

CHAPTER –I

FORMAL STRUCTURE OF COMPANY’S INTERNAL TRADE IN SOUTH-WEST BENGAL

Introduction; Established as a trading organisation, East India Company came to India with an intention of trade and commerce. They were inspired by the rulers of their own country.¹ The Company focused mainly on exportation in trade. They got advantages in smaller as well as larger fields of their trading in India consecutively.

In 1615 A.D. Tomas Roe came to Jahangir’s court as an ambassador of the king of England with an intention of trading. The introduction of English Company’s advantages in trade in India took place through Tomas Roe. They got permission to execute trade in India from the *Mughal* emperors. Their primary intention was to flourish the trade and business of the Company and also to provide Indian goods to the European markets. According to the will of Tomas Roe Company directed their business in India especially in Bengal that the servants of the Company would enter in to the hinterland in order to ensure the Company’s goods of trade and it might be forcefully. Initially, they would follow fair dealings and goodwill or offering bribes to the officers.² Factories (centres of production) were set up at the places sanctioned. It was decided that the factories would be controlled according to the rules and regulations of their own country.

As a trading organisation The East India Company was far more ahead than the other European Companies and the merchants of Asia because of the dominance and

¹ Henry Vansittart, *A Narrative of the Transaction in Bengal(1760-1764)*, Vol.-1, London, MDCCLXVI, pp. 7- 8

² Sukumar Bhattacharya, *The East India Company and Economy of Bengal From 1704-1740*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 12

integrated communications from places of manufacture to the selling markets by the heads and the subordinate officials of the factory (centres of production) and 'aurung' (wholesale trade centres / a place where any article of trade was manufactured and collected for wholesale disposal or export).³ In the seventeenth century the factories and *aurungs* were controlled by council of the main centre of trade in Hoogly.⁴ Later Calcutta became the main centre of trade and since then the factories and *aurungs* were controlled directly by the council.⁵

The European Companies had established factories in the important production and trading centres in South West Bengal to collect the trading commodities before the establishment of the English East India Company's permanent dominance in South West Bengal. Of these Radhanagar, Khirpai, Sonamukhi, Haripal, Golaghar, Kashijora ⁶ and Ghatal ⁷ were the remarkable centres of the East India Company. Apart from these the Company set up their *aurungs* in frontier Balasore and Balaramgori.⁸

The East India Company gained its permanent dominant position in South-West Bengal when *chakla* Midnapore and *chakla* Burdwan came under them in 1760. In those places so many factories and *aurungs* were set up. One Resident in *chakla* Midnapore and one Resident in *chakla* Burdwan were appointed as the heads of judicial, administration

³ Ibid, p. 129

⁴ Niranjana Dhar, *The Administrative of the East India Company in Bengal 1714- 1786* , Vol.1 (Political), Calcutta, Eureka Publishers, 1964, p.9

⁵ William Bolts, *Considerations on India Affairs*, London, MDCCLXXII (1772), pp.70-71

⁶ K.K. Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1960, pp.151,154

⁷ Sukumar Bhattacharya, *op.cit*, 1969, p.145

⁸ K.K.Datta, *op. cit*,1960, p.151

and revenue.⁹ John Stone and Hey were the first residents of *chakla* Midnapore and *chakla* Burdwan respectively.¹⁰

Internal trading network, trading organisation, procurements of goods, oppressive attitude of the trading authorities, oppose of the producers and the artisans in South West Bengal and its impact on trade will be discussed in this chapter.

I.1 Trading Network; Geographical Spread, Zones of Exchange in South West Bengal

Weaving industry was the most prosperous industry next to agriculture production in South West Bengal. Like others, weaving industry was developed by indigenous method. There were weaver families as well as workshops in the every important village. It was flourished by the local rulers (*zamindars* and *talukdars*) of Bishnupur, Midnapore and Burdwan. Cultivation of cotton and silk weaving got increased in large numbers. The European Companies—the Dutch, the French and the English came to these places for trading on cotton and silk textile. As a result a trading network developed between the outer world and these places. So, the conventional weaving organisation met a significant change. In South West Bengal after the acquisition of economic and territorial control the East India Company soon felt to regulate and improve the communication system.¹¹

In the eighteenth century Indian Ocean linked with the unknown regions of India through the European ships.¹² Their arrival connected the hinterland of South-West

⁹ Harry Verelst, *A view of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772, pp. 70-74

¹⁰ Farmingar, W.K.(ed), *The Fifth Report of the Affairs of the East India Company*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1917, p. cxxiv

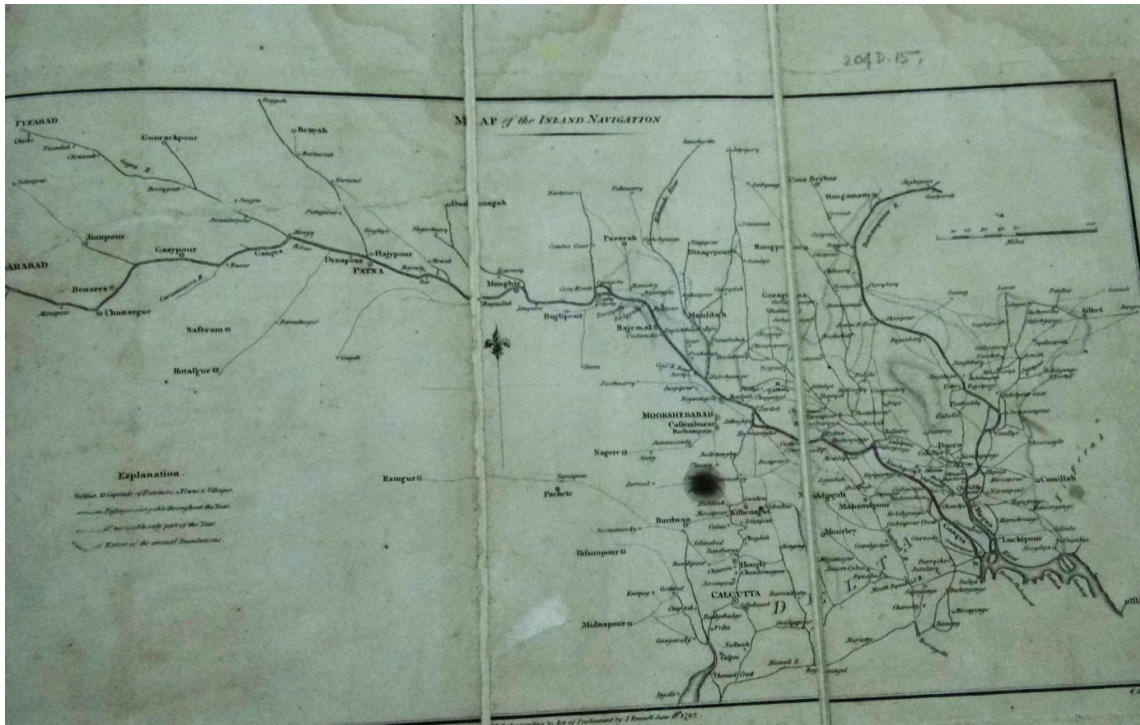
¹¹ Nitin Sinha, *Communication and Colonialism In Eastern India: Bihar, 1760s- 1880s*, Delhi, Anthem Press India, 2013, p. XIX

¹² Rila Mukherjee, Ed. *Vanguards of Globalisation ; Port- Cities from the Classical to the Modern*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, p.1

Bengal with the larger world. The European Companies set up their so many factories in search of essential goods and to collect them. In course of research in South- West Bengal it is noticed that most of the factories and *aurungs* were set up in the places of production and trading convenient to well communication. Unlike Birbhum most of the factories and *aurungs* were connected with the navigable channels. It was a usual fact that every part of Bengal had some navigable channels, even in the dry seasons, within 25 miles. It was more common to find a navigable channel within ‘a third of that distance’.¹³ So many large and small rivers flowed from the plateau of Choto Nagpur through South West Bengal. Rennell’s map reflects a clear idea on navigation system of South West Bengal. It has been cited below :(I.1)

¹³ James Rennell, *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan or the Mogul Empire* London, 1785. First Indian Edition, Calcutta, 1976, p. 382

Map No: I.1



Source: Rennell's Maps of Inland navigation June 1792, 204D.15

The economic development of rural Bengal was the boon of fluvial network. Transportation through navigable channels was more profitable as well as convenient and secured in commercial activities. During the time of Rennell 30,000 boatmen (*Majhi*) were engaged in internal navigation.¹⁴

Communication took place through four stages in land rout or water channel – from villages or production areas to the *bazars*, from one *bazar* to another, from that *bazars* to larger *bazars* or cities and from cities to the outer world.¹⁵ It is argued that space is partly produced by the 'connections (of a given place) to the rest of the world' and that different connections line at the heart of the production of different kinds of spaces.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Mukherjee Tilottama, *Of Roads and Rivers; Aspects of Travel and Transport in Eighteenth Century Bengal*, M. Phil Dissertation, J.N.U., 1997,

Similarly, it is seen that the European Companies, mainly EIC made a communication through the weaving goods trading that reflects a model like:

Model: 1 I

Production Centre/ Village → Factory → *Aurung*/Residency → Main Centre/Calcutta → Outer World

Production centres and distribution centres of weaving goods divided different regions of South West Bengal in to a several zones –‘North- East’, ‘North’, ‘Central’ and ‘South-West’. Cotton, silk piece goods and raw silk producing villages were interconnected with the *aurungs* on the basis of their producing goods. The produced goods would reach Calcutta, the main centre of the Company from *aurungs* through residency and then these would be exported to the outer world. In a word, the producing villages became the part of the international trading through an integrated trading network.

In the ‘North- Eastern’ zone of South-West Bengal the EIC had three main centres – Khirpai, Ghatal and Radhanagar. There were nine important *aurungs* under Khirpai, those of Chandrakona, Haripal, Joynagar, Coincolla, Radgebulhaut, Colina, Mayapur and Dinacolly.¹⁶ Eleventh *parganah*’s manufacturing stations were under Radhanagar.¹⁷ Numerous weavers, reported to be residing around the Chitwah Burda *aurung* were able to manufacture more than two *lakh* pieces of cloth. The cloths made in this *aurungs* were *Mulmuls*, *Dooreas*, *Charconnaes*, *Soosies*, Neck cloths, *Adgurraeas*, *Seersuckers* and *Currydarries*.¹⁸ Khirpai and Gopalpur produced *Dooreas* and *Mulmul*, *Cossijurrah* articles that were the general demand, especially for flowering in Dhaka.¹⁹ As a separate residency

¹⁶ Board of Trade Commercial (BOT) Vol. 7, 23rd May, 1776

¹⁷ Provincial Council of Revenue Burdwan, (PCRB) 17th June, 1776

¹⁸ BOT, Vol. 23, 21st May, 1780

¹⁹ BOT, Vol. 4, 11th August, 1775

Ghatal²⁰ was an important centre of the Company. There were so many *aurungs* under Ghatal like Gopigunj.

In South-West Bengal the production centres were established in indigenous way but latter these became more active by the influence of the factories or *aurungs* of the Europeans. The goods were transported mainly through the water ways from these centres to the headquarterd in Calcutta. The main route of water in this region was Rupnarayan in the eastern part of the South- West Bengal frontier. It was first cited in Rennell's map. Dwarakeswar and Shilai merge and become Rupnarayan at Bandar under present Khanakul Police station. It flows beside Tamluk and meets Hoogly River at Geonkhali. Shilai is the main tributary of Rupnarayan which flows through Ghatal town having mingled with many other small rivulets. The ferry service is operated in the rainy season only in the upper portion of Ghatal. But in the lowland of Ghatal the ferry was available throughout the year by the flow-tide.²¹ Ghatal was the main trading port of this region in South West Bengal. The rivulets, having without sufficient water for ferry in the dry seasons, the goods of Khirpai, Radhanagar, Chandrakona and Narajole were despatched to Calcutta through Ghatal port.

The 'Central' zone of South- West Bengal was based on Midnapore. It was relatively small with a few *aurungs* under it. Cussary, Mohunpur, Ootmarrey, Narrajole and Patna were the *aurungs* belonging to the factory of Midnapore.²² Mohunpur and Pantapur were its principle *aurungs*.²³ Mohunpur and Narajole were the most crowded

²⁰ Sukumar Bhattachariya, *op.cit*, 1969, p. 145

²¹ W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. 3 Part-1 (The District of Midnapore) Calcutta, 1997, p. 24

²² BOT, J. Peiarce's letter to William Aldersey dated 27th May, 1776.

²³ BOT, Vol. 26, 26th February, 1781

aurungs of Midnapore.²⁴ *Teaoos, Mulmull, Rajebullaby* and *Seerbunds* were some of the articles manufactured in Midnapore. Except these, different types of clothes were exported from Midnapore like *Charconnaes, Chucklaes, Nillaes, Peniascoes, Sannoestur, Salbasts, Garba, Hammam*.²⁵ In lower *parganah* of Burdwan province (in Tamluk and *parganah* of Kashijorah, Shawpur and Cutubpur) and Gongapur of Midnapore *sarries* and coarse cloths were made for the common people of village around of these *aurungs*.²⁶

Midnapore, on the bank of the river Kangsabati was the main centre of the ‘Central’ zone in South West Bengal. The river Kangsabati produced a rivulet near Kapastikri village. This rivulet flows through the lowland of Narajole and mingles with Rupnarayan near Sribara village to the south- eastern part of Ghatal sub-division.²⁷ The main branch of Kangsabati which flows by Panskura meets Haldi River and then mingled with Hoogly River. The goods were transmitted to Calcutta through the river Kangsabati in the rainy season. In the dry seasons these were transported through road having no other option for transportation. According to Philip Coales, the Resident of Midnapore it appears clear that he was unable to send the expected amount of despatch from his *aurung* because of the ‘shutting up of communication between Midnapore and the presidency by the way of Gongacolly and river Kangsabati and hence the dispatch would sent by the road when the road would be dry and proper for the transportation of the Company’s bales over land’.²⁸

Sonamukhi was main centre of the ‘Northern’ zone of South-West Bengal. It was also a large *aurung* with a few other significant *aurungs* such as Bishnupur, Pattersayre,

²⁴ BOT, Vol. 156, 24th November, 1801

²⁵ W.K. Firminger, *Bengal District Records; Midnapore:1763-1767*, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 8-9

²⁶ BOT, Vol. 20, 22nd September, 1779

²⁷ Pranab Roy & Panchanan Roy, *Ghantaler Katha: Ghatal Mahakumar Itihas o Samajchitra*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, Sandesh, 1st Published(1977) reprint 2007, p.1

²⁸ . BOT, Vol. 40, 11th November, 1783

Roybagny and Gopalnagar,²⁹ Coshinagore, Rebagory, Gungapur under it.³⁰ It is further mentioned that when Jhon Cheep was the commercial agent of Sonamukhi, he controlled three main factories and twelve subordinate factories.³¹ *Khasas, Baftas, Sannoos* were produced in the subordinate factories of Sonamukhi.³²

In the second half of the 18th century the production centres of South- West Bengal were connected with each other with various markets by water ways as well as land routes. In some areas land routes were the only mode of communications. In these cases Sonamukhi can be pointed out. The contractor of Sonamukhi wrote that, ‘as there is no water carriage in this country, by which means despatched would be made ... the cloths are conveyed on bullocks to a magazine in Culna ...’³³ though goods were despatched to Calcutta from Bishnupur *aurung* under Sonamukhi through Dwarakeswar River. This type of information was found.

Balasore and Balaramgori in the frontier Bengal were the important centres of ‘South- Western’ zone of South-West Bengal from where different types of weaving goods like *Chuckleas, Piniascos, Gingham* etc.³⁴ were exported to Calcutta through Balasore port. Keshiary was the main centre of *tasar*. The *tasar* of Keshiary were exported regularly to Calcutta through Balasore port by the Europeans.³⁵

²⁹ BOT, Vol. 34, 24th December, 1782

³⁰ BOT, Vol. 4, Letter no.163, from Ramcaunt Chateerjee, Gomastahhh of Sonamooky, dated 7th September, 1775

³¹ BOT, Vol. 29, 11th December, 1781

³² BOT, 11th November, 1805

³³ BOT, Vol. 31, 21st April, 1782

³⁴ K.K. Datta, *op.cit*,1960, p.151

³⁵ S.S O’ Mally, *Bengal District Gazetteers; Midnapore*, Calcutta, 1995, p.240

I.2 Organisation: Weaving Industry in South- West Bengal

In the production system of industry its organization was very important. The importance of organization in the weaving industry was no exception. In this system the organizer supplied raw material to the artisans and the artisans would make the articles with that resources and provided those articles to the organizer. This form of commercialisation was not existed at a large scale in the production sectors. In the second half of the eighteenth century the peasant's production got increased as well as merchants financing production. It was seen that at that time of scarcity the peasants supplied grains on regular basis. In the textile industry some modifications were executed when the European Companies set foot on this sector initially³⁶.

It was the most vital aspect of production organisation that the organisations were tied with an agreement. The agreement was made between the middleman (*paikar*) and the weaver based on the goods which would be sent to the markets.³⁷ The *paikars* would supply the raw materials or give money to the weavers in advance. With the advance cash from the *paikars*, according to the agreement, the weavers would buy raw materials or use the money for the necessity of their families during the production period. The principal elements of this system were — financial requirement of the weavers, their limited buying capacity from the markets and their non- risk attitude regarding the demand of the markets.³⁸

³⁶ Deepa Khakha, *Production, Coercion and Resistance: Bengal Cotton Textiles in Transition, c.1750-1800*, Ph .D thesis, JNU, 2011, pp.76-78

³⁷ Om Prakash, *The New Cambridge History of India; European Commercial Enterprise in pre – Colonial Indian*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,1998, p. 166

³⁸ Ibid

The weavers were the independent craftsmen. The weaver was the basic unit of the production system.³⁹ The affluent weavers produced goods not only for their own requirement but also to sell those in the markets.⁴⁰ They enjoyed security from the rulers. They sold their production themselves in the markets. Besides them, there were some poor weavers who used to make cloths in smaller quantities and sold them in the local *haats* and fairs. This type of production system was continued towards the end of the 18th century.⁴¹

The European Companies made use of the more dominant form of production in their trade. The institutional structure of production, procurement and trading organisation conducted by the Europeans was skilled and sophisticated.⁴² Firstly, the East India Company collected goods through the agreement with the native merchants. The East India Company made contact with the local or grass-root producers with the help of those native merchants. The native merchants acted as agents and they collected goods from the producers by paying money as advance supplied by the European Companies. It was known as '*dadan*' and those native merchants were called as '*dadni* merchants'⁴³. The East India Company paid one- fourth in cash and the rest third- fourth as *dadan* of their investment for collecting goods.⁴⁴ In this system the producers were supposed to provide goods if they had taken the advance (*dadan*) from the *dadni* merchants. After supplying goods, according to the *dadan* system, the producers would deal in independently; sometimes with the other merchants.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ William Bolts, op.cit, 1772, p. 194

⁴¹ Debendra Bijoy Mitra, *Cotton Weavers of Bengal; 1757-1833*, Calcutta, 1978, p. 35

⁴² Om Prakash, op.cit,1998, p. 3

⁴³ Datta Rajat, "The Commercial economy of Eastern India Under Early British Rule" in H.V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke and John G. Reid, '*Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds: c1550-1850*', Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 340-369

⁴⁴ K.K. Datta, Fort William India House Correspondence (1748-56), Vol. 1, 1958, p. 192

In 1753 the East India Company introduced agency system instead of *dadni* system as the traders failed to provide goods under agreement due to various obstacles. In this system the Company would collect their necessity goods for exportation directly by their agents or *gomastah* from the factories and *aurungs*.⁴⁵

The 'Court of Directors' directed 'Calcutta Council' on 31st January, 1755 to establish a committee and the council formed a supervising committee with an intention to supervise the factories and *aurungs*. Rojer Drake was the 'President' of the newly formed committee. Charls Manningham, Richard Bechar, William Frankland were the members of the committee.⁴⁶ With the instructions from the Court of Directors, Calcutta Council unanimously accepted the policy of collecting goods directly from the factories and *aurungs* on 10th March, 1755.⁴⁷ In the newly introduced agency system (1753 A.D.) a large number of *gomastahs*, *paikars*, *dalals* were needed to be appointed to collect goods from the producers and the manufacturers. They would also supervise the goods at the factories and *aurungs*.

William Bolts in his '*Consideration on Indian Affairs*' says that the factors or the agents were called as *gomastahs*. Since 1753 the *gomastahs* became the official agents of the Company and soon acquired the status of the Company's representatives.⁴⁸ In the various *aurungs* the Company procured its goods. Besides the master given to each *gomastah* to guide him in providing the Company's investment, he was given monthly

⁴⁵ N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal ; From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, Calcutta, (Third Edition 1965) Reprint 1981, Vol. 1, Calcutta, p 157

⁴⁶ Letter to the Court 31st January, 1755, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.1 , Para 57, P. 85, Also see K.K. Datta, *Aliverdi and His Times*, 1960, pp. 156-157

⁴⁷ Letter to Court 11th September, 1755, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.1, Para 18, Also see op.cit, 1960, pp. 156-157

⁴⁸ Hameeda Hussian, *The Company Weavers of Bengal: The East India Company and the Organization of Textile Production in Bengal 1750-1813*, Delhi, 1988, p. 90

salary (5-50 rupees) and a palanquin (in keeping with the official status as a Company official) and a few staffs under him.⁴⁹ The staffs were a clerk or *mohuri*, a cash keeper, a few peons and some *harkaras* with a *gomastah*. The lodging for the *gomastah* was arranged at the factories or *aurungs*. It was called *cutcherry* where he summoned the *dalals* and the weavers by the peons or *harkaras*. They signed a bond and promised that they would provide goods on a stipulated rate on a scheduled day. At that time the *gomastah* would give them a part of stipulated amount as advance.⁵⁰

The *gomastahs* played a vital role in the Company's business. They had to provide in order to enter the Company's service besides pledging their allegiance and exclusive service to the Company. They not only enjoyed the administrative power but also raised a financial stability from the *gomastah* of Warren Hastings it is evident that the *gomastahs* were able to raised their small empires for them besides being powerful.⁵¹

The *gomastah* and the agent as well as *tagadgeer* or collector of textile, *jassendar* or appraiser of the valuation of the production played a crucial role in the textile production and the Company's investment. The natives were appointed to those posts in a nominal salary.⁵² The *dalal* or *baniyan*, according to Bolts, was the important person in this system. 'He is interpreter, head book-keeper, head secretary, head broker, the supplier of cash and cash- keeper'. 'He conducts all the trade of his master, to whom, unless pretty well acquainted with the country languages; it is difficult for any of the natives to obtain accesses'.⁵³ The *paikars* under the *dalals* were an inferior set of brokers. The *paikars*

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 87

⁵⁰ H.G Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India 1579-1657*, Oxford, MCMXX, p. 127

⁵¹ Hiteshranjan Sanyal, *Continuities of Social Mobility in Traditional and modern Society in India; Two Case Studies of Caste mobility in Bengal*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.30, No. 2, February 1971

⁵² Binod Sankar Das, *Changing Profile of the South West Bengal*, Kolkata, 2013, p.167

⁵³ H.G.Rawlinson , op.cit, MCMXX, p. 127

maintained the connection between the *dalals* and the weavers as well as the *gomastahs*.⁵⁴

In 1767 the *paikars* were entrusted to supply weaving goods to the *aurungs* of the EIC in South- West Bengal. It is clearly found the chart (I: 1):

Table No: I.1

At the *Aurung* of Chandrakona (26 *paikars*)

Name of the <i>Paikar</i>	Number of pieces per month contracted for in 1766	Number of looms assigned to each <i>Paikar</i> in 1766	Number of looms assigned to each <i>Paikar</i> in 1767
Kamdev Thakur	66	49	48
Raghudev Thakur	15	19	16
Janki Thakur	27	22	21
Gangaram Thakur	27	27	24
Hari Ghosal	21	18	18
Udirt Thakur	18	19	19
Sadhu kar	90	77	70
Jugal Poddar	75	57	60
Kaliram Hai	51	38	38
Gauranga Dutta	45	41	41
Govardhan sarkar	45	40	40
Raghu sarkar	24	25	27
Bhagirath Das	24	19	29
Motiram poddar	24	21	21
Uknitjan Teli	30	20	22
Trilok Chaudhuri	45	28	30

⁵⁴ Bolts, op.cit, 1772, p. 193

Titu Sarkar	54	49	50
Trilok Sarkar	27	18	23
Lokicharan Chaudhuri	27	22	20
Jaganath Das	40	35	35
Sani Sarkar	30	29	29
Hit kar	18	15	15
Ganesh Poddar	18	10	12
Jaganath Bairagi	15	70	12
Jugal Bari	17	8	9
Bairagi Das	27	26	26

At the *Aurung* of Khirpoy (9 *Paikar*)

Sarveshar Pahari	225	180	205
Kirparam Teli	90	72	70
Panju Dutt	30	24	40
Sitaram Pal	30	24	25
Sundar Mahi	90	72	70
Manik Mondal	60	48	46
Baburam poddar	60	48	50
Kashi Pal	30	24	25
Gokul Das	521/2(half)	42	40

At the *Aurung Radhanagar*(2 *Paikar*)

Jugal Chaudhuri	60	48	46
Motiram Dutt	30	22	25

At the *Aurung Ghatal*(1 *Paikar*)

Dukhiram Doba	100	80	60
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At the *Aurung Udayraj pur*(1 *Paikar*)

Sarbjot Thakur	28	23	23
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At the *Aurung Ramjibon pur and Hajipur*(1 *Paikar*)

Hiranand Chaudhuri	60	48	50
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At the *Aurung Sammraat* (1 *Sarkar* or *gomastahh* being an employee of the English Company)

Name not given	150	150	231
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Source: Om Prakash, 'From Market –Determined to Coercion –based: Textile Manufacturing in Eighteenth Century –Bengal', in Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy(eds), *How India Clothed the World of South Asian Textile, 1500-1850*(Leiden; Brill,2009), pp. 217-52

The *paikars* of the village level acted for the EIC or the private traders or other foreign companies. They gave advance to the weavers and also collected raw materials from Calcutta or from other open markets and bore the responsibility to supply those to the weavers. They bought weaving goods from the weavers. The affluent weavers would sell

their goods in terms of cash in the open markets. The village *paikars* were the key persons in making and distribution of weaving goods. Guild system was found in the weaving production system. The leaders of the weavers or the *mandols* settled themselves in the middle of the society with land property and a large numbers of machines. Below their level were master weavers who owned so many weaving machines. They bought cotton from the producers in the local markets. Sometimes the master weavers would engage some rented labourers to supply goods in time according to the agreement with the *paikars*.⁵⁵ Substandard clothes were produced throughout the year. The fine clothes were produced in the rainy season to sell them in the demand of internal markets.⁵⁶ The *paikars* of the Company would make agreement with the master weavers to get the goods of fine quality. The foreign merchants and the private English adventures were not associated from this type of agreement.⁵⁷

The *gomastahs* or the agents of the factories and the *aurungs* signed the agreement with the *dalals* by paying bullion of cash in advance. They sent the sample of collected goods to Calcutta Council. The Council examined the sample of goods regularly. They returned the sample and wanted explanation from the heads of the factories and the *aurungs* if the quality of the samples was not satisfactory. The Council also strictly instructed them to maintain the quality of goods in the case of future investment.⁵⁸ It is seen, at that time the council was not satisfied with the quality of weaving goods from Khirpai and Haripal *aurungs*. A resident was entrusted to supervise the quality of the goods. He wanted to know from the keeper of export ware house about the quality of goods of past. He was determined to make an enquiry on the sub-standard goods by

⁵⁵ H.R.Ghosal, *Economic Transition In The Bengal Presidency(1793-1833)* Calcutta, 1966, p. 4

⁵⁶ BOT, 11th November, 1806

⁵⁷ BOT, 3rd June, 1793

⁵⁸ K.K. Datta, *Aliberdi and His Times*, 1960, pp.153-155

preparing a report.⁵⁹ The *gomastahs* and the agents of the Company had the right to reject the sub-standard weaving goods and with this they kept the weavers dependent on them.⁶⁰ As a trading corporation the Company was interested in maximum profit. It proceeded to acquire territories and the Company obtained a special privilege in trade from the territories.

In 1760 A.D. the Company, having gained permanent dominant position in Midnapore and Burdwan, appointed a Resident in each province – John Stone and Hay respectively to form a new administration in those provinces. The residents had the responsibility of trade and commerce as well as judicial, administration and revenue settlement.⁶¹ In 1762 Sir Bardet was appointed in the place of John Stone and then Baumont in 1764 in place of Sir Bardet and later Heugh watts.⁶² who, as the chief of the administration took the responsibility of investment, collecting goods from the subordinate factories of Anandapur,⁶³ Midnapore, Mohanpur, Kashijora, Narajole etc. and sent those goods to the headquarter of the Company in Calcutta. In 1768 the then resident settled a vast land for the increase of silk export.

An expert named Grimond was sent to develop the quality of cloth and flourish the Company's trade in 1770. Later when the trade developed, it was quite difficult to a resident to maintain trade and commerce. Then a separate servant was engaged and the

⁵⁹ BOT, 30th May, 1775, p. 362

⁶⁰ BOT, 7th May, 1793

⁶¹ Harry Verelest's *A View of The English Government*, 1772, pp. 70-74

⁶² Mazharu Haq, *The East India Company's Land Policy and Commerce in Bengal 1698-1784*, 1964, pp. 69-70

⁶³ Rev. James Long, *Selection from Unpublished Records of the Government; 1748-1767 :Relating Mainly the Social Condition of Bengal*, Vol. 1, 1869, p. 239

charge of the factories and *aurungs* were entrusted on him in 1777. He was known as a 'Commercial Resident'.⁶⁴

In 1769 a supervisor was appointed in every *chakla*/district under the revenue committee of the Company of Murshidabad. These supervisors were treated as the collectors during the period of Warren Hastings in 1772. A native was to assist the collector as *dewan*. Midnapore collectorate was formed with *chakla* Jaleswar and *chakla* Midnapore.⁶⁵ The Resident of Midnapore worked as a collector. For some time (November, 1773 to 1777) Midnapore was under provincial council of revenue of Burdwan.

All the *aurungs* were under an *aurung* committee till 1770. The committee signed the letters and the relevant papers only but everything was controlled by the export warehouse keeper. Nothing was stated in the regulating Act in 1773 on how the trading system would be operated. It was the internal matter of the Company's governing body. After it the 'Court of Directors' and the 'Court of Proprietors' decided to establish a separate semi-autonomous body to control the Company's trade. On 29th March, 1774 the 'Board of Trade' was formed with eleven senior servants of the Company. Samuel Middleton was nominated as the 'President' of the newly formed 'Board of Trade'. It would enjoy a large measure of autonomy in its day to day affair, but the ultimate supervision of the 'Governor General and Council' over its affair would be theirs. After the 29th March, 1774 the Company was divided into two parts-commercial service and general service (central service).⁶⁶ The 'Board of Trade' was empowered to appoint officers and agents among the servants under them. In 1776 the Court of Directors instructed the

⁶⁴ Yogesh Chandra Basu, *Medinipurer Itihas*, Calcutta, 1416 (Bengali Year) p. 226

⁶⁵ Firminger's *Fifth Report of the Affairs of the East India Company*, Calcutta, 1917, p. 784

⁶⁶ Nirranjan Dhar, *The Administrative System of the East India Company in Bengal 1714-1786*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 46

‘Board’ to monitor the entire trade of the Company. Only the investment was supervised by the Supreme Council.⁶⁷ The ‘Board of Trade’ had no fund of its own. The ‘Governor General and Council’ provided them a large amount of the collected revenue from Bengal Presidency.⁶⁸ It was known as commercial treasury at the disposal of the ‘Board of Trade’. The amount was sent to the factories and *aurungs* of South West Bengal as well as every district of Bengal Presidency in the beginning of the time of investment. Through the above discussion the organisation of the Company’s internal trade is quite clear to us.

I. 3 Procurements of Piece Goods in South West Bengal

The English East India Company got them developed through the competition with the Asian and other European merchants. The factories and the *aurungs* of the English Company were situated in the different parts of South- West Bengal. The Calcutta Council of the Company controlled the factories and *aurungs* with the help of the heads of the factories and the *aurungs*.

Before 1753 the Company collected piece goods with the agreement of the indigenous merchants. According to the agreement, the merchants would have to supply piece goods in the stipulated price within the scheduled time. If they failed to supply, they had to pay the compensation.⁶⁹ Calcutta Council supplied money to the factories and the *aurungs* of South West Bengal to collect the necessary piece goods at the beginning of the investing time. The Company always tried to control their contracted merchants.⁷⁰ In this

⁶⁷ N.K. Sinha , *The Economic History of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1981,Vol.1, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁸ General Letter from the Court of Bengal dated 29th March, 1774

⁶⁹ William Bolts, op.cit, 1772, pp. 190-191

⁷⁰ K.K. Datta, *Studies in The History of Bengal Subha;1740-1770*,Vol.1, Calcutta, 1936, pp.123-124

present context *dandni* system was existed and piece goods were collected in cash also. In 1751 -1752 the amount of cash for collecting piece goods was rupees 3, 52,054.⁷¹

Already, in 1746 the Court of Directors instructed Calcutta Council to give priority in cash transaction without giving importance to advance payment. Although, it can be said that until 1753, the English East India Company procured goods by paying *dadan* (advance) to the indigenous merchants along with the cash transaction. Due to various conditions of the English Company the indigenous merchants refused to supply goods without *dadan* (advance payment). Moreover, due to the favourable conditions, they preferred the French and the Dutch to the East India Company to supply piece goods. As a result the East India Company faced difficulty in getting their necessary goods.⁷²

As the indigenous merchants failed to supply piece goods according to the existing system, the Company introduced a new system which it has mentioned earlier regarding collection of goods in 1753.⁷³ The directors instructed Calcutta Council “great care must be taken not to risqué too much of our estate at a time in the *gomastah* hands and that they give at all times sufficient and undoubted security to be answerable for what they are entrusted with and that notwithstanding your method of sending a cash keeper with the *gomastah* who by way of a check keeps one key of the cash chest yet the *gomastah* is to be accountable for all the money you advance him”⁷⁴This system became successful and the investment increased gradually. It is clear as cited the chart (1.2 & 1.3).The amount of the Company’s investment for collecting piece goods in South West Bengal in 1755 was-

⁷¹ N.K Sinha, op.cit, Vol.1, 1981, p.6

⁷² Debendra Bijoy Mitra, op.cit, 1978, pp. 46-47

⁷³ Ibid, p.47

⁷⁴ Letter from Court 31st January 1755, *Fort William India House Correspondence*, Vol.1, 1958, Para -49, p.83

Table No: I.2

<i>Aurung</i>	Current Rs.	<i>Anna</i>	Paisa
Hurrypaul	85,443	8	6
Dorneacally	38,533	7	3
Gollagore	38,518	3	6
Keerpoy	1,62,370	12	0
Sonamukhi	22,099	14	6

Source: Rev. James Long, op.cit, 1869, p. 63

The investment for collecting piece goods in South West Bengal in 1757

Table No: I.3

<i>Aurung</i>	Current rupees
Kheerpoy	2,48,675
Buddaul	71,670
Gollagore	20,800
Sonamukhi	1,01,220
Hurripaul	1,54,645

Source: *Letter to Court, 10 January 1758; Fort William India House Correspondence Vol. 2 Para 35, p. 267*

It is found besides the investment of the Company that in 1767 most of the looms which were used for cotton weaving were for the English East India Company. It is clear from the chart below: Number of looms at work in the *aurungs* of South West Bengal:
(1.4)

Table No: I.4

Name of <i>Aurung</i>	Number of looms reserved for the English Company	Effective number of looms available	Number of looms reportedly hidden
Chandrakona	903	896	200
Narrajole	231	300	50
Khirpai	350	350	50
Radhanagar	253	250	50
Ghatal	60	100	25
Udinaspur	50	50	10
Hajipur	50	60	10
Kolmisoor	0	15	0
Total	1,897	2,021	395

Source: Om Prakash, 'From Market –Determined to Coercion –based: Textile Manufacturing in Eighteenth Century Benga'l, in Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy(eds), *How India Clothed the World of South Asian Textile, 1500-1850(Leiden; Brill,2009), pp.217- 52*

The Company provided the money treated as advance quite successfully. It ensured the Company in getting goods of good quality in the stipulated time. It also made the Company free from uncertainty of collecting goods by paying cash. The Company made payment to the weavers three times in a year – 10/16 part in May, 4/16 in September and the rest (2/16) after in position of the goods. The major part of the advance was paid in the first instalment for buying raw materials and essential tools for weaving, rented machine for spinning, engaging extra workers, paying land revenue, remit the loan of the *mahajans* etc.⁷⁵ Sometimes it was found that the second and the third instalments were divided equally according to getting goods from the weavers.⁷⁶The method of collecting

⁷⁵ H.R. Ghosal, *Economic Transition*, 1966, p. 17

⁷⁶ Debendra Bijoy Mitra, *op.cit*, 1978, p.58.

goods by paying the weavers in advance was the best policy to the East India Company for collecting goods. This type of payment mode provided the Company with availability of goods and free from fluctuation of price of goods. Although for the subsistence, the weavers had to depend for ready money- sales, the weavers sold their weaving goods to the other foreign companies till 1774 even after taking a handsome amount of money in advance from the East India Company and afterwards they sold their goods to the native private parties and then after 1793 to the combined native and the British private parties and also for the open competitive sales in the internal markets to the native whole sellers.⁷⁷ Moreover the Company invested through the *gomastahs* and they used to procure goods directly by the agents during that period. Narayan Satpati, the weaving merchant of Midnapore can be mentioned in context of the Company's investment directly by the agents. He was sent to the *mufassal* to collect goods as a *tahasilder*.⁷⁸ An account of his collected goods is mentioned (1.5);

⁷⁷ Binod sankar Das, op.cit, 2013, p. 168

⁷⁸ Provincial Council of Revenue Burdwan (PCRB), 8th March, 1776, pp. 182-85

Table No: I.5

Year	Advance(Current Rupees)
1762	8640 (Advance made by Burdett)
1763	4518.8.9
1764	34093.7
1765	36103.14.6 (Advance made by Mr.watts)
1766	78389..9 (Advance made by Mr.Graham)
1767	72210.14.3
1768	91733.2.9
1769	85245,1
1770	25694.4
1771	11474.10 (Advance made by Mr babar)
1772	21900.6
1773	43200

Source: Provincial Council of Revenue Burdwan, 8th March 1776, pp. 182-85

In April, 1771 The Court of Directors tried to regain *dadni* system by making agreement with the then *dadni* merchants. Besides it if required to make up the loss of agreement they would collect goods in cash by opening warehouses.⁷⁹ If it would be found that the collecting of goods would not be sufficient, the contract system would be introduced in 1775. The Company would invest in some cases through the agreement with the indigenous merchants. But the investment for the weaving goods in the agency system would be prevailed which was existed up to 1782. The agency system as well as the contract system was existed in 1787-88. The agency system persisted in the important

⁷⁹ Bisheswar Prasad, (Ed), *Fort William India House Correspondence*, Vol.6, Para. 21-22, NAI, Delhi,1960, pp. 80-81

aurungs. On the other hand in the less important *aurungs* the contract system reigned through the indigenous merchants. Goods were sent to Calcutta from the two principal residencies of South West Bengal – Midnapore and Khirpai. In the present context an account of collecting goods is found which is cited below:

Piece goods exported from Midnapore

Table No: I.6

place	Month/Year	Bales	Price
Midnapore	1 st August, 1780	81	69,369
„	1 st October, 1780	173	1,49,124
„	31 st December,1781	92	80,360
„	28 th February,1781	89	80,360

Sources: Board of Trade Commercial, 1st August 1780, p. 69, BOT, 3rd October, 1780, p.149, BOT, 2nd July 1781, Vol.1, p.17, BOT, 6th March 1781, p.78.

Piece goods exported from Khirpoy

Table No: I.7

Place	Month /Year	Bales	Price
Khirpoy	1 st August, 1780	79	25,5360
„	1 st October, 1780	97	25,5301
„	December,1781	97	25,5306
„	26 th February, 1781	137	30,9155

Sources: Board of Trade Commercial, 1st August, 1780, p. 69, BOT, 3rd October, 1780, p.149, BOT, 2nd July, 1781, Vol.1, p.17, BOT, 6th March, 1781, p.78.

As the chief of local trading centres the *gomastahs* and the agents misused their power in the investment of the Company. Verlst pointed out “to their own emolument and an authority given to enforce a just performance of engagements, became notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of the higher servants a source of new oppression”⁸⁰

The *gomastahs* of the Company had a large number of names of the registered weavers who were not allowed to work for others. The *gomastahs* would send them from one place to another through the oppression and deception. The piece goods collected from the weavers were stored at the warehouses called ‘*khattab*’. Price and the names of the weavers were mentioned in the *khattab*. An officer who would assess the goods was engaged in the name of *jassendars* or asserters. The deception made by this department was beyond imagination. They assessed the price of the goods less than 15 to 40 percent of the market value. In this case the weavers got the wages only. So the weavers wanted to sell their goods to the other merchants personally. The Dutch and the French *gomastahs* were eagerly ready to buy those goods. The *gomastahs* of the EIC sent peons to spy those weavers.⁸¹

If the weavers wished to refund the advance, they had to do that without any delay. For, having taken the advance from the Company, they weavers came under contract throughout the year. They had to face physical torture in the case of violating agreement. The weavers had to compensate the loss due supply the goods in the stipulated time. On the 12th April 1772 the Company announced free and open trade for the weavers. In this

⁸⁰ Verelst, A View of the Rise ,Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal, 1772, p. 85

⁸¹ Bolts, op.cit,1772, p.193

announcement it was said that the weavers could deal according to their will. None could force them to receive the advance.⁸²

The Board of Trade was to keep the interest of the weavers. Some weavers residing in Midnapore supplied weaving goods to the *aurungs* of Khirpai according to the agreement with the keeper of the *aurungs*. But the Board of Trade decided to instruct them to supply goods to the Midnapore residency for their convenience. The Board intimated it to both the residents of Midnapore and Khirpai and it was said that the amount of investment in Khirpai *aurungs* of those weavers would be transferred to Midnapore residency.⁸³

Warren Hestings hoped that announcement of freedom in trade would protect the weavers from the oppression by the Company's *gomastahs*. It was true that this announcement saved the weavers and the *ryots* partly. The *paikars* and the *ryots* of Bhuisadar, Balagunge, Balia, Mandalghat, Ichanadalbaira, Benakuthi made petition against the *dalals*. When the master of Khanakul came to those places and assured the *ryots* that he would look after the trade of those places, they were satisfied. But they came to know from the two *dalals*— Giridhar Dalal and Gobindaram Khamrai that the *dalals* would collect the entire goods. The *ryots* claimed a *parwannah* from the Board of Trade in which it would be clearly mentioned that these two *dalals* would not collect goods from them. Then they could supply goods to the local agents of the Company.⁸⁴ Consequently, the Company

⁸² BOT, Vol. 3, Part 2, 9th May, 1775

⁸³ BOT, 10th March, 1775, p. 245

⁸⁴ BOT, 21st April, 1775, p. 117

suggested the *paikars* and *ryots* to be careful to the agreement with the Company and the Company assured them protection from the oppression.⁸⁵

At the same time the 'Board of Trade' instructed the 'Provincial Council of Revenue' to be careful about the fraudulence from the part of the weavers. In 1775 it was found that the regulation of prevention was introduced for the first time and it was stated that weavers willing to receive advance would supply goods according to the agreement. It was also mentioned that the weavers must provide the due goods to the Company as per the agreement. If the weavers would fail to supply goods in stipulated period, the agent of the Company would engage a peon to make them supply goods. The weavers had to face punishment by the judicial court if they would supply goods to the others instead of the agents of the Company.⁸⁶

The commercial residents of the Company repeatedly reported the drawback of the free and open trade that the weavers denied in trading with the Company because of their (weavers) spirit of independence. They would get more profit if they sold their goods in the open markets or other traders in cash. So, they were less interested in the trading with the Company. Even the weavers who received *dadni* (advance money) refused to supply goods to the Company.⁸⁷

The residents of the factories in the districts of Midnapore and Burdwan were responsible for trade under the Board of Trade. They received money from Midnapore⁸⁸ and Burdwan treasury to maintain their institutions as well as made advance payment to

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 118

⁸⁶ BOT, Vol. 4, 5th September, 1775,

⁸⁷ Debendra Bijoy Mitra, *op.cit*,1978, p. 55

⁸⁸ H.V Baylay, *Memoranda of Midnapore*, Calcutta, 1988, p. 1

the weavers. They had to face the hazards with the weavers under them. Mr. Wall, the resident of Khirpai sent a list of the weavers to the collector containing the names of the weavers who received *dadni* from him. They had been instructed earlier not to receive advance money from the others. But they refused to obey his instruction and received advance money from the others. So, Mr. Wall sent a peon and demolished their looms and weaving goods. The collector of Burdwan did not approve it. He also expressed his dissatisfaction to Mr. Cromlin, the Resident of Ghatal for the same accusation.⁸⁹

In March, 1787 Mr. Brook made an enquiry on the basis of the clash between the Resident of Ghatal and the farmers. He instructed after the enquiry – “the *tootia ryots*, who have received the Company’s advance, are not, on the account of balances of revenue, to be seized by the farmers or confined or molested by peons being placed over them; but the *izaradar* shall prefer his complaint in writing to the chief of the factory.”⁹⁰

Shows again, there were some petitions which did not even bother to disguise their threat such as the one by the weavers of Neetal Kothi, a dependent on Sonamukhi—

We receive advances from the factory for Gurrah cloths. We used to be allowed at the rate of 5 rupees per piece... which enabled us to maintain ourselves. We now receive at the rate of 4 rupees which does not suffice for our support. The mufassal gomastah require a large quantity of cloths than we can manufacture and when we get them made by other weavers they all take 1 rupee more which is a loss to us upon each piece. Further they (gomastahs) in various ways subject us to peada (peon) charges and thereby distress us, so that we can remain. You are our masters; we are hopeful that you will give orders for us to be released from the concerns of the factory, so we shall be able continue in our country, else we must

⁸⁹ Bengal; Past and Present, “The Early Collectorate Records of Burdwan” p. 238

⁹⁰ Ibid , p.238

*quit it. As we suffer great distress we have fled away and come to you. If we obtain our discharge we can retain.*⁹¹

I.4 Private Trade of Piece Goods

From the earlier period the Company allowed the agents and his subordinates of the factories in private trading because of their meagre salary. They enjoyed the profit of their private trade. But they could not violate the rules of monopoly of the Company. They could send the items like valuable stones only to Europe. The internal trade was the main centre of the private traders. The Directors did not interfere in it and allowed them in their prosperity.⁹²

For the sake of the servants, the Company set some conditions before the indigenous merchants to collect weaving goods but the conditions could not satisfy them. So collection of goods got hampered and thus the '*dadni*' system was rejected. A new agency system was introduced in place of *dadni* system. In this new agency system the private investment and the investment of the Company mingled with each other. In this phase the investment of the Company got no effect but the native *dadni* merchants disappeared in this system. As a result the servants of the Company engaged in the internal trade favourably.⁹³

The difference was acute after the battle of *Plassey*. The servants of the Company aimed to be rich as much as possible in taking part in the internal trade. The *gomastahs* of the Company showed their mastery in every part of South-West Bengal. The Raja (the

⁹¹ BOT, Vol. 95, 4th November – 30th December, 1791. Petition dated Fort William, 23rd December, 1791

⁹² N.K Sinha, *op.cit* , Vol. 1, 1981, p. 77

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 78

regional chief), *zamindar* had no capacity to prevent them.⁹⁴ During the period of 1757 and 1772 the *gomastahs* and the agents of the English Company created obstacles on the way of the merchants who came from the different parts of India. The economy of South West Bengal as well as the entire Bengal was operated on the demand of the European market in 1760s, 1770s, and 1780s.⁹⁵

In the Second half of the eighteenth century the government of the Company failed to maintain the monopoly of trade and production of cotton and silk. But the competition among the foreign merchants, British adventurers, native inland merchants, less production due to natural calamity brought difficulty to the weavers in supplying the cotton goods. They failed to entertain monopoly (in trade) again and again. They tried to compete with the inland and foreign traders in this regard. The Court of Directors alleged against increasing of private trading of the French and the Dutch. It was harmful to the interest of the British private merchants.⁹⁶

During the period of 1764-1778 being prohibited, the Dutch and the French executed their own trade in the investment of the English Company. The servants of the English Company sent their own income /profit to their own country through the bill of exchange with the help of those merchants. The Dutch and the French residents were allowed in trading in Radhanagore, Sonamukhi, Khirpai, Midnapore and Balasore to hide

⁹⁴ Bolts, *op.cit*, 1772, p.191

⁹⁵ N.K Sinha, *op.cit*,1981, Vol. 1, p.110

⁹⁶ Letter from the Court 1772-1773, No. 16, p. 22

the own private business of the servant of the English Company. Their investment the French and the Dutch was through the *gomastahs* and Indian *paikars*.⁹⁷

Since 1774 Warren Hastings took the policy against the French. He ordered them to put an end to their business/ trade. But the *gomastahs* kept on their trading till their property seized in 1784. The weavers were ready to receive the investment from the private traders because they would provide much money.⁹⁸

When the Dutch and the French were aloof from the market of competition in 1784, the position of the private traders became stable. As the transaction in cash rose up, the weavers denied accepting the conditions of the Company. After the Regulations in 1780 many residents of South Bengal alleged that the buyers in cash transactions increased the rate of all the textile products. So, the weavers did not agree to make contract with the Company in the matter of investment.⁹⁹

The labour cost grew up when weavers had to depend on the cotton from Mirzapur because of the non availability of the superfine thread in low rate in the local market, and raw cotton in good quality. At the same time the need of the cotton goods to the private traders, decreased quality of goods affected the Company's a lot. The Company had some financial burden in cash investment. In that case they had to depend on private traders and Indian *paikars*. Demand of cotton textile of South west Bengal decreased in the foreign markets due to its substandard quality. Since 1781 the Company's investment in South West Bengal depended on the basis of the demand in the foreign markets. The private

⁹⁷ Binod Sankar Das, op.cit,2013, p. 170

⁹⁸ BOT, 4th July, 1794, also 22nd July, 1794

⁹⁹ BOT, 11th November, 1800

traders of that region could not supply good quality cotton because of their poor financial condition. At last they decided to supply cotton produced in Manchester with an aim to compete in the markets of Europe. At that time the weavers of Radhanagar and Khirpai demanded more money. On the other hand the Company thought to import thread to South West Bengal as well as the markets of Bengal from England. An acute scarcity was found in the spinning industry and the production of raw cotton in this region.¹⁰⁰

In 1788 the commercial agents were appointed. Since then the so called middlemen and the *paikars* got vanished from the system of investment in collecting goods. From the identity of the *paikars* it was known that most of the *paikars* were the local money lenders and the traders who acted as the link men between the producers, weavers and the Company. In 1750-60 they were not too rich *baniyan* in Calcutta. Some of them were landlords. The Company in the initial stage of their region protected those middlemen landlords. Narrain Satpatty took the responsibility in collecting raw cotton and engaging weavers to supply the goods of the best quality. At that time the *paikars* and the *dalals* unlawfully grabbed a certain amount of the weavers' income. The *paikars* were abolished from the system but the contractors and the *gomastahs* jointly made the same oppression.¹⁰¹

Price of the raw goods grew higher but the wages of the weavers did not increase. The Company did not agree with the high price of the textile goods in proportional rate. After paying the labour charge of the master weavers and the price of the raw materials they got a meagre amount of profit in the competitive market.¹⁰² More over as per the

¹⁰⁰ Binod Sankar Das, op, cit. 2013, P.171

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 172

¹⁰² BOT, 12th August, 1794

contract they could not take new advance rupees before the completion of the existing task. The weavers protested it. They expressed their unwillingness to work under the Company. Apart from the main centres of South West Bengal the weavers of the general centres were much interested in weaving for the demand of the local people than that of the Company. It is clear in the chart below (I: 8):

Parganah wise distribution of weaver's families

Table No: I.8

<i>Parganah</i>	Number of Families engaged in cloth production for the Company	Number of Weavers engaged in Companies Production	Number of Families engaged in cloth Production	Number of Weavers engaged for local Production local people
Kundar	151	966	150	900
Balarampur	39	Na	10	Na
Duttamuta	34	Na	4	Na
Kedar	9	Na	37	Na
Pratapban	5	Na	100	Na
Narayangarh	13	Na	81	Na
Fatehpore				
Bhuniamuta	Nil	Nil	50	Na
Jamnah	Nil	Nil	3	12
Darinda	Nil	Nil	13	42
Julkapore	Nil	Nil	8	Na
Karagpore	Nil	Nil	35	Na
Uttarbehār	Nil	Nil	50	na

Source: WBSA, Survey of the *Parganah* of Midnapore with Genealogy and Succession of the *Zamindars* 1788, pp.7, 22

The head of the weavers or many *mondols* refused to sign the contract when John Chip undertook Sonamukhi *aurung*.¹⁰³ The weavers of Sonamukhi and many of the others places did not make contract with the commercial residents regarding the supply of cotton.¹⁰⁴ The rough behaviour and the false promise of the Indian officers of the residency, paying advance after ascending less rate for the higher quality of cloths fell the weavers in debts permanently. Even they also interfere in their work.¹⁰⁵

The Indian agents of the Company and the village level *paikars* jointly oppressed the weaving communities. In 1780 the *Gurrah* weavers of Sonamukhi protested against this oppression in a large scale. They left the *aurung* for the work of the private merchant Fauchet. The Company was obliged to reject a *paikar* named Gadadhar Chung in paying his advance.¹⁰⁶ The *gomastahs* of the Company and the agents collected money from the poor weavers in some illegal way. They had no other way but to protest. As a result Dynely, the commercial Resident of Radhanagar resigned from the post and Charls Crommelin came to that position.¹⁰⁷

Investment of the Company affected when the Company reintroduced the agency system. It brought a change in paying advance to the weavers. Later it was divided into two equal instalments according to the supply of clothes. The first instalment was mainly given to the weavers to buy raw materials. In this case the weavers delayed the supply of goods and the goods were of below quality as per the standard of the Company. To prevent the dark side of the investment, the convenient method was the payment of advance in

¹⁰³ BOT, 22nd August, 1794

¹⁰⁴ BOT, 27th May, 1799

¹⁰⁵ BOT, 27th May, 1793, also 29th June, 1794

¹⁰⁶ BOT, 25th September, 1789

¹⁰⁷ BOT, 30th May, 1782

monthly basis. In this system the chief and the Residents should prevent the misuse money of the Company.¹⁰⁸

According to the conventional system the first instalment was given to buy the raw materials but in the newly introduced system when the weavers would not take the advantage of buying raw materials when the price of the goods got decreased. More over the supply of goods was delayed if the investment was continued up to the end of the year.¹⁰⁹

The Company thought that in absence of oppression the investment of the Company would be hampered and the quality of goods would be worsened. In 1786 and 1787 the policy of subdue was more acute. The aim of the regulation of 1782 was against interlopers. It was said, “The purchasers of said cloths apparently knowing them to be the property of the Company by the secret and clandestine manner which they take to procure them or by the notoriety of the weavers being in the Company’s employees who offered to depose of them, on proof on the fact, shall be liable to punishment by the *adawlat* according to the nature of their offence and cloths so purchase shall be confiscated”.¹¹⁰ The regulations were granted on 19th July 1786. On 23rd July 1787 a series of more regulations were imposed. These regulations instructed the weavers to be obliged to the Company. Moreover, if the weavers failed supply goods as per the contracts, they had to make up the loss. Then the Company’s men would sell the rejected piece at public auction and after deducting 15 percent of the total sales proceed, return the remainder to the

¹⁰⁸ BOT, 3rd June, 1776, Prog. No. 45, Vol. 7

¹⁰⁹ BOT, 3rd June, 1779, Prog. No 35, Vol. 19

¹¹⁰ J. E. Colebrook, *A Digest of the Regulations and laws, enacted by the Governor General in Council for the civil Government of the Territories under the Presidency of Bengal,*(Judicial and Revenue Supplement):p.437 also see BOT, 3rd June, 1783, Prog. No 30, Vol. 37

weavers. The big weavers, possessing more than one loom had to agree to the payment of a penalty of 35 percent in case they failed to deliver cloths in time.¹¹¹

So, we can see that the Company took so many methods to collect goods from the weavers. It affected the weavers badly. They did not get the sufficient wages. The Company's men oppressed them in different ways. After 1793 the situation of the markets changed and it also brought some relief to the weavers. Then the Company could not control it.

I.5: Procurements of Raw Silk and Silk Goods in South West Bengal

Besides cotton textile, raw silk and silk goods had a great prospect in South West Bengal. During the reign of the *Mughals* and latter in *Nawab* period in Bengal the local Hindu landlords and the temples were the main patron of the silk manufacturers.¹¹² Like the Dutch and the Franch Company, the English merchants operated their silk trading in remote areas of South West Bengal with the help of the Indian merchants by paying the internal transport revenue. The foreign companies wanted to have the facilities of tax –free business from the *Nawab* to operate their trading in those areas.

The officials of the English Company wanted to operate the trading through direct communication with the silk producers. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Company protected the cotton and silk producers from the forceful collection of money by the *Nawab* and the Maratha *foujdars*. With the help of the Company Radhanagar and Bishnupore of South West Bengal, the frontier area of South Bengal like Balasore, Pipli,

¹¹¹ Ibid: additional supplement to the regulations, for weavers, passed on the 30th October, 1789, p.467

¹¹² Robert Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, Vol.2, 1803, p. 4

Hariharpur etc. flourished as the centres of silk production.¹¹³In the second half of the eighteenth century the centres of South West Bengal got flourished after the normalcy restored from the destabilized condition caused by the Maratha invasion.¹¹⁴ The Company set up garrisons in Balasore, Mayurbhanj and the long frontier areas in Midnapore. Since 1760 the Company provided security to the artisans and the craftsmen of Jungal *mahal* and the frontier areas of Midnapore.¹¹⁵From the letters of *Kuthi* Resident of Ghatal and Baroj, the Collector of Midnapore from 1777 to 1800 it is known that silk cultivation and trading of silk got developed in Khirpai, Radhanagore and Ghatal¹¹⁶.

Cotton thread was imported to different *aurungs* in South West Bengal from Mirzapur because of its shortage according to its need.¹¹⁷In that part of South West Bengal production of wound silk and silk piece goods started. Cotton thread was imported from Mirzapore in exchange of wound silk and silk piece goods.¹¹⁸

According to the act of 1700 importation of Indian silk in England was prohibited.¹¹⁹It discouraged the production of woven silk goods in South West Bengal as well as entire Bengal. The silk produced at that time was exported to different parts of the British Empire. Silk was exported to different provinces in India mainly with the help of

¹¹³ J.Z.Holwell, *Interesting Historical Events*, London ,1772, p. 200

¹¹⁴ John Henry Grose, *Voyage to the East Indies*,. Containing authentic accounts of the Mogul Government in general, the viceroalties of the decan and Bengal, with their several subordinate dependences... with general reflections.... Desert, Vol. 2, London, 1772, p. 236

¹¹⁵ . Rev. J. Long, op.cit, pp.237-38

¹¹⁶ Binod Sankar Das. & Pranab Roy, *Itihas o Sanskritir Bibartan: Medinipur*, Kolkata, Sahityaloke,1989, pp.398-399

¹¹⁷ . N.K.Sinha, op.cit,Vol-1,1981, pp. 115-16

¹¹⁸Rev. J. Long, op.cit, p.239.

¹¹⁹ J.C. Sinha, *The Economic Annals of Bengal*, Calcutta,1927, pp.25-27

sahukar and *gosain* merchants. In 1753 the English Company stopped the investment in silk through the Indian merchants. Since then with the help of the *gomastahs / paikars* who were the Indian paid middlemen, the trading was operated. They maintained the link between the real producers and the residents of the Company. From 1751 to 1765 the demand of silk increased in an average from 60,000 to 80,340 small pounds of 16 ounces each per annum.¹²⁰

After 1757 the English Company was interested in silk production and silk business. But they were in confusion whether they could compete with Spanish and Italian silk in capturing the European markets. So the Court of Directors sent their supervisors to Bengal in 1770 to implement the Italian system in Bengal. In Midnapore and Bankura of South West Bengal the new system was introduced to produce silk.¹²¹ Among the Italian winders head was James Wiss. Their methods were success which was judge by a report: “Mr. Wiss has succeeded to admiration in drawing a tolerable silk from the most ungrateful cocoons that the sickliest worms under the most unfavourable season could produce.... The coarser silk could not be much improved; it was the finer sizes that required reformation which if accomplished the Company would view with astonishment the advanced price and demand for its”¹²²

The merchants encouraged the *ryots* in mulberry plant production. It was announced by the Company that the revenue would be free for two years in the cases of restoration of the waste land. It was also announced that in restoration of the wasteland the producers would get tax free benefit for two years. In 1770, 1/3 of the people engaged in

¹²⁰ William Melburn, *Oriental Commerce*, Vol. II, London, 1813, p.252

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Raghubir Sinh, *Fort William India House Correspondence* (1786-88) Vol. X, 1959, pp. Introduction 17-18

silk production died from great famine and so many mulberry fields turned into paddy fields. To maintain the regular silk production, eggs for silk worm were supplied from China in 1771.¹²³In 1773 another term skilled factors were sent to Bengal. Due to the initiative of the producers the Company's investment in raw silk increased which was realized by the comparison between the year 1776-77 and 1777-78.

Table No: I.9

Materials	1776-1777	1777 -1778	Increase
Raw silk	3500000	4700000	120000
Piece goods	4000000	4833000	8,33000
Saltpetre & Turmeric	467000	467000	

Source: BOT, 18th November, 1776, p. 291

Different types of silk worms were cultivated in South West Bengal like '*nistary*' or '*madraji*' in monsoon and small *palu* or large *palu* in winter. In Tamuk area Chinese *palu* were cultivated. The silk of that area was yellow or golden. In Midnapore one type of blue colour silk was cultivated. In the frontier area of Bengal two more types of silk *tassar* and *endi* were cultivated.¹²⁴

Silk thread was collected from the jungles of Gogooi, Mooga, Silda, Ramggon of Midnapore district. Besides this, silk thread was collected from different parts of Mayurbhanj and Dhalbhum. In indigenous merchants, *paikars* and the middlemen (*dalals*) collected silk thread from those places in low rate and sold those to the weavers of Anandapur and Keshiari. Sometimes the merchants sold their goods at the villages and

¹²³ J.H.Walsh, *A History of Mursidabad District*, 1902, pp. 103

¹²⁴ Binod Sankar Das, op.cit, 2013, p. 185

towns engaging the weavers in paying money. The *santals* and other *adibashi* people sold the cocoons to the farmers or the producers. But sometimes they would collect silk thread and sold it to the *paikars*. The *paikars* collected silk thread throughout the year through *dadni* system.¹²⁵

Different types of people were in silk industry like the producers of mulberry plants, *rearers* of silk worm, winders and weavers. They were all benefitted from it. Most silk winding was done in the Company's factories and skilled workers operated those factories. The *rearers* of silk worms received advanced money for supply of cocoons. Initially, the commercial agents of the Company contacted the producers directly. But when the investment in silk increased, the Company had to engage middlemen or *dalals*. They were appointed at the *aurungs* on the basis of monthly salary.

Winding in the indigenous method was quite cheap and the weavers followed this system personally at home. The silk reeled by them was called Bengal wound silk. Alternatively, some weavers accepted the Italian system of weaving. The Company exported both types of silk – filature silk (reproduced from the factory) and Bengal wound silk (produced by the independent works in their own houses). Since 1772 the raw silk was exported regularly. The amount of yearly exportation from 1772 to 1793 was in an average of 4, 09,000 ibs.

Silk was collected thrice in a year and locally it was called as bands—'November bands' (from October to February), 'March bands' (from March to June), 'July bands' / 'Barsat bands' (from July to end of September). The worms thrive best in winter season.

¹²⁵ Ibid

The silk of November bands was the best in quality. March bands silk was inferior in quality than that of November. The silk of Radhanagar was superior in quality.¹²⁶

The residents always tried to collect the best quality silk by offering the advance to the producers in time. For the requirement of cocoon the mulberry plants were grown even in the monsoon. So the Resident of Radhanagar sent a requisition of 25000 or 30000 *sicca* rupees as soon as possible to the Board of Trade in order to make advance payment for the *Barsat* bands and November bands. If he would make the advance payment, he would be sure in collecting the best quality of silk from the producers.¹²⁷

The Resident of Radhanagar had paid rupees 16000 as advance payment for collecting raw silk as the *paikars* expected it. He sent a bill of exchange to the council of Burdwan amounting 30000 according to the advice of Board of Trade. At that time a large amount of silk (130 *mds*) was in demand. The Resident of Radhanagar desired to collect that amount of silk by offering advance money through the *paikars* with the consent of the Board of Trade. He had already satisfied the Burdwan Council in this respect.¹²⁸ A large amount of raw silk was exported from Radhanagar—the main centre of raw silk production in South West Bengal as mentioned (I.10):

¹²⁶ Sukumar Bhattachariya, op.cit, 1969, p. 145

¹²⁷ BOT, 29th June, 1775, p. 490

¹²⁸ BOT, 18th January, 1776, pp. 84-86

Table No: I.10

Place	Month/year	Bales	Price
Radhanagore	1 st August 1780	199	342211
Radhanagore	September	229	333958
„	1 st October	195	381208
„	31 st October	285	480433
„	31 st December	224	298100
„	28 th February	303	365890

Sources: BOT, 1st August, 1780, p.69, 3rd October, 1780, p.149, 2nd July, 1781, p 17, 6th March, 1781

Besides the *paikars* the Company very often approached the regional rulers for their investment. The *ryots* of Ranihati *parganah* was divided in to two parts regarding the receipt of advance from the Company for raw silk in eleven *parganahs* of Radhanagar. In this context the resident demanded a *parwannah* to the Board as people were not familiar with the Company's investment under the Board. Apart from this he requested the king of Bogri to issue a *parwannah* in which the king allowed the *ryots* to accept the advance.¹²⁹

The Board sent 55000 *sicca* rupees as required to the resident accompanied by a *habildar* and six *sepoys*. Two *parwannahs* were also sent to the *ryots* of Bogri and *Havely* regarding the Company's investment with a purpose of growing interest in silk production.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ PCR, 17th June, 1776, p.59

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp. 60-61

The *paikars* deceived the producers of the mulberry plants, the *rearers* of silk worms, the winders and the weavers. The silk *chassars* of Radhanagar or *aurung* under Burdwan *chakla* appealed the Company to take initiative to stop this. The Company assured them in this regard. Any Bengali or the European can go to the *mufassal* to buy silk for the Company. But they could not pressurise the producers to receive advance and supply silk. They have sent a strict *parwannah* to Burdwan district in this regard on 22 *Jaistha*, 1182. They could receive or refund the advance without fear. They could submit the petition. They would not face any trouble at any point of time in this respect. ¹³¹

The *chassars* and the mulberry *ryots* (sometimes these two persons were the same) took the whole responsibility in cocoon rearing and feeding of worms. Even they had to face so many problems during the heavy rainfall and flood. But they had to depend on the condition of the *paikars*. The records of the Board of Trade contained complaints of the *ryots* against the landed proprietors and the *paikars* when they put impediments deliberately on their labour, used force and compulsion to sell cocoons in their own terms.¹³²

Having received the *parwannah* from the Company Hurry Sing, the *Zamindar* of Burdwan stated the names of his authorised persons for silk purchasing. They were Giridhar Dalal, Gobinda Ram Khamrai, Tilak Ram Bag, Narayan Dhara, Gour Charan Das, Ram Maji, Sham Khanra, Damodar Mandol, Asharam Behera, Jasmont Chowdhury, Rasamoy Samanta, Janardan Mandal, Tutiram Mandol etc. It was told that they would operate their trade freely. ¹³³ This instruction of Hurry Sing made them adamant.

¹³¹ BOT, 29th June, 1775, pp. 497-99

¹³² BOT, 25th April, 1787

¹³³ BOT, 29th June, 1775, p. 499

Giridhar Dalal and Gobinda Ram Khamroi instructed the *ryots* of all the villages of Chandrakona to receive *dadni* as per the will of the *zamindars*. They also added that they had appointed Bhabani Sankar Mukherjee as their representative to operate their trade. The producers would receive *dadni* in every band from the representatives and supply them silk. They would not oppose it.¹³⁴

But the *ryots* of Barda *parganah* protested against it. Nimu Jana and Suberam Adhya of Kanakpur, Tilak Ram Santra, chhotan sdamanata of Tilakpur, Baniram Jana, Narayan Panja and Bostam Das of Jaykrishnapur, Chhotan Behera of Barindipur, Abhiram Pal of Jot Bhogadar were noted among those. They said that Giridhar Dalal sent *dadni* to them through Bali Bose. In the same way the *ryots* of Bhagpota of Chandrakona also protested against the effort of giving *dadni* by Giridhar Dalal and Gobindaram Khamroi.¹³⁵

The silk *ryots* intimated the Resident of Radhanagar that Giridhar Dalal and Gobindaram Khamroi expressed jealousy towards the trade of the area. It would be clear if a special enquiry could be done. According to the wish of the *ryots*, the resident offered one rupee to a *paikar* in his own will and that *paikar* promised him to supply silk. So the jealous persons tried to prevent him.¹³⁶

Giridhar Dalal gained his dominant position in that area by boundless oppression. But the resident had not enough power to curb him. He reported it to the Burdwan Council.¹³⁷ The resident applied to the Burdwan council to send 8 to 10 peons or *harkaras* to regain peace in that area because Giridhar Dalal, appointed by Gokul Ghosal was the main culprit of trouble of the area. When the Resident came for the first time, he faced great

¹³⁴ Ibid, pp. 497-498.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ BOT.18th 1776, pp. 84-86

¹³⁷ . BOT.29th June, 1775, pp..490-491

trouble by Giridhar Dalal and Gobindaram Khamroi. He came to know from the instruction of the higher authority that Giridhar Dalal and Gobindaram Khamroi would supply 142 *mds* raw silk to the Company. He noticed that two *ryots* received advance from the resident. But Giridhar's *paikars* forced them to take it from them. More over a *ryot* told him that a *paikar* informed him that Mr Stephenson brought the instruction of collecting 300 *mds* raw silk for the Company and then he offered *parwannah* to the king of Burdwan(*zamindar*) to collect it. The king/ local *zamindar* offered the responsibility to Giridhar Dalal. When the resident tried to oppose him, Giridhar Dalal invaded factory at 11 at night with 100 people with arms and bamboo in order to maintain his interest. Giridhar was the leader of them. He instructed those people to beat the people of the resident and they seized a *harkara* named Chand. The resident opined that Giridhar should be arrested and sent to Burdwan. He requested the Council of Burdwan to send a powerful force to arrest Giridhar and sent him to Burdwan to maintain peace of the area. It would then establish dominance of the resident.¹³⁸

The provincial council of Burdwan sent 10 peons to take effective steps. Next day one more *habildar* and 12 *sepoys* were sent to arrest Giridhar Dalal and to take him to Burdwan.¹³⁹ But when they came to arrest him, he fled away over a thatched hut. The peons were sent to all over the locality to seize him. The *paiks* were also deployed to support the peons and the resident also took initiative in this matter. He convinced that Giridhar fled away but he had so many supporters to destabilize the peace of that area. A *habildar* along with six *sepoys* were engaged to seize them for a short period.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Ibid, pp. 490-492

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.494

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 495

In another field, it was seen that the Company's servants protected the culprit. A petition from Narrain Dhara, a silk *paikar* in *Mandalghat parganah* complained *dewany adalat* towards the month of *Chyte* against Ram Baira, an inhabitant of the same *parganah* regarding some money that was due from him on of account their commercial concerns. The case was filed in *dewany adalat* and summon was issued to bring the defendant Ram Baira. But he had ever since evaded the summon by concealing himself and it was appeared that he was at Calcutta and lodged a complaint with company's servant Mr. Jarrett for apprehending the original plaintiff Narrain Dhara.¹⁴¹

It is known from the writings of the Resident of Radhanagar that there was a tendency of dacoit in the area. At the time of sending money escorted with peons and *barkandazs*, the dacoits attacked them near Rajibulhaat and two persons died then. They looted 14000 rupees. Some *sepoys* were there to guard the factory. The Resident told, while sending money to Khanakul, a place four *crozes* (eight miles) away from Ghatal that it was impossible to the peons and *barkandazs* to prevent the dacoits. He also added that it would be more convenient to deploy some responsible *sepoys* to protect the property of the Company.¹⁴²

The indigenous people were appointed as *sepoys* of the Company. They maintained the security of the *aurung*. They also took a vital responsibility for despatching goods from *aurungs* to factory and from factory to Calcutta with security.¹⁴³ More over them also provided security to the higher officials of the Company. The indigenous *sepoys* were also to arrest the offenders of the Company.

¹⁴¹ Revenue Department Governor General in Council (RDGGC), 31st October, 1775, Lt. No. 78, pp. 5443-544

¹⁴² BOT, 25th January, 1776, pp. 136-137

¹⁴³ K.K Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, 1960, p. 154

The Company issued a *parwannah* to the *thanadar* and *sikdar* under the Resident to establish peace in future in the silk trading in eleven *parganahs* of Radhanagar. He assured that he would not convince forcefully to the others in receiving the advance who had not yet received the advance. He would not do anything against the rule of the Company. They would enjoy the freedom of their own work. After the establishment of peace he would return all the *sepoys* and the peons to the Burdwan Council. ¹⁴⁴

The great famine of 1770 affected silk breeders and mulberry cultivators. A great number of people died and the mulberry fields turned in to paddy fields. But with the Company's effort especially the rebate of the tax the mulberry plantations grew up till 1780. Due to the war in 1780-83 so many *chassars* of South West Bengal had to leave/ give up mulberry cultivation owing to the scarcity of food though there was high demand of silk.

At that time the government took decision to settle mulberry lands at a low rate on a permanent basis. ¹⁴⁵ According to the *chassars* the low assessment of their production should be commensurate to additional revenue. ¹⁴⁶ But when there was fall demand of raw silk, it was not actually worked due to the existence of *dalals* during 1783 to 1787 consequently affected the economic position of the mulberry cultivators and cocoon *chassars*. After the permanent settlement the land holders increased many *abwabs* which discouraged the *ryots* and the cocoon *rearers*.

Conclusion: Towards the end of the eighteenth century the conventional weaving industry of South West Bengal as well as entire Bengal ruined gradually. At that period the machine-made weaving goods were produced and it was seen that the price of the goods

¹⁴⁴ BOT, 29th June, 1775, pp. 496-97

¹⁴⁵ .BOT, 13th January, 1789

¹⁴⁶ .BOT, 29th May, 1789

and the thread produced in England was lower than that of the goods and the thread produced in conventional system in entire Bengal. Apart from these the pressure of tax pushed the weaving goods of Bengal back in the European markets. But according to the statistics it was seen that the exportation of raw silk got increased regularly in Europe. During this period, the rich weaving industry of the past slowed down, and the condition of the weavers was deplorable in most parts of South West Bengal. However, some centres like Sonamukhi were exception. Most of the weavers of Khirpai, Radhanagar, Ghatal, Sonamukhi were engaged by the native merchants. The merchants failed to provide sufficient money to the poor weavers due to lack of adequate capital formation and the fluctuation in the demands of internal markets, entrepreneurial class. Many of the *chassars* owned lands but the weavers were more or less dependents on weaving. The carders and the spinners were usually poor. When there was no works in spinning *motka* or working in filatures, they worked as day labourers in the paddy fields. The silk weavers were regarded more superior to the cultivators in social position and more prosperous than the cotton weavers. But they were all under the *mahajans* who knew the condition of the markets so well. Besides getting silk at a cheap rate, they charged the market weavers heavy rates of interest. The progress of silk weaving industry was greatly impeded like many other industries of South West Bengal. The rich money lenders took the policy of grabbing. They enjoyed the privilege of getting all goods of an industry.

Finally, it can be said that the Company's intervention in the weaving industry brought a change in the indigenous production system. The production system and trade were more active. Some indigenous people enjoyed the profit individually but the weavers, who were dependent on the Company's factories suffered in different ways, mentioned earlier such as one more instance that when the weavers delivered goods according to their advance, the *gomastah* of Cuttorah and his subordinates forced them to pay one rupee

more as *salamy*.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, the weavers of Cuttarah made complaints against Ramnauth Bandopadhya for collecting *dastur(sic)*.¹⁴⁸ In a word the Company's servants and the *gomastahs* oppressed the weavers. They were unable to dodge the tyrannical attitude of the higher authorities of the administration and the financial torture of the money- lenders which pushed the weavers to poverty.

¹⁴⁷ Revenue Board of Fort William, 1st August, 1788, pp.103-104

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.105