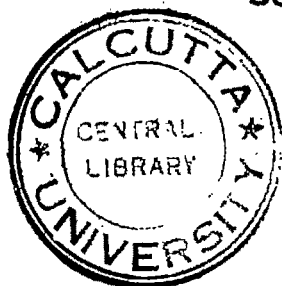


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THE COTTON WEAVERS OF BENGAL

1757 - 1833

SCANNED



THESIS SUBMITTED FOR PH. D.  
DEGREE ( ARTS ) OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

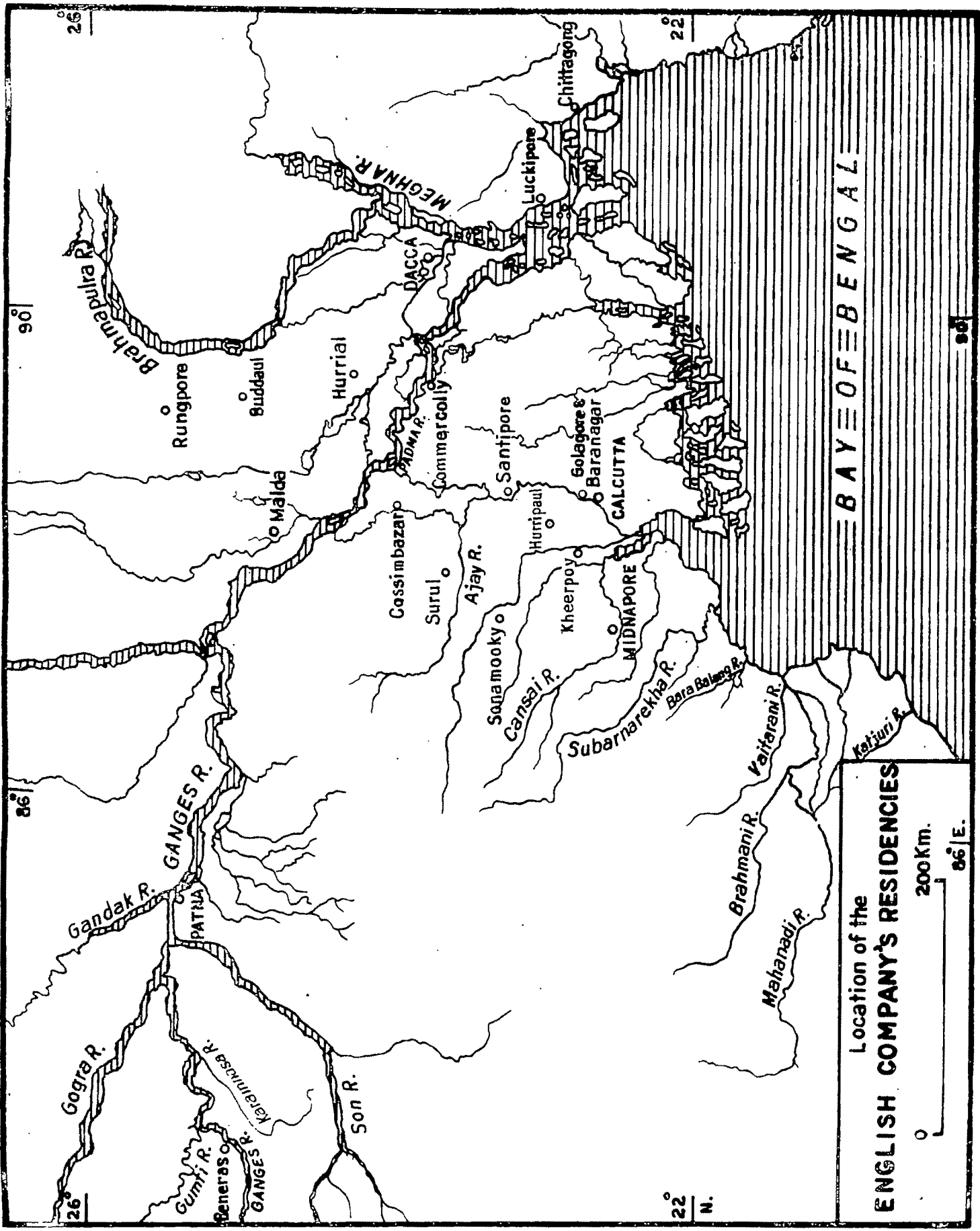
By

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Location of the  
**ENGLISH COMPANY'S RESIDENCIES**

200 Km.

86° E.

CHAPTER - I

STATEMENT OF THE MAIN THEME

The nature of the changes that British rule has brought about in Indian society and economy has been a controversial question. Though the significance of the changes has scarcely been questioned, there is considerable disagreement as to the nature of the changes and their bearing on the general behaviour of the economy. One method of studying this behaviour has been to study the movement of national income of British India over the years. On the otherhand, different sectors of the economy have been separately studied in order to show how the broad institutional and economic changes occurring during British rule impinged on those different sectors. The present study follows the second method and concentrates on a crucial period of changes occurring in the cotton industry which admittedly formed a significant sector of Bengal's economy. Though it was the rural agrarian society of Bengal which received the severest jolt as a result of the changes brought about by British rule, it can be argued that at least during the first few decades of British rule, the considerable sector of Bengal's economy constituted by its cotton

industry was<sup>aa</sup> deeply affected as the agrarian society. The two processes of changes had, however, distinct characters of their own. The agrarian society was mostly directly affected by the policy of the English towards maximization of land revenue. The process of change in Bengal's cotton industry occurred in a different way. It is notable that the English East India Company was keen on increasing the exports of cotton piecegoods as far as possible or at least on maintaining the exports at their old level. However, such a plan of the Company was frustrated by other developments which the Company's Government in Bengal failed to resist and some of the decisions of British Parliament were actually imposed on the Company's Government. The changing fortunes of the cotton industry make a significant study also because of the far-reaching effects on the numerous community of cotton weavers and spinners, of the substantial re-structuring of the organisation of cotton production effected by the Company after the consolidation of its political authority in Bengal.

Researches on the cotton industry of Bengal, which was its premier industry till the first quarter of the 19th century, have mostly concentrated on its decline. The nature of the production organisation in the industry and the changing economic conditions of the weavers have also been analysed. The present study stems from a feeling that a more detailed study of the changing fortunes of the cotton industry and also of the considerable community connected with the industry, is possible, with the help of the existing source materials available which have only been inadequately studied for the purpose.\*

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\* The present study is mainly based on the Unpublished Papers of the Bengal Board of Trade. The Bengal Board of Trade which looked after the various aspects of the Company's 'investment' in Bengal has left a stupendous mass of records dealing with the question of the organisation of cotton production and the exports of cotton piecegoods from Bengal.

The starting point of the study is the year 1757, the year of the battle of Plassey, which admittedly constituted a great turning point in the political and the economic history of Bengal. The study ends with 1833, the year when the trading status of the English East India Company was finally abolished. So far as the fate of the cotton weavers was concerned, this was not by any means a decisive event. The decline of the industry started much earlier and the industry in its original form was nearly completely annihilated by the late 1820s and the East India Company's connection with the cotton industry practically ceased by then. However, we have brought down the story to the year of the abolition of the Company's trading status mainly because of the fact that some of the later proceedings of the Board of Trade contained a detailed analysis of the process of decline of the cotton industry. The East India Company throughout argued in favour of keeping alive the cotton industry of Bengal and it is not improbable that had the trading status of the East India Company not been abolished in 1833, the Company would have continued to defend the interest of Bengal's cotton industry. Perhaps, such a defence by itself would have been ineffectual, in the context of the mass production in U.K. of cotton textiles whose technology was one of the first to be revolutionized as a result of the Industrial Revolution and we can conclude that Bengal cotton-goods could scarcely compete with the considerably cheaper textiles produced in U.K. through the new technology.

Though the main emphasis in this thesis is on the changing fortunes of the cotton weavers and spinners, the changing market of Bengal cotton piecegoods constitutes a significant background of this

change in the fortunes of the cotton weavers. The East India Company's policy in regard to the organisation of the cotton piecegoods did constitute a very vital factor in this. However, it can not be isolated from the fluctuations in the market, for Bengal cotton piecegoods. In fact, in certain cases, the changes in the conditions under which the weavers worked could be directly related to such fluctuations. The second chapter deals with certain long term trends in these fluctuations. The Bengal cotton piecegoods had an established international market for a fairly long time. However, this market was increasingly being exposed to new influences and fundamental changes tended to occur in this. The British policy, particularly since 1765, was to increase, as far as possible, the exports of Bengal's commodities and this is natural in view of the fact that cotton piecegoods still constituted the most important item of exports. Other European Companies also were interested in an increased exports of cotton piecegoods. However, the expectation of the Court of Directors that the Command of the English East India Company over an enormous territorial surplus revenue as a result of the acquisition of the Diwani in 1765 would enable the Company substantially to increase the exports of cotton piecegoods was only partially fulfilled.\* Initially, the main factor in this was that the size of the resources which the Company could divert to the purchases of cotton piecegoods from Bengal, was not as large as the Court of Directors assumed. However, the dominant factor in the relatively slow expansion of cotton

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\* See P.J. Marshall : Problems of Empire, India and Britain, PP 83-85.

exports from Bengal was not such constraints on the supply. The demand position tended to be increasingly decisive and the trade in Bengal cotton piecegoods gradually declined over the years mainly because the markets for them tended to shrink. Some short term oscillations occurred during the time of American War of Independence which by restricting the exports of goods from England tended to reduce the old market for Bengal cotton piecegoods. However, with the end of the war, the Bengal cotton-goods could regain their old position and indeed as Taylor argued the years between 1771 and 1787 were the most prosperous period of the cotton trade of Dacca. Developments, however, were occurring with far reaching consequences for the market for Bengal cotton piecegoods. It was the course of the Industrial Revolution in England which proved the most crucial one in the decline of Bengal's cotton trade. The intervention of the long period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars only aggravated the situation and the Bengal cotton piecegoods had scarcely any share in the booming trade in Bengal commodities soon after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the establishment of Peace in Europe. It is arguable whether Bengal cotton goods could hold their own against their rival-varieties which could be produced on a mass scale at a much cheaper rate than the Bengal goods. However, the inadequate tariff protection for the Bengal cotton goods completely ruined the chance of their survival.

The third chapter is concerned with the changes in the organisation of production, in the general context of the fluctuations in the market for Bengal cotton piecegoods, and I have tried to emphasize

some of the structural changes in this. It may not be entirely true, as is sometimes supposed, that the cotton weavers before British rule were wholly a prosperous economic community. There is evidence that in some regions at least the cotton weavers worked under conditions which were far from enviable and that they were not the main beneficiaries of a fairly stable market for cotton piecegoods. However, though the old system was not entirely replaced by a new one during British rule, there is evidence that this underwent significant changes. Not only that the imperfections in the old system were consolidated, but also the area over which this system worked was then far larger than before. The most decisive factor in this, as I have tried to emphasize, is the role of the English political power and it is evident that without the exercise of this power, the production organisation would not have evolved in the way it did. The contrast with the situation during the Mughal period was clear. The Mughal state did encourage the production and exports of cotton piecegoods but there is no evidence that the State machinery could control the entire cotton production or that it was oriented to maximizing the production and exports of cotton goods. During the British rule, the situation substantially changed. It was the English Company itself which dominated the exports of Bengal goods and it was this Company again which depended, at least for a considerable time after Plassey, on the exports of cotton goods as a mode of remittance of tribute to Europe and the local control of the Company's Officers over the whole system of cotton production was so re-structured as to ensure the stability of this system of remittance. While the Pre-British system was not entirely free from the elements of coercion on the cotton weavers, such coercions and constraints organised far more efficiently during British rule than before, increasingly tended to be <sup>a</sup> necessary part of

the new organisation of production. Such coercions were not sporadic or isolated and they were formalised in the form of a series of regulations and the state had to adopt various devices towards the enforcement of these regulations and as we shall see the most effective of these was the manipulation of the system of advances.

Contrary to a more or less general assumption, the Company, however, did not necessarily invariably succeed in enforcing the coercive system and could only establish a partial monopsonistic control. The fourth chapter deals with the causes of the failure of the Company in establishing a complete monopsonistic control. This point needs to be emphasized in view of the fact that the complete success of the Company in this regard has been usually assumed. While writing the misfortunes of the cotton weavers of Bengal, historians generally tend to relate them to a supposed monopsonistic control.

Available statistical evidence suggests that only about one third of the total estimated weaving population could be directly controlled by the English Company and even here, the occasional encroachments by other European Companies could not be entirely prevented.

Sometimes, this partial success of the English Company in the buyers' market resulted from the fact that the English Company's purchases were in normal times confined to some particular categories of cotton goods and in such cases they scarcely bothered whether other European Companies operated in the market. However, even where such a direct competition had not to be faced, the operation of the other

Companies did adversely affect the position of the English Company in the buyers' market. This was partly a result of the fact that in view of the cotton production being a specialised kind of production, the supply of cotton goods did not necessarily expand as fast as the demand for it and over a certain period of time, the size of the skilled weavers did not appreciably increase. Therefore, whenever in the context of a sudden spurt in the demand for cotton goods, other European Companies entered the buyers' market and eagerly distributed advances, the English Company's insistence on a particular kind of commodity did not necessarily provide effective protection against the inroads of the rival Companies.

In certain cases, it was the English Company which wanted the other European Companies to continue to operate in the market and in regard to the Dutch at least, the English were keen on a kind of compromise. The English throughout showed generosity to rival Companies during the periods of its own financial stringency and in view of series of political conquests with which the English had to grapple, such stringencies tended to recur. During such times when the English could scarcely afford to provide as much advances to the weavers as they did previously, they welcomed the activities of the other Companies because without the advances provided by them, the whole system of cotton production would have been seriously disrupted.

However, even in regard to the categories of cotton goods in which the English were interested, the English had to face keen competition from the other rival Companies and could only partly eliminate

it. This resulted from a number of circumstances. The prices which the English Company offered were invariably much lower than those offered by the rival Companies and it is surprising that the English Company was reluctant to raise prices despite a spectacular increase in the prices of the daily necessities and also cotton thread. The weavers working for the Company in fact suffered worse where part of the prices which the Commercial Residents offered were misappropriated by the lower ranks of bureaucracy of the Commercial Residencies. In some cases, the cotton weavers found the particular kind of supervision exercised by the Commercial Residents extremely galling. Under the circumstances, the offer of higher prices by the other Companies would easily induce them to desert the English and work for these new masters. In fact, under the conditions of boom in cotton markets, the English could scarcely devise a completely effective system towards the prevention of the weavers' contacts with the rival European Companies.

The particular reactions of the weavers to the coercive system enforced by the English, were also responsible for the failure of the English in completely enforcing such a system. The cases of combined resistance of weavers were very many and it is notable that such cases of resistance tended to increase whenever the conditions of prosperity of cotton trade made it easier for them to establish contacts with the rival European Companies. In fact, such cases of resistance would have been more frequent but for certain circumstances for which the weavers had to hesitate before striking against the English. Of these circumstances, the most important one that has been

emphasized in this study, is the protection that the Commercial Residents usually provided against the exactions of the Zamindars and local Ijaradars.

The role of the cotton industry in the general economy of Bengal and the actual effects of the decline of the cotton industry on the economy form the main theme of the next chapter. The point needs to be stressed in view of the general impression that the effects of this specific form of 'de-industrialization' on the economy were disastrous. Some historians have gone to the extent of arguing that the decline of the cotton industry resulted in a serious imbalance in the total economy of Bengal. It is notable that such conclusions are only rarely supported by adequate evidence. Though the harmful effects of the decline of the cotton industry on the economy can scarcely be doubted, there is scarcely any warrant for the view about the alleged destruction in the balance in the economy as a result.

The available data are not entirely satisfactory and what I have tried to do is only to analyse whatever data I have found in the unpublished records. I have studied the question from several angles : (i) the regional distribution of the main centres of production of cotton goods which would normally indicate the size of the regions which were directly affected by the changing fortunes of the cotton industry ; (ii) the size of the weaving population ; (iii) the nature of the employment that cotton weaving and the related processes provided to persons involved in the production process in

various centres of cotton production and lastly (iv) the phases of decline of cotton industry and the nature of the search on the part of the affected cotton weavers for alternative employment. In this connection, I have also tried to judge the validity of a recent view which argued that cotton weavers need not necessarily have deserted their old occupations and that certain circumstances occurred which enabled them to continue, though in a modified way, their production of cotton goods.

## CHAPTER - II

### TRADE IN COTTON PIECEGOODS

Calicoes and Muslins, of singular beauty and endless variety, were manufactured in various parts of India, more particularly in Bengal and had from time immemorial formed the important item of exports from India. These were in great estimation amongst the people in ancient Britain and from the commencement of trade between Europe and India by the way of the 'Capte of Good Hope, formed a substantial part of exports from India.

In 73 A.D. Pliny was aware of the trade and manufactures of India and spoke highly of the excellence of the Bengal muslins.<sup>1</sup> Calicoes, mostly of Bengal manufacture, formed a very considerable part of the Portuguese exports into Europe in the early period of their trade in the 16th Century. Among the numerous articles of which the Cargo of 'THE CARRACK' taken by the English in 1592, consisted, were Calico lawns, broad white Calicoes, coarse white Calicoes, brown broad Calicoes, canopies, towels, quilts and Calico Carpets like those of Turkey.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Milburn : Oriental Commerce, Vol. II, P. 229.

2 Ibid : P. 230.

When the English came, they found the textile industry of Bengal well established. Leaving enough for her own internal consumption, Bengal piecegoods formed the principal article of exports in her World Commerce. Soon after the English began to trade to India and piecegoods formed a part of their cargoes homeward in 1615, it appears, writes Milburn, from Sir Dudley Digges's Pamphlet that large quantities of Calicoes were exported from England to foreign parts and in 1628 Mr. Munn estimated the annual exportation of Calicoes to England of 50,000 pieces.<sup>3</sup> He further estimated that the Calicoes cost on an average 7 S per piece in India and sold in London at 20 S per piece.<sup>4</sup> He also mentions that in his time the Turks sent £ 6,00,000 a year from Mocha for Calicoes, drugs, sugar, rice etc.<sup>5</sup> In 1625, some objections were raised in England against this trade of the English East India Company and the Company in reply pointed out that instead of paying £ 5,00,000 annually to Holland and France for linens, lawns and Cambrics, half the consumption of those articles was superseded by the use of Indian Calicoes and "foreigners now pay us money for the cloths they formerly received in payment for those goods".<sup>6</sup>

From 1631, painted Bengal Calicoes began to be exported from Bengal in considerable quantities by the officers of the Company's ships and during the years 1653 and 1656, when the East India trade was laid open, the prices of the commodities of India became so cheap that "they supplied more parts of Europe and even Amsterdam itself therewith than ever they did after".<sup>7</sup>

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3 Milburn : op.cit. Vol. II, P. 230.  
 4 Ibid : P. 230.  
 5 Ibid : P. 230.  
 6 Ibid : P. 230.  
 7 Quoted in Milburn : op.cit. P. 230.

Though the manufacture of cotton began in England from the beginning of the 17th century,<sup>8</sup> it was far from developed even in 1656-57 and the quantity of production was small. Mac Pherson describes thus :-

"the quantity of linen manufactured in the British dominions was so trifling as not to be equal to, perhaps the thousandth part of the consumption and thence it was evidently good national economy to encourage the use of Indian Calicoes which were much cheaper than linen".<sup>9</sup>

Thus we find that at a time when England was learning the art of weaving, Bengal was manufacturing muslins which had become the wonder of the world. Dr. Forbes Royle did not exaggerate when he said that "the cotton manufacture was no doubt established in India long before we find it noticed in any reliable history".<sup>10</sup>

About 1675 the fashion of wearing Bengal muslins had become pretty general in England and these "in a great measure supplanted the French Cambrics, French and Silesia lawns and other flaxen fabrics of Flanders and Germany, the prices of all which they also reduced very considerably".<sup>11</sup> In 1677, England imported Calicoes to the value of £ 1,60,000 and by 1680 she consumed East India manufactured goods including printed and painted Calicoes for cloths, beds, hangings worth £ 3,00,000 annually".<sup>12</sup> Bengal cotton piecegoods were exported to other consuming markets in considerable quantities throughout the

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8 Baines : History of Cotton Manufacture in Britain, P. 101. Baines is of opinion that "this art was imported from Flanders by the Crowd of Protestant artisans who fled from Antwerp in 1585 some of whom settled in Manchester". P. 99.

9 MacPherson : Early European Commerce with India, PP. 124-25.

10 Royle : Culture and Commerce of Cotton in India and Elsewhere, P.4.

11 MacPherson : op.cit. P.136.

12 Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P.230.

17th Century. According to Mr. W.H. Moreland's calculation, between 1660 and 1680, Japan took nearly one tenth of all the cotton goods shipped by the Dutch from Batavia.<sup>13</sup> Sam <sup>brought</sup> ~~bought~~ Calico and baftas - Moluccas and Ambionia wanted only painted goods. Across the Indian Ocean, South Africa in the early 17th Century offered no market at all but late in the century assorted cotton goods were sent to the Cape for the Dutch settlers and their slaves. A much more important market was that furnished by the Red Sea ports which supplied the West of Arabia, Egypt and the adjacent parts of North Africa. The main off-take was of Calico and ordinary muslin or turban cloth.<sup>14</sup> The trade to the Persian gulf was generally similar to that of the Red Sea with perhaps a larger proportion of ordinary Calico.<sup>15</sup>

About 1699, the Company's Charter was forfeited and a number of persons embarked on the Indian trade. The supply of Indian goods in the British markets was large and its price came down to such a level that it became ruinous to the English manufacturers. About the same time, the Company's trade gave birth to the business of printing Indian Calicoes in England, in imitation of the painted Chintses of India, another article of general use in female dress. This branch of manufacture soon rose to such a height as to render unnecessary the Indian stuffs. The Calico printers very soon raised a clamour against the Company for importing Indian Chintses.<sup>16</sup>

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13 W.H. Moreland's article entitled 'Indian Exports of Cotton Goods in the 17th Century' in the "Indian Journal of Economics", 1924-25, Vol. V, Part - 3, P. 241.

14 Ibid : P. 241.

15 Ibid : P. 241.

16 Mac Pherson : op. cit. P. 136.

In 1700, Parliament came forward and granted protection to the infant textile industry of Great Britain. The Act of 1700 provided that from and after the 29th day of September 1701, all wrought silks of Bengal and stuffs mixed with silk and herba, the manufacture of Persia, China or the East Indies and all Calicoes, painted, dyed, printed or stained which would be exported into Great Britain would not be worn or otherwise used in Great Britain and all these goods would be exported again.<sup>17</sup>

But Indian Calicoes, mostly of Bengal, had become so popular in Great Britain that even the Act of Parliament prohibiting the use of Printed Indian ~~Calicoes~~<sup>Calicoes</sup> failed to give adequate protection to the British industry. Further measures were necessary and in 1720 another act was passed. The Act of 1720 made the use of stained or dyed cotton cloth in Britain a penal offence. The offender would have to pay a penalty of £ 5. Again, if anyone attempted to sell any painted, printed, dyed or stained Calico, he would have to pay a penalty of £ 20.<sup>18</sup>

Though Parliament was anxious to protect and encourage British Cotton<sup>in</sup> Manufactures and passed several laws prohibiting the use of such foreign goods as interfered with them, the industry had not made much progress till 1750. Before 1750, the goods manufactured in Britain were strong and coarse fabrics. Forbes Royle states that "about 1739 and 1740 East India yarns, we learn, were commonly used for the finer kinds of goods and upto the year 1760, the machines employed were nearly as simple as those of India".<sup>19</sup>

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17 Quoted in Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P.231 : P.J.Marshall : Problems of Empire, Britain and India. P. 80.

18 Quoted in Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 231.

19 Royle : op.cit. P. 5.

Hence certain quantity of white Calicoes and certain classes of muslins continued to be exported into England for consumption there and large quantities of Calicoes of various kinds, both white and coloured, and muslins, were regularly exported to England throughout the 18th Century for re-exportation to different countries. Hence the loss of the market of England was more than compensated for by a very considerable increase in the total export of India's textile goods to the other countries by the energetic English Traders.

Thus we find that though hand-weaving of Cotton goods was common to almost all countries, still throughout the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries the finer and luxury products were almost entirely supplied by India. Even as late as 1772 Henry Patullo remarked that "the demand of its ( Bengal's ) textile manufactures could never lessen because no other nation on the globe could either equal or rival their quality."<sup>20</sup> In seeking to explain the cause of this supremacy, Henry Patullo put emphasis on technological factors. Others stressed lower production costs in India. The truth was that the success of the Indian Cotton industry in maintaining its overseas markets and in creating new ones in the West before the Industrial Revolution was due "as much to the possession of highly specialized technical skills in manufacturing as to lower costs of production."<sup>21</sup> The weaving of cotton was not just the assembling of the raw materials required for it. The cotton weaving called for "an empirical knowledge of the preparation and treatment of the natural fibre before it could be made ready for weaving".<sup>22</sup> Before

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20 Henry Patullo : An Essay upon the Cultivation of the Land & Improvement of the Revenues of Bengal, P. 25.

21 K.N.Chaudhuri's article entitled 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century' in 'Indian Economic & Social History Review', June-Sept' 1974, P. 129.

22 Ibid., P. 129.

the invention of machine spinning, hand-spinners in Europe could hardly equal the quality of Indian yarn. India thus possessed two major advantages --- in the local supply of the raw materials and in human capital and these gave her industry a distinct lead in costs. "Measured in money terms the labour inputs also effected substantial savings when compared to the costs of production in an equivalent industry in Europe. It was this price differential which enabled the East India Company to maintain a mark-up on the Unit Cost of its textile imports in the ratio of two to one".<sup>23</sup>

The picture remained the same after the acquisition of the political power of Bengal by the English Company in 1757. The cotton piece-goods formed the most important item of the Company's investment<sup>c</sup> in Bengal. With regard to the value and variety of investment, much depended upon the political condition of the country. For instance, the Council thus complained :

"Hitherto we have not been able to make any great progress in the investment of this season. The delay made by the late Nabob in performing his treaty and re<sup>u</sup>turning our goods seized by his orders, the apprehensions we were under a fresh rupture and the want of sufficiency of cash to supply to a<sup>u</sup>rungs with any large sums of money, were all of them so many impediments to our commencing the provisions of investment".<sup>24</sup>

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23 K.N.Chaudhuri's article entitled 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry etc'- in "Indian Economic & Social History Review", June-Sept 1974 PP. 129-130.

24 Letter to Court, 20 Aug 1757 : Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol.II, Para 11, P. 241.

The investment figures, mostly consisting of cloth, for the year 1757 was as follows :<sup>25</sup>

Santipore	:	Rs. 1,68,500
Cuttorah	:	Rs. 64,000
Kheerpoy	:	Rs. 2,48,675
Malda	:	Rs. 3,52,450
Harrial	:	Rs. 3,11,970
Buddaul	:	Rs. 71,670
Gollagore	:	Rs. 20,800
Burron	:	Rs. 1,04,800
Sonamooky	:	Rs. 1,01,220
Hurripaul	:	Rs. 1,54,645
Calcutta	:	Rs. 1,69,720

By November 1757, the share of Dacca amounted to one lakh of rupees and the factory at Patna was supplied with one lakh also.<sup>26</sup> The total amount allotted to 'investment' for 1757 was Rs. 19,68,445 including the amount allotted to Dacca and Patna. If we make a comparison of the 'investment' figures of 1757 with those of any previous year, we notice a considerable difference. The total amount allotted to 'investment' in 1751-52, on the eve of the abandonment of the policy of 'investment' through dadni merchants<sup>27</sup> was Rs. 33,66,050. Dacca was allotted Rs. 8,40,390.<sup>28</sup> Owing to political uncertainty, the amount of 'investment' was thus considerably reduced and the amount allotted for 1757 was a

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- 25 Letter to Court 10 January 1758 : Fort William-India House Correspondence Vol.II, Para 35, P.267.
- 26 Letter to Court 10 January 1758 : Fort William-India House Correspondence Vol.II, Paras 58-61, PP 271-72.
- 27 Vide Infra Chap. III.
- 28 N.K.Sinha : The Economic History of Bengal, Vol.I, P.7.

little more than the half of the total amount allotted for 1751-52. The amount allotted to Dacca which produced the finest muslin was only one eighth of that for the year 1751-52.

At this time, the business was carried on by the gomastas<sup>29</sup> and the Council ~~write~~ <sup>Wrote:</sup> "you may rest assured of our being as careful as possible to avoid having more money at the aurungs at one time than there may be occasion for, nor shall we be wanting in any endeavours to encourage the merchants to manufacture and bring into our Cottah as large a quantity of ready money goods as we can prevail on them to provide, conformable to your orders".<sup>30</sup> But they apprehended that owing to the presence of multiplicity of purchasers, the prices might be enhanced at the aurungs and if the Company did not offer higher prices, they might have to accept the goods of inferior qualities.<sup>31</sup> For the year 1758, the figures of investment were as follows:<sup>32</sup>

Patna	:	C Rs.	2,12,432 - 14 - 0
Dacca	:	" "	4,67,050 - 0 - 0
Lakshmipur	:	" "	32,775 - 0 - 0
Balasore	:	" "	75,330 - 0 - 0
			and 100 gold mohurs
Cossimbazar	:	C Rs.	9,23,353 - 12 - 9
			and 5 gold mohurs.

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29 Infra. Chapter III.

30 Letter to Court, 31 December 1758 : Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol.II, Para 38, Page 334.

31 Ibid.

32 Letter to Court, 31 December 1758, Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol.II, Paras 55 and 63, PP 338-39.

The full 'investment' figures for 1758 are not available and hence it is difficult to make a comparison with the previous year's allotment. But from the available data relating to Dacca and Patna, we find that in 1758 the 'investment' in these two places was substantially increased with the end of political uncertainties. The share of Dacca amounted to C. Rs. 4,67,050 as against only one lakh in 1757. The amount allotted to Patna was more than double the previous year's allotment, and the 'investment' consisted mostly of cotton piecegoods.

Writing on the 29th December, 1759, the Council expressed great satisfaction at the manner the 'investment' had been carried on by the gomastas at the several aurungs. They thus wrote to the Court of Directors :- "the cloth they have sent us down proves in general very good and we believe the whole of our orders will be fully complied with".<sup>33</sup> The gomastas were instructed "to increase their purchases of cloth foreseeing that a large return of goods from Bengal would \* \* \* turn out greatly to the Company's advantage".<sup>34</sup> As regards the investments received from Dacca and Luckipore, the Council wrote : "The investments received from Dacca and Luckipore, this season have proved extremely good and the gentlemen of those factories acquaint us they shall be able to invest the whole of the monies they have been supplied with".<sup>35</sup>

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33 Letter to Court, 29th December, 1759 : Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol.II, Para 37, Page 440.

34 Ibid : Para 39 Page 440.

35 Ibid : Para 45 Page 440.

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For the year 1759, the Company's investment figures were such :<sup>36</sup>

Cossimbazar	:	C Rs.	8,59,674 - 10 - 7
Patna	:	" "	2,07,307 - 7 - 3
Dacca	:	" "	1,59,603 - 14 - 3
Luckipore	:	" "	1,66,185 - 0 - 0
Balasore	:	" "	10,942 - 7 - 6

The table gives us the investment figures of the main factories only. The allocation for the subordinate factories is not mentioned and since the table does not give the full amounts invested, it may be taken as roughly indicative of only the approximate volume of investment for the year 1759. But it is seen from a letter to Court<sup>37</sup> that in 1759, owing to the undisputed prestige and power attained by the Company, larger investments were secured than in some years before.

With the acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal in 1765 and the promise of a great surplus of territorial revenue the prospects of the Company's investment in Bengal brightened. Before 1765, the Company had to pay for its purchases in Bengal mostly with bullion. The Company could import huge woollen cloths but "the poverty of the mass of the population and the unsuitability of wool in a warm climate obviously limited sales".<sup>38</sup> Hence before Plassey, the Company had to import bullion

36 Letter to Court, 29th Dec. 1759 : Fort William-India House Correspondence Vol.II, Para 47, P. 441.

37 Letter to Court, 5th March, 1759: Fort William-India House Correspondence Vol.II, P. 414.

38 P.J. Marshall : Problems of Empire, Britain and India, 1757-1813, P. 79.

worth on an average of £ 7,00,000 a year.<sup>39</sup> The complaint was raised that East India trade "denuded Britain of her wealth".<sup>40</sup> After 1765, it was no longer necessary. It was once suggested that the surplus revenue of Bengal would be sent to England not in the shape of commodities but in the form of bullion. Lord North opposed the idea in the House of Commons in 1769. He compared India to a hen which lay one golden egg a day and argued "if you draw off in bullion the revenues of that country, you will kill the hen to get all her eggs at once".<sup>41</sup> Hence the only practical way of sending the revenues of Bengal was by trade. "To draw off, therefore, the wealth of that country without ruining it, must be by investments in India, in the growth and manufacture of those countries which investments must be sold in Europe".<sup>42</sup> The Company fully accepted its new responsibilities. On receiving the news of the Diwani, the Directors immediately ordered their servants in Bengal "to enlarge every channel for conveying to us as early as possible, the annual produce of our acquisitions".<sup>43</sup> The House of Commons was told in 1767 that the Company hoped to be able to raise the value of their sales to £ 4 million, that is, to approximately twice what they had been before the conquest of Bengal.<sup>44</sup>

During this period the Directors wanted to extend various privileges and offer higher prices to the weavers and silk winders. Many of the Company's servants would not hesitate to use force to make the

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39 P.J. Marshall : Problems of Empire, Britain and India, 1757-1813, P.79.

40 Ibid.

41 Quoted in P.J.Marshall : op.cit. P. 83.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 P.J. Marshall : op.cit., P. 83.

weavers enter into business contract with the Company. The Directors thus commented :

"The gentlemen at Dacca say the foreigners give 20 and 30 per cent more than we do but the fact that comes the strongest to the point is the sale of old Ferrit and Damaged Goods which sold at public auction from 10 to 100 per cent advance, a clear proof of the injustice done to the weavers, at once accounts for the reluctance to work for the Company ; and violence being added to that, we are no longer to seek for the reasons why so many of them quit their looms".<sup>45</sup>

Various varieties of fine and coarse cloth, muslin and coloured goods were in demand in the European markets and constituted the bulk of the exports from Bengal after 1770. The value of this trade may be estimated from the instructions of the Court of Directors that the Bengal investment for the year 1770-71 should not fall below C. Rs. 70 lakhs. With the prospect of increasing revenues arising from the Diwani, the value of investment was enhanced. The Directors wrote : "As the matter of investment is of the greatest importance to our interest, because on that alone depends our prosperity and existence, we have bestowed very great attention to the goods which answer best at this market".<sup>46</sup>

From 1770 the export of piecegoods to England on account of the English Company remained fairly steady down to 1778 in which year 8,05,010 pieces were sold.<sup>47</sup> The value of the English East India Company's Bengal imports and exports during the years 1772 to 1778 was <sup>as</sup> follows :

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- 45 Letter from Court, 11th November 1768, Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol.V, Par<sup>38</sup> R 139
- 46 Public Letter from Court, 23 March 1770 Para 22, Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol. VI, P. 14.
- 47 J. C. Sinha : op.cit., P. 172.  
Economic annals of Bengal

TABLE NO: 1

The Value of the English Company's imports of Merchandise from Britain and the value of exports of Commodities from Bengal from 1772 to 1778. The exports are valued at prime cost and not at their sale price in England.

<u>Y E A R</u>	Import of Merchandise from Britain	EXPORTS FROM BENGAL					Total
		Piece- goods	Raw silk	Salt petre	Drugs		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1772	£ 78,133	6,97,778	1,36,270	24,275	7,555	8,65,878	
1773	£ 92,043	5,08,622	94,431	22,306	7,213	6,32,572	
1774	£ 1,21,357	4,66,944	1,60,016	14,262	7,645	6,48,867	
1775	£ 1,75,808	6,59,255	2,39,514	23,968	10,100	9,32,837	
1776	£ 1,79,646	4,46,277	3,18,406	16,736	7,104	7,88,523	
1777	£ 1,47,972	6,14,539	4,34,268	23,971	9,455	10,82,233	
1778	£ 1,10,349	5,95,079	6,33,836	23,252	14,057	12,66,224	

Source: Quoted in J.C.Sinha : Economic Annals of Bengal, P. 171.

It appears from an analysis of the above table that the exports of piecegoods during the year 1772 to 1778 remained fairly steady. The slight fall in 1774 was more than compensated by the substantial increase in the next year. The exports of raw silk from Bengal was steadily rising but still the cotton piecegoods formed about three fourths of the total exports from Bengal. In 1778, raw silk surpassed cotton piecegoods but this was due to the uncertain market conditions caused by the American War of Independence.

In 1779 there was a heavy fall both in value and volume of the exports of Bengal cotton piecegoods, the total number of pieces sold being 3,38,465 ~~pieces~~ only as against 8,05,010 pieces in 1778. During the four years after 1779, the number of pieces exported was not much higher.<sup>48</sup> This sudden decline was due to the American War of Independence. Of the cotton goods exported to England, the greater part was re-exported to the Continent, West Africa and West Indies. This re-export trade was considerably restricted during the war from 1779 to 1783.

About the year 1782, the Calico printers in England submitted a memorial in which they proposed that application be made to Parliament to lay an additional duty on printed Calicoes imported from Bengal. Accordingly, the Court of Directors resolved to withhold the importation of Printed goods from Bengal for a term of four years.<sup>49</sup>

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48 Milburn, <sup>Vol. II</sup> op.cit. P. 234.

49 J.C. Sinha : Economic Annal of Bengal, P. 173.

In spite of this restriction, cotton goods remained the most important item of the Company's export. The following account of the quantity of piecegoods exported from Bengal to England will prove this :<sup>50</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Pieces Exported</u>
1783	4,37,802
1784	5,16,088
1785	7,68,228
1786	7,64,173
1787	7,45,449

Taylor describes the years between 1771 and 1787 as being the most flourishing period of the Dacca cloth trade. He stated that in 1787 the total output of Dacca cloths was valued at one and a quarter <sup>51</sup> crores of rupees or £ 15,62,500 more than four times what it had been in 1753.

The other companies also had a considerable trade in Bengal cotton piecegoods. Dependent on the chief settlement at Chandernagar, the French had factories at Cossimbazar, Patna, Dacca, Jugdia and Balasore where French agents procured supplies from weavers. Cossimbazar was the principal centre of silk trade. Patna was the chief centre of saltpetre and opium trade. At Dacca, the French had a large commercial house. After 1765, the French trade there was valued at "five to six hundred thousand livres per year".<sup>52</sup> "Under favourable circumstances trade could be extended to the value of 15,00,000 livres but for that it

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50 Milburn : op.cit. P. 234.

51 Taylor : A Descriptive and Historical Account of Cotton Manufacture of Dacca in Bengal, P. 132.

52 S.P.Sen : The French in India, PP 91-92.

is necessary to have money in hand always, so that the worker could be kept continually employed by us, without which he is at once employed by others".<sup>53</sup> The French factory at Jugdia was not far from the English factory at Luckipore. The French secured "very high quality cloth called Hamams and Buffetas. Every year we procure both for the Company as well as for the private persons goods worth 7 to 8 hundred thousand livres".<sup>54</sup>

The Dutch trade in cotton piecegoods was not very thriving before Plassey. The English and even the French had succeeded in taking the lead over them in this item. In 1750, the Dutch exported from Bengal only 57,000 pieces, in 1753 - 79,000 pieces, in 1756 - <sup>51,000</sup>~~57,000~~ pieces. The number fell to 45,000 pieces in 1758 and again rose to 47,000 pieces in 1764.<sup>55</sup> The Dutch wrote in 1765 : "Although we have so many controversies in the trade in cotton piecegoods, it is slowly increasing and we have cargo for more than we can put in two ships".<sup>56</sup>

After 1767, the Dutch trade was in a favourable position. Their bills of exchange were in great demand by the servants of the English Company for the remittance of their fortunes home without the knowledge of their masters. Hence, the Dutch were not in want of money for their investment could largely do without importing bullion. The exports of cotton piecegoods and raw silk increased. Kelsall from Dacca wrote to Verelst in Sept 18, 1767 "the Dutch at Dacca have commissioned an Armenian to the amount of near seven lakhs of rupees. So enormous a

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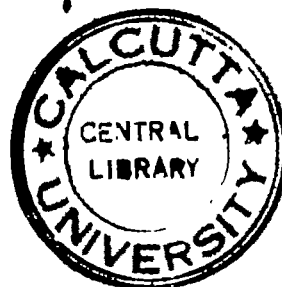
53 S.P.Sen : The French in India P 92.

54 Ibid.

55 N.K.Sinha : The Economic History of Bengal Vol.I, P. 57.

56 op.cit. P. 63.

Ibid



sum might be thought beyond the capacity of an Armenian to presume to invest \* \* \* , they must necessarily purchase at an advanced price".<sup>57</sup> Hence the Dutch maintained friendly relations with the English Company. But the outbreak of the Anglo-American War eliminated this competition. The Dutch investment in the 1760s and 1770s amounted to an average of about 40 lakhs a year.<sup>58</sup> When the Dutch reappeared in 1784, after the American War of Independence, they found that the East India Company and the British Private Traders were strongly entrenched to their position. The British Private Traders were no longer in need of the Dutch bills of exchange for the remittance of their wealth home. The Dutch were not in a position either to bring bullion to procure their investment from Bengal. Hence they disappeared from competition.

The Company's servants, English Free Merchants and the merchants of the French and the Armenians also participated in the trade in cotton piecegoods. With the privileged inland trade of the Company's servants in salt, betelnut and tobacco coming to an end in 1768, the Company's servants transferred their fortunes to trade in cotton piecegoods and raw silk. The volume of the private trade of the Company's servants cannot be estimated accurately. In the 1780s, the English Free Merchants and the Company's servants were at logger heads in some of the most important cotton weaving centres. The sale of Bengal cotton piecegoods in Europe was so profitable that all the Free Merchants as well as the Company's servants entered into competition to procure goods. From July 1785 to July 1786, 9,00,000 pieces of Indian goods, mostly from Bengal,

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in N.K. Sinha (Edited) Calcutta University History of Bengal pp. 109-10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, P.110.

were sold at Copenhagen on account of the British Free Merchants.<sup>59</sup>

In 1788, the Private Trade of the British merchants was estimated at 14,00,000 current Rupees, that of the French at 62,000 current Rupees and that of Bengali and Armenian merchants at 8,00,000 current Rupees.<sup>60</sup>

To sum up, cotton piecegoods formed the most important item of exports from Bengal. It also formed the bulk of the exports of the English Company from the beginning of the 18th century. In the fifty years before Plassey, the English Company's sales in London realized an average of about 2 million a year.<sup>61</sup> This level had been attained in the 1720s and remained more or less static till the conquest of Bengal. With the acquisition of the Diwani and the promise of a great surplus of territorial revenue, the English Company hoped to double their investment shortly. They had not to import bullion from London to pay for its purchases in India. But a doubling of the Company's investment was not to be achieved easily. Any expansion of the Company's trade as a means of transferring wealth to Europe had its difficulties. P.J. Marshall classified these difficulties under two main heads. In the first place, commerce was not the only demand on the surplus revenue. The Company's new responsibilities acquired with the Diwani and the subsequent conquests had brought with them a great increase in the costs of Government and defence in India. In the years when the Company was at war, such costs often absorbed all the available revenue leaving no surplus for trade. Hence in practice, surpluses existed only in some years in the late 1760s and

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59 N.K. Sinha : The Economic History of Bengal, Vol.I, P. 94.

60 Ibid. P. 96

61 Balkrishna : Commercial Relations between India and England, P. 189.

early 1770s and again in the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>62</sup> The second problem was to find goods which would sell well in London. With the rise of the British cotton industry, the market for Bengal cotton piecegoods in Europe became increasingly limited. The British Calicoes were successfully produced since 1772 and the British muslins since 1781, and by 1787, the manufactures of England could compete with the products of Bengal in the market of England as well as outside.

FLUCTUATIONS IN THE EXPORT MARKETS :<sup>62A</sup>

The year 1787 marks an important date in the history of Indian textiles. A series of important discoveries in the technique of spinning, weaving and bleaching took place between 1778 and 1786 - the Crompton's mule in 1779, Cartwright's powerloom in 1785, Berthollet's process of bleaching by Chlorine in 1785 and Bell's process of Cylinder printing in 1784. The interests of British traders and manufacturers now ran counter to each other. The former's advantage lay in dealing in Indian goods while the latter viewed India with the same jealous feeling with which they ~~contemplated~~<sup>despised</sup> foreign rivals.

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62 P.J. Marshall : op.cit. P. 85.

62A The process and the phases of the decline of the market for Bengal cotton piecegoods have been studied in greater details in a different connection in Chapter V.

The British manufacturers invested large sums and manufactured huge quantities of goods which exceeded the demands in the export-markets of Britain. The East India Company also increased its total exports to England, whereupon, the British manufacturers presented a memorial to the Privy Council "charging the Company with having purposely augmented the quantity of their goods and lowered their prices in order to ruin them and destroy British industry and among other plans of relieving their distress were desirous of excluding the Company from importing any white cotton goods".<sup>63</sup>

The East India Company presented a memorandum to the Lords of the Treasury in reply to that of the manufacturers in which they argued that of the goods exported by them to England, 85% of the coarser sorts of goods known as Calico and three fifths of the goods under the denomination of muslins, were sold for re-exportation and were not consumed in Britain. Moreover, all the coloured goods exported by them were also re-exported. Hence, restrictions on the exports of the East India Company would scarcely do any good to the British manufacturers, for as soon as the East India Company decreased its exports, the other nations would promptly increase their exports of Bengal cotton piecegoods to Europe, while

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63. Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, PP. 232-33.

"the selling price necessary to keep the British manufacturer employed would so much exceed the prices the Indian goods could be supplied at, that the prohibition laid upon the Company would only give encouragement to the illicit trade to supply the home consumption and leave to their maritime states to furnish the continent with those large foreign orders for calico and muslins hitherto supplied from the Company's sales".<sup>64</sup>

The struggle between the British and Indian manufactures continued. The Company kept the prices of Calicoes and muslins at low levels and this enabled the Company to compete with the British products. The competition went on unabated till 1793, the year of the renewal of the Company's Charter. From this year, Britain had been almost constantly in a state of war which dislocated the trade with India, while on the other hand, her manufactures made a rapid headway. There was a marked decline in piecegoods trade as a result of these two causes. The war had saved the British manufacturers. Milburn had made the significant remark that "the British manufacturers must be convinced that in the event of Peace, every attempt to check the importation of Indian muslins and Calicoes upon the Continent will be ineffectual".<sup>65</sup> The following table will illustrate this competition during the crucial years between 1800 and 1810.

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64 Quoted in Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II. P. 233.

65 Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P.

TABLE NO : 2

Figures indicating the volume of Bengal  
Cotton piecegoods exported to Britain  
and British piecegoods imported into  
Bengal from 1800-01 to 1809-10 ; —

<u>Y E A R S</u>	Bengal piece- goods exported to Britain ( Sale Value ) £	<u>Y E A R S</u>	Import of British manufactures into Bengal ( Sale Value ) £
1	2	3	4
1800 - 01	£ 14,06,879	1800	£ 60,32,652
1801 - 02	£ 11,31,531	1801	£ 71,60,463
1802 - 03	£ 6,64,317	1802	£ 79,10,306
1803 - 04	£ 6,72,079	1803	£ 73,78,879
1804 - 05	£ 4,44,114	1804	£ 85,61,224
1805 - 06	£ 6,21,862	1805	£ 98,57,110
1806 - 07	£ 4,98,233	1806	£ 1,07,50,724
1807 - 08	£ 2,60,307	1807	£ 1,08,51,045
1808 - 09	£ 3,17,516	1808	£ 1,28,39,624
1809 - 10	£ 3,33,768	1809	£ 1,86,34,614

Source: William Milburn : Oriental Commerce : Vol.II PP. 235-36.

The outbreak of War between England and France in 1793 affected the sales of Bengal merchandise in London and during the whole period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, except for a brief interval of 1802-03, bonafide French trade with India was at a standstill. Napoleon prohibited the entry of British goods into France. But the sale of Indian piecegoods did not immediately decrease. Some muslins, therefore, continued to be imported into England for the purpose of re-export to the Continent where Bengal muslins were still preferred to British manufactures. But from 1806 on

"the Berlin and Milan Decrees of Napoleon largely shut the Continental market against Bengal piecegoods ; while the Anglo-Danish hostility from 1807-08 made the situation worse still. There arose a tense misunderstanding between Great Britain and the United States over the British insistence on the search of neutral vessels which ultimately led to war between the two countries".<sup>66</sup>

The exports from Bengal to the Continent amounted to SR₹47,32,545 in 1795 but in 1796 it dwindled to SR₹32,02,191 and to SR₹18,58,135 in 1797, probably on account of the growing intensity of war in Europe ; the exports in 1798 fell to SR₹11,43,140.<sup>67</sup> From 1806-07, there was a remarkable fall in the Company's exports of Bengal piecegoods to London which formed their chief market and it is worthwhile to notice that the total value of Indian piecegoods exported on account of the Company to London during the three years ending 1808-09 was only SR₹57,40,855 whereas in the year 1797-98 alone, it amounted to SR₹79,08,688.<sup>68</sup>

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66 H.R. Ghosal : Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency, P. 40.

67 Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 133.

68 Progs Board of Trade 29th June 1827 Prog no. 48 Vol: 453 Part II.

The nature of the fluctuations in the export market, resulting from wars and competition could be studied with reference to Dacca which produced the finest muslins. It was the muslins that most felt the effects of the competition of British manufactures. Consequently, the exports of fine muslins from Dacca and other places to Great Britain fell off rapidly. The falling off was well marked by 1800. In that year, the Court of Directors wrote that "They were obliged to make an increase in the Calicoes and prohibited goods ( from Bengal ) on account of the investment of 1801 and a corresponding reduction in some of the muslins, particularly Doreas".<sup>69</sup> The amount allotted for cloth investment at Dacca in 1801 was reduced to SR $\text{₹}$ 3,27,445,<sup>70</sup> which was less than half the average yearly allotment during 1795-97, the average yearly amount during 1795-97 was Rs. 6,83,915.<sup>71</sup> In 1802, the Court of Directors wrote that "a very material alteration has taken place in their indent for goods from Dacca factory by the entire exclusion of Doreas, both plain and stitched, and a considerable reduction has been made in several other sorts of muslins ; this is required by the altered state of the markets which are now overflowing with substitutes for these goods from British Looms at rates of price that precludes all prospect of gain on such articles at our sales".<sup>72</sup> The indent for Hurripaul humhums, Kheerpooy Doreas and ordinary Midnapore mulmuls were curtailed as the British Looms successfully imitated these fabrics.<sup>73</sup>

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69 Progs Board of Trade, 9th December, 1800 Prog no. 95 Vol: 150.

70 Progs Board of Trade, 5th June, 1801 Prog no. 39, Vol.153.

71 Progs Board of Trade, 25th July, 1817, Prog no. 26, Vol: 333.

72 Progs Board of Trade, 11th February, 1803, Prog no. 13, Vol: 163.

73 Ibid.

In the year 1803 the Company had to face a series of difficulties in its piecegoods trade. In the first place, in consequence of the war with France, the markets which usually took off the largest proportion of Company's Bengal piecegoods were either altogether shut or in consequence of the goods having been rendered liable to seizure and confiscation, the trade in them had become contraband. Still Bengal cotton piecegoods were clandestinely carried to the markets of France, Holland and Flanders. But the cost of transport being very high, the price rose up. And as prices rose up, the demand for Bengal cotton piecegoods in these markets diminished. Secondly, the rigorous measures adopted by the French Government to prevent the consumption of Indian articles in France, principally in Paris, resulted in a considerable portion of the Company's superior assortments remaining unsold. Lastly, the British manufacturers successfully imitated and manufactured all varieties of Bengal muslins at a very low price resulting in the possibility of Bengal piecegoods being excluded from Indian as well as foreign markets.<sup>74</sup> In view of these circumstances, the Court of Directors reduced the indent for Bengal piecegoods for the year 1804 and it amounted to SR₃60,13,004 of which SR₃19,16,777 was allotted to Muslins, SR₃30,29,075 to Calicoes and the rest to the prohibited goods.<sup>75</sup> The condition of the Export market did not improve in 1804 and the indent of Cotton piecegoods for 1805 was further reduced to SR₃56,65,785 of which 18,41,361 was allotted to muslins, SR₃26,96,558 to Calicoes and the rest to the prohibited goods.<sup>76</sup>

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74 Progs Board of Trade 18th Dec, 1804 Prog no. 73 Vol : 167.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

A review of the market situations in 1807 revealed that the imports of muslins as well as the finer Cossaes, specially of the superior descriptions, were meant for the supply of the "home market and that of France, together with a small proportion for other parts of Europe and some few were to America - the proportion being for British consumption about  $\frac{2}{5}$ , for exports  $\frac{3}{5}$  ths. But heavy imposts and strong prohibitions prevented the entry of these goods into France and in fact these tended to be strengthened in the recent years. As to the home market, it continued to be brisk for all superior fabrics but was amply supplied from British Looms with the lower assortments".<sup>77</sup>

The situation by 1808 was thus summed up by the Court of Directors in March 1808 : "this branch of our commerce continues to be very materially depressed by the suspension of Export Trade which affects each of its three branches in a greater or less degree and compels us to frame the present indent on a still narrower scale than that adopted last year".<sup>78</sup>

In the indent for 1809, the Court of Directors reiterated the difficulties they had been facing during the last few years. The main difficulty was to find out the external markets for Bengal cotton piecegoods. The prospect of the trade greatly declined as a result of the complete closure of all the principal markets of consumption. The Court of Directors regretted that the prospects of piecegoods trade had further declined in 1809 and that they were put to a very awkward situation because

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77 Progs Board of Trade 3rd April 1807 Prog no. 24 Vol : 207.

78 Progs Board of Trade 11th March 1808 Prog no. 14 Vol : 218.

"notwithstanding the comparatively small amount of our late imports, a considerable proportion of the different assortments remain in our warehouses unsaleable".<sup>79</sup> In such a discouraging state of the trade, the Court allotted Rs 22,39,441 including commission and all charges.

In 1810, the Court of Directors wrote that the prospect of trade in Muslin "is so much depressed that by far the most valuable portion of our late sale remained unpurchased".<sup>80</sup> They assigned two main causes for it. In the first place, the change of fashion resulted in the stagnation of the demands of the fine and delicate fabrics of the muslin assortments in the English market. Secondly, the increasing perfection and cheapness of the goods manufactured in England largely limited the advantageous sale of Bengal cotton piecegoods there.<sup>81</sup>

The <sup>year</sup> 1813 was a turning point in the history of the East India Company as well as of India. The East India Company lost its monopoly of Eastern Trade which was being assailed for more than a century. So far as India was concerned "her economy felt for the first time the full impact of Industrial Revolution, the implications of which were henceforth rapidly worked out in thousand and one ways to the detriment of the native trade and industry".<sup>82</sup> The Charter Act of 1813 by granting freedom of commerce enabled the British manufacturers to flood the Indian market with their <sup>machine-made</sup> machine-made products while the general peace that followed after the fall of Napoleon brought with it important

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79 Progs Board of Trade, 17th March, 1809 Prog no. 10, Vol : 230.

80 Progs Board of Trade, 10th Nov, 1810 Prog no. 40, Vol : 238.

81 Ibid:

82 A. Tripathi's article 'Some Reflections on the E.I. Coy's Charter of 1813' "Indian History Congress Proceedings" 1949, P. 227.

consequences. The whole of the British tonnage employed during the war for various purposes were now left free and were rapidly employed in conveying cargoes to the East. The Bengal Government "by Regulation IV of 1815 reduced the import duty on British goods to  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ .<sup>83</sup> The result was that during the following years, there was a large increase in the exportation of cotton goods from Great Britain into Bengal. Conversely, there was a rapid fall in the export of Bengal cotton piecegoods to Great Britain. In the first year of <sup>free</sup> the trade, i.e. in 1813-14, the total exports of British cotton goods into Bengal was only worth about SR 91,800 but in 1822-23, it was as high as SR 67,77,279.<sup>84</sup> For a few years after this it progressively declined but from 1829-30 again it showed an upward trend,<sup>85</sup> the cotton goods exported from Britain in that year being worth SR 50,61,861.<sup>86</sup>

The effect of free trade was to facilitate the importation of machine-made goods from other countries also. During the Anglo-American War of 1812, the American textile industry underwent rapid expansion. In 1808, "there were only 15 cotton mills in America with 800 spindles ; in 1815 the number of spindles rose to 1,30,000 and in 1830 it reached 12,46,000, and by 1860 the number had increased to 52,36,000 spindles.<sup>87</sup> The United States of America started to export her manufactures into Bengal. The value of American piecegoods<sup>et</sup> imported into Bengal in 1829-30 was CR 39,325 ; in 1833-34 it reached to SR 57,313.<sup>88</sup>

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83 H.R.Ghosal : op.cit. P.42.

84 Appendix to Report from Select Committee on the Affairs of E.I.Coy. (1832) ii Part II, P. 516.

85 Infra : More about it in Chapter V.

86 Appendix to Report from Select Committee on the Affairs of E.I.Coy. (1832) ii Part II, P. 516.

87 Lippincot : Economic and Social History of United States, P.258.

88 Bell : A Comparative Review of the External Commerce of Bengal, P.6

The export of Bengal piecegoods to Great Britain, gradually declined. In the years 1813-14, the Company's exports to London amounted to SR₹34,29,043, in 1818-19 it dwindled to SR₹13,98,926.<sup>89</sup> A further decline occurred by the year 1827-28 when the value of piecegoods <sup>exported</sup> to Britain was only SR₹3,05,683 and the exports were confined to some of the finer fabrics<sup>90</sup> and in 1828-29 the Company's exports further dwindled to piecegoods worth SR₹1,64,408.<sup>91</sup> Loss of England meant the loss of the most important market of the Bengal piecegoods in the world.

"Throughout our period ( 1814-55 ) Great Britain undoubtedly remained India's most important market for exports. This coupled with the fact that she stood in a special financial relationship with India, which was dependent on trade, exerted a marked influence on the latter's economy and was responsible for associated changes in the volume of India's trade with her leading partners. Thus a recession or boom in Britain was so obvious a moment to India, since the amplitude of fluctuations in the Indian exports to the former, which was severe during the period 1828-40 was the most important factor determining the movements in the total exports".<sup>92</sup>

In 1813, the total allotment for Dacca fabrics amounted only to SR₹1,20,188.<sup>93</sup> In the Court's indent for 1817-18, the amount earmarked for muslins was only SR₹2,06,093 out of 24 lakhs allotted to piecegoods.<sup>94</sup> Next year, the piecegoods indent was further reduced to 16 lakhs of rupees and muslins nearly disappeared from the assortments intended for the European markets.<sup>95</sup> In 1753, the total exports from

89 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June 1827 Prog no. 48, Vol : 453, Part II.

90 H.H.Wilson : A Review of the External Commerce of Bengal, PP 65-66.

91 John Bell : op.cit. P.

92 K.N.Chaudhuri (Ed.) The Eco Development of India under the East India Coy., 1814-58, P. 30.

93 Progs Board of Trade, 26th Feb, 1813 Prog no. 8 Vol: 278 Part II.

94 Progs Board of Trade, 14th Feb, 1817 Prog no. 5 Vol: 327.

95 Progs Board of Trade, 13th Feb, 1818 Prog no. 4 Vol: 340.

Dacca on account of the Company and Private Traders amounted to Arcot Rupees 28,50,000.<sup>96</sup> From 1790 to 1799 ( both years inclusive ) the total exports from Dacca on account of the Company and Private Traders amounted to SR₹1,36,26,018 - 11 - 6<sup>97</sup> ( the annual average being SR₹13,62,601 -13- 11 ). The Company's cloth factories at Dacca and Santipore were wound up in 1818. The Company's cloth fabrics at other places very soon shared the same fate. Their cloth establishments at Patna and its subordinate stations were wound up in 1819. "The downfall of Dacca was symbolical".<sup>98</sup>

The decline of Bengal piecegoods trade as far as the loss of the British market was concerned was accelerated by the impositions of high tariff duties by Parliament. Upon plain muslins and ~~muslins~~ ~~plain and~~ Calicoes flowered or stitched the duty rose from 18 percent before 1797 to more than 30 percent ad valorem in 1800 and  $37\frac{1}{2}$  per cent ad valorem in 1823. Upon plain white Calicoes and dimities the duty rose from about 40 percent before 1797 to about 60 percent in 1800 and  $67\frac{1}{2}$  percent in 1823. Outside Britain, the situation was not any better.<sup>99</sup> In the foreign markets, England became an active rival of Bengal. Cotton piecegoods were speedily ousted from various European, African and Asian markets. Bengal piecegoods were ousted from the markets of Denmark, Sweden, Holland and Hamburg. The exports to France in 1826-27 amounted to SR₹32,445 and after that it ceased altogether.<sup>100</sup> The Bengal manufacture was able to retain the Asiatic and African markets for sometime longer.

96 Progs Board of Trade, 1st Dec. 1801 Prog no. 85 Vol : 156.

97 Ibid.

98 N.K.Sinha : The Eco. Hist. of Bengal, Vol.III, P.4.

99 Quoted in H.R.Ghosal's article 'Cotton Industry in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa during the early 19th Century' : 'Journal of India History' Aug 1939. P. 211 (Footnote).

100 H.H. Wilson : op.cit. P. Table No. 18. PP. 20-21.

But very soon they were supplanted by British fabrics in those markets. The value of piecegoods exported to South America in 1820-21 was SR₹12,68,587 but in 1826-27 it was only SR₹58,464 and after that it ceased altogether.<sup>101</sup> Exports to North America in 1817-18 amounted to SR₹15,23,725 but in 1827-28 it came down to SR₹21,985.<sup>102</sup> Exports to Pegu in 1813-14 amounted to SR₹2,01,219 but in 1827-28, it came to SR₹28,443.<sup>103</sup> Exports to Sumatra in 1813-14 was SR₹1,37,934 but in 1827-28 it was only SR₹4,651.<sup>104</sup> Exports to Manilla was also trifling. Exports to the Coast of Coromandal amounted to SR₹2,41,534 in 1813-14 but it came down only to SR₹21,788 in 1827-28.<sup>105</sup> Exports to Arabian and Persian gulfs amounted to SR₹15,36,541 in 1813-14 but in 1827-28 it was only SR₹5,52,650.<sup>106</sup> The only exception was Java where the demand of Bengal piecegoods did not cease and Java imported in 1827-28 cotton piecegoods worth SR₹3,87,834.<sup>107</sup>

Thus we find that by the close of the first quarter of the 19th century, the demand for Bengal Cotton piecegoods nearly ceased. This was due to a number of causes. This was partly due to the decay of the indigenous Courts and the change in fashion which British rule in India had gradually brought about. The decisive factors, however, were British Commercial Policy and the Industrial Revolution in England and the competition of cheap machine-made products.

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101 H.H.Wilson : op.cit. Table No. 28, PP. 32-33.

102 Ibid: Table No. 30, PP. 36-37.

103 Ibid: Table No. 32, PP. 38-39.

104 Ibid: Table No. 36, PP. 42-43.

105 H.H.Wilson : op.cit. Table No. 42, PP. 54-55.

106 Ibid: Table No. 52, PP. 62-63.

107 Ibid: Table No. 38, PP. 44-45.

The artistic and costly handicrafts were in great demand in the Courts of the Nawabs of Bengal. The demand for these products from outside this class of nobility was too small. Hence the decay of these Courts meant that the fine articles were no longer required.

The successor to the nobility did not patronize the indigenous handicrafts and preferred the cheap machine-made goods of England. They preferred the imported goods to indigenous goods because "to follow European fashion was considered the hall mark of enlightenment".<sup>108</sup>

The English Commercial Policy of the 18th and the early 19th century was characterised by protective measures against Bengal piecegoods. The protective duties levied on Indian textiles between 1799 and 1824 were briefly as follows : upon plain muslins and calicoes, flowered or stitched, the duty rose from 18 percent before 1797 to a little over 30 percent ad valorem in 1800, to  $44\frac{1}{2}$  percent in 1813 and fell to  $37\frac{1}{2}$  percent ad valorem in 1823. Upon plain white calicoes and dimities, the duty rose from about 40 percent before 1797 to the equivalent of about 60 percent in 1800, to a little over 85 percent in 1813 and declined to  $67\frac{1}{2}$  percent in 1823. On the otherhand, ever since British power was established in India, English goods entered India either with no or with a merely nominal import duty. The British Government took no steps to protect the manufactures

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108 Gadgil D.R. : The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times  
op.cit. P. 41.

of Bengal, while the policy of free trade was admirably suited to the needs of the growing industry in England, it was clearly inapplicable to India.

But the most important reason for the decline of the industry was the Industrial Revolution in England. In any case, the Bengal handicrafts could not have withstood foreign competition which derived its strength from gigantic machinery, large scale productions, complex division of labour etc. Thus the main challenge which was to change radically the future course of events came from the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Perhaps, for the first time in her history, "India was placed in a position of having to import textile goods from a foreign country",<sup>109</sup> "The invention of the power-loom in Europe" as Dutt rightly remarks "Completed the decline of the Indian industries".<sup>110</sup>

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109 K.N. Chaudhuri's article "The Structure of Indian Textile" etc. Indian Economic and Social History Review, Sept, 1974, P. 178.

110 R. C. Dutt : ~~op. cit.~~ Economic History of India under Early British Rule, p. viii

CHAPTER - III

PRODUCTION ORGANISATION IN THE INDUSTRY

From time immemorial Bengal had developed cotton manufacture into a great art. The products of Bengal looms not only supplied cloths to her teeming millions at home but also to the numerous customers outside. When British commerce with the East was established early in the 17th century, Bengal was the unrivalled centre of cotton manufacture in the whole world. Weaving and spinning had become national occupations, peculiarly suited to the mode of Bengal village life. A notable thing about it was that the manufactories were distributed amongst innumerable cottagers who were in a sense their own masters. Another thing was that the weavers' methods of manufacture, compared to the elaborate mechanical devices of a modern factory, were extremely simple ; nevertheless, the products of the little loom "might be thought the work of fairies or insects rather than of men".<sup>1</sup> It was this aspect of the Indian manufactures that specially struck Baines who wrote, "It cannot but seem astonishing that in the department of industry, where the raw material has been so grossly neglected, where the machinery is so

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<sup>1</sup> Baines : The History of Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain, P. 56.

crude and where there is little division of labour, the results should be the fabrics of the most exquisite delicacy and beauty, unrivalled by the products of any other nations even those best skilled in the mechanical arts".<sup>2</sup>

The production organisation in the cotton industry of Bengal underwent several significant changes during British rule and hence makes an interesting study. In this chapter, it would be studied under three main sections : (i) the nature of the production organisation in the industry before the consolidation of the British political control in Bengal ; (ii) the emergence of a new type of production organisation during British rule and (iii) the mechanism of enforcing the new 'System'.

CONDITIONS OF THE COTTON TRADE IN GENERAL  
AND THE CONDITIONS OF THE COTTON WEAVERS IN  
PARTICULAR IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY :

In the first half of the 18th Century, the trade of Bengal, both inland and foreign, exclusive of the commerce of the European countries, was very flourishing. The Hindu, Armenian and Muhammedan merchants carried on a brisk trade with other parts of India and with Turkey, Arabia and Persia. "The despotism of the Nawabs of Bengal never

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2 Baines : op.cit. P. 74.

degenerated into absolute oppression".<sup>3</sup> Commerce and manufactures were encouraged. This was the impression of most contemporary observers, such as Bolts and Orme :

"Every possible encouragement was given by the Mughals to merchants of all nations who were allowed free ingress and egress for their traffic to and from Bengal by land and water, in so much that large caravans overland were used to come from the distant parts even from Muscovy for the purposes of trade into Bengal and the adjacent provinces".<sup>4</sup>

"Bengal by its situation and production has the most extensive commerce of any province of the Empire. Delhi is from hence supplied with all its linens and silks, raw and manufactured, with cloths, with sugar, opium, grain etc. The European nations make their largest and most valuable investments here".<sup>5</sup>

The Mughal Empire broke up during the year 1739-1759 but the luxurious mode of living of the Mughal Emperors continued. Some of the Mughal nobles became successful in carving out independent principalities for themselves and they felt that they would command respect of the people if only "they could make their Courts miniature replicas of the Mughal Darbar".<sup>6</sup> Hence even during the period of 1739-1759 there were the Mughal Emperors at Delhi, the Nawab Wasir of Oudh, the petty Ruhela Chieftains in the North and the Nizam in the South. Hence the demand for Bengal cotton piecegoods remained and

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3 J.C. Sinha : op.cit P.33.

4 Bolts : Considerations on Indian Affairs, P. 67.

5 Orme : Historical Fragments of the Mughal Empire, P. 416.

6 N.K. Sinha : The Economic History of Bengal, Vol.I, PP. 109-10.

in spite of occasional disturbances the cotton piecegoods and the silks stuffs of Bengal must have sold almost as briskly as before in different parts of India and in the neighbouring regions. The following description of Bolts,<sup>7</sup> though he did not specify the period he was describing, was true of Bengal at the time of the death of Alivardi Khan. "A variety of merchants of different nations and religions such as Cashmeerians ( of Kashmir ) Multanyes ( People of Multan ) Patans ( Pathans ) Sheikhs<sup>8</sup> Sunniassys ( Saunyasi or mendicant traders coming down in batches from the Himalyan region with finer forest products such as pieces of Sandal wood, rudraksa etc ) Poggyahs ( up country merchants with turbans on their heads ) Betteeas ( Bhutias ) and many others used to resort to Bengal in Caffeelahs or large parties of many thousands together with troops of oxen for the transport of goods from different parts of Hindustan". Such an influx of merchants of different places was facilitated by the simplification of inland customs and imposts. According to Orme : "The customs and imposts throughout Hindustan are fixed and unalterable. The merchants may at any time make an exact calculation of the deductions to which his trade was subject. Customs paid at any of the Mughal's ports are not to be demanded at any other for the space of twelve months".<sup>9</sup>

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7 Bolts : op.cit. P. 200.

8 Dr. K.K. Datta thinks that these refer to Moslems of Arabia settled in India. Gradually the use of the term became more and more general and it came to be used also for Moslems coming to India from other countries besides Arabia.

Alivardi and His Times P 148.

9 Orme : op.cit. P. 414.

In such circumstances in the first half of the 18th century, the weavers of cotton piecegoods, "used to manufacture their goods freely and without oppression, restrictions, limitations and prohibitions".<sup>10</sup>

Bolts pointed out that in the time of Alivardi Khan :

"it was then a common practice for reputable families of the Tantee or Weaver caste to employ their own capital in manufacturing goods which they sold freely on their own accounts. There is a gentleman now in England who in the time of Alivardi Khan has purchased in the Dacca province in one morning eight hundred pieces of muslin at his own door as brought to him by the weavers of their own accord. It was not till the time of Siraj-ud-dullah that oppressions commenced, since those days the natives had no Nabob to apply to in cases of oppression".<sup>11</sup>

Bolts did not exaggerate because Verelst, his opponent, corroborated him and referred in an official despatch to the "diffusion of commerce", "a general opulence", "readiness of sale" and to the encouragement of the artisans before the revolution of 1757. The state of things at Dacca before Plassey was described by Bebb who was Resident at Dacca in 1789. The manufacturers were in a better bargaining position and could say "you do not offer me the price sufficient, therefore I will not sell assortment to you" and the purchaser was in a position to say "you demand too much, therefore, I will not buy of you unless you will be more reasonable".<sup>12</sup> What was true of Dacca was largely true of the rest of the Bengal Presidency before Plassey. Moreover, by compulsive and coercive methods, the weavers could not be made to work. Orme writes :  
"If guards were placed upon the villages which is the only method of

10 N.K.Sinha : op.cit. Vol.I, P.159.

11 Bolts : op.cit. P.194.

12 Progs Board of Trade, 6th March, 1789, Prog no. 21, Vol: 77 and 31 Dec, 1789, Prog no. 111, Vol: 83, Part II.

compulsion that can be used, the alarm would be taken and half the country by retreat of these people would be depopulated in a day's time".<sup>13</sup>

ORGANISATION OF THE COTTON WEAVING INDUSTRY BEFORE PLASSEY :

The caste system had been the dominant factor all along in the economic as well as the social life of the country. Every kind of work was hereditary and each craftsman or menial inherited the right to work for certain families.<sup>14</sup> However, the caste system was not the decisive determinant of the shape of production organisation in the cotton industry. There were also other factors.

In early times, when villages were largely self-sufficient, the needs of the people simple and foreign commerce negligible, weaving was carried on by the people who mostly belonged to the weaver caste but when the demand for cloths increased, the limits of caste were crossed and weaving became the profession of people who belonged to other castes as well. Though the different castes retained its individual social entity, yet all of them were members of the same guild,<sup>15</sup> and it was the guild which ultimately regulated the industry in place of caste.

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13 Orme : op.cit. P. 411.

14 D.H.Buchannan : The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India, P.14.

15 Birdwood : The Industrial Arts of India, Vol.I, P. 159.

Membership of the guilds was hereditary but newcomers could be admitted on payment of entrance fees. The guilds would admit no unqualified persons and jealously guarded the standards of their art. The guilds strictly fixed the hours of work, holidays of the year and made regulations about the various details of work.<sup>16</sup>

The internal conditions of the industry deserve special notice. Baines was of the opinion that in India the processes of cotton production were not divided among different groups.<sup>17</sup> It was of course true that in the earliest stage of the industry, in the early stages of the guild, there was little division of labour. But as the demands of cotton goods increased with the growth of markets, conditions changed. The various processes of making cloths became highly specialised necessitating considerable division of labour. The details of the Dacca industry given by Taylor show how complex the process of production eventually became. The early system of production was that of the small independent producer, generally a member of a guild, working with his own capital and employing mainly his own labour for customers directly dealing with him in his village. As the craftsmen and consumers dealt directly with each other, the opportunity for fraud was very small.<sup>18</sup> The craftsman was of course, a master craftsman and had apprentices under him who were paid small sums as wages.<sup>19</sup> In Dacca, for example, production was carried on by small master-weavers possessing two or three looms and employing usually an apprentice ( Nikari ) and a journeyman ( Kareegar ). Taylor writes : "boys of fourteen years of age

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16 P.J. Thomas : 'The Indian Cotton Industry' about 1700 A.D. in "Modern Review", Feb, 1924, P. 135.

17 Baines : op.cit. P. 74.

18 D.H. Buchannan : op.cit. P. 15.

19 P.J.Thomas : op.cit. P. 136.

may be seen working at the loom and are very often very experts at the business".<sup>20</sup> But in the days when the Dacca industry flourished under increased demands from foreign countries for its products, such a system of production broke down. In the Pre-Plassey system,<sup>21</sup> the craftsman was an independent figure and combined in himself the various functions of employer, merchant, foreman and even workman. But the increasing demands brought about a change in the entire system of production and it was not possible for the independent producer to cope with the increased demands. In the changed system of production, the independent producer lost his freedom and found himself working for a superior called 'Mahajan' who was more a merchant than a producer and who provided part of the necessary capital.<sup>22</sup> The 'Mahajan' used to make advances to the weavers for the supply of cloths at a fixed price. He had a small staff of assistants to do the business. His travelling agents were called Paikars who went about the country advancing money to the weavers. He had under him experts called Mookeems who would go round and inspect the making of cloths. The exact relations between the 'Mahajans' and the craftsmen working for him are not well known. The 'Mahajans' often combined money-lending with his cloth business. It was easy to exploit the labour of simple artisans whose poverty made him dependent on the 'Mahajan'.

Whether working for himself or the 'Mahajan', the weaver did business in the traditional way with the co-operation of his household and of one or two journeymen and apprentices. The wages paid to journeymen

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20 Taylor : A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Manufacture of Cotton at Dacca in Bengal, P. 78.

21 About 1700 A.D. when the demands from foreign market was limited.

22 P.J. Thomas : op.cit. PP. 136-37.

varied according to the ability of the journeyman and the kind of work he was employed to perform. The weavers who prepared the thread for the loom were paid at the rate of one anna and a half ( 2 d ) per day ; those weaving plain muslins were paid 2 to 3 annas ( 3 d to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  d ) per day ; and weavers of flowered muslins received 11 annas ( 6 d ) per day or were paid according to the number of spots or figures they made --- generally one anna for seven figures.<sup>23</sup> They were all "fed by the employer at mid-day and there was a personal relation between them as distinct from the cash-nexus of modern factory employment".<sup>24</sup> The relation between the master craftsman and his apprentices was homely. A boy was usually initiated as an apprentice at the age of 10 or 12.<sup>25</sup> The apprentice was housed and fed by the master and received besides 2 to 10 annas per month as pocket money.<sup>26</sup>

In Bengal, factories were not unknown and powerful kings brought together excellent workers under one roof in certain places. In the Mughal Empire, there grew up a large variety of State Karkhanas for manufacturing various kinds of handicrafts. A particular feature of the production organisation was that the craftsmen in different fields of industry were assembled in a 'Karkhana' which was placed in charge of a Halik over whom there was the 'State General Superintendent of Arts and Crafts'. The French doctor, Bernier in 1666 found in many places such Karkhanas which he called 'Halls'. He thus described the 'Halls' :-

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23 Taylor : A Descriptive and Historical etc. P. 78.  
 24 P.J. Thomas : op.cit. P. 138.  
 25 Taylor : A Descriptive and Historical etc. P. 78.  
 26 P.J. Thomas : op.cit. P. 138.

"Large halls are seen in many places called Karkhanas or workshops for the artisans. In one hall, embroiders are busily employed, superintended by a master, in another you see goldsmiths, in a third painters, in a fourth varnishers in lacquer work, in a fifth joiners, turners, tailors, shoe-makers, in a sixth manufacturers of silk brocade and fine muslins".<sup>27</sup>

Even as late as 1800, such royal workshops known as Mulboos Caus Cooties existed in Dacca. These were meant for making the choice-muslins called "Mulboos Caus" which were sent to the Mughal Emperor as part of tribute due from Bengal. Taylor<sup>28</sup> wrote that these factories were superintended by Darogas, <sup>and</sup> it was their immediate duty to inspect the manufacture of all the cloths made for the Emperor's use. At Sonargaon and Juglebeery sheds were erected at the Cotties for the looms and for the accommodation of the workmen. The weavers employed to make the cloths were selected from amongst the best manufacturers and registered and were compelled regularly to attend at the appointed hours, until the piece or portion of the piece allotted to each weaver was finished. Mookeems, on the part of the Darogas, daily inspected the threads which the weavers brought for their looms and none was permitted to be used until it had been previously compared with the established musters and approved of. The constant practice of weaving such cloth must have highly sharpened the skill of the weavers and the incessant inspection of the Darogas and their people and the fear of the weavers of incurring punishment for any negligence must have effectively deterred the weavers from

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27 Bernier : Travels in India, P. 259.

28 Progs Board of Trade, 1st Dec. 1806, Vol. 156.

attempting any improper practices. Under these circumstances the 'Mulboos Caus' manufactured for the Emperor was probably not only made of superior threads but consisted throughout the warp and woof as nearly as possible of threads of one quality. The art of making Jamdaunies or of embroidering cloths in the loom was exclusively possessed by the weavers of the Dacca aurung. The Jamdaunies made for the Emperor were advanced for by the Darogas of the Sudder Mulboos Caus Cooties at Dacca, but probably from some local considerations part only of the cloths was made under the immediate inspection of the Darogas. The rest was manufactured at the weavers' houses. In the State Karkhanas, "the artisans repair every morning to their respective workshops where they remain employed the whole day and then in the evening return to their homes".<sup>29</sup> The function of the artisans in the State Karkhanas was to work up raw materials supplied by the State into fully manufactured goods fit for use. They were the salaried servants of the State and paid directly from the State Treasury.<sup>30</sup>

However, this traditional organisation of production gradually changed with the growth of European Commerce in Bengal. The different European Companies had considerable trade in Bengal Cotton piecegoods. In the 17th Century, the English, the French and the Dutch carried on extensive commercial transactions in Bengal. In Bengal, the Dutch had prosperous centres of trade at Chinsura, Cossimbazar and Patna. The Dutch trade in Bengal was larger than that of the English during the first half of the 18th Century. The efforts of the French to establish contacts with Bengal started from

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29 Bernier : op.cit. P. 259.

30 J.N.Sarkar : Mughal Administration, P. 162.

1674 when Shaista Khan, the Viceroy, permitted them to have settlements in some commercial centres of the province. In 1693 they succeeded in obtaining a farman from Aurangzeb with permission to trade in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa on the same terms as the Dutch. Though the English trade in Bengal began as early as 1633 through Balasore, it was only after the foundation of the Hooghly factory in 1651, that the English started trading there on a large scale. By the 1760s they had established factories at Cossimbozar, Patna, Dacca besides those at Balasore and Hooghly and in 1672 they founded the Malda factory. The foundation of Calcutta by Job Charnock in 1690 completed the process of factory settlement. The farman of 1717 placed them in a superior commercial position in relation to other merchants, Indian or foreign. It remained the sheet anchor of the Company's rights in Bengal till the battle of Plassey.

In the first half of the 18th Century, markets were competitive. In the days of Alivardi Khan there was readiness of sales, full competition among the English, the Dutch and the French, the Armenians and Indian traders.<sup>31</sup> Before Plassey, there was no monopoly and until the days of Siraj-ud-dullah there was the Nawab's administration, however, corrupt, to appeal to.<sup>32</sup> Alivardi treated all the European Companies on the same level and if anybody had done an act of injustice to the other, the Nawab punished the wrong-doer. In 1748, for instance, the Nawab became highly displeased with the English Company as Commodore Griffin had captured some trading vessels of the Armenians and Mughal merchants.

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31 N.K. Sinha (Edited) Calcutta University History of Bengal, P. 113.

32 N.K. Sinha - op.cit. Vol.I, P. 181.

The Armenians and the Mughals complained to the Nawab for redress.

The Nawab at once sent a Perwannah to Barwell, the governor of Calcutta, saying :

"These merchants are the Kingdom's benefactors ; their imports and exports are an advantage to all men and their complaints are so grievous that I cannot forbear any longer giving ear to them. As you are not permitted to commit piracies, therefore, I now write you that on receipt of this, you deliver up all the Merchants' goods and effects to them as also what appertains unto me ; otherwise you may be assured a due chastisement in such manner as you least expect".<sup>33</sup>

The reply of the English Company that these goods were seized by the King's ships and that they had no control over them failed to satisfy the Nawab. He adopted stern measures against the English traders at Cossimbazar and elsewhere and ultimately the English had to make good the losses suffered by the Armenians.<sup>34</sup> It was only then that the Nawab passed orders removing the restraints he had imposed on the trade of the English.<sup>34</sup>

The competition amongst the purchasers was much to the advantage of the weavers because it resulted in an increase of the prices that were offered them. In Alivardi's time, the English Company had to face the competition from the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Prussians, the Danes as well as the Asiatic traders like the Armenians, the Mughals, the Pathans who were actively engaged in the trade in different parts of Bengal. They sent their gomastas to

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33 Quoted in K.K.Datta's book "Alivardi and His Times", P. 118.

34 Letter to Court, January 1749-50, Fort William India House Correspondence Vol.I, Para 108, P. 34+k 377.

the surungs, who offered increased prices for cloths and other articles to the great inconvenience of the English traders.<sup>35</sup> In 1744, the English <sup>factors</sup> ~~factories~~ at Dacca experienced great troubles in procuring tanjeebs and mulmuls as the Pathans, the Mughals and the Armenians had raised the prices to a high degree.<sup>36</sup> In 1751, the country merchants in Calcutta demanded of the English Company advance money to purchase some varieties of cloths "as the French and the Dutch, by having made larger contracts for them enhanced their prices".<sup>37</sup> Moreover, as a result of the competition, the Company was compelled from time to time to purchase cloths of inferior quality. Mr. Nicholas Cleriumbault, Chief of Dacca factory since 1749, wrote to the Council on the 14th Sept, 1752 that on account of the "emulation of the French lately settled there," he was compelled to purchase more cloths of inferior quality than should have been done<sup>6</sup> to prevent the Company from being disappointed in quantity ordered".<sup>38</sup>

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35 Letter to Court 11th Dec, 1741, Quoted in K.K.Datta's book "Alivardi and His Times", P. 168.

36 Letter to Court, 3rd Aug, 1744, Quoted Ibid, P. 168.

37 Letter to Court, 20th Aug, 1751, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.I, Para 46, PP. 505-506.

38 Quoted in K.K.Datta's book "Alivardi and His Times", P. 168.

GROWTH OF THE ENGLISH TRADE IN COTTON GOODS :

DIFFERENT METHODS OF THE PROCUREMENT OF 'INVESTMENT' :

The trade of English East India Company was gradually growing inspite of the competition of other European Companies and Asiatic trades. Their factories and surungs were scattered throughout the province. The Council in Calcutta exercised direct control over the chiefs and subordinate officers of these factories and compelled them to furnish securities for their good conduct. The goods sent by these factories were subjected to a close scrutiny and if goods of inferior quality were sent, the Council returned these with instructions to improve the quality in future.

To procure commodities, the Company advanced money to the 'dadni'<sup>39</sup> merchants. Usually at the commencement of each year, the Council in Calcutta despatched to the respective factories lists of 'investments' to be collected, musters ( samples ) of cotton piecegoods and also bullion or money for payment. The Company always tried to maintain a strict control over its merchants who had to give securities and were also often warned against sending cloths of inferior quality.<sup>40</sup> The Company often exacted penalties from the merchants on the balance of their deliveries and in cases when the merchants themselves could not or did not pay penalties, their securities were held responsible for their debts.<sup>41</sup> Sometimes, on failures of contracts, the merchants were put

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39 The word 'dadni' derives from 'Dadan' meaning advances.

40 Letter to Court, 11th Dec, 1741, Quoted in K.K.Datts's book "Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah" - PP. 123-124.

41 Letter to Court, 11th Dec, 1741, Quoted in Ibid, P. 124.

in confinement.<sup>42</sup> In the settlement of accounts, the Company did not like the arbitration of others and wanted the matter settled at their own factory.<sup>43</sup> The exact relations between the dadni merchants and the weavers are not well known, but the control of such merchants was probably increasing.

As the merchants could not always make good their contracts by procuring goods to the full amount of the 'dadani', the Court of Directors about the year 1746 sent instructions to the members of the Council in Calcutta that they should make as little advances as possible to the merchants and should encourage them to procure goods at ready money. On the 29th October 1746, the Council in Calcutta directed the gentlemen at the <sup>Jugdea</sup> Jugdea factory "to keep secretly ... the orders of the Home in not advancing for goods but to pay for them as were brought into the House".<sup>44</sup> But the Seths and merchants replied that without 'dadani' they were unable to provide goods. They received 'dadani' only on some selected articles and they had to provide most of the commodities for ready money. They further pointed out that in case 'dadani' was not given, it would not be possible for the Company to get cloths for investment,<sup>7</sup> for there were many articles which brought no gain but sometimes caused losses even when the full 'dadani' had been advanced upon them, particularly the coarse cloths. They replied : "the most they could think of undertaking for ready money was one fourth part of the investment<sup>7</sup> and unless they received 'dadani' for the other three fourths,

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42 Letter to Court, 19th Nov, 1748, Quoted in K.K. Datta's book 'Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah' - P. 124.

43 Letter to Court, 10th January, 1748, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.I, Para 250, P. 247.

44 Letter to Court, 30th Nov, 1746, Quoted in K.K. Datta's book 'Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah', P. 116.

they could not promise to complete the investment".<sup>45</sup> Till 1753, the French Company's investment was provided in most places by the same 'dadni' merchants who provided the investment of the English East India Company. But the French like the Dutch offered more favourable terms, were less scrupulous about prizing the assortments and thus had less difficulty in procuring their investment. The 'dadni' merchants after 1740s were not eager to do business for the English Company. The terms of the French and the Dutch were more lucrative to them and in many cases they refused to accept the terms of the English Company. Many of them did not supply the full quantity of goods to the Company and preferred to work for the French and the Dutch.

As the merchants often failed to supply the full quantity of goods according to the terms of contract, the Company abandoned in 1753 the method of procuring investment through dadni merchants and introduced the practice of getting them direct from the aurungs through their gomastas or agents.<sup>46</sup> The Directors thus instructed the Calcutta Council as to the course of action for the future :

"Great care must be taken not to risque too much of our estate at a time in the gomastas' 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 gomasta, who by way of a check keeps one key of the Cash Chest yet the gomasta is to be accountable for all the money you advance him."<sup>47</sup>

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45 Letter to Court, 10th January, 1754,<sup>1757/48</sup> Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. I, Para 34, P. 192.

46 Letter to Court, 18th January, 1754, Ibid, P. 762.

31 Jan 47 Letter from Court, 3rd January 1755 : Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. I, Para 49, P. 83.

In order to keep a careful watch over the conduct of the servants, a supervising committee was set up in 1755 with Roger Drake, the President, Charles Manningham, Richard Becher, William Frankland as its members.<sup>48</sup>

This new method, though successful for some time, did not produce satisfactory results. It vested the gomastas and the agents of the Company with powers "which were frequently abused", as Verelst justly 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",<sup>49</sup> so much so that the Council in Calcutta had to restore the old method of entering into contracts solely with the merchants in different parts of the country.

A new form of production organisation emerged in the industry after Plassey, which constituted a great turning point not only in the political but also in the economic history of Bengal. The cotton-weaving being still the premier industry felt its impact severely. The organisation of production underwent several changes.

The 'dadni' merchants disappeared from 'investment' business in 1753 and the English East India Company adopted the new method of engaging the weavers to work on a system of advances under which the weavers were bound to give their entire produce to the Company. This necessitated the

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48 Letter from Court, <sup>31</sup> 3rd January 1755 : Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. I, Para 37, P. 85. 85

49 Verelst : A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal, P. 85.

employment of a large number of gomastas, paikars and dalals at every factory or aurung in order to compel strict observance of the contracts by the weavers. The moral effect of the victory of Plassey on these people was very great. The aim of the Company's servants in Bengal was to make as much wealth as possible by taking part in the inland trade and asserting their political authority in the state. The Company's gomastas after 1757 assumed in every district a jurisdiction which "even the authority of the Rajahs and Zemindars in the country dared not withstand".<sup>50</sup> In this state of things, as the trade of the English Company increased, the evils which before 1757 were scarcely felt, were greatly intensified throughout Bengal. According to Bolts :

"the Company's investment for Europe in a peculiar degree has been the one continued scene of oppression, the baneful effects of which are severely felt by every weaver and manufacturer in the country, every article produced being made a monopoly, in which the English with their Banyans and black gomastas arbitrarily decide what quantities of goods each manufacturer shall deliver and the prices he shall receive for them".<sup>51</sup>

By the year 1757 the indigenous groups for whom the weavers had woven had nearly disappeared. Before 1757 the manufactures of Bengal had found their way into different parts of Hindustan through indigenous merchants. During 1757 to 1772 the servants of the English East India Company with the retinue of agents and gomastas were responsible for such proceedings as deterred all these merchants from different parts of India from coming to Bengal. "The entire economy of Bengal was dominated by the

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50 Bolts : op.cit. P. 191.

51 Ibid.

needs of the European markets in the 1760s, 1770s and 1780s".<sup>52</sup> In the rest of India, the Mughal tradition was gradually replaced by that of the Marathas. The Board of Trade wrote : "The Mughals magnificent and ostentatious required every article of luxury. Towns and Cities grew out of this spirit. The Marathas were averse from those costly modes of expense. Towns and cities were mouldering fast into ruin. In this cause may be traced the drooping commercial state of the provinces of Hindostan."<sup>53</sup>

THE ENGLISH COMPANY, THE PRINCIPAL PURCHASER :  
VARIOUS OPPRESSIONS UPON THE WEAVERS :

The English East India Company thus became the main purchaser of the Bengal cotton goods woven by her weavers and after 1757 it became the constant endeavour of every succeeding governor of Bengal to increase the amount of the Company's investment of goods for Europe. To obtain this increase, they took all possible measures and the result was that the manufacturers suffered great hardship.

For a better understanding of the nature of the hardship suffered by the manufacturers, it would be proper to explain the Company's methods of providing investment [as conducted either by the Export Warehouse Keeper and the Company's servants at the subordinate factories

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52 N.E.Sinha: op.cit. Vol: I, P.110.

53 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd May, 1791, Prog no. 32, Vol. 92.

on the Company's account or by the English gentlemen in the service of the Company as their own private ventures]. In either case, factors or agents called gomastas were engaged at monthly wages. The aurung establishment was composed of one head gomasta, one Mohuree or clerk, one cash keeper and some peons. Upon the arrival of the gomasta at the aurung or manufacturing station, he fixed upon a habitation which he called his cutcherry, to which with his peons, he summoned the brokers called the 'Dalals' and 'Paikars' together with the weavers whom after receipt of the money despatched by his master, as Bolts says,

"he makes them sign a bond for the delivery of a certain quantity of goods at a certain time and price and pays them a part of the money in advance. The assent of the poor weaver is in general not deemed necessary for the gomastas when employed on the Company's investment frequently makes them sign what they please".<sup>54</sup>

The cloths when made were collected in a Warehouse where it was kept marked with the weavers' name till it was convenient for the gomasta to assort and fix the price of each piece. The person entrusted with this work was known as Jassendar or assorter or appraiser. Bolts said,

"The rougery practised in this department is beyond imagination, but all terminates in the defrauding the poor weaver ; for the prices which the Company's gomastas and in confederacy with them, the jassendars fix upon the goods are in all places at least fifteen percent and in some forty percent less than the goods so manufactured would sell in the public bazar or market upon a free sale".<sup>55</sup>

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54 Bolts : op.cit. P. 193. The evidence of Bolts is not always trustworthy. However, such evidence as is quoted here is confirmed by official documents.

55 Ibid.

The weaver, therefore, desirous of obtaining a just price for his labour frequently attempted to sell his cloth privately to others, particularly to the Dutch and French gomastas, who were always ready to receive it. This "occasions the English Company's gomasta to set his peons over the weavers to watch him and not unfrequently to cut the piece out of the loom when nearly finished".<sup>56</sup>

In spite of his grudge against the East India Company, Bolts does not seem to have exaggerated the oppressions on the weavers, for his statements are corroborated by contemporary records. In their letter of Nov 11, 1768, the Court of Directors wrote : "We can ascribe your difficulties to nothing but the oppressed state the weavers have been in for some years, which has occasioned many of them to fling up their looms".<sup>57</sup> They admitted that force was applied to make the weavers undertake the Company's business. The weavers were unwilling to work for the Company, since they were not paid a fair price for their labour. At Dacca, for example, the weavers got 20 and 30 percent more by working for the agents of other Companies like the French. Moreover, "the fact that comes the strongest to the point", wrote the Court of Directors, "is the sale of the Ferrit and Damaged Goods which sold at the Public Auction from 10 to 100 percent advance, a clear proof of injustice done to the weavers".<sup>58</sup> The description of Bolts is confirmed by the local reports which the Board of Trade received from time to time. The letter from the Court of Directors to Bengal ( 12th April 1773 ) refers to some of these :

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56 Bolts : op.cit. P. 193.

57 Letter from Court, 11th Nov, 1768, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.V, Para 38, pp. 138-39.

58 Ibid. Page 139 Para 38

"The two annexed papers which the President formed from an examination into the complaints made to him by the weavers of Santipore and which he has every reason to believe to be authentic, will show the present miserable situation of the weavers, since it appears that the prices given to them for the cloths provided on account of the Company's investment, amount to no more and in some instances less than the cost of the materials and their labour is extracted from them without repayment".<sup>59</sup>

Verelst corroborates this description and states that "the gomastas or agents of the Company were necessarily entrusted with powers which they frequently abused 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".<sup>60</sup>

These oppressions went to such an extent that many weavers gave up their profession. Verelst, in a letter to the Court of Directors ( March 17, 1767 ) referred to the uncommon 'scarcity' of weavers, a great number of whom had "deserted their profession to seek subsistence from a less precarious calling and hence follow those unavoidable disputes which so frequently happen with the French and the Dutch, who leave no means untried to seduce the weavers, from our service".<sup>61</sup> In his letter of March 28, 1768 to the Court of Directors, Verelst again observed that "plenty has succeeded to famine and security has induced the natives to apply themselves again to labour and to commerce, but the manufacturers are scarcely increased, the surungs are not so well-

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59 Proceedings of April 12, 1773, Quoted in J.C.Sinha's book - Economic Annals of Bengal, PP. 83-84.

60 Verelst : op.cit. P. 85.

61 Letter to Court, 17th March, 1767. Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. V, P. 303.

peopled as they were twenty years before and yet your demand and those of other nations are beyond what the country is able to supply, was every specie of cloth to be purchased --- the amount of your order is above a crore and twenty lakhs --- the Dutch wish to have forty, the French and endeavouring to procure twenty-two and the Danes and Portuguese fifteen".<sup>62</sup> In their letter to Bengal dated 30th June, 1769, the Court of Directors wrote that "it is with concern we see in every page of your consultations, restrictions, limitations, prohibitions affecting various articles of trade".<sup>63</sup> They admitted that in a country abounding with manufacturers this was the worst policy. A liberty of buying and selling would encourage the manufacturers and would increase their number. They wrote : "When the hand of authority is held over them and they are told that they have only one market open for their goods, they will not long bestow their labours upon that trade and the quantity will decrease from year to year".<sup>64</sup>

#### EFFECTS OF THE FAMINE OF 1770 :

We notice a certain change in the organisation of production as a result of the 'scarcity' of the cotton weavers caused by the famine of 1770. It gave a terrible blow to the total economy of Bengal. By it

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- 62 Letter to Court, 28th March 1768, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.V, Para 29, P. 407.  
 63 Letter from Court, 30th June, 1769, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.V, Para 40, P. 217.  
 64 Ibid.

at least one-third of the inhabitants of Bengal perished.<sup>65</sup> The district of Purnea suffered worst. Ducarel, Supervisor of Purnea, reported that two lakhs of people perished in that district.<sup>66</sup> Nadia also suffered much from the famine. The extensive rural depopulation led to a considerable decrease in cultivation. In Bishnupur, immense tracts of fine open country remained waste and uncultivated as a result of mortality and desertion among the Ryots.<sup>67</sup> In 1773 a statement was submitted of the number of families in eleven villages of Pargana Muneer and fifteen villages of Pargana Arrah in the district of Patna. In 1769, the number of families in those twenty-six villages was 556 but in 1773 (one year after the famine) the number was 282. This indicates the extent of depopulation in these areas.<sup>68</sup> Mr. Groose, the Supervisor of Rungpore informed the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad as early as Sept 1770 that he was concerned to find that notwithstanding a considerable quantity of rain the greatest part of the country remained uncultivated in consequence of the dearth of inhabitants. He was of the opinion that had there been a sufficient number of ryots to cultivate the lands, there would have been plentiful harvest this season.<sup>69</sup>

The cotton industry of Bengal was particularly affected by the famine of 1770. A large number of skilled weavers, spinners and cotton growers died. The total output of cotton goods at Dacca in 1776 was one third less than that ten years before,<sup>70</sup> and a similar decline occurred in most other cotton weaving centres in Bengal. The price of one seer of fine

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- 65 Letter to Court, 3rd Nov, 1772, Fort William India House Correspondence Vol. VI, Para 6, P. 418.  
 66 N.K.Sinha : The Eco. History of Bengal, Vol.II, P. 50.  
 67 Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue, Murshidabad IV, 28th Feb, 1771, Letter from Higginson, 22nd Feb, 1771, P. 40.  
 68 N.K.Sinha : op.cit. Vol.II, PP. 51-52.  
 69 Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue, Murshidabad I, PP. 35, 4th October, 1770.  
 70 C.J. Hamilton : Trade Relations Between India and England, P. 198.

cotton thread at Malda was Rs. 4 - 6 - 0 and that of coarse thread was Rs. 2 - 4 - 0 before the famine, but after it, the prices rose to Rs. 6 - 4 - 0 and Rs. 3 - 2 - 9 per seer respectively.<sup>71</sup> The famine swept away many of the inhabitants of Malda. An enumeration made of the looms employed in the Company's investment at Malda<sup>72</sup> after the famine revealed that their number had decreased during the calamity to about one half.<sup>72</sup> At Malda, the weavers were also the cultivators of land. "If such a body of people", Ducarel wrote, "as the weavers who had double resources of earnings had perished or dispersed to the number of one half, it may be judged what must have been the situation of the poorer ryots of Purnea who solely depended on tilling lands for their daily bread".<sup>73</sup> Grueber, Resident at Dacca wrote that "the Dacca fabrics for these six or seven years past have been upon the decline, great part whereof may be attributed to the ravages of the famine of 1770 carrying away great numbers of the best spinners, weavers and ryots who cultivated the cotton plants. The loss is not yet recovered nor will it for many years to come".<sup>74</sup> A petition of the Santipore weavers stated that "the price of yarn has been gradually rising for many years past and the number of spinners being greatly reduced by the famine it was now 25 percent dearer than formerly. Yet the prices paid to the weavers remained the same."<sup>75</sup> While the decline of the cotton manufacture of Bengal became thus inevitable, the demand for Bengal cotton piecegoods was steadily rising. The Court of Directors decided to adopt remedial measures when they found "the once flourishing state of the commerce of Bengal" on the path of "a general decline".<sup>76</sup> They wrote :

71 Progs Board of Trade, 2nd January, 1776.

72 Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue, Murshidabad VIII, 30th Dec 1771, P. 109.

73 Ibid.

74 Progs Board of Trade, 10th May 1776, Prog no. 38, Vol: 7.

75 Quoted in N.K.Sinha, op.cit. Vol.I, P. 161.

76 Letter from Court 10th April, 1771, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. VI, Para 17, P. 80.

"On comparing the once flourishing state of the Commerce of Bengal with the <sup>gradual</sup> general decline it has undergone for several years past, it gives us the greatest concern that so unhappy a change should have happened under our Government and at a time when our influence over the whole country was sufficiently established to enable our servants to remove every visible source of this unnatural decay".<sup>77</sup> The remedy they suggested was "freedom in trade".

DECLARATION OF FREEDOM IN TRADE AND ITS EFFECTS :

On the 12th April, 1773, the Company's trade was thrown open. It was provided "that the weavers of the provinces of Bengal and Bihar should enjoy a perfect and entire liberty to deal with any persons whom they pleased and that no person should use force of any kind to oblige the weavers or other manufacturers to receive advances of money or to infringe in contracts for the provision of cloths".<sup>78</sup>

Hastings hoped that the declaration of "freedom in trade" would save the weavers from the oppressions of the Company's gomastas. The declaration of "freedom in trade" did no doubt save the weavers from the oppression of the Company's servants to some extent. However, with the introduction of the system of Ready Money Purchases, the prices of the articles of exports rose very high. Privileged inland trade in salt,

77 Letter from Court 10th April, 1771, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. VI, Para 15, P. 80.

78 Progs Board of Trade, 9th May 1775, Vol. III, Part II.

betelnut and tobacco came to an end in 1768 and the Company's servants henceforth began to trade in cotton piecegoods and raw silk. They were not very particular about the quality of the fabrics. The quality thus deteriorated and the Company's trade could not be carried on in this changed situation. The Commercial Residents repeatedly wrote of the adverse effects of the 'free trade' on the public trade of the Company. The weavers assumed a spirit of independence to the neglect of the Company's business. The weavers around Dacca refused to be engaged for the Company's service, since they got employment from other Companies and private ~~Traders~~ traders. Even those who received the Company's advances, refused to deliver goods and would not obey the summons of the gomastas.<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Dacres of Patna found that the weavers of Patna had formed the idea that they were not under any obligation to work for the Company and warned that unless a timely check was imposed on them, the Company's 'investment' would not be completed and considerable balances would accumulate.<sup>80</sup> Nicholas Grueber, Resident of the Dacca factory, intimated that as the Company's advances to the weavers were made early in the season and as they had for many years given their labour to the Company, they should be considered their servants and a "preference of influence be maintained over them" and thus the weavers should be brought under their absolute control.<sup>81</sup> Mr. Goodwin from Luckipore informed that most of the weavers refused to take advances on account of the Company, as they found it more to their advantage to make cloths with the little money they had of their own and to bring it to the market where they sold it to the

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79 Progs Board of Trade, 23rd June, 1775 Vol. 3, Part II.

80 Progs Board of Trade, 30th May, 1775 Vol. 3, Part II.

81 Progs Board of Trade, 2nd May, 1775 Vol. 3, Part II.

Paikars employed both by the Company and the individuals but chiefly to the latter as they got a higher price for their cloths. He had received repeated representations from the Dalals of Luckipore to the effect that weavers had refused to take advances.<sup>82</sup>

Hence we find that the old system of coercion largely failed to work under the conditions created by the famine, at least temporarily.

#### COERCIVE REGULATIONS OF 1775 :

In order to stop this desertion of the cotton weavers on a large scale the Provincial Councils of Revenue<sup>83</sup> were asked to co-operate with the Agents of the Board of Trade. But this was soon found insufficient. Therefore, for the first time, Coercive Regulations were provided in 1775.<sup>84</sup> It was stipulated that the weavers having agreed to work for the Company and having received advances from them would have to deliver cloths accordingly. Secondly, the weavers from whom balances were due would be compelled to fulfil those balances. Thirdly, if any weaver failed to deliver cloths to the Company according

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82 Progs Board of Trade, 1st April, 1777.

83 The Provincial Councils were created in Nov, 1773, when the English Collectors were recalled from districts. The Councils were placed in charge of collection of land revenue. There were five Provincial Councils in Bengal --- Calcutta, Murshidabad, Burdwan, Dinajpore and Dacca. A Provincial Council was normally composed of one Chief, four Senior Servants of the Company and a native Diwan. These Councils were abolished in 1781.

84 Progs Board of Trade, 5th Sept 1775, Vol. IV.

to the stated periods agreed upon, the Company's agents would place peons upon them and compel them to work. Lastly, if it was found that a weaver employed in the service of the Company was selling cloths secretly to agents of other Companies whilst he was deficient in his supplies to the English Company, he would be punished in a regular process in the Judicial Court.

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CHANGES IN THE METHODS OF PROCURING THE  
INVESTMENT AND IN THE METHODS OF MAKING  
ADVANCES TO THE WEAVERS AND THEIR EFFECTS :

The Court of Directors in their letter April 10, 1771 ordered reversion "to your former practice of providing investment by contract with dadni merchants" and by opening "your warehouses for ready money purchases",<sup>85</sup> in case of the inadequacy of supplies by the 'dadni' mode. The Board of Trade accordingly reintroduced the contract system for investment in 1775. However, the Court's instructions were only partially carried out. In fact the provision of investment by contracts with Indian merchants was adopted only in a few cases. The Agency System continued to be the general mode for the greater part of the cloth investment till the year 1782. The oppression on the weavers did not, therefore, come to an end. Moreover, during this period, other changes were introduced which affected the weavers in various ways.

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from Court, 10th April 1771 : Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol. VI, Paras 21-22, PP. 80-81.

The reintroduction of Contract System for providing the Company's 'investment' was associated with a change in the system of making advances to the weavers. Previously half of the total amount was advanced in the first kist ( instalment ) and the rest was advanced in two equal instalments according to the supply of cloths. In the first kist, half of the total amount was advanced with the object of enabling the weavers to purchase raw materials. But as the weavers were very slow in the delivery of goods and in most cases the goods were not upto the Company's standard, large balances began to accumulate against the weavers. To prevent these evils it was now decided that "monthly advances for the investment was the only effectual method, provided it was strictly attended to by the Chiefs and Residents to prevent the abuses of Company's money".<sup>86</sup>

This method adversely affected both the weavers and the Company and the Commercial Residents from different factories<sup>87</sup> pointed out its evils. All of them complained of the utter inadequacy of the first advance under the new system and stressed the necessity of a big first advance ( at least 50% of the total advance ). The Residents argued that the smallness of the first advance would affect the weavers adversely. The weavers generally purchased the necessary raw materials for manufacturing cloths throughout the year out of this first advance. They would thus be deprived of the privilege of purchasing the raw materials in large quantities when their prices were low and their quality was good. Mr. Cottrell informed that at Dacca the season for the purchase of threads of superior quality

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86 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd June, 1776 Prog no. 45, Vol: 7.

87 Mr. Hurst and Cottrell from Dacca, Mr. Law from Luckipore and Mr. Henchman from Malda.

generally expired about the end of the month of July and as new threads came in the markets, the threads of the previous year became dearer. But this thread was generally preferred in fabricating the cloths of the finer assortments. But under the new system of making the advances in twelve monthly instalments they would be prevented from availing themselves of the cheapness of the market to purchase the necessary materials for the year. Secondly, the smallness of the monthly advances would not enable the Residents to enter into engagements with a large number of weavers, because if the Residents distributed the small amount amongst the whole class of weavers, the sum would be so trivial as to afford them little or no assistance towards the execution of their engagements and the business would be involved in a state of confusion. Thirdly, as one of the Chiefs<sup>88</sup> feared, if advances were given till the last month of a year, their cloths would come late and the Company would be disappointed in not receiving the goods in due time for the ships of the season.<sup>89</sup> Fourthly, the system of monthly advance, the Residents argued, would result in an unnecessary loss of time on the part of cotton weavers. For example, if a weaver had entered into an agreement to deliver cloths to the amount of Rupees 120 in the course of a year, he would accordingly be entitled to receive Rupees 10 monthly, instead of the whole sum during three or four months as formerly. The weaver would have to undertake twelve journeys out and home instead of two or three journeys to the principal aurung for his advances at the most favourable time of the year. 3 or 12 days would be insignificant but the loss of a month would be considerable and he would try to make up for

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<sup>88</sup> The Chief of Luckipore, Mr. Law.

<sup>89</sup> Progs Board of Trade, 18th June, 1779, Prog no. 35 Vol: 19.

the loss by an increase in the price of the cloths. The bad effect of this would be severely felt particularly in the case of the finest variety of cloths which formed the most valuable part of the 'investment'. As the monthly advance to a weaver would hardly be equal to the cost of thread, part of it would necessarily be spent in maintaining himself and family and thus the opportunity for purchasing thread would be lost and cloths, if manufactured at all, would be manufactured with the mixed threads and be unsuitable for the Company's 'investment'. Balances would accumulate and it would be increasingly difficult to recover them.<sup>90</sup> The Resident of Luckipore apprehended not only the accumulation of large balances but also a fall in the standard of quality of the fabrics.<sup>91</sup>

One of the Residents<sup>92</sup> stated categorically that it would be impossible for him to procure an 'investment' with advantage if cash was supplied to him in equal monthly instalments throughout the year. He asserted that large advances ( even more than 50% of the total advance ) were absolutely necessary at the commencement of the season to enable the manufacturers to secure the best materials for their looms. If the weaver was advanced only a small sum monthly, he would purchase materials only for his monthly work and the quantity would be small. Hence, he would be compelled to purchase whatever was brought to market irrespective of its quality and at a comparatively high rate. The condition of the weavers at Malda was altogether different. The weavers could not support themselves and their families merely by their loom, and combined weaving with agriculture. "They handled the shuttle and plough alternatively.

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90 Progs Board of Trade, 27th July, 1779, Prog no. 42, Vol : 20.

91 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd August, 1779, Prog no. 43, Vol: 20.

92 Thomas Henchman from Malda.

If they were kept engaged in one work throughout the year, the other would be neglected. If they were interfered with the season when they sowed or at the season of harvest, the grievance did not affect them only, it extended to the Zamindars and injured the revenue of the Company". Moreover, after the middle of February, the level of water of the tanks fell low and its colour became bad and hence bleaching on which the quality of the cloth essentially depended could not be performed.<sup>93</sup> Hence the Commercial Residents generally agreed that large advances should be made in course of the first two instalments so that cloths might be returned and whitened by the month of March, while to protract the advances to the end of April would be self-defeating.

Having faced such difficulties, the Board of Trade felt helpless in regard to the completion of the projected 'investment' and earnestly entreated the Governor-General in Council that "you will consent to furnish us with supplies as we may have occasion for them".<sup>94</sup> But the Governor General and Council disagreed and replied that they would not depart from the rules laid down for issuing supplies. "The inconvenience, if there be any, may be avoided by accommodating your own arrangements to the periods of payment and the amount of supplies which we have promised you".<sup>95</sup> The Board of Trade, thereupon, expressed regret that their arguments were not given due weight and wrote,

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93 Progs Board of Trade, 29th February, 1780 Prog no. 13, Vol: 22.  
 94 Progs Board of Trade, 18th June, 1779 Prog no. 35, Vol: 19.  
 95 Progs Board of Trade, 25th June, 1779 Prog no. 36, Vol: 19.

"you furnish us with our stipulated supplies by quarterly instead of monthly payments. For, notwithstanding, we have taken every precaution, we find it impossible to portion a sum allowed monthly so as to prevent an excess in the demands which unavoidably come upon us in so short a period. By this mode of quarterly payments, we shall in some measure be relieved from the real and unexaggerated difficulties we labour under at present",<sup>96</sup>

The Governor General and Council agreed to consider this proposal of quarterly payments of advances.<sup>97</sup> Considering the convenience in procuring the investment through quarterly instead of monthly advances, the Governor General and Council intimated the Board of Trade that "we readily acquiesce in this mode and shall direct that your applications at the Treasury for advances on each quarterly supply \* \* \* shall be complied with \* \* \*."<sup>98</sup> The system of monthly advances thus continued from 1776 to the middle of 1779. But even the quarterly division of the annual supply created difficulties in procuring the 'investment'. The Board of Trade emphasized that "at certain seasons of the year larger advances are required than at others" and they did not expect any other assistance from the Governor General and Council except that "we might receive the annual supply at such periods within the year as we might require it". They asserted that at the beginning of the season, larger advances were required.<sup>99</sup> The Governor General in Council argued : "To comply with your request would be directly opposite to our Resolutions and would very naturally affect the management".<sup>100</sup>

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96 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1779, Prog no. 37 Vol: 19.  
 97 Progs Board of Trade, 6th July, 1779, Prog no. 38 Vol: 20.  
 98 Progs Board of Trade, 27th July, 1779, Prog no. 42 Vol: 20.  
 99 Progs Board of Trade, 23rd May, 1780, Prog no. 30, Vol: 23.  
 100 Progs Board of Trade, 6th June, 1780, Prog no. 33, Vol: 23.

The Board of Trade's Minute on this reply is noteworthy :-  
 "It has been made unanswerably clear to the Governor General and Council that equal portions of advances are not wanted throughout the year, or in different words, that there are periods at which larger advances are wanted than at others". But the Governor General and Council did not pay any heed to their suggestions. The Board, therefore, declared themselves free from responsibilities for the consequences that "may follow from the want of sufficient supply of advances at those times at which they are required either on account of the seasons of the year or of positive engagements which have been made".<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, during times of war, the Company had to reduce the amount set aside for 'investment' and at times 'investment' was suspended altogether.<sup>102</sup> In such circumstances, as in 1781, the advances to the contractors were made not in cash but in certificates for the Company's bonds bearing 8% interest. Durga Charan Mitra, Ramnedy Surmah, Sreemanto Ghosh, Greedur Mitre, Ramkissen Haldar and Radhabenode Haldar, cloth contractors in different aurungs in a petition informed the Board of Trade that as no cloths could be had without ready money advances to the weavers, they were under the necessity of borrowing money from the bazar at the rate of 12% to 15% interest.<sup>103</sup> The result was that after paying interest and meeting the discounts on Company's bonds, they had very little profit. This made them unwilling to work for the Company. Mr. Grant, Resident at Malda, regretted that after making allowance for the discount on the Company's bonds,

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101 Progs Board of Trade, 6th June, 1780, Prog no. 33, Vol: 23.

102 P.J. Marshall : op.cit. P. 84.

103 Progs Board of Trade, 10th April, 1781, Prog no. 17, Vol: 27.

there remained to him only 3 percent on the price of the last year. The exorbitant discount on the Company's bonds was one of the main reasons why the profit remained low. The rate of discount, only 3% at the time of making the contract, gradually rose to 15% and the resident wanted the discount to be debited to the Company's account.<sup>104</sup> Greedur Mitra, a contractor at Serampore ( Dacca ) wrote to the Committee of Aurungs that he had suffered losses because of the Company's bonds. Mr. Kingley from Bauleah stated that he experienced many difficulties and suffered losses in realising cash upon the Company's bonds and he had paid heavy discount and his loss was heavy. He prayed that he might be granted indulgence @ 4% upon his invoices.<sup>105</sup> The Company's economic position deteriorated so much in 1781-82 that the Board of Trade directed to Mr. Stephenson, Chief at Patna, that there would be no provision of 'investment' for the year 1782-83 in Silk, Silk piecegoods and cotton cloths.<sup>106</sup> The effect of all this was that the weavers were often without advances and on many occasions they argued that if adequate advances were not made to them, they might be released from the engagements to the Company and permitted to manufacture Bazar assortments.

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104 Progs Board of Trade, 10th August, 1781, Prog no. 42 Vol: 28.  
 105 Progs Board of Trade, 1st May, 1782, Prog no. 24 Vol: 31.  
 106 Progs Board of Trade, 1st May, 1782, Prog no. 24 Vol: 31.

WEAVERS UNREWARDED FOR THEIR LABOUR : ✓

The weavers who received the Company's advances did not get a fair price for their labour. They were obliged to work against their will at whatever prices were arbitrarily imposed on them. The English Company's own men admitted that their European rivals were prepared to pay 20% to 30% more and naturally the weavers were unwilling to work for the Company. The prices offered by the Company remained unchanged for a fairly long time. In the Teetabaddy aurung in Dacca the prices remained unchanged, despite the rising cost of production and living resulting from the rise in the prices of cotton and of daily necessities of life on the one hand and from the increase of rent on the other.<sup>107</sup> It was only as late as 1788 that the first substantial increase in the prices of cloths was made when John Bebb, the Commercial Resident, increased the rate by one rupee per piece on each of the superfine, fine and broad Tanjibs.<sup>108</sup> There were other instances of an increase in the prices but these increases were the results not of a sober analysis of the cost of production but of the intense discontent amongst the producers and the resultant decline in the 'investment'. However, the producers did not in most cases receive this enhanced price. One important cause was that the Commercial Residents cheated the weavers by prizing their cloths into inferior letters. One example will illustrate this. In Dacca there was no trouble till the coming of Mr. Barwell. Mr. Barwell took over as the Chief from Mr. Day in 1775. Barwell made a change in the method of prizing.<sup>108A</sup>

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107 A detailed study of the cost structure throughout the period and the weavers' profit and loss in working for the Company is made in the next Chapter.

108 Progs Board of Trade, 12th Dec 1788, Prog no. 117 Vol: 74.

108A A detailed reference to the different aspects of 'prizing' has been made in a later section.

The weavers of Dacca and Sonargaon<sup>109</sup> represented that Barwell ordered them to produce cloths of better quality and promised that they would be allowed 20% more than the price of the previous year ( 1774 ). They weaved cloths of a good quality and Mr. Barwell examined the cloths as being of the qualities A,B & C. He next returned to Dacca with cloths and rated the quality at D, E and F respectively and insisted that the prices should be paid in proportion. When the weavers pointed out that they would suffer enormous losses, the Sepoys were ordered to beat them. The weavers were strictly forbidden to work for private merchants or other Companies and the cloths of other Companies were forcibly taken away from them.<sup>110</sup> Mr. Guinand informed that before the coming of Mr. Barwell to Dacca, in 1775, the prizing of goods was made by first selecting a muster or sample. When cloths were brought to the factory, these were compared with the musters and if found to be of the same quality as the musters, were marked A. The cloths which proved inferior to A were rated B and those that proved inferior to B were rated C and in this way cloths were marked upto the letter E. Mr. Barwell reversed this method and began to prize from the lowest letter E. The cloths which proved better than E were marked D and thus cloths which proved better were carried a letter higher. This method was certainly advantageous to the Company and was a highly effective one towards retrieving the Company's declining 'investment', but it was easy to see what difference this method made to the weavers as by all comparison and calculations there was full one letter's variation between these methods.<sup>111</sup>

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109 A petition bearing no date received by the Board of Trade on 10th Feby, 1775.

110 Progs Board of Trade, 10th February, 1775, Vol.I.

111 Progs Board of Trade, 5th July, 1775, Vol.IV.

Mr. Guinand further argued that when Mr. Barwell adopted this method he put it upon a larger scale and went as low as F and fixing a muster of that Letter prized upwards, that is, all goods superior to letter F was made E and so on. It was plain that the assortments being divided into six letters, few pieces could reach the first two A and B. Though the English Company presumably gained by it, the weavers suffered, since a piece little inferior to A was prized to letter C and was paid as such. By all comparison the letter F or at most E was equal to the former letter D and from this arose all complaints from the weavers. Had the other method been followed what would have been invoiced B would have been equal or very nearly so to A.<sup>112</sup> This was not an isolated case and the Proceedings of the Board of Trade contain numerous evidence of the weavers' cloths being prized into inferior letters. The weavers of Santipore complained against the gomastas for the low price paid for the Company's investment<sup>9</sup> which was below the market rate. A large number of spinners died as a result of the famine of 1770 and yarns became ~~25%~~ dearer than formerly. But the price paid by the Company remained the same, for although the rates were higher than before, when the gomastas came to appraise the cloths, they threw them into the lower class.<sup>113</sup> The enhanced price was thus intercepted by the middlemen, the larger share going to those who were in charge of the Company's aurungs.

The prizing of cloths into inferior letters resulted in an ever-increasing balances against the weavers. Again, extortions from the weavers on one pretext or other, were not infrequent. Mr. Cottrell

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112 Progs Board of Trade, 21st July, 1775, Vol: IV.

113 Progs Board of Trade, 12th April, 1775, Vol: II.

extorted a huge amount of money from the weavers of Dacca during the period of his Chiefship from May 1779 to January 1782. Mr. Bebb from Ducca gave a detailed account of the abuses that prevailed during the Chiefship of Mr. Cottrell.

- (a) In the name of Fan Dustoree ( Commission  
or piece Custom, he extorted :                      Rs.    a    P.  
C Rs. 50,687 - 8 - 0
- (b) an arbitrary tax of  $\frac{1}{2}$  anna in the  
rupee or Re 1 - 9 - 0 percent on the  
advances, and amounted to                      C Rs. 18,574.-15 - 9
- (c) another arbitrary tax for Dewan  
Diachand @  $\frac{1}{2}$  annas in the rupee  
or Re 1 - 9 - 0 percent amounted  
to                      C Rs. 12,651 - 9 - 6
- (d) Under valuation of the cloths, not  
for the Company's benefit, a higher  
price being charged to them :                      C Rs. 14,700 - 0 - 0
- TOTAL:                      C Rs. 96,614 - 1 - 3 <sup>114</sup>

The extortions by different groups of people connected with the investment like the Tagadgeers ( Collectors of cloth from the aurungs ) gomastas and Jassemars ( appraisers ) greatly reduced the actual receipts

114 Progs Board of Trade, 29th April, 1788, Prog no. 48, Vol: 66 and  
Progs Board of Trade, 6th Nov, 1788, Prog no. 108, Vol: 73.

of the weavers. The Gurrah weavers of Sonamooky aurungs submitted a petition in 1789 in which they stated their grievances. They stated that "the gomastas and tagadgeers at the different stations have collected much money both from those who manufacture for the Company and also from those who provide private individuals' cloth. Let it be ordered that we receive back this money and they may be prohibited from taking money in future".<sup>115</sup>

John Bebb from Dacca stated he privately employed persons in the aurungs and from them he received intelligence that a <sup>system</sup> ~~sym~~ of speculation was regularly going on, that it was effected by means of strong and artful combination of the gomastas, the inferior aurung servants and the principal weavers of every district --- all united by a common interest in levying contributions from the inferior weavers and that the receipts were divided among themselves and some of the servants at the Sudder.<sup>116</sup>

CARELESSNESS OF THE WEAVERS IN THE  
PERFORMANCE OF THEIR ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE COMPANY :

The natural reaction of the weavers to these was that they were careless in fulfilling contracts with the Company. The 'interlopers' ( rival mercantile groups ) offered much higher prices and induced the weavers to weave for them. They kept the Company's interest-free advances as long as they could and with the Company's advances used to purchase threads of an inferior quality and weave cloths for sales in the bazars and

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115 Progs Board of Trade, 15th Dec, 1789, Prog no. 106, Vol: 83 Part I.

116 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd Sept, 1790, Prog no. 66, Vol: 88.

private merchants. Secondly, the weavers artfully concealed their transactions by weaving their cloths in other houses and gave them to be sold by persons who had not received the Company's advances. Furthermore, after serious delay, they delivered cloths of the lowest letters a considerable portion of which <sup>were</sup> being unsuitable for the Company's investment.<sup>117</sup>

FURTHER COERCIVE REGULATIONS :

The Company thought that without further coercive measures the Company's investment would further decline and the quality of the cloths would also deteriorate. They took a series of measures between 1786 and 1787 and the weavers came under greater restraints. The regulations for weavers of April 1782 were aimed against interlopers. It was provided that "the purchasers of the 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 employ who offers to dispose of them, on proof of the fact, shall be liable to punishment by the Adawlut according to the nature of their offence and cloths so purchased shall be confiscated".<sup>118</sup>

On July 1786, 21 regulations were passed. Another set of regulations were issued on the 23rd July, 1787.<sup>119</sup>

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117 Progs Board of Trade, 15th July, 1783, Prog no. 38, Vol: 37.

118 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd June, 1783, Prog no. 30, Vol: 37.

119 The details of the Regulations are given in Appendix.

To analyse the actual significance of the Regulations, we can broadly classify these under two heads : (i) regulations relating to the obligations of the weavers to the Company and (ii) penalties for non-fulfilment of the contracts.

Regulations relating to obligations of the weavers insisted on strict adherence to the work for the Company. All the weavers were provided with tickets which specified their names, place of residence and general conditions under which they worked. The weavers were to deliver cloths according to the periods specified in their respective tickets. The cloths delivered by them must be of the standard fixed by the Company. They had to serve a fortnight's notice if they did not like to take the Company's advances. Again, they were not allowed to be engaged for newer engagements if their previous engagements were not fulfilled. They were also not allowed to sell in the open market.

The penalty regulations were also severe. In case the weavers failed to deliver cloths according to the period specified in the ticket, the Company's men were empowered to place peons upon the defaulting weavers. These peons were to be paid and fed by the weaver. Again, the freedom of the weaver to sell cloths simultaneously to the English Company and to the agents of other Companies and native merchants was now restricted. If the weavers were found to be selling cloths to the agents of other Companies and native merchants, they were to be punished in a judicial Court according to a regular process. The engagements with the English Company were to be fulfilled first. By this regulation the English Company asserted their prior right to the labour of the cotton

weavers. Again, if the weavers possessing more than one loom failed to deliver cloths according to the contract, a penalty of 35 percent of the price of the cloth not delivered was imposed besides the repayment of money advanced for the same.

An analysis of the regulations reveals that the Company was very particular about the receipt of the goods at the fixed periods and took all steps to ensure that. They asserted the prior right of the Company to the labour of the cotton weavers. The moral justification for this can be doubted but the Company cared little for it and their political authority in the country greatly helped the Company in this. Again, there was hardly any point in not allowing the weaver to work simultaneously for the English Company and the private agents. This step was taken solely with the object of eliminating the rival mercantile groups. The regulations did not take into account many unforeseen contingencies, such as sickness of the weavers and their inability to procure threads of proper quality, which might hinder the punctual delivery of cloths to the Company. In view of this, the placing of peons indiscriminately upon the defaulting weavers, to be paid and fed by them, was really oppressive. Moreover, the Regulations did not have any provision for rewarding the weavers who promptly and punctually delivered cloths to the Company. On the contrary, the defaulting weavers had to pay penalties in case they failed to deliver within the stipulated periods.

One of the Regulations provided exemption from the Company's work on serving a fortnight's notice. But in most cases, this was not practicable since there was a good deal of discrepancy, between the theory

and the practice. The serving of a fortnight's notice was easy but to get exemption from the Company's work was not easy. The last Kist ( instalment ) delivered by the weaver might not come upto the Company's standard and the weaver would be in  $\text{H}$  balances to the Company. To complete these balances further advances would be given to the weavers and hence the serving of notice became in most cases useless and release from the Company's work practically became unachievable.

Hence the regulations were one-sided and failed to generate a healthy climate for the cotton weavers but stifled their initiative to work and ultimately made them disinclined to work for the Company at all.

The engagement clauses provided that threads meant for the Company's cloths would be properly twisted and sorted and the "cloths shall be of the established dimensions in length and breadth".<sup>120</sup> They had to engage that their delivery would consist only of three letters A, B and C and if any piece of cloth was adjudged inferior in comparison with the sample, it would be deposited in the factory and they would replace that piece of cloth by another suitable piece in the next instalment and take back the earlier piece. If they failed to do so, the Company's men would sell the rejected piece at public auction and after deducting 15% percent of the total sale proceeds, return the remainder to the 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.

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120 Progs Board of Trade, 10th May, 1791, Prog no. 34, Vol: 92.

The weavers who were subject to all these constraints became what was described in the language of the law Courts, as 'Khatabandi' i.e. bound by indenture. If the weavers had once accepted the Company's advances, it meant a preemption by the Company whatever the circumstances. In most cases, peons were employed to see that the Company's orders were carried out.<sup>121</sup> In case of delay or any other infringement of the agreement, the manufacturers were liable to penalties and even prosecution.<sup>122</sup>

#### THE CHARTER ACT OF 1793 AND ITS EFFECTS :

After 1793, the same system of production organisation continued. One important thing to note was that previous to the Charter Act of 1793, the trade in cotton piecegoods had remained entirely in the hands of the East India Company. But the Charter Act of that year provided that "the Company should allow three thousand tons of shipping annually to the private merchants for their trade in the East".<sup>123</sup> As a result of this enactment, a considerable proportion of the trade in Bengal cotton piecegoods passed into the hands of the private traders. Naturally, the Company had to face a serious competition arising from the interference of the private traders and their trade in the staple article

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121 Progs Board of Trade, 1st August, 1794 Prog no. 48 Vol: III, Part II.

122 Progs Board of Trade, 27th May, 1793 Prog no. 38 Vol: 104, Part I.

123 Quoted in H.R.Ghosal's 'Cotton Industry in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa',  
 "Journal of Indian History", Aug, 1939, P. 206.

of piecegoods suffered a great deal. The following table of the quantities of piecegoods exported from the Bengal Presidency and sold on account of the Company and also on account of the private traders in privilege-trade would show this.

TABLE NO : 1

The quantities of piecegoods exported from the Bengal Presidency and sold on account of the English Company and Private Traders in privilege-trade between 1797 and 1806.

1	C O M P A N Y ' S		I N D I V I D U A L S'	
	2	3	4	5
YEAR	Quantity pieces	Sale Value £	Quantity pieces	Sale Value £
1797	3,50,329	6,48,756	1,36,761	1,51,942
1798	7,23,129	12,19,818	1,27,810	1,82,594
1799	7,84,615	10,56,840	2,42,597	2,78,839
1800	11,29,501	14,06,879	3,04,530	3,17,828
1801	8,38,712	11,79,447	3,96,444	3,79,569
1802	4,37,862	6,60,019	12,52,503	9,60,864
1803	6,26,641	6,72,031	10,85,739	8,65,209
1804	9,60,971	9,17,562	9,79,199	5,26,968
1805	1,74,321	1,42,157	3,20,727	1,93,665
March Sale, 1806	6,09,696	4,82,919	2,09,497	1,29,055

Source: William Milburn op.cit. Vol.II, P. 222.

From the above table it would also appear that during the period between 1797 and 1806 there was a marked decline in the sale value of the Company's cotton piecegoods except in the years between 1798 and 1801. The maximum sale of £ 14,06,879 was due to the passing of the Warehousing Act of 1799. Under this Act, duties on imports were not to be collected at the time of their landing as heretofore ; but only a small warehouse duty was to be then paid while main duty was to be collected from the purchasers at the time of their sale.<sup>124</sup> It is to be noted, however, that the augmented quantity of goods exported into England during these years were chiefly meant for re-exportation and not for the English market.

The increase of private purchases during the period following 1797 resulted in a great depreciation of the quality of articles exported and a considerable variation in the price level. The fabrics were so much debased that one of the Company's agents had justly observed : "the original standards are no longer to be seen".<sup>125</sup> Loud complaints were heard from various quarters against the conduct of the private traders and their agents. The Board of Trade in Madras<sup>126</sup> made the following observation which would equally apply to Bengal :

we  
 "The two prominent evils of which have had cause to complain are the great difficulties occasioned by the interference of the private agents in the provision of the Company's investments and the ruinous debasement of the fabrics, both proceeding from a competition

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124 H.R.Ghosal : Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency, P.23,  
 125 Parliamentary Papers: 1808-13, Supplement to the Fourth Report : Appendix No. 47. Foot note.  
 126 In a letter to Governor General and Council dated 9th April, 1803.

at a particular juncture that admits of no delay and consequently obliges them to purchase whatever they can procure, however inferior in quality of which urgent necessity the manufacturer is perfectly aware and scruples not to avail himself to the utmost by vending a debased manufacture made up of the advances he has received from the Treasury of the factory".<sup>127</sup>

But these evils had to be borne with under the circumstances because the private traders, as Wellesley argued played a very vital role in the Commercial activities of the country. They rendered very useful services when the Company's investments were substantially reduced and the manufacturers received very little or no advance at all. Apart from rendering a much-needed relief to the manufacturers, the advances "furnish ultimately a resource for the payment of the land revenue". And naturally, the withholding or substantial reduction of the advances meant various difficulties on the part of the manufacturers to pay their land revenue in time.<sup>128</sup> The Board of Control in reply intimated that they were fully aware "of the evil consequences that are likely to ensure when the Company's investment is much curtailed, if the public were not allowed to fill up the chasm".<sup>129</sup> They held the view that the weavers were entitled to constant protection and encouragement of the State ; otherwise, such a useful and valuable body of men would experience distress, the fabrics manufactured by them would be much debased in quality and the most valuable branch of export trade would be wholly abandoned or materially injured. The Board of Control expressed great satisfaction at the measures taken to encourage the trade of the private

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127 Parliamentary Papers, 1808-13, Supplement to the Fourth Report, Appendix No: 47.

128 Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 227.

129 Quoted in Milburn, op.cit., Vol.II, P. 227.

merchants in order that they might be able "to supply the place of the Company in the market and to furnish that support to the manufacturer which could not proceed from the Company's funds".<sup>130</sup>

EFFECTS OF TRADE-DEPRESSIONS ON  
THE FORTUNES OF THE COTTON WEAVERS :

The smallness of the Company's investment after 1797 caused by Napoleonic Wars caused immense distress to the manufacturers.

A Parliamentary Paper, thus stated the conditions of the weavers of the Dacca division in 1802 :

" ..... but above all, we apprehend that the decrease of the Hon'ble Company's investment, a decrease severely felt by the manufacturers, and rise in the price of cotton ( from three rupees to eight rupees per maund ) from the failure of the crops for the last two years, have most materially contributed to injure this branch of commerce ; and on the whole, we are of opinion, that in the want of vent, for this as well as other articles of export ( its prime source of riches ) this division has essentially suffered by the long continuance of the war and that the complete revival of its trade and manufactures can only be looked for in the lapse of years of uninterrupted peace".<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 227.

<sup>131</sup> Parliamentary Papers : Vol: 9, 1812-13 ( House of Commons ) PP 78-79.

Strachey, Magistrate and Judge of Midnapore, in his letter of 30th January, 1802 wrote that "the Company's investment has during the war dwindled away to almost nothing ; and that numbers of weavers who depended for subsistence on the advances of the commercial agents and who are less able than other descriptions of artisans to change their occupations, are reduced to very great distress".<sup>132</sup> Mr. Brooke from Hooghly stated that "the great stagnation in trade, for the last few years has reduced the large body of weavers and manufacturers to some distress".<sup>133</sup> M. C. Oldfield, Judge and Magistrate of Nadia, in a letter dated 16th January, 1802, stated that "at present from the stagnation of trade, from nearly a total stop being put to the provision of the Company's usual investments, the conditions of the weavers is rather distressful."<sup>134</sup>

The Commercial Residents from different factories also pointed out the evil consequences arising from the stagnation of the Company's trade. J.W. Paxton, Resident of Santipore factory, informed the Board of Trade that from the enquiries which he had made into the circumstances of the weavers and other manufacturers both at Santipore and Burron aurungs he was convinced that great distress existed amongst them. He came to learn that some had absconded from their place of residence and others "had scarcely a habitation to dwell in owing to the small investment which had been furnished at that factory for these four or five years past."<sup>135</sup> Henry Williams, Resident of the Golagore

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132 Parliamentary Papers : Vol: 9, 1812-13, House of Commons, PP 78-79.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Progs Board of Trade, 4th July, 1806, Prog no. 35, Vol: 199.

factory, stated that the cause of the inferiority of most of the fabrics despatched from his factory was that the Company's advances were not made regularly for the last four years and the investment was composed principally of cloths realized from the old outstanding balances.<sup>136</sup>

John Cheap, Resident of Sonamooky, wrote that from the observations of the Board, it appeared that cloths of superior letters were only approved and those of inferior letters rejected. Most of the cloths despatched were adjudged inferior in the last season. He intimated that as a result of the reduction of investment for the last three years the weavers had been thoroughly disorganised and that it was a very difficult task to bring them back to the factory and induce them to weave only better assortments.<sup>137</sup> On the bad consequences of the want of employment, the evidence of a parliamentary paper is as follows :

"the inconveniences arising from the want of employment for this useful class of our native subjects may be hereafter most severely felt and prove highly detrimental to our commerce, for should the blessing of Peace be once restored or any other circumstance occur to occasion an increased demand for piecegoods in Bengal, it may be found impracticable to meet it ; for when a weaver once quits his loom and resorts to any other mode of employment <sup>which</sup> shall yield him wherewithal to live upon, it may be apprehended that he will feel no inducement to return to his loom".<sup>138</sup>

In the indent for 1807, the Court of Directors intimated :

"our demand is only for superior sorts and we desire the Board of Trade may consider whether it may not be practicable to adopt a proportionate

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136 Progs Board of Trade, 25th July, 1806, Prog no. 39, Vol: 199.  
 137 Progs Board of Trade, 1st Aug, 1806, Prog no. 41, Vol: 200.  
 138 Parliamentary Papers, 1812-13, Vol: 8, House of Commons, P.23.

scale beyond which no finer goods to the lower letters shall be in the future received on our accounts".<sup>139</sup> They expected that in the adoption of this new method of receipt of cloths, the Board of Trade would specially look into the condition of the weavers. The competition of the private traders tended to depreciate the quality of the fabrics. The Court of Directors hoped that the cessation of the competition, with the virtual elimination of the private traders in 1807, would be the most suitable opportunity for trying to improve the quality of the fabrics.<sup>140</sup>

However, in the absence of constant employment, the improvement of the fabrics as required by the Court of Directors was not easy to achieve. This was explained in the letter of Mr. C.R. Crommelin, the Commercial Resident at Beneras. He pointed out that the provision of the assortment of muslins formerly ordered from this Residency had been discontinued for the last three or four years in consequence of the progressive improvement of the coarser assortment of muslins in England, and he emphasized the consequences of such discontinuation of orders from time to time. Competition on the part of private merchants undoubtedly tended more immediately to the debasement of the fabrics. At Beneras about three years ago, competition ceased altogether and had the Company's investment been sufficiently extensive to provide full and constant employment for the manufacturers, the opportunity would have proved extremely favourable for the improvement in the qualities of

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139 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd April, 1807, Prog no. 24, Vol: 207.

140 Ibid.

the assortments. However, ceassation of the Company's advances at times and the provision of inadequate and small sums resulted in increasing the evil. This had forced the greater part of the best manufacturers to have recourse to the country-fabrics as a means of employment.

The Commercial Resident argued that under such circumstances an improvement in the quality of the fabrics was difficult to achieve. The Court of Directors in their letter had suggested the adoption of a scale to which they would strictly adhere. If the piecegoods did not reach the standard scale, these would not be taken on account of the Company and would be rejected. Mr. Crommelin intimated that the weavers in the employ of the Company were poor and the rejection of their cloths would ultimately subject the Company to endless balances without having realized the end proposed and would induce the weavers to quit the service altogether, since they were not sure of constant employment by the Company. Hence, the Commercial Resident proposed that the measure suggested by the Court of Directors could be adopted only when their resources would be sufficient to provide full employment to all the weavers throughout the year.<sup>141</sup>

In a petition, the Head Weavers ( in all 84 in number ) of Kheerpoy, Chanderconnah and Radhanagar stated that for the last three or four years, the amount of investment was very small. Last year ( in 1807 ), the Head Weavers pointed out, the investment having been stopped after one advance, they were in utter distress and suffered

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<sup>141</sup> Progs Board of Trade, 16th June, 1807, Prog no. 44, Vol: 209.

great loss. Their loss was occasioned by the declaration of the Resident that on their receiving a first advance, a second would soon follow. Under that promise, they had borrowed money from the merchants and bought threads and made more cloths than they had received advances for. But the second advance was not given to them and the cloths were still in their houses. There were no private merchants to purchase the cloths but they were paying interest to the merchants from whom they had borrowed money and thus they suffered great loss. For want of Company's advances, many weavers have left their houses, begging from place to place and many were starving.<sup>142</sup>

In March 1808, the Court of Directors wrote : "This branch of our Commerce continues to be very materially depressed by the suspension of Export Trade which affects each of its three branches in a greater or less degree and compels us to frame the present indent on a still narrower scale than that adopted last year".<sup>143</sup> The consequence was that only small sums could be allotted to the factories.

141 Head Weavers of Hurriaul factory in an arzee ( petition ) to Henry Williams, Resident of the factory, similarly described their distress. From the commencement of the Company's business at the station, they and their forefathers had received the full advances for several required assortments and made their deliveries accordingly and had maintained themselves thereby, but in the year 1808 they had been informed at the factory that a very low amount had been available for investment.

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142 Progs Board of Trade, 4th March, 1808, Prog no. 12, Vol: 218.

143 Progs Board of Trade, 11th March, 1808, Prog no. 14, Vol: 218.

At that auring ( Hurriaul ) there were 5200 looms belonging to the registered weavers and their subsistence mainly depended on making cloths only for the Company. Formerly the amount of the investment for this factory had seldom been less than 30 to 40 thousand pieces and they had to weave on each loom about 8 or 10 pieces of cloths. However, in 1808, the order of investment was for 3400 pieces only by which they would not get one piece of cloth to weave on each loom, and as a consequence they would not be in a position to maintain themselves.<sup>144</sup>

Mr. J. Sprot, Assistant of Chittagong factory, in a letter to Robert Brooke, Resident of Luckipore informed that the cause of the debasement of the fabrics of his aurungs was the stagnation of the trade in piecegoods which had induced many of the manufacturers to turn their hands to labour and that once they had ceased having constant employ in their line of business, they became indifferent and careless. Weaving no longer afforded them means of subsistence. With

"the shuttle in one hand and plough in the other, they rightly understood the business of neither but mar and disappoint the duties of both. Except the small quantity lately despatched on account of the Company, no mercantile cloth had been made in that district for the last eighteen months, little that the natives and others have continued buying being of such low assortments as not to average more than 32 rupees per corge ( twenty ) and this had also tended much to debase the manufacture, together the general want of employment which had reduced the weavers to the greatest distress." <sup>145</sup>

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144 Progs Board of Trade, 19th August, 1808, Prog no. 37, Vol: 223.  
 145 Progs Board of Trade, 10th March, 1809, Prog no. 9, Vol: 230.

In 1809 and 1810 the prospects for investment in piecegoods were far worse and hence allotments to each factory had to be further curtailed. The result was the intensification of the misery of the manufacturers. The Assistant in charge of the Chittagong factory in a letter to the Commercial Resident wrote that as a result of the reduced investment many of the weavers had been forced to abandon their looms altogether.<sup>146</sup>

Charles Bayley, Resident of the Santipore factory, informed that he was convinced that constant employment of the best weavers was the only way to obtaining good investment. If a good weaver remained four or five months without employment from the Company, he was obliged to weave cheap, coarse and badly manufactured goods for sale in the bazars, thereby quickly losing the habit of attention necessary for the fabrication of those finer assortments which were in demand in England -

"but a small proportion of these people, however, can earn a subsistence in this manner the generality of the weavers were obliged to live on the profits of their few months' previous labour, that expended, they borrowed at a ruinous interest, were distressed ever after and became unable to do justice to the advances when made to them — to these causes may be traced the great falling off in the fabrics of these aurungs so strongly complained of by the Hon'ble Court of Directors".<sup>147</sup>

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146 Progs Board of Trade, 2nd March, 1810, Prog no. 9, Vol:242, Part I.  
147 Progs Board of Trade, 13th October 1810, Prog no.41, Vol:249.

The Company's factories at Dacca and Santipore were wound up in 1818. The factory at Patna was closed down in 1819 and by 1825 the cloth establishments in almost all the factories were wound up. The condition of the weavers was pitiable. They felt the need of the Company's employment badly and had no alternative but to turn to pursuits mechanical, agricultural and commercial.<sup>148</sup> The female population who were engaged in spinning were thrown completely out of employment.

Thus we find that the different methods of procuring the Company's investment did adversely affect the cotton weavers. They were not adequately rewarded for their labours. Moreover, the English Company's men oppressed them on various pretexts. However, the market position after 1793 had also much to do with the changing fortunes of the cotton weavers, and the English Company could not control this situation.

THE MECHANISMS OF ENFORCING THE NEW  
SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION ORGANISATION :

After 1757 a new system of production organisation gradually emerged. The basis of this organisation was the system of advances or 'dadan'. The acceptance of 'dadan' involved the obligations on the part of weavers of providing the Company with goods worth the value of advances

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148 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.

before the weavers could sell their commodities in market. This system though in existence before was very limited in extent. After 1757 it became universal.

I now intend to study the mechanism of the enforcement of the new system. The different regulations passed by the Government for the weavers aimed mainly at two things : (i) to compel the weavers to fulfil contracts and (ii) to eliminate rival mercantile groups from interfering with their business.<sup>148A</sup>

FORCED ADVANCES AND RETAINING OF THE WEAVERS'  
SERVICE BY ALWAYS HAVING A BALANCE AGAINST THEM :

The device adopted by the Commercial Residents was to make advances to the weavers before they received advances from rival mercantile groups and to keep them in the constant employ of the Company. The Commercial Residents stressed in this connection the necessity of advances at proper and specific times. Mr. Law in 1783 informed from Dacca that the number of Free Merchants there was very considerable, particularly after the end of the American War of Independence, and that they were always ready to make advances to the weavers <sup>indiscriminately</sup> indiscriminately and the only means of preventing their making advances to the Company's weavers was by keeping them constantly employed.<sup>149</sup> The presence of

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148A A brief reference to this has been made in an earlier section.

149 Progs Board of Trade, 16th Sept, 1783, Prog no. 22, Vol: 109, Part II.

the large number of Free Merchants was due to the Peace established after the American War of Independence. The War had its impact in Bengal. The two main contenders, the English and the French, were engaged in it and it naturally led to a complete suspension of the trading activities of the French East India Company and the French private traders. The trade of all other merchants, both indigenous and foreign, was also affected by the war. The war was concluded by the Peace Treaties of 1763. One of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles concluded between England and France provided "a safe, free and independent" ( *Sur libre et independent* ) trade to be carried on by the French in India on pre-war level. All other merchants were also allowed to carry on trade without let or hindrance. From Kheerpoy, Mr. Chandler informed that advances should be provided by the Company till the last month of the year. With the close of the year, when all the advances had been made, one of the two pieces of cloth was to be collected from the weaver and one piece would still remain due from him. As soon as he delivered the piece due from him at the beginning of the next year, a double Kist would again be given to him. By this, Mr. Chandler argued, the weaver would be in a position to maintain himself and his family more comfortably since he would never be without advances and the Company would be assured of the services of the weavers by always having a demand upon him. But if the weavers were ever without advances of the English Company at the end of a year, there was every possibility that they would receive the advances of the French or the Dutch.<sup>150</sup> These were not the isolated cases in Dacca or Kheerpoy.

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150 Progs Board of Trade, 2nd May, 1775, Vol. III, Part II.

The same method was followed in the other places. Mr. Henry Scott from Luckipore in 1790 stated that he made an advance for two pieces of cloth to each weaver, and on the delivery of one piece gave him another advance, so that the weavers were constantly employed having always one piece in balance.<sup>151</sup> Mr. Scott in another letter in 1792 wrote that it was necessary for the purpose of keeping the weavers in the Company's employ that there should be outstanding balances in the surungs, which would always prevent the full order being completed within the year but generally in time for the ships of the season, provided the advances for the ensuing investment enabled the Resident to collect the balance of the past at the same time engaging the weavers by fresh advances. The principal and indeed the only security of obtaining the investment was by early advances so as to enable the Resident to commence his operations with the beginning of the year and thereby secure the greater part of the cloths before the private merchants had commenced their purchases.<sup>152</sup> The most important cause of this was that the terms of the rival mercantile groups were more favourable.<sup>153</sup> for the weavers.

Once having accepted the Company's advances, the weavers were forbidden by Regulation II of July 1787, to work for newer engagements or bazar sales till their engagements to the Company were fulfilled. But the weavers, once employed for the Company, had little chances of being relieved. The Company's men retained the services of the weavers by prizing their cloths into inferior letters and always having a balance against them.

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151 Progs Board of Trade, 31 August, 1790, Prog no. 65, Vol: 87.

152 Progs Board of Trade, 13th Dec, 1792, Prog no. 90, Vol:101, Part II.

153 The details of the causes are discussed in Chapter IV.

In 1775 the weavers of Sonargaon complained that they prepared piecegoods of the best quality and when Mr. Day from Dacca came to Sonargaon he took these as being of the first three qualities of A, B and C. He next returned to Dacca with those cloths but there he rated the quality at D, E and F respectively and insisted that prices should be paid in proportion.<sup>154</sup> The weavers of Teetabaddy in a petition to the Board of Trade informed that by means of prizing their cloths into inferior letters the Company had made a considerable balance accrue against them.<sup>155</sup> The weavers of Luckipore auring in a petition to the Governor General and Council pointed out that the cloths delivered by them were forcibly prized by the Commercial Resident, Mr. Scott, without their consent at a much lower rate than that allowed by the former Residents and thus a heavy balance appeared against them. The weavers of Kheerpoy in a petition to the English Company's Trade Council complained that their cloths were prized at their absence in violation of the prevailing custom. Very few cloths had been taken as fine, a great many fine were taken as middling and the middling as coarse. As a result there had been a great balance against them.<sup>156</sup> The weavers of Dacca in a petition<sup>157</sup> pointed out that the Commercial Resident in collusion with the Jassendars ( appraisers ) and gomastas had ruined them. He lowered the price of every assortment. "Cloths of 2100 threads were taken as 2000 threads letter C & D and even as 1900 threads and the handkarchiefs middling were taken as ordinary in letters C & D. In that manner, the Resident took every other assortments at an undervalue and unfair prizing. In that manner large balances had been made against them".<sup>158</sup>

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154 Progs Board of Trade, 10th January, 1775, Vol: I.

155 Progs Board of Trade, 29th August, 1775, Vol:IV.

156 Progs Board of Trade, 27th March, 1794, Vol: 109, Part I.

157 Addressed to the Board of Trade dated 3rd Choit, 1200 Bengali Year.

158 Progs Board of Trade, 31st March, 1794, Prog no. 22, Vol: 109, Part II.

21 weavers from Santipore<sup>159</sup> complained that they prepared the thread for the different sorts of cloths for which they received advances. Sorters of thread came to their houses and sorted the thread after which they began to weave cloths with the said thread. The Company's men came daily to inspect the progress and affixed the Company's seal to the cloths. On the completion of the piece they delivered it to the factory where the threads of both the length and breadth were counted and the cloth was weighed and examined with the musters by the sorter, the gomasta and Naib gomasta and received if equal to them and returned if proved inferior. The cloths which were thus received were afterwards prized by the sorter, the gomasta and Naib gomasta and the Commercial Resident threw these into inferior sorts. This did not happen in their presence and they were told some days afterwards when the cloths were entered on their chits ( receipts ) that the cloths had been thrown into inferior letters.<sup>160</sup>

Several weavers numbering about 25 of the aurungs of Khattorah<sup>161</sup> under the Hurripaul factory complained that Mr. Robert Richardson, the Resident of the Hurripaul factory, forcibly and unjustly rejected cloths of various descriptions belonging to them and required them to deliver new ones in lieu thereof and placed peons over them and thereby subjected them to great expenses. The former Residents used to send for them at the time of prizing their cloths and examined them with the musters by which method more cloths

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159 In a petition dated 25th Assar 1205, Bengali Year corresponding with 6th July 1788 Christian Year.

160 Progs Board of Trade, 10th July, 1798, Prog no. 53, Vol: 137.

161 In a petition to the Board of Trade in 1813.

were prized of the first, second and the third letters. Mr. Richardson did not send for them and prized the fine fabrics as middling according to his own wish. As a result large balances had accumulated against them.<sup>162</sup>

In all such cases, the previous balances were taken as a part of the advances due for the next year. The weavers always complained that balances were not justly due and had accumulated as a result of the Commercial Residents' prizing their cloths into inferior letters. The Company made use of balances outstanding against the weavers as a means of perpetuating their continued association with the Company.<sup>163</sup> Hence the weavers, even if they did not like to work for the Company, had no escape and the Company's men always having a demand upon them under the pretence of balances compelled them to work.

The servants of the English Company, in order to counteract the private traders' dealings with the weavers and to bring the unwilling weavers to submission, offered in 1788 a very small premium on every piece of cloth ordered by them and promised to redress their grievances. Theoretically, the weavers were perfectly free. The Board of Trade thus wrote to the Commercial Resident of Hurripaul : "They need not enter into if they do not choose to do. And after having entering into it, they need not continue in it longer than they like. And there is no obligation upon them to assign any reason for wishing to quit it".<sup>164</sup>

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162 Progs Board of Trade, 30th April, 1813, Prog no. 16 : Vol: 280.

163 Progs Board of Trade, 26th July, 1776, Vol: 8.

164 Progs Board of Trade, 7th January, 1799, Prog no. 2 : Vol: 140, Part I.

But there was a great deal of discrepancy between theory and practice and in the main the Company's men relied upon coercive measures and the most effective way of making the unwilling weavers to work was to force advances on them. "There is every reason to believe that in many cases, advances were forced on the weavers".<sup>165</sup>

At Luckipore, about the year 1794-95, the Resident found it more and more difficult to procure the Company's investment in time. In assigning the reasons, the Commercial Resident, Mr. C.R. Crommelin, wrote that from a variety of circumstances he was induced to believe that the major part of the weavers were numbered<sup>166</sup> in the first instance contrary to their inclinations. That, according to his study, proved a fundamental evil ; the weavers had little real likings for the Company's work ; they took advances out of necessity and they esteemed their numbers as badges of restraint and were eager to get rid of the name of a numbered weaver.<sup>167</sup> Sometimes, the Company's men made advances beyond the capacity of the weavers to weave. Bijoyram Dutt, Narain Nundy, Johurry Ghui, Bhabani Churan Ghui, weavers of Sonamooky in a petition stated that in 1787 Ganga Narain Sircar got the contract and sent his brother Hurry Narain Sircar to manage the business in his stead. He forcibly made his first advance for 70,000 pieces. This was much more than their capacity to weave. When they wanted to know the cause for such a large advance,

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<sup>165</sup> N.K.Sinha, *op.cit.* Vol.I, P. 162.

<sup>166</sup> To distinguish the Company's weavers from those in the employ of the other companies and to determine the size of the people employed by the Company, each weaver in the Company's employ was given a number.

<sup>167</sup> Progs Board of Trade, 17th April, 1795, Prog no. 22, Vol:115, Part II.

they were told that they would have to accept more than that in future.<sup>168</sup> Sometimes, the weavers were compelled to take advances for assortments which they had never weaved in their lives. In a petition (to the Board of Trade) Manick Bhur Tanty, Tilluck Sain Tanty, Coobir Coondoo Tanty and Gora Chand Dey Tanty of Khursurroy under the Company's factory at Cuttorah complained that the gomasta of the above factory mischievously entered their names in the Company's papers and advanced them a sum of money for making cloths of the said factory. They stated that they had never weaved such cloths. They maintained themselves by weaving Dhoti and other coarse cloths for sales in the bazars and maintained their families in a frugal manner.<sup>169</sup> Several weavers of Persaudpore aurung under the Hurripaul factory<sup>170</sup> wrote that Sambhonaut Chuckerbutty, a gomasta of the Persaudpore aurung, forced advances upon them. They were unable to weave assortments as desired by the Company. Hence they were compelled to purchase cloths from such weavers who weaved such assortments. They thus suffered a great loss and "were reduced to beggary".<sup>171</sup> Even consideration on compassionate grounds was not to be expected from the Company's gomastas. Seven weavers belonging to the Durhatta factory in 1798 petitioned to the Board of Trade that they had been for long weaving cloths for the Company but ~~now~~<sup>now</sup> that they were grown old and their eye sight was failing, they were unable to work any longer. But the gomasta oppressed them greatly and they did not know how to escape.<sup>172</sup> The Board of Trade expressed great concern at the petition of the seven weavers and in a letter to the Commercial Resident, Mr. Philpot, wrote that on examination of the evidence "it appears that advances were forced by the gomastas upon the seven weavers and that under the plea of

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168 Progs Board of Trade, 26th June, 1787, Prog no: 62, Vol: 57.

169 Progs Board of Trade, 24th May, 1794, Prog no: 32, Vol: 110.

170 In a petition in June, 1798.

171 Progs Board of Trade, 14th August, 1798, Prog no: 63, Vol: 137.

172 Progs Board of Trade, 2nd November, 1798, Prog no: 86, Vol: 139, Part I.

balances arising from these advances, they have been constrained to work for the Company. We particularly, enjoin you to be careful that advances be not forced upon the weavers".<sup>173</sup> Advances from time to time were made to the weavers who had secured their release from the Company's service. For example, Dattaram Paul, Ramlochun Paul, Gocul Doss, Gobindaram Doss, Ramsorun Doss, Lochun Doss, Mathoor Dey, Kirparam Laha, weavers of Hurripaul in 1808 stated that on their request the Board of Trade was graciously pleased to release them from the Company's service by issuing a Perwannah to Thomas Philpot, late Resident of Hurripaul factory. That occurred in 1797 and since then they were free. However, <sup>now, one</sup> ~~one new~~, Ramcont Mukherji, the gomasta of the said Hurripaul factory, compelled them to renew their engagements forcibly.<sup>174</sup>

In enforcing the system, the Commercial Residents ruthlessly exercised their authority. The case of Bhugobutty-widow of Agurparah would illustrate this. The husband of Bhugobutty died with a large debt due to the Company. He was the security of the Company's cloth factory at Augurparah. The widow had one infant son of eight, four daughters and three small dwelling houses. The rent of the houses was the only source of income to the family. Mr. E. Marjoribanks, Resident of Santipore and Golagore, issued orders to the gomasta of the factory, Manick cChandra Bandopadhyaya to sell the houses for the recovery of the debt. The widow in a petition in Sept 1823 prayed that she was willing to enter into a settlement with the Company and wanted to pay off the debt by instalments. If her houses were sold, she would be

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173 Progs Board of Trade, 7th January, 1799, Prog no: 2, Vol:140, Part I.  
 174 Progs Board of Trade, 8th March, 1808, Prog no: 13, Vol: 218.

deprived of her only place of residence, and by losing the rent of the houses, she would have no alternative but to starve with her children.<sup>175</sup> The Board directed the Resident to make an enquiry into the petition of the widow and furnish an early report. The Resident in his letter recommended the disposal of the deceased weaver's property, otherwise, he apprehended, there would be great difficulty in recovering any part of the balance.<sup>176</sup> But the Board sympathised with the widow and in spite of the Resident's recommendation ordered that if Bhugobutty could by being permitted to retain the use of her house make any settlement guaranteed by a respectable person for the progressive liquidation of her husband's debt to the Company, such an arrangement would be preferable to ejecting her from her house and selling it for the benefit of the Company.<sup>177</sup>

The same Commercial Resident at times exceeded his authority and even flouted the orders of the Board of Trade. A petition was submitted by the weavers of Augurparah, Panhatty, Mahes, Duckineswar, Baranagar complaining against the Resident and his subordinates. They stated that Mr. Marjoribanks appointed a certain person as his banian to whom he owed one lakh and fifty thousand rupees and invested him with an absolute power of discharging and appointing individuals to work for the Company. Instead of advancing those weavers whose hautchittas (handwritten receipts) appeared to be clear, the banian advanced to new weavers and at the time of issuing new hautchittas, he received

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175 Progs Board of Trade, 16th Sept 1823, Prog no: 66, Vol: 408.

176 Progs Board of Trade, 13th January 1824, Prog no: 4, Vol: 412.

177 Ibid.

two, three, four and even five rupees. Moreover, he received in the name of Dewanji at the rate of two annas upon every piece of cloth. On each of such hautchittas, the gomasta received one rupee, the Mohrer received one rupee and so on. In case, any of the weavers refused to pay the money, they did not allow him to go out of the factory and "the gomasta said that he was their Resident" which compelled the weavers to make such payments.<sup>178</sup> The Board of Trade expressed great dissatisfaction at the manner in which the affairs of Augurparah and the neighbouring places had been conducted and ordered the Resident to proceed immediately to the factory personally and make a thorough investigation into the matter.<sup>179</sup> But in spite of such peremptory orders, the Resident did not proceed and the Board of Trade again directed the Resident to proceed to Baranagar to make an investigation and to submit a report of the same to the Board.<sup>180</sup> Still the Resident remained silent. The Board of Trade thereupon appealed to Lord Amherst, the Governor General in Council. The Board wrote that they repeated request to the Commercial Resident of Santipore and Golagore for an enquiry ~~regarding~~ into the complaints made by the weavers of Baranagar and Augurparah had all been ineffectual. They requested the Governor General and Council to depute a public officer to the Baranagar factory for the purpose of this enquiry.<sup>181</sup>

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178 Progs Board of Trade, 9th August, 1825, Prog no. 60, Vol: 431.

179 Ibid.

180 Progs Board of Trade, 6th January, 1826, Prog no. 2, Vol: 436.

181 Progs Board of Trade, 21 March, 1826, Prog no. 23, Vol: 438.

DIRECT INTERFERENCE WITH THE PURCHASES  
OF THE RIVALS ON VARIOUS PRETEXTS :

After the conclusion of Peace in 1763, the English Company faced serious competition from the French and Dutch traders in the purchase of cloths. The prices paid by the Dutch and French were more than those of the English Company and hence the English Company's men were unable to eliminate their rivals from the markets.<sup>182</sup> They, therefore, tried to interfere directly with the purchases of their rivals on various grounds.

The Chief of the Dutch factory at Chinsura in a letter to the Governor General in Council in 1785<sup>183</sup> wrote that the English Company's gomastas at Mahanandpur ( under the Malda factory ) and places adjoining it, had forbidden by the sound of drums that no weaver should undertake to manufacture any cloths for the Dutch. From other places also the gomastas by the sound of drums declared that weavers should not manufacture nor deliver a single piece of cloth to any foreign merchants or that they would be seriously punished.<sup>184</sup>

At Santipore, the Company's men gave notice to all the Company's weavers that none of them would be permitted in future to work for any another group under any pretence whatsoever, until the Company's investment was completed. Mr. Fergusson from Santipore

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182 Infra : Chapter IV PP.

183 The letter was dated 9th July

184 Progs Board of Trade, 16th August 1785, Prog no. 37, Vol: 48.

intimated the Board of Trade in 1786 that "the Board should think in the light of compelling the weavers to return <sup>to</sup> their duty and protecting the contractor in the exclusive right of employing for the investment those weavers who have been long considered as Company's and who have actually received advances on this account".<sup>185</sup>

The gomastas and Dalals of the Dutch Company in Santipore auring in an arzee to the Court of Directors for the Dutch Company in June 1786 complained that their business had come to a stop since Mr. Beauland on the part of the English Company at Santipore had ordered the weavers not to make any cloths but for the English Company.<sup>186</sup>

The French from Chandernagar in a letter to Lord Cornwallis in June 1787 pointed out that Mr. Udny, the Chief of the English factory at Malda, caused their peons to be stopped who were carrying twentyone pieces of cloths to the French House of Commerce. These cloths were seized. The French gomasta intended to visit the English factory to ask for an explanation but <sup>he was</sup> has refused access.

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185 Progs Board of Trade, 18th July 1786, Prog no. 5, Vol: 51, Part II.

186 Ibid.

At Chanderconah, Hurripaul, Canicola, Santipore and other adjacent places, Mr. Wall, one of the English Officers, had issued a proclamation by the sound of tom tom to all weavers prohibiting them for working for any persons except the contractors of the English Company. Mr. Wall also enjoined them not to receive any stranger amongst them and when the gomastas of the French had shown themselves in any of these places he had forbidden them to make any advances and had opposed with all his power by means of his siccars and peons their stay in the districts, with the result that most of the French agents had returned without having it in their power to do anything. Mr. Wall also stationed peons at the doors of every weaver to prevent their having any communication with the people without. The French complained that "he was exercising this new tyranny with indecent stubbornness".<sup>187</sup>

The trade of the Armenians at Malda also came to a stop. In July, 1787, one Sarkis Munassakar submitted a petition to the Board of Trade. He stated that he had been in Calcutta from 1755 previous to its capture by Siraj. He made a trip to Malda in 1762 and afterwards went on several voyages to Sea. On his return in 1771 he became the agent of some of the Armenian merchants for the purchase of cloths of different assortments to the amount of 30 to 40,000 rupees a year upon a commission of 5 percent. At first he did not face any difficulty or 'molestation' in the transaction of his business. But after some time, Mr. Udny, Company's Resident at Malda, without any just cause, had put a total stop to his business by 'molesting' and 'injuring' his dalal.

He had sustained a loss of about 35,000 rupees. Mr. Udny stationed sepoy's at the houses of the weavers, ordered the Company's seal to be affixed upon the cloths, seized every piece and carried the cloths to the factory. By this, he had collected 52 bales of cloths containing 5200 pieces for his personal trade.<sup>188</sup>

From Chittagong, Matthew Louis, a Free Merchant, complained that his trade there was much obstructed. In a letter, to S. Bird, Chief of Chittagong, in August 1788, Mr. Matthew Louis wrote that on the 15th of August, 1788, thirty-two pieces of cloths were stopped on the public road by the English Company's men. They forcibly seized the cloths from his people and affixed the Company's seal upon the cloths. The next day seven pieces more were seized, though the Company's seal was not affixed, and he informed Mr. Harris, the Commercial Resident of Chittagong of this. He had no doubt that Mr. Harris would not only restore the cloths but would take steps, so that such things might not recur in the future and would punish the persons responsible for these activities. Mr. Harris only ordered the restoration of twenty pieces of the first seizure but previous to the restoration of these pieces, eighteen more pieces were seized by the Company's men. Mr. Louis pointed out that these cloths were manufactured with his advances, his name was written on each piece by the weavers who received his advances. Had these been manufactured with the Company's advances, their seal would have been affixed upon the pieces. But in the eighteen pieces seized, not one had the Company's mark on it.<sup>189</sup>

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188 Progs Board of Trade, 24th July 1787 Prog no. 70, Vol: 58.

189 Progs Board of Trade, 14th October, 1788, Prog no. 103, Vol: 72.

The Free Merchants of Dacca in a letter to Cornwallis pointed out that freedom of trade so essential for the public trade did not exist in the district. The Sixth Article of the Regulations for weavers of 23rd July 1787, provided that a list of the Company's weavers should be stuck up at public places by the Commercial agent.

Mr. Bebb, the Commercial Resident, did not do so and the Free Merchants were not sure as to who really the Company's weavers were. They advanced to the weavers called the Company's weavers. Notwithstanding this omission, their webs had been seized in the loom by the native agents acting under Mr. Bebb. Weavers had been punished when found employed on their account and their goods were stopped in the auring at their pleasure. Moreover, the Dalals and the Pykars who received their advances were encouraged and protected as Company's Dalals and Pykars.

Their applications to Mr. Bebb proved to be of no avail. He did not want to afford relief but on the pretext of enquiry he desired to keep himself informed minutely of the quantity, quality and prices of the cloths advanced for by the merchants and he was also interested in knowing the names of the weavers who had received the advances of the private merchants so that he could put a stop to their business.

The 2nd Article of the Regulations of 1787 provided that "the weavers who have not fulfilled their engagements to the Company shall not work for newer engagements or bazar sales until those engagements

are completed". The Resident taking these words literally applied the article rigidly. The case could be thus illustrated. A manufacturer having eight looms took advances from the Commercial Resident on account of the Company for the purpose of one loom some days previous to the receipt of advances for the other looms. The cloth to be manufactured in the loom engaged to the Company being of a superior quality, the manufacturer might not furnish agreeably to this engagements from want of proper threads or any other probable cause. However, by a rigid construction of the aforementioned article, Bebb's people seized the cloths of the other looms not engaged to the Company on the ground that the Company's engagements were not fulfilled.

The 12th Article of the Regulations of the same year provided that "Weavers are to be bound to the rule of giving cloths according to the priority of engagements". The Resident, Mr. Bebb, argued that this clause was applicable not only to a manufacturer having one loom but to those having a variety of looms and journeymen of different capacities. Each of the looms might be

"occupied by a web of every different value --- one piece may take six months in manufacturing and be worth of forty or fifty rupees, others two, three or four months and be worth of ten, twenty and thirty rupees. The Company's men put a stop to the work of the other looms not engaged to the Company on the ground that the piece requiring most time happened to be only a few days previously advanced for".<sup>190</sup>

In these ways, the English Company's men interfered with the business of the rival mercantile groups and tried to eliminate them from competition. In it, they became successful to some extent but not wholly.

From the foregoing study, it follows that the nature of the production organisation in the industry before Plassey, was on the whole conducive to the growth of the industry and the well being of the artisans alike. Some constraints did exist. However, despite these constraints the industry continued to flourish. For capital, the artisans had no doubt to depend on the advances of the Mahajans but that did not mean either coercion or curtailment of their freedom of buying and selling. Bengal attracted merchants of different provinces of India. The different European Companies also traded in Bengal cotton piecegoods. Trade was competitive, market was expanding and the artisans were well paid. After Plassey, a new type of production organisation gradually emerged with the acquisition of political power by the English East India Company. The basis of

this new production organisation was the system of advances or dadan, the acceptance of which involved the obligations of providing the English Company with goods worth the value of the advances before the weavers could sell their commodities in the market or the agents of any other European Companies. Before Plassey, the weavers had no doubt to depend on the Mahajans for part of their capital. This also involved the obligations of timely delivery of goods to them but after Plassey a crucial change occurred. The Company had now to administer a territory as well as to carry on trade. By exercising ~~of~~ their newly acquired political authority, they succeeded in eliminating, at least partly, the other rival mercantile groups from competing with them. Again, compulsive regulations were passed from time to time during the 80s of the 18th century. Thenceforward, the weavers had to work under various constraints. They had to provide cloths to the English Company's agents within the specified date. They could not work for the agents of other Companies before they completed their engagements to the English Company. And release from the Company's engagements was unthinkable under the circumstances in which the weavers worked. Advances were forced upon them. The remuneration paid to them was not at all attractive. Their work was superintended by peons paid and fed by the weavers themselves. To quicken the deliveries of cloths, the Commercial Residents often held out threats of prosecution. In case, the weavers failed to deliver cloths within the specified period for reasons

beyond their control such as sickness, fines were exacted from them. Moreover, the exactions from the weavers on one pretext or another, by different intermediaries like the gomastas and dalals, were considerable. Hence the position of the artisans changed a great deal. Again, the object of the English Company was to become the sole purchaser of the cloths woven by the artisans. Hence, they devised an elaborate machinery to enforce compulsive regulations. They directly interfered with the purchases of the 'interlopers' ( rival mercantile groups ) on various grounds. Moreover, the Company made use of balances outstanding against the weavers as the means of perpetuating their continued association with the Company. Balances always remained outstanding against the weavers. But in spite of all these, the English Company did not succeed in establishing a full control in the buyers' market for various reasons which I have studied in the next Chapter.

#### CHAPTER -IV

#### FACTORS IN THE ABSENCE OF A COMPLETE MONOPSONISTIC CONTROL

To compel weavers to fulfil their engagements and to prevent the rival mercantile groups from interfering with their business, the English Company passed series of Regulations in the last quarter of the 18th Century. However, they did not succeed in establishing an exclusive control in the buyers' market. Several foreign nations and many indigenous and British Private Traders did manage to continue to trade in Bengal cotton piece-goods through the period. The trade of the other European Companies tended to decline over the years. However, the English had to reckon with their commercial rivalry which assumed serious proportions during some particular periods.

#### ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY :

In the Bengal Presidency, the main rivals of the English Company were French Company and the Dutch Company. Till, 1753, the French Company's investment was provided by the said 'dadni' merchants who provided the English East India Company's 'investment'. In 1756,

war broke out between England and France and it naturally led to a complete suspension of the trading activities between the two Companies. After the return of Peace in 1763, the French trade was slow to <sup>revive</sup> receive in Bengal. In 1769, the King's Council of State in France passed the decree suspending the exclusive privilege of the French Company and allowing the French subjects to trade freely in different parts of India.<sup>1</sup> With the enforcement of this decree, the trade of the French Company practically came to an end and only the private traders traded in Bengal till 1778 when War again broke out between the French and the English.

The Anglo-French War which broke out in 1778 extended over a period of five years and also involved Holland and Spain. With the close of the main conflict with France in 1783, Peace was established with other belligerents. The definitive treaty of Versailles was concluded with France in September, 1783. With respect to India, the Treaty of Versailles had laid down two main principles for the restoration of Peace : firstly, a reciprocal restitution of territories and secondly, a safe, free and independent ( Sur libre et independent ) trade to be carried on by the French in India on the pre-war level. The first principle was put into operation without much trouble or controversy. The determination of trade relations presented a task of much greater magnitude. " \* \* \* no difficulties have yet occurred", the Government of Bengal remarked in a letter of 25th October, 1785,

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1 N.K. Sinha : The Economic <sup>History</sup> of Bengal, Vol.I, P. 36.

"nor do we think that any can be apprehended in regard to the Restoration of Places. The usage of visiting French ships as they pass the Fort of Budge Budge ; the Privileges of Trade, and the Mode of ascertaining and realizing the Duties of the Country Government on that Trade, have been the principal points of discussion between us and the French Agent and Matters of Constant Dispute \* \* \* In some respects they were also causes of Difference with the other Foreign Settlements in Bengal".<sup>2</sup>

The English were unwilling to share trade with the French on equal terms in territories conquered by them and under their sovereignty, such as Bengal and Bihar. They raised all kinds of difficulties for French trading operations. Disputes and minor incidents of violence were of daily occurrence. The most serious of these incidents in Bengal was the firing of a French Corvette, the 'Esperance' from the English fort at Budge Budge in December, 1785. In violation of the time-honoured freedom of navigation on the Hooghly, respected by all the European nations from the beginning of their settlements in Bengal, the English had established a custom-post at Budge Budge and claimed the right of inspecting all foreign ships going up the river. The Captain of the 'Esperance' refused to submit to such a demand whereupon the English opened fire from their fort.<sup>3</sup> Dangereux, who was in charge of the Chandernagar settlement, protested to the Government in Calcutta against this without getting any redress.

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2 Foreign letter to Court, 25th October, 1785 :  
Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.XV, Paras 5-6, P. 502.

3 S.P.Sen : The French in India, P. 419.

Disputes still went on and in order to settle them the Governor General and Council in Calcutta decided in 1786 to send Colonel Cathcart to the Isle of France to negotiate a Commercial convention with Souillac, the French Governor General. In April, 1786 Colonel Cathcart successfully concluded an Anglo-French trade Convention in Mauritius which solved most problems by amicable compromise. (i) By the first Article of this Convention, the English gave an assurance of freedom of trade to French subjects in the Carnatic, Madura, Tanjore, Northen Sarkars, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. (ii) The French agreed to an examination of ships previously reported as smugglers of salt or military stores. (iii) The British abandoned their claim to a complete monopoly of salt in Bengal by allowing the French to bring in 2,00,000 maunds of salt for purchase by the Bengal Government at a fixed price. (iv) The British likewise receded from their plan to prohibit French from issuing dastaks exempting their goods from local duties.

The provisions of the Anglo-French Convention demonstrated beyond doubt the superiority of British political power and diplomacy in India. And when Lord Cornwallis came to India, the French settlements were subjected to further control. A controversy soon arose on the French claim to hoist their flag within the limits of their settlements. Disputes on this question came to a head in Malda. Mr. Udny from Malda intimated the French gomasta that if he had any design of hoisting the flag he would be well-advised to wait until the clarifications could be obtained from Calcutta. He wrote : "A flag imposes upon the natives and may convey the

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4 Secret letter to Court, 28th August 1786 : Fort Williams India House Correspondence, Vol. XV, Paras 140-54, PP. 704-70.

idea of some privilege, authority or respect. Used by the French where they were not allowed before, it might naturally be used as a concession of greater influence and be capable of misapplication".<sup>5</sup>

Under one of the articles of the provisional convention it was provided that "all the inhabitants, whether European or Natives of the French Establishments, Factories and Houses of Commerce as well as the Territory annexed to them shall be under the protection of the French flag and subject to the French jurisdictions".<sup>6</sup> Hence the provision of the convention permitted the French to hoist their flags in all parts of the country where they had establishments. But the Governor General in Council put their own meaning on the article and resolved "that the Flag of his most Christian Majesty, should be hoisted only at five original factories belonging to the French, at Chandernagar, Dacca, Patna, Cossimbazar and Balasore and at that Factory which they have been permitted to establish in lieu of Jugdia".<sup>7</sup> These resolutions were generally not put into operation and the French agents continued to hoist their flag in the manner they did before. But the manner in which the Governor-General in Council reacted indicated the determination of the English Government to suppress every semblance of political authority on the part of the French Settlements in India.

The flag controversy was in fact the prelude to prolonged wranglings. The regulations of 1782 and 1786 forbade clandestine purchase of cloths from the English Company's weavers. It was complained that the

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5 Progs Board of Trade, 22nd Aug, 1786, Prog no. 8, Vol: 51, Part II.

6 Secret letter to Court, 11th Nov 1786 !

Fort Williams-India House Correspondence, Vol: XV, Para 32, P.763.

7 Ibid. Para 33 P.764

French gomastas carried on a trade of this kind. The agents of the French used to visit the houses of weavers and purchased cloths which they had woven with the English Company's advances.<sup>8</sup> As the prices offered by the French agents were higher than the prices of the English Company, the weavers were naturally unwilling to work for the English Company. The English on their part retaliated. In May 1787, Udny seized twenty pieces of cloth which the peons of the French gomasta were carrying to the French agent at Malda.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Wall, the Chief, issued a proclamation by sound of horn not only at Malda, but at Chanderconnah, Hurripaul, Cannicola, Santipore and adjacent places, prohibiting the weavers from working for any person except for the contractors of the English Company.<sup>9A</sup> He placed peons at the door of every weaver to prohibit them from having any communication with the people.<sup>10</sup>

The argument of the French was that they offered higher prices to the weavers. The weavers either worked for more hours or procured the services of other weavers to supply the goods to the French agents. The French claimed that at Malda it were they who had first organised and promoted the weaving of cloths.<sup>11</sup> Since the outbreak of the American War of Independence, the servants of the Company employed the manufacturers exclusively for their trade. Now as the French wanted to regain their previous position, the Company's servants were trying to put all sorts of obstructions. The French argued that after the completion of the Company's 'investment', the Commercial Residents in the

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8 Progs Board of Trade, 17th October 1786, Prog no. 11 Vol: 52.

9 N.K. Sinha : op.cit. Vol.I, P.45.

9A Supra : The details of this are discussed in Chapter III.

10 Progs Board of Trade, 15th June, 1787, Prog no. 59, Vol: 57.

11 Holden Furber : John Company at Work, P. 53.

interests of their Private Trade purchased cloths from the weavers and they engaged weavers for their trade. The French competition really was with the English Private Traders. The French said : "In all these matters, your Company is a mere cypher. Your Residents only use its name to impose upon you".<sup>12</sup> "Thus the obstruction of which the French complained was very real and the Board of Trade could not deny that the French competition with the Private Trade of the Company's servants was the hinge of the whole controversy".<sup>13</sup>

The outbreak of the French Revolution put an end to all French activity in India. Moreover, a few months later, the French Company lost its single privilege of monopoly of the eastern trade and this brought about a sudden reduction in the volume of the French Trade. The successor of the monopoly Company suppressed some of the agencies such as those at Mocha and Yanam to reduce the cost of establishment. The Company in this way carried on its trading operations, although on a diminished scale down to the seige and capture of Pondicherry in August 1793. The terms of capitulation had assured property rights and liberty of trade and the Company could have continued its commercial operations even after 1793 but the total suppression of the Company and the confiscation of its goods in France made it impossible to continue its trade in India.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Progs Board of Trade, 22nd Sept, 1787, Prog no. 90, Vol: 60.

<sup>13</sup> N. K. Sinha : op.cit. Vol.I, P. 50.

<sup>14</sup> S. P. Sen : op.cit. P. 425.

ANGLO-DUTCH COMMERCIAL RIVALRY :

Like the English and the French, the Dutch had considerable commercial transactions in India. They established factories within the jurisdiction of the Bengal Subah, not only at important centres of commerce, such as Pipli, Balasore, Patna, Dacca, Malda, Kalikapur ( near Cossimbazar ), Chinsura, Baranagar and Luckipore but also at some villages in the interior with the object of collecting different commodities for their trade.<sup>15</sup>

The French trade in Bengal began to decline considerably since the 1740s owing to lack of funds and incompetence of the successors of Dupleix.<sup>16</sup> However, the Dutch continued to carry on considerable trade in the province. The Dutch were in fact the principal commercial rival of the English in this province during the decades from 1740 on. Naturally, there was a keen competition between them in the matter of procuring suitable articles of exports from the different manufacturing centres. Before Plassey, the Dutch were interested mainly in two articles, opium and saltpetre. Their trade in cotton piecegoods and silk was not significant. In the language of a British Private trader, "opium and saltpetre were their leading articles, cloth and silk a bagatelle".<sup>17</sup> But after Plassey, the Dutch lost their preeminence in the saltpetre trade. Mir Jafar issued a Perwanna giving the British the sole right to the manufacture of saltpetre. The Dutch trade in cotton piecegoods and

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15 K.K. Dutta : The Dutch in the Bengal and Bihar, P. 1.

16 Ibid; P. 5.

17 Quoted in N.K. Sinha : op.cit. Vol.I, P. 56.

raw silk increased after Plassey. The Dutch were in a very convenient position in one respect. Their bills of exchange were in great demand by the Company's servants who wanted to remit their fortunes home without the knowledge of their masters. Hence, the Dutch had not to import bullion to finance their purchases in Bengal.

But still the Dutch trade in Bengal was doubtless adversely affected by the steady enlargement of the English Company's 'investment' and there was a great resentment at Chinsura. It may be pointed out in fairness to the English Directors that they did not like to see the trade of the other Companies obstructed by their trade. They even advised their servants to prevent all possible encroachments on the Commercial rights and privileges hitherto enjoyed by them.

The principal cause of the frequent dispute between the English and the Dutch authorities during the administration of Verelst ( 1767-69 ) was the 'uncommon scarcity'<sup>18</sup> of weavers<sup>19</sup> throughout Bengal which in fact adversely affected the foreign trade of all the European Companies. The Dutch complained that the weavers engaged by them were enticed away by the agents of the English Company and that the weavers supplied cloths to none except the English.<sup>20</sup> Towards a solution of the problem the Dutch proposed a "distribution of the Tantees"<sup>21</sup> (weavers) and

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18 The various oppressions by the Indian gomastas after 1757 resulted in the substantial reduction in the number of the cotton weavers. Many of them gave up weaving to avoid oppressions. Hence, by 1767-68, there was 'uncommon scarcity' of the weavers. The English Company's men found it difficult to procure the full quota of 'investment' in cotton piecegoods for want of weavers.

19 Letter from Verelst to Court, 17th March, 1767, Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.V. P. 303.

20 N.L.Chatterjee's article 'Anglo-Dutch Disputes in Bengal' in the "Proceedings of India History Congress", 1939, PP. 1438-39.

21 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, Vol.II, P.122.

Verelst agreed to it, on condition, however, that the complaints of the Dutch should first be investigated by the Commissioners appointed for this purpose.<sup>22</sup> After Clive's departure, the Dutch suddenly changed their former attitude regarding the proposed enquiry and insisted on the enumeration of the weavers as a preliminary measure.<sup>23</sup>

To bring about the desired 'partition' of the weavers, the Dutch began to prefer serious charges against the English gomastas and dalals who, as the authorities of Chinsura pointed out, "engaged themselves to work for nobody than for the English, beating and tormenting all of them that made bold to deliver any goods to us, cutting down from the weavers' looms the cloths that were to be made for us".<sup>24</sup>

Although Verelst had originally favoured the idea of a 'partition' of the weavers as desired by the Dutch and French, he changed his mind. He was of opinion that the 'partition' of the weavers would not only "be a difficult and lengthy business but would also bring the Nizamat into contempt".<sup>25</sup> He was convinced that a 'partition' of the weavers, even if it were at all practicable, would lead to disastrous consequences. In the first place, it would cause great distress to the weavers themselves. They would be forced to accept the prices offered by the Company and would not be able to dispose of their goods in the open market to the highest bidder. Secondly, the merchants of the country, too, would be unjustly deprived of their legitimate rights and privileges

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22 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, Vol.II, P.122.

23 N.L.Chatterjee's articles 'Anglo-Dutch Disputes in Bengal' in the "Proceedings of Indian History Congress", 1939. P.1439.

24 Quoted in N.L.Chatterjee's article 'Anglo-Dutch Disputes in Bengal', "Proceedings of Indian History Congress", 1939, P. 1439.

25 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, Vol.II, P. 122.

and would be unable to secure supplies of cloths sufficient for the requirements of the people. Thirdly, the output of goods would be small and the quality of manufactures would tend to deteriorate in the absence of competition among the purchasers. Lastly, the revenues of the Government would ultimately suffer as a result of such diminution in the output of manufactured goods.<sup>26</sup>

Verelst's <sup>opposition</sup> oppression to the proposed 'partition' of the weavers was not due to economic or commercial reasons alone. The Governor appears to have considered the scheme politically inexpedient too. "A participation [partition] of the weavers", he wrote :

"would be to throw off the mask and acknowledge ourselves the sovereigns of the country. It would counteract in the most expressive manner the professions, we make, the appearance we necessarily assume and the endeavours we use of seeming to act from the Nabob's authority only. In a word, the disproportion of hands necessary to form their investment and yours would appear so great that we could not accept the proposals of participation without confessing all that policy requires should be concealed".<sup>27</sup>

In view of such consideration, the Government and Council refused to acquiesce in the proposal regarding the 'partition' of the of the weavers. The Dutch authorities at Chinsura vehemently protested

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26 N.L.Chatterjee's article "Anglo-Dutch Disputes in Bengal" in Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1939, P. 1439.

27 Letter to Court, 14th Sept, 1767 : Fort William India House Correspondence, Vol.V, PP. 60-62.

against the refusal of the English to listen to their just representations, but the English paid no heed to their protest. The Dutch authorities were eventually obliged to relinquish their claims to a 'partition' of the weavers and the prolonged altercations between the Councils at Calcutta and Chinsura were eventually settled.

The outbreak of the American War of Independence resulted in a complete suspension of the Dutch trading activities. After the return of Peace, they found that the English Company and the British Private Traders were more strongly entrenched in their positions than ever. When Titsingh<sup>28</sup> arrived in Bengal in September, 1785, he found Gregorius Herklot, Ross's second in command, had been hard at work negotiating with the British for the past six months. He hoisted the Dutch flag in the fort at Chinsura on March 9, 1785 and claimed for the Dutch Company all the rights and privileges and immunities to which it was entitled under the firmans and sanads granted by the Mughals.<sup>29</sup> But Macpherson<sup>30</sup> was determined that the Dutch would not be allowed to regain the position they had held before the war and a prolonged struggle ensued. All the Dutch appeals to their Mughal firmans were ignored. In a word, the fiction that four European nations traded on equal terms in Bengal under Mughal firmans was virtually abandoned.<sup>31</sup>

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28 In 1784, Issac Titsingh, Chief of the Dutch East India Company's factory in Japan left Nagasaki for Bengal. He succeeded Johannes Matthias Ross as the Chief of the Dutch Settlement of Chinsura in 1785.

29 Holden Furber : op.cit. PP. 85-86.

30 Mr. Macpherson succeeded Warren Hastings to the Office of the Governor General.

31 Holden Furber : op.cit. P.86.

In the business of collecting an investment of piecegoods the Dutch met with considerable opposition from the English. Titsingh arrived in Lower Hooghly and was met by the Dutch Commissioner at Calcutta when the dispute about piecegoods was at its height. The gomastas of the foreign Companies were not any longer active after the war. Macpherson did not want that they should return on anything like terms of equality with the gomastas of the English Company. Under such circumstances, the gomastas of the English Company sensed their power and looked upon the gomastas newly appointed by the Dutch Chief with the utmost scorn.<sup>32</sup> In Malda where Charles Grant was the Resident, three gomastas sent out by the Dutch reported that the English Company's gomastas threatened to burn down their places of business within eight days. They also alleged that on Grant's orders, six sepoys under a havildar marched into the village to deprive them of facilities for washing the Dutch Company's cloths and to set spies upon the weavers.<sup>33</sup> Charles Grant denied that he had done anything more than publishing the English Company's weaving Regulations of 1775 and 1782 which forbade the weaving of cloths for foreign Companies by the English Company's weavers. But the truth was "that the English Company's gomastas possessed powers of intimidation which other gomastas could not use".<sup>34</sup>

Towards the close of the 18th Century, the volume of Danish trade and British private trade increased by leaps and bounds. During the six months from November to April, 1798, the Danes imported from Calcutta and other places into Serampore piecegoods worth about

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32 Holder Furber : op.cit. P.88.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

13,70,000  
 S Rs. 1,37,07,000 and the total value of piecegoods exported from Calcutta from 1st June 1797 to 31 May 1798 on account of the foreign and British private trade was more than S Rs. 81,71,000.<sup>35</sup> The trade of the British Private Traders was also considerable during this period. In 1802, they exported more than 12,50,000 pieces of cloth to England whereas the pieces shipped on account of the Company in that year numbered less than 4,38,000 pieces.<sup>36</sup>

From the foregoing it appears that several foreign nations did have considerable trade in Bengal cotton piecegoods throughout the period. The inevitable result of this commercial rivalry and competition amongst the different companies was that it became difficult for the English Company's Commercial Residents to procure the full quota of 'investment'. This was particularly the case after the American War of Independence and the re-establishment of Peace in India. During the post-peace period, the English Company's trade in cotton piecegoods was very considerable and in 1787 the Company's 'investment' in Dacca cloths reached its zenith but the most striking thing was that even during the flourishing period of their trade, the English Company could not fully eliminate their rivals from the market.

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35 Quoted in H.R. Ghosal : op.cit. PP. 22-23

36 Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 232.

EVIDENCE OF THE FAILURE OF THE ENGLISH COMPANY'S  
AGENTS TO PROCURE THE FULL QUOTA OF 'INVESTMENT' :

John Prinsep, Superintendent of the Santipore auring in a letter ( 20th October 1783 ) regretted that only an inconsiderable part of the total weavers had received advances from the immediate agents. The position was aggravated by the interference not only of the agents of Private Merchants and of Foreigners but by that of the servants of other Contractors with the Board of Trade. He felt the effect of that competition the very first day the weavers came to receive advances and were requested to get their names registered in the factory books. Out of 100 weavers comprising in the first class of the old Santipore workmen, only nine chose to take the pottah, some declared that they had full advances in hand, all of them plainly spoke that they were better paid elsewhere and therefore asked for an upward revision of the Company's rates along with many other conditions in their own favour.<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Tomlinson and Gosling from Burron<sup>38</sup> intimated that they were very much inconvenienced in procuring 'investment' as several Cooties had been established by the agents of the Danes, the Dutch and Private Individuals who readily gave them an advance in increased rates and continually obtained cloths made with money issued by the Company's contractor. He was further alarmed by the prospect of an increase of

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36A Infra: The details about the lowness of the Company's price are given in a separate section in this Chapter.

37 Progs Board of Trade, 31 October, 1783, Prog no. 56, Vol: 39.

38 Near Santipore.

this evil from the addition of the Dutch and the French Dalals or perhaps of European Residents when Chandernagar and Chinsura would be restored in consequence of the Peace.<sup>39</sup>

John Taylor, Superintendent of Hurriaul in 1783, informed that he believed the resources of Hurriaul were adequate to manufacturing Company's cloths to the amount of Current Rupees, 5,00,000 annually, assuming that all the weavers belonging to the aurungs were employed. However, in the present circumstances of the aurungs he expressed his inability to provide this 'investment'. The cloths manufactured at Hurriaul were known to be so profitable an article of exportation that at least fifty percent of the total weavers were either openly or secretly engaged in the service of private traders whose rates were much higher than those of the English Company. The English Company could hardly pay half the rates of the Private Traders.

For example, he stated that an Armenian at Dacca, in course of the year 1782-83, was believed to have procured cloths from the Hurriaul aurungs worth of nearly two lakhs of rupees. He had a list of 13 other adventurers who were employed that year in different parts of the aurung for the ~~purpose~~<sup>purpose</sup> of purchasing cloths. He had no doubt that by far the greatest part, if not the whole of the cloths, ultimately belonged to the foreign companies. The consequence of this competition was at first a very serious delay in the deliveries of goods by the weavers who had received advances for the Company's 'investment' and at

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39 Progs Board of Trade, 4th November, 1783, Prog no. 57, Vol: 40.

last a positive refusal to complete their engagements. It is notable that the cloths purchased by the agents appointed by the other nations, were generally of the most inferior kinds, altogether unacceptable to the English Company. These agents of the other nations in order to invest their money purchased without discrimination whatever cloths were brought to them by the weavers and <sup>the</sup> weavers taking advantage of the situation were very prompt and eager to deliver them. The Coarser the cloths, the more expeditiously they were manufactured. Consequently as the demand for the coarse thread rose, the supply of fine threads in the markets fell short, and the difficulty of procuring fine threads as well as the enhanced prices of it inevitably brought about the debasement of the Company's assortments.<sup>40</sup>

C.R. Crommelin, Contractor for the Mundelgaut <sup>during</sup> ~~during~~ stated in May 1784 that the re-establishment of Peace both in Europe and India by stimulating trade had given rise to competition from the foreign agents and the local indigenous merchants who chose in time of war not to risk their money. This has considerably raised the prices of goods and has enabled the weavers to choose from numerous purchasers ( who before were happy to obtain the employment of the Company ). The agents of the foreign Companies in order to procure a sufficient quantity of cloths did not therefore hesitate to give higher prices than those allowed by the English Company. Moreover, these agents accepted whatever quality was brought to them by the weavers, not rejecting even a single piece of

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40 Progs Board of Trade, 20th November, 1783, Prog no. 60, Vol: 40.

cloth. The position of the Company's contractor, Mr. Crommelin pointed out, in this regard was altogether different. They had to select cloths very minutely and compare each piece with the sample kept in the factory and this selection resulted in the rejection of many of the pieces delivered by the weavers. Hence, it was natural that the weavers who derived all these advantages would be more inclined to work for the agents of the foreign companies than for the English Company.<sup>41</sup>

Mr. Grueber, the Chief of Luckipore factory, in a letter to the Board of Trade ( January, 1785 ) described the innumerable obstructions he had to face in procuring the Company's 'investment'. He complained that freedom given to the private merchants of every denomination to purchase without any control or restraint in the Luckipore district had been particularly harmful. When his predecessors had previously pointed out these inconveniences to the Supreme Council, the Council ordered the abolition of the factories which had been established by these merchants and the Council had expected that everything would be normal very soon. However, the number of private native agents had increased and they offered much higher prices to the weavers than before. The Europeans had their factories in different places. The Dutch and the French were eager to re-establish their factories as a result of the Peace. The extraordinary demand in the meantime had tended to "enhance the prices, to depreciate the fabrics and to tempt the weavers to make their cloths shorter and narrower".<sup>42</sup>

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41 Progs Board of Trade, 24th September, 1784 Prog no. 43, Vol: 44.

42 Progs Board of Trade, 18th January, 1785 Prog no. 4, Vol: 46.

John Bebb, Resident of the Dacca factory, wrote in 1784 that the weavers were unwilling to renew their engagements with the Company. The result was that 'investment' had declined despite his best efforts. The first instalment of cloths was delivered by the weavers as late as in the month of November. In normal conditions, they delivered the first instalment in the month of June. The cause for this delay was that the weavers during this time had worked for the Private ~~Traders~~ and tried to make good their engagements for the Company's investment after the month of October. Mr. Bebb concluded that it had become an established practice.

Mr. Udny, Resident of the Company's factory at Malda, informed in 1787 that the Company's Commercial rights at Malda had been alarmingly invaded by the French, Armenians and others. Their dalals established their network throughout the district where the weavers lived. Some Armenians went so far as to carry on an illicit trade in cloths in collusion with the gomastas of the Company's factory at Juggernautpore in violation of all public faith on their part. However, Mr. Udny, came to know of this brisk trade after it had continued for long.<sup>43</sup>

At the close of the 18th Century, the trade of the Private traders so much increased that the East India Company found it very difficult to procure its 'investment.' The Commercial Resident of Luckipore in 1800 reported that the demand for cloths was so great that it was extremely difficult for him to procure low-priced fabrics.<sup>44</sup>

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43 Progs Board of Trade, 24th July, 1787 Prog no. 70, Vol: 58.

44 Progs Board of Trade, 11th November, 1800, Prog no. 89, Vol: 150.

From Chittagong, Mr. Henry Williams, the Resident, informed in 1802 that the business in cloth had considerably declined. The number of weavers who in the previous years worked for the Private Merchants was considerable and nearly all of them declared that it would not be possible for them to receive advances from the English Company's agents and work for them, their main argument being, that they would incur a heavy loss by working for the English Company.<sup>45</sup>

At Sonamooky, about the year 1815-16, the number of American purchasers was considerable and their presence and purchases greatly affected the English Company's purchases and in some cases reduced the Company's purchases to insignificance. The Board of Trade wrote that their agents had failed to make any purchases at all. This failure originated, the Board pointed out, in the unprecedented demand on the part of the Americans for coarser goods of that aurung. The Resident was hence induced in the early part of the year ( 1816 ) to postpone his advances in the expectations of a stagnation of that demand, which, however, did not take place. The Americans continued to offer higher prices to the weavers for the coarser cloths and the weavers were more inclined to manufacture coarse cloths. The result was that the weavers refused to buy thread, of a superior quality from the spinners and the manufacture of high quality cloths came nearly to a stop.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Progs Board of Trade, 30th March, 1804, Prog no. 25, Vol: 171.

46 Progs Board of Trade, 27th December, 1816, Prog no. 43, Vol: 325.

It thus appears that the English East India Company in very many cases failed to eliminate the private traders and the agents of other foreign Companies throughout the period and thus failed to establish a complete monopsonistic control in the market. In fact in most cases they could effectively control only 33% of the weaving population. The following tables will show this :

C. R. Crommelin, Resident at Mow and Azinghur in 1809 stated that of the total number of working weavers in his district about one third was employed by the Company and the rest had remained unconnected with the Company for quite a long time. Probably, they worked for indigenous merchants and that foreign trades.

TABLE NO: 1

The number of weavers employed by the English Company and the number employed by others from 1803 to 1807 at Mow and Azinghur (near Benaras)

YEAR	Employed by the Company	Not employed by the Company	TOTAL
1	2	3	4
1803	3,600	9,200	12,800
1804	3,500	9,300	12,800
1805	2,500	10,200	12,700
1806	3,100	9,700	12,800
1807	2,900	9,900	12,800

Source: Progs Board of Trade, 18th August 1807 Prog no.62, Vol:21, Part II

At Luckipore, also, the number of weavers employed by the Company was hardly more than one third of the total number. The total number of workmen in all the aurungs under Luckipore factory was 12,045.<sup>47</sup> The total number of the weavers employed by the English Company was as follows :

TABLE NO: 2

The number of weavers employed  
by the English Company

AURUNGS 1	1796 2	1799 3	1800 4
Luckipore	487	467	403
Bulluah	464	441	492
Rajganj	259	394	460
Kampta	109	447	424
Dharamganj	166	237	223
Dukinsavazpore	803	775	731
Amrabad	865	595	582
Bidrabad	774	323	412
Dunderah	392	322	303
Buzygunge	184	164	183
<u>T O T A L :</u>	4,503	4,165	4,213

Source: Progs Board of Trade, 21st August, 1801, Prog. no. 59, Vol: 154.

47 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd February, 1824, Prog no. 8, Vol:413, Part I.

THE CAUSES OF FAILURE OF THE ENGLISH COMPANY  
TO ESTABLISH A COMPLETE MONOPSONISTIC CONTROL :

(a) LOWNESS OF THE COMPANY'S PRICE :

The most important cause of this failure was the lowness of the price which the Company offered to the weavers. That the Company's price was low could be proved by a comparison of the Company's price with that of the Private Traders and Foreign Companies. It is not easy to make this comparison, because the goods of the English Company were not exactly similar in quality to those of the Private Traders. But many goods of the Private Traders were nearly similar in point of quality to many of the Company's assortments. Mr. Bebb, Resident of the Company's factory at Dacca, had made this comparison in 1790. It revealed that the difference between the Company's prices and those of Private Traders was considerable. The following table will show this :-

TABLE NO: 3

Private muster	Price Rs. as. P.	Nearly corresponding to Company's muster	Price Rs. a. P.	Percentage of difference
1	2	3	4	5
1) Allaballies Fine C 20 x 2 yds	12 - 4- 0	Serbetties Fine A 40 x 2 yds	10 - 8- 0	16.66
2) Allaballies Superfine B 20 x 2 yds	19 - 0- 0	Allaballies Fine A 40 x 2 yds 1700 threads	18 - 0- 0	5.55
3) Allaballies Superfine 1700 threads C 40 x 2 yds	32 -15- 6	Allaballies A 40 x 2 yds 1700 threads	18 - 0- 0	83.15
4) Allaballies Fine Superfine 1700 threads A 40 x 2 yds	60 - 0- 0	Allaballies Fat F 1700 threads A 40 x 2 yds	51 - 0- 0	17.64
5) Terrindans Ordinary A 20 x 3 yds	13 - 0- 0	Terrindans Ordinary B 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	8 - 6- 0	55.22
6) Terrindans Superfine A 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ yds	24 - 0- 0	Terrindans Superfine C 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	19 - 4- 0	24.67
7) Terrindans Superfine B 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	27 - 3- 0	Terrindans Superfine B 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	21 - 6- 0	27.19
8) Terrindans Superfine B 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	37 - 8- 0	Terrindans Superfine B 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	36 - 0- 0	4.16
9) Nyansooks Chaundpur Superfine A 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	19 - 8- 0	Nyansooks Chaundpur Fine A 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yds	12 - 0- 0	62.5
10) Mulmuls Serbetties Fine B 40 x 2 yds	9-12 - 0	Noneed heatty B 40 x 2 yds	4 - 8- 0	116.66
11) Mulmulls Fine 1300 threads A 40 x 2 yds	17 - 8- 0	Serbetties Fine B 40 x 2 yds	9 -14- 0	77.21
12) Subleems Fine Superfine readymade A 40 x 2 yds	32 - 0- 0	Subleems B 40 x 2 yds	29 - 4- 0	9.40

Mr. E. E. Pote, Resident at Patna, stated in 1791 that the weavers did not like to enter into engagements with the Company on the Company's rates. He in fact examined the prices of the raw material and labour to ascertain if the rates given to the weavers were really low. He examined one Saulgachee of 27 x 2 cubits. The weight of the assortment was Seers - 2 -  $8\frac{3}{8}$  Chittacks.

	Rs. a. P.
The price of the thread was estimated at :	Rs. 3-13- 0
The charges of labour was estimated at :	Rs. 1- 0- 0
Other charges ... :	Rs. 0- 6- 0
	<u>          </u>
Total cost of one piece :	Rs. 5- 3- 0
	<u>          </u>

The price in 1791 of the Saulgachee was fixed by the English Company at S Rs. 88 - 1 - 0 per corge ( twenty ) but at the above calculation, the Saulgachee of the required quality would cost S Rs. 103 - 12- 0 per corge ( twenty ).<sup>48</sup>

In reality, the weavers in most cases did not derive any profit from the Company's work and hence lost all incentive to work. Mr. Taylor, Resident at the Dacca factory, tried to make an estimate of profit and loss of the weavers of Narrainpore on the different articles composing the Company's 'investment' in 1794. This estimate clearly revealed that the weavers derived no profit. The estimate was as follows :

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48 Progs Board of Trade, 5th July, 1791 Prog no. 45, Vol: 93.

(i) Mulmulla Mamnee 40 x 2 ( Yds ):

## Thread

Wrap - 33

Woof - 36

69 tolas @ 22 per rupee :

Rs. a. P.

2 - 14 - 0

## Labour

A Weaver: -  $7\frac{1}{2}$  daysA Journeyman: -  $7\frac{1}{2}$  days15 days @ Rs. 2 per month : 1 - 0 - 0

Profit of manufacturer at the

rate of one anna in the

rupee <sup>or</sup> of 6 - 4 - 0 percent

on 3 - 14 - 0, the cost of

materials and labour

...

0 - 4 - 0

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Estimated average value of the cloth: 4 - 2 - 0

Average price received by the Weavers for

Mamnees or Mamnees ferrit delivered in

course of the year 1794

...

2 - 12 - 5

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Estimated loss to the manufacturer

on value of cloths

...

S Rs. 1 - 05 - 7

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(ii) Mulmullis Mamudhiatties 40 x 2 ( Yds ):

## Thread

Wrap - 38	
Woof - 42	Rs. a. P.
<u>80</u> tolas @ 22 tolas per rupees:	3 - 10 - 0

## Labour

A Weaver - 10 days	
A Journeyman - 10 days	
<u>20</u> days @ 2 rupees per month:	1 - 5 - 6

## Profit of manufacturer

at the rate of one anna in the

rupee <sup>of</sup> 6 - 4 - 0 percent

on 4 - 15 - 6 ... 0 - 5 - 0

, Estimated average value of the

cloth ... Rs. 5 - 4 - 6

Average price received by the Weavers for

Mamudhiatties, Mahmudhiatties ordinary and

Mamudhiatties ferrit in course of the year 1794 3 - 8 - 0

Estimated loss to the manufacturer

on the value of Cloths ... S Rs. 1 - 12 - 6

(iii) Seerbetties ordinary 40 x 2 ( Yds ):

			Rs. a. P.
Thread	- 35		
Woof	- 35		
	<u>70</u> tolas @ 14 tolas per rupee	S Rs.	5 - 0 - 0

## Labour

A Weaver	- 13 days		
A journeyman	- 13 days		
	<u>26</u> days @ 2 Rupees per month		1 - 1 <sup>2</sup> - 0

## Profit of manufacturer

at the rate of one anna in

the rupee or 6 - 4 - 0 percent

on <sup>Rs</sup> 6 - 11 - 0	...		0 - 6 - 9
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## Estimated average value

of the cloth	...	S Rs.	7 - 2 - 6
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## Average price received by the weavers

for Serbetties ordinary and Serbetties

ordinary ferrit in the course of the

year 1794	...		6 - 8 - 2
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## Estimated loss to the manufacturer

on the value of the cloth	...		0 - 10 - 4
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(iv) Mulmulls 1200 threads 40 x 2 ( Yds ):

## Thread

Wrap - 35	Rs. a. P.
Woof - 35	
<u>70</u> tolas @ 11 per rupee	6 - 8 - 0

## Labour

A Weaver	15 days	
A journeyman	15 days	
	<u>30 days</u> @ 2 Rupees per month	2 - 0 - 0
		<u>8 - 8 - 0</u>

Profit of the manufacturer at the

rate of one anna *on in the rupee on*

rupees 8 - 8 - 0 ... 0 - 8 - 0

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 Estimated average value of the cloth 9 - 0 - 0

Average price received by the Weavers

for Mulmulls 1200 threads in the course

of the year 1794 ... 3 Rs. 8 - 9 - 0

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 Estimated loss to the manufacturer

on the value of cloths ... 0 - 7 - 0

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The Resident estimated the loss of the weavers in all other varieties of cloths woven at Narrainpore and that explained the weavers' unwillingness to supply cloths at Company's rates.<sup>49</sup>

Henry Williams, Resident of the Company's factory at Chittagong, in 1802 ascertained the loss of the weavers working in the aurungs under his residency. The loss here actually meant the difference between the actual price of the cloth and the actual receipts of the weavers from the Company's agents. In most cases, the weavers did not receive anything for his labour and had to remain content with the price of the raw materials used.

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49 Progs Board of Trade, 20th May, 1795 Prog no. 30, Vol: 116.

TABLE NO. 4

A COMPARISON OF THE ACTUAL PRICE OF A PIECE OF CLOTH WITH THAT THE WEAVERS' SUSTAINED IN EACH PIECE. ALL THE ASSORTMENTS WERE CALICOES : COSSAES (KHASA) VARIETY WAS FINER.

Assortments	Price of the Company's muster Rs. a. P.	Quantity of thread in each piece Seer. Chh.	Deduct Conjee Chittacks	The actual weight of each piece Seer Chhs.
1	2	3	4	5
Baftaes Chowbissa 25 x 2	37-8-0	2 - 1 1/2	4	1 - 13 1/2
	40-0-0	1 - 13	3 1/2	1 - 9 1/2
	42-0-0	2 - 1	4	1 - 13
	45-0-0	2 - 1	4	1 - 13
Meetamemdy 25 x 2	47-8-0	2 - 2	4 1/2	1 - 13 1/2
	50-0-0	1 - 15	4	1 - 11
	52-0-0	2 - 0	4	1 - 12
	55-0-0	1 - 14 1/2	3 1/2	1 - 11
Meerousary 25 x 1 1/2	57-8-0	1 - 14	3 1/2	1 - 9 1/2
	60-0-0	1 - 13 1/2	3 1/2	1 - 10
	62-8-0	1 - 15	4	1 - 11
Baftaes Fine 25 x 2	65-0-0	1 - 13 1/2	3 1/2	1 - 10
	67-8-0	1 - 14	3 1/2	1 - 10 1/2
	70-0-0	1 - 13	3 1/2	1 - 9 1/2
Baftaes Chittafully 25 x 2	72-8-0	1 - 13	3 1/2	1 - 9 1/2
	77-8-0	1 - 12	3 1/2	1 - 8 1/2
	80-0-0	1 - 13	3 1/2	1 - 9 1/2
Baftaes 28 x 2	60-0-0	2 - 2	4	1 - 14
Baftaes 36 x 2	60-0-0	3 - 1 1/2	6	2 - 11
Cossaes 40 x 2	80-0-0	2 - 15	6	2 - 9
Gurrahs 36 x 2 1/2	67-8-0	3 - 8	6	3 - 2
Gurrahs 24 x 2 1/4	42-8-0	2 - 8	5	2 - 3

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THAT WHICH WAS ALLOWED BY THE COMPANY WILL SHOW THE LOSS THE RESIDENTS WERE CALICOES : COSSAES (KHASA) VARIETY WAS FINER.

Price of the thread Chittacks	Total cost of thread in each piece Rs. a. P.	Weaver's work Rs. a. P.	The actual price of the cloth when delivered to gomastas	The Resident's prize agreeable to the factory Rs. a. P.	Loss to the Weavers Rs. a. P.
6	7	8	9	10	11
14 ch. Per Re.	2-2-0	0-8-0	2-10-0	1-14-0	0-12-0
14 " " "	2-13-0	0-8-0	2-5-0	2-0-0	0-5-0
14 " " "	2-1-0	0-8-0	2-9-0	2-2-0	0-7-0
14 " " "	2-1-0	0-8-0	2-9-0	2-4-0	0-5-0
11 " " "	2-11-0	0-10-0	3-5-0	2-6-0	0-15-0
11 " " "	2-7-0	0-10-0	3-1-0	2-2-0	0-9-0
11 " " "	2-8-9	0-10-0	3-2-9	2-10-0	0-8-9
11 " " "	2-7-0	0-10-0	3-1-0	2-12-0	0-5-0
10 " " "	2-8-0	0-12-0	3-4-9	2-14-0	0-6-9
10 " " "	2-9-7	0-12-0	3-5-7	3-0-0	0-5-7
10 " " "	2-11-3	0-12-0	3-7-3	3-2-0	0-5-3
8 1/2 " " "	3-1-0	0-14-0	3-15-0	3-4-0	0-11-0
8 1/2 " " "	3-2-0	0-14-0	4-0-0	3-6-0	0-10-0
8 1/2 " " "	3-0-0	0-14-0	3-14-0	3-8-0	0-6-0
7 " " "	3-10-3	1-0-0	4-10-3	3-10-0	1-0-3
7 " " "	3-8-3	1-0-0	4-8-3	3-14-0	0-10-3
7 " " "	3-10-3	1-0-0	4-10-3	4-0-0	0-10-3
10 " " "	3-0-0	0-12-6	3-12-6	3-0-0	0-12-6
14 " " "	3-1-9	0-14-0	3-15-9	3-0-0	0-15-9
11 " " "	3-11-8	1-3-0	4-14-8	4-0-0	0-14-8
1 Seer Per Re	3-2-0	1-0-0	4-2-0	3-6-0	0-12-0
1 " " "	2-3-0	0-8-0	2-11-0	2-2-0	0-9-0

The Company's prices were not only low but they remained unchanged for a fairly long time even though the cost of production and living tended to rise because of the rising prices of daily necessities of life and of cotton. This was particularly the case after the famine of 1788 which resulted in the death of large number of cotton weavers and the rise in the prices of raw cotton. The whole of the Eastern Bengal was affected by this terrible famine which was particularly severe during the first six months of the year 1788. About the severity of the famine, Mr. Shore in a letter to Mrs. Shore wrote<sup>50</sup> : "This year we have been affected with a great scarcity so much so that many mothers have been compelled to sell their children ; knowing this I ordered my servants to buy all that were brought and promised the parents that if they would take back their children after the removal of the scarcity, they should all have them again. Without this, many must have died or have been disposed of to persons who would not have taken as much care of them as I have done".<sup>51</sup>

In a letter of May, 1788 the Collector of Rungpore stated that "out of a large family who at the beginning of the year possessed numbers of cattle, many ploughs and abundance of grain, only one miserable and emaciated wretch had remained to tell the fate of his friends".<sup>52</sup> It was estimated that Rungpore during the single year lost one sixth part of its inhabitants ; in the Pargana Panga alone, half of the population disappeared. A petition of the Zemindars points the following picture :

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50 Letter of Mr. Shore to Mrs. Shore dated 22nd April, 1788.

51 Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth,  
Vol.I, PP. 156-57.

52 Rungpore District Records, Vol.I, P. 22.

"Many ryots either died or deserted and numbers of those who remained in the district, being unable to procure livelihood betook themselves to the Commission of thefts and robberies \* \* \* many frequently putting to death such ryots as had reserved a quantity of grain for seed ; others were reduced to the necessity of bartering their wives and children for a few seers of rice".<sup>53</sup>

An enquiry by Dacca Collector, Mr. Day, revealed that in the Dacca district, 60,000 persons perished during the inundation and the subsequent famine. "No Pergunnas suffered in so dreadful a degree", he observes "as Rajanaghur and Cartickpore". The famine raged with such violence that some thousands miserably perished while whole families forsook their habitations \* \* \* but so reduced and emaciated were many through sickness and hunger that they ended their days in search of sustenance ; others repaired to the town of Dacca in the hopes of finding some alleviation of their distress and to such misery and wretchedness were mothers reduced by the griping hand of hunger that forgetting all parental affection they offered their children for a handful of rice".<sup>54</sup>

The famine had disastrous effects upon the cotton industry. Mr. Cheap, Resident at Sonamooky, found that owing to the high prices of grain, necessaries of life and cotton, it would be very difficult for him to make the weavers work at the Company's rates. Grain sold at Birbhum at only 28 seers for a rupee while formerly it used to be from two to three maunds and often more<sup>55</sup>. (~~and in Birbhum it was considerably dearer~~).

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53 Rungpore District Records - Vol.I, P. 22.

54 Taylor : Topography and Statistics of Dacca, P. 304.

55 Progs Board of Trade, 11th July, 1788, Prog no. 74, Vol: 69.

Mr. Bebb, Resident at Dacca factory, in 1789, stated that the cause of the falling off in the quality of Chandpore Nyansooks was the high price of thread. To counteract their loss, the weavers made use of thicker or coarser thread. The price of raw cotton was at least double of what it had been some years ago.

In Rungpore, rice which sold at three to four maunds a rupee, sold at only one maund per rupee in June 1789 and in July it sold at 30 seers a rupee and in spite of the best efforts of the Collector to stop a further rise, in September it was selling in Rungpore at 23 to 25 seers a rupee and in some parts of the district at only 18 seers a rupee.<sup>56</sup>

Mr. Taylore, Superintendent at Hurriaul, wrote in 1788 that owing to the uncommon scarcity of thread caused by the famine of 1788 it was not possible for him to attempt any improvement of the fabrics. The price of cotton rose from 9 to 10 rupees at which it was sold a year ago to Rupees 13 to 13-8-0 per maund of 60 sicca weight. The percentage of the rise in prices was thus 36.84. Rice had usually been so plentiful that it seldom sold dearer than 3 to 5 Cutcha maunds a rupee but in 1788 it was never cheaper than 38 seers a rupee and in the dry months, it stood for a long time at 24 seers.<sup>57</sup>

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56 Rungpore District Records, Vol.I, P. 22.

57 Progs Board of Trade, 30th Dec, 1788, Prog no. 121, Vol: 74.

Mr. William, Resident of Kheerpoy, wrote in 1792 that the dearness of grain was an important obstacle in procuring goods of the right quality. He wrote that while in common years rice was purchased at the rate of 60 to 70 seers per rupee, in September and October last ( 1789 ) the price was 38 to 30 seers per rupee ( the percentage of the rise in prices was 89.41% ) and from that time till 1792, it had kept pretty much at about 25 to 26 seers and once as low as 22 to 23 seers per rupee. This meant that the weavers had to incur double the expenditure for their maintenance and this prevented them from purchasing threads of finer quality.<sup>58</sup>

The trend of the prices of cotton and other necessities of life to rise continued also later. The weavers of Gourepur surung under the Company's factory at Hurripaul in a petition to the Commercial Resident stated that they did the work of the English Company since 1789 and did it without much difficulties till 1818. But in 1820, it was not possible for them to work at the old rates because threads had become dearer. They stated that the price of cotton per maund was between Rupees 12 and 13 at an average before 1820 but in 1820 it was between Rupees 20 and 22, ( the percentage of increase being 68 ) and rice, grain, oilseeds had all simultaneously increased.<sup>59</sup> Robert Richardson, Resident of the Hurripaul factory corroborated this and stated that the poverty of the weavers was extreme and the high price of cotton prevented them from working at the rates of the Company.

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58 Progs Board of Trade, 13th April, 1792, Prog no. 27, Vol: 97.

59 Progs Board of Trade, 29th May, 1818, Prog no. 17, Vol:343.

He stated that the average price of cotton at the Etawah factory was sicca Rupees 14-13-4 per factory maund but the price he paid in 1820 for cotton for packing the bale was more than 24 Sicca rupees ( or the increase being 63.2% ) per factory maunds and he understood that prices had further since increased.<sup>60</sup> The gomasta of the Hazareehant aurung under the factory of Chittagong and Luckipore informed Charles Mackenzie, Assistant to the Commercial Resident, that the weavers were not at all inclined to receive advances for the cloths of the Company. The cause was the rise in prices of cotton. In 1819 the market price for cotton was only Rupees 4-5- and Rs. 5-8 per maund but in 1820 it rose to Rupees 12 and 13.<sup>61</sup>

The prices of rice and raw cotton continued to rise from 1792-93 in almost all places. The statistical tables will show this rise in prices.

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60 Progs Board of Trade, 15th Dec, 1820, Prog no. 47, Vol: 375.

61 Progs Board of Trade, 30th Sept., 1820, Prog no. 36, Vol: 372.

TABLE NO: 5

THE PRICE OF RICE AT THE SEVERAL RESIDENCIES

FROM 1792-93 TO 1822-23 : Per maund <sup>of</sup>  
80 Sicca weight.

YEAR	BENERAS 1	COOMERCOLLY 2	HURBIPAWL 3	KHEERPOY 4	MALDA 5	RADHANAGAR 6	RUNGPORE 7	SANTIPORE 8	SONAMOOKY 9
	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.	Rs. a.P.
1792-93	0-13-6	0-15-8	1- 1-8	1-12-4	0-10-6	1- 8- 0	N.A.	1 - 1-6	2- 6-6
1793-94	0-13-11	0-14-0	1- 5-4	1- 7-2	0- 9-6	0-13-0	"	1 - 1-6	0-14-0
1794-95	0-14-10	0-12-8	0-15-0	1- 0-9	0-10-0	0-13-0	"	0-10- 0	0- 9-6
1795-96	1- 0- 3	0-14-0	0-14-0	1- 0-9	0-10-0	0-13-0	"	0 -15-3	0- 9-0
1796-97	1- 0- 5	0-14-8	0-15-4	1- 0-9	0-11-0	1- 0-0	"	0 -13-0	0-11-0
1797-98	1- 0- 8	0-12-8	0-15-4	0-14-8	0- 9-0	0-15-0	"	1- 7-6	0-14-0
1798-99	1- 2- 3	0-10-8	0-14-0	0-14-8	0- 9-5	0-12-0	"	0- 12-0	0-12-0
1799-1800	1- 4- 0	0-11-4	0-14-0	1- 0-9	0-10-0	0-11-0	"	0- 15-0	0-11-0
1800-01	1- 4- 3	0-13-0	0-14-0	1- 1-8	0- 9-8	0-14-0	"	0-12- 0	0- 9-0
1801-02	1- 5- 0	0-15-4	1- 1-4	1- 4-7	0- 8-0	1- 1-0	"	1 - 0-0	0-10-6
1802-03	1- 6-10	0-14-4	1- 2-8	1- 3-4	0- 9-0	1- 1-0	"	0- 14-9	0-12-0
1803-04	1- 6-10	0-15-4	1- 2-8	1- 3-4	0- 8-6	0-14-0	"	1 - 1-0	0-14-0
1804-05	1- 6- 4	0-14-4	1- 0-0	1- 2-8	0- 9-0	0-14-0	"	1 - 2-0	0-14-0
1805-06	1- 4- 9	0-12-8	1- 0-0	1- 2-8	0-10-0	1- 1-0	1 - 0-9	0- 15-6	0-13-0
1806-07	1- 2- 9	0-12-4	1- 3-4	1- 3-4	0-10-6	1- 1-0	1 - 1-6	1 - 3-0	1-14-0
1807-08	1- 3- 1	0-14-0	1- 3-4	1- 3-6	0-11-2	1- 2-0	1 - 2-0	1 - 1-0	1 - 0-0

An analysis of the above table reveals that the prices of rice rose nearly everywhere by 1822-23 though this increase was not uniform in all places. Prices fluctuated from time to time ; however, an upward trend of the price was noticeable. At Benaras, the prices in 1821-22 <sup>were</sup> more than three times the prices of 1792-93 though in the following year, i.e., 1822-23 the prices fell and <sup>were</sup> only a little more than double the price of 1792-93. At Commercolly, the prices rose steadily from 1813-14 and reached the maximum in 1818-19 when rice sold at Re. 1-8-0 per maund though in the next year, i.e. 1819-20, they came down to Re. 1-4-8 per maund. The prices in Hurripaul also rose and reached their peak in 1810-11 when rice sold at Rs. 2-8-0 per maund. This rise was rather abrupt. In the following year, i.e. 1811-12, the prices became as low as Re. 1-3-4 per maund and it was about half the prices of the previous year though in the years following 1811-12, the prices rose again. The Kheerpooy prices fluctuated very much. The prices began to come down from 1793-94 but rose from 1800-01, but again fell for two years, i.e. 1814-15 and 1815-16. The steady rise in the prices took place from 1817-18 though in 1822-23 they came down again. The Malda prices also fluctuated but the steady rise was marked from 1817-18 though in 1819-20 and 1820-21 the prices came down. At Radhanagar, a marked spurt in the prices took place from 1809-10 and though in 1811-12 and 1812-13 the prices came down, the upward trend reasserted itself from 1813-14. The Rungpore prices also

rose steadily from 1815-16. At Santipore also the rise in prices was almost continuous from 1806-07, except in the years 1813-14 and 1814-15 when prices fell. At Sonamooky, the prices of rice were the highest in 1792-93 and was sold at Rs. 2-6-6 per maund ; in 1822-23 it came to as low as at Re. 1-1-6 per maund. The prices of rice between 1793-94 and 1805-06 varied between 9 annas and 14 annas per maund. The upward trend was noticeable from 1806-07 and the highest price was recorded in 1816-17 when rice was sold at Rs. 2-3-6 per maund. This sudden rise was preceded by a fall in the two previous years, viz., 1814-15 and 1815-16. Between 1817-18 and 1822-23, the price varied between Re. 1-8-0 and Re. 1-1-6 per maund.

TABLE NO: 6

THE PRICE OF RAW COTTON AT THE SEVERAL RESIDENCIES FROM  
1792-93 TO 1822-23 WAS AS FOLLOWS

YEAR	BENERAS	COMMERCOLLY	HURRIPAUL	KHEERPOY	MALDA	RADHANAGAR	RUNGPORE	SANTIPORE	SONAMOOKY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Rs. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.	Es. a. P.
1792-93	6-10-8	N.A.	16-13-7	14- 3- $\frac{1}{2}$	12-12-0	18- 0-0	N.A.	5 - 0-0	13- 8-0
1793-94	6-10-8	"	16-13-7	12-14- 5	13- 0-0	15- 0-0	"	4- 8-0	11-12-6
1794-95	6-10-8	"	17-11-9	14-3- $\frac{1}{2}$	12-10-0	16- 0-0	"	4 - 0-0	11- 8-0
1795-96	6-14-0	"	18- 2-11	15-12-11	13- 2-0	16- 0-0	"	7 - 0-0	12- 8-0
1796-97	6-15-8	"	18- 2-11	13- 8- 9	12- 8-0	13- 0-0	"	6 - 8-0	13- 8-0
1797-98	6-15-8	"	18- 2-11	13- 4- 5	13- 0-0	13- 8-0	"	7 - 0-0	11- 8-0
1798-99	7- 1-4	"	18- 2-11	13- 8- 9	12- 8-0	20- 0-0	"	6 - 4-0	10-12-0
1799-1800	7- 1-4	"	14- 8-11	15-14- 4	11-14-0	19- 0-0	"	9 - 0-0	21- 8-0
1800-01	7- 8-0	"	13-12- 5	13- 3-11	12- 0-0	20- 0-0	17- 8-0	13- 0-0	20 -0-0
1801-02	7- 8-0	"	14- 8-11	17-11- 3	12- 8-0	19- 0-0	17- 8-0	7 - 8-0	23- 0-0
1802-03	7-14-8	"	15-14- 3	20- 2- 7	12- 6-0	20- 0-0	21- 0-0	6- 12-0	21- 8-0
1803-04	7-14-8	"	18- 1- 1	19- 5- 8	12-12-0	16- 0-0	20- 8-0	6- 0-0	14- 8-0
1804-05	7-14-8	"	18- 1- 1	19- 4-10	13- 0-0	17- 0-0	14- 0-0	3- 12-0	12- 8 -0
1805-06	9- 2-8	"	18- 1- 1	14- 6-11 $\frac{1}{2}$	12-14-0	16- 0-0	14- 8-0	2-12- 0	14- 8-0
1806-07	9- 2-8	"	18-10- 8	14- 7- $\frac{1}{2}$	13- 2-0	17- 0-0	14- 8-0	4- 8- 0	15- 0-0
1807-08	9- 2-8	"	18-10- 8	14- 7- $\frac{1}{2}$	13- 2-0	17- 0-0	14- 8-0	4- 8- 0	15- 0-0

From the <sup>p</sup>receding table it becomes clear that the prices rose almost everywhere. At Benaras, the prices per maund in 1792-93 <sup>were</sup> was only SRs. 6-10-8 per maund but in 1822-23 <sup>the</sup> prices became almost double and was as high as SRs. 12-8-0 per maund. The prices at Commercolly increased very considerably from 1815-16 and reached its peak in 1818-19. At Hurripaul, the prices were the highest and in some cases, the prices were even more than double the prices in the other residencies. The prices at Hurripaul rose steadily since 1794-95 and reached the climax in 1820-21 and became nearly double the prices of 1792-93. The prices in 1792-93 were SRs. 16-13-7 per maund but in 1820-21 it became SRs. 30-14-3 per maund. At Kheerpoy also, the prices reached the maximum in 1820-21 when cotton sold at SRs. 20-13-4 per maund though it was much less the price of Hurripaul in the same year. The prices at Kheerpoy came down from 1821-22. The prices at Malda and Radhanagur rose during the period but the rate of rise was not very high. The Rungpore prices very much fluctuated and steady rise in price began from 1818-19. At Santipore, the prices reached the maximum in 1800-01. Cotton sold then at SRs. 13-0-0 per maund whereas in 1792-93 it was sold only at SRs. 5-0-0 per maund. The prices fell from the very next year, 1801-02 and did not appreciably increase during our period. The price at Sonamooky rose to the highest point in 1801-02 in which year it sold at SRs. 23-0-0 per maund. The prices came down from 1802-03 but the upward trend reasserted itself from 1818-19 again.

Despite a substantial rise in the prices of Cotton and <sup>e</sup>rise that thus occurred between 1792-93 and 1822-23, the rate of wages of the labourers engaged in cotton manufacture remained largely unchanged.

The following table illustrated the point :

1801-02	"	10-10-3	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1802-03	"	10-9-7	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1803-04	"	10-8-5	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1804-05	"	10-8-5	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1805-06	"	10-8-5	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1806-07	"	10-8-2	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1807-08	"	10-8-2	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1808-09	5-0-0	10-8-3	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1809-10	5-0-0	10-7-8	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1810-11	5-0-0	10-7-9	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1811-12	5-0-0	10-7-9	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1812-13	5-0-0	10-5-4	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1813-14	5-0-0	10-7-8	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1814-15	5-0-0	10-0-9	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1815-16	6-0-0	10-3-1	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1816-17	6-0-0	10-3-3	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1817-18	6-0-0	10-2-6	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1818-19	6-0-0	10-1-11	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1819-20	6-0-0	10-1-6	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1820-21	6-0-0	10-0-1	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1821-22	6-0-0	10-3-9	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1822-23	6-0-0	10-0-0	3-0-0	2-8-0	3-0-0	0-8-0	12-8-7 $\frac{1}{2}$

The lot of the poor labourers thus scarcely improved during the period. Of the seven residencies, in the five, Kheerpoy, Malda, Radhanagar, Rangpore and Santipore - the rates of wages remained static throughout the period. In all these places, their wages in 1822-23 remained exactly the same as in 1792-93. At Hurripaul, there was a slight rise in the wages of the spinners from 1799-1800 to 1802-03 but wages fell from 1818-19. At Commercolly, the wages ranged between Rupees 5 and 6.

The cotton weavers also suffered as much as the wage labourers like the spinners. The increase in the wages made by Company was inadequate and did not satisfy the weavers. The Commercial Residents were in favour of an increase in prices but the Board of Trade was generally not in its favour. In a letter to the Resident at Hurripaul in 1788 they argued that rates once increased cannot be reduced without much difficulty and any increase of prices in any aurung might serve as a precedent for a similar increase in other aurungs.<sup>62</sup> The only substantial increase in the prices was made in 1788. The Teetabaddy weavers were allowed an increase in prices by John Bebb when he increased the rates by one rupee on each piece of superfine, fine and broad Tanjibs and by eight annas per piece on ordinary Tanjibs. There were other instances of an increase in the prices which occurred not due to a sober analysis of the cost of production but due to an intense discontent among the producers and to the declining investment resulting from this discontent.

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62 Progs Board of Trade, 22nd February, 1788, Prog no. 23, Vol: 65.

But in most cases, this enhanced price did not reach the weavers. One important cause was that the Commercial Residents often cheated the producers by prizing their cloths into inferior letters. Moreover, the extortions by different groups of people connected with the 'investment' reduced the actual receipts of the weavers.<sup>63</sup>

Thus the lowness of the Company's price was the most important cause of the weavers' unwillingness to work for the Company and for this unwillingness the Company failed to be the sole purchaser of the goods woven by them.

(b) STRICT SELECTION OF THE COMPANY'S FABRICS :

Another cause of the failure of the English Company to establish a full control over the buyers' market was that the Company was very particular about the selection of their fabrics. The Court of Directors always demanded that its goods should be of a high quality, standard measure and length. They were unwilling to sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity. On the other hand, the agents of the other companies and the private traders cared very little for quality, made no distinction between superior and inferior stuffs and purchased any whatever their quality. The weavers were more eager to work for the foreigners and the

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For details,  
63 Supra, vide Chapter III. ~~CP~~.

private traders. The English Company's men placed peons upon the weavers who accepted the Company's advances in order to compel them to weave cloths of a standard quality. This irked the weavers. Mr. E.E. Pote, Resident at Patna, in 1788 wrote that a weaver manufacturing the Company's assortments was closely supervised and had to work with greater care and attention. Moreover, he had to supply cloths within the stipulated periods. During the time taken to manufacture three pieces of cloth for the Company, a weaver could make five pieces of common cloths of the same dimensions for private merchants, for which he had an instant sale. Moreover, there was no superintendence over his work and hence he could hope to get relief from time to time from his family members.<sup>64</sup> On many occasions, even an increase in the price allowed to the weavers did not induce them to accept the Company's advances. The Resident of Patna informed in 1788 that though the prices were increased, the weavers still refused to be employed for the Company. They continued to object, the Resident intimated, to entering into any engagements whatsoever because there must be a superintending power compelling them to complete those engagements from which superintendence and compulsion they had then been released.<sup>65</sup> The Gurrah Weavers of Sonamooky put the grievance very forcibly : "We labour and manufacture cloths for Government and over us Tagadgeers are established to hasten our deliveries who accordingly do press us for the cloths but besides, the Mohussil peons are placed over us, who are an expense to us and beat us so that we poor people cannot remain at our houses".<sup>66</sup>

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64 Progs Board of Trade, 22nd January 1788, Prog no. 8, Vol: 64.

65 Progs Board of Trade, 30th October 1788, Prog no.107, Vol: 72.

66 Progs Board of Trade, 15th Dec, 1789 Prog no.106, Vol: 83, Part.I.

(c) WEAVERS' DEVICES TO AVOID HANDING OVER THEIR ENTIRE PRODUCTION TO THE COMPANY AND THEIR RESISTANCE TO THE COMPANY'S SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION AND CONTROL :

Another important cause of the failure of the English Company to establish a complete monopsonistic control was the resistance of the weavers to the establishment of such a control. This resistance was present throughout the period of our study, though its pattern differed from time to time.

In Bengal, the English East India Company's 'investment' was mainly provided by the 'dadni' merchants. These merchants acted as brokers to the Company in their 'dadni' business in the 17th and in the first half of the 18th Century. These 'dadni' merchants were replaced by gomastas in the year 1753. But the gomastas, like the merchants, proved equally oppressive upon the weavers. Their exactions reduced the weavers to misery.<sup>67</sup> Bolts writes "The Company's gomastas make the weavers sign a bond for the delivery of certain quantity of goods at a certain time and price and pays them a part in advance. The assent of the poor weaver is in general not deemed necessary, for the gomastas when employed on the Company's investment \* \* \* frequently make them sign what they please. A number of these weavers are generally also registered in the books of the Company's gomastas and not permitted to

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67 For details, See Supra, Chapter III.

work for any others. The prices which the Company's gomastas fix upon the goods are in all places at least 15% and in some even 40% less than the goods so manufactured would sell upon a free sale".<sup>68</sup> To counteract these and to obtain a just price for his labour, the weavers frequently attempted to sell his cloths privately to others.

The gomastas of the English Company then placed peons over the weavers to watch them and prevent clandestine sales. But still the situation did not improve and clandestine sales of cloths to others could not be prevented. In their letter of Nov, 11, 1768, the Court of Directors wrote : "They [the weavers] are unwilling to engage in [Company's business] because we do not pay them a higher price. The gentlemen at Dacca say the foreigners give 20% to 30% more than we do".<sup>69</sup> The weavers of Santipore sent petitions to the Calcutta Council pointing out their grievances. The following authoritative account is to be found in the Proceedings of April 2, 1773 :-

"The two annexed papers which the President formed from an examination into the complaints made to him by the weavers of Santipore and which he has every reason to believe to be authentic, will show the present miserable situation of the weavers, since it appears that the prices given to them for the cloths provided on account of the Company's investment, amounted to no more and in some instances less than the cost of the materials and their labour was extracted from them without any repayment. They are at the same time forbidden under pain of corporal chastisement and forfeitures to work for private merchants or to make any other assortments but those ordered for the Company's investment".<sup>70</sup>

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68 Bolts : op.cit. P. 193.

69 Letter from Court, 11th Nov, 1768, Fort William India House Correspondence Vol: V, Para 38, P. 139.

70 Quoted in J.G. Sinha : op.cit. PP. 83-84.

In such circumstances, the English East India Company's men failed to procure the full quota of the 'investment' and their balances began to accumulate. The oppression by the gomastas began from 1753 but it was after 1767 that they became unrestrained. The decline of manufacture was inevitable because the weavers were obliged to work against their will. The Company's exports of piecegoods in 1772 was worth £ 6,97,778 ; in 1773 it dwindled to £ 5,08,622 and in 1774 it came down to £ 4,66,944.<sup>71</sup> Things came to such a pass that the Chief and Council at Dacca submitted a representation to the effect that they found it difficult to procure the Company's 'investment.'

As 'investment' was declining steadily, the Court of Directors declared their intention to do away with all the restraints on trade and create a free trade. The result was that very many weavers sought to relinquish the Company's employment, though they had received the Company's advances.<sup>72</sup> To stop large-scale desertion, coercive regulations were passed. It was provided that weavers receiving advances should not be allowed to default and the Company's agents would be at liberty to place peons upon them and keep them under restraint. Thus the state of things remained practically the same as before.

The next step taken by the Board of Trade in 1775 was the abandonment of the Agency System and the reintroduction of the Contract System. But even then things did not much change. The East India Company's name was freely used in the investment business and the Contractors behaved as if they were Company's representatives and coerced the weavers in the Company's name.

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71 Quoted in J.C. Sinha : op.cit. P. 171.

72 Supra : Chapter III.

Under the Contract System ( of providing 'Investment' ), clandestine sales of cloths to others continued as before. Blaquiére, Contractor at Santipore, gave a vivid description of the state of the Santipore aurung : The weavers took the Company's advances with which they purchased thread of an inferior quality and weaved cloths for bazar sales and for private merchants, who purchased them for ready money, being unwilling to trust the weavers with advances. It was impossible to detect the clandestine purchasers. The weavers artfully concealed their transactions by weaving cloths in other's houses and gave them to be sold by persons who did not receive the Company's advances. They were induced to carry on this practice by the enormous rate of interest which they paid on borrowed amount ( 6 pie per month per rupee or 37% per cent per annum ), whereas they paid none on the Company's advances to them.<sup>73</sup> This seems to have largely counteracted the 'loss' of the weavers from the 'low price' paid to them by the Company. The weavers kept the 'interest-free' advances as long as they could ; sometimes they kept the advances for 3, 4 and even 5 months after which they delivered pieces of cloth. In normal times, they could deliver one piece after one month. Sometimes, it happened that even after such inordinate delay they delivered cloths of the lowest letters and many inadmissible in the Company's 'investment'. At Patna, the weavers were most unwilling to accept the Company's advances. Their unwillingness was due to the little profit they got from the Company's work.

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73 Progs Board of Trade, 15th July, 1783, Prog no. 38, Vol: 37.

By weaving coarser cloths for the private traders, for which there was a general demand, they secured higher profit. Moreover, they were not subjected to the irksome superintendence by peons.<sup>74</sup> The Company thought that without further coercive measures, the Company's investment would decline and its quality would deteriorate. To prevent these, they took a series of measures in 1786, 1787, and 1789 and the weavers came under greater restraints.<sup>74A</sup>

The manufacturers of almost all the places immediately reacted to these coercive measures. From Patna, Mr. E.E. Pote, the Resident, informed that the weavers told him openly they would not receive the Company's advances. Their reply was :-

"markets are open and they will sell their cloths where they please. Let the Company go to the markets or establish Cooties and if they choose they will bring their cloths to Coote for sale and if they do not, they will carry them elseqhere but they will not enter into engagements whatever with the Company. [ I begged them that I will settle the price before them so that they might judge how fairly the Company meant to deal with them, ] They declared no".<sup>75</sup>

The reason of their disinclination, besides low prices, was, according to Law's analysis, their supposition that they could not give up their employment once they had accepted it. The weavers were also

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74 Progs Board of Trade, 22nd January, 1788, Prog no. 8, Vol: 64.

74A Supra : The details of these measures are discussed in Chapter III.

75 Progs Board of Trade, 4th September, 1787, Prog no. 84, Vol: 60.

averse to manufacturing cloths of unusual lengths because in case these were rejected by the English Company's agents, these would not be purchased by the agents of private merchants. Again, a weaver manufacturing cloths for the Company's assortments was under superintendence. Moreover, during the time required to make three pieces of the Company's cloths, a weaver could make five pieces of common cloth for private merchants for which he had an instant sale.<sup>75A</sup>

The Commercial Residents announced an increase of rates but this was not enough to induce the weavers to work the Company's assortments. They retained their objection to entering into any engagements whatever because "there must be a superintending power compelling them to complete those engagements from which superintendence and compulsion they were now released".<sup>76</sup>

At Luckipore, at the close of the 1780s the demand for cloths sharply increased as a result of the resort of many merchants from other parts following the return of Peace after the American War of Independence. As a consequence, the prices considerably increased and the quality of the cloths also suffered :-

"hurried off the loom and deficient in thread, they were thin and badly made - everyway defective for the Company's investment".

Moreover, as soon as the cloths of the Company were ready, if the aurung servant was not present, they immediately carried it to the bazar for sale.

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75A Progs Board of Trade, 22nd January, 1783, Prog no. 8, Vol: 64.

76 Progs Board of Trade, 30th October, 1783, Prog no.107, Vol: 72.

Mr. Scott, Resident at Luckipore in 1792, informed the Board of Trade that some of the weavers of Luckipore refused to admit peons or deliver cloths for their balance but tendered cash towards the repayment of the advances they had received. To revert to adawlut in every instance of failure, the Resident argued, was no solution ; the length of time required in carrying on a suit was sufficient to prevent from going to courts and the problem of expenses was also there. Moreover, this made the weavers more disinclined to the Company's service.<sup>77</sup> Mr. C.R. Crommelin, Resident at Luckipore, in 1795 narrated the state of the aurung in the following words :

'the weavers of his aurung esteemed their numbers as badges of restraint and they were eager to get rid of the name of a numbered weaver. The language of the manufacturer ( I speak of one who may have entered willingly into a regular Kistbundee agreement ) if now ( in 1795 ) summoned is :  
"I will not go either to the Moffussil or Sudder factory, nor will I work more for the Company --- if you want the cloths I will not give them but if you will send your people here and settle my account, the balance shall be paid to you".<sup>78</sup>

The Resident further stated that if any man was sent with summons to seize the defaulting weaver, he would be immediately rescued by his neighbours and the person deputed would surely be severely beaten by them. To complain to the Adawlut on every occasion would cause endless trouble and vexation without any good effect. To try to argue with a weaver was out of question. They would not try to understand anything but would attribute it rather to fear on our part.

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77 Progs Board of Trade, 5th November, 1792, Prog no. 99, Vol:101, Part I.

78 Progs Board of Trade, 7th April, 1795, Prog no. 22, Vol:115, Part II.

The Resident even apprehended that a large number of the weavers would give up the Company's employment by the end of 1795. In the month of August, about one third of them had left the Company's work and only 5970 weavers remained in the Company's employ. But he feared that about 1349 weavers would leave very soon and at the end of the year, there would remain only 4621 weavers for the Company's work.<sup>79</sup>

At Dacca, the weavers accepted the regulations without much opposition. The result was the decline of the Teetabaddy auring which manufactured one very important assortment for the Company's 'investment'. There were 900 houses of weavers in Teetabaddy in 1774 but the number fell to 500 in 1788.<sup>80</sup> The main reason for this was that the weavers were not paid a reasonable price. There was no opposition and the weavers accepted their lot. Bebb wrote : "I am astonished at their passiveness". But at times they also put up combined resistance as in <sup>1789 and</sup> 1793. The cause was perhaps that the grievance was not confined to the weavers of Teetabaddy alone but affected all the weavers of Dacca factory. When the Commercial Resident of Dacca made an attempt to reduce the prices of some of the fabrics, the weavers made an obstinate resistance to his efforts.<sup>81</sup> Mr. Taylor, the Resident of the Dacca factory, informed

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79 Progs Board of Trade, 8th March, 1796, Prog no. 19, Vol: 121.

The Table was as follows :

		Looms originally numbered
Refused to work	- 2291	9947
Deserted	- <u>1048</u>	<u>3339</u>
	3339	Leaving - 6108
		<u>Deaths - 138</u>
	Remaining 31 August, 1795	- 5970

80 Progs Board of Trade, 8th March, 1796, Prog no. 19, Vol: 121.

81 Progs Board of Trade, 31st December, 1789, Prog no. 111, Vol:83, Part II.

the Board of Trade in 1793 that at the aurungs of Jungleberry and Bazitpur, the weaver could not be persuaded to accept advances. He stated that the principal weavers refused to receive advances unless he would agree to restore the prices of 1791 — the same which had been settled by Mr. Barwell in 1774 but which ( in consequence of Board's instructions in 1791 ) were reduced by about from 10% to 14% below the rates of the preceding year.<sup>82</sup> Mr. Taylor wrote that not only the principal weavers but the general body of weavers who were to a great extent controlled by the head weavers expressed a similar determination. There must have been some collusion between the gomastas and the weavers in this endeavour to restore the old prices. He called the gomastas and deputed an aumeen to the aurungs fully explaining to them the grounds on which the prices proposed to the weavers were made and of his inability to depart from them. However, the weavers persisted in their refusal to receive advances except on the condition proposed by them, the restoration of Mr. Barwell's prices.<sup>83</sup> When the proposed reduction was eventually effected and advances were forced upon them, the weavers began to deliver cloths of an inferior quality hoping "by this means to counterbalance the reduction of price by a saving in the quality or the quantity of thread used".<sup>84</sup>

At Malda, the weavers showed a determined resolution not to take Company's advances, because of the penalty clause. Since they feared that circumstances such as sickness, inability to get proper thread in

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82 The reduction applied to some assortments like Nyansookg and Seerhandconnah's.

83 Progs Board of Trade, 28th March, 1793, Prog no.23, Vol:103, Part.I.

84 Ibid.

proper time, interruption due to disputes with the Zemindars might prevent them from fulfilling their contracts. The weavers of the City of Dacca unitedly protested against the imposition of a penalty of 35%. It became so serious in nature that in order to break the combination, Mr. Taylor, the Commercial Resident, had to send six ring leaders of the combination to the Magistrate of the Faujdari Adawlut for trial and punishment.<sup>85</sup>

Thomas Brown, Resident at Cossimbazar in 1789, also concluded that the late Regulations subjecting the weavers to a penalty of 35% on a failure in the performance of their engagements at the stipulated periods would tend to render them increasingly averse to receiving the Company's advances. Such an aversion, was in fact quite common, and this tended to increase with the growing competition from different groups. Most of the weavers were poor and accepted the advances of the Company because of the immediate pecuniary gains from them. Weavers possessing property did not easily enter into engagements with the English Company because the manufacture of the Company's cloths required a greater degree of care and attention on their part. In a word, the weavers preferred the work of the other purchasers.<sup>86</sup>

The New Regulations<sup>86A</sup> for the weavers provided that the weavers failing to deliver cloths to the Company in time would be prosecuted in the Dewanee Court. Mr. Fletcher, Resident at Santipore in 1789, argued

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85 Progs Board of Trade, 24th March, 1794, Prog no. 20, Vol:109, Part I.

86 Progs Board of Trade, 24th December, 1789, Prog no. 110, Vol:83, Part II.

86A Infra: The details of these regulations are given in the Appendices.

that in such circumstances, it would be necessary on his part to take written agreements from each weaver working for the Company, because nothing less than a written agreement from the weavers, would be entertained as proof of a failure of engagements in an Adawlut. Mr. Fletcher announced his decision to obtain written engagements from the Company's weavers.

The response was far from enthusiastic. The demand of written agreements was an innovation. Hence, the weavers did not like to enter into written agreements at all. They argued that formerly if they had failed to supply cloths within the stipulated periods and right upto the Company's standard, the mode laid down in the Regulations of July 1787 had been pursued. The weavers were required not to enter into newer engagements. They were also forbidden to work for sales in the open bazars. But as the weavers were now subjected to a heavy penalty in case of failure of their stipulated deliveries to the Company, Mr. Brown concluded, it was probable that the weavers would be cautious in entering into engagements with the Company. He feared that as the prices paid by the Company were not very attractive, it would be difficult for him to induce them to sign written engagements.<sup>87</sup>

The Santipore weavers demonstrated a remarkable solidarity and power of combination. The competition at Santipore was greater than elsewhere because its goods were in demand in the European markets and because of its vicinity to Calcutta and other foreign settlements. As the weavers could earn more by working for Private Traders, they manufactured cloths for them and deliberately fell into arrears in their deliveries to the

Company. The Company's men were placed in a very peculiar situation and at times had to accept cloths which were not upto the Company's standard in order to prevent accumulation of balances. Mr. Fletcher, Resident at Santipore in 1788, wrote that the prices paid by private merchants and Foreign Agents for Santipore goods had for a long time so considerably exceeded the Company's prices that it became necessary to keep all cloths produced from the advances, those that were equal to the established musters as well as those that were inferior because there was a ready sale for every kind, however, indifferent. The returning of the inferior fabrics to the weavers would only serve to encourage the weavers further to debase the fabrics. It would afford them an opportunity of selling the cloths woven with the Company's advances at an enhanced rate to the individuals.<sup>88</sup> The weavers of Santipore assembled daily by the sound of horn and discussed their grievances amongst themselves.<sup>89</sup> The discontent spread even to the distant aurungs where the weavers stopped working for the Company though they had taken the Company's advances. The contractors found it difficult to manage the aurung and nine ring leaders of the combination were arrested. Six of them were later released on providing securities for their good behaviour in future but the other three were prosecuted and imprisoned. The Santipore weavers thus showed some capacity for combined resistance which under more favourable circumstances would perhaps have been more successful. But it was true that circumstances were less favourable and the success of such resistance was very limited and henceforward they had mainly to depend upon mere petitions for the redress of their grievances.

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88 Progs Board of Trade, 15th April, 1788, Prog no. 43, Vol: 66.

89 Progs Board of Trade, 25th July, 1786, Prog no. 6, Vol: 51, Part II.

Mr. John Cheap, the Commercial Resident at Sonamooky, narrated in 1794 the difficulties he had to face at his aurung. He stated that in the fifth year of his agency in 1793, several people who had never before worked for the Company took advances from him and his people in the early part of the year. But very soon, there was a sudden influx of private merchants at Sonamooky. The result was that it became impossible for him to obtain the services of new weavers for the Company's work. It became difficult for him to retain even the services of the old weavers who were already working for the Company. He had therefore, to enter into a fresh settlement with them on much favourable terms. But even then, he found, to his utter surprise, that the weavers were not delivering goods according to the terms of settlement. The reason was the demand of written engagements from them. At Sonamooky, the weavers were required to enter into written engagements with the Company and the weavers of Pattersayer<sup>90</sup> were most unwilling to sign written engagements. It was then that he tried <sup>the</sup> ~~to~~ experiment of dismissing the weavers from the Company's employ. However, far from being considered a punishment, it was welcomed by the head weavers who persuaded other weavers to be dismissed from the Company's work. "Dismission was rather considered as a favour than a disgrace". Mr. Cheap tried much to break such an influence of the head weavers and though he became successful in this at Sorool, ~~he~~ failed miserably in all the out-factories, where the head weavers constantly sought to have the weavers collected together, often pretending that it was merely because the weavers wished to see each other.<sup>91</sup> In another letter to the

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90 In the Bankura District.

91 Progs Board of Trade, 22nd July, 1794, Progs no. 45, Vol.III, Part I.

Board of Trade, Mr. Cheap intimated, that at Sonarundi,<sup>92</sup> the weavers were practically controlled by the lease holders and maundals ( village headmen ) and "it becomes their interest to create misunderstanding between the factory and them. Habits of intimacy, the same cast ( sic ) and living in the village gave them an influence which I am convinced no exertion of Resident will be able to overthrow \* \* \* and indeed the former mode<sup>93</sup> of conducting the business in this aurung was so oppressive that there are but few youngman in that division who weave, their parents having giving up teaching them, preferring their being employed, in the Fields to the risk of their suffering what they themselves had felt".<sup>94</sup>

The cotton manufacturers of Hurriaul demanded increased prices for cloths owing to dearness of grain and thread and for a long time declined to weave the finer goods for the Company.<sup>95</sup> But when the increased prices were not allowed a large number of them left the Company's employ. Mr. Beachcroft, Resident at Hurriaul in August 1796, stated that in the year 1795 the Company lost a considerable number of good weavers. In one village about one hundred persons declined to receive any further advances of the English Company. They alleged that the profits they got from the Company's work were not worth their trouble. In two or three other villages, similar desertions<sup>n</sup> happened and he had

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92 A village in the Katwa sub-division of Burdwan district.

93 The mode of procuring the Company's investment (under the Agency System) in which the Indian gomastas made advances to the weavers out of the Company's funds. The various oppressions of the Indian gomastas reduced the weavers to misery.

94 Progs Board of Trade, 5th Aug, 1794, Prog no. 49, Vol: 111 Part II.

95 Progs Board of Trade, 12th Aug, 1794, Prog no. 51, Vol: 111 Part II.

little reason to expect that they would ever be won over as long as the present rate continued unaltered. The Resident stated that the weavers were justified in their demand for increased rates. The prices of coarse thread in 1794 was five gundahs per tolah cheaper on an average than that prevailing in either last or the present year. Consequently, on a piece of Addaties middling 21 x  $2\frac{1}{4}$  yds, the weavers suffered a loss of about six annas ; on Cossaes middling 40 x 3 yds one rupee and one anna ; on Cossaes Cogmaria middling 40 x  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yds twelve annas ; on Hummams ordinary 24 x 3, ten annas and on Hummams Middling 24 x 3, eight annas and so on.<sup>96</sup>

From the foregoing it becomes clear that the weavers, if their interests so demanded, did not hesitate to defy the Company's authority. There were in almost every important centre of cotton manufacture certain mandals or head-weavers who were probably at the head of the weavers' guild and they often instigated the mass of manufacturers under them to refuse to work for the Company.<sup>97</sup> Combinations, among the weavers were widespread and to break these combinations, the Commercial Residents had to use all possible means in their power. However, in almost all cases of such resistance the weavers had eventually to yield.

The absence of any general resistance on the part of the weavers, is, however, explicable. In the first place, the weavers looked upon the Commercial Residents with wonder and awe and could not

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96 Progs Board of Trade, 10th May, 1796, Prog no. 36, Vol: 122.

97 Progs Board of Trade, 27th June, 1794, Prog no. 37, Vol: 110.

easily defy their authority. These Commercial Residents exercised unlimited authority. For example, Mr. Cheap, as W.W. Hunter writes, "exercised magisterial powers and the villagers to whom an appearance before the Collector, whether as a plaintiff or a defendant, was equally an object of terror, referred their disputes to the arbitration of the Commercial Resident".<sup>98</sup> Secondly, the weavers feared that the Commercial Residents backed by the 'State' machinery would easily break their resistance. They knew that the effect of unsuccessful resistance would be fatal since they would be exposed to the full fury of their revengeful masters in the future. Again, the persuasions and open threats of the Commercial Residents, in many cases, held back the weavers from resistance. Thirdly, the general ignorance of the weavers prevented them from organising effective resistance. The forms and procedure in British Courts were more complex than those prevailing during the Mughal days and the weavers, ignorant of the laws, did not know whom to apply to for the redress of their grievances and unless their major interests were in great jeopardy, they remained generally submissive. Lastly, the Company's employment was considered honourable and had some attractions. The weavers of the Pargana Jehanabad under the Patna factory stated that they derived no profit from the Company's work and in most cases got only the value of the thread but lost the value of labour. "Yet in consideration that whilst engaged in the service of the Company, we would be protected from all violence and oppression we furnished cloths to the Company".<sup>99</sup> This protection in cases of violence and oppression from the Zamindars or his agents attracted very many weavers to the

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98 Hunter W.W. The Annals of Rural Bengal, P. 182.

99 Progs Board of Trade, 6th May, 1814, Prog no. 16, Vol: 293.

Company's work. Secondly, there was no doubt that the weavers did not derive any profit on the value of cloths. The standard rate of profit according to Mr. Taylor's calculation, was one anna in the rupee or  $\frac{1}{4}\%$  on the cost of materials and labour.<sup>100</sup> In most cases, the weavers sacrificed this profit. They were satisfied with only the value of threads and something for their labour. Moreover, on many occasions, the weavers did not appoint 'journeymen' weavers and got the work done by the other members of his family. This somehow enabled them to work for the Company. In cases, where the weaver appointed journeymen, they wanted the wage of the journeymen besides the value of thread, without which it was not possible to continue in the Company's service. Hence, what the weavers demanded was the value of thread and something for their labour. Lastly, though theoretically, the weavers were free, in reality they were not. They were compelled in most cases, against their will, to be engaged for the English Company and not infrequently were whipped or beaten with rattams.<sup>101</sup> They had no alternative but to work for the Company. The trade of the other European Companies and Private Merchants gradually declined and the Company's employment was the only avenue to the weavers.

The instances of resistance offered by the weavers would in fact have been more numerous but for certain other circumstances. The advances offered to the weavers were interest-free while in the open markets,

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100 Supra: The Calculations by Taylor are discussed in this Chapter in an earlier section.

101 Progs Board of Trade, 8th May, 1818, Prog no. 15, Vol: 343.

the rate of interest was not less than 12% to 15% in urban areas and 7% to 8% in rural areas.<sup>102</sup> Secondly, the Commercial Residents at times, protected the weavers, who were also mostly the cultivators of the soil, from the enhancement of rent by the Zemindars. The Zemindars were in the habit of raising the rent and demanding various taxes from time to time on various grounds. The case of Dinagepore would illustrate it ; A great proportion of the weavers employed by the English Company's factory at Malda resided in Dinagepore district. Mr. George Udny, the Commercial Resident at Malda, in a letter<sup>103</sup> to the Collector of Rungpore, intimated that on his arrival at one of the aurungs, Surrupunge, he had to meet a deputation of the weavers numbering at least one thousand. They complained that they had not "seen their houses" for ten days past. Their only guilt was that they refused to pay a tax, Deury Khurcha<sup>104</sup> which they had paid last year on the occasion of the death of the late Rajah of Dinagepore. On their refusal to pay the tax, Bishen Hury, the Naib of Mahynuggur, was oppressing them in various ways. The weavers stated that if justice was not speedily done to them, they would suffer great distress.<sup>105</sup>

Charles Grant, the succeeding Commercial Resident, took up the cause of the oppressed weavers and in a letter to the Collector of Dinagepore ( 4th January, 1782 ) wrote that he had no intention to interfere in the business of the Revenue, yet "the protection of the Affairs entrusted to their management and of the people who work under them is essentially their duty".<sup>106</sup> He believed that the demand of the

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102 Progs Board of Trade, 10th April, 1781, Prog no. 17, Vol: 27.

103 21 Dec, 1781.

104 Deury, a Hindu Temple, Kharaj, <sup>or Khurcha.</sup> means expenditure.

105 Rungpore District Records, Vol. II, PP. 178-79 ; Letter No. 224 of George Udny to Richard Goodland, Collector of Rungpore, 21 Dec, 1781.

106 Rungpore District Records : Vol: II, P. 179.

Deury Tax was unjustified and unauthorised. The argument of the Collector that since it was "paid last year", it should be considered "a perpetual tax" was not justifiable. The Collector asserted that he was ordered "to collect agreeably to the last year". The Commercial Resident answered that the order "to collect agreeably to the last year" could only mean "what was known to Government", for otherwise if one thousand acts of oppression had been committed last year, such an order would give a sanction to the continuance of the same.<sup>107</sup> The demand of the tax was unauthorised because the Commercial Resident had reasons to think that such a tax could not have the sanction of the Governor-General and Council. When in 1781 he requested the present Rajah not to insist on levying more than the stated Malguzari, the Rajah relinquished his claim.<sup>108</sup>

The Collector of Dinajepore then raised the plea of "customs of Dinajepore" by which a tax once admitted becomes a part of the Jumma on whatever plea it was exacted. Mr. Grant replied that "customs" in the Collector's sense "only mean what the strong imposes on the weak". He argued that there might be innumerable marriages, births and deaths and other occasions of extraordinary expense in the family of the Dinajepore Rajah but the Collections made on these occasions could not form a part of the Jumma of the Province.<sup>109</sup>

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107 Rungpore District Records, Vol.II, PP. 181-82.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid., PP. 191-192.

The Commercial Resident personally visited the aurungs to assess the magnitude of the difficulties borne by the weavers. He established contacts with Devy Singh, the farmer of Dinagepore. Ultimately he succeeded in getting orders from the Rajah to withdraw Deury Tax from the weavers and Devy Singh agreed to refund what had been exacted from them on this account.<sup>110</sup>

In order to prevent future troubles in the collection of rent, the Commercial Resident agreed to stand as a guarantor and became "bound for the due payment of the just rents of all the Company's weavers in the Dinagepore province".<sup>111</sup>

But troubles began again at the close of the 1780s. In 1789, Mr. Udney, Resident of Malda, was informed by the Collector of Dinagepore that it was his intention to measure all lands held by the weavers and fix the rent at the rates which were paid by other ryots who were not weavers. Mr. Udney eagerly defended the cause of the Company's weavers. He strongly protested against such innovations and the result was that though the measurement of lands was carried on, the assessment of rent was suspended. But after some time, the Commercial Resident was informed by the weavers of the different aurungs that they were being compelled to take new Pottahs and to pay rent according to such rules as applied to other ryots. The weavers very much resented this novel measure and were unwilling to pay rent.

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110 Rungpore District Records, Vol.II, PP. 211-12.

111 Ibid., PP. 275-276.

The Commercial Resident<sup>d</sup> informed the Board of Trade that ever since the Company had provided investment in Malda, the manufacturers had enjoyed greater favours than other people, their neighbours. The weavers had been protected from the imposition of the numerous abwabs or taxes which had been levied upon other ryots. The Regulations issued by the Governor-General in Council on 23rd July 1787 provided that the weavers should pay "no more rent than the amount specified in their Pottahs" and they "prohibit every arbitrary occasional demand of the Zamindars, Farmers or Collectors on any account whatsoever".<sup>112</sup> The residence of the weavers, the Resident argued, was fixed. They could not move about from one place to another because they were permanently appointed by the Company to their work. Had the weavers been migratory, the business of the Company would have been interrupted. But this was not the case with the other ryots who often moved to different and distant places and sometimes fled to evade the payment of rent. The fixed residence of the weavers, the Resident pointed out, ensured the Zamindars the payment of their rent without trouble and hence entitled them to some indulgence. Moreover, the improvement of the manufactures would not be possible if the rents of the weavers were increased. The weavers would, in that case, be impoverished, discontented and rendered unable and unwilling to do Company's work.<sup>113</sup>

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112 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd April, 1789, Prog no. 30, Vol: 78.

113 Ibid.

Mr. Udny, Resident at Malda, complained to Mr. Hatch, the Collector of Dinagepore, in 1788, that he had received several reports from the aurungs under his factory of various oppressions upon the weavers by the persons employed in the collection of rent. The weavers had been totally confused. These collectors, contrary to all rights and in total disregard of the Regulations of Government, were plundering the property of the weavers and confining them. He stated that the Company's business was utterly disorganized as a consequence. For example, he stated that at the aurung of Saungunge, "all is uproar. Weavers are carried away by the peons, confined, cloths cut off from their backs ; they are beaten and forced to give the excessive rent demanded of them, notwithstanding they have regularly paid or are ready to pay the just amount of their Pottahs. They have deserted their houses".<sup>114</sup> The Resident drew the attention of the Collector to the 8th and 9th Articles of the Regulations of the Government, 1787, respecting the weavers. The 8th Article, he wrote : "restricts to professional tax to be paid by the weaver to what were established previous to the Bengal year 1179, frees them from any arbitrary occasional demand of the Zemindars, farmers or collectors on any account whatsoever and limits the rent to be paid by them to what is specified in their Pottahs". The 9th Article positively declares :- "that no weaver, gomastah or other servant employed by the Company in their investment shall be confined by any Zemindar or other officer engaged in the collection of the revenue or be put under peon by them or summoned to the Cutcherry on any pretence whatsoever".<sup>115</sup>

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114 Dinajpore District Records Vol.I, P.94.

115 Dinajpore District Records Vol.I, P.94.

The Resident argued that from the treatment <sup>the</sup> of weavers had received it appeared that the Regulations had been infringed in every point. In another letter he further stated<sup>116</sup> that he had received more representations from the weavers of the different parts of Dinajpore district, complaining that the officers collecting the revenues had proceeded to seize their lands and refused to let them cultivate them any longer unless they paid rent according to the rate of the other ryots. The Resident expressed surprise that the measure of sequestering the lands of the weavers on their refusal to pay an increased rent should be adopted at this time when the propriety of that rent was under discussion and after the Governor-General in Council ( in a letter to the Board of Revenue of 13th May communicated to him by the Board of Trade, the 22nd of that month ) had directed that until further orders the rent from the weavers of Dinajpur attached to that factory be levied according to the rates paid by them previous to the 23rd July, 1788.<sup>117</sup> It was as late as July 1789 that Mr. Hatch, in a letter to Mr. Udny, wrote that he had issued Perwannah to the Zemindars to prohibit his officers in the mofussil from demanding of the weavers any more rent than what they had <sup>always</sup> ~~already~~ hitherto paid.<sup>118</sup> It was ultimately agreed that the Collectors of rent should no longer demand more than what was specified in the Pottahs of the weavers. In this way, the most embarrassing question was solved at the interference of the Commercial Resident. This was how the Commercial Residents granted protection to the Company's weavers who weaved the Company's assortments.

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116 In June, 1789 addressed to the Board of Trade.

117 Progs Board of Trade, 7th July, 1789, Prog no. 59, Vol: 80, Part II.

118 Dinajpur District Records - Vol: I, P. 248.

Another consideration which prevented the weavers from organising stiffer resistance against the Company's system of control was the problem of an alternative employment. The weavers had to stick to their original occupation because of lack of other possible occupations. A change of occupation was not an easy process particularly in view of their hereditary skill in weaving.

Thus we find that several foreign nations and indigenous merchants did have considerable trade in Bengal cotton piecegoods throughout the period despite efforts on the part of the English Company's men to eliminate them. This was particularly the case after the American War of Independence. After it, the English Company's trade in cotton piecegoods reached its zenith but still they could not establish a complete monopsonistic control over the market. The agents of the English Company, on many occasions, complained that the full quota of the Company's 'investment' could not be procured because of the presence of the Private Merchants and Foreign Traders. The important cause of this failure was the lowness of the Company's price. The private traders and the agents of the foreign companies offered 15% and in some case even 40% more than the Company's prices. The English Company's men could not afford to pay more prices. Their purchases were made to order. They offered substantial advances to the weavers much before the actual delivery of goods. These advances were interest-free. The other purchasers, on the other hand, offered no such advances and hence were in a position to pay more prices. They, in most cases, purchased goods which were manufactured with the advances of the English Company and sold to them

clandestinely by the weavers. Secondly, the agents of the private traders were not as meticulous as the agents of the English Company regarding the quality of the fabrics. The former used to purchase irrespective of the quality but the latter used to reject the fabrics of inferior quality. Lastly, the weavers themselves very much resented the various coercive measures of the English Company. They strongly resented coercion and compulsion and preferred to work for the private traders though the interest-free advances of the English Company were very tempting to them. Hence, as long as the private traders continued their trade in cotton piecegoods, the weavers clandestinely sold goods to them. The disappearance of the private traders was a great disappointment to the weavers because they had then to depend wholly on the English Company's work.

CHAPTER - V

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COTTON INDUSTRY  
IN THE GENERAL ECONOMY OF BENGAL

Cotton weaving was the staple industry of Bengal till 1833. What silk was to China, linen to Egypt, wool to England, cotton was to Bengal. To determine the actual significance of the industry in the total economy of Bengal, it becomes necessary, at the outset, to study the size of the industry. Next in importance, is the size of the population engaged in it, since this would indicate the size of the gainful employment that the industry provided. Thirdly, the study of cotton weaving as a whole-time or a part-time employment would reveal the importance of cotton weaving as an occupation. Lastly, the role of the decline of the industry in the process of 'de-industrialization' in the Bengal Presidency needs to be assessed.

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE CENTRES OF PRODUCTION :

"On the coast of Coromandel and in the province of Bengal", says Orme, "when at some distance from the highroad or a principal town, it is difficult to find a village in which everyman, woman and child is not employed in making a piece of cloth".<sup>1</sup> In the Bengal Presidency, the weaving manufactories were dispersed throughout the country and each district was noted for the manufacture of a distinct type of cloth.<sup>2</sup> Spinning and weaving had become a national occupation. The important towns like Malda, Hurriaul ( in the Rajshahi district ) Seerpore ( a small town in the Rajshahi district, 74 miles north east from Murshidabad and lying within the Zemindari of Rani Bhabani of Natore ), Balikushi ( lying with the Zemindari of Rani Bhavani of Natore ) and Cogmari ( a small town in the Mymensingh district and lying within the Zemindari of Rani Bhabani of Natore ), were famous for manufacturing the following species of piecegoods for the European-markets : Cossaes ( Khas ) elatches ( a kind of cloth woven of silk and thread so as to present the appearance of cardamans : ilachi, according to Hobson Jobson ), humhums ( according to Hobson Jobson, cloth of thick stout texture and generally worn as a wrapper in the cold season ), Chowtahs ( which perhaps made with four threads or wires ), tootally, soosiess ( a kind of fine coloured cloth ) Seersuckers ( perhaps Sir, head sukh pleasure ) for the markets of Bussorah, Mocha, Jidda, Pegu, Acheen and Malacca, the different sorts of Coassaes, baftaes ( coarse goods of excellent fabrics ) ; Saunoose ( samms, flaxen or linen cloth ), mulmulls or malmals, tanjibs ( ornament of the body ). From the aurungs at Rungpore,

1 Robert Orme : Historical Fragments of the Mughal Empire, P.409.

2 K.K.Datta : Alivardi and His Times, PP. 180-81.

3 Holwell : Interesting Historical Events: P. 193.

Ghorahat ( a town in the district of Dinajpore, 90 miles North East of Murshidabad and lying with the Zemāndari of Raja of Santose ), Santose Buddaul ( in the Dinajpur district ), the East India Company was supplied with Saunoose, mulmuls and tanjibs.<sup>4</sup> The towns like Burdwan, Kheerpoy, Radhanagar ( both in the Ghatal sub-division of Midnapore district and lying within the Zemāndari of Raja Tilakchand of Burdwan ), Dewanganj and Balligisagar ( lying within the Zemāndari of Raja Tilak Chand of Burdwan ) supplied the East India Company with dooreas ( striped cloths ) terrاندams ( clinging to the body ), cutianies, soosies, sootromals, gurrahs ( garah ), sestersoys, santon coupees, cherrideries chilye, custas, doosootas<sup>5</sup> ( coarse cotton cloth ). The East India Company was supplied with a large quantity of gurrahs from Elambagar, the principal town in the Birbhum district.<sup>6</sup> From the towns of Santipore, Burron ( in the Nadia district ) the Company was supplied with Mulmuls, and cossaes.<sup>7</sup> Besides muslins, the production of coloured goods was the specialised art of Midnapore. These coloured goods were in great demand in the markets of Germany, Africa and West Indies.<sup>8</sup> However, the premier position in the manufacture of fine muslins and Cotton cloths of different species, was occupied by Dacca. "Plain muslins distinguished by various names according to fineness and to the closeness of their texture, as well as flowered, striped and chequered muslins, denominated from their patterns, are fabricated chiefly in the province of Dacca. The manufacture of the finest sorts of thin muslins is almost confined to that province".<sup>9</sup> The following varieties of muslins are mentioned by Taylore, Commercial Resident at Dacca :

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4 Holwell : Interesting Historical Events : P. 194.

5 Ibid: PP. 195-96.

6 Ibid., PP. 201-02.

7 Ibid: PP. 202.

8 Ibid., P. 200.

9 William Ward: A History, Leterature, Philosophy of the Hindoos, P. 28.

- (a) Arawns (b) Allaballies of five different sorts,  
 (c) Buddun coss ( badankhas ), (d) Doorias of various  
 kinds such as fine, superfine, middling, Dutch fine, Dutch  
 superfine and Dutch middling (e) Jamdanies ( figured or  
 flowered muslins ), (f) malmals of various descriptions  
 (g) Nyansooks ( nainsukh "pleasure of the eye" ),  
 (h) handkerchiefs, (i) Sarbatis ( semitransparent like  
 sherbat ), (j) Seerbund ( Sirbundh - Turban ), (k) Sublins,  
 (l) Tanjibs of many varieties, (m) Terrindam ( turundams ),  
 (n) Sarkaralis (o) Hum muns of two different sorts,  
 (p) Seerhandconnas of several kinds and  
 (q) Cossaes ( khases ) of different descriptions.<sup>10</sup>

The reasons why different places came to specialize in the production of different varieties of fabrics are not hard to seek. In the first place, there was the force of tradition. A weaver<sup>10</sup> amongst the Gentoos was far from an unrespectable caste and proficiency was transmitted for centuries from father to son.<sup>11</sup> Many European travellers have noted the slender and somewhat delicate physical frame of the natives of Dacca, the remarkably fine sense of touch and the nice perception of weight which characterize their fingers. James Mill's keen analysis of the Bengal weaver is worth quoting : "It is a sedantary occupation and thus in harmony with his predominant inclinations. It requires patience of which he has an inexhaustible fund".<sup>12</sup> Climate was another decisive

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10 Progs Board of Trade, 9th June, 1797, Prog no. 48, Vol: 129.

11 Robert Orme : op.cit. P. 410.

12 Mill: History of British India, Vol.II, P. 8.

factor. The climate of Dacca was well suited to the manufacture of fine muslins while that of Birbhum to the manufacture of coarse calico. The heat and climate of Dacca is lower by some degrees than that of the western districts of the province.

"The mean maximum temperature of May and Sept. (the two hottest months in the season) was as deduced from ten years observations 87.37 degrees in the former and 88.34 degrees in the latter month. Humidity is the characteristic of the climate. The average annual quantity of rainfall during eight years was 70.3 inches. The greatest fall in any year during that period was 79.9 and the least 46.8 inches".<sup>13</sup>

The moist damp climate of Dacca was well suited to the manufacture of muslins while the dry arid atmosphere of Birbhum was a hindrance to it. This explains why cotton fabrics were manufactured in Bengal proper. The climate of other Presidencies was much drier.

The English East India Company, during the period under review, had Commercial Residencies in these places - Chittagong, Luckipore ( in the Noakhali district ), Dacca, Commercolly ( near Kusthia in the Nadia district about 120 miles north east of Calcutta ), Harial, ( Rajshahi district ), Rungpore, Malda, Santipore, Hurripaul, Golaghore ( in the Hooghly district ), Radhanagar ( Midnapore district ), Midnapore, Kheerpoy ( Midnapore district, Surul ( in the neighbourhood of Santiniketan in the Birbhum district ), Patna, Ghazipure, Beneras, Mau and Etawah, each of which had a number of subordinate aurungs or outstations under it.

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13 Taylore: A Descriptive and Historical etc, PP. 2-3.

The important aurungs under the Chittagong factory were besides Chittagong proper, Meercaussary, Banscolly, Hazareehaut, Sundeep, Hattiah, Bommeenee and Duchimeck.<sup>14</sup> The aurungs under Luckipore were Luckipore including Churpattah, Bulluah, Rajegunge, Kampta, Durrungunge, Dukkensavazpore, Omrabad, Bidrabad, Danderah and Buxygunge.<sup>15</sup> The aurungs under Dacca were Dacca, Sonargaon, Dumroy, Teetabaddy, Narrainpore, Sonarpur, Chaundpore, Jungleberry-Bazitpore.<sup>16</sup> The aurungs of Hurriaul were Belcohee, Nowgong, Tetoolean, Birtara, Akua, Alingy, Shazadpur.<sup>17</sup> The aurungs under Malda were Collingunge, Singhia, Jaggernautpore, Surroopgunge, Malduar, Nirchindpur, Buddaul and Tannore.<sup>18</sup> The aurungs under Santipore and Burron were Santipore, Sonabarya, Bagara, Collygunge, Doolpur, Khulsy, Monohurgunge, Nirnia, Satbarya, Seebathy and Siddipassa.<sup>19</sup> The aurungs under Hurripaul were Hurripaul, Durhatta, Dhaniakhali, Mayapore, Chaundoolea, Khursurroy.<sup>20</sup> The aurungs under Golagore were Golagore, Gaulpore, Khawnpore, Gurap, Mazenan, Hooghly and Baranagar.<sup>21</sup> The aurungs under Kheerpoy were Chandersona, Kheerpoy, Radhanagar, Ghatal, Ramjibanpore, Bally, Shumant and Narajole.<sup>22</sup>

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14	Progs Board of Trade,	14th June, 1807,	Prog no.3	Vol: 204,	Part I.
15	Progs Board of Trade,	28th Sept, 1804,	Prog no.75,	Vol: 177.	
16	Progs Board of Trade,	28th April, 1804,	Prog no. 32,	Vol: 172.	
17	Progs Board of Trade,	6th April, 1807,	Prog no. 32,	Vol: 208.	
18	" " " "	20th April, 1804,	" " 55,	" 175.	
19	" " " "	12th Feby, 1819,	" " 6,	" 352.	
20	" " " "	8th March, 1808,	" " 13,	" 218.	
21	" " " "	29th May, 1808,	" " 39,	" 208.	
22	" " " "	21st April, 1815,	" " 14,	" 304.	

CAUSES OF CONCENTRATION(a) AVAILABILITY OF RAW MATERIALS :

The concentration of the weavers in these places, was due to several reasons, such as availability of suitable raw materials, facilities of carriage both by land and water, and royal patronage. According to Colebrook, nearly the whole of the raw cotton required for yarn-making in the province of Bengal was at one time produced locally.<sup>23</sup> Later, with the increased demand for cotton piecegoods, it had to be imported from Surat and afterwards from the Doab. The reason why the best weavers had settled in Dacca was that the finest kind of cotton was cultivated in the neighbourhood of Dacca. "The soil of Sonargaon, Kapasia and Junglebarry possessed all the components necessary for the best cotton ground".<sup>24</sup>

"A tract of land extending from Ferringyazar [ this small town stands on the west side of Dullasery river ] 12 miles east of Dacca along the banks of Megna to Idelpore, 20 miles north of the sea, occupying a space of about 40 miles in length and in some places as far as 3 miles in breadth, situated in the Pergunnah Kedderpore, Bickrampore, Rajenagar [ this small town stands on the west side of the Puddah ] Carticpore, Serampore and Idelpore, to produce the finest coppass which is grown within the Dacca province. The superiority of the coppass was attributed to the vicinity of these places to the sea, the waters of which mixing as the tide rolls them in with the other waters of Megna which overflowed that part of the country during three months of the year deposited as they subsided sand and saline particles which very considerably improved and fertilised the soil."<sup>25</sup>

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23 Colebrook : Remarks on the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal, P.84.

24 Baines : op.cit. P. 62.

25 Progs Board of Trade, 6th Sept., 1791, Prog no. 62, Vol: 94.

The most considerable in quantity and valuable in quality was Photee cotton, which was produced in this province. All the thin cloths such as Mulmulls, allaballies, Dooreas, Terrindams, Tanjibs, Serbetties and Nyansooks were made from Photee cotton except the stripes of the Dooreas which were made of the Seronji or Hindustan cotton. Baggah Cotton was the produce in the eastern hills and brought down for sale. It was used in making coarse cloths such as low priced Baftaes, and Guzzies.<sup>26</sup>

Five sorts of cotton were produced at Patna and the Company's assortments were made from these. Malda produced three sorts of cotton — barrabunga, biretta and nurma. The quality of barrabunga cotton was excellent but the quantity produced was small and not more than 2500 maunds annually. The produce of the other two sorts amounted to 40,000 maunds of which 10,000 maunds were annually exported.<sup>27</sup> In the district of Burdwan, three sorts of cotton were produced viz., Nurma, Muhree and Bogga. Of the three sorts, urma was of the finest quality and was used in the manufacture of Nyansooks, mulmuls, seerbati and Dooreas. The Muhree was of an inferior quality and served in weaving the finer Dhooties, Guzzees, and Gurrahs. The bogga cotton was coarser still and was used in the Company's assortments of Gurrahs and other cloths of similar qualities.<sup>28</sup> The cotton produced in Radhanagar was of three sorts, the Kaur, the Muhree and the bhogee. The first sort was the best and fine cloths were made of this cotton and the coarser cloths were made of the two other sorts. The total quantity of produce was about 15,000 to 17,000 maunds a year.<sup>29</sup> Two sorts of cotton viz., bogah and corree were

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26 Progs Board of Trade, 10th August, 1790, Prog no. 60, Vol: 87.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

produced in Hurripaul. The Company's assortments were made from the latter sort. The former was of an inferior kind and was used in Guzzies and the coarsest cloths worn by the poor. In Midnapore also, the local cotton production was enough for the local requirements. Indeed, there was even a small surplus. The production of Santipore could not fully meet the demands of the weavers. The cotton principally produced in the surungs was on a shrub of about 4 feet high and was called Kapas. It was of superior quality. The quantity grown annually was about 3500 maunds. The surung had to import from Burdwan about 400 maunds a year.<sup>30</sup> The production of Chittagong was considerable and it fully met the requirements of the weavers.

From the foregoing, it appears that all the places where manufactories were established produced considerable cotton and this was one of the important reasons why the weavers had concentrated in these regions.

(b) FACILITY OF TRANSPORT :

The next important factor in the concentration of the weavers was the facility of transport of their products both by land and water routes. W.H. Moreland, restating Pyrard's account, remarked :-

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30 Progs Board of Trade, 10th August, 1790 Prog no. 60, Vol: 87.

"Indian looms had a practical monopoly of the home market for cloths and in addition had three principal export markets, Arabia and beyond, Burma and the Eastern Islands, besides minor outlets in various other parts of Asia and on the east coast of Africa. The production carried on to meet this demand was diffused throughout the country but the distribution was not uniform ; certain localities had acquired a reputation for special classes of goods while facilities for carriage had led to considerable concentrations of the industry in particular areas either on the coast or along the inland water ways".<sup>31</sup>

All the places where the weavers had settled had excellent means of communication with other parts of the country both by land and water. The important towns like Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna were connected with Nepal, Bhutan and Sylhet. Even relatively unimportant town like Burdwan had important roads running from and to different parts of the country. For example, from Burdwan, there were roads running to Chandernagar and thence to Calcutta, one to Ghyretty Cantonment by Dhaniakhali, one to Tamruk, one to Buz Buz, one to Nadia, one to Jalangi, one to Rajmahal, one to Radhanagar, one to Chanderkona.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Cossimbazar was connected by several roads with different parts of the country. There was "one from Cossimbazar to Patna, one to Burdwan, one to Jalangi and thence to Dacca, one to Rampur Boalia, one to Meenkhote and Dinajpur, one to Burdwan, one to Malda, one to Rungpore".<sup>33</sup>

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31 W.H. Moreland : India at the death of Akbar, P. 181.

The statement of Pyrard was that "everyone from the Cape of Good Hope to China, man and woman is clothed from head to foot" in the products of Indian looms.

32 K.K.Datta : Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah. P.388.

33 Quoted in K.K.Datta : Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah, P.388-89.

Thus we find that the important trading centres were connected by roads with the places where district-towns were located. Moreover, each district was intersected by many roads within it. Even the remotest part of the province had good roads within them as well as connecting links with the district capital cities.

But eastern Bengal and more particularly the tract lying east of Dacca had no good land routes owing chiefly to the presence of numerous creeks and rivers. As Rennel has observed : "After leaving Barraset [Barasat] we seldom found the roads good, they being excessive narrow, rough and crooked and very frequently running across paddy fields so that when the ground is ploughed there are no traces of road to be found".<sup>34</sup> The important places, however, were connected by roads with cities of importance. As for example, there were two roads from Calcutta to Dacca ; two roads from Calcutta to Bakharganj, the first road running through Jessore Khulna and the second by Hobibgunge ; two roads from Calcutta to Islamabad ( Chittagong ), the second passing through Dacca, one road from Calcutta to Sylhet via Dacca.<sup>35</sup>

Besides land routes, Bengal had good water routes as well. During the time of Akbar and Jahangir ; "Up the river Ganges the Bengal traders --- the Portuguese in particular - carried to Patna cotton goods, silk, saltpetre and jewelleries from this province".<sup>36</sup>

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34 Rennel's - Journals PP 87-88.

35 Quoted in K.K.Datta: Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah, PP.391-92.

36 T.K.Raychaudhuri : Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir P. 180.

"The Ganges and Burramooter rivers together with their numerous branches and adjuncts, intersect the country of Bengal ( which independent of Behar and Orissa is somewhat longer than Great Britain ) in such a variety of directions, as to form the most complete and easy inland navigation that can be conceived ... It is supposed that this inland navigation gives constant employment to 30,000 boatmen. Nor will it be wondered at, when it is known, that all the salt, and a large proportion of food consumed by ten millions of people are conveyed by water within the Kingdom of Bengal and its dependencies. To these must be added, the transport of the commercial exports and imports probably to the amount of two millions sterling per annum".<sup>37</sup>

Dacca maintained throughout the year a free contact by water with most of the surrounding parts of the country and the big cities of Patna, Calcutta and Chittagong. The route to Calcutta changed with the season of the year. In the dry season, the boats proceeded down the Burriganga, Dhaleswari, Sital-lakhya, Meghna, Padma and the Sunderbans via Khulna. The passage usually took ten days. During the rainy season, the shorter route through Faridpore creek was preferred. The communication with Sylhet was maintained by the Meghna and with the western districts by the Padma or Ganges.<sup>38</sup>

Besides the main river routes through the Ganges and the Bharnaputra, numerous tributary rivers and creeks running almost through every part of eastern Bengal, served as excellent means of communication and trade. There was no want of means of communication throughout the country. Dow has remarked : "The easy communication by water from place to place facilitated a mercantile intercourse among the inhabitants. Every village has its canal, every Pergunnah its river, and the whole kingdom the Ganges which falling by various mouths into the Bay of Bengal lay open the ocean for the export of commodities and manufactures".<sup>39</sup>

37 Quoted in K.K. Datta, Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah, PP.396-97  
 38 S.Bhattacharyya: The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, P.193.  
 39 Dow : Hindustan, Vol.I, P.vii.

(c) ROYAL PATRONAGE :

The concentration took place, of course, in the context of a considerable internal demand. Royal patronage was one of the important reasons for the encouragement of the cotton industry in Bengal. First, the Hindu Kings and then the Mughal Emperors extended their unstinted patronage to the industry. With the establishment of Mughal rule in Bengal, commerce greatly flourished. The Mughals were great patrons of Bengal manufactures. In the Ain-in-Akbari, Abul Fazl mentioned the existence of Karkhanas or workshops, maintained under the patronage of Akbar, where goods of great artistic skill were produced.<sup>40</sup> These factories or "mulboos khas kootees" were superintended by Darogas. The Empress Nur Jahan was said to have entirely changed the fashion of the ladies' dresses and to have invented a number of new ornaments to decorate their persons and to have given encouragement to the artisans and manufacturers. Stewart writes : "The delicate muslins of Dacca and silks of Malda constituted the chief part of the dress of the Imperial Court, whether male or female, and the fineness of its texture was such as cannot now be imitated".<sup>41</sup> Again, under the able government of Ibrahim Khan, the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, enjoyed a state of tranquility and security which tended much to the happiness of the inhabitants. There was considerable improvement in the condition of agriculture, trade and industry. As a result of uninterrupted peace, traders from the different places of India

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40 The Ain-in-Akbari, Vol.I, translated by Blochman Ain 31.32. PP 87-92.

41 Stewart : History of Bengal, P. 222.

came to Bengal and carried with them the costly fabrics of the Bengal looms to the different parts of India, particularly in the Courts of Agra and Dacca. "As the political centre of gravity shifted to the marshy and riverine tracts of the south east, the arteries of trade were revitalised upto their farthest point. Dacca developed as a great emporium of commerce and by 1628 was in a state flourishing enough to draw homage from the pen of the much travelled Manrique. Evidently, a new era was dawning in the history of Bengal".<sup>42</sup> The reputation that the muslins of Dacca subsequently enjoyed was due to the patronage of the Court of Shah Jahan. Aurangzeb was also a great lover of the Bengal muslins. The fabrics which the governors of Bengal annually presented to the Emperor Aurangzeb were in the language of Mr. Bolts "incomparably finer than anything of the kind produced in his lifetime,"<sup>43</sup> and "they cost ten times the price of any linens permitted to be made for Europeans or anyone else in the kingdom".<sup>44</sup> The mulboos khas which Murshid Quli Khan sent yearly from Dacca to Aurangzeb consisted of about 500 pieces of muslin and a few other articles, the total cost of which was 1,27,871-12-0 Arcot Rupees or £ 15,984.<sup>45</sup>

The Bengal cotton industry was also kept alive and developed by the patronage of the nobility. "The nobles had to present the rarest products, both natural and manufactured, of their provinces, to the Emperor,

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42 T.K. Raychaudhuri, op.cit., P. 38.

43 Bolts : op.cit., P. 206.

44 Orme : op.cit., Vol.IV. P. 412.

45 Taylor: op.cit., P. 84.

the princes and the ministers. It was not only a tactical blunder but also a breach of the accepted rules of social etiquette to approach the great empty-handed. The nobles therefore, employed the best local artisans to manufacture for them articles worthy of presentation in time for their next visit to the Court".<sup>46</sup> Though the nobles did not maintain Karkhanas, they caused these fabrics to be manufactured by advancing money to the artisans and the nobles competed with one another to employ the best artisans for them. In this way, they encouraged the artisans.

SIZE OF THE POPULATION ENGAGED IN THE INDUSTRY :

The size of the population engaged in cotton industry and the other branches allied to it during the period under review is difficult to estimate. The statistical data are scanty. There was then no regular census. Even the Board of Trade had to admit that it was very difficult to form an estimate of the number of people engaged by the English East India Company. Besides, a very considerable section of the weaving population also worked for private traders and other foreign Companies. To ascertain their size is still more difficult. The reply of the Collectors of different districts to the queries of the Board of Revenue formed the basis of Walter Hamilton's book A Geographical Statistical and

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46 J.N.Sarkar : 'Industries of Mughal India : Seventeenth Century' in "Modern Review", June, 1922, P. 676.

Historical Descriptions of Hindostan, (Vol.I, 1820). ~~Hamilton's accounts,~~ Hamilton's accounts, though otherwise useful, do not provide much information about the number of individuals engaged in different occupations. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton's accounts do provide much detailed information, but his survey was confined to certain districts only. The Proceedings of the Board of Trade ( Commercial ) contain very useful materials for the reconstruction of the history of European commerce in Bengal during the period under review but as regards population-figures, the materials are inadequate. This inadequacy of source-materials has compelled me to concentrate on certain places only and hence no estimate of the total weaving population could be made over the years.

In Dacca, there were considerable private traders besides the English East India Company. In 1787, the Armenian, Greek and Muhammedan merchants, while protesting against the Company's method of issuing tickets to weavers, whereby they were forbidden to work for them, stated that the total population engaged in the cloth trade of the place was about 48,000.<sup>47</sup> The average number of the weavers annually employed in the Company's service between 1791 and 1799 is available. According to a report by Taylor ( Nov, 1799 ) "the average number of weavers annually employed during the period from 1791 to 1799 inclusive is 5542, the greatest number or 6219 was employed in 1791, the smallest or 4951 in the present year, i.e., in 1799 and the number of weavers who have had engagements in the preceding period but who are now principally from insolvency out of employ is 2909. Every year adds to the list of weavers of this last description".<sup>48</sup>

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47 Progs Board of Trade, 14th March 1787, Prog no. 14, Vol: 54.

48 Progs Board of Trade, 17th July 1818, Prog no. 23, Vol: 345.

In the Dacca auring in 1796 the total number of the weavers was estimated at 1600.<sup>49</sup> Sundry weavers of Sonargaon in a complaint lodged against the gomasta of the aurung, Pritam Roy, and other amlahs ( 15th Falgun 1211, Bengali year, corresponding with the Christian Year 1804 A.D. ) stated "that there is in the auring about 1000 or 1200 houses of weavers but during the time of the present gomasta many of the weavers have deserted by suffering loss. There are still at the auring about 550 houses of weavers who will also fly on account of the grievances experienced from the gomasta and others".<sup>50</sup> The population of Sonargaon, according to Taylor's calculation in 1833, was at 5000. Sonargaon was mentioned by Abul Fazl and Ralph Fitch about the end of the 16th Century as a place where the finest cotton cloths were made. It was celebrated for muslins of thin texture, also for flowered fabrics which were manufactured chiefly by the Muhammedan weavers in the towns and in the country around it. "The East India Company", wrote Taylor, "during the time they were engaged in trade had a warehouse for cloths at this place and had generally from 1300 to 1400 weavers' names registered in their books. The number of the weavers' houses is now [1833] estimated at 300".<sup>51</sup>

Dumroy stood on the river Bunsī, a branch of Brahmaputra and about twenty miles west of Dacca. Taylor writes : "The inhabitants are principally Hindoos and are estimated at 6000 in number. The town furnishes the greater part of the fine thread used in the Dacca looms. The number of weavers' houses is estimated at 400".<sup>52</sup>

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49 Progs Board of Trade, 5th April, 1796, Prog no. 26, Vol: 121.  
 50 Progs Board of Trade, 7th June, 1805, Prog no. 37, Vol: 186.  
 51 Taylor : op.cit. P. 8.  
 52 Ibid.

Teetabaddy was a village situated on the eastern side of the river Luckia and within a few miles of the tract of country called 'Kapasias'. It was celebrated for the fine quality of the cotton grown in its vicinity and the manufacture of <sup>them</sup> their muslins. Taylor estimated the number of weavers' houses in 1833 at 200.<sup>53</sup>

Junglebaree lay on the eastern side of the Brahmaputra river and was at one time a prosperous manufacturing station. However, in 1833, according to Taylor, the number of weavers' houses was reduced only to about 100.<sup>54</sup> According to Bolts, at the time of Siraj-ud-dullah about 700 families deserted in consequence of the oppression of the officers of that Nawab and settled in other parts of the country.<sup>55</sup>

The population of the district of Dacca in 1801 was estimated at 9,38,712, one half Hindus and the other Muhammedan.<sup>56</sup> The population of the city of Dacca fell off very rapidly since the opening of the India trade in 1813. In 1814, when the Chokidar Tax was first introduced the number of houses actually assessed amounted to 21,361 and the amount collected at an average of two annas per house maintained nearly eight hundred Police Chokidars, whereas in 1830, the number of houses actually assessed amounted to 10,708 and the number of Chokidars maintained to 236.<sup>57</sup> According to Taylor, the population of the City of Dacca consisting of Hindoos, Muhammedans, English, Armenians, Greeks and descendants of Portuguese was computed in the year 1833 at 68,000.

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53 Taylor : A Descriptive and Historical etc. PP. 8-9.

54 Ibid: P.9.

55 Bolts: op.cit. P. 194.

56 Walter Hamilton : op.cit. Vol.I, P.182.

57 Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha, Vol.II, Edited by B.N.Banerjee, P.336.  
Article by Henry Walters : "Asiatic Researches", Vol: 17 (1832),  
'Census of the City of Dacca'.

The number of weavers' houses was estimated at 750.<sup>58</sup> The population of the City of Dacca in 1801 was 2,00,000.<sup>59</sup> Hence there was a great fall in the population in Dacca and this was due to the decline of the cotton industry.

Robert Brooke, Resident of Hurriaul factory stated in 1807 that the total number of the weavers in his factory was as follows :

TABLE NO: 1

The number of villages, the number of Hindu and Mussalman weavers in the different aurungs under Hurriaul factory in 1807.

Aurungs	Villages	Hindu weavers	Mussalman weavers	Total weavers
1	2	3	4	5
Belcoochy Dowlea	284	1,595	642	2,237
Nowgong	131	902	12	914
Titalea Mokam	42	459	N.A.	459
Birtara	52	464	35	499
Akua	63	509	26	535
Alingy	75	264	139	408
Shahzadpur	14	81	76	157
<u>T O T A L</u>	661	4,274	930	5,204

Source: Progs Board of Trade, 31 July, 1807, Prog no. 57, Vol: 210.

58 Taylor : op.cit. PP 5-7.

59 W. Hamilton : op.cit. Vol.I, P. 48.

This number was employed by the English Company. The number of weavers employed by private traders and foreign Companies can not, however, be ascertained.

C. R. Crommelin, Resident at Mau and Azimghur, in 1809 stated that of the whole number of working weavers in his districts about one third only was employed by the Company and the rest had remained unconnected with the Company and at liberty to work for themselves and to dispose of the produce of their looms to others. He has thus stated the number of weavers employed by the Company and those who remained outside their employment.

TABLE NO: 2

The number of weavers employed by the Company and the number remaining outside the Company's employment at Mau and Azimghur from 1803 to 1807 :

<u>Y E A R S</u>	<u>Employed by the Company</u>	<u>Not employed by the Company</u>	<u>T O T A L</u>
1	2	3	4
1803	3,600	9,200	12,800
1804	3,500	9,300	12,800
1805	2,500	10,200	12,700
1806	3,100	9,700	12,800
1807	2,900	9,900	12,800

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Source: Progs Board of Trade, 18th August, 1807, Prog no. 62,  
Vol: 211, Part II.

At Luckipore also, the total number of weavers employed by the Company was hardly one third of the total number. The number of weavers employed by the Company was as follows :-

TABLE NO: 3

The total number of the weavers employed by  
the Company at Luckipore  
in 1796, 1799 and 1800

AURUNGS	1796 (upto 9th April)	1799 (upto 31 Dec)	1800 (upto 31 Dec)
1	2	3	4
LUCKIPORE	487	467	403
BULLUAH	464	441	492
RAJGANJ	259	394	460
KAMPTA	109	447	424
DHARAMGANJ	166	237	223
DUKHYNSAVAZPORE	803	775	731
AMRABAD	865	595	582
BIDRABAD	774	323	412
DUNDERAH	392	322	303
BUXYGUNGE	183	164	183
<b>T O T A L:</b>	<b>4,503</b>	<b>4,165</b>	<b>4,213</b>

Source: Progs Board of Trade, 21st August, 1801, Prog no. 59, Vol: 154.

The total number of workmen in all the aurungs under Luckipore factory was 12,045<sup>60</sup> and hence the Company employed only one third.

Mr. Robert Brooke, Resident of the Hurripaul factory, intimated in 1824 that since the discontinuation of the English Company's trade in cotton piecegoods there, only 600 weavers received advances from the native merchants for a kind of cloth called Seersuckies and somehow maintained themselves. Their economic condition was altogether different when they received advances from the English Company. Moreover, they then received advances from the other European trades like the Danes, French, Dutch and the Portuguese. The trade of these Companies was discontinued long before. Hence the weavers could not expect advances from any source. He was informed that another 900 weavers had borrowed money from the native merchants and manufactured Cossaes which cost them Rs. 12 and Rs. 13 per piece. They were selling these cloths upon a very small profit at the different hauts and bazars and were consequently in a very depressed state. Hence, the total number of the weavers in Hurripaul in 1824 was 1500.<sup>61</sup>

In the aurungs of Khattorah and Chaundoolia four or five hundred families of individuals were engaged in the production of coloured cloths. After the cessation of the Company's advances on account of coloured cloths, they were very much distressed and had to support their families with difficulty by weaving Banee cloths and labouring in various ways.<sup>62</sup>

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60 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd February, 1824, Prog no. 8, Vol: 413, Part I.

61 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.

62 Progs Board of Trade, 27th March, 1827, Prog no. 24, Vol: 450.

In Sonamooky, the Resident stated that about the year 1789, the number of weavers' houses under all the aurungs were about 3000 and the number of weavers about 4000.<sup>63</sup>

The total population of Santipore in 1822 was 50,000 and the number of buildings 20,000.<sup>64</sup> The government purchases of Santipore muslins averaged during the first twenty years of the 19th Century from £ 1,20,000 to £ 1,50,000.<sup>65</sup>

John Forsyth, Resident at Golagore factory, in 1810 stated that at Chandernagar there were about 1400 weavers of whom two to three hundred took advances from the Hooghly aurung. The remaining weavers numbering from 1000 to 1200 never received the Company's advances. They, he understood from a minute enquiry, manufactured the best cloths.<sup>66</sup> In 1814 an enumeration of the houses and inhabitants at Chandernagar showed that the total number of houses was 8484 and that of the inhabitants was 41,377 of which 20,829 males and 20,548 females.<sup>67</sup> The total number of the weavers in other aurungs under Golagore factory could not be accurately ascertained. A petition addressed to the Board of Trade in July 1804 was signed by 1052 weavers of Gouripur, 700 weavers of Khanpoor, 470 weavers of Gurap, 1400 weavers of Golagore and 380 weavers of Majenan. The total number of the signatories was 4002. Since the petition was not presumably signed by all the weavers of those places, we can assume, however, that the total number was certainly more the number of weavers that signed.<sup>68</sup>

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63 Progs Board of Trade, 15th Dec 1789, Prog no. 106, Vol: 83, Part I.

64 N.K.Sinha: op.cit. Vol.III, Footnote, P.9.

65 W.W.Hinter : A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.II, P.95.

66 Progs Board of Trade, 16th February, 1810, Prog no. 7, Vol: 241.

67 W. Hamilton : op.cit. Vol.I, P. 62.

68 Progs Board of Trade, 17th August, 1804, Prog no. 63, Vol: 176.

In the district of Dinajpur, the weavers of cotton cloths numbered 6212 houses and 7279 looms.<sup>69</sup> At Malda and its vicinity, there were about one hundred and twenty houses of weavers who made thin muslin ( malmal ) and turbans and were the only persons in the district who wove these kinds of cloths. We are informed that they had from one to seven ~~houses~~ looms in each house and the total number of looms was about 360.<sup>70</sup>

Buchanan writes : "in the district of Shahabad there are 7025 houses of weavers who work in cotton alone and they had 7950 looms. It is admitted that in these houses there were more than 7950 men able to work but the surplus is said to be employed in agriculture".<sup>71</sup>

In the district of Purnea about 3500 looms were engaged at the time of Buchanan's visit in making finer goods.<sup>72</sup>

In the Chittagong factory ( as the Commercial Resident informed us ) the Company had in 1788 about 2000 effective weavers who ought to deliver Gurrahs and Baftaes (the former being in small proportion) about 3500 pieces per month or about 40,000 pieces in twelve months which would make an investment of upwards of a lakh of Duss Massa rupees exclusive of charges. But instead of that, a little above one half had only been realized since, because they could then obtain higher price by carrying them to others, which he was convinced the weavers did daily to the detriment of public investment.<sup>73</sup>

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69 Martin : Eastern India, Vol: II, PP. 975-76.

70 Ibid: P. 973.

71 Buchanan : Shahabad Report, PP. 410-11.

72 Buchanan : Purnea Report, P. 542.

73 Progs Board of Trade, 19th Sept, 1788, Prog no. 94, Vol: 71.

The above findings may be presented in the form of a Table:

TABLE NO: 4

SIZE OF THE WEAVING POPULATION IN THE BENGAL PRESIDENCY

Names of Factories or regions	The Total population	The Total number of the weavers' houses	The period when the estimate was made	Weavers employed by the Company	Weavers employed by the Private Traders	The Total weaving population
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Dacca	-	-	1787	-	-	40,000
"	-	-	1791	6219	-	-
"	-	-	1799	4951	-	-
"	-	-	Average of 1791-1799	5542	-	-
Dacca aurung only	-	-	1796	-	-	1,600
Sonargaon aurung	5000	300	1833	-	-	-
"	-	1000 to 1200	1804	-	-	-
"	-	-	During the Company's trade	1300 - 1400	-	-
Dumroy	6000	400	1833	-	-	-
Teetabaddy	-	200	1833	-	-	-
Junglebarse	-	100	1833	-	-	-
Dacca district	938,712	-	1801	-	-	-
Dacca city	200,000	-	1801	-	-	-
"	68,000	-	1833	-	-	-
Hurriaul factory	-	-	1807	5204	9200	-
Mow & Azimghur	-	-	1803	3600	9300	-
"	-	-	1804	3500	10200	-
"	-	-	1805	2500	9700	-
"	-	-	1806	3100	9900	-
"	-	-	1807	2900	-	-

CONTD....

TABLE NO: 4 CONTD.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Luckipore	-	-	1796	4503	7542	-
"	-	-	1799	4165	7880	--
"	-	-	1800	4213	7832	-
Huripaul	-	-	1827	-	-	1500
Sonamooky	-	3000	1789	-	-	4000
Santipore	-	-	1822	-	-	50,000
"	-	-	1872	-	-	13,680
Chandernagore	-	-	1810	-	-	1,400
"	41,377	-	1814	-	-	-
Golagore Factory except Chandernagore	-	-	1804	-	-	4,002
Dinajpore district	-	6212	At the time of Buchanan's visit.	-	-	-
Malda	-	120 weaved Mulmuls only	-	-	-	-
Shahabad district	-	7025	-	-	-	-
Chittagong	-	-	1788	2000	-	-

Sources: ( As indicated before ).

By 1825 the cloth establishments in almost all the factories were wound up, only those residencies were retained which supplied the Company's raw silk investment. The factories affected were Dacca, Malda, Buddaul, Hurripaul, Khattorah, Kheerpoy, Midnapore, Santipore, Patna, Sonamooky, Commercolly, Rungpore, Beneras, Mow and Azimghur, Luckipore and Chittagong. The people affected by the discontinuation of the Company's investment in piecegoods were weavers, growers of cotton, spinners, dressers, Ruffoghurs and embroiders. As regards the size of the people the Board of Trade wrote : "To form an estimate of the number of individuals thus thrown out of employment may not be an easy matter but we should suppose it may fairly be calculated at 5,00,000 souls. The distress experienced by them at the time when the Company first suspended their dealing at several factories must have been severe indeed and even now the condition of the greater number of workmen is deplorable".<sup>74</sup> This was the number of individuals, according to the Board of Trade's calculation, affected as a result of the discontinuation of the Company's investment in cotton piecegoods. Besides, there were the private traders and other European Companies who employed a large number of persons for their work. Dr. N.K. Sinha calculated "that private traders, British and "Foreign European" employed the same number of workers as did the East India Company. Perhaps they had a much larger number in their employ. We may not be far wrong in concluding that 10,00,000 people were thrown out of employment. The industry was annihilated".<sup>75</sup> If we assume that each family consisted of at least six members, the total number of people affected would be at least 60,00,000. It is difficult

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74 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827 Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.

75 N. K. Sinha : op.cit. Vol: III, P. 7.

to form an accurate estimate of the total population of Bengal owing to lack of data. An estimate of population of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Benaras compiled by the Collectors in 1789, puts the total at 2,39,48,653.<sup>76</sup> Colebrooke's estimate of the total population in 1804 was 2,70,00,000.<sup>77</sup> Another estimate of 1824 puts it at 3,99,57,561.<sup>78</sup> If we accept the last figure as accurate, the people affected by the decline of the industry would be about  $\frac{1}{6}$ th ( about 16% ) of the total population.

COTTON WEAVING AS A PART-TIME  
OR WHOLE-TIME EMPLOYMENT :

Cotton weaving thus formed the occupation of a considerable section of the total population of Bengal. A number of weavers engaged in weaving as a part-time occupation could thereby supplement their normal income from agriculture. However, to many weavers, weaving was an exclusive occupation and they did not combine it with agriculture. It is interesting to study to what extent cotton weaving was a whole-time or a part-time employment.

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76 Quoted in A. Tripathi : op.cit: P. 265.

77 Ibid., P. 266.

78 Ibid. For a discussion of the Statistical basis of the Pre-Census Population estimates of Bengal, see a Cyclostyled Paper 'A Guide to the Population Estimates of Eastern India' 1811-1830 by Durgaprasad Bhattacharyya, Indian Statistical Institute, Dec, 1972.

Though agriculture was undoubtedly the most important occupation of the bulk of the people, "Vacation from agriculture", as Orme has remarked, left "a much greater number of the inhabitants than can be spared in others, at leisure to apply themselves to the loom so that more cotton and silk are manufactured in Bengal than in thrice the same extent of the country throughout the empire and consequently at much cheaper rates".<sup>79</sup> Thus in Bengal, agriculture and manufactures went hand in hand. In many places, the cotton weavers were husbandmen. They tilled their own soil and if the various processes of weaving and those of agriculture coincided, the work of weaving was obstructed and at times came to a standstill. This, however, does not apply to those regions where the finest muslins were manufactured.

The manufacture of fine muslins of Eastern India, such as "Textile Breeze", "Evening Dew", or "Running Water", required a high degree of specialisation and it was the exclusive occupation of the weavers. As Taylor said : "A ryot quitting his plough to work at the loom or leaving the latter in order to resume the former is a common occurrence, especially among those who make coarser cloths in many parts of India but in Dacca this is seldom the case, weaving being there a distinct trade, to which those practising it devote their whole-time attention".<sup>80</sup> In Dacca the business of weaving was carried on in almost every village of the district but the principal manufacturing towns ( aurungs ) where muslins were manufactured were the City of Dacca, Sonargaon, Dumroy, Teetabaddy, Junglebarry and Bozitpore.

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79 Orme: History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Hindostan, Vol: II, P.4.

80 Taylor : op.cit., P. 73.

The machinery required by the weaver to manufacture finer assortments was small. A loom costing about "two rupees and a half, sticks for warping and a wheel for winding worth two annas, a shop costing four rupees and yarn for two ready money pieces about five rupees in value".<sup>81</sup> The process of manufacture was crude. Even the experts wondered how the Bengali artisans could produce fabrics of exquisite delicacy with machinery of the crudest kind. The explanation lies in the fact that the Bengali weaver was endowed with a fine sensibility of touch, a nice perception of weight and he had also a singular command over muscular action. As Orme said : "As much as an Indian is born deficient in mechanical strength so much in the whole frame endowed with an exceeding degree of sensibility and pliantness. The hand of an Indian Cook wench shall be more delicate than that of an European beauty, the skin and features of a porter shall be softer than those of a professed. The rigid clumsy fingers of a European would scarcely be able to make a piece of canvas with the instruments which are all that an Indian employs in making a piece of cambric".<sup>82</sup>

In Dacca, the manufacture of muslins was conditioned by these factors : (i) the atmosphere (ii) the period when cotton was gathered and (iii) the time required to weave one piece. As weaving depended on these factors, it required the whole-time attention of the weavers. The condition of the atmosphere most favourable to the manufacture of fine muslins was that of a temperature of about 82 degree (F) combined with moisture. The heat and dazzling glare of the sun's rays at mid-day were

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81 Martin : Eastern India : Vol: II, PP. 973-74.

82 Orme : Historical Fragments, PP. 412-413.

generally too powerful to admit of the process being carried on at that time and hence it was the practice amongst the weavers to work only in the morning and afternoon.<sup>83</sup> The best season for weaving fine muslins was during the months of Assar, Sawan and Bhadun ( from 13th of May to 14th August ). In very hot weather, it was sometimes necessary during the operation of weaving to place beneath the extended yarns of the wrap in the loom a few shallow vessels of water, the evaporation from which kept the threads moist and prevented them from breaking.<sup>84</sup> The coarser fabrics could of course be produced throughout the year. But the outturn was generally much greater in summer than in winter.<sup>85</sup>

In Dacca the period of manufacture was very much conditioned by the period when cotton was gathered. All the fine cloths made at Dacca and the other aurungs under the factory were made from cotton grown in Bengal. Mr. Cottrell intimated that fresh or newly gathered cotton retained considerable moisture and thread made from such cotton became soft. But after the lapse of two or three months, it became harder and fit for weaving fine cloths. Hence, threads spun with fresh cotton always became coarse and unfit for weaving cloths of the finer qualities. The thread made from fresh cotton generally reached markets in the months of September and October. The thread spun afterwards was of an excellent quality, since the moisture in cotton dried up after two or three months and threads spun from such cotton became highly elastic. The spinners could draw out delicate threads from such cotton. Such threads reached

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83 Progs Board of Trade, 13th June, 1780, Prog no. 34, Vol: 23.

84 Taylor : op.cit. P. 37.

85 Progs Board of Trade, 11th Nov., 1806, Prog no. 60, Vol: 203.

the markets in the months of December, January, February and March and in the first two weeks of April. Hence, the advances made in December and January, Mr. Cottrell added, should be considered the principal advances. The weavers had to purchase threads of a superior quality and threads of such quality would be available in the markets during this period. But in the months of July and August, the markets would be full of threads of inferior quality because "these were made of two kinds of threads — the refuse of the one year and the very new of the next".<sup>86</sup>

The time required for the manufacture of a piece of muslins also explains why it required the whole-time attention of the weavers. The time required for the manufacture of a piece of muslin of the usual dimensions ( 20 yards x 1 yard ) depended on the quality of the fabric and the skill of the weaver employed in making it. In the latter respect, there existed great diversity --- natural aptitude, hereditary instruction and constant practice. As to time required in weaving different fabrics, it was found that <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ preparations of the tana or wrap thread of a full piece of plain striped cloth of the Dacca station occupied two men, according to the quality of the thread, from ten to thirty days.<sup>87</sup> The weaving of such cloth occupied two persons, one to weave, the other to prepare the threads and attend to the loom, --- if of the ordinary or middling plain assortments, from ten to fifteen days ; if of the fine, twenty ; the superfine thirty ; the fine superfine from forty to fortyfive ; and if the cloth be of the fine superfine

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86 Progs Board of Trade, 13th June, 1780, Prog no. 34, Vol: 23.

87 Taylor : op.cit., P. 39.

dooreas or charkona assortments, sixty days.<sup>88</sup> At other stations, where cloths of higher or less value were made, the time required for manufacturing them is proportionably increased or decreased. A half piece of mulmul khas or circar Ali of the finest thread costing from seventy to eighty rupees, cannot be manufactured in less than five or six months.<sup>89</sup> Many of the finer assortments required eight and ten months a piece to weave.<sup>90</sup> Much less time was taken in the manufacture of coarser fabrics and a piece of inferior muslins costing about two rupees could be made in about a week's time. A whole piece of Narrainpore Jehazy muslin costing two rupees could be made in the course of eight days.<sup>91</sup>

At Santipore, the manufacture of Mulmuls was an exclusive occupation of the weavers. Even the weavers who <sup>waved</sup> ~~waved~~ Mulmuls could not weave mulmuls of superfine quality which required a highly specialised skill. Mr. Fletcher, Commercial Resident at Santipore in 1788, stated that "Mulmuls superfine 40 x  $2\frac{1}{4}$  yards is an assortments which only a few weaver can manufacture well and from the scarcity of proper thread (owing to the famine of 1788) for the cloth, I do not think that the quantity wanted can be procured. The ordinary mulmuls 40 x 2 and 40 x  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards can be manufactured by all the weavers who make the middling mulmuls".<sup>92</sup>

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88 Taylor : op.cit. P. 39.

89 Ibid.

90 Progs Board of Trade, 13th June, 1780, Prog no. 34, Vol: 23.

91 Taylor : op.cit. P. 39.

92 ~~Martin : Eastern India, Vol. II, P. 973.~~

→ Progs Board of Trade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, 1788 Prog no 15, Vol: 74

To some weavers of Malda, weaving was an exclusive occupation. Martin writes that at Malda and its vicinity there were about one hundred and twenty houses of weavers who made thin muslins ( mulmuls ) and turbans and were the only persons in the district who weave these kinds of cloths. Only to these persons was weaving an exclusive occupation.<sup>93</sup>

The weavers of the Kheerpoy factory did not possess lands of their own and hence had to depend entirely on weaving. The Commercial Resident of the factory, Mr. C. Sweedland in Sept 1804, found that

"the weavers at these aurungs are the poorest class of natives in India who together with their families follow no other occupation nor attempt any other means of acquiring a maintenance than that of weaving cloths for which they chiefly depend on the Company's advances. This had been more particularly the case, of late, as few private traders have either advanced or purchased cloths ( owing to the alarm created by Milan and Berlin Decrees that goods would be confiscated ) at any of the aurungs under my charge ; they are reduced to great distress and should the present enhanced price of grain continue, they shall shortly become objects of public charity and consideration".<sup>94</sup>

The weavers of the nine aurungs appertaining to the Luckipore factory were also landless and entirely depended on weaving cloths. In a petition to the Board of Trade in 1816,

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93 Martin : Eastern India : Vol: II, P. 973.

94 Progs Board of Trade, 28th Sept 1804 Prog no. 75, Vol: 177.

12,055 workmen ( under 7679 numbers ) belonging to the nine aurungs under the Luckipore factory thus stated their reactions when they were informed that the Company's factory would be abolished soon :

"We who are Jogees and weavers are not able to perform any other profession besides that of weaving cloths. By this, we have supported ourselves and lived within the Company's territories paying reveeme from year to year and if owing to our misfortune the factory should be abolished and the making of advances ceases, we shall have no means whatever for discharging the Company's balances. We are possessed of no property and are reduced to great distress".<sup>95</sup>

The condition of the weavers of Dacca became pitiable as a result of the abolition of the Dacca factory, since to them weaving was an exclusive occupation. In a petition, to the Board of Trade, Jogul Krishna Paul, Gopey Krishna Paul, Thakur Doss Paul and other weavers of Serampore aurung appertaining to the Dacca factory stated that

"our ancestors and we used to receive advances from the Company and maintain ourselves and our respective families by weaving Company's superior assortments. Owing to our misfortune, the aurung has been abolished, ever since which we and our families are distressed for want of the means of livelihood. We are weavers and do not know any other business. We, a thousand persons must starve for food, if the Board of Trade do not cast a look of kindness towards us and give us orders for cloths".<sup>96</sup>

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95 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd February, 1824, Prog. no. 81, Vol:413, Part I.

96 Progs Board of Trade, 14th June, 1816, Prog. no. 21, Vol: 319, Part I.

The weavers of Dacca aurung in a similar petition ( to the Board of Trade ) stated : "Our ancestors and we as well as four or five hundred workmen under us together with our families maintained ourselves by weaving the Company's commissioned Jandane cloths but no orders having been received last year, we are suffering much distress. We have no other means to maintain ourselves for we have not been brought up in any other line. We do not know the duties of a servant that we might engage ourselves in that capacity".<sup>97</sup>

At Malda, weaving was not an exclusive occupation, except to those already mentioned. The manufacturers combined weaving with agriculture. The Commercial Resident, Mr. Henschman found that the weavers could not support himself and family merely by his loom. A weaver was not only a weaver but commonly also a husbandman and he handled the shuttle and the plough alternatively. The Resident argued with the Board of Trade that "if you interfere with the season in which he sows or the season of harvest, the grievance does not affect him only --- it extends to the Zamindars and injures the revenue of the Company --- one branch is the indisputable support of the other --- the Investment and Revenue must go hand in hand".<sup>98</sup>

At Chittagong, also the weavers combined weaving with agriculture. The process of weaving coincided from time to time with the various phases of agriculture and the former had to be stopped at that time. In 1802 Henry Williams, Resident at the Company's factory at Chittagong, wrote that almost all the Company's weavers being ryots, they

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97 Progs Board of Trade, 14th June, 1816, Prog no.21, Vol: 319, Part I.

98 Progs Board of Trade, 29th February, 1780, Prog. no. 13, Vol: 22.

cultivated lands ; consequently during the months of June, July and August their time was wholly taken up in preparing their lands for sowing and afterwards for reaping the first crop of Paddy. The returns, therefore, from any advances made to them at that period were but slow and the produce of their labours indifferent as the looms were then left to the management of women and children. During the months of March, April and May, the cloths were much finer and better woven than at any other period of the year, since, remaining unemployed at the time, they gave their whole attention to the loom. Hence advances made to the weavers during these months were recovered more easily and in larger proportions than in any other part of the year.<sup>99</sup> In July 1790, the collection of outstanding balances due from the surungs under Malda factory was very much obstructed, as Mr. Udny, the Resident, wrote, "from the weavers being very much engaged in gathering in their crops of grain".<sup>100</sup> The Commercial Residents repeatedly pointed out to the Board of Trade that advances were to be made at specific periods when the weavers were not engaged in their fields. Mr. Udny, the Commercial Resident at Golagore, intimated that he endeavoured his best to realize the old outstanding balances but could not <sup>do</sup> anything. He wanted the principal advances made in the months of April and May. Instead, it was made in November and December. In these two months the weavers were engaged in the fields in harvesting.<sup>101</sup> In a second letter in July 1800, the Resident wrote that if advances were irregularly issued, it would not be possible for him to specify the period at which goods would reach warehouses. He wrote that "in an surung where the greater

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99 Progs Board of Trade, 9th March, 1802, Prog no. 18, Vol:158.  
 100 Progs Board of Trade, 18th February, 1791, Prog no. 13, Vol: 90.  
 101 Progs Board of Trade, 26th June, 1798, Prog no. 49, Vol:136.

number of weavers are likewise husbandmen, it is difficult to regain the time lost whilst they are engaged in the fields".<sup>102</sup>

From the foregoing it appears that to a greater section of the total weaving population, weaving was an exclusive occupation. The manufacture of fine muslins required a high degree of specialisation as well as sufficient time and naturally its manufacture was an exclusive occupation. The weavers could not afford to spend much time on any other occupation such as agriculture. The weavers of Dacca and Santipore come under this category. Next come the weavers who were landless and had to depend entirely on weaving. They did not weave superior assortments like the weavers of Santipore and Dacca. The weavers of Kheerpoy and Luckipore come under this category. To the weavers of Malda, Chittagong and Golagore, weaving was not an exclusive occupation. The weavers of these places possessed lands of their own and combined agriculture with weaving. Weaving was their part-time occupation. The weavers of these places were better off and did not suffer as much as the other weavers after the discontinuation of the Company's investment in cotton piecegoods. But the number of such weavers was small and the majority suffered severely for want of alternative employments.

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102 Progs Board of Trade, 11th Aug 1800 Prog no. 64, Vol: 148, Part II.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GRADUAL DECLINE  
OF COTTON INDUSTRY :

The effects of the decline of the cotton industry in Bengal in the first quarter of the 19th were far-reaching. For centuries, the prosperity of Bengal was due to agriculture as well as domestic handicrafts. Agriculture and manufactures went hand in hand. The balance between the two was maintained for a long time. "But British policy, British skill and British enterprise brought about a commercial revolution, established a new economy and bound India's economy to the heels of the British economy".<sup>103</sup> The beginning of the process dates from about 1793.<sup>103A</sup>

Many were the factors in the gradually declining investment<sup>7</sup> by the English East India Company in cotton piecegoods. By 1787 the spinning and weaving industry in Great Britain was considerably stabilized and Indian goods had increasingly to face the competition of British goods.<sup>104</sup> Secondly, from 1793, England was constantly in a state of warfare, there was a fall in the exports of muslins to France after the outbreak of the French Revolution. These fine stuffs had a large sale in the Court of Versailles. "The French Revolution", observes J.C.Sinha, "practically ruined this trade".<sup>105</sup>

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103 N.K. Sinha : The Economic Hist. of Bengal, Vol: III, P. 1.

103A Some aspects of the process have been indicated earlier ( Supra Chapter III ).

104 Supra : Chapter III.

105 J. C. Sinha : op.cit. P. 250.

The Revolutionary wars in particular largely affected the export trade to Hamburg, Lisbon, Portugal and hence the sudden fall in the Company's sales of piecegoods. The total amount of piecegoods exported on account of the Company in 1792-93 was Sicca Rupees 61,69,686 ; this fell to S Rs. 23,74,950 in 1796-97.<sup>106</sup> The maximum export of piecegoods in 1797-98 was due to the passing of the Warehousing Act of 1798. The value of Bengal piecegoods sold in London was nearly the double the amount of the preceding year.<sup>106A</sup> Private trade also increased after 1793. The Charter Act of 1793 by allowing three thousand tons of shipping annually to private merchants for their trade in the East greatly stimulated the growth of private trade which in the years 1802 and 1803 exceeded the trade of the English Company. Hence, even in 1805, Bengal had a fairly extensive commerce in cotton piecegoods. The figures of Bengal's world-trade in cotton piecegoods are as follows :

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106 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.

106A Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 235.

TABLE NO: 5

Volume of Cotton piecegoods and the  
total merchandise exported from Bengal  
in 1805 to different countries

<u>COUNTRIES</u>	Exports of piecegoods from Bengal in 1805	Total Merchan- dise exported in 1805 S Rs.	Percentage share of the former to the latter
1	2	3	4
DENMARK	SRs. 3,37,632	SRs. 6,51,308	Approx. 51.83%
LISBON	SRs. 12,13,353	SRs. 13,96,343	" 86.90%
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	SRs. 47,63,132	SRs. 62,78,055	" 75.86%
COAST OF MALABAR	SRs. 13,65,093	SRs. 53,60,781	" 25.46%
COAST OF COROMAUNDEL	SRs. 4,07,942	SRs. 24,10,253	" 16.90%
ISLAND OF CEYLON	SRs. 1,03,994	SRs. 4,00,073	" 22.58%
COAST OF SUMATRA	SRs. 85,089	SRs. 4,94,371	" 17.24%
GULFS OF PERSIA AND ARABIA	SRs. 8,45,788	SRs. 21,85,287	" " 38.71%
PULO PINANG AND EASTWARD	SRs. 8,16,612	SRs. 34,80,416	" 23.46%
MANILLA	SRs. 9,15,796	SRs. 9,84,956	" 92.96%
CHINA	SRs. 3,79,469	SRs. 70,79,641	" 5.35%
Commerce with all parts of the world	SRs.1,18,49,670	SRs.3,73,95,877	" 31.67%
<b>T O T A L :</b>	SRs.2,30,83,570	SRs.6,81,17,361	Approx. 33.88%

Source: Columns 1 to 3, Milburn Oriental Commerce, Vol: II.

P. 129, 130, 134, 136, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 146, 147 and  
150 and Column 4 my own calculation.

From the table it appears that cotton piecegoods formed a very considerable part in the total merchandise exported in 1805. Bengal during the period from 1802-1806 had also a very considerable favourable balance of trade against the rest of the world and cotton piecegoods had a large share in it. The picture of Bengal's favourable balance of trade will be clear from the following figures of imports and exports.

Y E A R S	Merchandise exported from Bengal to different parts of the world	Merchandise imported into Bengal from different parts of the world	Exports exceeded the imports by
Between 1802-06	SRs. 18,57,94,144	SRs. 5,37,19,211	SRs.13,20,74,933

Y E A R S	Treasure imported in Bengal	Treasure exported from Bengal	Imports exceeded the exports by
Between 1802-06	SRs. 6,44,50,566	SRs. 19,47,563	SRs.6,25,03,003

The Balance in favour of Bengal in five years

SRs. 13,20,74,933 + SRs. 6,25,03,003 = SRs. 19,45,77,936.

Average per year : SRs. 3,89,15,587.<sup>107</sup>

107 Milburn : Oriental Commerce, Vol: II, P. 150.

In the year 1832-33 though Bengal had a favourable balance of trade against the world, the balance was much reduced. This would be clear from the following table :

In 1832-33, the total amount of Merchandise and Treasure  
imported was           SRs. 2,50,93,018

In 1832-33, the total amount of Merchandise and Treasure  
exported was           SRs. 5,66,94,772.<sup>108</sup>

Thus the balance of Bengal against the world was  
( SRs. 5,66,94,772 - SRs. 2,50,93,018 )  
=       SRs. 3,16,01,754.

This balance in comparison with the average annual balance of the period from 1802 to 1806 was less by ( SRs. 3,89,15,587 - 3,16,01,754 )  
=       SRs. 73,13,833.

The main cause of the reduction in Bengal's favourable balance of trade during the period was the decline of the export-trade in cotton piecegoods. Cotton piecegoods formed a very considerable amount in the total export trade of Bengal. The Company's investment in cotton piecegoods amounted to about 67 lakhs on an average in the 1780s and 1790s. Besides, there was considerable private trade in it.

From 1806 on, the Berlin and Milan Decrees of Napoleon largely restricted the continental markets of Bengal cotton piecegoods. But the sale of Indian piecegoods did not immediately decrease. A smuggling business continued in the sale of Indian piecegoods of finer assortments in Paris and the rest of France. "Napoleon" says N.K. Sinha, "could not make commerce manoeuvre like a regiment".<sup>109</sup> There were "about 1,00,000 smugglers along an immense frontier. From Heligoland Jersey, Sicily, Salonica, Dalmatia, trade was carried on with much friction",<sup>110</sup> but it did not cease altogether. But the demand was confined only to superior assortments. The Court of Directors wrote : "our demand is only for the superior fabrics and we desire the Board of Trade may consider whether it may not be practicable to adopt a proportionate scale beyond which no fine goods of the lower letters shall be in future received on our accounts".<sup>111</sup> The demand of India calicoes for British consumption was extremely limited as the market was amply supplied from British looms with lower assortments.

In March 1808, the Court of Directors wrote again of the depressionary trend : "this branch ( cotton piecegoods ) of our commerce continues to be very materially depressed by the suspension of Export trade which affects each of its three branches, ( Muslins, Calicoes and prohibited goods ) in greater or lesser degree and compels us to frame the Present Indent on a still narrower scale than that adopted last year".<sup>112</sup> In the allotment of the total investment of 64 lakhs of Sicca rupees to different articles, a great change was marked. In order of importance and of

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109 N.K.Sinha : op.cit. Vol.III, P.2.

110 Quoted Ibid: P.2.

111 Progs Board of Trade, 3rd April, 1807 Prog no. 24, Vol: 207.

112 Progs Board of Trade, 11th March, 1808 Prog no. 14, Vol: 218.

the total amount allotted, cotton piecegoods came to be relegated to the second position :

Raw Silk	:	SRs	24,00,000
Piecegoods	:	SRs	19,00,000
Sugar	:	SRs	10,00,000
Saltpetre	‡	SRs	4,93,418 - 3 - 3
Sunn	:	SRs	1,30,000
Hemp and Hempseal	:	SRs	41,000
Worsted carpet	:	SRs	2,500
Agent Commission	:	SRs	3,38,345
Export Warehouse Charge	:	SRs	94,736 -12 - 9
<u>T O T A L</u>	:	SRs	64,00,000 - 0 - 0 <sup>113</sup>

The process of this decline quickened after 1813. The Company's trade for the first time felt the full impact of the Industrial Revolution in England. The British factories produced good quality muslins at a very low cost and very soon Bengal cotton piecegoods were supplanted by British manufactures. The value of cotton piecegoods exported to London on account of the Company in 1792-93 was SRs. 61,67,851 ; it dwindled to SRs.34,41,141 in 1813-14 and came to as low as to SRs. 5,43,376 in 1821-22 and to SRs. 3,42,843 in 1823-24.<sup>114</sup> England was the most important market of Bengal cotton piecegoods. England now became an active rival of Bengal manufactures in the markets of "Foreign Europe". In his 'Report upon the Inland customs and Town Duties of the Bengal Presidency (1835), Tr<sup>e</sup>v<sup>e</sup>lyan provides data, which shows the displacement of cotton piecegoods, first in the foreign markets and then in the home market.

113 Progs Board of Trade, 10th June 1808 Prog no. 27, Vol: 221.  
114 " " " " 29th June, 1827<sup>1827</sup> Vol: 453, Part II.

TABLE NO: 6

Figures showing the displacement of  
Bengal Cotton Piecegoods first in the  
Foreign markets and then in the Home  
markets

Y E A R S 1	Cotton goods Exported 2	Cotton goods Imported 3	Twist imported 4
1813-14	SRs 52,91,458	SRs 9,070	
1814-15	" 84,90,760	" 45,000	
1815-16	" 1,31,51,427	" 2,63,800	
1816-17	" 1,65,94,380	" 3,17,602	
1817-18	" 1,32,72,854	" 11,22,372	
1818-19	" 1,15,27,385	" 26,58,940	
1819-20	" 90,30,796	" 15,82,353	
1820-21	" 85,40,763	" 25,59,642	
1821-22	" 76,64,820	" 46,78,650	
1822-23	" 80,09,732	" 65,82,351	
1823-24	" 58,70,533	" 37,20,540	
1824-25	" 60,17,559	" 54,96,816	SRs 1,23,145
1825-26	" 58,34,638	" 41,24,159	" 75,276
1826-27	" 39,48,422	" 43,46,054	" 8,82,743
1827-28	" 28,76,313	" 52,52,793	" 19,11,205
1828-29	" 22,23,163	" 79,96,383	" 35,22,640
1829-30	" 13,26,423	" 52,16,226	" 15,15,321
1830-31	" 8,57,280	" 60,12,729	" 31,12,138
1831-32	" 8,49,887	" 45,64,047	" 42,85,517
1832-33	" 8,22,891	" 42,64,707	" 23,87,807

Source: S.C. Trevelyan : Report upon Inland customs and Town Duties of  
the Bengal Presidency.

An analysis of the figures in the table reveals some interesting things. We note that exports of cotton goods were declining and the imports of British goods were increasing. The fall in exports was continuous from 1817-18, though in the year 1822-23 there was a slight rise. But from 1826-27 on it was remarkable, and in 1832-33 the total exports were even less than  $\frac{1}{7}$ th of the total exports in 1825-26. The steady fall in the exports of Bengal cotton piecegoods was not solely the effect of the competition with the manufactures of Great Britain and other countries. It also resulted from an increased exports to Great Britain of raw cotton. Cotton became so scarce that it was either not at all procurable by the manufacturer or if procurable, the rates were so high, that it left them with little or no profit<sup>115</sup> in the manufacture.

The total exports in 1816-17 amounted to SRs. 1,65,94,380 ; in the following year, i.e. 1817-18 it amounted to SRs. 1,32,72,854 ; one of the causes of the decrease in exports in 1817-18 was the non-availability of cotton by the manufacturers. In 1817-18 the increase in the exports of raw cotton amounted to 3,47,757 maunds and this increased exports resulted in a rise in the price of raw cotton of Rs. 2-8-0 annas on each maund.<sup>116</sup> In 1816-17 the wholesale market value of cotton was Rupees 12-6 a maund while in 1817-18 it rose to Rs. 14-8 the maund. In 1816-17, the total exports by individuals were 6,20,263 maunds while in 1817-18 it was 9,68,020 maunds.<sup>117</sup> The exports of raw cotton continued.

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115 Board of Customs, Salt and opium, 6th January 1826, Prog no.105, Vol:114.

116 Board of Customs, Salt and opium, 6th January 1826, Prog no.105, Vol:114.

117 Ibid.

Y E A R	Cotton exported to U.K.	Cotton exported to World
1823-24	SRs. 4,51,021	SRs. 23,47,586
1824-25	" 5,01,779	" 32,28,335
1825-26	" 4,76,169	" 30,57,130

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The percentage share of the raw cotton exports was as follows:

1814-15	:	8.0
1828-29	:	15.0
1834-35	:	21.0

Though the fall in the export-oriented production did not mean a total extinction of cotton weaving as a profession, the loss of export markets surely adversely affected the urban weavers who weaved finer class of goods. These goods had no markets whatsoever in India after the disappearance of the Indigenous Courts and princes. Taylor writes that at Dacca in 1839 the produce of the looms chiefly consisted of 'flowered muslins' and 'Khassidas', besides the common cloths of the country but the quantity was small compared to what it was in former years.<sup>120</sup> The decline in cotton manufacture, indeed, occasioned a great diminution of the population of the city of Dacca. In 1800,<sup>1800,</sup> the inhabitants<sup>121</sup> of Dacca was 2,00,000 but the total number was not more than 68,038 in 1839.

118 A. Tripathi : op.cit. P.202.

119 K.N.Chaudhuri : The Eco.Development of India under the East India Company, P.26.

120 Taylor: Topography and Statistics of Dacca, P. 191.

121 Ibid.

It may be argued that there gradually emerged a home market in cotton goods and the import of cheap yarn and twist greatly facilitated this. Apparently it seemed that imports of cheap yarns from 1824-25 greatly strengthened the competitive position of the Bengal cotton weavers vis-a-vis British weavers. But in reality this was not so. The imports of British cotton goods into Bengal began from 1813-14 but that of British yarn from 1824-25. During these ten years, the cheap machine-made products of Bengal flooded the markets of India and by this time most of the important weaving manufactories had to be closed down for loss of export markets.<sup>122</sup> The importation of cheap yarns did little to ameliorate the sufferings of the weavers of Bengal because they had to weave cloths by manual labour. The hand-made products could not stand long in competition with the machine-made products. The productivity of the British weavers with the same yarn was increasing rapidly while that of the Indian weavers was stationary. Again, as Gadgil writes, in the matter of quality, the Indian weavers could easily hold his own against the British weavers but in the matter of price, he was hopelessly beaten by the machine-made goods.<sup>123</sup> Hence the demands for English products for domestic consumption increased and the home market in cotton piecegoods only marginally increased. This was evident from the fast increase in the number of imported cotton piecegoods.<sup>124</sup> Bengal was required to produce raw materials only.

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122 Infra.

123 Gadgil : op.cit. P. 43.

124 Infra.

The actual percentage share of the important items of export trade in the total value after 1813 for a selected number of years is illustrated by the following table :

**TABLE NO: 7**

India's exports, commodity composition, percentage shares of selected items in total value

Y E A R	Indigo	Piece-goods	Raw Silk	Cotton	Opium	Sugar
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1814-15	20.0	14.3	13.3	8.0	Not available	3.0
1828-29	27.0	11.0	10.0	15.0	17.0	4.0
1834-35	15.0	7.0	8.0	21.0	25.0	2.0
1839-40	26.0	5.0	7.0	20.0	10.0	7.0
1850-51	10.0	4.0	4.0	12.7	34.0	10.0
1857-58	6.1	2.9	2.9	15.6	32.7	4.3

Source: Computed by K.N.Chaudhuri, op.cit. P.26.

"This broad structure of the commodity composition of India's export trade", says K.N.Chaudhuri, "confirms the widely held opinion that the most striking change in the character of her international trade in the first half of the 19th Century <sup>lay</sup> in the almost entire transformation of her exports into the category of primary commodities with a corresponding concentration on manufactured goods in her exports. The manufacturing and commercial interests in England were beginning to be aware of India's position as a potential supplier of raw material and the advantages which accrued from it to the home industries".<sup>125</sup>

125 K.N.Chaudhuri, op.cit. P. 24.

The displacement of Bengal manufactures by British manufactures was very much facilitated by the imposition of duties on Bengal goods in the British market. In 1813, plain muslins as well as muslins flowered or stitched were subjected to an ad valorem duty of more than forty percent and upon calicoes and dimities the duty was raised to slightly above eighty five percent.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, the Bengal Government by Regulation IV of 1815 reduced the import duty on British goods to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  percent which proved still more favourable to the importation of British cotton fabrics into Bengal. Sir Charles truly observed : "Bengal piecegoods have been displaced in the foreign market to the extent of about a crore of rupees a year and in the home market ( Cotton twist included ) to the extent of about 80 lakhs. Even the trifling quantity of piecegoods which is still exported is for the most part made from English twists".<sup>127</sup>

"What is to become of all the people who were employed in working up this great annual amount" ( Rs. 1,80,00,000 ) ( Sir S.C. Trevelyan wondered,<sup>128</sup> unless we favour their transfer to other employments by giving freedom to those branches of industry in which India really excels".<sup>128</sup> But the Government of India did not move its little finger to save the starving millions whose occupation was nearly gone. The English East India Company was not in a position to protect the national industry of Bengal from the competition of its new rival. It was not even possible to reserve for the Bengal industry its foreign market. The East India Company enjoying special privileges from British Parliament was afraid of antagonising the manufacturing interest in England by restricting the imports of British cotton goods to India. They looked at the question of Lancashire

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126 H.R.Ghosal : op.cit. P. 27.

127 Quoted in B.D.Basu: The ruin of Indian Trade and Industries, P.35.

128 Ibid.

competition not from the point of view of the ruling power in Bengal but solely from the standpoint of its pecuniary interest as a trading body.

Dacca was the most important centre of cotton-weaving.

"The continued prosperity of Dacca throughout the 18th Century and its catastrophic decline in the opening years of the 19th Century" says N.K.Sinha, "serve as a measure and symbol of Bengal's long dominance in world-trade in cotton piecegoods and her speedy downfall".<sup>129</sup>

In the year 1753, the total exports from Dacca amounted to Arcot Rupees 28,50,000. The details were as follows :<sup>130</sup>

The Emperor at Delhi ( for the use of Emperor )	(a)	1,00,000
The Nawab at Murshidabad ( for the use of the Nawab and his Court )	(b)	3,00,000
Jaggat Seth ( the great banker ) of Murshidabad	(c)	1,50,000
For Home Consumption		
Turannies for the consumption of upper provinces	(d)	1,00,000
Pattans	(e)	1,50,000
Armenians for Bussorah, Mocha and Judda markets	(f)	5,00,000

129 N.K.Sinha: op.cit. Vol: III. P.4.

130 Progs Board of Trade, 1st Dec 1801, Prog no. 85, Vol: 156.

Mughals : Partly for home consumption partly for foreign	(g)	4,00,000
Hindus for home consumption	(h)	2,00,000
English Company for Europe	(i)	3,50,000
English individuals supposed for foreign market	(k)	2,00,000
French Company for Europe	(l)	2,50,000
French individuals supposed for foreign market	(m)	50,000
Dutch Company for Europe	(n)	1,00,000

Estimated Prime cost of Dacca goods<sup>o</sup> Arcot Rupees 28,50,000.

The Dacca muslins were introduced into England between 1666 and 1670. The English, the Dutch and subsequently the French carried on an extensive trade in Dacca till 1787 in which year it reached the highest water mark. Taylor estimated that in 1787 the whole commerce of Dacca amounted to one crore of rupees or 1.25 million sterling.<sup>131</sup>

The volume of goods manufactured at the Dacca surungs for exportation between 1790 and 1797 was as follows :

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131 Taylor : Topography and Statistics of Dacca, P. 363.

TABLE NO: 8

The volume of cotton piecegoods  
manufactured at Dacca from 1790 to 1797

<u>Y E A R</u>	Private trade as per statement annually transmitted by the Resident	Company's trade received from the <u>aurungs</u>	<u>T O T A L</u>
1	2	3	4
1790	SRs. 14,91,109-14-6	SRs. 7,45,548- 8-7	SRs 22,36,658-7- 1
1791	" 10,80,893- 6-2	" 4,01,121- 2-11	" 14,82,014- 9- 1
1792	" 10,11,103- 2-0	" 6,37,096-12-10	" 16,48,199-14- 0
1793	" 6,89,926-10-0	" 5,78,286- 0- 2	" 12,68,212-10- 2
1794	" 4,13,665- 2-0	" 4,60,706-15- 9	" 8,74,363- 1- 9
1795	" 6,62,069- 3-0	" 5,16,093- 3- 1	" 11,78,162- 6- 1
1796	" 6,48,781-13-0	" 5,52,171- 9- 1	" 12,00,953- 6- 1
1797	" 8,94,157- 0-0	" 5,07,388- 6-11	" 14,01,545- 6-11
1798	" 6,39,948- 0-0	" 4,39,799-13-11	" 10,79,743-13-11
1799	" 7,52,450- 0-0	" 5,03,710-15- 7	" 12,56,160-15- 7
<u>T O T A L</u>	SRs. 82,84,095- 2-8	SRs. 53,41,923- 8-10	SRs1,36,26,018-11-6

Source: Progs Board of Trade, 1st Dec, 1801, Prog no. 85, Vol: 156.

But in the Court's indent for 1813, Dacca obtained only SRs 1,20,188 out of SRs 19,76,856 allotted to cotton piecegoods.<sup>132</sup> In 1818 the Dacca factory was closed down. It was not the freight nor the protective duty which prompted the Court to abandon it in 1818 but the sharp reduction in the prices of British cotton goods of a similar description, and the fine piecegoods of Bengal increasingly lost their market. The following table will show the comparative prices of British and Indian piecegoods.

TABLE NO: 9

COMPARATIVE PRICES OF BRITISH AND INDIAN PIECEGOODS

Description of Articles 1	Price (Made in England) 2	Price (Made in India) 3
Doreas (20 yds piece)	55 shillings	Dacca - 155 shillings Kheerpoy - 45 " Hurripaul- 89 "
Cossaes	60 shillings	Malda and Dacca - 95 "
Mulmuls	22 to 35 "	Santipore - 47-76 " Kheerpoy - 39 "
Nainsocks	33 "	Kheerpoy - 61 "
Seerhandconnees	50 to 64 "	Dacca and Santipore 80-89 "

Source: A Tripathi: Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency P. 165.

A more detailed study of the difference could be made from the following table :

<sup>132</sup> Progs Board of Trade, 26th January 1813 Prog no. 8 Vol:278, Part.II.

TABLE NO: 10

Difference of cost between  
the English and country thread

<u>ASSORTMENTS</u>	Cost of English thread warp and weft	Cost of country thread for warp and weft	Difference in favour of English thread	Difference in favour of English thread percentage
1	2	3	4	5
	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	
Mulmuls Cossejurah ordinary 40 x 2	4- 0- 0	6-13- 4	2-13- 4	70.833%
Terrindams Chander- konnah Fine 40 x 2	4- 0- 0	10- 8- 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 -8- 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	163.737%
Nyansooks Chander- konnah Fine 40 x 2	4-13- 4	8-14- 8	4- 1- 4	84.481%
Seerhand connahs Santipore 40 x 2	7-12-10 $\frac{3}{4}$	10- 5-10	2- 8-11 $\frac{1}{4}$	32.777%
Nyansooka Chander- konnah, Superfine 40 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$	7-12-10 $\frac{3}{4}$	13- 3-10 $\frac{3}{4}$	5- 7- 0	69.658%
Mulmuls Santipore fine 40 x 2	6- 1- 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	9-13- 4	3-11- 6 $\frac{3}{4}$	60.920%
Mulmuls Santipore Superfine 40 x 2	9- 4- 0	12- 1- 1	2-13- 1	30.46%
Seerbetties Santipore 40 x 2	10- 5- 4	12- 1- 1	1-11- 9	16.784%
Seerhand connahs jungle fine 40 x 2	7- 1- 4	13- 8- 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	6- 7- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	91.066%
Seerhand connahs Jungle fine 40 x 2	7-15- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$	13- 0- 0	5-10-10 $\frac{3}{4}$	63.645%
Seerhand connahs Jungle fine superfine 40 x 2	9- 0- 0	15-10-10 $\frac{3}{4}$	6-10-10 $\frac{3}{4}$	74.485%
Dooreas Cossejurah Moote choors charcona fine 40 x 2	7- 1- 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	12-12- 0	5-10- 2 $\frac{3}{4}$	97.307%
Dooreas Jootimaulas 20 x 2	2-13- 1	5-14- 0	3- 0-11	108.503%
Dooreas Batta Cogzie Hurripaul Fine Superfine 40 x 2	9-12-10 $\frac{1}{2}$	18-10- 3	8-13-4 $\frac{1}{2}$	90.119%

Source: Progs Board of Trade, 16th April, 1822, Prog No. 23, Vol: 391. Part I.

The Company's factory at Santipore was also wound up. The cloth establishments at Patna and its subordinate stations were wound up in 1819, though some of their factories including that of Patna were maintained till 1835 for the supply of saltpetre. With the rapid decrease of trade in coarse calicoes, India lost her only industry which had an international market. By 1825, the cloth establishments in almost all the factories were wound up. Only those commercial residencies were retained which supplied the Company's raw silk investments. In 1833, there were ten residencies in the Bengal Presidency.<sup>134</sup> By the Charter Act of 1833, the Company ceased to be a trading body and within the next two years the remaining residencies too were abolished. Private traders disappeared long before.

All these happened between 1793-1833. A silent economic revolution thus took place. "That this was a revolutionary development in India's foreign trade there is no doubt. For the first time perhaps, in the history of her trading relations with the West, India stood in the position of a buyer whose traditionally low cost products were being pushed out of both the domestic and foreign markets by European products".<sup>135</sup> A serious dislocation was caused in the socio-economic structure of the country by this change. In the language of the Board of Trade :

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134 Progs Board of Trade, 5th Dec, 1833, Prog no. 87, Vol: 530.

135 K.N.Chaudhuri : op.cit. P. 35.

"The weavers whom the Company retained in their constant employ for the purpose of manufacturing their own annual investment of Cotton piecegoods to supply the Europe market have not only been deprived of that vital aid by the extinction of all the factories heretofore maintained by the Company for the production of goods of that description, but these weavers as well as others, their brethren, throughout the country have from a similar cause, namely, the successful application of machinery to the production at a very reduced cost of cotton thread been simultaneously cut off from another very profitable source of employment, which had existed during a long course of years, namely supplying the demand for cotton piecegoods to foreign Europe and a later period to the United States of North America, France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal and North America, each of these countries were in the habit of importing annually into thence direct from Bengal large quantities of the cotton manufactures of this country, whereas now we believe that not a single piece finds its way into any of them --- a revolution so mighty and complete we conceive is hardly to be paralled in the history of commerce".<sup>136</sup>

"It was not the policy of the East India Company to foster Indian industries".<sup>137</sup> The Directors could not afford to ignore the organised pressure groups in England. Even as early as 1769 the Court of Directors wished that the manufacture of raw silk should be encouraged and that of silk fabrics discouraged. At the time of the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1813, it was clear that Parliament wanted to promote the interest of the manufactures of England. British manufactures were forced into India while Indian manufactures were shut out from England by prohibitive tariffs. By this policy, wrote Raming, a merchant, "India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing to that of an agricultural country".<sup>138</sup> The Board of Trade wrote :

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136 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827 Prog no. 48, Vol:453, Part II.  
 137 R.C.Dutt : The Eco Hist of India under Early British Rule, P. 256.  
 138 Quoted in R.C.Dutt op.cit., P. 262.

"were Bengal an independent principality such a state of things would not be suffered to endure for a moment. Bengal to ensure its own artisans a preference of sale in their own market would instantly lay on a protecting duty on the foreign cotton goods of Europe amply adequate in amount to secure that object and we cannot but think that even situated as Bengal now is, a dependency of Great Britain and paying a large revenue to the governing power, it would seem to behove that power by the removal of unnecessary burthen under which any class of their subjects may be labouring to render the payment of their tribute as early as possible."<sup>139</sup>

But this was not to be.

The loss of foreign markets of the Bengal cotton piecegoods was deplorable but still more deplorable was the loss of the Indian market. The machine-made products of England were definitely inferior to the Bengal hand-made piecegoods in point of durability, fineness and texture but the customers cared more for cheapness than for anything else. Another reason for it has been assigned by Dr. Gadgil. "One of the most harmful effects of a foreign rule, is the imposition on the conquered peoples of the ideals of the conqueror".<sup>140</sup> The people of Bengal were more and more attracted towards "Made in England" products and a feeling that "anything that is English must be good and fine" began to grow, and this among many other factors contributed to the downfall of Bengal's Cottage industry.

By the year 1833, the process of 'de-industrialization' of Bengal, which begun from 1793 went quite far. India lost a great art and the artisans lost their employment. The housewife's spindle seldom

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139 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.  
140 D.R.Gadgil: The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times, P.41.

now twirled on the cotton-floor. The affected persons were weavers, spinners, dyers, the bleachers, the cotton beaters and the needle workers. The effect of the decline of the industry "has been a continuous tendency to ruralization".<sup>141</sup> There are no accurate figures relating to the proportion of people that derived their subsistence from agricultures in the beginning of the 19th Century but towards the end of the period this tendency has been persistent. There is no doubt that the weavers who were badly hit by the loss of occupation largely swelled the rank of agriculturists.

SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT :

The pertinent question is, whether or not, these displaced persons could find alternative employments. The factories that suffered most were Dacca, Malda, Buddaul, Hurripaul, Cuttorah, Kheerpoy, Midnapore, Santipore, Patna, Sonamooky, Commercolly, Rungpore, Beneras, Mow and Azimghur, Luckipore and Chittagong.

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141 Rohini Choudhuri : The Evolution of Indian Industries, P. 32.

Robert Brooke, Resident of the Hurripaul factory, found that in the aurungs of Cuttorah and Chaundoclea, the weavers from whom balances were outstanding, were engaged in the manufacture of coloured cloths for the Company and were very much distressed as advances were stopped and many had gone to different places to support themselves. The weavers who remained in the aurungs had no alternative but to work as coolies.<sup>142</sup>

Mr. Charles Bayley, the Resident of the Company's factory at Beneras, stated that the weavers of his residency had suffered a great deal immediately after the abolition of the Company's cloth establishments, but gradually the situation improved. The weavers gainfully employed themselves in "agricultural, mechanical or commercial pursuits". However, the condition of the spinners became really deplorable. The female population was mostly engaged in spinning and they depended wholly on it for their maintenance. They were severely hit by the discontinuation of the Company's business and the exports of thread from England. It was not possible for them to turn to any other pursuits, mechanical or agricultural.

Mr. Bayley further informed that piecegoods manufactured in England were highly appreciated at Beneras and in the adjacent aurungs on their first introduction for its cheapness and apparent superiority. The weavers were seriously affected because the sale of their products appreciably declined. But this did not continue for long. The 'country products' were very soon preferred to the "Made in England" products.

The country manufactures were more durable and hence the country consumers purchased the 'country-products' though the British products looked more glossy and were cheaper in price. But these 'country-products' were meant for country consumption only. The European, Asiatic and the other foreign markets were closed to the 'country products'. The decline of the export-trade in cotton piecegoods adversely affected the weavers to a considerable extent, though their condition in Benaras and in the adjoining aurungs was not as bad as in the other factories.<sup>143</sup>

Robert Richardson, Resident at Commercolly factory, wrote in 1826 that the weavers of the aurungs under his residency were in a very impoverished condition and the proportion employed in weaving and other work might be as follows :

Approximately 37% were employed in weaving cloths  
for native users ; Dhooties, Chaddars,  
Baftaes etc.  
31% agricultural pursuits  
13% Navigation  
19% all kinds of work and with difficulty earned  
a subsistence for daily food.<sup>144</sup>

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143 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II

144 Ibid.

Mr. Robert Brooke further reported that in the district of Hooghly, the condition of the weavers had become really pitiable after the discontinuation of the English Company's trade in cotton piecegoods. Of all the weavers, he came to learn, only 600 received advances from the native merchants for a kind of cloth called Seersuckies, ( which were still in demand ), by which they somehow maintained themselves and their families. Their economic condition was altogether different when they received advances from the English Company. Moreover, they then received advances from the other European ~~T~~Traders like the Danes, French, Dutch and the Portuguese. The trade of these Companies was discontinued long before and after the discontinuation of the English Company's trade in the recent past, the weavers could not expect advances from any source. He was informed that another 900 weavers had borrowed money from the native merchants and manufactured Cossaes, which cost them Rs. 12 and Rs. 13 per piece. They were selling these cloths upon a very small profit at the different hauts and bazars and were consequently in a very depressed state. The weavers had not become agricultural labourers because it was against their custom to hold the plough. Hence, the rest of the weavers had also borrowed money from the native merchants and were trying to manufacture cloths. The English manufactured cotton goods were not preferred by the country consumers and were not to be found in the hauts and bazars. <sup>145</sup>

The condition of the weavers of Kheerpoy became equally deplorable after the discontinuation of the English Company's trade there. Mr. Watts intimated that it would be clear from the wretched

condition of the villages where the weavers used to reside. Formerly populous and prosperous these villages now bore the <sup>marks</sup> ~~marks~~ of poverty and were largely deserted. Only a handful of the weavers were still engaged in the manufacture of cotton cloths. These were meant exclusively for the country markets. The majority of the weavers were working as coolies. However, they also admitted that the English manufactured cotton goods were not much in demand in the markets of Kheerpoy and its neighbourhood and a few people who had used cloths did not like them because "they complained that they lasted no length of time".<sup>146</sup>

The conditions<sup>different</sup> of the weavers of Malda seems to have been much from the condition of the weavers of the other factories. Mr. Grant wrote that the weavers were not at all adversely affected after the discontinuation of the English Company's trade there. The problem of an alternative employment was not a problem at all to the weavers of Malda. The cause for it was the custom which was prevalent there. Mr. Grant stated that no objection on the score of caste was raised there to rearing of silk-worms by the weavers. They also easily resorted to the other mechanical or agricultural pursuits in large numbers. Moreover, a section of the weavers kept themselves engaged in weaving cotton and silk-goods which were still in demand in the markets of India.<sup>147</sup>

Unlike in the other factories, the British goods had a ready sale at Santipore. But gradually the consumers felt the "English cloth neither wears nor washes so well as the country made". But still the

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146 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.

147 Ibid.

richer class of people used the "Made in England" goods, ( though they admitted "the English cloths do not stand the length of time" ). They used them because "it was English and anything that was English must be good and fine". The volume of British goods brought into Santipore was very considerable. The result was that a large number of weavers were thrown out of employment. Mr. E. Marjoribanks, the Resident of the Company's factory at Santipore, reported that very many of them actually starved. The situation improved a little only after the importation of cotton yarn ( mule twist ) from 1823-24 on. The weavers manufactured cloths with the imported cotton twist and sold cloths at a much lower rates than before. But still they earned some profit because they could purchase the imported yarn at much cheaper rates. Thus, the weavers of Santipore, using the imported twists somehow maintained themselves.<sup>148</sup> The Board of Trade admitted : "Were the Indian weavers able readily to procure threads of suitable quality at the European rates or even at the Indian market rates, he would maintain a successful competition with imported cotton goods from Europe."<sup>149</sup>

At Sonamooky, after the discontinuation of the English Company's trade, the weavers manufactured cloths on the advances of the country-merchants. These cloths were sent to the Calcutta markets for sale. But most of the cloths remained unsold or did not sell even at the prime cost. The weavers did not therefore any longer get advances from the country-merchants and were left absolutely without any employment. Mr. Cheap, the Resident, found that most of them were "Thrown at large on the world, some becoming saunyasis, some byragis, other coolies,

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148 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827, Prog no. 48, Vol: 453, Part II.

149 Progs Board of Trade, April 1828, Vol: 454: Quoted in N.K.Sinha  
op.cit. Vol.III, P.9.

very few agriculturists and some mechanics". Some women and children found employment at the silk filature --- "a vast number had died", the Resident reported, "principally from taking to drinking". About fifty percent of the total weavers died. The conditions of the silk-weavers was a littler better than that of the cotton weavers. The opening of the road from Burdwan to Bankura through Sonamooky greatly facilitated the movement of the "west country travellers" to Sonamooky and these travellers carried the goods to the different parts of western India. But very soon, the demands of Sonamooky goods in western India ceased. The weavers then migrated to Cossimbazar. However, the change<sup>2</sup> of place proved very fatal to the weavers<sup>150</sup>, "as very few were afterwards heard of".<sup>150</sup>

With the decline of the cotton industry, a considerable number of people in the district of Purnea, Tirhut, Bhagalpur, Patna, Gaya, Shahabad and also in some other parts of Bihar were thrown out of employment. In Purnea, 13,500 looms were employed in finer and coarse goods.<sup>151</sup> Most of them were entirely deserted. With the desertion of looms the weavers' net earning of Rs. 4,73,000 was annually lost.<sup>152</sup> Women employed in spinning were deprived of a net profit of Rs. 10,00,000 annually.<sup>153</sup> In Bhagalpur, 1,60,000 women were employed in spinning.<sup>154</sup> Altogether 7279 looms were on work.<sup>155</sup> After 1833, most of the looms were deserted and weavers were thrown out of employment.

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150 Progs Board of Trade, 29th June, 1827 Prog no.48, Vol:453, Part.II.

151 Buchanan : Purnea Report, P. 543.

152 Calculated on the basis of figure available in Buchanan's Purnea Report, P. 543.

153 Buchanan : Purnea Report, P. 539.

154 Martin : op.cit. Vol: II, P. 267.

155 Buchanan : An Account of the District of Bhagalpur, P.616.

In Shahabad, the number of women employed in Spinning was 1,59,500.<sup>156</sup> Their earning was, however, very small. No woman could earn more than a net profit of Rs. 1-8 ans annually, while the women at Patna and Behar had a profit  $\frac{3}{4}$  Rupees.<sup>157</sup> No doubt, it was a very small income, "but this little was added as Dr. Buchanan tells us, "to the income of families to which the women belonged."<sup>158</sup> In all, 7025 houses were engaged in weaving.<sup>159</sup> The number of looms employed in cloth manufacturing was 7950.<sup>160</sup> But when the spinning and weaving was rendered an unprofitable business during the third decade of the 19th Century most of the looms were deserted. In Patna and Gaya districts, the number of looms employed in the manufacture of chadars or Table cloths was 750 each having a profit of Rs. 108 annually.<sup>161</sup> But with the decline of the industry, these persons, particularly women employed in spinning had to suffer a lot. Dr. Buchanan thus described the development.

"By far the greater part of these spin only a few hours in the afternoon, and upon the average estimate the whole value of the thread that each spins in a year is worth nearly 7 rupees 2 annas 8 pies, giving for the total annual value of Rs. 23,67,277 and by a similar calculation the raw material at the retail price will amount to Rupees 12,86,272 leaving a profit of Rs. 10,81,005 for the spinners or Rs.  $\frac{3}{4}$  ( 6s. 6d the year ) for each ... As the demand, therefore, for fine goods has for some years been constantly diminishing, the women have suffered very much".<sup>162</sup>

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156 Buchanan ; An Account of the District of Shahabad, P.408.  
 157 Ibid. P. 408.  
 158 Martin : op.cit. Vol.I, P.9.  
 159 Buchanan : An Account of the District of Shahbad, P.410.  
 160 Ibid. P.410.  
 161 Martin : op.cit. Vol.I, P.350.  
 162 Ibid. P.350.

Such reports of the Commercial Residents from different factories<sup>x</sup> show that the condition of the weavers considerably worsened after the discontinuation of the English Company's<sup>c</sup> investment in cotton piecegoods. Private traders also disappeared and the other European Companies also discontinued their trade in cotton piecegoods. The result was that most of the weavers lost their only employment. They were not trained in other works and hence most of them had to work as coolies to maintain themselves and their family. Some of them turned to agricultural, mechanical or commercial pursuits. Only a small section of them could somehow maintain themselves by weaving ordinary cloths meant for consumption in the country and selling these in the hauts and bazars. The importation of cheap British yarns did very little to ameliorate the sufferings of the weavers. It was only in Santipore that a handful of them could employ themselves in weaving with the help of British ~~yarns~~<sup>yarns</sup>. In other places, the imported textiles were much preferred and country manufactures mostly remained unsold. The condition of the spinners was still more deplorable. The female population was mostly engaged in it and they were thrown completely out of employment. They could not turn to agricultural or other pursuits, and, indeed died in large numbers.

The vital role of the Manchester-made textiles and yarns in bringing about the collapse of the cotton industry of Bengal in the first quarter of the 19th Century has been altogether ignored by Professor Morris D. Morris.<sup>163</sup> The remarks of Professor Morris have evoked criticisms from different scholars in Indian economic history and hence this controversy becomes relevant to the theme of my dissertation.

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163 Morris D. Morris's Article 'Towards a Re-interpretation of the Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History' in 'Journal of Economic History', Vol: XXIII, No. 4 December, 1963, PP. 606-18.

Professor Morris did not believe that cotton weaving was a highly developed craft before 1800 and he disagrees with the notion that Manchester machine-made textiles wiped out the Indian handicrafts by the mid-19th Century.<sup>164</sup> His logic was that Manchester exported both yarn and cloth. While British cloth was competitive with Indian handloom production, machine-made yarn "seems to ... have strengthened the competitive position of the indigenous handloom sector despite the fall in prices".<sup>165</sup> The demand for cloth in India seems to have been "fairly elastic", and "the fall in price led to a movement down the demand curve". Again, there seems to have been a shift to the right of the demand curve for cotton cloths. Not only was there population growth, there were also "changes in custom" which increased the amount of cloth consumed per capita. (For example, he says that there was an increasing tendency for women to wear bodices in addition to the traditional saris ). Finally, Morris points out that there seems to have been a shift away from inferior to cotton fabrics. Morris concludes : "Hence there is evidence of a rising demand for cotton cloths during the 19th Century. The vast expansion of British cloth exports to India skimmed off the expanding demand. The handloom weavers were at least no fewer in number and no worse off economically at the end of the period than at the beginning".<sup>166</sup>

This view has been questioned in various quarters. While Morris finds evidence of a steady rise in the per capita income in the survival of some of the handloom textiles and a possible expansion of Indian handicrafts in the 20th Century, Professor Tapan Raychaudhury

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164 Article of D. Morris D : in "The Journal of Eco Hist", Vol. XXIII, 1963,  
 165 Ibid. P.611.  
 166 Morris: op.cit. P.613.

argues that Morris "misses the other and far more important implication of this survival, viz. the stagnation of skills and hence of productivity in the secondary sector of production".<sup>167</sup> Morris spoke of the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th Century as a period of slow gestation. Professor Raychaudhuri argues : "It is an odd form of gestation which after hundred and fifty years leaves the structure of the economy and the level of skill more or less what they were before".<sup>168</sup>

Granting that the machine-made yarns strengthened the competitive position of the indigenous handloom weavers vis-a-vis British weavers, Toru Matsui questioned if from these premises, one can safely draw the conclusion that the handloom weavers were no fewer in number and no worse off economically at the end of the period than at the beginning or that the net effect for the economy was a positive one in terms of per capita real income. Toru Matsui further pointed out that even if we accept that a sharp fall in the price of yarn helped the handloom industry, it gave a bitter blow to the indigenous spinning industry. "This negative effect", writes Toru Matsui, "on the traditional sector should not be omitted for it offset at least partly, the benefit gained by the weavers".<sup>169</sup> Moreover, Matsui argued that the demand for cloth increased because the price fell, not that the price rose because the demand increased. What happened was that there was a sharp fall in prices. We have then reasons to infer that the Indian handloom weavers tended to be worse off. The fall in the prices of yarn was caused by the innovation in the spinning process in Britain,

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167 T.K.Raychaudhuri's article 'Towards a Re-interpretation of the Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History' in "Indian Economic & Social History Review", Vol.V, No.I, March, 1968, P. 94.

168 Raychaudhuri : op.cit. P.94.

169 Toru Matsui : "The Indian Economic & Social History Review", March, 1968, P.20.

while the decline in the prices of cloth was caused by the innovation in the weaving as well as spinning process. Matsui concluded that "it follows that from the long range point of view the fall in price of cloth per piece was greater than the fall in price of the yarn required for one piece of cloth. It is clear then that the remuneration for weaving per piece was less".<sup>170</sup> This affected the weavers adversely. The way to cover the decrease in remuneration was to work harder and for more and more hours but there was a physical limit to hard work. "We have grounds for supposing that the Indian handloom weavers became worse off economically or fewer in number during this period."<sup>171</sup>

Prof. Bipan Chandra sought to refute the argument that the import of yarn strengthened the competitive position of the Indian handloom weavers, vis-a-vis British weavers. With the help of statistical tables, he attempts to find the ratio of yarn imports and imports of woven textiles and came to this conclusion that even in the long range view, the ratio of the former to the latter was very low. He quotes the following table :<sup>172</sup>

<u>YEARS</u>	<u>IMPORT OF COTTON PRODUCTS</u>	
	<u>Cotton twist and Yarn</u> £	<u>Cotton Goods.</u> £
1849	9,09,016	22,22,089
1859	17,14,216	80,88,929
1869	27,79,934	1,60,72,551
1887	37,46,979	2,77,64,508

170 Toru Matsui : op.cit. P.21

171 Ibid., P.21.

172 Bipan Chandra's article entitled 'Towards a Re-interpretation of the Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History', "Indian Economics & Social History Review", Vol.V, No.I, March 1968, P.55.

Bipan Chandra writes<sup>173</sup> "How the weavers strengthened their competitive position? The productivity of the British weavers with the same yarn was increasing rapidly while the productivity of Indian weavers was stationary."

Even in the earlier period, the import of cotton goods was greater than that cotton twist.<sup>173</sup> Again, one important point must be stressed here. The import of British cotton goods into Bengal began from 1813-14 but that of British Yarn from 1824-25. During these ten years, the cheap machine-made products of England flooded the markets of India. Indian cotton goods lost their markets and most of the important weaving manufactories had to be closed down. The importation of the cheap yarns did in fact very little to ameliorate the sufferings of the weavers.

Again, the export price of woven goods ( cotton ) was falling much more rapidly than that of yarn

Period	Yarn in pence	Cloth in pence
1819-21	29.0	70.3
1829-31	15.3	40.6
1844-46	12.0	22.5
1859-61	11.7	20.5
1880-82	12.8	19.4

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173 Supra: P. 257.

174 Bipan Chandra : op.cit. P.56.

This meant that the competitive position of the Indian weavers vis-a-vis British weavers was weakened throughout the 19th Century. That was why the import of cloth went up between 1849 and 1889 by 25.5 million sterling ( 12.5 times ) while that of yarn went up by only 1.8 million sterling ( 4 times only ).

As regards increase in cloth consumption arising from "changes in fashion", Irfan Habib argues that while it was true that low prices of imported manufactures increased the total quantity of the cloth consumed, "the further implied assertion that the total value of cloth consumed in India also increased substantially, at any rate by a higher percentage than that of the value of imported cloth to previous total consumption, is quite baseless".<sup>175</sup>

This study of the cotton weavers of Bengal between 1757 and 1833 clearly revealed that at the end of the first quarter of the 19th Century, a large number of people were thrown out of employment. We have seen that very few could earn their living by weaving and most of the people had to turn to agricultural pursuits. Many of them became sannyassies and Byraggies and many died. Thus the total number of the weaving population was considerably reduced and hence there is hardly any justification for the view that in the late 19th Century they were "no fewer". Again, in the palmy days of the industry very many weavers lived in easy circumstances. Some of them built Pucca houses and lived

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175 Irfan Habib's article entitled 'Colonialization of Indian Economy' in "Social Scientist" (32) March, 1975, P. 38.

in ease <sup>and</sup> comfort. "Large dilapidated pucca buildings, temples and tanks in Hooghly and Midnapore districts still remain <sup>to attest</sup> once prosperous condition of the weavers" — wrote Surgeon Lieutenant Colonel Dutt, Civil Surgeon of Hooghly.<sup>176</sup> Reports from other districts also testify to the once prosperous condition of a number of weavers. But after 1833, "the great majority of the weavers have given up their hereditary occupation and have now taken to cultivation and other remunerative pursuits".<sup>177</sup> Even Mr. J.C. Jack, a member of the I.C.S. who intended to prove the benefits of the British raj and concluded that Faridpur peasants were better off than Italian peasants, admitted : "weaving which used to be a vigorous industry has been killed partly by the importation of foreign or factory-made cotton goods and partly by the ravages of Malaria".<sup>178</sup> It is thus wrong to argue that the weavers were economically well off towards the end of the first quarter of the 19th Century. The industry was annihilated and the old urban centres of production became progressively ruralized.

The cotton industry thus played a very vital role in the economic life of Bengal. The weaving manufactories were dispersed throughout the country and weaving and spinning had become the national occupation. Secondly, the size of the population engaged in the industry was considerable. Though it is not possible to precisely estimate the total population it may be said with some certainty that weaving formed

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176 Quoted in N.N.Banerjee: Monograph on the Cotton Fabrics of Bengal, P.24  
 177 N.N.Banerji : op.cit. P. 24.  
 178 J.C.Jack : The Economic Life of a Bengal District, P.92.

the occupation of the bulk of the total population engaged in different industrial pursuits. Thirdly, weaving was not only a part-time occupation in addition to the primary one. To a considerable section of the weavers, it was a while-time occupation. They depended wholly on it. To some weavers, it was a part-time occupation. As a part-time employment weaving was also remunerative and enabled the weavers to supplement their income. Lastly, the decline of such a significant industry of Bengal had far reaching consequences. Among other thing, its collapse resulted in the progressive ruralization of the old urban centres of production of cotton goods.

CHAPTER VIC O N C L U S I O N S

The decline of the cotton industry in Bengal in the first quarter of the 19th Century is a significant development from the standpoint of the socio-economic history of Bengal. Weaving and Spinning had been the occupation of the majority of the people engaged in different industrial pursuits. Next to agriculture, weaving constituted the most important employment to the people. We have seen<sup>1</sup> that as a result of the collapse of the industry about 10,00,000 people, ( the exact number was perhaps more ) lost their means of livelihood. If we assume that each family, consisted of at least six members, the total number of people affected by it would be at least 60,00,000. It is difficult to form an idea of the total population in Bengal at the time of the collapse of the industry, but it could safely be concluded that the size of the population engaged in weaving, spinning and the other branches allied to it, was considerable.

The Nationalist writers like Dr. R.C. Dutt, Major B.D. Basu and Dr. Radhakamal Mukherjee, have all argued that the downfall of Bengal's cotton industry during the early decade of the 19th Century

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1 Supra: Chapter V.

resulted in a serious imbalance in the total economy of Bengal. Dr. H. R. Ghosal concluded that "the downfall of Bengal's cotton industry during the early decades of the 19th Century amounted to an economic revolution".<sup>2</sup> It was true that the collapse of the industry resulted in great sufferings of the weavers, and more particularly, of the spinners who were totally thrown out of employment. They were not trained in any other branches of employment. The importation of the British yarns beginning from 1824-25 nearly annihilated the business of spinning since hand-spun thread could scarcely compete with its machine-made substitutes. This affected not merely a handful of women. Their number was about two millions and a half.<sup>3</sup> Their condition really became deplorable. Moreover, since the cotton piecegoods had formed the most important item of exports from the Bengal Presidency during the period under review, the entire economy of Bengal was adversely affected by the decline of the industry.

It would, however, be worthwhile to examine whether the decline of the cotton industry resulted in an imbalance in the economy as a whole. There was, no doubt, that the decline of the cotton industry in Bengal affected the weavers and spinners but to say that a serious imbalance resulted from this would perhaps be going too far. To a considerable section of the people, as we have seen,<sup>3A</sup> it was a whole-time occupation. With the decline of the industry, these people lost their gainful occupation. The industry declined mainly because of the cessation of the valuable export markets. But a notable thing is that

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2 H.R. Ghosal : op.cit. PP. 44-45.

3 Quoted in H.R. Ghosal : op.cit. P.44.

3A Supra: Chapter V.

the cessation of the export markets did not mean extinction of the cotton weaving as a profession. The profession of those weavers who were engaged in the manufacture of the finest quality of cloths was no doubt gone for good. But there were certain other fabrics which were best and cheaply manufactured by hand. Dr. Watson's remark is very significant in this connection.: "The native looms will continue to yield the Embroideries, the Shawls, the Carpets for which they are already so famous".<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a section of the weaving population kept themselves engaged in weaving Dhooties Chaddars, Baftaes for the native people.<sup>5</sup> Thus we find that at least in the cases of two classes of goods, the embroidered and the other finer goods in which the handloom had a peculiar advantage, and the coarser kinds, which supplied the demands of the common people, the cotton weavers of Bengal could easily hold their own. As a result of these local employment opportunities, a section of the weavers could still maintain themselves by weaving.

However, it can scarcely be denied that after the decline of the cotton industry, the economy of Bengal did not remain quite the same again. The weavers engaged in the production of finer goods lost their occupation for good and their number was considerable. They drifted to the land and the dependence of a considerable number of people on agriculture who before only marginally depended on agriculture tended to increase. The inevitable decline in the urban population ( particularly in cities such as Dacca, Murshidabad and Santipore ) also told on the rural economy in the neighbourhood, since the de-urbanisation process considerably reduced the effective demand for agricultural produces.

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4 Watson : Textile Manufactures of India, P.7.

5 Supra : Chapter - V.

The effects of this process were however, partially redressed because the decline of the Cotton industry was followed by a phenomenal expansion in the cultivation of valuable crops such as raw silk, sugarcane and indigo, as a result of which the foreign trade of the Presidency increased very considerably after 1813. The increased production of raw materials and semi-manufactured goods considerably repaired the loss the country had sustained because of the decay of the cotton industry. "Indian economic historians are too often <sup>obsessed</sup> observed with the decay of Indian cotton manufactures to appreciate the remarkable growth of trade in raw materials."<sup>6</sup> The growth of foreign trade in different raw materials and semi-manufactured goods may briefly be noted. It is notable that the regions specializing in the production of the new export commodities such as raw silk, sugar and indigo were not necessarily the ones where cotton piecegoods were previously manufactured.

From the early 19th Century, the trade in cotton piecegoods fell off and their place in the foreign markets was to a certain extent taken by silk manufactures but as the demand in England of raw silk increased, emphasis was given on cultivation of raw silk.

The Company took interest in Silk business after the acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal in 1765. The ryots were encouraged to cultivate the mulberry plants on rent-free lands and soon experts from Italy and France were sent to Bengal for teaching the indigenous workers improved methods, particularly those in regard to reeling. But soon after came the terrible famine of 1770-71 which swept away one third of the entire

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6 A. Tripathi : op.cit: P. 253.

population of Bengal engaged in silk cultivation all over Bengal.<sup>7</sup> In spite of it, the Company gave all possible encouragement to the producers of raw silk and as a result, a satisfactory progress was made by 1775 and the average exports of raw silk to England during the following decades rose to more than 5,60,000 "small pounds" a year.<sup>8</sup>

But after 1775, the Company sustained heavy losses in silk trade owing to rise in the cost of production of raw silk and hence trade was thrown open to private individuals.<sup>9</sup> The Company omitted raw silk from its investment. In 1785 again the Company revoked this privilege and reserved for itself the exclusive right of sending silk to England. But the silk trade was slow to revive.

By the year 1792, owing largely to the adoption of the Agency System in 1787, the Company's prospects of silk trade became brighter. The total volume of raw-silk obtained from several factories in 1792 exceeded twenty nine lacs of rupees.<sup>10</sup> The Company's silk trade received a set-back as a result of the French Revolutionary Wars in Europe, when the Company's sales in London went down.<sup>11</sup>

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7 Bengal Past and Present : XXIX. P. 37.

8 J.H.T. Walsh : Hist of Murshidabad : P. 103.

9 J.C. Sinha : op.cit. P. 176.

10 Progs Board of Trade, 30th May, 1793, Prog no.39, Vol:104,Part I.

11 Progs Board of Trade, 23rd Dec, 1793, Prog no.192,Vol: 107.

The depression in the Company's silk trade came to an end in 1807. The rigorous enforcement of the Continental System by Napoleon "occasioned an entire cessation of the customary importation of Italian raw silk into Great Britain",<sup>12</sup> as a result of which the demand for Bengal raw silk in British market increased tremendously. The number of filatures was increased and the total output of raw silk nearly doubled in a few years.<sup>13</sup>

There was a remarkable increase in trade in silk after 1813 for the following reasons : (i) the rapid decline in the export of Bengal cotton piecegoods encouraged the Company to invest the greatest part of their capital in the silk trade and Bengal raw silk became the major item of the Company's exports ; (ii) the Charter Act of 1813 gave a tremendous impetus to trading activities and lastly, after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, intercourse with the countries that had discontinued their trade with India became possible. The average annual export of raw silk during the eight years ending 1820-21 amounted to nearly seventy five lacs of rupees.<sup>14</sup> In the year 1819-20, the total export of raw silk reached the highest level and amounted to Rupees 94,10,743<sup>15</sup> and the export to Great Britain alone in that year was more than sixty seven lacs of rupees.<sup>16</sup> In order to meet this increased demand, the Company's opened a new silk station at Santipore.<sup>17</sup>

The Sugar industry at first occupied the third and after 1813 the second place among the indigenous industries in the Bengal Presidency. It had for long been an article of export. The native merchants

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12 Progs Board of Trade, 2nd Sept, 1808, Vol: 224.

13 Progs Board of Trade, 22nd April, 1814, Prog no. 14, Vol: 292.

14 G.A.Prinsep: Remarks of the External Commerce and Exchanges of Bengal,

15 Ibid. i, 16 H.H.Wilson: op.cit. P.67. P.56

17 Progs Board of Trade, 15th Sept, 1820, Prog no. 34, Vol: 372.

controlled its export and the annual exportation of sugar in 1756 was 50,000 maunds which yielded a profit of about 50 percent.<sup>18</sup> During the next 30 years or so after Plassey, the industry suffered a setback largely due to a rise in the prices of the article and the increase in the charge of transportation.

The European merchants became attracted to the trade by 1787-88 and the export market of sugar brightened. However, after 1805 there was a remarkable decline of trade, so much so that the Company decided to wind up its sugar establishments.

But fortunately after 1815 the prospects of the export of sugar brightened and its export to Great Britain in 1814-15 was valued at about nine lacs of rupees.<sup>19</sup> The duty on sugar exported from Calcutta was doubled but in spite of it, its export to the ~~United~~ <sup>United</sup> Kingdom increased and in 1826-27, it was valued at more than 18 lacs of rupees.<sup>20</sup>

The production of indigo as an article of export roughly dates from the 1780s. In 1788 the <sup>U</sup>total British import of indigo was 20,96,911 lbs of which "Asia" ( including exports from Bengal ) supplied 6,22,691 lbs.<sup>21</sup> In 1795, the total quantity imported was 43,68,027 lbs of which Bengal supplied 29,55,862 lbs.<sup>22</sup> In 1800, forty thousand maunds of indigo was exported from Calcutta to England. In 1810 the Court observed "the article ( indigo ) appears to be established as a

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18 Quoted in Milburn : op.cit. Vol.II, P. 270.

19 H. P. Wilson : op.cit. P.71.

20 Ibid.

21 Quoted in Benoy Chaudhuri : Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal,

22 Ibid.

P.80.

great staple of Bengal. It supplies much of the consumption of Europe and no rival to it seems to arise ; it will therefore, probably continue to be largely in demand".<sup>23</sup>

Indigo was produced in the delta regions of lower Bengal and Bihar. Cultivation was extended even beyond Bihar. From the statements of Indigo factories received from all the districts of Bengal Presidency in 1830, we find that there were nine hundred and eighty three factories in the whole of the Presidency, the number of planters was 124 and the area under cultivation was 17,22,405 bighas.<sup>24</sup>

The expansion in the production of raw silk, sugar and indigo after 1813 resulted in a considerable increase of foreign trade. Increased trade led to an increase of wealth. The Charter Act of 1813 also greatly stimulated trading activities. The economic activities after 1813 afforded that much needed relief many people wanted and to a great extent reduced the adverse effects of the decline of the cotton industry on the economy of Bengal. Hence, the view that the balance in the economy of Bengal was shaken after the decline of the cotton industry is of doubtful validity.

The absolute dependence on the production of raw materials, particularly, raw silk, indigo and sugar had its weaknesses. Price fluctuations greatly hit the production of these articles and the

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23 Quoted in Benoy Chaudhury : op.cit. P. 80.

24 Statements prepared by H.Shakespeare in General Appendix and report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the E.I.Company (1832), PP. 295-305 and 333.

market for these commodities was throughout characterized by extreme instability,<sup>25</sup> and it showed the dangers to the economy of Bengal. The remedy lay in a quick industrialization, which alone could prevent her from being relegated to a position where she played only a subordinate and complimentary role of a raw material producer. This, however, did not happen.

The potential effects of the decline in the cotton industry were thus partly counteracted by the development of other economic activities and by the exports of other commodities, there is no doubt that the decline in the cotton industry did to a considerable extent adversely affect the economy. However, the old view that this resulted in a serious imbalance in the economy and in the so called 'ruralization' of Bengal seems to be only partially valid.

The nature of the adverse effects of the particular organisation of the cotton industry on the weavers during British rule has also sometimes been interpreted in a way which is difficult to agree with. How the imposition of the new system affected the weavers has been indicated earlier.<sup>26</sup> However, some studies seem to have misjudged the character of the pre-British production organisation. The effects of the new system look more severe than what they actually were, partly because of the fact that the pre-British system has been

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25 K.N.Chaudhuri: Economic Development of India etc. PP. 27-29.

26 Supra: Chapter III.

presented in these studies as an idyllic one. That the changes in the production organisation during British rule were for the worse cannot be denied. However, it would be wrong to argue that the previous system was without its faults.

In this connection, two things need to be stressed :

(i) the so-called 'independence', 'freedom' of the weaver has sometimes been misjudged ; (ii) the impression about the prosperity of the weaver community in general before British rule also does not seem to be an entirely well-founded one.

Even under the pre-British system, very many weavers were under the circumstances largely dependent on merchants or mahajan for the necessary advances or for the marketing of their products or for both.<sup>27</sup> Some weavers did weave traditional varieties of cloths for the open market, but "more often they appeared to work for particular merchants who provided working capital for a guaranteed supply of cloths which were frequently of a special type, suitable only for certain export markets".<sup>28</sup> The cases where the weavers could sell directly to the consumer were undoubtedly very few. This probably happened where the cotton manufactures did not "provide more than partial means of subsistence and where the division of labour has not proceeded beyond the rudimentary level". One of the important reasons of this inevitable

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27 The point has recently been emphasized in a highly perceptive Paper by K.N.Chaudhuri 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in "The Indian Economic and Social History Review" Vol: Eleven Numbers two & Three, June-Sept, 1974. See the Section, 'The organisation and structure of Textile Production in India', What follows is based on this paper.

28 Ibid, P. 147.

dependence on the merchants was the differentiated character of the Indian ~~Textiles~~ industry and under such circumstances it was not difficult "for traders to assume control over the artisans through their greater experience of the market".<sup>29</sup>

About the general economic conditions of the weavers under the Pre-British system, we still know very little. There are, however, indications that the weaver community in general was far from prosperous. A recent book on Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal, 1650-1720, thus concludes : 'From various reference in the records of the Company, it appears that "the lot of the poor weavers" remained the same despite the increase in production and competition among the buyers.' The plight of the weavers is amply illustrated by the factors' correspondence which often described it in such phrases as — "weavers cannot subsist or lie long idle" or "weavers live from hand to mouth", or "such needy a generation as the weavers are".'<sup>30</sup> The author argues that the middle-man system was responsible for their "extreme poverty". Dr. K.N. Chaudhuri also refers to "the Universal poverty of the weavers repeated with such persistence throughout the 17th and 18th Centuries", though he finds it difficult to explain it "in view of their equally well-recorded spatial and occupational mobility".<sup>31</sup>

A firm conclusion cannot be reached without more detailed researches in the subject. However, the weavers seem to have faced serious privations from time to time. It is notable that the causes which caused such privations were largely different from the ones <sup>that</sup> ~~and~~ caused the weavers' poverty during the British rule.

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29 K.N.Chaudhuri's Paper, op.cit. P.148.

30 Sushil Chaudhuri: Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal, 1650-1720,

31 K.N.Chaudhuri's Paper, op.cit. P.171. Cal, 1975, PP. 237-38.

SELECT GLOSSARY

Abwabs	:	Cesses
Amil	:	Officer appointed for the purpose of collecting revenue either on behalf of the government or of the revenue farmer.
Amla	:	Subordinate Native Officer.
Arzee	:	Petition.
Arcot Rupee	:	Originally coined by the Nawab of Arcot, afterwards by the English, Dutch and French Companies, gross weight varying from 171 to 170 grains.
Assar	:	A Bengali month corresponding to the second half of June and first half of July.
Assin	:	A months which corresponds to the second half of September and first half of October.
Assal	:	Principal, original.
Aurung	:	Place of manufacture.
Aumeen	:	Native Surveyor.
Banian	:	A Native merchant or tradesman.

Banee	:	Wage.
Barkandazes	:	Accompanying guards.
Batta	:	Amount added or deducted from any payment according to the currency in which it is made as compared with a fixed standard coin.
Beoparies	:	Petty Merchant.
Bhaudon	:	A month corresponding to the second half of August and first half of September.
Bigha	:	A measure of land equal to one third of an acre.
Bootias	:	A Mongolian caste of Tibetan origin.
Chadar	:	Wrapper or bed sheet.
Chakla	:	A large division comprehending a number of Parganas.
Chattacks	:	$\frac{1}{16}$ th part of one seer.
Chouky (chokey)	:	A custom house - also a Police Station.
Choukidar	:	Watchman.
Chuprassy	:	Native Orderly.
Cora	:	Unbleached state.

Corge	:	Twenty.
Coss	:	A measure of about two miles.
Cooly	:	Labourer.
Current Rupee	:	Rupee in which the Company's accounts were kept.
Cuttanee	:	A female spinner.
Dak	:	Mail.
Dalal	:	Broker.
Darkhast	:	Petition.
Daroga	:	Native Inspector or Superintendent or Overseer.
Dastak	:	A Permit.
Dee ( Dih )	:	A village.
Dhooties	:	Coarse white cloths worn by the male.
Diwan	:	Receiver-General of a Province : Revenue Minister.
Diwani	:	The Office or jurisdiction of a Diwan.
Dewanee Adawlut	:	A Court for trying revenue and other Civil causes.

Dustoree	:	Customary reward or payment, Perquisite.
Dus Mussa Rupee	:	It means ten mashas or about 150 grains in weight.
Farman	:	An Imperial Decree.
Faujdari Adawlut	:	A Court having charge of the Police and with jurisdiction in all criminal matters.
Gandas	:	Small change subsidiary to rupee. 20 gundas = 1 anna 16 annas = 1 Rupee
Gomasta	:	An Indian Agent.
Golah	:	Godown.
Gunges	:	Village marts.
Guzzees	:	Coarse undergarments by the male in the upper part of the body.
Hat ( Haut )	:	Village market held only on certain days in a week.
Hatchittas	:	Handwritten Receipts.
Hookumnamah	:	An order.
Huzur ( Hazur )	:	Ruler, Master.

Jagir	:	An assignment.
Jeyte	:	A month corresponding to the second half of May and the first half of June.
Jassendar	:	An officer attached to a factory for appraising the value of the manufactures.
Jumma	:	The total of land revenue assessment.
Kachari(Cutcherry)	:	The public office where the revenue transaction is conducted.
Karkhana	:	Workshop.
Kharch	:	Expenditure.
Kist	:	Instalment.
Kistibundee	:	Payment by instalments.
Kutchra (Kacha)	:	Raw, crude.
Mahajan	:	Merchant, Money lender.
Malguzari	:	Paying revenue or rent.
Mandal	:	Headman.
Mauza	:	Village.
Maund	:	40 Seers or 37.250 kilogram.

Mochlekka (Muchelka)	:	A declaration in writing.
Mofussil	:	Interior of the country.
Mohrier (Mohurir)	:	Native Accounts Clerk.
Naib	:	Deputy.
Nawab	:	The governor of a province under the Mughal Government.
Nizamat Adawlut	:	The Court of Criminal Justice.
Paddy	:	Rice in the husk.
Pargana	:	Sub-division of a district.
Perwannah (Perwana)	:	Notice for obedience.
Patta (Pottah)	:	A document granted to the cultivators specifying the conditions on which the lands are held.
Pykar	:	An Intermediary dealer.
Peon	:	An inferior officer.
Pie	:	$\frac{1}{192}$ part of Indian Rupee.
Raffugars	:	People who were employed to repair the muslins that were spoiled during bleaching.
Raja	:	King.
Romale	:	Handkerchief, towel.

Ryot	:	Peasant, cultivator, tenant.
Rowanah	:	A certificate from a Collector of Customs authorising goods to pass without payment of further duty.
Sadar	:	The chief seat of Government.
Sadar - Dewanee - Adawlut	:	Chief Civil Court.
Saunyasis	:	Wandering fakirs.
Sanad	:	A written authority.
Seer	:	A measure of weight slightly less than a kilogram.
Sicca Rupee	:	These are worth 16 percent better than Current Rupee.
Taggdgars	:	Collectors of cloth.
Thana	:	Police Station.
Tom Tom	:	Horse conveyance.
Zamindar	:	Land holder - Proprietor.
Zillah	:	District.

APPENDICESREGULATIONS FOR THE WEAVERSAPPENDIX INO. IA

The Regulation for weavers of April 1782 were aimed against intercopers. It was recorded in the Proceedings of Board of Trade ( Commercial ), 3rd June, 1783 Prog no. 30, Vol: 37.

It provided "that the purchasers of the 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 employ who offers to dispose of them, on proof of the fact, shall be liable to punishment by the adawlut, according to the nature of their offence and cloths so purchased shall be confiscated".

APPENDIX NO: IB

On 18th July, 1786, 21 regulations were passed. Some of the regulations were as follows :

Regulation No IX provided "And for the better ascertaining the number of weavers in each district in the Company's employ as well as the nature and extent of their respective engagements, it is hereby directed that every weaver be furnished with a ticket specifying the name, the place of abode and cooty under which he works and containing an account of the dates and periods of advances made, the value of the cloths of goods he shall from time to time deliver in return".

Regulation No. X provided "That at the end of each year or expiration of each management, the Commercial Resident or his representative shall sign to the adjustment of such weavers' accounts and receive the weavers' signature to the counterpart thereof, which latter shall remain at the Factory or Cootey to be produced whenever called for".

Regulation No. XI : "upon any weaver failing to deliver cloths according to the stated periods agreed upon, the Company's agent shall be at liberty to place peons upon them and keep them under restraint".

Regulation No. XII : "If any weaver in the Company's service should be convicted of selling cloth either by himself, any of his family, journeymen or by any agent to any other merchants or dealers whatever whilst he is deficient in his deliveries according to the stated periods of his agreement with the Company, such offender shall be punished in a regular process and conviction in the judicial Courts".

Regulation No. XIII : "And whereas a practice has prevailed of selling cloths provided by the Company's advances clandestinely to the individuals apparently because it suits private dealers best to buy without risking balances, ready-made goods and those of the finer assortments which the Company's weavers long supported by them and enabled by their advances, produce."

"It is hereby resolved and ordered that the purchasers of the said cloths apparently knowing them to be 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 employ who offer to dispose of them, on proof of the fact, shall be liable to punishments by the Adauluts according to the nature of his offence and the cloths so purchased shall be confiscated".

Regulation No. XIV : "And whereas it has been alleged by those whose interest it was to make such purchases that the Company's weavers cannot be distinguished from others, it is hereby ordered that a list or

register of the weavers employed by the Company in every Pergunnah be stuck up by the Commercial Agent those in the Cutcherry of that Pergunnah and the same to be corrected at the beginning of every week or month according to the alteration that shall have happened in the week or month preceding".

Regulation No. XVII : "Weavers with whom compulsion is used to enter into agreements or who are not paid for their cloths according to the agreements voluntarily made between them and the Company's servants or contractors, may complain in the first place, if injury is offered by native agents, to the Commercial Resident, or contractor under whom they act ; if the injury is offered by the Resident or Contractor himself, or if he gives no redress against his agents, complaints may be made to the Collector of the district in which such weavers reside and the said Collector is hereby required to enter into an intelligent and impartial examination of such complaint and if he judges it expedient to represent the same to the Commercial Resident or Contractor, to receive his answer and determine thereupon either to dismiss the Complaint or to refer it to the Presidency and the weavers if dissatisfied with the conduct of the Collector may themselves represent their case at the Presidency. But in order that the encouragement may not hence be taken for false or frivolous complaints, in the view of eluding the performance of fair argument or of procuring improper advantages, all manufacturers are hereby informed that Complaints which are found to be really groundless will be duly punished, and of this, Collectors are also desired to take proper notice".

APPENDIX NO: IC

Another set of Regulations was issued on the 23rd July, 1787.

Regulation I : "The weavers shall give at least a fortnight's notice when they intend not to take further advances".

Regulation II : "If they have not fulfilled their engagements by the period agreed on, they shall not work for newer engagements nor for bazar sales, until those engagements are completed."

Regulation III : "When any weaver fails to deliver cloths at the stipulated periods he has engaged for, the Company's agent or representative shall be at liberty to place peons upon him, in order to quicken his deliveries".

Regulation IV : "If not-withstanding, any weaver shall by himself or any other persons, sell cloths to private merchants, European or natives, dealers or agents of whatever kind, whilst he is deficient in his stipulated deliveries to the Company, such offender may be prosecuted in the Dewanee Adaulut and upon conviction shall be adjudged to forfeit cloths so sold with costs of suits besides and moreover be still obliged to complete his engagements".

Regulation V : "Persons procuring from weavers in the Company's service, by the offer of ready money or on pretence of previous engagements which are not avowed, cloths really wrought for the Company and with advances, knowing such cloths to be the right of the Company, either by the mark upon them or the transactions between the weavers from whom they procure them and the Company or having reasons for such knowledge from the notoriety of those weavers being in the Company's employ, shall on the proof of the fact in the Adauluts, be subjects to such punishments as the nature of the offence may appear to deserve".

Regulation VI : "A list of register of the weavers employed by the Company in every Pergunnah with their places of abode, shall be stuck up by the Commercial Agents there, in the catcherry of that Pergunnah".

APPENDIX NO: ID

Additional supplement to the Regulations for  
weavers 30th Sept 1789.

Regulation XV : "Weavers possessed of more than  
one loom and entertaining one or more workmen, shall be subject  
to the following penalties on failing to deliver cloth at the  
stipulated period expressed in written agreement. To the Company  
for every piece of cloth not delivered according to the agreement,  
35 percent on the stipulated price of such cloth, besides the  
repayment of money advanced for the same".

APPENDIX NO: 2

The form of engagements entered into by the weavers employed under the Dacca factory for the provision of the investment of 1791 was as follows : (Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade (Commercial) 10th May, 1791, Prog no. 34, Vol: 92).

"We ... weavers of the auring ... fully understanding the contents of the Regulations of the 23rd July 1787 and 30th October 1789 engage to manufacture on account of the Company the several qualities of cloths ----- the thread of the warp and woof shall be properly twisted and sorted, the 32 folds shall be made well and even throughout and the cloths shall be all of the established dimensions in length and breadth."

"Our deliveries shall consist of three letters, A, B and C. Should any of them being compared with the musters bejudged inferior to C, they shall be ferretted and held in the deposit in the Cotee and we will in the course of the next Kist replace them with cloths equal to the musters. The cloths will then be returned. Should we fail to replace them with proper cloths within the appointed period they shall be sold at public auction and credit be given to us for the sales after deducting 15 percent as compensation for the interest, risk and charges. In cases, where any of us possessing more than one loom with journeymen fail in our stipulated deliveries, we will pay according to the Regulation of 30th Sept., 1789, a penalty of 35 percent on the amount together with repayment of the advance received."

APPENDIX NO: 33 APETITIONS OF THE WEAVERS

Petition from the Dacca Weavers - no date received by the Board of Trade 7th February 1775 recorded in the Proceedings of Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 10th Feb., 1775, Vol: I.

"Time out of remembrance, the goods of this place have been furnished to the Company by means of Dellolls and Pycars and a fine trade allowed. In 1181 ( Bengalee year ) when Mr. Barwell was Chief, Mr. Day and Bikkrum Takoor having dismissed the Dellolls and Pycars received themselves the Company's advances after which Mr. Day and Bikkrum Takoor having called us before them ordered us to bring them cloths equal to the musters of Mr. Carteer and they would give us 20 percent more than we received from Mr. Carteer. We answered that Mr. Grueber and Bikkrum Takoor wanted to give us 25 percent the year before but we gave for answer that by the Famine a great number of peoples died and materials were become scarce and dear and we would not consent to this proposal of Mr. Grueber's. Bikkrum Takoor told us that he would have the cloths from us, that they should be equal to Cartier's musters and that we should have no more than 20 percent advances. When we heard this, we were afraid and ran away. But we were seized by force by peons and brought back when Mr. Day and Bikkrum Takoor told us to make our cloths better than

last and they would take from us, the letters A, B & C at an advanced price of 20 percent. Having said this they gave us money after which we did our business for the Company in security but the cloths we had of our own or belonging to Merchants, Mr. Day and Bikkrum Takoor forcibly took from us and for every Rupee worth wanted to give us 8, 9 or 10 annas for which reason, we would not take the money. After this, peons were placed over us and we were forced to take advances and give Receipts for them and obligations were demanded from us that we would furnish no other Merchants with goods. To this, we made great objections but were forced to comply. After this, we made our cloths of the first quality or letter A when our goods were assorted into six letters."

"We complained of this, but were driven out of this Factory. Mr. Day and Bikkrum Takoor took a large quantity of the Company's cloths for themselves and fixed the price at 10 or 12 annas in proportion to a Rupee which price they wanted us to take. Never any gentlemen behaved in so oppressive a manner before."

APPENDIX NO: 3B

Petition from the weavers of Sonargong under Dacca factory no date received by the Board of Trade 10th Feb, 1775 and recorded in the Proceedings of Board of Trade (Commercial) 10th Feb 1775, Vol.I.

"From time immemorial our families have worked for the Company under Dellolls and Pycars. We received advances and furnished goods to their account. In the year 1181 (Bengalee year), Mr. Barwell took from Mr. Day and the Dellolls, the charge of this factory and himself gave orders to the Dellolls. After this Mr. Barwell and his Dewan, Narain Das, came to Sonargong and ordered that we should make cloths equal to the muster of those made in Mr. Cartier's time and he would give us 20 percent more than we had from Mr. Cartier. We answered that the last year Mr. Grueber offered to give us 25 Rupees advances in each hundred rupees but that a great number of weavers, Cuttanies having died in the famine, the price of materials had been raised and we could not consent to Mr. Grueber's proposition. This year, Mr. Day ordered us to produce cloths of a better quality than the last year of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd quality and he would take them and he would give us 20 percent more than the price of last year and having made this often, he advanced us

money after which Mr. Day confined us and took an obligation from us that we could not be employed for any other Merchants. After this we had made our cloths of a good quality and Mr. Day came to Sonargong and examined them as being of the first three qualities A, B & C after which he returned to Dacca with the cloths when he rated the quality of the cloths at D, E & F and insisted that the prices should be in proportion. We complained heavily of this grievance when Sepoys were ordered to beat us and drive us away. In the same forcible manner, we have been obliged to furnish our cloths for the whole year and have never had the advance of 20 percent paid to us as agreed by Mr. Day."

APPENDIX NO: 3C

Petition of the sundry weavers of Santipore, Muddia and other places ( under Santipore ) delivered to Mr. Bebb at Santipore, the 12th July, 1786 recorded in the Proceedings of Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 25th July, 1786 Prog no.6, Vol: 51, Part II.

"For many years, we have been employed to make cloths for the Company but since the business of the aurung has been carried on by contract, we have suffered great hardships. During the management of Mr. Beauland, Kissore Sandel his gomastah, his delloll and the servants who carry on the present contract for the Investment of 1784-85, we have not been able to supply ourselves with food or cloths because superfine cloths are prized as only fine, fine as middling and middling cloths are ferretted and then retained as the Dutch ( or ordinary ) sort, at an underprice. Advances are made to us for Nainsocks and when we deliver them, they are also ferretted, termed Dutch and retained at an underprice. From such dealings, we are great sufferers and thread being extremely dear we are under the necessity of selling our households utensils for our subsistence and can no longer remain here. We are at a loss how to represent all we suffer from Mr. Beauland and the present gomastah and servants. We request of you, Sir, to put

persons in the aurung who are experienced in the manufacture of cloth and let us deliver cloths agreeable to the Sudder ( Export Warehouse ) musters and we will cheerfully go on with our work. The cloths that may be ferretted upon the musters, we desire may be returned to us. If the gomasta and all the present servants at this aurung are removed and others sent instead of them, we will remain and carry on the business but if not, we cannot, stay here and live. We are poor people. We await your orders".

APPENDIX NO: 3D

Translate of a petition presented by the weavers of Cooties Mohunpore, Dugaspore, Ramchunderpore and Maurker Mokaums subordinate to Sonomooky. No date Recorded in the Proceedings of Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 8th July, 1791, Prog.no. 46, Vol: 93.

Firstly, "we have from time immemorial been employed by the Company and furnish cloths according to our advances and have never been beaten off otherwise maltreated but in this present year, the Gentleman at the Sorool Cooty beats and ill-treats us. We are poor artificers and cannot remain and work under such treatment as we now receive".

Secondly, "at the different factories, Taggudgars are employed but notwithstanding this, peons are put upon us who occasion a very great expense to us. We are poor artificers and the unjust charge for peons occasions great loss to us ; and therefore cannot at this rate fulfill our engagement but wait your commands".

Thirdly, "we now continue to deliver to the Company cloths of the same quality as we have always been accustomed to deliver but now these cloths are refused to be received and are ferretted and afterwards are purchased from us for ready money which not only occasions a great loss to us in the price but disables us from completing our deliveries. We are poor people and are ruined by this practice.

Fourthly, "advances are forcibly made to those weavers among us who are unable to make cloths of the Company's assortments and therefore these weavers are obliged to purchase their cloths and deliver them to the Company at the loss of one rupee per piece. We are poor men and are not able to support this loss and therefore beg that these weavers may be exempted from taking advances."

Fifthly, "the Company's cloths have always been washed at Dignagur Cooty but now the washing place is changed to the Sorool Cooty and the cloths are transported from Dignagur to Sorool Cooty upon bullocks and are during the trip obliged to cross 3 or 4 rivers which during the rainy season occasions the cloths to be stained in many places and are also dirtied by mud getting to them. This occasions the cloths to be ferretted and we are obliged to pay as a fine upon every piece of cloth that is rejected fifteen gundas. This fine was never formerly imposed and we afterwards experience a great loss in selling these cloths which are rejected on account of stains. We are poor people and beg that the washing of the cloths may again be performed at Dignagur and then we shall be able to remain and fulfil our engagements".

Sixthly, "we last year went to Calcutta and brought from thence a Hookumnamah from the Board of Trade which we gave to the Gentleman at Sorool which Hookumnamah is now in his possession and contained an order that weavers should only work for the Company

voluntarily and without compulsion. Notwithstanding this, weavers who are not inclined to take advances from the Company are beaten and otherwise forced to receive them and further those weavers who are not inclined to enter into engagements any further than what they could fulfil are forced to receive more advances than they can manufacture for. We are poor artificiers and are labouring under this injustice. You are the master of the country and we humbly beg for redress that we may be able to remain in security. This is our request".

Signed Godadhur Dutta, Nayan Doss  
Neetaee Kaar, Manick Naik  
Khanoo Sook, Rogonaut Doss

APPENDIX NO: 3E

The petition of weavers and working men of aurung Hurripaul and six dependent aurungs there No date Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 29th Nov, 1791, Prog.no.80, Vol:95.

"That formerly our piecegoods had been measured in our presence and if any piece thereof had been a little less in measurement, then price of that less had been deducted according to custom and the piece never had been refused to be taken, but in this year on the contrary of the same --- Debnath Bundapaudia, cloth measurer, out of his covetousness of receiving bribe artfully in our absence, made our Gold Head Pieces less in his second measurement, after they were washed in their first wash and were sorted by Thomas Philpot Esqr. --- tho' be the said cloth measurer has made them perfect pieces in his first measurement when they were unwashed. Thomas Philpot Esqr. not only refused to take these pieces in customable less price but also cut their four corners in order to render them unvendable for proper rate ( which will be 600 to 700 pieces in number and therefore some pieces we brought with us to show you ) and also some of us whose piece were so done, he bringing to Factory put their leggs into the stocks till two whole days, without eating and drinking and next day he coming himself then gave each of them twelve strokes with rattan in binding his hands to a pillar and insisting peons upon him took back from his rupees instead of taking from him in a few days according to custom, other perfect pieces for his so done less pieces. Tho' at present we have been weaving pieces more broad than sample pieces and yet Thomas Philpot Esqr. by instruction of the said cloth measurer refuses to take them, saying they are less in breadth".

APPENDIX NO: 3F

The following is translate of a petition which has been presented to the Board of Trade by some weavers of Dacca factory :  
Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade, 31st March, 1794  
Prog. no. 22, Vol: 109, Part II.

"We have for a long time taken advances for several sorts of cloths and have delivered cloths of the letters A, B & C agreeable to musters. Whenever any small quantity has been ferretted they have been taken into the letter D. Mr. Taylor for the first two years of his Residency acted accordingly. But since the last year that Gentleman colluding with this Passendar and Gomastah has ruined us and we are left without the means of support. He lowers the price of every assortment. Cloth of 2100 are taken as 2000 threads, in the letters C & D and even as 1900 threads and the handkerchiefs middling are taken as ordinary in the letters C & D. In this manner the aforesaid gentleman takes every other assortment at an undervalue and unfair prizing. Besides this, having made advances on his own account, he received a few pieces as A, B & C and ferretting the remainder, he required us to give a writing for the delivery of them as D. We desired that they might be compared with the musters and taken accordingly, but to this he paid no regard and we being remediless gave the writing. Thus, year after year, according to his pleasure, he takes the cloths in 7 and 8 letters. He also takes cloths of 10 Rupees price at Rupee five in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th letters and thus he takes every assortment. Moreover, last year and also this

year, he has taken cloths in 10 and 12 letters. In this manner, large balances have been made to be owing to him on his own account, which afterwards have been deducted from the Company's advances in consequence of which the Company's business had fallen in arrears. Further, the said gentleman complaining in the Dewanee Adawlut has caused 10 or 15 weavers to be confined in the Jail. Never before did any gentleman practise such oppressions. On pretence of our failure in the Kistbundee, he demands 35% profit and 1% interest. On hearing this, we remonstrated personally with the gentleman but were told by him that the money must be paid. Seeing this injustice, we were about to come to Calcutta when the gentlemen hearing our intention sent for us and without making any investigation told us that he acted by the Board's orders and that we must pay the money. Afterwards, the gentleman having beaten us said we might apply to the Board but that it would not avail us. In the time of former gentleman, Kistbundees were settled but we who labour for our daily support never then paid any profit or interest. These gentleman conducted the business so as to conciliate the weavers but Mr. Taylor endeavours to effect our ruin. We request that these matters may be enquired into".

Dated 3rd Choit, 1200 B.S.

APPENDIX NO: 30

Translate of petition of Kallee Churn and others, weavers of Chittagong aurungs dated 12th Jyta, 1200. Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade (Commercial) 28th May, 1795, Prog. No.32, Vol: 110.

The undersigned persons deputed for Kashoob Kona, Roton Rohunaut, Dyaree Bona, Bobanee Kata, Shanta Bubugan Bona, Gopee Kora and others to the number of three hundred and sixty weavers in the village of Chore Bahamonee in the Pergunnah of Sundeep under the Zillah of Islamabad, humbly represent that from the English year 1789 to 1793 ( altogether 5 years ) in the time of Mr. Harris and Mr. Coales, Mya Govindee, gomastah, when he made advances for the cloths, grievously oppressed us the particulars of which this petition is going to set forth.

1. At the aurung of Luckipore, no batta upon Sicca rupee is taken but the aforesaid gomastah unjustly takes yearly  $17\frac{1}{2}$  gundas out of every rupee that he pays us.

2. He gets rupees of full weight from the Collector's treasury and gives us those that are deficient.

3. From the year 1789 to 1793 ( five years ) he deducted from our advances one thousand six hundred and twenty rupees which he said was for the Collector's use.

4. At the end of the year, the said gomastah under the pretence that there is a deficiency in the measurement, deducts four annas, eight annas or a rupee from the price of each piece but was he to act fairly we should get the full value of them. By this means, we never receive above half the wages that are justly our due.

5. We understand that upon the balance due from to the Company from the weavers, no interest is ever charged but the said gomastah takes it from us by force.

6. When a weaver commits a fault, he is fined if he is not able to pay ready money, the said gomastah makes him give a Bond for the amount.

7. He charges fine or six annas to each man for Dewan's fee.

8. Kinnor Ram, the writer, Halup Zemmidar and the Zilladar, the servants of the said gomastah make their own private advances of two rupees for a piece of cloth but take those of four rupees value without the permission of the Company.

9. When we take our cloths to him, he does not put a fair valuation upon them, but prizes them at one rupee or one rupee and four annas less than they are worth.

We, the 360 weavers abovementioned do not like this said Mya Govindee gomastah. We humbly request that another may be appointed and that you will summon him to Calcutta and enquire into the affair or else that you will be pleased to write to the judge to examine into it.

APPENDIX NO: 3H

Translation of a petition from the weavers of Sonabarreeh aurung, a dependency of the Santipore factory to the Board of Trade, dated 26th January, received 30th January, 1801. Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 3rd February, 1801, Prog. no. 9, Vol: 151.

"We have been in the Hon'ble Company's employ a long time and delivered cloths agreeable to the advances made us which were appraised on musters and received. For the last six or seven years. Jogomohun Chowdhary, the gomastah and Ramanund Bhadoory, the Cash Keeper of the under factory at Monohurgunge have taken a perquisite of one rupee upon every eight or nine rupees of the advances made us, before they will pay the money. When we have wove cloths of the sort for which we have received advances we deliver them to the gomastah of the Under Factory who examines and receives them after which Seebram Sandyal and Pawchoo Jawcho<sup>W</sup>dar in concert together change all the descriptions of the cloths in our absence at Sonabarea prize them as third, fourth and fifth letter and after dispatching the same to Calcutta put down the prizings in our tickets. In this manner, they cause us a loss of three or four rupees per piece".

"He deducts half an anna out of every rupee as brokerage. We do not know what species of money they receive from Government but when there is batta on Gold Mohurs, they pay us in that coin and when there is a premium of Gold Mohurs, they give us rupees of all descriptions, deficient, one anna or one anna and a half each, whereby we suffer heavy losses. Labouring under all these oppressions, we going to ruin. We, therefore, pray, that the Board will be pleased to summon the Head gomastah Seebaram Sandyal, Pawchoo Jawchondar, Jogomohon Chowdhury, the gomastah and the Cash Keeper Ramamund Bhaudoory and grant us redress".

APPENDIX NO: 31

Translation of a petition from sundry weavers of Dooarhatta aurung in Hurripaul factory to the Board of Trade dated the 12th Feby, 1801, recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 3rd March, 1801, Prog. No. 17, Vol: 152, Part I.

"We are unwilling to weave cloths for the Hon'ble Company. The gomastah has given us advances and put us to great expense for peon charges and will not pay us the balances due to us. He places peons over those who are in balance to the Factory and collects the outstanding balances in this manner. We, therefore pay that the Board will order Mr. Philpot, the Resident at Dooarhatta to receive whatever balances stand against us after giving us credit for what is due and excuse us from receiving advances".

APPENDIX NO: 3J

Translation of a petition from Tonoo Daas, Mothoor Gooyen and other weavers of blue cloth belonging to the under factories of Gouripoor, Khanpoor, Goorap, Golagore and Majenan appertaining to Golagore to the Board of Trade in the Commercial Deptt. dated the 8th and received the 11th July, 1804 : Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade ( Commercial ) 17th August, 1804, Prog. no.63, Vol: 176.

"We have been receiving advances from the Hon'ble Company through the Resident of Golagore factory for a long time and furnishing different sorts of cloths in doing which we were never done injustice to the time of any Resident."

"Mr. Williams being appointed to the above factory in the year 1802 began practising various acts of injustice through the collusion of the servants of the factory on which we preferred several complaints to him, to which he paid no attention but beat us unjustly and sent us away".

"We are poor, our families are ruined through the injustice of the Resident and the servants of the factory and we are suffering great hardship for want of the means of subsistence".

"We beg leave to represent to the Board that we are suffering severely from acts of injustice and hereafter state the several heads under which the Resident and the servants have unjustly taken ninety thousand rupees from us and pray that they will be pleased to persue them and send for the servants and render us justice or that they will have the kindness to depute an ameen to investigate the several heads and render us what is justly due to us that we may be enabled to remain in our villages and receive advances and furnish the Factory with cloths or that they will be pleased to grant us leave to quite our native villages and settle in others."

First, "Mr. Williams received two pieces of cloth of the first letter from each weaver belonging to the five factories and prized them at six rupees and a half per piece but paid us at the rate of four only and told us that he would do us good".

He received eight thousand pieces of cloth which at

Rs. 6-8 per piece is	...	52,000
He paid to us at Rs. 4 per piece	...	32,000
Balance due by him	...	20,000

Second, "the factory gomastah on receiving the cloths examines them and sees if they are damaged or torn, the same cloths are then forwarded to the Factory at 'Pundwa' where they are not sorted in our presence and cloths of the first and second letters are prized under the fourth and fifth

and if they have taken at the rate of one anna per piece on account of washing charges for which we are entitled to ... Rs. 10,000.

They do not sort cloths at the factories of the Aurungs at which they are manufactured but forward them to Pundwa where they are sorted in our absence and cloths of the first and second letters made ferrett ( i.e. rejected and we are only allowed 3 : 14 per piece for the same for which we are entitled to ... Rs. 20,000.

We shall prove this point minutely Fourth. They sort the cloths in our absence at Pundwa and though cloths of the first and the second letters into fourth and fifth as suits their ends and pass the said cloths to the Company under the first and second letters and inform us of their proceeding after four or five months, on which account we are to received ... Rs. 20,000.

We are entitled to receive seventy thousand rupees from Mr. Williams and will prove the same minutely when an investigation takes place.

Fifth, the servants at the Head Factory Sri Nund Coomer, Dewan Ramjebon Mookhopadhya and Radhoo Sarcar and Govind Dalal have received every year six or seven rupees from each of the weavers belonging to the above five factories on which account we are entitled to received ... .. Rs. 20,000.

Besides the money taken by the servants at the Head Factory,  
there are sums taken by the servants at the subordinate factories

... Es. 90,000

( by the addition of 20,000 + 10,000 + 20,000 + 20,000 + 20,000 = 90,000 ).

The sum of ninety thousand rupees is justly due to us and  
if an investigation is made we will prove every item minutely.

Sixth, on an application from us, Mr. Money with the  
knowledge of the Board fixed a letter 'A muster and allowed us at the  
rate of six rupees and ten annas per piece for the same and we have been  
since furnishing cloths and Mr. Williams has likewise sorted and received  
them accordingly but instead of allowing us for them at the same rate has  
made out a false balance of a large amount against us and subjected us to  
hardship and beat us severely.

We pray that the Board will be pleased to examine the  
Accounts as well as the masters of Mr. Money's time and direct Mr. Williams  
to pay us for the cloth which we have delivered during his time at the  
same rate as was allowed by Mr. Money.

Seventh, the cloths of our aurungs used to be delivered  
at the Moofussil Factory and sorted in our presence for a long time ; in the  
time of Messers Cook and Money, cloths of all the factories used to be  
delivered in at Pundwa where they are sorted in our presence and received

under the respective letters and we suffered no injustice but were perfectly well satisfied. At present, Mr. Williams sorts the cloths in our absence agreeably to his own ends whereby we suffer great loss and therefore pray that the Board will be pleased to direct that the cloths be sorted by a trusty person agreeably to the Muster at the factory, under which they were manufactured that we may be present at the prizing and have no cause for future complaint.

Tonoo Daas

Mothoor Gooyen etc

1052 weavers of the factory of Gouripore

700 weavers inhabitants of Khanpoor and

470 weavers of Goorap

1400 weavers of Golagore and other

380 weavers of Majenan.

APPENDIX NO: 3K

Translation of the petition of Tilluck Chunder Chund.  
and Rammohun Biswas inhabitants of Degong and Roghoonath Dutta  
and Bhyrub Chunder Sen inhabitants of Sreemuggur in Zilla Nuddea  
and other weavers of the Srumuggur Chuckla to the Board of Trade :  
Recorded in the Proceedings of the Board of Trade ( Commercial )  
13th August, 1813 Prog. no. 31, Vol: 284.

"Deby Persand Chowdhury, the new gomastah of the  
Seebattee Factory under Santipore and Hur Chunder Chowdhury have  
brought advances and cause us to be seized in the high road by  
peons and confine us in the Godown at the factory and beat and  
compel us to take advances".

"We have never wove pieces of cloth but have maintained  
ourselves by weaving Dhoties and selling them at the markets. This  
factory has existed for sixteen or seventeen years but we have never  
been harassed in this manner and cannot weave pieces but are  
oppressed notwithstanding".

"We therefore pray that the Board will be pleased to  
grant us a perwannah to the gomastah directing him not to give  
us advances."

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