

The Growth and Decline of a Pre-colonial Town in Bengal in the Age of Transition

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Bengal had a long tradition of emergence, growth and decline of towns from the earliest times to the present century. Under the rule of the Nawabs (c.1704-1757), many new urban centres grew around the administrative points across Bengal. But what is more important is that many towns developed centring around the residences of the zamindars or the principal revenue collectors who were practically the local potentates with wide revenue, police and judicial powers. The first half of the 18th century saw the growing power of many of these zamindars whose seats of authority gradually turned into the most important provincial towns of the time.¹ Theoretically, the town of Burdwan began to develop centring the zamindari of Burdwan but that is not the only reason for the process of urbanization in the vicinity. Hence we try to investigate and interpret both the theoretical and practical process of human settlement in the area under review.

Origin and Development of Burdwan

According to the Greek geographers, Protails was the capital of Gangaridae and one view of modern scholars is that this Protails was Burdwan. The name Burdwan means ever-augmenting, the town is situated on the north bank of the river Banka, some two miles from the river Damodar. The district lies mainly between the rivers Ajaya, Bhagirathi, Hughly and Damodar. It has been claimed by English anthropologists in *Burdwan Gazetteer* that Mal and Bagdi were the original tribes of the region, there are the ruins of some forts possibly of some local rulers.²

The town of Burdwan that is the heart of the Burdwan division figured in Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari*³ as a *Mahal*

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under Sharifabad *sarkar*. But no further mention of Burdwan and the fort is noticed in the *Ain*, so it became very difficult to find out when the town developed. The local scholars insist that the beginning of Burdwan could be seen from the small town of *Kanchannagar*, which is now a ward of the municipality of Burdwan. According to them, ironworks had started there since the twelfth century when the river Damodar had extended a branch called *Khari* to that place in its eastward march. These scholars believe that this kind of manufacture of iron works, perhaps brought by the tribes from the Chota Nagpur hills, created the *Bhalluka* civilization that did not last long. *Kanchannagar* became famous for its iron manufactures during the 19th century.⁴

It appears that the founder of the House who first immigrated to Bengal and settled at Burdwan was one Sangam Rai, a Kapur Kshatriya of Kotil in Lahore, who on his way back from a pilgrimage to Puri, being much taken with its natural beauty and commercial advantages, chose to live at Baikunthapur, a village lying near about the outskirts' of the town. Commerce and money-lending being his principal pursuits, he soon acquired for himself a position of influence in the locality. The date of the immigration and settlement of this Kshatriya at Burdwan can only be approximately determined. We find that his grandson Abu Rai was appointed Chowdhuri (revenue collector) and Kotwal (police chief) in 1657 A.D. Taking the period intervening between the two incidents to be 60 years, we conclude that it was towards the end of Emperor Akbar's reign that Sangam Rai settled at Burdwan. So it became very clear that the founder of the Burdwan dynasty Sangam Rai at first lived at Baikunthapur which was about four miles away from Burdwan. On the bank of river Banka, Baikunthapur was then a trading place. The ruins of the big buildings of the Burdwan dynasty are found at Baikunthapur still today.⁵

The late 17th and early 18th centuries provided remarkable openings for the zamindarship⁶ in Bengal.

The anxiety of Emperor Aurangzeb to consolidate his position in the remote province of Bengal led to the conferment of zamindari rights on many parties. So did the policy of Murshid Quli Khan to secure an increasing and punctilious flow of revenue to the centre. As a result, a number of Zamindaries came into being and grew. It is interesting to note that the creation of zamindaries during this period was mainly centred on the Hindus who manned the revenue department as *qanungos*, *chaudhuris*, *diwans* and *naibs*.⁷ The vicinity of these revenue officials expands demographically from this time onwards.

Socio-Economic and Cultural Dynamics

By 1680, the Burdwan family had obtained a small zamindari and had entered the Mughal revenue-collecting hierarchy. In subsequent decades, the Burdwan zamindari expanded over hundreds of villages and gained broad autonomy over its internal affairs. By the mid-18th century, it covered some 5,000 square miles and was a virtual Hindu kingdom within the weakening provincial Mughal hegemony.⁸ The growth of the Burdwan zamindari under Kritichandra Rai (1702-40) and Chitrasen Rai (1740-44) afford an opportunity to examine in detail the process by which power was restructured and one 18th-century zamindari absorbed its neighbours. In many parts of India in the 18th century, provincial governors were breaking away from Delhi's control and aligning themselves with an emerging class of powerful zamindars. As imperial power waned, the influence of local magnates willing to cooperate with the provincial successor states expanded. So did the opportunity to share in the honourable enterprise of local kingship.⁹ Eventually within the periphery of such type of growing political orbit a rapid human settlement is being noticed which led the place in the process of urbanization.

The area comprising the zamindari of Burdwan an extensive river- intersected tract of old alluvial deposit consisted for the most of rich rice-producing plains. Its population consisted of Rarhi Brahmans and Kayasthas as well as of dominant cultivating castes like the Sadgops, Aguris and Kaivartas. Below whom stood untouchable landless castes like the Bagdis and the Bauris. The Sadgops were the largest agricultural cast in the area and dominated many of its villages before as well as during the administration of the Raja of Burdwan. Before the rise of the house of Burdwan, their political power in the region based on the dominant position of Sadgop agriculturists in the villages was reflected in the existence of Sadgop principalities in the Gophbhum tract at the north of Burdwan town.¹⁰ All the *farmans*¹¹ issued by the Mughal Emperors to the successive Raja of Burdwan from 1694 to 1769 point toward the inflow of revenue,

charitable and religious activity of the zamindari family.

The Process of Urbanization in Burdwan

Urbanization refers to the process whereby ever large numbers of people migrate to and establish residence in relatively dense areas of population. It is a phenomenon that has existed throughout the ages, from ancient times to the present.¹² One of the most important contributions to the growth of the city was made by the landed and commercial interest during the period of our study. The zamindars used to maintain in the capital an establishment of *naibs*, *wakils*, messengers, peons and other servants required for their purposes; so did the big merchants and the traders. All the foreign companies had separate factories and besides their own officials and servants, hundreds were employed as agents, brokers and workers. The city served as a manufacturing centre, a market place and as an entrepot. It received goods from the interior and forwarded them to various place both in and outside Bengal.¹³ From the point of view of the government, cities and towns were no more than conglomerations of adjacent villages, which indeed was frequently the case when outlying villages were absorbed into the expanding suburbs of a pre-existing settlement, like *mahal*, *mahalla* etc. into which every city or town was sub-divided. In many instances, the *mahalla* possessed its own organic identity, which could be defined in terms of economic organization or occupation, a common caste or sectarian affiliation, a shared ancestral migration from a particular village or region, a client-patron relationship with a particular family under whose protection that *mahalla* lived, or allegiance to a saint whose shrine was located within the vicinity. If not wholly self to provide at least some of the basic needs of their inhabitants, while their sense of group identity, and what distinguished them from the residents of others *mahallas*, was reinforced in many cases by the fact that the *mahalla* was walled off from its neighbours, with gates, which could be closed at night or during periods of disorder and insecurity. Within each quarter, most matters of concern to the community as a whole could be settled by the arbitration of a *panchayet* or a respected 'elder'.¹⁴ Urbanization in modern times is widely defined as "the transformation of social life from rural life to urban settings."¹⁵ It means that urbanization is that process by which a village is transformed into a town or city.

Keeping in mind the various processes and forces of town development, the growth characteristics of the town of Burdwan may be surveyed. We have already noted how the house of Burdwan zamindari began to develop during the 17th century and the early 18th century. Moreover

during the period of Maratha attacks starting 1743 many people fled to Calcutta and Chandernagore but some had gone to Burdwan as well. In 1752 the famous poet Bharat Chandra Ray and Banesvara Vidyalkara's description of the place of Burwdan throws some light on this. It appears from the above account of the rise and growth of the Burdwan House that it was the deliberate creation of Mughal official policy as well as Nawabi patronage.¹⁶

The references to both the fort and the town of Burdwan could be seen in Mirza Nathan's narratives on the rebellion of Shahjahan. The growth of the town of Burdwan could be discerned from the history of the growth of the zamindari of Burdwan since the second half of the 17th century. The ironworks of Kanchannagar have already been referred to following the opinion of the local historians but as yet there is not positive link found between the rise of Kanchannagar and the rise of Burdwan.¹⁷

The growth of Burdwan zamindari under Kirtichandra (1702-40) was spectacular.¹⁸ The growth was pushing settled agriculture and caste-based social organization into jungly areas that had been more exclusively tribal and nomadic.¹⁹ Now a question may be raised how the tribal and nomadic people contribute to developing the town? Though the tribal were mainly farmers and they resided outside the town. But a close integration between the village and town as well as the initiative of the zamindars led the town Burdwan to grow. In a recent study, it is being claimed that the smaller centres of distribution were created partly by the family members of the Naziams and by their official. In greater part, however, they were the products of zamindari initiative. A census of the number of the market in Burdwan in 1790 showed that the Rajas owned 7 ganjs, 1 bazaar and 16 haats. Of these Raja Tejchand had established 9; Trilok Chand, 11 and Kirti Chand, 4.²⁰ Moreover, Burdwan Raj was a deliberate creation of Mughal official policy, which promoted its growth as a means of bringing the area under government control through a loyal princely house.²¹

The town of Burdwan did not get all the advantages of the river Damodar though it is situated on the north bank of the river. In rainy seasons floodwater entered the town. Mud blocked was built to prevent the inflow water but it was not successful every year. As a result of this, the town took a long time to develop. In the middle of the 18th century, the zamindary became large about five thousand squares mile.²² Town Burdwan had also developed during this time. So the above discussion makes it clear that the old part of Burdwan is known today as Kanchannagar. Kanchannagar is supposed to be the early nucleus or focal point for later urban growth in Burdwan. A more rapid pace of urbanization stated due to the establishment of

Burdwan Raj. Shirin Akhtar²³ remarks that due to forcible enlargement of the state under the Raja's of Burdwan, the town began to develop.

Market Economy in the Town of Burdwan

We have already referred that Kanchannagar became famous for its iron manufactures, moreover, we find some profession based settlement in the town of Burdwan namely, Mahajantuli (wards of money lender), Golahat (wards of the fire arms artilleryman), Bherikhana (wards of the prostitute) etc. and we find the name of some market based human settlements like Raniganj, Jahuripatti, Alamganj, Tikorhat, Tejganj, Puratanchawk, Bara-bazar and Kotalhat. There was religion-based settlement like Godapalli inhabited by the Muslims and tomb of Sufi saint Khakkor Sha. In 1752 the famous poet Bharat Chandra Roy's description of the place of Burdwan throws some light on this. The poet tells us that the town was very populous with all kinds of professional people living in different wards, which must have developed during the first half of the 18th century. The poet also tells us that the river Damodar was not far from the town. Unfortunately, we do not have any estimate of the number of people living there.²⁴

In his description on the town and markets of Burdwan the poet Ramprasad²⁵ says that the market of Burdwan abounded in many foreign traders and the shops were filled with from jewellery to cheap materials. But the customers are few and sale is scarce. But when Bharatchandra²⁶ describes the town of Burdwan in 1752 he says that the town was thickly populated. In the main gate, there was an armed guard. That means there was a high wall around the city.

Just before the battle of Plessey, Maharaja Tilakchand Bahadur authoritatively ordered²⁷ to seal all the trading centres of Company that proves the power and authority of the royal family. During 1757 to 1770 there was a tendency of non-co-operation among the Nawab of Murshidabad, East India Company, and Burdwan Raj Tilakchand, the Rayats and the Talukdars and the Native traders each. As a result, the agriculture and agro-economy of Burdwan died down.

Referring to Burdwan, Holwell wrote in 1765 that "in tranquil times this place afforded an annual large vend for the valuable staples of lead, copper, broad-cloth, tin, pepper, *tootanague*. The Puggiah merchants from Delly (Delhi) and Arga, resorted yearly to this great mart, and would (come) again if peace was established in the country: - they purchased the above staples, either with money, or in barter for opium, tincal, saltpeter, and horses."²⁸ In a recent study, it is being shown how the manufactures and sell of salt is being performed in Burdwan before

and after the Colonial rule. Moreover, the study also shows how the production and distribution of silk and cloth are being performed in Burdwan.²⁹ The zamindars generally played the role of salt farmers in Midnapur and Burdwan.³⁰ Although such merchant communities carried on extensive trade but, indeed, Bengal never produced a merchant of the stature of Virji Vora or Abdul Gafur, who had dominated Surat trade in the 17th century.³¹ Although there were extremely influential merchants in Bengal as well, such as Khemchand and Chintamen Saha in Balasore, who were engaged in both foreign and internal trade around this time.³² In the mid-18th century, Bengal trade was dominated by such merchant princes as Khwaja Wajid, Amirchand and Jagat Seths, who comprised the 'Princely aristocracy'.³³ But it may be noted that there is a difference between the Bengal merchants and the Bengali merchants. In our study, we comprise both the merchant communities who engaged in trade and commerce of Bengal, inter-provincial and export trade as well.

Before Plassey Englishmen were certainly involved in the internal trade of Bengal, but the scale of their operations seems to have been relatively limited.³⁴ Moreover before Plassey except English merchants other Europeans, Asians as well as different groups of Indian merchant community were actively engaged in Bengal trade. But the scenario rapidly began to change after Plassey. Although we see a linked market economy began to develop in Bengal in the late 18th century in consequence of that a commercialized society also emerged.³⁵

Every important city or town had a *bazar* or market within its boundary.³⁶ *Bazars* flourished even in places, which were not trade centres. The markets in the cities contained shops of almost every article of necessity as well as luxury, such as paddy, rice, fire-wood, sweetmeats, sugar, *bhura* (unrefined sugar), milk, ghee betel-leaves, betel-nuts, mace, nutmegs, sandal, saffron, etc.³⁷ Ramaprasada, describes the jewellery and cloth departments of the market in the rich and populous city of Burdwan: "Beyond these, the poet (Sundara) saw the king's market with thousands of foreign merchants sitting there. There were hundreds of trades, and shopkeepers, countless gems pearls, and rubies. There were also various kinds of fine and beautiful cloths, such as *vanat* (felt-cloth), *makhmal* (velvet), *pattu*, *bhusnai*³⁸ *butadar* (spotted cloths,) *dakaia*³⁹ *mal dai*⁴⁰ and various other kinds, much liked by the *Amirs* (the rich). There were many *bilati* (foreign) articles of fancy prices or of fashionable designs,⁴¹ which were, however, heaped together for want of customers. Everything was cheap and easily available... Baghai Kotwal, with pride equal to that of the Lord of Death, and with eyes reddened, was present there on an elephant's back."⁴²

The cloth of cotton and silk were traditionally being produced in Burdwan for long. Ramprasad Sen mentioned the sale of *banat*, *makhmal*, *patu*, *bhusnai*, *dhakai*, *mal dai*, *nalati*, *chikan*, *sarband*, etc. in the bazar of Burdwan. According to Holwell, at least fifteen kinds of cotton were produced in the regime of Tilakchand.⁴³ The native and the foreign traders invested a lot of money in cloth manufacture in the middle of the 18th century.

Morphology of the Town

The town of Burdwan remains partly unexplored in the context of its morphology. We have already noted that Burdwan emerged as a small town during the 17th century and became a centre of trade, commerce and craft during the first half of the 18th century, although the morphological analysis of the town of Burdwan is very complex one because we do not have any more demographic and statistical data during the period under review.

A long Bengali poem '*Kaviranjan Vidyasundara*' by Ramprasad Sen written a few years after the death of Murshid Quli Khan (June 30, 1727) gives a minute description of Burdwan town, though we find a flavour of exaggeration in it. His description is as follows:

*Probhate Udayaditya, Sundar Prafullachitto,
Probeshila bir singha desh.*

*Saachando Sakal lok, Nahi raag dukkho shoke,
Nahi Kono aadharmer lesh.*

*Divojo proicchod pore, Gaan badyo ghare ghare,
Titek nahiko taal bhango.*⁴⁴

In his poem, Ramprasad portrays the town of Burdwan as one whose people are happy and contented, free from disease, sorrow and trouble and from any taint of irreligiousness. All wear fine dresses. Additionally, Vocal and Instrumental music are practised in every house.

An almost similar description of Burdwan town is found in *Annadamanagal* (1752 A.D.) of Bharatchandra. When the hero of the poem Sundar enters the town of Burdwan, Bharatchandra gives the following description:

*Dekhi puri Bardhaman Sundar Chaudike Chan
Dhanyo Gaur je deshea ea desh
Raja baro bhagyodharo Kache nad damodar
Bhalo bole janinu bishes.
Chaudike sahar pana Dware chauki kato jana
Marucha buruj shilamoy.
Kamaner hurhuri Banduker durduri
Sanmukhe baner gar hay.*

.....
.....
Jaite prathom thana Jigawshe karia mana

*Kotha hoite aila kotha jao.
Ki jati ki naam dharo Kon babsayae karo
Na kahile jaite na pao.*⁴⁵

The above description shows that the town of Burdwan was prosperous during that time and suggests that the town was well protected by guards. In a recent study, it is being claimed that there were walls on all sides to protect the city and many armed guards on the entrances; that the town had been divided into quarters occupied by different ethnic groups; that the city was a great mart, where indigenous agricultural products and handicrafts, as well as many European articles of fancy, were easily available; that the Burdwanites were well-fed, well-clad and generally content.⁴⁶

At the entrance of the Burdwan town was a big pond which was built by queen Brajasundari, mother of Kirtichandra. The pond was named '*Ranisayar*.' At the south '*ghat*' (bathing place) of the pond, there was an inscription. The pond to the west of it was '*Shymsayar*', built by Ghanashyam Rai. To the west of it was '*Krishnasayar*' built by Krishnaram Rai.

Kanchannagar pally was the trading place of old Burdwan, knives and scissors of this place were famous. During '*Rathjatra*' fair took place here. The *maharaja* had to be chariots made of wood. At the south-west of Kanchannagar there was a gate on the road named '*Baraduari*.' Proverb goes that Maharaja Kirtichandra ordered to build the gate as a memento of his victory over the king of Bishnupur. To the south-east of Kanchannagar was Idilpur. The East India Company had its office here.⁴⁷ In 1768 the zamindar of Burdwan received a *farman* mentioning him "*fidabi khash*" means privileged royal servant, no more Bengal zamindars get such status.⁴⁸

In his description on town and market of Burdwan the poet Ramprasad says that the market of Burdwan abounded in many foreign traders and the shops were filled with jewellery to cheap materials. But the customers were few and sale is scarce. But when Bharat Chandra described the town of Burdwan in 1752 he said that the town was thickly populated with all kinds of professional people living in different wards. The poet's description of the town shows that it had a well-guarded gateway. The principal guard was an Abyssinian who was not happy with the administration since the pay was very low. He opened the gate after receiving a substantial bribe.

The poet described different wards of the town as *garh* or fort although there was no mention of a separate gate for each ward. Inside the town the first ward after the gateway was occupied by the foreigners including the English, Dutch, French, Danes and the Armenians. It may be pointed out that the Danes had to leave Bengal in 1717 due to a quarrel over taxes but they came back during the

rule of Alivardi Khan, possibly after 1750. These foreigners brought their goods here by ship for sale. This seemed to be a special area for the sale of foreign goods since there is no reference to Indian merchants. Some of them were artillerymen. The second ward had been occupied by all kinds of Muslims including Syeds, Mullicks, Shaikhs, Mughals, Afghans and Turks. They spoke Arabic mixed with Persian and did their prayers in their language. Here the races and professions were mixed. The third ward was occupied by the Khatriyas who were fighters and experts in weapons. The fourth ward was occupied by the Rajputs who were good warriors and they guarded the bedroom of the king. The elephant drivers and couriers sat together in the fifth ward. The sixth ward held the treasury and was heavily guarded. Various kinds of people and sarafs were there in this ward.

Beyond these six wards lay the palace. One first encountered a chowk called Chandni Chowk in the middle of which was the Kotwali Chabutara - the police station - along with an open prison where the prisoners were kept with iron in the legs. They begged for food from anyone passing by. Beyond this was the principal part of the palace in the shape of an outer office over which music used to be played. Leaving the Kotwali Chabutara behind it appears that there was a large space where 36 castes had their 36 workshops. Then one arrived at the actual palace of the king which was in the middle of the city. The surroundings of the palace contained 8 hats or rural markets, 16 lanes and 32 markets. Groups of elephants fed with wine were in chains at the door. There were thousands of horses from various countries like Iraq, Turkey, Arabia, etc. These were roped near the door. The camels and other domestic animals were also there in a similar fashion.

It appears that there was a separate area for the Brahmins who read the Vedas, grammar, Smriti, philosophy, etc. There were temples inside the houses from where one could hear the noise of bells. Many sacrifices were held there in the form of festivals and there were worshippers of both Shiva and Chandi. Next to this area was the area of the Vaidyas who were physicians and they treated the patients by checking their pulse and read their books of medicine. The Kayasthas had their area next. They belonged to various professions which have been enumerated by the poet. The poet commented that they looked after their income all the time. In the list of professional people given by the poet, it seems that some of the lower castes had moved up to claim the status of Kayasthas. In other words, mobility within the caste system in the urban areas was discernible. After the Kayasthas the areas were occupied by lower castes and then the untouchables. All of them were professional

people. But the poet does not mention any demarcation of space between the upper, the lower castes and the untouchables. Besides, some of these were rural people, like hunters. There were certain other professional people like painters, dancers, etc., whose residences or areas were not clearly marked by the poet. The poet does not mention whether some of these people were of lower castes or not. The area ended at a beautiful tank full of water and trees on its bank.

The poetic description of the town almost suggests a linear view of the ward. The area next to the palace was that of the upper castes followed by lower castes and untouchables or service people. The area was divided to accommodate the foreigners first, then the Muslims, professional people and their markets before going to the palace. The upper and lower castes were separately described but the demarcation of their area has not been clearly spelt out. Obviously, the poet has given his impression of the town rather than a description of the city. The reference to the kotwal and the prisoners is interesting since the poet in his real-life had been imprisoned at Burdwan for debts incurred by his father. One must also give due margin to the exaggeration of the poet in describing a town of his time which he liked very much and on which he wove the romantic story called *Vidyasundar*.⁴⁹ The urban settlement demarcated the native and foreigners which are called the black and white part of the town.

At the northern part of Kanchannagar and the opposite side of the river Banka was Rajganj. The nimbark saint had an aakhra there. North-west of this aakhra was Lakurdi, nearing it the Durlabh Kali temple. At the bank of river Damodar and south-west of Idilpur was another temple named Tejganj Kali Mandir. At the east of Lakurdi was Tikorhat and Kotalhat, West side of these two market place was Godapalli inhabited by the Muslims. The Barabazar was situated just on the eastern side of the royal palace and south-west of the palace was a tomb of fakir Khakkor Sha, eastward of the tomb was another market named Barhan-bazar. There was a jail in Borhat situated at the north-east of the royal palace. During 1790, the East India Company occupied the jail to confine the arrested captives, besides there was also an office of the company for a long time⁵⁰

The Town in Crisis

As the town of Burdwan developed, centring around the residence of Burdwan zamindari, in the same way it also depopulated with the gradual disendowment of the zamindars by the English. Moreover, the zamindars became impoverished during the years 1760-1770. The famine of 1770 almost completed this catastrophe.

Disorganization and dislocation became widespread in North and West Bengal.⁵¹ A recent study also mentions that Burdwan's agriculture and manufactures had declined considerably by the mid-1770s.⁵² In consequence, from 1771 to 1776 the population of Burdwan was reducing almost 25%. The trend of reducing the population in the vicinity was going on till 1791, because in between 1787-1791 Burdwan faced flood twice and famine once, in consequence of the above-stated facts we see the number of population in the locality before the famine 1000, which was reduced to 375 in 1791.⁵³ So we may argue that the Famine of 1770 followed by some others natural calamities changed the entire demography of the towns of our study. Besides the introduction of the Permanent settlement⁵⁴ changed the geographical and political structure of the zamindari as well. All these were responsible for the pull-down of the towns. During the monsoon, a high man-made embankment imperfectly protects the military cantonment, administrative offices, bazaars, temples, mosques, and mostly earthen residences of Burdwan town from the coursing waters of Damodar in the 18th century. When unusually heavy rain fell or when the embankments were inadequately maintained, the Damodar breached the earthworks, flooded Burdwan town, and destroyed the crops and huts of neighbouring villages.⁵⁵ We have an intensive description of the decline of the town of Burdwan. In a letter dated October 9, 1787, Bruce gives an account of a great flood which occurred on Monday, 1st October. "The town is totally destroyed, not a vestige of mud house remaining, and even those built of brick are many of them fallen or so entirely damaged that a longer residence in them becomes dangerous. Many people have lost their lives and a great number of cattle drowned. Nothing but the banks of the tanks remained for the reception of every living animal."⁵⁶ As a consequence of the flood the whole district suffered, but especially the southern parganas. The flood was followed by an outbreak of cattle disease. A further letter draws the attention of the Board to the "effects to be apprehended from the contagion of the Carnage which is so dreadful in many places as to threaten even a Plague to the inhabitants."⁵⁷ Hence we may argue that the flood and epidemic were responsible for the decline of the town of Burdwan at the end of the century.

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35. For details see the discussion by Rajat Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
36. In different Mangal Kavyas like, *Annadamangal*, *Dharmangal*, *Tirthamangal* etc. the author's mentioned the market-place around the towns.
37. "Nattour has a large Bazar but is a place of no trade." Rennell's Journals in his *Bengal Atlas*, Vol. II, Kalyan Rudra, ed. (2016), Kolkata, p. 85.
38. For details see K. K. Datta, *op. cit.*, 175.
39. *Ibid*.
40. *Ibid*.
41. *Ibid*.
42. Quoted by K. K. Datta, *op.cit*, 175.
43. Satyanarayan Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 33. And also J. Z. Holwell, *Empire of Indostan, Interesting Historical Events, Relative to the Province of Bengal*, Part-I, (Microfish edition, 1987), Calcutta.
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