

CHAPTER –II

REGIONAL TRADE OF GRAIN IN SOUTH WEST BENGAL

Introduction: From the very ancient time the *ryots* of South West Bengal produced a large variety of crops which was the central point of agrarian economy on which different social relations were articulated. Natural conditions, social relations, institutional network in the countryside were well organised in the entire agrarian economy. It was determined by the ups and downs in the field of agricultural productions and peasants' efforts.¹

Grain was a staple item of trade of South West Bengal. Initially, the trade of agrarian products were regulated mainly by the local traders. At the next level it was managed by the traders of upper strata. The trade of grain like that of textile, indigo and opium was not an integrated part of colonial trade. The trade of grain was directly regulated by the indigenous traders without direct official interference of the East India Company.² It was a kind of self- governing area of indigenous traders; petty trade was freely operated by the local traders in various localities of South West Bengal. The trade of grain helped to build an important relation between town and *mufassal*. The traders of grain were the pivot of this relation.

Rice and Paddy were the main trading items for the consumption of people. In the opinion of contemporary observers and officials there was a close relation between the production of grains and its consumption. H.T. Colebrook wrote around 1796 "Except in the cities, the bulk of the people are everywhere subsisted from the produce of their own

¹ Rajat Datta, *Society Economy and Market; Commercialization in Rural Bengal c1760-1800*, New Delhi, Monohar, 2000, p. 21

² W.W. Hunter, *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, London, Smith Elder and Co, 1868, p. 420

immediate neighbourhood”.³ Grain was cultivated more or less in the rural areas of South West Bengal. So it can be assumed that the grain trade was mainly based on the demand of the cities, but the ups and downs of grain production gave the opportunity of grain trade in the rural areas.

The main aim of my discussion is to make an enquiry of the trading structure of agrarian products specially grain and the role of the agrarian economy in the second half of the eighteenth century, based on the trade of the local agricultural products, the discussion about the production of the *ryots*, preservation of grains, *ryots* and traders relationship, its effect on the internal markets and above all the regulations of trade by the Company.

II.1 Grain Production and Its Storage

Though one side of South West Bengal was covered with dense forest, its vast other side was the plain land built with silt. Various rivers coming from Chhoto Nagpur plateau made fertile to the land of this area. The people of Bengal could so easily grow crops which the people of the rest of the world could not. So, the easy process of growing crops of Bengal was followed in South West Bengal, too. Actually, the geographical location made the agricultural production favourable.⁴ The grain producers of South West Bengal preserved their productions in indigenous method.

There were two types of farming land in South West Bengal – *kala* land; it is also called high land. This type of land was high and so it contained large quantity of sand in its soil. Mainly ‘*ravi*’ crops were produced here. These were also known as commercial crops. But ‘*aus* rice’ was cultivated in this land in rainy season. On the other hand the literally known water-prone land was ‘*jala*’ land or low land. The *jala* land was situated in close

³ H.T. Colebrook, *Remarks on the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884, p.104

⁴ Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindustan*, Vol.1, 1770, p.136

proximity to water canals, retained their intrinsic moisture for a longer duration than the *kala* lands. There all types of crops were cultivated including *aus*, *amon* and *boro* rice. In that land various edible farinaceous-root (*kachu*) were used as essential food supplements especially by the poor.⁵

In *chakla* Midnapore grain were produced in low lands/ *jala* lands where irrigation was available in favourable condition. The lands were classified in eight different types owing to its heights from low lands. Different types of crops were produced on each land ⁶ *Parganah*- wise distribution of the market value of the classified land of Midnapore 1788 is shown below (II.1):

⁵ Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Mursidabad (PCCRM), Vol. 5, 30th April, 1771

⁶ Rajat Datta, *op. cit*, 2000, P. 39

Table No; II. 1

<i>Parganah</i>	Market value of total paddy produced by the <i>ryots</i> in <i>jala</i> land			Market value of the total <i>kala</i> land production of <i>ryots</i>		
	Rs.	As.	Gs.	Rs.	As.	Gs.
Kundar	1,07,711	00	00	54,251	00	00
Kedar	31,091	13	12	4,954	15	04
Narayangarh	30,771	13	09	6,498	11	15
Fatepore						
Karagpore	25,852	10	15	3,492	16	10
Uttarbihar	17,174	09	09	5,475	03	18
Pratapban	16709	05	00	6,829	00	00
Durttamuta	9,737	04	07	2,504	02	17
Dharinda	5,650	00	00	2,772	06	08
Jamnah	4,643	06	00	942	03	05
Julkapore	4,606	03	00	2,200	05	00
Mhunimuta	2,136	05	00	20,375	01	08
Balarampur	688	13	14	183	06	08

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

Various types of crops were produced in South West Bengal, of which gram, wheat, mustard and sesame seed etc. were notable.⁷ But rice was the main staple in most of the part of South West Bengal. According to Sujan Roy Bhandary rice of great varieties were produced in entire Bengal. The varieties were so rich that one corn from each variety

⁷ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District Copies of Correspondence Statement ... Tamluk, Hidgelee and Mysadal, (CSTHM) 1787-88, Vol. 1, p. 26.

could fill up a *vando*(pot).⁸ Naturally, three types of rice were produced here – *aus*, *amon* and *boro*. *Amon* was a crop of winter season. This crop was sowed in June- July and harvested in November – December. Naturally, the market value of this crop was much, ‘bearing a high price and sought after by all’.⁹ In South West Bengal various types of *amon* rice were cultivated; such as – *Dadkhani*, *Hatisal*, *Jhingesal*, *Banktulsi*, *Bansfuli*, *Sitahar*, *Kasiful*, *Rupsal*, *Metekra*, *Bhutasole* etc.¹⁰ Other type of crops was *aus* which is known as spring season crop.¹¹ This crop was sown in April- May and harvested in August- September. The quality of spring season crop was lower than that of the winter season. The spring season crop was consumed by the people of lower class of the society. ¹²*Suryamukhi*, *Kajla*, *Kalamanik*, *Madhumalati*, *Dalkachu* etc. were among the *aus* rice cultivated in South West Bengal. ¹³*Boro* rice was a coarse type of grain produced in mid-term which was sown in March- April. This crop was cultivated in low land and harvested in June to August.¹⁴ *Aus* and *amon* took six months of time for its harvesting where *boro* took four months. *Boro* was produced very quickly. It got ripe in May to July. According to the earlier writers it was thought that *boro* rice was not cultivated in a large part of Midnapore and Burdwan. ¹⁵But it can be assumed that *boro* was produced in various parts of South West Bengal. From the writings of the local writers it is known that where *amon* rice was wasted due to excess water in South West Bengal, *boro* rice was cultivated there.

⁸ Sujan Roy Bhandary, *Khulasat Ut Twarikh* Trans. J. N.Sarkar, *The India of Aurangzeb*(*Topography, Statistics and Roads*) Compared with *India of Akbar with Extracts*, Calcutta, 1901,pp. 40-41

⁹ WBSA, Board of Revenue Grain(BRG), 17th October, 1794

¹⁰ ‘Krishak’, Falgun 1323, see Sri Sudhir kumar Mitra, *Hughli Zillar Itihas*, 1948, p . 75

¹¹ Revenue Depart Governor General in Council(RDGGC), 31st October, 1775, Lt. No. 889, pp 5440-5441, Letter from Burdwan

¹² BRG, 17th October 1794

¹³ Sri Sudhir Kumar Mitra, *Hughli Zillar Itihas*, 1948, Calcutta, p 76

¹⁴ CSTM, 1788-89, Vol. 2, p.8

¹⁵ Rajat Datta, *Op. Cit*, 2000, p. 241.

Both types of rice were produced in the same manner.¹⁶ Various types of rice were collected from the plain land of South West Bengal. The average production of rice per 'bigha' in South West Bengal was as follows:

Table No; II. 2

Output of Rice in South West Bengal (*maunds per bigha*)

<i>Parganah</i>	Average Produce (<i>maunds</i>)
Midnapore	10.5
Burdwan	10.71

Source: IOR, Board of Revenue (Customs)(BRC), P/25/ 50, 19th October, 1790, IOR, BRP, P/71/22, 20th March, 1790 See Rajat Datta, Op. Cit, 2000, pp .40-41

Besides rice, various leguminous plants were cultivated in the same land. *Khassari*.¹⁷ *Kalai*, *Moog* and *Musoor* were also cultivated after harvesting of paddy in the same land. As a result the fertility of farming land would increase and the production rate also increased in the rice cultivation on that land later. In Midnapore the cultivation of *kalai* was of great importance. It was produced after oak, sugar cane subsequent years in *kala* lands.¹⁸

In every village there were water tanks or ponds which the *zaminders* dug for spiritual or other purpose. Those were irrigated at the adjoining fields in the event of rain ceasing before the crop maturity. These tanks were used to irrigate those fields which were sown with crops, considered to be the most valuable to the producers.

¹⁶ TarundeBhattacharya, *Paschimbanga Darshan; Medinipur*, 1979, p. 114

¹⁷ Many types of pulses were produced in South West Bengal, of which *khassari* was one type.

¹⁸ Rajat Datta, *op. cit*,2000, pp .40-41

In November, 1767 George Vansittart had written that he had travelled in Midnapore and *chakla* in Jaleswar from April to the end of May. Then after a special observation, he noticed around 80,000 *bighas* of land left uncultivated there. To make the land fit for cultivation, he gave away 34000 *bighas* of land among the *ryots* and made a self realization that those lands would be fit for cultivation next year.¹⁹ Of this, 24,900 *bighas* of land had been brought under cultivation by 1768,²⁰ and a further 24200 *bighas* were to be opened up by 1769.²¹ The alluvial tracts bordering the *Rupnarain* river was being vigorously opened up for cultivation in this period. The southern part of this area was crucial suppliers of firewood to the Midnapore salt industry, and such were marginally under cultivation. On south side of the river Rupnarain a proposal of clearing 10,000 *bighas* of *Jalpai* (land liable to be under water) land in Mahisadal in 1788.²²

From a report of 'Amini Commission' in 1778, it was known that not only the production of crops increased but also the reformations of land were also done in the frontier area of Midnapore district. As a result, land revenue in 1771 to 1772 was rupees 8, 8,388 which was increased to rupees 10, 43,985 in 1776 to 1777. Likewise deposit in Hijli increased from rupees 2, 78,536 to rupees 2, 94,945 in the same period.²³ The growth rate in South West Bengal is cited in the table (II.3).

¹⁹ Mazharu I. Haq, *The East India Company's Land Policy and Commerce in Bengal 1698-1784*, Dacca, Asiatic Press, 1964, pp.75-76 also see Bengal District Records; Midnapur, Vol.-1, No. 216, 10th November, 1767, p.191

²⁰ Mazharul Haq, *op.cit*, 1964, p. 77

²¹ J.C Price, Notes on the History of Midnapur, Calcutta 1867, p. 104,

²² Rajat Datta, *op.cit*, 2000, pp. 74-75.

²³ *Ibid*

Table No; II. 3

Source of Increase	In Midnapore	In Hijli
From new lands brought under cultivation	75,696	7123
From lands cultivating high grade crops	6,668	Nil
From rice land paying revenue in kind	52,644	1414
From new taxes ,imposts and assessment of secreted lands	24,639	7922

Sources: BM, Add. Ms. 29088 , fols. 110,199 see Rajat Datta, op.cit, 2000, p. 74

It is seen in this district “lands which yield rice have been gradually gained from jungles by the adventurers who have obtained grants from government and risked money to bring them under cultivation”. The *ryots* of the other areas of South West Bengal also enjoyed the same facilities. For example, a group of *ryots* from Tamluk bought uncultivated land named ‘*pooroah*’ from the government in a condition to cultivate the land for three years and they were exempted land revenue for the next three years.²⁴

As there were no such types of grain merchants in Midnapore district of South West Bengal who could deal in crops with the other parts of the country directly. The grain traders of Midnapore worked mainly under the big merchants of the urban areas like Calcutta. It has mentioned later. So, the affluent landholders of those areas preserved the crops to sell in favourable time in future. The place where the native dealers or affluent landholders preserved crops was known as *golah* or *hamar*. Company’s servants collect grain for their own consumption. Their estimated account of grain mostly collected from

²⁴ Ibid

the *agrahan* harvests.²⁵ They also preserved their collected grain in *golah/hammar*. These *hamars* had usually a platform of timbers of various dimensions, resting on low bricks support which was over spread with bear's mats in places where they were obtainable and the sides were composed of small timbers, bamboos and mats and the roofs thatched. But as mats were made in very few of the *parganahs*, the platforms more generally consisted with only of split bamboos ranged closely between the principle timbers. Interstices were plastered with earth and of the other materials. The inner and outer parts of the store house were plastered and the close thatched cover offered the grain deposited in them a tolerable protection against injuries from the weather. A granary built in this manner was first described properly raised on brick or rude store pillars and of an extent of 20 feet by 30 feet and 10 feet in height would be estimated the cost of about 125 rupees and capable of containing about 3,000 *mds* of rice or 2,300 *mds* of paddy.²⁶

As per the regulations of the 'Governor General', the Company suggested to construct public granaries to collect crops all over the country. As a result the selected places of Midnapore in South West Bengal *hamars* or *golahs* were constructed in order to provide grains at the time of scarcity as well as for the other requirements. Those granaries were constructed in Midnapore town, Sherpur, Gayeshpur, Bhabanipur, Mohanpur, Ghoskira, Pratabpur, Dublachetti, Badirkali, Kolinda, Daihati, Anandapur, Panchpai, Sabang and Manglamaro. The *golahs* of *Chakla* Jaleswar were erected at Keshiary, Mohanpur, Haveli Jaleswar, Casba, Egra Char etc.²⁷ besides this, in the district of Burdwan grains were stored in to two places collected from different parts of the district. Crops from a vast part of South West Bengal were stored near Burdwan town beside the

²⁵ Revenue Board of the Consisting of the Whole Council(RBCWC) , 21st December,1773,Lt. No.905, pp. 517-518

²⁶ BRG, 31st October, 1794 to 12th June, 1795 Vol. 1, p. 229, let. To G.H Barlow from F. Pierard

²⁷Ibid, 31st October, 1794 to 12th June, 1795, Vol. 1, pp. 227-28

Damodar River. Another granary of this district was situated at Kalna. From there it was easy to despatch the grain to Calcutta or Murshidabad. On the other hand from the granary on the bank of the river Damodar grains were sent to Calcutta and the other parts of Bengal during the monsoon.²⁸

As per the regulations of the 'Governor General Council', public granaries in Midnapore were constructed. Rice and paddy were bought for their own consumption. A great number of *gomastahs* were appointed to buy the crops. As per the agreement they preserved the grain collected from the *ryots*. Desired amount of grain could not be obtained through the agreement or by making advance payment. The *gomastahs* could collect one third of grains in Bengali months *Magh*, *Falgun* and *Chaitra*.²⁹

Most of the grains were bought from the *haats* in cash. This collection was mainly done during the month of February and March. At that time the grains were plenty in the markets.³⁰ It was known that the required amounts of grains were also collected from the grain traders with favourable terms in cash.³¹ A large quantity of grains wasted because of faulty way of preservation in Midnapore district. Due to low quality of preservation, worms grew in the granaries and a huge amount of rice and paddy got destroyed there. In the case of rice the amount of wastage was quite less. The wastage of rice varied a little due to dampness and worm.³² To minimise the wastage of grains, the native dealers sold old grains and collected new fresh grains from a regular interval. As a result the whole store was changed and the entire grain was available in good condition.³³

²⁸ BRG, 1794, Vol. 1, p. 10

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 08-09

³⁰ BRG, 31st Octobar, 1794- 12th June, 1795, p. 226

³¹ BRG, 1794, Vol. 1, pp. 08-09

³² BRG, 31st Octobar, 1794- 12th June, 1795, p. 227

³³ BRG, 1794, Vol. 1, p. 09

A large amount of grain was preserved in the every district. The local private traders would buy crops in low cost and they waited for the favourable time to come to sell that.³⁴ As the local private merchants collected grains personally, the Company did not get sufficient grains for the public granaries. The purchase of grains for the granaries of the Company drained out of the resource of the state. There was a great loss due to management, high maintenance costs, damaged by natural elements and pests, as well as high-cost purchase price and selling prices. The later was due to merchants' collective endeavour to control the rates and withdrawing from the auction.³⁵

It was mentioned earlier that the Company collected their required amount of grains from the main *haat* for their internal consumption in South West Bengal. They failed to collect grains through the agreement or by making advance payment.³⁶ Sometimes it was seen that the crops had not been harvested yet from the fields but the poor *ryots* took advance from the grain traders even before it. In this case it was seen that the advance prayer assessed the rate of the crops in their own way.³⁷ The Collectors of Burdwan, Midnapore and Birbhum were instructed that the Company would buy crops as much they needed without making any harm to the *ryots*.³⁸ But the substantial *ryots* would preserve their produced crops and before despatching to market they would assess the price of their grain in comparison to the market. If they were satisfied with the price, they would send their grain to the market.

³⁴ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District Copies of Correspondence... (CSTHM) 1791-1793, Vol. 4, No. 66, p. 92

³⁵ Miki, Sayako, *The East India Company and Indigenous trading System*; 2001, pp. 225-228, also see Tillotama Mukherjee, *Political Culture and Economy in Eighteenth Century Bengal; Network of Exchange Consumption and Communication*, 2013, pp. 258-259

³⁶ BRG, Vol. 1, pp. 226-227.

³⁷ RDGGC, 17th April, 1788, pp. 693-94

³⁸ . RDGGC, p.695

II.2 Mechanism of Grain Trade

The general nature and characteristics of the grain trade affected by mainly two factors, one is the nature of grain as a commodity seasons and the weather of the year. Grain market was usually a short term one. Because the grain cannot be stored for a long time as it was destroyed now and then by insects or gets damp.³⁹ Being a bulky commodity the traders had to bear a high amount of transportation charge. It affected the price of grain.⁴⁰

Several things simultaneously encouraged the commercial activities of the grain merchants. They enjoyed the benefit of high price of the crops. They controlled the price of grain between production centres and towns in their own favourable way. They would collect grain from the production centres in low rate but sold them in high rate in the urban areas. They also took the advantage scarcity of grain during the Famine of 1770. All these helped the grain traders in commercial profit and their trading condition got flourished.

During the pre-*Plassey* period some factors increased the price of grain in a combined way in South West Bengal. Firstly, it was the Maratha invasion and the abduction of wealth. Secondly, high rate of tax imposed by the regional rulers. Thirdly, there was competition among the foreign European Companies. Last of all, there were occasional natural calamities.⁴¹ After 1740 the price of grains gradually increased in different parts of Bengal. It can be mentioned as an example, Balasore situated in the frontier South West Bengal. There the local weavers bought merely 10 *seers* of grain in exchange of one rupee. This high price of grain continued for so many years after that.⁴²

³⁹ BRG, 18th January, 1795, Y. Burgess to G.H Barlow

⁴⁰ BRG, 30th January, 1799, G. Dickinson to Inspector, Government Granaries.

⁴¹ K.K. Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 178.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 177

Bengali rhymes written in the context of the then society about Maratha expedition which is prevalent in today's society as a proverb.

ছেলে ঘুমালো পাড়া জুড়ালো

বর্গী এলো দেশে।

বুলবুলিতে ধান খেয়েছে

খাজনা দেব কিসে?⁴³

Moreover, how Maratha invasion had influenced in South West Bengal has been found in various writings of that time. Gangaram wrote, “ The *Bargis*(the Maratha) plundered and murdered all whom they could lay hold of, with the result that no provision could be had; rice, pulses of all sorts, oil, ghee, flour, sugar, and salt, began to be sold at one seer a rupee. The misery of the people was as great as to beggar description. A large number of people died of starvation; *ganja* (Indian hemp) and tobacco could not be purchased; so also vegetables of all kinds”⁴⁴

In the eighteenth century the production of the *ryots* or commercialisation of agricultural products in South West Bengal as well as the entire Bengal was closely related with the interregional and even international trade. In this case the *ryots* agricultural production was conducted in a complex manner to meet the demand of the small village markets (the *haats*) as well as some products were produced on the demand of the international markets.⁴⁵ However, some products like paddy were produced by the *ryots* to meet their own needs as well as for the highest inter- provincial trade. Everything happened within the utmost importance in the agricultural economy.

⁴³ It may be said in English – “The children slept and the silence and peace restored in the nearby area. The Maratha invaded the country. The bird *Bulbuli* ate up all the crops and how could we pay the revenue?”

⁴⁴ K.K. Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 178

⁴⁵ Rajat Datta, *op.cit*, 2000, pp. 21-22.

It is notable that the local trade was mainly conducted between the production areas and *gunjs* or markets in town. Later nodal points also raised in the countryside for the trading goods. It was a meeting place for those who brought their production from their village to these markets and those who came to buy goods from outside the locality.⁴⁶

B.R. Grover cited that in the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century the markets in the rural areas were very much important in local trade.⁴⁷ This type of trading does not mean the exchange of crop between the urban and the local areas. It also reflects the relation between the production area and the local market. A unique social relationship was created in this local market system and this conducted, too. This bonding acted as a go between the production and selling.

In the research of the agrarian economy it is seen that in the second half of the eighteenth century there were insufficient supply of food grains in South West Bengal. This (in certainty) started since the Famine of 1770. History of agriculture showed the acute continual scarcity of food up to later thirty years. Very often famine like situation appeared. Sometimes fear among the masses created a panic of famine in 1775. In this way agricultural production got hampered in 1777 and 1779. In 1783 the production of food grains hindered due to heavy rain fall and it increased the price of food grains.⁴⁸ Fluctuation of the food grains is clear as mentioned in the chart –

⁴⁶ Kumkum Banerjee, *Grain Traders and the East India Company; Patna and its Hinterland in the late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century*, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 23, 4(1986) SAGE New Delhi/ Beverly Hills/ Newbury Park/ London, accessed 11th June, 2015, pp. 403-429

⁴⁷ T.Roychaudhury & Irfan Habib (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India,;c.1200-1750*, Vol.1, 1982, p.325

⁴⁸ WBDR New series Midnapore, 13th October, 1783, p.23

Table No: II.4

Year	Commodity	Price	Amount
1729	Fine Rice/Wheat	Rs.1/-&Rs.1/-	1md 10 seer/1md 20seer
1738	Rice/	Rs.1/-	2 md 20 seer/ 3md
1743	Rice/ Wheat	Rs.1/4/0-&2/-	1md/1 md
1751	Rice	Rs.1/4	1md 32 seer
1769	Rice	Rs.1/-	35 seer
1770	Rice	Rs.1/-	11seer (August)
1770	Rice	Rs1/-	21 ½ seer(September)
1778	Rice	1/6/5/-	1md
1790	Rice	2/0/6-	1md

Source: Home Department Consultation December 11, 1752 and 10th June 1752. Midnapur Salt collectorate Salt records dated 15th April, 1778, 1st January, 1790 see Binod Sankar Das, *Changing Profile of the South West Bengal*, Kolkata, 2013, p.205

Insufficient supply in the respect of demand due to frequent shortage created profitable situation to the grain traders, as we shall see subsequently, that because of frequent crisis, the grain traders were in dominating position in the case of supplying grain and the network of its distribution,⁴⁹ thus the grain traders controlled the agricultural monetary policy in their own commercial interests.

Exchange was quite convenient in the system of local markets by the level wise *bazar* organisation. The three main levels were *haats*, *bazars* and *gunjs*. John Shore has cited the difference among these trading centres. *Haats* were gradually held on certain days of a week. In these trading centres usually the petty vendors and traders delta in. These were generally held in open spaces. A flag was hoisted there on those particular days at the time of purchase and sale; on the other hand *bazars* were the daily markets, where a number of shops and the petty vendors frequented them. In *gunjs* mainly grains were sold on wholesale system. Other necessary goods were also sold there. But the wholesale

⁴⁹ Rajat Datta, *Merchants and Peasants; A Study of the Structure of Local Trade in Grain in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal*, *The Economic and Social History Review*, 23, 4(1986) Sage New Delhi/ Beverly Hills/ Newbury Park/ London, accessed February 7, 2015, p.384

trading was generally done in the *bazars* and the *haats* besides retail trading. In the *bazars* the articles are sold in retail and in great variety. The *bazars* were usually established in the towns.⁵⁰ In these *haats*, *bazars* and *gunjs* different types of goods were exchanged.

Who were the grain traders? It is said that a certain trading community emerged on the basis of grain trade. They were known as *beopari*. They were divided into three groups. The wholesale dealers lived in the main town. They were also known as '*aratdar*'. *Faria* or mobile traders were the second group who did not live in the main towns but they operated their trade in the towns with the help of the agents. They went to the rural areas to buy rice and paddy. The third ones were the shopkeepers who sold grains in retail.⁵¹

D.H. Curly has mentioned in his research that the traders of Rajasthan were known '*coyer*', the traders of entire North India were known as '*buccali*', the traders of Ujjayan were also known as '*ozina*', while the merchants of Mursidabad were called '*murcha*'.⁵² Two popular agricultural caste in Midnapore was *Kaivartas* or *Mahisyas* also another cultivating caste in Midnapore was *Sadgops*.⁵³ H.T Sanyal in his research said that the *Sadgops* the farming community of South West Bengal,⁵⁴ and the *Teli* community were related to trade and commerce. It is seen that besides the communities of *Saha*, *Pal*, *Seth*, and *Podder*, the Brahmin and *Mandol* traders operated grain trade in South West Bengal.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ W.K .Firmingar, The Fifth Report, Vol.2, Calcutta,1917, p. 492

⁵¹ Rajat Datta, op.cit,1986, p.385

⁵² D.H. Curly, 'Rulers and Merchants in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal', D. Phil thesis, University of Chicago,1980, pp. 24-25

⁵³ Ratnalekha Ray, *Change in Bengal Agrarian Society c 1760-1850*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 132

⁵⁴ H. 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, also see L.S.S O' Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Calcutta,1995, pp..67-69

⁵⁵ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District ...Hijli, Mysadal, Tamluk(CSTHM), Vol.4, No.66, p.92 also see Datta Rajat, '*The Commercial economy of Eastern India Under Early British Rule*' in H.V. Bowen,

The local trade of grains was influenced due to the demand of the towns. The social organizations in the towns in the eighteenth century were complicated. It consisted of the different communities belonging to different occupations organized in different levels. The chief traders played a vital role between trading head quarters and the supply base of goods. In the same way they established their own dominance in the markets. The traders set up the chain of intermediate dealing. They would buy crops directly from the *haats* or the *ryots* through the *gomastahs* and *paikars*.⁵⁶ The agents could easily go to the *muffassal* areas with their bullocks and they collected grains from the threshing ground.⁵⁷ They supplied seeds to the producers as per their requirement on behalf of the superior traders.⁵⁸ The *gomastahs* and the *paikars* would collect grains directly from their houses or *haats*. The *paikars* would take very small amount of advance from the non residential merchants.⁵⁹ For, the *paikars* would buy grains with sufficient money without making any loss to themselves.⁶⁰

At the local trade structure, the merchants (*beoparis*) occupied a dominating position in the complex of agrarian relations that existed at the village level. These *beoparis* who were often *mandol* and rich *ryots* i.e. native dealers had their own *golahs* and stores, where grains were kept for a short period.⁶¹

On the basis of the discussion we can get an idea of the controversy on grain trading in provincial or state level. In this context I am discussing the trading structure of rice and paddy of South West Bengal.

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

⁵⁶ BRG, Vol.1, 17th October, 1794

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Rajat Datta, op.cit, 1986, pp. 396-97, 399

⁵⁹ BRG, Vol.1, 17th October, 1794

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid, p .229

The grain traders like Bhagaban Maity, Kishore Maity, Bon Dinda and Ram Behera supplied grain to Calcutta from Duttamutha, Balighai *parganahs* of *chakla* Jaleswar.⁶² Apart from this the grain traders like Ram Ghosh Daroga, Nimu Pramanik dealt in paddy in *parganahs* of Mandalghat, Chitua, Radhanagar areas. They collected and supplied grains by bullock carts, small boats.⁶³

In South West Bengal there were no such affluent grain traders who exported grain directly from the outer province. But it is seen that Sinasse Paul, Kala Chaund Chakroborty, Panchuram Mandal, Laxmikanta Dass were the grain traders of Calcutta. They would buy food grains from Hijli, Midnapore, Ghumghar, Patashpur *parganahs* of South West Bengal for a long time and sell those in Calcutta. The local grain traders would take advance money from them and supplied them the food grains.⁶⁴ In 1775, 16 percent rice was exported from Midnapore. However, the amount of rice exported from a part of Burdwan which included South West Bengal was much higher.⁶⁵

It is also seen that two famous grain traders of Calcutta named Durram Dass Paul and Gopee Charan Paul appointed *gomastahs* in the different parts of South West Bengal. They were actually local grain traders who would collect grains from different places in South West Bengal and stored the crops in their own *golahs* and despatched to Calcutta, in favourable situation. Murali Patar, Chhotan Kanta, Panchuram Patra were appointed *gomastahs* in this purpose at Hijli. They also appointed Madhu Mandal, Kinu Kaur, Rasu as *gomastahs* in Ghumghar *parganahs* while Bhagat Ram Roy, Darpanarayan Roy Chowdhuri, Bhabani Serma, Dhuku Manna were appointed in Midnapore *parganahs*. The

⁶² Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue (PCR)30th August,1784, pp.458-59

⁶³ Ibid , 25th August, 1785, pp.392-93

⁶⁴ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt... (CSTHM).Vol.4, No-66, p. 92

⁶⁵ 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

gomastahs of Midnapore *parganah* received advance money from them and collected food grains from the *mufassal* areas and stored those in their own granaries and supplied those to Calcutta in their favourable times.⁶⁶

Food grains were produced most in Midnapore district. Here mainly ordinary quality of food grains was cultivated.⁶⁷ It is seen from the normal production years that the grain would be surplus in Midnapore and Jaleswar *parganahs*. An account of rice in Midnapore and Jaleswar is cited below:

Table No; II.5

Province	Rice of this Year crop / <i>munds</i>	Remains of last year/ <i>munds</i>	Total Crops
Midnapore	841859	32512	874371
Jaleswar	305568	12800	318368

Source: Revenue Board Consisting of the Whole Council, (RBCWC) Vol.8, 7th December, 1773, p.452

The production of grain depended on natural climate. In this case adversity of natural climate would affect the production of grains. The *ryots* of Hijli like Madhu Giri, Paran Manna, Haru Giri, Atmaram Sahoo, Jagu Behera, Kali Charan Paul and the *ryots* of Majnamutha like Bhim Jana, Baistam Manna, Budhu Manna, Haran Kar Dinda, Abiram Gunia, Narayan Giri reported that in the beginning of 1789 the seeds sown on the land damaged in the scorching sun and in the Bengali month of *Bhadra* they put the seed on land again but it also damaged in heavy rain fall.⁶⁸ Besides this the production of crops varied due to natural adversity in Midnapore district in South West Bengal.

⁶⁶ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt... (CSTHM).Vol.4, No-66, p. 92

⁶⁷B RG, 31st October, 1794-12th June, 1795, p.226

⁶⁸ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt ... (CSTHM) Vol.2, Lt.No-66, p. 57

Table No; II. 6

<i>Parganahs</i>	Paddy produced in <i>arrah</i>	Consumption in <i>arrah</i>	Surplus in <i>arrah</i>	Deficit in <i>arrah</i>
Kundar	90,535	89,129	1,406	
Kharagpur	90,281	26,218	4,063	
Utterbehar	13,941	10,521	3,420	
Jamnah	2,907	2,907		
Duttamutha	8,893	7,675	1,217	
Bhuniamutha	16,099	26,795		10,696,
Dharinda	8,565	13,713		5,148
Baklarampore	2,7,33	7,161		4,428
Julkapore	3,037	4,145		1,108
Kedar	30,771	34,833		4,062
Pertapban	13,428	14,437		1,009
Narayangrah	32,366	38,367		6,001

Sources: WBSA, Survey of the *parganahs* of Midnapore with the genealogy and succession of the *zamindar*, 1788, pp.7-22) 1 *arrah*= 4 katha is equal to 2 don of five seers each , 1 *bish* = 10 *arrah*

This tendency was seen even at the end of the century. The production of crops decreased in different parts of the province except Kedar, Kharagpur Subbang, Darinda,

Belorchour, Lampachour and Havelli Jallasore due to the lack of rain.⁶⁹ The same was seen in Contai province in the production of food grains.⁷⁰

During the time of adversity the food grains from the surplus areas were despatched to the food grain deficit areas in South West Bengal. So many instances were found that the people of Midnapore and *chakla* Jaleswar imported food grains from the Maratha district in low price. During the Famine of 1770 the price of food grains increased in the entire Bengal. A large number of people belonged to labourer class died. So many people of South West Bengal went away to the nearest districts in order to have food grains in low price and to get rent free land.⁷¹ The grain traders exported food grains from the South West Bengal to Calcutta, Dhaka, and to the Northern districts. From Balasore on the frontier South West Bengal and its vicinity areas the grain were exported to Dhaka in the Month of May, 1788. It is said that before the first day of June 50,000 *mands* rice would be supplied in the most favourable condition.⁷² Food grains exported from Mandalghat *parganah* in South West Bengal to Mirzapore.⁷³

Agricultural commercialization was well-felt in the then South West Bengal. Richard Eaton has reflected his views regarding the commercialisation of Bengal. It was significant to South West Bengal, too. He has argued that the ability of the province to achieve remarkably successful high agrarian, mainly rice, surplus underpinned 'and agricultural and manufacturing boom' in later medieval Bengal and created suitable

⁶⁹ BRG, 15th November, 1799, p.246

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.247

⁷¹ Romesh Datta, *The Economic History India Under the Early British Rule*, Calcutta 1956, p.51

⁷² Revenue Department Governor General In Council(RDGGC),3rd April, 1788, p.81

⁷³ B RG, 20th February, 1801,Vol-10, p.85

conditions for an expanding ‘overland and maritime trade that linked Bengal even more tightly to the world economy’⁷⁴

It cannot be denied that the markets were not self sufficient. The relationship between the buyers and the sellers in the markets was important in that period. This relationship reflected the existing social inequality in the field of exchange. It was very much important in the processes of commercial accumulation. The merchants took special initiative to restrict the free access of the *ryots* to these markets. The merchants ensured their important role by converting surplus products into cash and intrusion of merchant-capital in to the circuits of peasant production through the advance contracts –debt servicing channel.⁷⁵ However, in this way a large number of *ryots* came to the market in the eighteen century of South West Bengal.

The traders had control over the local resources due to financial weakness of the *ryots*. Rent was a burden to the producers and it helped the traders to take advantage in this case. Most of the rent was collected in cash. The producers would collect their required money by selling their production in some financial condition. In this context Colebrook can be cited as an example. When production of grain was higher, the cost of the grains was low. Besides it the *ryots* had to pay rent at the harvesting time. So they needed cash and felt the need of the markets. Whether their productions were sold or not, their eagerness decreased the price rate of the food grains.⁷⁶

It has mentioned earlier that merchants would collect grains at almost lower price and store them in their *golahs* (granaries). But when they thought that the price was

⁷⁴ Rajat Datta , op.cit, 2000 , p. 22

⁷⁵ Ibid , p.27

⁷⁶ H.T. Colebrooke, *Remarks From the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884, p. 67

favourable, they would sell those grains. Thus the situation of price was critical in the market transaction. The price and transaction followed no laws of supply and demand. In this system of trade the village faced a relative disadvantage. In this system of trade each of these of markets was interlinked to the next level in an increasing sale commodity transaction. The main target of trade was to shift away from the village in this situation no single peasant household could enjoy the experience of formation of price even at the level of village *haat*. The local merchants had controlled over the trade in agricultural production. But the East India Company had the monopoles control in some sectors like cotton piece goods and silk (latter to be supplemented by opium and indigo) made for a situation where the formation of prices depended on command and coercion to an extent equal to the influence exerted on them by the interplay of demand and supply.⁷⁷

The grain traders of Calcutta demanded to the committee that the main centres of rice – collections were Hoogly and Hijli. They claimed that it was due to the consumption of the Company's servants and also to supply the food grains to Calcutta. It needed the expansion of '*dastak*' and the customs master did this in this respect.⁷⁸ It is seen that the food grains produced in Tamluk and Hijli areas fulfilled various demands of that areas and also a large amount of food grains were supplied to Calcutta. Moreover the *ryots* of Hijli and Jaleswar imported food grains from the Maratha region. The subject of import and export is clear from the charts below; Particular statement of grain in the Tamluk and Myshadal districts.

⁷⁷ Rajat Datta, op.cit,2000 , p. 27

⁷⁸ Comp trolling Committee of Revenue (CCR)21st May, 1771, p. 358

Table No; II.7

District	Grain store past year and present year	Grain store of the present season or 1195 <i>vellatte</i> (Sic)	Total Grain Stor in Tamluk & Myshadal District	Grain For the internal consumption	Grain for seeds	Grain for Exportation to Calcutta by Merchants	Total grain Expended	Remains amount require .Purchased other parts
Tamluk	33,535	2,26,072	2,59,607	17,91,283	24,942,,20	----	18,16,225,,20	15,56,618,,20
Mysha-dal	21,253	8,99,095,,20	9,20,348,,20	17,26,808,,20	73,333,,28,,4	75,000	18,75,141,,38,,4	9,54,793,,18,,4
Total	54,7488	11,25,167,,20	11,79,955,,20	35,18,091,,10	98,276,,8,,4	75,000	36,91,367,,18,,4	25,11,411,,38,,4

Source: Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District Copies of Correspondence Statement ... Tamluk, Hidgelee and Mysadal, (CSTM) 1787-1788, Vol-1, Lt-72, p-63

A particular statement of grain in The Hijli district and likewise four *parganahs* of Jaleswar:

Table No; II. 8

District/ <i>Parganah</i>	Grain store of past year	Grain store in present season 1195	Grain imported by the <i>Ryots</i> from the Maratha country	Total Grain store	Grain internal Consumption	Grain Seeds	Grain Exported to Calcutta by Merchants
Kicuramahal	6000,-,-	5,37,771,34,,	2,57,470,36,,	8,01,242,30,,	7,44,000	31,242,30	26000
Magnamootha	5000,-,-	4,48,646,33,,	2,81,469,29,,	7,35,116,22,,	6,84,000	26,116,22,,	25000
Jellamootha	2000,-,-	1,94,326,30,,	62,027,2,,	2,58,353,32,,	2,40,000	11,333,32	7000
Sujamootha	2000,-,-	1,71,160,-,-	34,904,21,,	2,08,064,21	1,92,000	10,064,21,,	6000
Donådumnán	1500,-,-	2,52,187,8,,	42,472,37,,	2,96,160,5,,	2,64,000	14,660,5, ,	17500
Jallesore							
Beercool	2500,-,-	75,000	8,250,-,-	85,450	78,000	3,750	4000
Meergodha	1000,-,-	50,000	3,4000,-	54,400	50,400, ,	2,500,	1500
Balsay	400,-,-	21,500	10,575,-	32,475	30,000	1,075	1400
Cacrachour	500,-,-	15,000	4,750,-	20,250	18,000,	750	15000
Total	20,900	17,65,592,25	705,320,5	24,91,812,30,,	23,00,400,11	101,512,30	8,9,900

Source: Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District Copies of Correspondence Statement ... Tamruk, Hidgelee and Mysadal, CSTM 1787-1788, Vol.-1, Lt-75, p-65

The statistics of January, 1789 of Hijli and Jaleswar division in South West Bengal show how much food grains were imported from the Maratha district and how much food grains were exported to Calcutta.

Table No; II.9

<i>Parganah</i>	Grain Imported the <i>Ryots</i> of Hijli & Jallasore Part purchased from their land in Those district	Total Grain	Grain Exportation to Calcutta by the Merchants
Kicuramahl	2,24,533	5,96,804,,34	1,000
Jallamootah	54,500	2,40,326,,30	5,000
Magnamootah	2,46,400	5,50,046,,33	1,000
Doroodumnaun	38,500	2,80,187,8	8,000
Sujamootah	30,500	1,92,600	5,600
Beercool	9,250	60,575	2,000
Meergodah	7,000	40,500	1,500
Balsay	7,900	22,900	1,600
Cackrachour	5,000	16,200	1,300
	6,23,083	20,00,200,25	45,000

Source: Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District Copies of Correspondence Statement ... Tamluk, Hidegelee and Mysadal, (CSTHM), Vol. II, No.78, p. 65

A special effect of the demand of the towns on agricultural products is noticed. Contemporary observers noticed that the establishment of the markets throughout the whole century had led to the increase of the population in the towns or markets. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the establishment of various markets in Midnapore increased the population. For example, Sepoy *bazar* was established as the centre of the

arrival of troops.⁷⁹ There are many examples of this that a large quantity of grains collected from the countryside of South West Bengal for the consumption of the *sepoys*. In addition to this, the place where *Bara bazar* and *Choto bazar* located in the present place where there were once forests. Mr. Burdett's collectorship was to build a fort here. A *haat* was established for the need of the coolies engaged in the construction of the fort. It was the first establishment of *Bara bazar* and it then became flourished. Apart from the government employees and their associates, the land lords of Midnapore *parganahs* and their '*vakils*' established their houses in this place.⁸⁰ Source indicates that traders supplied food grains to the town for their daily consumptions by collecting from different regional areas. They also exported food grains to the outer world. It was sometimes more than 20% of the normal production year. In the regional field, 8% to 9 % of the total grain produced was kept as seed.

What amount of surplus grain would come to the rural market, or what amount of grain people used as food were not clear as South West Bengal, my field of discussion was under different collectors at that time. At present a portion of Midnapore was under *chakla* Burdwan at that time. These places were later included in the Hooghly district. On the other hand, the Tamluk and Hijli division of Midnapore were distinct as salt agencies. It was also seen that Bisnupur region was separated from Midnapore and Jaleswar *parganah*. This individual is difficult to find out the actual data. As well as it is difficult to say for the lack of sufficient information. A strong indication is found that rural demand was indeed exerting and extremely dynamic influenced on the movement of marketed rice in that period. It is notable to calculate that the demand of the local trade in rice probably accounted for 70 to 80 percent.

⁷⁹ PCR, Vol-9, 8th November, 1781, pp. 177-178

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp.178-179

It was seen that surplus production would satiate the regional demand. A huge amount of rice was exported to Calcutta. Such as instance, in 1792 the Collectors of Birbhum and Bishnupur estimated that about 75 percent of the surplus of rice and sugar was sent almost entirely to Calcutta and expressed the fear that the same course still existing all the export were in that channel, and as a necessary consequence the consumption in these districts diminished.⁸¹

The grain trading was operated in a certain period of a year. Grains were purchased to sell those in the villages or the rural markets. The *Bhadraony fasal* (*aus* crops) or summer crops and *Aughranny fasal* (*aman* crops) were the two main rice crops. The later was more important for commercial purposes mentioned earlier. It was of superior quality, could be preserved longer and was consequently sought after and purchased by all description of merchants⁸² especially during the months of harvest when price would be the lowest. It could be transported during the period from February to July when prices of grains would be rising.⁸³ Rice of this kind would presumably have featured prominently in a system of natural exchange; yet the grain merchants made it a point to purchase the *aus* crops from the cultivators before they could dispose of their surpluses independently in the local markets.

The Company's record shows that grains were transported from the *mufassal* to the city by water ways. Most of the rivers were capable of shipping four months from July. A certain time of the year, grains were transported from the country side. The grain traders

⁸¹ WBDR, New Series Birbhum Dt 1st November, 1792,p. 30

⁸² BRG 17th October, 1794, Y. Burgess to G.H Barlow

⁸³ .BRG , 25th October, 1794 G. Arbuthnot to G.H. Barlow

kept the grains in their granaries for its actual time of sale. In the interior grains were reserved until the river was open for shipping in July.⁸⁴

II.3 Price of Grain in Various Markets of South West Bengal (1770, 1775 &1788)

In the process of market unification, price of regional goods were previously independent. But later it was determined by the global price. It logically followed from the law of one price that within the process of such a transition there was a need of convergence of the prices towards a single price or –due to transport costs – to a stable price ratio. Unsurprisingly, commodity price convergence was taken into account as a reliable indicator for expanding markets. History offers lots of samples of convergence as a consequence of increased trade opportunities.⁸⁵

One major indication of an integrated provincial market would be behaviour of prices of food across the region, M.M. Postan has cited in his research work on economy how a pre-modern market worked. It was seen that the price and flow of commodities got fluctuated from season to season and from locality to locality and also the seasonality of the consumers. The grains were cheapest when flow of commodities was good.⁸⁶

‘Grains were at their cheapest rate in the early autumn, i.e. immediately after the harvest had been gathered, since the villagers then had some grains of their own to eat. But they almost invariably rose in the summer, since by that time many villagers had exhausted their own grain supplies and swelled the ranks of the buyers’. The narrowness of the market merely widened the amplitude of the fluctuations of price and that prices would not

⁸⁴ BRG, 27th December, 1799, R. Pattle to Inspector Govt. Granaries

⁸⁵ Roman Studer. India and the great divergence: Assessing the Efficiency of Grain Markets in Eighteenth Century and Nineteenth Century India. For a full list of University Oxford Discussion paper in Economic and Social History , 2007 , pp. 39-42

⁸⁶ Rajat Datta ,op.cit,2000, pp. 194-195

have risen and fallen as sharply as they did had the buyers and sellers been more numerous ,the volume of the commodities larger and the access to imported food easier.⁸⁷

In South West Bengal Kukrahaty(Cookrahaty) was a largest trading centres of grain⁸⁸. In Tamruk and Hijli division there were more grain markets. Comparison of grain price of those markets gave us the clear idea of price fluctuations. In the main discussion of the normal year it is seen that the abundance of supplied grains in the market led the price relatively low. But when the supply of grain was insufficient and the demands of the grain were high, it increased the cost of the grains. For example the price of rice in different grain markets of Tamruk and Hijli Division in South West Bengal, price fluctuation can be noticed. Month of February this time, there were a lot of grain imports in the markets.⁸⁹ At that time we can see that the grain price was lower. It is seen in the figures below from the 1st March to 15th March on 1788. (Table:11.10)

⁸⁷ Ibid , p.195

⁸⁸ Tarun Deb Bhattacharya, *Paschimanga Darshan*,: Midnapore, Calcutta, 1979, p. 137

⁸⁹ B RG, 31st October, 1794- 12th June, 1795

Table No; II. 10

Disrict/ <i>Pargannah</i>	Markets/ <i>Bazars</i>	Paddy Per <i>Maunds</i>		Rice per <i>Maunds</i>	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
		Rs.A.g.c	Rs.A.g.c	Rs.A.g.c	Rs.A.g.c
Mysadal	Tentoolberrea	„8,10,-	„10,13	1,5,7	1,7,10
	Banca	--	--	1,5,7	1,7,10
	<i>Haat</i> Gunnea	--	--	1,5,7	--
	<i>Haat</i> Calcacoond	--	---	1,5,7	--
Aurungnagar	<i>Sair</i> Chandeeepore	„8,18,-	„10,13	1,6,10	1,10,13
	Sam <i>Gunj</i> &Ninon	„	„	„	„
Goomghur	<i>Gunj</i> Balarampore	„ 8,18	„10,13	1,6,10	1,10,13
	<i>Gunj</i> Sonachura	„8,18	„10,13	1,6,10	1,10,13
	<i>Haat</i> Cummul pore	--	--	1,6,10	1,10,13
Tamluk	<i>Haat</i> Narrainpore	„12,-	1,2,-	1,6,10	1,8,11
	Sheb <i>gunj</i>	—	--	1,7,5	1,9,10
	Nickasee	„12,-	--	--	--
	Coorpai	„12,-	--	--	--
	Manik <i>gunj</i>	--	--	1,9,-	1,12,-

Source: Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District.. (CSTHM).Vol-1, Lt 65, p 58

On the other hand the price of the grains was different in the same market in the month of October. The statistic shows the price of rice and paddy was high during the 1st to 15th October, 1788 in the above markets of Tamluk division.

Table No; II.11

Disrict/ <i>Parganah</i>	Markets/ <i>Bazars</i>	Paddy Per <i>Maunds</i>		Rice per <i>Maunds</i>	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
		Rs.A.g.c	Rs.A.g.c	Rs.A.g.c	Rs.A.g.c
Mysadal	Tentoolberrea	--	--	2,-,-	---
	Banca	--	--	2,3,11	---
	<i>Haat</i> Gunnea	--	--	2,-,-	--
	<i>Haat</i> Calcacoond	--	---	2,2,22	--
Aurunagar	<i>Sair</i> Chandepore	1,-,-	1,2,-	---	---
	SamGunge&Ninon	„	„	2,10,15	3,-,-
	<i>Haat</i> Nandapore	„15,5,-	1,57,-	2,57,-	3,57,-
Goomghur	<i>Gunj</i> Balarampore	1,5,-	1,57,-	2,57,-	3,57,-
	<i>Gunj</i> Sonachura	„15, 5.-	1,57,-	2,57,-	3,57,-
	<i>Haat</i> Cummul pore	„15,5-	1,57-	2,57,-	3,57,-
Tamluk	<i>Haat</i> Narrainpore	„12,-	-,-,-	1,12,-	-,-,-
	Sheb <i>gunj</i>	_____	--	1,12,-	2,-,-
	Manik <i>gunj</i>	--	--	1,13,-	--

Source: Comptroller of Salt and collector of Salt District..... (CSTHM), Vol-2, No-58, p.52

The price of rice and paddy in the different grain markets of Hijli division varied like that of Tamluk in South West Bengal. A chart from the 16th to 31st March, 1788 clearly shows this.

Table No; II.12

District/ <i>Parganah</i>	Markets/ <i>Bazars</i>	Paddy per <i>Maunds</i>		Rice per <i>Maunds</i>	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
		Rs.A.G.C	Rs.A.G.C	Rs.A.G.C	Rs.A.G.C
Biheean	<i>Haat</i> Bowanny chauk	--	1,-,-	---	---
Erranch	<i>Haat</i> Handeah	„11,9,-	----	„11,10,-	---
	<i>Haat</i> Koonjeeopore	---	-----	„11,10,-	---
	<i>Gaut</i> Coorgunge	„11,9,-	--	„11.10	--
Jellamootah	<i>Haat</i> Boorundah	„10,13,2	--	„11,15	--
	<i>Haat</i> Seebgunj	„10,13,2	--	„11,15	--
Magnamootah	<i>Bazar</i> Bogawanpore	--	--	1,-,-	1,8
	<i>Ghat</i> Kausdah	„10,14,-	--	1,-,-	--
	<i>Haat</i> Kerahanneah	„	--	1,-,-	--
	Audalearreeh	--	--	1,-,-	--
Casbah Hidgellee	<i>Ghat</i> Pratabpore	„9,10,-	--	„13,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat</i> Kedgeree	„9,10,-	--	„13,-,-	--
Balejoorah	<i>Ghat</i> Pettooah	„10,14,-	--	„	--
	<i>Haat</i> Meerjapore	--	--	1,-,-	--
Surroamootah	<i>Haat</i> Rannypatna	„10,-,-	--	„12,10	--
Daut Currai	Comal pore	„10,14,-	--	1,-,-	--
Patash pore	<i>Ghat</i> Intaberrah	„10,14,-	--	1,-,-	--
Doroodumnaun	<i>Haat</i> Cookrahatty	„12,-,-	--	„17,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat</i> hoarcolly	„12,-,-	--	„17,-,-	--
Sujamootah	<i>Haat</i> collaberrah	„10,14,-	--	„12,16	--
	<i>Ghat</i> Asooteah	„10,14,-	--	„12,16	--

Source: CSTM, Vol-1, No- 68, p. 60

In the chart below it is noticed that the price of grains rose very high within six months in the same market.

Table No; II.13

District/ <i>Paganah</i>	Markets/ <i>Bazars</i>	Paddy per <i>Maunds</i>		Rice per <i>Maunds</i>	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
		Rs.A.G.C	Rs.A.G.C	Rs.A.G.C	Rs.A.G.C
Biheean	<i>Haat Bowanny chauk</i>	---	----	2,8,--	----
Erranch	<i>Haat Handeah</i>	1,10,-,-	----	2,8,--	---
	<i>HaatKoonjeepore</i>	---	-----	2,8,--	---
	<i>Ghat Coorgunge</i>	1,10	--	2,2,--	--
Jellamootah	<i>Haat Boorundah</i>	----	--	2,2--	--
	<i>Haat Seeb gunj</i>	---	--	2,8,--	--
Magnamootah	<i>Bazar Bogawanpore</i>	--	--	---	---
	<i>Ghat Kausdah</i>	1,10,--	--	2,8,-	--
	<i>Haat Kerahanneah</i>	,,	--	2,8,-	--
	<i>Uddacarreah</i>	--	--	2,8,-	--
Casbah Hidgellee	<i>Ghat Pratabpore</i>	1,10,-	--	2,8,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat Kedgeree</i>	1,10,-	--	2,8,-,-	--
Balejoorah	<i>Ghat Pettooah</i>	1,10,-,-	--	2,8	--
	<i>Haat Meerjapore</i>	--	--	,,-	--
Surroamootah	<i>Haat Rannypatna</i>	1,10,-,-	--	2,8	--
Daut Currai	Comal pore	1,9,-	--	2,6,-	--
Patash pore	<i>Ghat Intaberrah</i>	1,9,	--	2,6,-	--
Doroodumnaun	<i>Haat Cockrahatty</i>	1,11,-	--	2,12,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat hoarcolly</i>	1,11,-,-	--	2,12,-,-	--
Sujamootah	<i>Haat Collaberrah</i>	1,10,-	--	2,8	--
	<i>Ghat Asooteah</i>	1,10,-	--	2,8	--

Source: CSTM, Vol-2, No 114, pp. 96-97

In the case of expansion of scattered markets and these markets mingled in to one, the price of the former markets got changed. The price of a local product was determined by its demand and supply. But in the case of grain, the price was affected in the preindustrial societies due to the supply side and the annual harvest. Demand, by contrast, was very stable in the short term, as grain dominated the diet of the people and was difficult to substitute. In modern terms, it was an inferior good with a low price elasticity.⁹⁰

At the other extreme, when markets are perfectly integrated, the domestic price is independent of the local harvest: if the domestic market is small relative to the rest of the 'world', local harvest fluctuations only change the volume of imports or exports, while the domestic price equals the world price plus a transport cost.

While there is no doubt that market integration would mean increased synchronicity of price over different regions largely because of the nature of demand and network of the local trade, a continuing volatility of the individual grain prices would not necessarily cut into this integration. Grain price was initially determined by the state of the current harvest which was in turn influenced by the prevailing climatic conditions. As the latter variable was beyond the control of the human agency, the amplitude of price fluctuation would continue notwithstanding a high degree of market integration.⁹¹ The information available from the *mufassal* of Burdwan, Midnapore, Bishnupur the price of rice is found when we compare the different provinces of South West Bengal.

⁹⁰ Roman Studer. India and the great divergence: Assessing the Efficiency of Grain Markets in Eighteenth Century ... For a full list of University Oxford Discussion paper in Economic and Social History , 2007 , pp 39-42

⁹¹ Rajat Datta, op.cit,2000, p 196

Table No; II.14

Province	1 st Class Rice	2 nd Class rice	3 rd class rice	4 th class rice
Burdwan province	„ 39 „	1,5,13	1,8,12	1,14,12
Midnapore	1,1,16	1,8,3	--	--
Beerbhum	„ 36 „	1,-,5	1,4,10	1,7,10
Bissen pore	1,7,	1,11,5	1,13,11	1,20
Pacheat	1,10	1,17	1,21	1,26

Source: Revenue Department Governor General in Council, Vol. 4, 31st October, 1775, pp. 5440-5441

The cost of grains grew due to adverse weather and famine. For example, after the Famine of 1770 the price of grains soared higher in Midnapore. It is seen how much food grains were available per rupee in the statistics from September 1769 to September 1770.

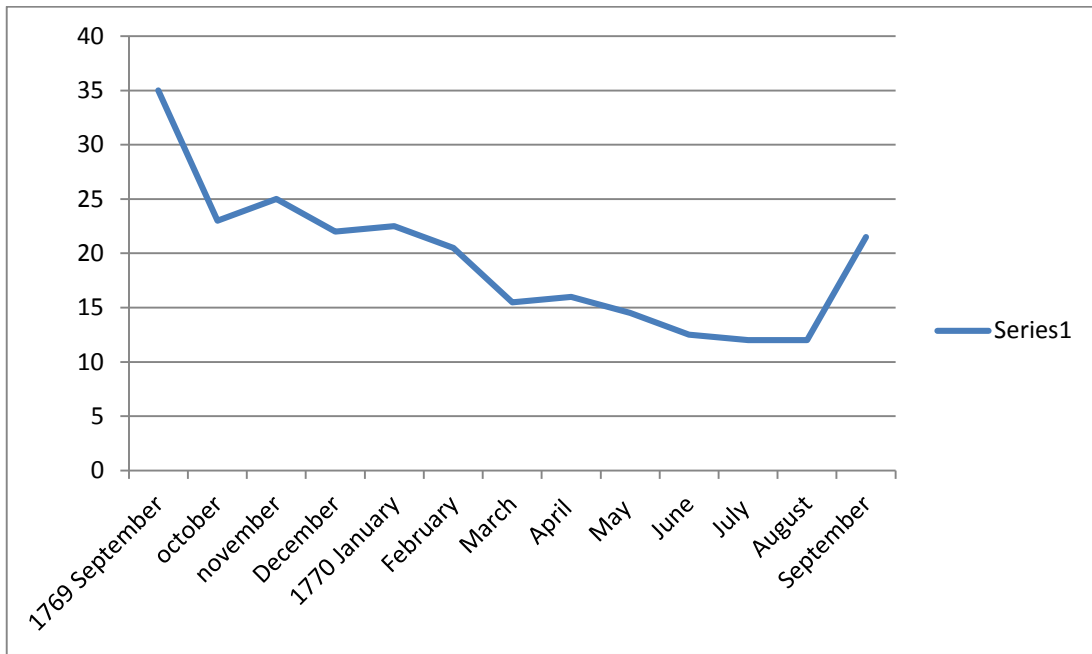
Table No; II.15

Month /Year	Grain
69, September	35
October	23
November	25
December	22
70, January	22.5
February	20.5
March	15.5
April	16
May	14.5
June	12.5
Julu	12
August	12
September	21.5

Source: Bengal District Records Midnapur, Vol. 4, 1770-1774, Letter Issued, pp. 32-33

The growth rate of cost of the good grains was a few times much during the period of famine if we draw a graphic in this respect.

Graphics Figure No: II.1



According to the Source, Bengal District Records Midnapur, Vol. 4, 1770-1774, Letter Issued, pp. 32-33

Famine increased the value of the corn should a degree of scarcity raise the price of grain above the average rate, it falls heavily on the manufacturer, and an exorbitant increase on the rate of the necessaries of life renders the ordinary allowances for labour insufficient are statements which clearly indicates the economic influence exerted by the state of the agricultural prices on the conditions of practically every harvest- dependent social strata in Bengal. The people who were most affected by the state of agricultural prices were presumably the poorer –peasants having in sufficient lands at their disposal, the rural and urban labourers and those artisans who depended exclusively on the markets for their subsistence.⁹²

⁹² Rajat Datta, op.cit,2000, p. 198

II.4 The Company and Grain Trade in South West Bengal

The system of local trade was operated with in a structure of control and domination. Almost all the groups who worked together to keep the structure of local trade in operation – traders providers of ancillary services like boatmen and carters- among them who engaged in these system there were some leaders who enjoyed great power and influenced over the other man.⁹³

Rural markets, whether permanent like *gunjs* or periodic like *haats*, were operated with the support of *zamindars*, *izaradars*, revenue officials, and other officials associated with the administration.⁹⁴The regional market and local trade acted as an undue exaction sector of a *zamindar*. They would collect duties in three different ways—as ground rent, as duties on the basis of goods transformation from his dominating markets and last of all as *tehbazaree* on a daily basis. *Tehbazaree* were levied on retail dealers for the space that they occupied in the market.⁹⁵

Ownership of retail outlets provided the elites of the urban areas in supplemental income. It was seen the prosperity of the elite's articulated themselves with the commercial network. It was also seen, at the lower level of the society even in the level *haat* the traders agreed to pay tax. Even they got privileged by paying bribe. It was seen in the case of valuable commodities as well as general commodity like rice.⁹⁶ Besides it the *beoparies*, the *paikars*, and other kinds of retailers were interlinked in a relation of dependence with

⁹³ Kumkum Banerjee, *Grain Traders and the East India Company; Patna and its hinterland in late eighteenth century*, The Indian Economic and Social History review,23,4(1986) p. 417

⁹⁴ Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Sayer(BRS) , 13th June, 1792

⁹⁵ BRS, 13th September, 1790

⁹⁶ Rajat Datta , op.cit,2000, p. 200

the *zamindar* and vice versa. The landowners initiated the maintenance of the infrastructural facilities which were essential for the transactions carried on at these points. It attracted local trade to the *gunjs*. The possibility of exorbitant taxes might cause a migration of *beoparies* to some other markets tended to act as a restraining of factor on the *zamindar*. But the *zamindari* protection felt by the traders was equally real.

In the first half of the eighteenth century there was a special barrier behind the regional integrated market. The *zamindar* and the landlords were the main agents of the market foundation and they simultaneously protested against the development of an unfettered system of markets in the province. The reason for this *zamindar* - *beopari* combination was largely due to the state's internal need to balance the two social strata in order to ensure its own stability, in the midst of a prosperous economic situation. However, the overall outcome of such an arrangement seems to have been a combination of two developments. a) Increase of the number of *chowkies* for collecting tariffs at different rates to the need of the *zamindars*. b) Traditional conflict was between the *zamindars* and the traders, as well as *zamindars* and other *zamindars*/ landlords for collecting the rate of duties, right on markets and the movement of goods. This conflict sometimes took violent turn that had disrupted the marketing network.⁹⁷

After 1757, the relation between the state and the market was restructured with the changing political and commercial circumstances. This made it possible to establish strict control over the domestic markets than the previous regime. Grain was produced all over the region and it was a common item of consumption. It was produced as an item of sustenance but a large quantity of grain was traded not only inside the province but also in other provinces. After the famine of 1769-1770 movement of grain from one place to

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 202

another was a serious matter in the field of economy. At this stage the Company's administration, politics and reformation were closely connected with each other.

The East India Company showed their interest in grain prices at the time of either abundant or poor harvest. After the assumption of *dewany* in 1765 the grain market system became well organised and stabilized. In the early years, the Company's government did not think of the condition and well-being of the country and the population too. But their attention drew towards it at the period of scarcity of grain.⁹⁸

In the internal fields, various obstacles were prevalent. *Chowkies* in the Company's point of view were detrimental to the open trade. There tolls were collected, as a result traders were very often oppressed by the *chowkies*. Transportation tariffs increased the price of goods. Abolition of the *chowkies* and light duties would reduce the price of goods of daily need. The newly acquired political power of the English Company needed to be stable. In 1778, Vansittart wrote "A market is a place" 'where authority must be exercised to regulate the weights and scales, to preserve order and to afford protection to the persons who frequent it ...' ⁹⁹

In 1773 the Company took several steps, a) The tariffs on grain transportation in the country were abolished. b) The tariffs on the crops would now be levied on daily consumption foods in the major towns. The authorised customs houses would collect it. c) All types of road duties were abolished. d) The local merchants would have the freedom to transport wherever they deem fit to sell their goods. ¹⁰⁰

The Company's penetration into the internal trade had a profound effect on the internal markets. The regulations of 1773, the merchants got free from the hindrance of the

⁹⁸ Kumkum Banerjee, op.cit.1986, p.419

⁹⁹ Rajat Datta, op.cit, 2000,p.203

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 203-204

outpost, toll station and economically important areas. The merchants immediately reacted on it. They re-established the private *gunjs* to collect their necessary goods or by others from those markets. From the *golahs* and the landing places grains were turned out. The re-distribution of the markets for the merchants increased the direct control of the internal markets both in network and distribution.¹⁰¹

On 1st March, 1774 the 'Council of Revenue' ordered to abolish the grain taxes (which were collected from grain trade). Mr. Lewis immediately sent it to the different *parganahs* of Midnapore.¹⁰² These steps were very much effective for the grain trade. It is seen that Rajnarayan Sen -- a grain merchant of Hatkhola in Calcutta, dealt in paddy and grain at Kasijora and Mandal Gaut areas since long period. He supplied grains to Calcutta from these areas. The *Zamindar* of Kasijorah seized some boats for customs. As a result Rajnarayan Sen (the grain trader) claimed a *parwannah* from the Company. The Company sent a *parwannah* to the grain trader and ordered the *Zamindar* of Kasijora to release the boats; otherwise he would be punished by the authority of the Company.¹⁰³

Kriparam Koyal, Hurry Kothrah, the residents of Kukrahati in Durudamnan *parganah* complained that Ramhari Sarkar Sikdar and Durga Charan Haldar unusually collected rupees 63 from them during the time measurement of crops. At the time of selling of crops at Kukrahati the *ryots* had to pay a share to the government which had already been stopped earlier.¹⁰⁴

In view of the allegation the government, after a proper investigation, ordered the persons to returns the *ryots* in double of the collected amount of rupees and also ordered

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 205

¹⁰² PCR B, 16th May 1774, Vol. 1, p. 29

¹⁰³ PCR 5th March, 1784, pp.344-345

¹⁰⁴ CSTHM ., Vol. 4, p. 58

the persons that rupees 24 and 13 *annas*, which they had collected for the extra weight, would be paid to the government for unauthorized collection.¹⁰⁵

It is also seen that the *Zamindar of parganah* Shaw bandar in Maratha district sent *paiks* and other people to collect unusual customs duties from the grains produced and stored in the Lamochoor *parganah* under *chakla* Jaleswar. After a proper investigation, J. Pearce ordered the *zamindar* to stop those activities through a *parwannah*.¹⁰⁶

So many instances where grains were imported or exported by violating the government order and collected unauthorised duties on grain such as it was seen that *chakla* Hijli in South West Bengal many *izaradars* levied various type of *sair* duties on grains. During the time of local king or landlords, Beer Narayan in Eranch *parganah* received 42 rupees on grain laden boats from the boatmen and *dandees*. As well as, rupees 16, 11, 17, 2/- were collected as duties from the paddy loaded bullock cart in Bahari Mutha *parganah*. Also duties were collected from the grain traders for transporting grain by bullock cart in Jawalamutha *parganah*.¹⁰⁷ During the time of *Rani*(Queen) Sugandha duties were levied on grain transportation in Majnamutha *parganah*. Duties were also collected from almost every *parganahs* of her dominated areas like as Sarifabad, Balijorah, Durudamnaun, etc.¹⁰⁸

Basically, the Company wanted to control of the supply of grain and similar products in the markets. As a result, the Company introduced the regulations. Actually the regulations came into in times of scarcity. An example can be cited that in 1774 delayed

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 18-19

¹⁰⁷ Comptroller of Salt and Collector of Salt District Copies of Correspondence Statement ... Tamluk, Hidgelee and Mysadal, (CSTHM) 1790, Vol. -3, pp.58-59, particulars of sundry *Sayer* duties Collected. Immemorial by *Izadadar*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

rainfall had increased the price of grain. There the *beoparies* would buy food grains and supply it to the deficit areas without any trouble.¹⁰⁹ Like as, in 1781 the vendor of grain (was) to be suffered to carry their grain to such markets as they preferred without hindrance or molestation.¹¹⁰

During situations of scarcity these profits could be made to assume staggering proportions, by the merchants, by restoring to their usual practice of regretting grain when it was most needed. Similar sentiments can be seen expressed in a report from Midnapore (dated 13th October, 1783) which states that any scarcity, occasioned by inclement weather is usually aggravated by an artificial scarcity, created by the merchants from hoarding grain greatly enhancing the price.¹¹¹ It was seen that during the time of famine in 1788, 45,835 *maunds* food grains were disappeared from the markets of Midnapore. 37,710 *maunds* food grains were controlled by the *mahajans* and *baniks* and the remaining 8125 *maunds* were with the *zamindars* and *choudhuries*.¹¹²

At that time, an assistant of the acting collector was appointed in Midnapore, to monitor the amount of grains stored in traders' 'granaries'. And it was instructed that if more than three thousand *maunds* of crops would be discovered, a peon would be appointed for its exaction. If it was found that the grains were discovered, it would allow the owner as much of the crops as possible to supply to the retail markets.¹¹³ Some *mahajans* and landlords who were actually native dealers or grain merchant's stored grain

¹⁰⁹ Tillotama Mukherjee, *Political Culture and Economy in Eighteenth Century Bengal: Networks of Exchange, Consumption and Communication*, New Delhi, Oriental Blackswan, 2013, p. 257

¹¹⁰ PCR, Vol. -7 12 September, 1781, p.213

¹¹¹ WBDR, New Series Midnapore, p.123

¹¹² Rajat Datta, op.cit,2000, p. 210

¹¹³RD GGC, 23rd April,1788, pp.446-448

to their granaries where grains were kept for some times, those discovered by Mr. Willam. It is mentioned below.

Table No: II.16

<i>Parganah</i>	Village	Name	Occupation	<i>Mds</i>
Oterbehar	Kissenpore	Juggoon day	<i>Mahajan</i>	9000
Kestnagore	Baingdau	Balram Adhakari	<i>Mahajan</i>	8950
„	„	Gopenauth Choudhury	<i>Zamindar</i>	3,125
„	„	Sagar ghosh	<i>Mahajan</i>	3730
„	Bauttee	Roopcharan mitra	<i>Mahajan</i>	4975
„	„	Munsiramahapatra	<i>Mahajan</i>	3800
„	„	Tiloc barr	<i>Mahajan</i>	3375
„	„	Argun dey	<i>Mahajan</i>	5000
„	Radanagore	Panchanan	<i>Mahajan</i>	3880

Source: RDGGC, 2nd July, 1788, PP. 164-165. List of persons and their occupations in whose possession a great quantity of grain was found.

It was impossible to determine properly the amount of grains left in the districts during the season, as it was not collected immediately at that time. Later food grains were transported from one *gunj* to another and it was sold according to the need of the buyers; so it was impossible to determine the exact amount.

The transportation of grains was prohibited. It was withdrawn later and allowed for free transportation of food grains to all the affected areas. The Board of Trade did not point out the selling price of food grains. The dealers were allowed to sell the food grains to their own will. The *ryots* and landlords preserved food grains for the price to be increased. As a result, after paying the revenue to the government they were sure of their dividend. The situation was serious enough for the state to issue warnings against hoarding, or not

bringing grain to the market and non-compliance could end in seizure of the grain.¹¹⁴ The Company always tried to maintain the price of grain. After the intervals of few days the districts officials send a copy of current price of grain to the committee of grain. So many instances were seen in *chakla* Jaleswar and Midnapore district.¹¹⁵

Traders came to Mindnapore and Jaleswar *parganahs* to buy food grains from neighbouring areas of South West Bengal that increased the price of food grains. This was one reason of crisis food grains in South West Bengal. According to the allegation of the traders and the inhabitants of the areas, Edward Babar arranged a rigorous enquiry. After enquiry, he saw a large quantity of food grains transported from the province. As a result, he issued a *parwannah* that prohibited the re-sale of purchased food grains in the province. Some regions of the province produced a large amount of food grains, but another region of this province felt in crisis of monsoon because a large area of the province were not cultivated. As a result, it was virtually impossible to supply food grains, according to the need of the inhabitant of these province of South west Bengal. But the merchants of Hooghly and Burdwan province came to the *parganahs* of South West Bengal though Hooghly and Burdwan had a special reputation for food grains production,¹¹⁶ probably due to the low rate of food grains, traders from Hooghly and Burdwan province used to come to South West Bengal to buy grains.

Occasionally, it was seen that the traders had legal *parwannah* but the officials of the Company hindered to transportation of food grains. The grain merchants, Snehasi Pal, Gopi Nag, Kalachaund Chakroborty, Gouri Koir, Kali Sankar Pal -- the inhabitants of

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 8th November, 1784, pp. 97-98

¹¹⁵ PCR, 15th December, 1783, Lt. No 48, p.123, 22nd December, 1783 Lt. No. 28, p.205, 29th December, 1783, Lt. No. 52,53,54, p. 366

¹¹⁶ Bengal District Records Midnapore, Vol.4, 1770-1774, Letter issued, pp. 52-53.

Calcutta sent a letter authorised by the Company to the different collectors of Midnapur, Hijli and Jaleswar about not to prevent any movement of their crops. The Collector of Hijli did not provide any hindrance to the transportation of grains, but the Collector of Midnapur, Jaleswar and Gumghar hindered the transportation of crops in those provinces. Moreover the *sikdars* of *mufassal* broke the key of the granaries of the grain above grain traders and sold their crops at the rate of 9 *maunds* per rupee, but the natural rate of that time was 8 *maunds* per rupee. So the traders would suffer tremendously. They appealed to the government to send a peon to collect their dues, and allow them to transport and sell the remaining crops in their granaries.¹¹⁷

In a letter dated on 1st February, 1788, the 'Governor General' instructed all the collectors under them, in a circular on the rights and privileges to purchase grains from different *gunj* and granaries, and according to the needs of the Company they would supply to the *sadar*. They would fix the price of grains according to the rate of the markets at that time, and main *gunj* under their control.¹¹⁸ In the main markets *chaudhuries* fixed the price rate of food grains. At that time *chaudhuries'* certificates were much significant.¹¹⁹ In the pre-colonial period the price rate of the products was controlled by the vendors to their own choice. It was approved by the *darogas'* seal.¹²⁰ It is unnecessary to mention that the government officials showed their power at the time of scanty periods and also when the price rate of food grains was so high.¹²¹ More over they ordered the Collector of Revenue and others to encourage the grain traders by eliminating all obstacles to their grains

¹¹⁷ Comptroller of Salt, CSTM, Vol.4, p. 98.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, Vol.1, No 49, pp. 42-43.

¹¹⁹ BRG, Vol.1, p. 235

¹²⁰ Rajat Datta, op.cit, 2000, p.200

¹²¹ CSTM, Vol.1, No 49, pp. 42-43.

transportation. The officials would identify the attempt of establishment of monopoly and punish them.¹²²

The grain traders were warned that if they would stock grains collecting from the markets they would be marked as culprits and in that case their grains would be confiscated and arranged for the sale of those grains. The officials of the Company would inform the grain traders that the government had no intention of interfering the dividends of grain traders and the transportation of grains.¹²³

The 'Board of Trade' instructed the 'Collectors of Customs' in Dhaka, Calcutta and Mursidabad record the grains transported from anywhere within the place. They would send the details weekly, along with the names of the grain traders. It does not mean that they would be exempted from the actual measure of grains. It was also stated that no tariff or restrictions would be imposed on the grain traders.¹²⁴

In the same way the collectors would be careful not to impose any restriction on *gunjs* and granaries under their control and also alert to look into the allegations. The grains would be stored in order to sell those in the current rate. They would sale it in public auction for benefit of the public. They would pay the profit to the actual owner of grains. The authority could not force any grain traders to sell his grains at a specific location.¹²⁵ Except recognised dealers, grain preservation was prohibited to others. One could keep enough grains for their family's consumption as well as seeds. They sent their surplus grains to the public market for sale; otherwise they would be marked as culprit.¹²⁶

¹²² . Ibid

¹²³ Letter from Governor General in Council 21st October,.1791,Vol.4, p.82

¹²⁴ CSTM, Vol.1, No 49, pp. 42-43.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Letter from Governor General in Council 21st October,.1791,Vol.4, p.82

It has been mentioned earlier that the Company ordered its officials to supply food grains to Calcutta or some special cases besides their own consumption. Such as an example, that the collector of Burdwan instructed his assistant to collect a large quantity of food grains and to send it to the Calcutta.¹²⁷

According to the direction the acting collector of Midnapore informed the secretary of Government Edward Hay that he collected 500 *maunds* food grains as per the instruction and arranged to send it to Tamluk by land route. He also sent a letter to inform Mr. Dent and told him (MR. Dent) to despatch these food grains by water ways to Calcutta. But Mr. Dent was unable to send it. Last of all the acting collector of Midnapore despatched the grains to Calcutta safely.¹²⁸ There were numerous instances in which it appears that the district authorities, according to the above instruction, collected food grains and sent it to Calcutta as well as where it was needed. Such as 500 *maunds* food grains were collected from the markets of Midnapore and sent it to Shibpore.¹²⁹

Along with the British East India Company, the French and the Dutch could collect their necessary goods from the markets of South West Bengal and take them to their desired places. A letter from J.C Price reveals that the French collected food grains from the markets of South West Bengal. He seized the collected amount with the help of a *havildar* and eight *sepoys*. However, later the French and the Dutch were allowed to transport their collected food grains to their destination.¹³⁰

It is observed that due to the scarcity of food grains, it was difficult to the Company's officials to collect food grains. For an example, an official of the Company in

¹²⁷ RDGGC, 2nd July, 1788, p.2

¹²⁸ Ibid, 23rd April, 1788, pp. 444-445

¹²⁹ Ibid, 16th May, 1788, p.483

¹³⁰ Bengal District Records Midnapore, Vol.4, 1770-1774, Letter issued, p. 15-16

South West Bengal said that it was impossible to collect rice according to the demand due to shortage of food grains in the district, even crops reduced in the military *bazars*. The commanding officers wanted an enquiry for this kind of shortage. Even he also, to avoid the harmful scarcity, he stopped its exports from the province to the north. He expected this system to reduce the price of grain and to buy enough grain from the markets. He forced the grain traders who bought grains for export to the northern part of Bengal to sell in the district markets which would provide temporary relief to all. In present situation there was no possibility to buying food grains. He had already purchased enough food grains that he would try to supply in time.¹³¹ A similar situation also reported in South West Bengal. Some official informed that he had collected food grains and sent the grains to Madras and Fort William. From the next month the *ryots* would start their cultivation for the next season; so if it would be possible under the present situation, he would be in position to send rice and paddy to Dhaka.¹³²

The grain traders were in greater danger in the Company's activities in the grain markets. For, the government acted both as buyer and seller in these markets. So, the grain dealers protested in this type of participation in the grain trade. It might turn out to be precursor of a situation of monopoly in the market for grain purchase from the primary producers. The grain traders also expressed their dissatisfaction that as a grain seller intended to slash their profit during the period of rising prices by offering the producers at much lower rates in compare to the existing rate of the food grains.

¹³¹ RDGGC, 23rd April, 1788, pp. 446-48

¹³²RDGGC, 17th April, 1788, pp.693-694

Conclusion: From the above discussion it was found that the Company partially successful participant in the grain market. They spending considerable sums on its grain concern; but they failed to manage themselves to be the competitions with the indigenous merchants in the case of grain collection and its transportation.¹³³

The European private traders would collect grains for their own consumption. For instance it is seen that the European who lived in Hooghly collected grains from the *bazars* of Hijli in neighbouring South West Bengal during scarcity in 1786. They preserved it at their own granaries. At that time they also decided not to export grain to the outer stations.¹³⁴

European private traders kept themselves aloof from the grain trading. As a result the Company deprived their own grain trade in South West Bengal as well as entire Bengal in lack of their experience in away from the grain trade. The Company kept themselves away from the trading without compromising its foremost priorities. They made no huge amount of investment in this regard. They preferred more in the trading of -cotton textiles, salt and saltpetre which were collected under their control or to set monopoly of the Company, In the Company's trading these goods were too much important to them. It made the Company's trade smooth and they could manage the supply of these commodities in adequate amount and elimination of competition in their control an imperative need.

¹³³ BRG., 29th July, 1803

¹³⁴ Revenue at Fort William, 18th July, 1786, pp.263-266

Last of all, it was seen that the internal grain trade based on fluctuated production and gradual increasing demand in urban areas was directly regulated by the Indigenous merchants of South West Bengal, and also they benefited from this trade. But later the Company's initiative i.e. controlling over stock and price of grains managed to check the illegal activities of dishonest traders.