

An analysis of the Trade of food Grains in Coastal region of Midnapore district in the Eighteenth Century

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Abstract: Coastal areas are commonly defined as the interface or transition areas between land and sea, including large rivers, ponds and inland lakes. Favorable biophysical and climatic conditions, together with ease of communication and navigation, have encouraged human settlement in coastal areas since prehistoric times. They are also important ecologically, as they provide numerous environmental goods and services. The coastal areas often provide excellent soil and climatic conditions for food grain, which has been practiced for thousands of years and plays an important role in the economy of coastal region of Midnapore district. Aside from providing food to coastal populations, agriculture also often provides raw materials to industry, which is established in these region to make the best use of port facilities. Therefore, coastal food grain, in addition to benefiting from favorable environmental conditions with generally good land, also benefits from sea communications for trade and for development of coastal region of Midnapore district, which may provide markets for agricultural products, livelihood support for coastal populations, including cities, and opportunities for establishment of agri-based sectors. This paper is concluded by offering some suggestions to improve the yield and productivity of laborers engaged in the food grains.

Keywords: Grain, Raice, Paddy, Hijli, Coastal Region

Introduction:

From the very ancient time the ryots of coastal region of Midnapore produced a large variety of corps which was the central point of agrarian economy on which different social relations were articulated. Natural conditions, social relations, institutional network in the countryside were well organized in the entire agrarian economy. It was determined by the ups and downs in the field of agricultural productions and peasants efforts. ¹ Grain was a staple item of trade of South West Bengal. Initially, the trade of agrarian products were regulated mainly by the local traders. At the next level it was managed by the traders of upper strata. The trade of grain like that of textile, indigo and opium was not an integrated part of colonial trade. The trade of grain was directly regulated by the indigenous traders without direct official interference of the East India Company.² It was a kind of self-governing area of indigenous traders; petty trade was freely operated by the local traders in localities of coastal region of Midnapore district. The trade of grain helped to build an important relation between town and mufassal. The traders of grain were the pivot of this relation.

Rice and Paddy were the main trading items for the consumption of people. In the opinion of contemporary observers and officials there was a close relation between the production of grains and its consumption. H.T. Colebrook wrote around 1796 "Except in the cities, the bulk of the people are everywhere subsisted from the produce of their own immediate neighbourhood".³ Grain was cultivated more or less in the rural areas of coastal region of Midnapore. So it can be assumed that the grain trade was mainly based on the demand of the cities, but the ups and downs of grain production gave the opportunity of grain trade in the rural areas.

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

Grain Production and Its Storage in Coastal region

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

There were two types of farming land in coastal region of Midnapore district – kala land; it is also called high land. This type of land was high and so it contained large quality of sand in its soil. Mainly 'ravi' crops were produced here. These were also known as commercial crops. But 'aus rice' was cultivated in this land in rainy season. On the other hand the literally known water-prone land was 'jala' land or low land. The jala land was situated in close proximity to water canals, retained their intrinsic moisture for a longer duration than the kala lands. There all types of crops were cultivated including aus, amon and boro rice. In that land various edible farinaceous-root (kachu) were used as essential food supplements especially by the poor.⁵

In chakla Midnapore grain were produced in low lands or jala lands where irrigation was available in favourable condition. The lands were classified in eight different types owing to its heights from low lands. Different types of crops were produced on each land wise distribution of the market value of the classified land of Midnapore 1788.

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

vando(pot).⁸ Naturally, three types of rice were produced here – aus, amon and boro. Amon was a crop of winter season. This crop was sowed in June- July and harvested in November – December. Naturally, the market value of this crop was much, ‘bearing a high price and sought after by all’.⁹ In coastal region of Midnapore various types of amon rice were cultivated; such as – Dadkhani, Hatisal, Jhingsal, Banktuli, Bansfuli, Sitahar, Kasiful, Rupsal, Meteakra, Bhutasole etc. ¹⁰ Other type of crops was aus which is known as spring season crop.¹¹ This crop was sown in April- May and harvested in August September. The quality of spring season crop was lower than that of the winter season. The spring season crop was consumed by the people of lower class of the society. ¹²Suryamukhi, Kajla, Kalamani, Madhumalati, Dalkachu etc. were among the aus rice cultivated in coastal area. ¹³ Both types of rice were produced in the same manner. ¹⁶ Various types of rice were collected from the plain land of coastal region of Midnapore district. The average production of rice per ‘bigha’ in coastal region of Midnapore district was as follows:

Besides rice, various leguminous plants were cultivated in the same land. Khassari. ¹⁷Kalai, Moog and Musoor were also cultivated after harvesting of paddy in the same land. As a result the fertility of farming land would increase and the production rate also increased in the rice cultivation on that land later. In Midnapore the cultivation of kalai was of great importance. It was produced after oak, sugar cane subsequent years in kala lands. ¹⁸ In every village there were water tanks or ponds which the zaminders dug for spiritual or other purpose. Those were irrigated at the adjoining fields in the event of rain ceasing before the crop maturity. These tanks were used to irrigate those fields which were sown with crops, considered to be the most valuable to the producers.

In November, 1767 George Vansittart had written that he had travelled in Midnapore and chakla in Jaleswar from April to the end of May. Then after a special observation, he noticed around 80,000 bighas of land left uncultivated there. To make the land fit for cultivation, he gave away 34000 bighas of land among the ryots and made a self-realization that those lands would be fit for cultivation next year. ¹⁹ Of this, 24,900 bighas of land had been brought under cultivation by 1768,²⁰ and a further 24200 bighas were to be opened up by 1769.²¹ The alluvial tracts bordering the Rupnarain river was being vigorously opened up for cultivation in this period. The southern part of this area was crucial suppliers of firewood to the Midnapore salt industry, and such were marginally under cultivation. On south side of the river Rupnarain a proposal of clearing 10,000 bighas of Jalpai (land liable to be under water) land in Mahisadal in 1788.²² From a report of ‘Amini Commission’ in 1778, it was known that not only the production of crops increased but also the reformations of land were also done in the frontier area of Midnapore district. As a result, land revenue in 1771 to 1772 was rupees 8, 8,388 which was increased to rupees 10, 43,985 in 1776 to 1777. Likewise deposit in Hijli increased from rupees 2, 78,536 to rupees 2, 94,945 in the same period.²³The growth rate in coastal region of Midnapore district is cited in the table.

Table-1

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

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

It is seen in this district “lands which yield rice have been gradually gained from jungles by the adventurers who have obtained grants from government and risked money to bring them under cultivation”. The ryots of the other areas of coastal enjoyed the same facilities. For example, a group of ryots from Tamluk bought uncultivated land named ‘pooroh’ from the government in a condition to cultivate the land for three years and they were exempted land revenue for the next three years.²⁴ As there were no such types of grain merchants in Midnapore district of coastal region who could deal in crops with the other parts of the country directly. The grain traders of Midnapore worked mainly under the big merchants of the urban areas like Calcutta. It has mentioned later. So, the affluent landholders of those areas preserved the crops to sell in favourable time in future. The place where the native dealers or affluent landholders preserved crops was known as golah or hamar. Company’s servants collect grain for their own consumption. Their estimated account of grain mostly collected from the agrahan harvests. ²⁵ They also preserved their collected grain in golah/hammar. These hamars had usually a platform of timbers of various dimensions, resting on low bricks support which was over spread with bear’s mats in places where they were obtainable and the sides were composed of small timbers, bamboos and mats and the roofs thatched. But as mats were made in very few of the parganahs, the platforms more generally consisted with only of split bamboos ranged closely between the principle timbers. Interstices were plastered with earth and of the other materials. The inner and outer parts of the store house were plastered and the close thatched cover offered the grain deposited in them a tolerable protection against injuries from the weather. A granary built in this manner was first described properly raised on brick or rude store pillars and of an extent of 20 feet by 30 feet and 10 feet in height would be estimated the cost of about 125 rupees and capable of containing about 3,000 mds of rice or 2,300 mds of paddy.

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

supplied those to Calcutta in their favourable times²⁶ Food grains were produced most in Midnapore district. Here mainly ordinary quality of food grains was cultivated.²⁷ It is seen from the normal production years that the grain would be surplus in Midnapore and Jaleswar parganahs.

The production of grain depended on natural climate. In this case adversity of natural climate would affect the production of grains. The ryots of Hijli like Madhu Giri, Paran Manna, Haru Giri, Atmaram Sahoo, Jagu Behera, Kali Charan Paul and the ryots of Majnamutha like Bhim Jana, Baistam Manna, Budhu Manna, Haran Kar Dinda, Abiram Gunia, Narayan Giri reported that in the beginning of 1789 the seeds sown on the land damaged in the scorching sun and in the Bengali month of Bhadra they put the seed on land again but it also damaged in heavy rain fall.²⁸ Besides this the production of crops varied due to natural adversity in Midnapore district in South West Bengal.

The grain traders of Calcutta demanded to the committee that the main centres of rice – collections were Hoogly and Hijli. They claimed that it was due to the consumption of the Company's servants and also to supply the food grains to Calcutta. It needed the expansion of 'dastak' and the customs master did this in this respect.²⁹ It is seen that the food grains produced in Tamluk and Hijli areas fulfilled various demands of that areas and also a large amount of food grains were supplied to Calcutta. Moreover the ryots of Hijli and Jaleswar imported food grains from the Maratha region. The subject of import and export is clear from the charts below; Particular statement of grain in the Tamluk and Myshadal districts.

Table-2

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

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

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

Table-3

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

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

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

Table-4

Parganah	Grain Imported the Ryots of Hijli & Jallasore Part purchased from their land in Those district	Total Grain	Grain Exportation to Calcutta by the Merchants
Kicuramahl	2,24,533	5,96,804,,34	1,000
Jallamootah	54,500	2,40,326,,30	5,000
Magnamootah	2,46,400	5,50,046,,33	1,000
Doroodumnaun	38,500	2,80,187,8	8,000
Sujamootah	30,500	1,92,600	5,600

Beercool	9,250	60,575	2,000
Meergodah	7,000	40,500	1,500
Balsay	7,900	22,900	1,600
Cackrachour	5,000	16,200	1,300
Total	6,23,083	20,00,200,25	45,000

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

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

Price of Grain in Various Markets of coastal areas

In coastal region of Midnapore district at Kukrahatty (Cookrahatty) was a largest trading centres of grain⁸⁸. In Tamluk and Hijli division there were more grain markets. Comparison of grain price of those markets gave us the clear idea of price fluctuations. In the main discussion of the normal year it is seen that the abundance of supplied grains in the market led the price relatively low. But when the supply of grain was insufficient and the demands of the grain were high, it increased the cost of the grains. For example the price of rice in different grain markets of Tamluk and Hijli Division in South West Bengal, price fluctuation can be noticed. Month of February this time, there were a lot of grain imports in the markets.³⁰ At that time we can see that the grain price was lower. It is seen in the figures below from the 1st March to 15th March on 1788.

Table-5

Pergunah	Market	Paddy per Maund		Rice per Maund	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
Mysadal	Tentoolberrea	„8,10,-	„10,13	1,5,7	1,7,10
	Banca	--	--	1,5,7	1,7,10
	Haat Gunnea	--	--	1,5,7	--
	Haat Calcacoond	--	---	1,5,7	--
Aurunnganagar	Sair Chandeeapore	„8,18,-	„10,13	1,6,10	1,10,13
	SamGunj & Ninon	„	„	„	„
Goomghur	Gunj Balarampore	„ 8,18	„10,13	1,6,10	1,10,13
	Gunj Sonachura	„8,18	„10,13	1,6,10	1,10,13
	Haat Cummul pore	--	--	1,6,10	1,10,13
Tamluk	Haat Narrainpore	„12,-	1,2,-	1,6,10	1,8,11
	Sheb gunj	„12,-	--	1,7,5	1,9,10
	Nickasee	„12,-	--	--	--
	Coorpai	--	--	--	--
	Manik gunj	--	--	1,9,-	1,12,-

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

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

Table-6

Pergunah	Market	Paddy per Maund		Rice per Maund	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
Mysadal	Tentoolberrea	--	--	2,-,-,-	---
	Banca	--	--	2,3,11	---
	Haat Gunnea	--	--	2,-,-,-	--
	Haat Calcacoond	--	---	2,2,22	--
Aurunnganagar	Sair Chandeeapore	1,-,-,-	1,2,-,-	---	---
	SamGunge&Ninon	„	„	2,10,15	3,-,-,-
	Haat Nandapore	„15,5,-	1,57,-	2,57,-	3,57,-
Goomghur	Gunj Balarampore	1,5,-	1,57,-	2,57,-	3,57,-
	Gunj Sonachura	„15, 5,-	1,57,-	2,57,-	3,57,-
	Haat Cummul pore	„15,5-	1,57-	2,57,-	3,57,-

Tamluk	<i>Haat Narrainpore</i>	„12,-	-,-,-	1,12,-	-,-,-
	Sheb gunj	--	--	1,12,-	2,-,-
	Manik gunj		--	1,13,-	--

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

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

Table-7

Pergunah	Market	Paddy per Maund		Rice per Maund	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
Biheean	<i>Haat Bowanny chauk</i>	--	1,-,-	---	---
Erranch	<i>Haat Handeah</i>	„11,9,-	----	„11,10,-	---
	<i>HaatKoonjeeopore</i>	---	----	„11,10,-	---
	<i>Gaut Coorgunge</i>	„11,9,-	--	„11,10	--
Jellamootah	<i>Haat Boorundah</i>	„10,13,2	--	„11,15	--
	<i>Haat Seebgunj</i>	„10,13,2	--	„11,15	--
Magnamootah	<i>Bazar Bogawanpore</i>	--	--	1,-,-	1,8
	<i>Ghat Kausdah</i>	„10,14,-	--	1,-,-	--
	<i>Haat Kerahanneah</i>	„	--	1,-,-	--
	<i>Audalearreaah</i>	--	--	1,-,-	--
Casbah Hidgellee	<i>Ghat Pratabpore</i>	„9,10,-	--	„13,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat Kedgerree</i>	„9,10,-	--	„13,-,-	--
Balejoorah	<i>Ghat Pettooah</i>	„10,14,-	--	„	--
	<i>Haat Meerjapore</i>	--	--	1,-,-	--
Surroamootah	<i>HaatRannypatna</i>	„10,-,-	--	„12,10	--
Daut Currai	Comal pore	„10,14,-	--	1,-,-	--
Patash pore	<i>Ghat Intaberrah</i>	„10,14,-	--	1,-,-	--
Doroodumnaun	<i>Haat Cookrahatty</i>	„12,-,-	--	„17,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat hoarcolly</i>	„12,-,-	--	„17,-,-	--

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

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

Table-8

Pergunah	Market	Paddy per Maund		Rice per Maund	
		Coarse	Fine	Coarse	Fine
Casbah Hidgellee	<i>Ghat Pratabpore</i>	1,10,-	--	2,8,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat Kedgerree</i>	1,10,-	--	2,8,-,-	--
Balejoorah	<i>Ghat Pettooah</i>	1,10,-,-	--	2,8	--
	<i>Haat Meerjapore</i>	--	--	,-,-	--
Surroamootah	<i>Haat Rannypatna</i>	1,10,-,-	--	2,8	--
Daut Currai	Comalpore	1,9,-	--	2,6,-	--
Patashpore	<i>Ghat Intaberrah</i>	1,9,	--	2,6,-	--
Doroodumnaun	<i>Haat Cockrahatty</i>	1,11,-	--	2,12,-,-	--
	<i>Ghat hoarcolly</i>	1,11,-,-	--	2,12,-,-	--

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

In the case of expansion of scattered markets and these markets mingled in to one, the price of the former markets got changed. The price of a local product was determined by its demand and supply. But in the case of grain, the price was affected in the preindustrial societies due to the supply side and the annual harvest. Demand, by contrast, was very stable in the short term, as grain dominated the diet of the people and was difficult to substitute. In modern terms, it was an inferior good with a low price elasticity.³¹

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

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

In the first half of the eighteenth century there was a special barrier behind the regional integrated market. The *zamindar* and the landlords were the main agents of the market foundation and they simultaneously protested against the development of an unfettered system of markets in the province. The reason for this *zamindar - beopari* combination was largely due to the state's internal need to balance the two social strata in order to ensure its own stability, in the midst of a prosperous economic situation. However, the overall outcome of such an arrangement seems to have been a combination of two developments. a) Increase of the

number of *chowkies* for collecting tariffs at different rates to the need of the *zamindars*. b) Traditional conflict was between the *zamindars* and the traders, as well as *zamindars* and other *zamindars*/ landlords for collecting the rate of duties, right on markets and the movement of goods. This conflict sometimes took violent turn that had disrupted the marketing network.³³

After 1757, the relation between the state and the market was restructured with the changing political and commercial circumstances. This made it possible to establish strict control over the domestic markets than the previous regime. Grain was produced all over the region and it was a common item of consumption. It was produced as an item of sustenance but a large quantity of grain was traded not only inside the province but also in other provinces. After the famine of 1769-1770 movement of grain from one place to another was a serious matter in the field of economy. At this stage the Company's administration, politics and reformation were closely connected with each other.

So many instances where grains were imported or exported by violating the government order and collected unauthorised duties on grain such as it was seen that chakla Hijli in South West Bengal many izaradars levied various type of sair duties on grains. During the time of local king or landlords, Beer Narayan in Eranch parganah received 42 rupees on grain laden boats from the boatmen and dandees. As well as, rupees 16, 11, 17, 2/- were collected as duties from the paddy loaded bullock cart in Bahari Mutha parganah. Also duties were collected from the grain traders for transporting grain by bullock cart in Jawalamutha parganah.³⁴ During the time of Rani(Quean) Sugandha duties were levied on grain transportation in Majnamutha parganah. Duties were also collected from almost every parganahs of her dominated areas like as Sarifabad, Balijorah, Durudamnaun, etc.³⁵

Occasionally, it was seen that the traders had legal pergunah but the officials of the Company hindered to transportation of food grains. The grain merchants, Snehasi Pal, Gopi Nag, Kalachaund Chakroborty, Gouri Koir, Kali Sankar Pal -- the inhabitants of Calcutta sent a letter authorised by the Company to the different collectors of Midnapur, Hijli and Jaleswar about not to prevent any movement of their crops. The Collector of Hijli did not provide any hindrance to the transportation of grains, but the Collector of Midnapur, Jaleswar and Gumghar hindered the transportation of crops in those provinces. Moreover the sikhars of mufassal broke the key of the granaries of the grain above grain traders and sold their crops at the rate of 9 maunds per rupee, but the natural rate of that time was 8 maunds per rupee. So the traders would suffer tremendously. They appealed to the government to send a peon to collect their dues, and allow them to transport and sell the remaining crops in their granaries.³⁶

According to the direction the acting collector of Midnapore informed the secretary of Government Edward Hay that he collected 500 maunds food grains as per the instruction and arranged to send it to Tamluk by land route. He also sent a letter to inform Mr. Dent and told him (MR. Dent) to despatch these food grains by water ways to Calcutta. But Mr. Dent was unable to send it. Last of all the acting collector of Midnapore despatched the grains to Calcutta safely.³⁷ There were numerous instances in which it appears that the district authorities, according to the above instruction, collected food grains and sent it to Calcutta as well as where it was needed. Such as 500 maunds food grains were collected from the markets of Midnapore and sent it to Shibpore.³⁸

Along with the British East India Company, the French and the Dutch could collect their necessary goods from the markets of South West Bengal and take them to their desired places. A letter from J.C Price reveals that the French collected food grains from the markets of South West Bengal. He seized the collected amount with the help of a havildar and eight sepoy. However, later the French and the Dutch were allowed to transport their collected food grains to their destination.³⁹ It is observed that due to the scarcity of food grains, it was difficult to the Company's officials to collect food grains. For an example, an official of the Company in South West Bengal said that it was impossible to collect rice according to the demand due to shortage of food grains in the district, even crops reduced in the military *bazars*. The commanding officers wanted an enquiry for this kind of shortage. Even he also, to avoid the harmful scarcity, he stopped its exports from the province to the north. He expected this system to reduce the price of grain and to buy enough grain from the markets. He forced the grain traders who bought grains for export to the northern part of Bengal to sell in the district markets which would provide temporary relief to all. In present situation there was no possibility to buying food grains. He had already purchased enough food grains that he would try to supply in time.⁴⁰

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

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it was found that the Company partially successful participant in the grain market. They spending considerable sums on its grain concern; but they failed to manage themselves to be the competitions with the indigenous merchants in the case of grain collection and its transportation.¹³³ The European private traders would collect grains for their own consumption. For instance it is seen that the European who lived in Hooghly collected grains from the bazars of Hijli in neighbouring South West Bengal during scarcity in 1786. They preserved it at their own granaries. At that time they also decided not to export grain to the outer stations.¹³⁴ European private traders kept themselves aloof from the grain trading. As a result the Company deprived their own grain trade in coastal region of Midnapore district as well as entire Bengal in lack of their experience in away from the grain trade. The Company kept themselves away from the trading without compromising its foremost priorities. They made no huge amount of investment in this regard. They preferred more in the trading of -cotton textiles, salt and saltpetre which were collected under their control or to set monopoly of the Company, In the Company's trading these goods were too much important to them. It made the Company's trade smooth and they could manage the supply of these commodities in adequate amount and elimination of competition in their control an imperative need.

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

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