The munificence of Maharaja Krishna Chandra Roy of Nadia (1728-82) once spread his reputation throughout Bengal. A Bengali proverb of his day states, "Any one who does not possess a gift from Krishna Chandra can not be a genuine Brahmin." At marriages, funerals and on all such social occasions Krishna Chandra distributed treasures among thousands of assembled Brahmins. At the "Agnihotra" and "Bajepsya" Yojnas performed by him, gifts were lavishly bestowed upon the learned Brahmins of Bengal and Benaras. Distinguished Pundits frequently received rent-free lands, sair britties, and nuggad britties. Himself a scholar, Krishna Chandra patronised learning and made endowments to the tols of Nadia for the diffusion of education. Nadia in his time became famous for Sanskrit learning, and students from different parts of Nadia came to study here. A monthly stipend of several hundred rupees was fixed for the students coming from a distance. Besides these, the Maharaja's benevolence included generous grants for the maintenance of temples and shrines - both Hindu and Muhammadan, reliefs to the poverty-stricken and rewards to his officers for meritorious services.

But though the munificence of Krishna Chandra was proverbial, the facts of his munificence are not widely known. Government records bear ample proof of Krishna Chandra's extensive land grants and numerous sair-grants, and enable us to study the effects of the grants upon the economy of the district of Nadia.
In the Record-Room of the District Collectorate of Nadia, there are forty-four volumes of Taidad Registers prepared in 1210 B.S. (1803-04) A.D. containing details of rent free grants to forty three thousand and five hundred persons. A separate "Register of Lakheraj Grants, exceeding 100 Bighas" shows that 5,56,929 bighas were granted to one thousand and eight hundred persons. Another volume, prepared in 1817, contains a list of rent-free lands "liable to resumption anytime."

Of the eighteen hundred grants each exceeding hundred bighas, thirteen hundred were made by Maharaja Krishna Chandra himself involving a total amount of 4,27,000 bighas, the rest being made by Krishna Chandra's ancestors and descendants and by several other land holders in the district such as Rany Bhowany, Ram Krishna Roy and Ektiar Khan Pathan. From this we can form an idea of Krishna Chandra's share in the forty-three thousand and five hundred grants recorded in the forty-four volumes of the Taidad Registers.

When the Taidad Registers were prepared not all the grants could be substantiated by producing original sanads. Many sanads were declared by their owners to be lost in fire, or by theft, or in natural calamities like floods or cyclones, or eaten by insects or destroyed in Maratha raids. The excuses for failure to produce original sanads represented largely the real state of things though some of the claims might have been fictitious. The Collector's comment a few years later that "not one-fourth (of the Taidads Registered) would bear the test of enquiry," is perhaps due to his failure to appreciate the reality of the situation.
Krishna Chandra offered generous grants to all the members of his family. Raja Sambhu Chandra and his mother (Krishna Chandra's youngest wife) had fifteen grants for above twenty thousand bighas under the denominations of Britty, Brahmmottar, Dewattar, and Lakheraj. Here are some details of Krishna Chandra's Brahmmottar grants outside the royal family.

A grant to Poondary Kackya Chakravorty: "In my possession to the eastward of the Ganges excepting Parganahs Plassey, Belgong, Hallyshur, Dhoooleapore, and Anwarpore, I give you five hundred bighas of waste, unclaimed, jungle lands. Enjoy the profits arising therefrom, you and your heirs for ever" - dated the 14th Jaistha, 1162 B.S.

To Bhootnaut Mukherjee: "Health and Prosperity. You have no charity land. Therefore, except Plassey, Belgong, Dhoooleapore and Hallyshur Parganahs I give you in my possession to the eastward, 201 bighas of jungle, uncultivated, unclaimed lands as also seven bighas for the residence of your tenants making in all 208 bighas. Cultivate the same for your own advantage." - dated 1st Bysakh, 1163 B.S. Another grant to Bhootnaut Mukherjee: "whereas you are married to the two daughters of Dyaram Banerjee, therefore, in my possession to the eastward I give you from amongst the waste charity lands 101 bighas as also seven bighas for the residence of your tenants, making in all 108 bighas. Cultivate the same and enjoy the advantages." - dated 28th Magh, 1357 B.S.

To Vaneswar Bandopadhya (was he the famous poet Vaneswar?) - "As you have only 61 bighas of land, I give to your son Bhubaneswar Bandopadhya out of jungle waste, unclaimed lands that lie to the
eastward that shall not be in the Parganahs. Plassey, Belgong and Hallyshur 40 bighas making in all 101 bighas. Cultivate and enjoy the same." - dated 17th Jaistha, 1164 B.S.

An example of Krishna Chandra's grants to the needy Brahmins:

To Feetamber Mukherjee12 - "As you have not any land I give to you 200 bighas of waste unclaimed lands in my possession to the Eastward with the exception of Parganahs Plassey, Hallyshur, Belgon, Dhooleapore as also two bighas for your ryots' houses. Cultivate and enjoy the same." - dated 22nd Chaitra, 1162 B.S.

A Dewattar grant to Harynarayan Tewary13 of Krishnagar runs: "you have established an idol. I therefore give you in my possession to eastward of the Ganges 101 bighas of uncultivated jungle land. Cultivate the same and make seva." - dated 12th Pousha, 1162 B.S.

Example of a Mehtur grant to Ram Ram Singh14 "In consideration of your being a faithful servant I give you 201 bighas of waste, uncultivated, jungle land as also 10 bighas for your ryots' houses. You and your heirs for ever cultivate and enjoy it. The revenue is excused you." - dated 22nd Jaistha, 1158 B.S.

Among Krishna Chandra's courtiers, Govindaram Ray15, physician-in-chief received 278 bighas and 12 cottahs in Parganah Pajnaur; Krishnananda Vidya Bachaspaty (Sarbabhauma)16 the distinguished Tantric received at least 250 bighas in Parganah Bagwan; and Ram Ram Panchanan Bhattacharya17, a scholar received 103 bighas and 10 cottahs in Parganah Krishnagar. Land grants to all the courtiers can not be traced. The task is made difficult because of our ignorance of the surnames of some of the scholars. One Balaram Mukherjee was granted 126 bighas in Parganah Sreenagur; another Balaram Ghosal was given 183 bighas in Parganah Plassey; Balaram Sharma received 101 bighas; and Balaram Chatterjee 125 bighas.
We are not sure who amongst the above Balarams was the famous Pandit of Krishna Chandra's Court.

Poet Bharat Chandra Roy was given two grants in Parganah Anwarpoire, one of 72 bighas in 1156 B.S., and the other of 92 bighas, (date not mentioned). The language of the sanad of the first of these two grants is as follows:

(To Sri Bharat Chandra Roy Gunakar - compliments from Maharaja Krishna Chandra - I give you in my possession in Parganah Anwarpoire, 21 bighas of unclaimed, waste lands for your house and a garden, and 51 bighas of waste jungle lands for cultivation making in all 72 bighas. Build your homestead, settle there along with your family, cultivate the jungle lands and enjoy the advantages - dated 1st Aswin, 1156 B.S.)

There is also reference to a Mehtrun grant of 105 bighas, dated 5th Sawan, 1149 B.S. which has been mentioned by...
Bharat Chandra's biographer, Iswar Chandra Gupta as well. Mehtrun grants were meant for non-Brahmins. Bharat Chandra's unorthodox background and Krishna Chandra's orthodox surrounding suggest that perhaps the poet was made to lose his caste for sometime.

For the sair grants of Krishna Chandra our main source of information is the proceedings of the Collector in connexion with the claims for compensation for the loss of sair revenue. In 1790 sairs were all abolished and by the Regulation 24 of 1793 compensations were granted to individuals for their loss of sairs. But in 1793 many persons were away from the District, chiefly on pilgrimage, and hence could not receive compensation. On return they presented their claims with documents and other evidences which the Collector carefully investigated. Here are summarise of the proceedings in connexion with some of the above claims;

1. Claim of Ruggoomony Bidyabhusan Bhattacharya, a pandit and an inhabitant of the village Bahergatchee in the Parganah Bagwan.

In 1140 B.S. Krishna Chandra granted a sanad to Ramchandra Nyalankar, the petitioner's grandfather authorizing him to collect in various hauts and ghauts (hauts of Santipur, Nedia, Chagdah, Auranghatta, Gowaree, Chandoorea, Jswanngar and petty hauts as dependant on them) 5 pacca Cowries in each rupee in the same and purchase of goods. In 1163 B.S. the Nyalankar dying, his son Ramananda Biddyalankar collected this britty, which amounted annually to Sa Rs.2500, until his death in 1186 B.S. Thereafter, the petitioner enjoyed the same privilege until the month of Magh 1196 B.S. He then rented his right to four persons and appointed Cassy Dutta an agent to collect from the above rentiers annually the sum of Sa Rs.1100, and proceeded on a pilgrimage to Banaras, Prayag and Gaya and remained there till the month of Aswin, 1209. On return,
he was informed of the abolition of all sairs by "an order from the Huzzoor," in the year of his departure.

2. Claim of Radhakishna Ghose\textsuperscript{22} an inhabitant of the village Kurrinchee, Parganah Huldah:

Krishna Chandra granted in 1151 B.S. a sanad to Kishan Chand Ghose, the great grandfather of Radhakishan, allowing him to collect from the Gomostahs of the hauts\textsuperscript{23}, certain sums to meet the expenses in worship of the Radhaballabh Thakoor which was placed in his dwelling. On the death of Kishan Chand Ghose this right devolved to his son Ramhurry who enjoyed it till 1191 B.S. The present claimant appointed Kanoo Sen his Gomostah and proceeded on a pilgrimage to Brindaban in 1195 B.S. He returned in 1207 B.S. and learnt from Kanoo Sen that the britties were collected up to the year 1197 when such collections were abolished.

3. Claim of Ramsundar Choudhury\textsuperscript{24} of Santipur:

In 1165 B.S., for the performance of religious ceremonies, Krishna Chandra granted the petitioner a sanad authorising him to collect in the hauts of Santipur from the merchants and traders a double handful of grain from each bullock-load and single handful from each basket brought into the said hauts for sale as also a collection of some cowries from the shopkeepers. The petitioner produced the original sanad and also a permova issued to the Kutkinadar of haut Santipur in 1191 B.S. in consequence of his not having received the Britty. In 1196 B.S. the petitioner gave the britty allowance in farm for a period of three years to Chand Banerjee at a fixed Juma of 51 rupees per mensem and proceeded on a pilgrimage to Brindaban the same year.
Five respectable inhabitants of Santipur summoned by the Collector confirmed the claims of Ramsundar.

"The only person who accompanied Ramsundar Choudhury from Santipur (to Brindavan) was his servant Kanoo Bhandary who, it appears, in the month of Assar of the past year, cast himself under the wheels of the Rath (at Santipur) and was killed on the spot."

4. Claim of Byrub Chandra Sharma:

In 1162 B.S. Krishna Chandra granted to the petitioner's father Kanjee Ram a sanad authorizing him to collect in certain places 4 cowries from each shop-keeper and 5 kutcha gandas from each bullock load of grain. In the year 1189 B.S. Kanjee Ram died and the petitioner enjoyed this privilege until the year 1197 B.S. when in consequence of the abolition of sair he was deprived of his right.

5. Claim of Suddaseeb Tarkalankar Bhattacharya:

In 1139 B.S. Krishna Chandra granted a sanad for the maintenance of a school at Santipur, to Ram Ram Panchanan Bhattacharya, the grand father of the petitioner, authorizing him to collect in the haut of Santipur on the sale of sundry articles eight pucca cowries on each rupee. Ram Ram Panchanan Bhattacharya collected the britty until the year 1158 B.S., when he dying, the right devolved to his son Callicharan Biswanath, who becoming blind and in other respects incapable of managing the collections, appointed his son, the present petitioner, Moktar. In 1196 B.S., the petitioner together with his blind father proceeded on a pilgrimage to Benares and remained there till 1211 B.S. on return he was informed of the abolition of sair collection since 1197 B.S.
6. Claim of Bhowanny Charan Chowdhury

In 1167 B.S. Krishna Chandra granted to the petitioner's father Ramnath Choudhury a sanad authorizing him to collect in the hauts of Kishengunge, Jewannagar, Hansdah, Chandoorea, Gopulnagar, Bazeetpur and Buddoorea on every market day, one handful of grain of each sort from every shop, six puca couries on each rupee on the sale of cloth etc. and the same sum from each loaded bullock coming in the market. In 1180 B.S. Ramnath Choudhury died and this britty devolved to his son the present petitioner who continued collecting it until 1194 B.S. when he farmed out his britty to three persons. From 1196 B.S. to 1209 B.S. he was on a pilgrimage to Benares.

In all the above cases the Collector was convinced of the validity of the claims and recommended to the Board of Revenue for favourable consideration of the applications. The Sair Proceedings of the Board of Revenue show that in most cases the Board accepted the claims.

A study of the landgrants of Maharaja Krishna Chandra shows that the grants were made in unclaimed, uncultivated, waste and jungle land areas, and did not infringe upon any established right. Stories of Krishna Chandra's munificence must have attracted to the district some of the caste Hindus who were migrating to the eastern side of the Ganges from the Western side because of repeated Maratha raids. The district was comparatively less affected than others in the western side of the Ganges, and at least after the final retreat of the Marathas, many caste Hindus who suffered at the hands of the Bargis very likely had migrated to the Zamindary of Krishna Chandra whose benevolent rule for about a quarter of a century had already created a name for him as the protector of
Hindu Society. Krishna Chandra's grants enabled the migrants to settle down and devote themselves to religious and cultural pursuits. Thus the grants promoted the district's cultural and economic enterprises without involving the Maharaja in any immediate sacrifice of his revenue.

It may be presumed that the grantees of the rent-free tenures did not cultivate their lands themselves, and engaged outside labour for the purpose. In most cases a piece of land was earmarked for the houses of the ryots who cultivated the lands. Possibly these tenants were neither share-croppers nor wage-earners. They enjoyed security of tenure of their dwellings and cultivated the lands of their masters probably just for the provisions of their basic needs.

Ordinarily the Brahmins lacked the drive to raise any marketable surplus. Their needs were limited and they showed extravagance only on the occasions of religious festivals - which were to some extent self-supporting, or while going on pilgrimage. Large-scale alienation of lands, which was progressive at the beginning, for the extension of cultivation to virgin soils, became after a time a hindrance to the agrarian development in the district, for vast tracts of lands remained in the hands of a class of people who were economically sterile and were not much concerned about the optimum utilization of lands.

We may, again, presume from the language of the sanads - "cultivate and enjoy the advantage," (Bengali words are "নিয়ম মূল এবং (নিয়ম মূল)" - that the charity lands were not leased out at the beginning. But a generation later, circumstances changed. The Famine of 1770 which seriously dislocated agriculture in the district, and
the recurrences of natural calamities in the closing years of the 18th century led the rent-free tenure-holders to lease out their lands to the tillers of the soil, though after the permanent settlement such leases were not tenable in the eyes of law. Let us describe the result of such practice in the language of the Collector of Nadia.

"The lands in this district paying revenue to the Government I consider generally in better cultivation than those that are rent-free. It appears to me that the same ryots being employed upon both will bestow the greatest industry upon those of which they are not liable to be dispossessed of and can with security erect habitations upon; this is not the case with the ryots when employed upon the rent-free lands, for not having granted leases they are liable to be discharged at the pleasure and caprice of the proprietors. So precarious a tenure must be an obstacle to the improvement of the soil and affect cultivation very essentially. I also understand that the reduced rents at which the ryots obtained the rent-free lands is the only inducement for engaging in cultivation of them and that the proprietors taking advantage of their not having any written engagements, on finding the crops productive, exact more than originally agreed upon which must discourage the ryots from bestowing much labour when uncertain of recovery of benefits." Concentration of Lakheraj lands in the hands of the non-agriculturists must have been a factor influencing the permanence and wide prevalence of utbandi land tenure in the district.

Besides the rent-free tenures under discussion there were Chakeran lands granted to certain occupational groups performing essential services to the Zaminder and to the community at large.
But the amount of Chakeran lands was not excessive in Nadia for here the paiks and the Barkandaze, were largely paid in cash, and in Nadia, unlike in some other districts like Burdwan, a Thanadary tax of 8 gandas per rupee was regularly collected before the permanent settlement. Towards the close of the 18th century, especially after the permanent settlement, Chakeran lands were gradually resumed. Total amount of rent-free lands in the district excepting the Chakeran lands was estimated in 1801 to be nine lakhs of bighas, total amount of all kinds of lands being 40,24000 bighas - jungle 1,05000 ground lying fallow, 19,59,500 and under cultivation 19,59,500 bighas. While some of the charity lands were being resumed - their purpose being no longer justified due to transfer of ownership etc. - by and large they remained unaffected. Strong sanction of tradition and fear of serious economic and social repercussions made resumption impracticable even after the advent of more business-like and impersonal form of land-ownership caused by the sale laws.

The Collector of Bhagalpur expressed the force of tradition when he says: "However deficient the natives are in sentiments of humanity and principles of justice in their dealings with each other, no people on earth are more scrupulous of touching the possessions of the poor helpless who exist on charitable contribution." In many districts of Bengal the Famine of 1770 considerably accelerated the process of generous grants of Bazí-Zamins to willing settlers to promote agrarian enterprise defying the Company's attempts to prohibit such alienation. But in Nadia about a fourth of the total lands being already alienated, not much unclaimed lands were available for similar distribution even though the district was desolate and the ryots frequently "absconding" for arrears of rent.
Inland trade, everywhere in Bengal, was shackled with numerous levies in the 18th century. Hauts and ganges were regarded as the private property of the Zaminders who imposed taxes upon the sale and purchase of goods and appointed haut-Gomostahs to collect them. After the resumption of sair, the Zaminder of Nadia received a deduction of Rs.42,126 on this account which was more than 4% of the total annual juma of the district. In Burdwan, one of the richest commercial districts of Bengal, and in Birbhum, the figures were less than two percent of the annual juma.

Excepting the big few, the hauts of Nadia "were held at a small distance from any town or village, under a large tree, in the daytime, once or twice a week, and those that frequent them are in general the class of the natives who should he first to be exempted from any contributions." The hauts satisfied the household needs of the surrounding population, and also, as in Medieval Europe, satisfied the instinct of sociability inherent in all men. Sair britties were collected from the hauts in addition to the normal dues of the Zaminder. Sometimes several persons received britties from the same haut. In the case Nos. 1, 3 and 5 above, all the claimants received britties from the hauts of Santipur, and in the case Nos. 1 and 6, both the petitioners raised britties from the hauts of Chandoorea and Jewannagar. There must have been, at each of the hauts, more such claimants not known to us now. Naturally the people often resented the levies and the Zaminder had to issue repeated perwanas to put the grantees in possession of their britties. In the case No. 2 the Zaminder issued the following perwana to Ragoonath Mollick, Hautgomostah at Bagdah, dated 20th Chaitra, 1163 B.S.
Ramhurry Mazumdar states that the britty which had hitherto been collected in the Bungong Ghat, Haut Collabagan, Chootipore and Bagdah account the shewa of Radhaballav Thakoor in Kurrinchee has been lately withheld by the wickedness of the mofussil people. Consequently, the rites are not well performed. Therefore, I write you the britty allowance for the performance of the ceremonies which has always been received, must not now be stopped - let there be no more complaints. Another perwana to Ramhurry Shadoo Khan, dated 15th Bysakh, 1171 B.S.

"Ramhurry Mazumdar states that account the Thakoor Shewa in Kurrinchee he received agreeably to my Sanad, two seers of salt from each boat belonging to merchants which passed the ghaut Luckipoolea, he does not receive owing to the confusion occasioned by the Kakeem (?) I therefore, direct that you will make enquiry whether his receiving this britty allowance be true, and if so pay as usual amount." There are references to similar perwana in case numbers 3 and 4. The practice of farming out britties created scope for exacting more than the authorised dues. Thus the generous sair-grants of Krishna Chandra imposed heavy burden of taxes upon the consumers in Nadia and handicapped trade and Commerce in the district.

Rent-free grants and sair-grants were not prevalent in the district of Nadia alone. All the Zaminders in all the districts of Bengal were in the habit of bestowing such grants. But the scale on which they were practised by Krishna Chandra was unique and unparalleled. Krishna Chandra's grants promoted intellectual activities in the district, maintained its tols and temples, and relieved the distress of the poor but involved the Maharaja in no immediate
loss of his revenue. The land grants, while extending cultivation at the beginning, put some permanent fetters upon the agriculture of the district and the sair-grants increased the prices of goods and impeded the district's trade and commerce. Thus the grants of Krishna Chandra Roy, undoubtedly well-intentioned, were ultimately productive of consequences that were positively adverse to the economy of the district of Nadia.
1. Vedic sacrificial ceremonies.
2. Right to raise tolls.
3. Cash payments as stipends.
4. When the landed possessions of the Zamindars were extensive the amount was considerable; since 29th March, 1792 the amount was reduced to one hundred rupees per months. - Letter from the Collector of Nadia to the Bd/R-dated 31st December, 1840.
5. For the above details of Krishna Chandra's munificence see, A Statistical Account of Bengal Vol. II - by Hunter.
7. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R- dated 19th September, 1815.
8. Taidad No. 11203
9. Taidad No. 1562
10. Taidad No. 1567
11. Taidad No. 2796
12. Taidad No. 5079
13. Taidad No. 14512
14. Taidad No. 8223
15. Taidad No. 9247
16. Taidad No. 17162
17. Taidad No. 689
18. Taidad No. 20337 for 72 bighas and Taidad No. 20339 for 92 bighas.
19. Taidad No. 31549
20. For biography of Bharat Chandra see "Kabibar Bharat Chandra Roy Gunakar Jivan Brityanta" by Iswar Gupta and also "Roy Gunakar Bharat Chandra" by Dr. Madan Mohan Goswami.
21. Letter from the Collector of Nadia to the Bd/R dated 12th June, 1804.
22. Letter from the Collector to the Board of Revenue dated 25th August, 1803.
23. Officers at the market who maintained law and orders and collected duties for the Zamindar.

24. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R. dated 31st Dec. 1804

25. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R dated 16th April, 1803

26. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R dt. 16th July, 1805

27. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R dt. 26th July, 1805


29. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R dt. 3rd Dec. 1801

30. Under Ubbandi system lands were leased out for a short period and were assessed only when they were under cultivation.

31. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R dt. 18th Sept. 1790.


35. Sair Proceedings of the Bd/R, dt. 3rd Feb. 1792


37. Letter from the Collector to the Bd/R. dt. 19th Nov. 1790.


39. Ibid...