



Diversification of Agrarian and Non-Agrarian Income in Colonial Dinajpur District: A Study of Revenue policies, Commercialisation, and Trade Networks

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ABSTRACT

Dinajpur has been a predominantly agriculture district in ancient times. Since ancient times, Cash crop such as paddy, jute, chilies pulse and sugarcane have been cultivated. An important change in the economic structure of the region began in 1765 AD when the East India company acquired the right to collect revenue. The introduction of the permanent settlement in 1793 AD institutionalized the zamindari system and increased revenue pressure on the agrarian economy. This article shows that this change accelerated the commercialization of agriculture and increased production of cash crops, thereby linking Dinajpur to the larger market system. At the sometime non-agriculture sources of income such as handicraft, petty trade, transport and administrative work developed. Specially the expansion of roads and railways strengthen regional and interregional trade network, which play an important role in income diversification. This study explore that diversification of income in Dinajpur was not a simple transition from agriculture to commerce, but rather complex and uneven process, governed by colonial policies, market forces and local social structures.

Introduction: agriculture was backbone of livelihood of the people of Dinajpur district. Most of the people here lived in village. The diversification of agricultural and non-agricultural incomes in colonial Dinajpur is

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a complex and multidimensional historical process, developed through the interplay of colonial fiscal policy, commercialisation and regional trade networks. The Dinajpur district of North Bengal was an important focal point of the radical changes that began in the economic structure of Bengal after the civil gain of the East India company in 1765 AD. It was from this year that various experiments were started to establish a functional colonial government by wresting the ruling power from the hand of the Dinajpur Raj-zamindari company bosses appointed an Amil in 1768 AD to ensure revenue collection from zamindars. The second important step taken was the control and monitoring of revenue collection. Dinajpur was historically important for its fertile farmland, diverse crop production and active local market system. From the permanent settlement to the changing fiscal policy of the colonial period, the agricultural economy of the region was profoundly affected. On the one hand, the expansion of commercial agriculture such as Indigo and sericulture, on the other hand, non-agricultural sources of income were generated through textile industry, fisheries and petty trade.

Geographical and Historical Context of Dinajpur:

Dinajpur district is known for its rich agriculture and river- centric culture. Due to the river- centric lifestyle, a different kind of social Bond has developed among the people of this region. In ancient times river-centric civilizations developed as the major civilizations of the world. F.W. Strong mention in his gazetteer about the rivers of Dinajpur district that "Hindi rainy season the main rivers, such as the Nagar, punarbhaba, and atrai, are navigable by good-sized country boats to about as far North as Dinajpur town."¹ Also W.W. Hunter mentioned about the rivers of Dinajpur district that "the following rivers are navigable by such boats during the rainy season:- 1. Mahananda, 2. Nagar, 3.Kulik, 4.Tangan, 5.Chhiramati, 6.Purnabhaba, 7.Dhopa, 8.Brahmani, 9.Atrai, 10.Garbhesswari, 11.Kankra, 12.Jamuna and 13.Karatoya."² The boundaries of Dinajpur district have changed over time. Administrative reorganization due to historical reasons is a major cause of this change. W.W Hunter mention about geographical boundary of the Dinajpur district that "Dinajpur district is a triangular tract of country, with the acute angle forwards the north, lying between the district of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur on the east and Purniah on the west, and in the South bordering on parts of Maldah, rajshahi, and bogra districts. The details of the boundaries were returned to me by the collector in 1870 as follows :- On the North-east it is bounded by chaklah Boda in Jalpaiguri district, and by parganas, Kazirhat, Kundi, Batasun, and Barabil in Rangpur district, the rivers Sulai, Bholari, Tista and Karatoya forming sueceivissively the boundary line; On the south- east by parganas mukhtipur, goraghat, khangaon, saguna, and Felthijangpur in bogra district; On the south by parganas Barbakpur and Jiasindhu in Rajshahi, and by parganas Bansdol-Paltapur, Shikarpur, Ajhor, Kasimpur, Rajnagar, and Bhalesswari in



Maldah district, and on the west by parganas Surjyapur, Barot, and Hatanda in Purniah District, the rivers Nagor and Mahananda forming a natural boundary-line."³

There are various disagreements among historians regarding the naming of Dinajpur. Also historians offer various explanations regarding the origin of Dinajpur's name. Various mythological stories are associated with this district. According to the belief of the local people, these mythological stories further strengthen the Identity of their district. After the mythical period, this district was ruled by various Hindu and Muslim rulers. It is rumored that the naming of Dinajpur was completed during the Muslim rule. In an article titled a historical review, zinatunnesa, R.M.M. Kunda, khandakar Nizamuddin and M.Q.M Mahamud wrote,"it is presumed that in the early 5th century, the city was named after Dinwaj, the founder of the Dinajpur Royal dynasty."⁴ Many historians believe that King Ganesh adopted the title 'Danujmardandev' His title is widely accepted as the origin of the name Dinajpur. In this context, Dhananjay Roy mentioned in his book that "when Raja Ganesh felt completely safe from all sides, he removed his son Jalaluddin and himself assumed the name 'Danujmardandadeva' and ascended the throne. Coins inscribed in Bengali script bearing the name Dhanujmardandadeva was also issued. In this manner, after ruling as Dhanujmardandadeva from 1417-18 A.D and for some period of 1418-19, Raja Ganesh died."⁵ In ancient and medieval times, that is, before the colonial period, the exact boundaries of the greater Dinajpur region cannot be clearly demarcated. During the colonial rule, the British government introduced Zamindari system and permanent settlement in Dinajpur district. This resulted in peasants becoming landless and increased revenue exploitation. Indigo cultivation, railway construction and commercial agriculture drove the local economy to colonial interests and formed the basis of the modern economic structure. During the reign of Raja Baidyanath of Dinajpur, the East India company obtained diwani in 1765 A.D. As a result, the acquisition of Diwani by the East India company in 1765 A.D. brought about many changes in the administration of Dinajpur. From then on, various experiments began to snatch power from the Dinajpur Raj zamindari and establish an effective colonial government. As a first step, the East India company officials appointed an Amil in 1768 to insure increased revenue collection from the Dinajpur Zamindari. The second important step was the control and monitoring of revenue collection. At this time an English supervisor was appointed to collect detailed information about the district revenue system. As a Result of the formation of the provincial council of company government in Dinajpur, the civil court was established in Dinajpur (present Raiganj) in 1780 A.D. The jurisdiction of this court included Haveli, pinjara or Dinajpur, Purnea, Rangpur, Idrakpur, Malda and part of the rajshahi district east of the Ganges.⁶

Revenue Policies and Land System of Dinajpur:



Although todarmal's revenue system was prevalent in the land revenue system before 1793 A.D. many changes were introduced latter. This settlement led to many changes in the land system of the Mughal period and increased the power of the zamindars, carnewallis's land system involved the interests of emerging capitalism in India. In 1793, 22 March the British parliament passed the charter act, extending the rule of the East India company. The permanent settlement was a philosophical foundation of British industrial capitalist rule. The former zamindari system was changed and a new zamindari system was introduced. The permanent settlement act was made up of 47 regulations. Various government agencies were established to implement this law. The declaration Cornwallis defined the relationship of zamindari between the government and the zamindars. The government recognized the zamindar as the sole owner of the land and undertook that the government deposit levied on the zamindars and talukdars engaged in permanent settlements would remain unchanged in perpetuity. Under this arrangement, the zamindars as sole owners of the land can freely transfer their land without the permission of the government.⁷ It was due to this permanent settlement that many small zamindari systems were established in Dinajpur. Exploitation of peasants increased due to the zamindari system. Following the acquisition of diwani, revenue collection and the administrative structure changed under British colonial rule. In this context F.W. Strong mentioned in his gazetteer that "In A.D. 1765, the British obtained the diwani of Bengal, with the right of collecting the revenue, and in A.D. 1772 a chief of the revenue was appointed to the zamindari of Dinajpur."⁸

Although this dynasty is mentioned in the Mughal Era, there are prevailing opinions among historians regarding the founding period of this dynasty. F.W. Strong mentioned that in the reign of Akbar we find the first authentic traces of the great zamindari family of Dinajpur, with which for the next two centuries the history of the district is closely interwoven. To Quote Mr. Westmacott: "In A.D. 1600, Akbar divided The Empire into 15 Soobas, and made his son Selim soobadar of Bengal. The sooba was divided into 24 Sarkars, and part of six of these Sarkars fall within the limits of the district of Dinagepoor. About the time of Akbar's settlement there was at Dinagepoor, at the place from which Gonesh, less than two centuries before, derived his title, a man, possibly of the blood of Gonesh, in possession of a considerable part of what are now the districts of Dinagepoor and Malda. Buchanan calls him Kasi, but whether he is correct or not, the name is now utterly forgotten. His grave is shown at the door of the Mondeer in the Rajbaree, and offerings of cloth, curds, rice, and plantains are regularly made upon it. His life is reputed to have been very Holy, and he is spoken of as a Brahmocharee, mohonto, or Gonesh. It is said that the nucleus of his estate was certain land with which an image of Kallee, named Kalika, and worshipped to the east, was connected, and that in addition to this he became possessed of an image of Krishna named Kaliya, endowed with the whole of the Sarkar or havelee, of panjara. The estate of dinagepur was frequently spoken of as Havelee panjara, even



when it included land in several other Sarkars. Had the estate really been a debuttar, or endowment of gods, Raja Radhanath would probably have brought the fact forward as an argument, when in A.D. 1798 he urged all in his power to prevent the sale of the land on which the Rajbaree and family temples stood; but he does not mention it, and it is probably a tradition of recent origin. It is much more probably that the estate dated from earlier times, possibly from those of Gonesh."⁹ it was during the reign of Raja Ramnath that the Dinajpur dynasty acquired its highest land holdings and wealth. This was accomplished not only by seizing other zamindaris, but also through the intense exploitation of its own subjects. Evidence of this can be found in the accounts of the Mughal revenue system. In 1728, the revenue of Dinajpur, comprising 99 parganas, was 506,431 sicca rupees; in 1763, the Dinajpur zamindari consisted of 121 parganas, and its annual revenue collected amounted to 745,433 sicca rupees.¹⁰

Churaman village, located eight kilometers from Itahar on the banks of the Mahananda, was home to the churaman zamindar. The village is known for its historical significance. The valuable two-storied zamindar house built on the banks of the Mahananda was very beautiful to look at. In this context F.W. Strong mentions that "the churaman zamindars, an old family with considerable estate in the neighborhood, have their home here, and their family residence, a large pukka building on the river bank, looks very picturesque to one approaching the village from the East. The estate is now under the management of the court of wards and a few years ago, as the old house seemed in danger of being cut away by the river, it was decided to build the word a new house at Durgapur, a place 7 miles off on the road to Raiganj."¹¹ The churaman zamindars were benevolent and patrons of education. They also established educational institutions which helped in the development of society. In this context, F.W. Strong mentioned that- "there is an excellent dispensary maintained by the estate at churaman, as also a boys' middle English School and a model girls' school."¹² Sukumar Barai mentions that churaman zamindars were patriots that "Although peasant uprising occurred against many zamindars in Bengal at various times, no such incident is known to have taken place in the churaman Zamindari. Even though the Tebhaga movement spread to Balurghat and Kaliaganj regions of Dinajpur district, its impact was not felt here."¹³

Also many large or small zamindaris were established in various regions for revenue collection. Bhupalpur village is next to National Highway No.34, 12 Km from Raiganj. Bhupalpur is named after zamindar Bhopal Chandra Roy Choudhary. According to the then existing law the British government took responsibility for the estate of Bhopal Chandra Roy Chaudhary as he was only 9 years old. The zamindars of Bahin and Haripur were his relatives. Many of these zamindars demanded excessive rent and forcibly collected it from the tenants.¹⁴ In the 1860s, Mahendranarayan Palchaudhury, the zamindar of Marnai,



initiated this Zamindari.¹⁵ Bahin Gram Panchayat is an important administrative unit of Uttar Dinajpur district. It is located on the Bihar border, 8 Km west of Raiganj. The Bahin Zamindari was established under the personal supervision of Ishwarchandra Roy Choudhary.¹⁶ The Giri Gosai zamindar family had an important role in the history of Raiganj. Later this zamindar clan became known as Goswami.¹⁷ Sudhir Das was the zamindar of Mahisya estate in Balurghat. He was a moderate zamindar.¹⁸ As a result of the permanent settlement, numerous large zamindari, medium zamindari, large jotedars and other zamindari systems developed in the undivided Dinajpur district.

In 1765, the East India company gained Diwani right in Bengal, which granted them the power to collect revenue. After acquiring Diwani right the British profoundly influenced Bengal's economy and administration. As a result financial administrative pressure and a large zamindar of Bengal started to disappear. The British government gradually began to control agricultural income. The British government imposed a new tax burden on local Zamindars. The power of zamindars was curtailed for failing to pay revenue. In this context, Dhananjay Roy mentioned in his book that "The Mughal rulers had strengthened the large zamindar families as sources of local power and influence for the fulfillment of their economic and political interests, whereas the company government regarded those zamindar groups merely as revenue farmers and concentrated on destroying the bases of their power and influence."¹⁹

Agrarian Income Structure of Dinajpur:

Dinajpur has been a major agricultural district since ancient times. Rice, wheat and jute are the main crops in this district. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of this region. W.W. Hunter discussed in detail the soil and crops of this district in his writings, highlighting the importance of agricultural production. W.W. Hunter mentioned in his 'A Statistical Account of Bengal' that: "Cultivable land is divided into two classes, known as Pali and Khidar. Pali lands are of a light sandy loam, and produce crops of every description. Khidar lands are a much stiffer soil and produce only rice crops. These, again, are subdivided as follows: Bastu, land on which the cultivator's homestead is situated; ud-bastu, land immediately surrounding the homestead, and generally used as a kitchen garden; nina, low land, inundated during the rainy season; canga or karpa, high land, producing sugar-cane, cotton etc; sarisha land producing mustard-seed; dhani or sali, rice land; katha, nursery land for seedlings; bhar chhayapi, low marshy land, which remains under water nearly all the year round; bhar danga, high land, which is never or very rarely under water. These lands are all of four qualities, - awal or first class, doem or second class, soem or third class, and chharam or fourth class land."²⁰ Also, F.W. Strong mentioned in his gazetteer about the crops that- "Notwithstanding the rise in importance of jute in recent years, rice is still by far the most important crop, covering as it does



998,700 acres or 79.6 per cent of the net cropped area. Dinajpur is, indeed, one of the chief rice-growing districts of the province. The principal crops are winter rice (haimantik), autumn rice (bhadoi), jute, rape and mustard.”²¹ Rice, tobacco, jute, gunny cloth, salt, and molasses were the main trade products of this district. In this context, W.W. Hunter mentioned that- “Rice, tobacco, jute, gunny cloth, salt, and molasses are the chief articles of trade in this district.”²² The rice of this district was exported to various places in the north-west. The Tulaipanji rice of this district is known for its aroma and remains a popular food grain even today. It cannot be denied that Tulaipanji rice was popular for its taste and aroma even during the British era. Because this rice is mentioned in ancient religious texts and medieval literature. "There was a story in Garur Puran where we found the name of Tulaipanji rice. Then in the medieval age also some experts mentioned the name of Tulaipanji. Brinchi showed the Tulaipanji in the Sunyo Puran of Ramai Pandit.”²³ Also, Satyaranjan Das mentioned in his book that: “This Tulaipanji rice is mentioned in the fourth episode of the Garur Puran where the story of the creation of the world is narrated. In the Medieval Age, a person named Brinchi cultivated Tulaipanji rice in Ramai Pandit’s 'Shunya Puran'.”²⁴ F.W. Strong has seasonally divided the rice of Dinajpur, which is an important part of the region’s agricultural heritage. F.W. Strong mentioned in his Gazetteer that: “(1) Autumn rice: Duni, Jama, Gorbaj, Sani, all white varieties, of which the first two are the most grain, and Niluji, a red variety, not very largely grown. (2) Winter rice: Kataribhog, Daudkhani, Dighalsaru, Darika sail, all fine white rices, of which the first two are well known and appreciated throughout the province.”²⁵ These commercial products of Dinajpur were exported from medieval times. “During medieval period, Dinajpur was famous for paddy and jute production. Tulaipanji rice exported to Calcutta and elsewhere and imported Burmian rice.”²⁶ Regarding the amount of rice exported from Dinajpur, W.W. Hunter mentioned that: “Mr. Robinson estimated that the quantity of rice exported from Dinajpur up country was 1,700,000 or 1,800,000 maunds, or from 62,232 to 65,892 tons.”²⁷ Also, Dr. Sujit Ghosh mentions in his book that: “On the other hand, a large quantity of rice used to be imported from Dinajpur to meet the food demand of the tea workers of the Dooars in North Bengal.”²⁸

Jute was one of the cash crops of Dinajpur district. Jute cultivation strengthened the economic base of the farmers here. F.W. Strong mentioned in his Gazetteer about jute cultivation that: “Ninety-two thousand acres were reported as being under jute in the year 1909–10. There has been a marked increase in the cultivation of this staple in recent years, though it has been well known in the district for over a century.”²⁹ Jute cultivation was widespread in Raiganj thana and other places of Dinajpur. F.W. Strong mentioned that jute is principally grown in the Thakurgaon Subdivision and also in parts of the Kotwali and Raiganj thanas and in the Chirirbandar outpost.³⁰ Also Dr. Sujit Ghosh said that-“Besides, jute from Dinajpur began to be exported to Calcutta from Parbatipur through the Eastern Bengal branch of the railway.”³¹

Besides, commercial crops like oilseeds, sugarcane, tobacco, and chilli were extensively cultivated in Dinajpur. F.W. Strong discussed about commercial crops that-"The only important oilseeds are rape and mustard. These are grown on some 90,000 acres. They are a cold weather crop and are grown on high lands especially along the banks of rivers and near homesteads. The principal thanas where this crop is grown are Raiganj, Ranishankail and Kaliaganj. Sugarcane occupies an area of 25,000 acres. The principal varieties, kheri and mugi, are thin-stemmed, the former red and the latter green. Tobacco occupies an area of 9,800 acres and is grown principally in the Parbatipur and Birganj thanas, though small plots of it are to be found in almost every village. It is cultivated almost exclusively for local consumption and little of it is exported. Chillies are an important crop in the Kaliaganj thana. The only other crops worthy of mention are pulses. Of these the most important are thakuri, arahar and mattar. Birganj, Ranishankoil, Raiganj, and Kaliaganj are the thanas in which they are principally grown.³² These commercial products from Dinajpur were not only exported abroad, but also bought and sold in local markets and fairs within Dinajpur district. W.W. Hunter mentioned that-"The principal seats of commerce are Raiganj, Nitpur, Ghoraghat, and Kumarganj, but there are numerous large produce depots scattered throughout the District along the river banks. Besides the permanent markets, a considerable proportion of the District trade is carried on at the large annual fairs, the principal of which are the Nekmard, Alawa, Khawa, Dholdighi, and Sontapur fairs."³³ The amount of revenue that the British used to get from this Dinajpur is mentioned by F.W. Strong as – In 1774, the revenue was Rs. 14,60,444, Raja Devi Singh paid Rs. 16,60,444, Rani Saraswati agreed to pay a revenue of Rs. 14,60,444, a Tahsildar used to collect Rs. 6000 to Rs. 1,00,000 in revenue from his own area."³⁴

Non-Agrarian Income Sources of Dinajpur:

The people of Dinajpur were not only involved in agriculture, but they also chose handicrafts and non-agricultural products as a means of earning money. W.W. Hunter mentioned that- A little coarse cotton cloth is made for home use; and in some parts a coarse but very durable cloth called mekli is made from the wild rhea grass. Gunny cloth is woven in the northern part of the District to a considerable extent, but this is a manufacture of the very coarsest description.³⁵ Rajbanshi women are known for their handicrafts. Also many people from Hindu and Muslim society were involved in various creative activities. Besides farming, they earned a lot of income through their handicrafts. F.W. Strong in his gazetteer describes in detail the cloth manufacture of the people of Dinajpur that-Weaving may be regarded as one of the industries of the district, though the number of professional weavers is now very small, and few of them are entirely dependent on weaving for a means of livelihood. A kind of coarse cloth (phota), of jute and cotton mixed, is manufactured for home use by Rajbansi women all over the district. Women of the cultivating classes



commonly wear cloths of this material; though the men often prefer cloth of foreign manufacture. The professional weavers are Tantis (Hindus), Jugis (Hindus), and Jolahas (Mahammadans). The principal product is a coarse cotton cloth, made with imported yarn which is little superior to phota and compares very unfavourably in appearance and evenness of texture with the imported Manchester cloth, though it is undoubtedly more lasting.³⁶ Many people in this district were involved in the business of jute products and bamboo products. Their contribution to the local economy is undeniable. The mats and baskets in general use all over the district are mostly made by Doms, though a few Santals also employ their leisure in this sort of work. The matting used for walls, ceilings, and floors of houses, compound fences, boat roofs and cart covers is made of lengths of split bamboo woven cross-wise, and is both cheap and serviceable. It is called chatai. Baskets also are generally made of split bamboo, though cane is sometimes employed for finer work. These baskets are of many kinds and play an important part in the daily life and domestic economy of the people. Different kinds of baskets are used for carrying earth or manure, provisions, fruits and vegetables, washing rice, and many other purposes. The finest examples of the work of Doms are the large closely woven baskets used for storing grain, and the hemispherical baskets of different sizes, called dons, universally used as grain measures. Small stools (mora) and cart covers (chhai) of matting and bamboo are also made by these people. In the Ranisankail thana grass matting is made on a considerable scale for sale in the district, and is even exported to some extent. This resembles Calcutta matting, though hardly as fine, and there is a considerable demand for it amongst the well-to-do classes.³⁷

Trade Networks and Market System of Dinajpur:

Dinajpur is a riverine district, so rivers became the main trade routes. Being riverine, the lives and economy of the district were dependent on the rivers. Before the railway line was established in Dinajpur, goods from Dinajpur were exported through this river. W.W. Hunter said of importance of the river in the export of the produce of Dinajpur that — "Of the total surplus rice of Dinajpur, it is roughly estimated that one-half is exported to the North-Western Provinces by way of the Tangan, Kulik, Purnabhaha, and other streams, into the Mahananda, and so into the Ganges; and that the remaining half is exported Southwards."³⁸ It is also known from W.W. Hunter's writings that some places in Dinajpur were marts places, of the foregoing marts, Patiram, Kumarganj, Chandganj, Kaliganj, Chak Gopal, Fakirganj, Rangamati, Pagli-bandar, Samjia, Brahmapur, and Balughat are all on the Atrai river and in Dinajpur District. Jiban Bazar or Goraghat is on the Karatoya. Hili is on the Jamuna, and in Bogra District, but largely exports Dinajpur rice, and is therefore returned here. All these marts are in close proximity to each other.³⁹ After the railway line was established in Dinajpur post-1881, Products from Dinajpur began to be extensively exported. Also, with the



establishment of the railway line, a major change occurred in Dinajpur's economic structure. Dr Sajit Ghosh in his book on Dinajpur railway line establishment and trade network mentions that — "In 1881, a few miles of railway line were constructed in Dinajpur. Between 1884 and 1891, the Eastern Bengal State Railway constructed railway lines in Dinajpur district. The Eastern Bengal Railway built a total of 31 miles of main line in Dinajpur. The principal stations on this route from north to south were Parbatipur, Bhawanipur, Fulbari, Chonkai, and in the Bihar section from east to west — Parbatipur, Chirirbandar, Kalgaon, Dinajpur, Birol (all presently Bangladesh), Radhikapur, Kaliyaganj, Bangalbari and Raiganj. With the opening of this railway line, agricultural trade between Dinajpur and the north-western states increased substantially. On the other hand, through the shipment of agricultural products from Raiganj to Calcutta via the Eastern Bengal branch of the railway, Dinajpur became connected with the trade of greater Bengal."⁴⁰ For Dinajpur's internal trade, various local markets or hats and annual fairs were established through the initiative of the Zamindars. These markets or hats and fairs played an important role in the local economy. In this context, F.W. Strong mentioned in his gazetteer that—"Most of the internal trade of the district is carried on at the local markets or hats, situated in central spots at a distance of a few miles from each other. The markets belong to the local Zamindars who charge a small fee for permission to sell there. Sometime this fee is collected by the Zamindars' amlas and sometimes the right of collecting it is leased out to middlemen called ijaradars or thikadars."⁴¹ F.W. Strong also describes the Dinajpur fair as- "Some mention has already been made of the fairs or melas, of which no less than 47 are held annually. Nowadays they are held to all intents and purposes for commercial purposes only.These profits amount sometimes to as much as Rs. 15,000, after deducting all expenses incidental to the holding of the fair."⁴²

Conclusion :

The colonial period in Dinajpur district witnessed a gradual but significant transformation of both agrarian and non-agrarian economic structures. British revenue policies, particularly the Permanent Settlement of 1793, fundamentally altered the traditional landholding system, displacing peasant proprietors and creating a powerful Zamindari class and that commercialised agriculture to serve colonial interests. The introduction of railway connectivity through the Eastern Bengal Railway proved to be a turning point, linking Dinajpur with Calcutta and facilitating the large-scale export of rice, jute, and other agricultural commodities. Trade networks expanded significantly, connecting Dinajpur with the Dooars tea gardens, the north-western provinces, and the broader Bengali market. Non-agrarian sectors including moneylending, local markets, and small-scale trade also underwent considerable expansion during this period. However, this apparent diversification and commercialisation largely benefited the colonial administration, Zamindars, and



mercantile elites. The peasantry and agricultural labourers remained economically marginalised, burdened by heavy taxation, indebtedness, and exploitative tenancy arrangements.

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