ditto registration blocks of Bengal	...	10,01,058	8,85,842
Total Imports		14,76,921	14,15,635
Exports to the other provinces and Assam	...	2,61,715	3,42,679
Ditto ditto registration blocks of Bengal	...	18,88,763	18,81,461
Total Exports		21,60,478	22,24,140
Grand Total		36,27,399	36,39,675

Thus, approximately speaking, it appears that the registered trade of the Rajshahye Division increased during the first three quarters of the year, as compared with the corresponding quarters of the preceeding year.

The transfrontier trade of Bengal with Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet was affected by the war during the year 1914-15 to the extent of only 12 percent. The Department of Statistics had issued after the war to the returns, and according to this Department, the total value of exports and imports together amounted to 108 lakhs of Rupees as compared with 123 lakhs in the preceeding year⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ E.C.Dozey, op.cit. p.231.

The magnitude of the transactions with these states may be stated by the figures in the following statement:-

Table No. IV.10 Transfrontier Trade: Imports (1916-17) :

	Tibet	Nepal	Sikkim	Bhutan
Horses...	167,770	1,250	23,582	54,663
Cattle...	...	311,508	98,002	21,502
Sheep...	74,630	143,757	190,507	24,183
Animals...	...	1,122,683	179,413	69,123
Fruits...	10,416	1,048,316	802,735	39,745
Hides...	...	32,175	28,970	4,317
Skins...	162,071	...	2,079	298
Musk...	4,420	...	...	12,649
Butter...	...	113,229	155,625	13,748
Grease..	10,375	89,443	169,059	1,662
Spices...	...	9,445	408,165	5,191
Wool...	2,102,803	...	2,304	...
Silver Coins...	315,083	156,519	62,534	2,000
Apparel...	104,354	230	2,777	630
Yarn...	13,952	41,837	79,919	164
Piece-goods (F)...	170,240	27,859	29,284	39,028
Fruit...	41,465	...	33,353	416
Piece-goods (I)...	132,220	126,499	164,962	895
Oil...	2,545	9,006	41,189	1,587
Lubricants...	557	21,857	144,591	2,087
Salt...	...	29,365	76,605	2,801
Silks...	101,872	...	7,484	2,569
Silver coins...	60,100	87,932	21,302	4,448

Suger...	38,068	12,383	101,419	7,512
Tobacco...	61,048	4,719	70,239	12,038
Wax...	...	...	40,045	...
Woolen Fabrics...	81,370	...	...	...

H. Export of different commodities-

The most important articles of export of the division were rice, jute, both raw and manufactured, tea and tobacco; and the principle articles of import were piece-goods and salt. The trade of the division increased on the whole in 1885-86. The principle article of export was rice. Its exports was greater in Dinajpur in 1885-86, and Mr. Beadon made the following interesting observations in regard to the rice trade of that district:-

“In the north of the district there is a large export to Matigara Hat in the Darjeeling district, and the complete destruction of the main roads in the south show the extent of the rice trade towards Maldah

and Godagaree. The road from Sultanpore to Mohadebpore (18 miles) has been completed this year, but the traffic takes a more northerly line, and passes from Neetpore through Putnitollah and thence eastward. This road testifies most conclusively to the heavy export, more particularly by roads crossing it and leading southwards from it. Where all is so doubtful it is perhaps useless to hazard a guess as to the extent of the traffic of the district. There are, however, various ways of making rough estimates: one by taking the valuation of the road cess papers, striking an average of rent per bigah, and estimating the area under cultivation; then estimating the yield per acre, and, after deducting in the case of rice a certain amount for the support of the cultivators, to consider the balance the export trade of the district. Another way would be to take the railway returns, and to assume that they are a percentage of the traffic of the whole district; but this percentage it is difficult to arrive at satisfactorily. Another to build up an estimate upon the proceeds of the license tax, making an allowance on account of the excluded incomes below Rs. 500.

“I made some calculations, based upon information which I have in my office, which made the cultivated area of the district 1,405,254 acres. Taking 7 ½ maunds as the normal produce of the bigah and 22 maunds as the produce of an acre, we get the total produce of the district to be 3,09,15,588 maunds. Then assuming that each person consumes three-fourths of a seer a day, or 7 maunds a year (a most liberal allowance), we must deduct 1,06,00,422 maunds as the consumption in the district, and maunds 2,03,15,166 remain available for export. The value of this, at Rs. 2 per maund, is Rs. 4,06,30,332, and as there must be a large import trade to meet this, we may fairly assume that the value of the export and import trade of this district is nearly eight crores of rupees, unless there is a very large accumulation of silver or stock going on. We see from the railway returns that of this only maunds 9,27,908^{58*} are exported beyond the district by that agency, and 70,685* are carried within the district.

⁵⁸ *These figures appeared to be incorrect according to H.U.Browne, Commissioner of Rajshahye.

But this latter cannot be wholly added, because it may be assumed to be to some extent some part of the maunds 1,06,00,422* which I have deducted. This gives an idea, however rough, of the enormous trade which goes on in the district, and how little of it the railway was as yet succeeded in getting. The reason of this is not far to seek. In the first place though a branch line runs into Dinagepore, which may be said to be the heart of the district, the whole of the western side is still out off by large rivers, which not only render access to the railway difficult, but afford cheap and easy means of diverting the traffic from the railway. Next, the line at present runs through a very small portion of the district, and the railway really carries more than I show, as there are large exports from the district through Hili, and all stations north of Parbuttypore to Haldibari. Thirdly, the rates on the line are very high in comparison with the rates charged for the river- borne goods. Fourthly, the great delay at the different railway stations from want of sufficient carriage. I do not hesitate in speaking of this to say that the accumulations of grain and jute at every station on the line at the chief times of export are enough to frighten any merchant from trusting to export his produce to this means. The matter demands the serious attention of Government. Let Government, in the months of August, September and October, and again in January, February and March, ask for a return on any particular day of the grain lying *inside* and *outside* every station on the line, and compare that with the carrying capacity on wheels on the same day, and it will be seen how utterly inadequate the latter is. Then , again, the railway is liable to sudden disorganization by an earthquake or floods, and there is the break of line at Sara, not to mention the break of bulk from boat or cart at the railway station, and the break again at the place of export. But still there would be enormous profit to Government if the line were completed between Dinagepore and Purneah, and I can only urge that it may be pressed on.” The export from the Darjeeling Terai was, in consequence of the good crop, unusually large. It thus seemed that the trade in rice expanded in 1885-86⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No.26.

Jute occupied the next place in the list of articles of trade in North Bengal. It was reported that in the 80s of the nineteenth century the trade in jute increased in Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri. The cultivation of jute in the Darjeeling Terai and the manufacture of gunny-bags was said to be receiving more attention⁶⁰.

I. Import of Different Commodities

The trade in piece-goods was expanding on the whole from year to year owing to facilities of conveyance afforded by railway. There was a decrease in the import of piece-goods to Darjeeling, said to be due to a large import at the end of the 1883s.

There were three registering stations for the trade with Bhutan, and the following were the statistics furnished by the district officer of Julpaiguri:-

Table No. IV.11 Trade Statistics with Bhutan :

⁶⁰ Ibid, No.27.

ARTICLES.	EXPORTED FROM BHUTAN.			ARTICLES.	IMPORTED FROM BHUTAN.		
	Buxa.	Hantoo- para.	Ambaree.		Buxa.	Hantoo- para.	Ambaree.
Betel nuts Mds.	282 28 0	355 1 0	30 0 0	Mangista Mds.	29 35 0	511 0 0	10 20 0
Iron and its manufac- ture "	8 22 0	.....	.....	Fuel "	2,001 0 0	2,959 0 0	.....
Molasses "	216 20 0	550 0 0	208 0 0	Oranges "	83 23 0	.....	4 0 0
Tobacco "	623 20 0	1,710 0 0	573 0 0	Salt (foreign) "	84 16 0	.....	.....
Sandal wood "	229 2 0	.....	.....	Tea (ditto) "	25 24 0	.....	10 0 0
Copper and its manu- facture "	10 26 8	.....	2 25 0	Wax "	207 36 0	.....	.....
Kerosine oil ... .. "	.....	.....	1 0 0	Butter "	25 26 0	.....	.....
Rice "	6,344 20 0	1,540 0 0	222 0 0	Pepper "	10 18 0	.....	.....
Vermillion "	2 0 0	.....	.....	Rubber "	16 0 0	.....	.....
Betel "	12 0 0	.....	.....	Wheat "	7 0 0	.....	.....
Paddy ... .. "	.....	1,759 0 0	25 0 0	Ghee ... .. "	.....	16 27 0	0 20 0
Chooria ... .. "	.....	.....	61 0 0	Lac "	2 8 0	.....	.....
Pigeons No.	.....	.....	4	Goats No.	455	.....	.....
Fowls ... .. "	.....	331	.....	Horses ... .. "	.....	132	98
Goats ... .. "	.....	.....	2	Dogs ... .. "	.....	3	.....
Cotton piece-goods (European) Rs.	15,308 12 0	.....	654 0 0	Yak tails Rs.	857 1 0	147 0 0	236 0 0
Endee cloth ... .. "	.....	789 0 0	1,150 0 0	Blankets "	6,468 10 0	3,691 12 0	3,670 0 0
Broadcloth "	1,745 8 0	.....	.....	Musk "	6,319 0 0	69 0 0	284 0 0
				Tusk "	200 0 0	.....	.....
				Kharooa cloth "	56 8 0	.....	.....

Compared with 1884-85, there was a falling off trade on the whole, owing to the late internal commotions in Bhutan, but with the establishment of a settled government a temporary revival of trade may be possible⁶¹.

The Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling made the following observations in regard to the trade of that district:-

“Under the main heads of commerce in this district tea, piece-goods, rice, cinchona, salt, potatoes, Indian corn, hardware, tobacco, spirits, and fermental liquors and gunny-cloths are most prominent. The rarer articles of merchandise are wool, ponies and sheep, blankets, musk, borax, coral, yak tails, cheretta, shell-dye, resins, incense, china and alum, which come from Thibet through Sikhim and from Nepal on

⁶¹ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No.30.

their way to Calcutta and elsewhere. Other grains and pulses, coarse and fine flour, hides, indigo, salted fish, kerosene oil, lime and cement oil, ghee, spices, sugar, provisions and oilman's stores appear in large quantities among the figures. Except for stores and clothes, and the local products like tea, cinchona, and gunny-bags, these articles for the most part pass through the district on their way from Calcutta to Nepal, Sikkim, and Thibet, and appear as both imports and exports in the detailed report on the frontier trade.

“Pack ponies are the chief means by which food-grains in the hills are supplied, and the surplus taken away, while carts are used in the Terai. As in previous year, thousands of pack ponies brought up rice from Purneah to Kurseong, and thence distributed it.

“The traffic by the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway, as compared with the last year, shows a considerable increase under the items beer, cinchona, coarse and fine flour, grains and pulses, hides, rice, salt, tea and tea-lead. But, on the other hand a noteworthy decrease has taken place under piece-goods, kerosene oil, lime, and cement, liquors, metals, oil, ghee, potatoes, provisions and oilman's stores, spices, sugar, tobacco, wool, wrought timber, and other articles. The decrease in piece-goods is said to be due to a large import at the end of the previous year. Beer and liquor seem to have kept an equilibrium among themselves, the former rising and the latter falling off.

“The Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway Company say that they lost much business by the break on the Eastern Bengal State Railway. I fancy, however, that most of the articles which consignors wanted to send up at that period were only delayed. A really serious interruption was the complete closing of the Thibet passes from the middle of September till the end of January, at what is usually the very busiest time of the year.”

The main centres of distribution have been, in the order of their importance were Darjeeling, Matigara in the Terai, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Siliguri, Phulbazar, Pankabari and Nakshwarbari in the Terai. "The chief mart in the Terai and the second in the district in Matigara, which receives and sends round the surplus produces of the neighbouring tracts, and has become a connecting link between the hills and plains, and Nepal and the Northern Bengal State Railway. From it innumerable pony loads are continually going up and down, and it is connected with almost every trade centre in the district.

"Jute, though grown only in the south part of the Terai, is, with its attendant manufacture of gunny-bags, yearly receiving more attention in this district. Rice yielded a bumper crop, as the floods watered high tracts which usually do not produce it. The export of rice from the Terai this year was in consequence unusually large, as also of the grains and pulses which the flooded high lands produced in unusual abundance.

There was a considerable falling off in the imports of ponies and blankets, due to the passes of Thibet having been closed. A large quantity of the articles of small bulk which come from Thibet were smuggled through the blockade.

"I see also that the imports of butter and ghee fell off; also of poultry. These provisions come from Nepal, and I know of no cause there which can have affected the trade in them. Less rice and food-grains were imported of course because of our fine season. Less charcoal came in, I presume, because of the extraordinary mildness of the winter-at least I know of no other cause for it.

"The foregoing remarks explain the ebb and flow of trade into, out of, and through the district. It differed in no wise from what it was in 1884-85, except in so far as it was affected by the Thibetan policy, and the unusually fine season, both for tea and cereals, which we enjoyed. The break on the Eastern Bengal State Railway in September and October may possibly be considered a factor. There

was a revolution in Nepal in November, and in Bhutan civil war lingered throughout the year, but neither occurrence had the slightest effect on our frontier with these countries, unless in so far as the Tibetan blockade was due to their and China's interference in the Bhutan troubles.

“An item of special interest for particular reasons is the trans-frontier salt. In the season 1884-85, 714 maunds came in, which I pronounced to be the residuum of the quantities brought for their own consumption on the road by the different caravans. Last season only 316 maunds came in, of which 104 maunds came from the Thibet side and 212 maunds by the Nepal frontier road, though the salt conveyed by this route also ultimately comes from west Thibet. The decrease may be partly due to the blockade of the Thibetan passes from September to January. Our salt, however, is still found being conveyed for at least a day's march into Sikhim and Nepal beyond the frontier.”

The Deputy Commissioner stated the transition in the state of trade at Darjeeling due to the completion of the Darjeeling and Himalayan Railway. During the time of construction, the contractors and timber merchants connected with this, who paid substantial license fees, disappeared by replacing a new class who was chiefly by petty traders of the huckster class⁶². Their increasing number forced the municipality to erect range upon range of nine buildings suited to their requirements. Even they wanted for reduction of their license tax fee⁶³.

In conclusion, it is to be said that in the Rajshahye Division in all the districts, jute as the articles of trade, except Darjeeling; gunnies in Dinajpur, Pubna, Rungpore, and Jalpaiguri; rice in the districts of Dinajpur, Rajshahye, Bogra, and Rungpore; tobacco in Rungpore only; and tea in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling mainly contribute to the thriving condition of the ryots. The influence of the tea industry in the parts of the Jalpaiguri district adjoining the Terai and the Dooars had been marked. The increase of

⁶² This class transacted at the weekly markets, which have all the character of fairs.

⁶³ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No.31.

population was very rapid, and in Mynagoree and Kyraantee thanas there was very little land not taken up for cultivation. The district of Darjeeling was largely dependent on trade and manufactures. In fact the population of the hills had been mainly gathered by, and was chiefly dependent on, the tea industry, and the trade expanded in consequence⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ Proceedings of the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No.32.