Introduction

Jute in West Bengal in India, since long time, has been highly significant as one of the most important crops, not only in agriculture but also in trade and commerce of the country due to its characteristics of being used in Industrial sector. It plays an important role in the country’s economy generating employment opportunities and foreign exchanges. It also meets to some extent the needs of fuel in the rural areas.

Jute is mainly produced as a cash crop from the barks of Jute plants and involves a process for final preparation. When the jute is finally prepared from the barks of the plants, it is marketed for use. The significance of jute has also been reflected through the items like sacks, hosiery, carpets, sit backs, cloths and the like where jute is used as the source of raw materials. In recent years the use of jute has been more diversified. Its application has been widely extended to textile Industries, paper Industries, ground coverings to check soil erosion, decorating, furnishing and shoe
makings. Researches on the preparation many other things are on progress.

The jute production, since the last two decades, has been suffering from many constrains. The constraints evolved from the interventions of the synthetic fibres in the world market, which created a negative impact on the production of jute and is reflected in the international market. But still, being a natural product and having eco-friendly characteristics, jute certainly has many advantages over the synthetic fibres.

The most interesting fact about jute cultivation is, that, jute occupies only an insignificant area (0.5%) of the entire country and shares only 1.5% of the total cropped production, yet it occupies a dominant position in Indian economy.

**Location of the study area**

The cultivation of jute is mainly concentrated in the eastern part of India. The Hugli District in West Bengal, the study area, is also located in the eastern part, geographically lying between the
LOCATION OF THE STUDY REGION IN THE PERSPECT OF INDIA AND WEST BENGAL.
HUGLI DISTRICT - THE STUDY REGION.
latitudes of 22° 39 32 North to 23° 1 20 North and the longitudes of 87° 30 20 East to 88° 30 15 East. (Maps- 1 and 2). The District Hugli is an important agricultural region of West Bengal and agriculturally the region has been divided into three sectors, namely, Chinsurah sadar, Chandannagore- Serampore and Arambagh which are again sub-divided into eighteen (18) police stations but have corresponded seventeen (17) Blocks (the administrative units). (Table- 1 , Map no- 3 ).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF THE SUB-DIVISION</th>
<th>NAME OF THE BLOCK</th>
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<td>1. CHINSURAH SADAR</td>
<td>1. PANDUAH</td>
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<td>2. DHANIAKHALI</td>
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<td>3. POLBA-DADPUR</td>
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<td>2. CHANDANNAGORE-</td>
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<td>SERAMPORE</td>
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<td>3. ARAMBAGH</td>
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<td>17. KHANAKUL-2</td>
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SOURCE: DISTRICT CENSUS HANDBOOK, 2001, HUGLI DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA.
ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS OF THE HUGLI DISTRICT.

[Map with administrative units marked on it, including Balagarh, Panduah, Chinsurah Sadar, etc.]

1. Balagarh
2. Panduah
3. Chinsurah
4. Polba-Dadpur
5. Dhaniakhali
6. Tarakeswar
7. Harital
8. Sonpur
9. Jangipara
10. Chinsurah-I
11. Chinsurah-II
12. Serampore
13. Pururah
14. Arambagh
15. Khanakul-I
16. Khanakul-II
17. Goghat
The jute crop cultivated in the Hugli District is of very high quality. Being a cash crop, jute cultivation is also important in some other parts of Eastern India, like Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura, but the quality of jute of these areas are not of that standard as it is in the Hugli District. The District has another advantage. It has a very favourable location near Kolkata (previously Calcutta) - a big hinterland for trade and commerce. Jute production of the study region has some other characteristics too. The District has two different units- the western and the eastern. Earlier, even during the British period, the District was very important for agricultural practices, particularly the western part, with its favourable agricultural conditions. The eastern part was noted for Industries, in which jute played an important role as there were a number of jute mills. The bulk production of raw jute in the western part has been highly supported by its location near Calcutta port (now Kolkata) and the development become very obvious.

The production of raw jute and the jute industries got a set back due to the introduction of synthetic fibres in the commercial
world. Added to this was the invention of high yielding varieties of seeds in different crops. The emergent situations were that (1) the farmers, who earlier used to grow jute in the fields, not suitable for the cultivation of Aman paddy (the staple food crop of the farmers of West Bengal), but was suitable for jute, stopped jute cultivation. Instead they began to grow Boro paddy, which was totally dependant on the adoption of advanced technologies and enabled the farmers to fetch more profit than jute and (2) the wide use of synthetic fibres created a negative effect on the price structure of jute leading to compelling the farmers to take decisions to restrain jute farming.

But all these adverse situations could not stop total jute cultivation in the study region. The cultivation of jute, from this period onwards, was practised by those farmers who were the traditional jute growers having long experiences in jute production with emotional attachments regarding jute farming.

In recent years it has been rediscovered that the use and production of jute fibres are more eco-friendly than the synthetic fibres. Hence the production of jute has again been given
emphasis from the government as well as from the environmentalists very widely.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to analyse the geo-economic conditions of jute production in the Hugli District, which are of high significance from the viewpoint of both geography and economics.

Thus the principal aims of the study focus on the following points: -

1. Physical characteristics, in detail, of the region, which have, close relation with the cultivation of jute.

2. General agricultural profile of the District which clearly reveals the relative position, nature and pattern of jute cultivation.

3. Economic conditions of jute cultivation covering the geographical as well as economic factors.
Scope and limitations

The scope of the study is obviously very wide. It covers different aspects ranging from resource analysis, agricultural production, cultural practices relating to jute cultivation, economics of jute crop and associated controversies. It implies that the scope is diversified too.

The wide scopes of the study and its diversities have made it difficult to yield in a comprehensive research. Though there are no lags in sincere endeavours, some gaps have become conspicuous. This is mainly due to the fact that the coverage of all aspects for analysis has not been possible because of non-availability of data.

Methodology

Methodology adopted for this study has been very important, because the purpose of the study is not only to assess the geographical conditions of jute cultivation of the Hugli District of West Bengal, but also to analyse its economic aspects since the last decade of the past millennium. For this reason emphasis
has been given to make an elaborate methodology. Data has been collected to satisfy the objectives mainly from the secondary sources, different government offices and public organisations, journals and books. A content analysis has also been employed with the interviews collected from different jute-farming experts. In addition to this database, an empirical survey has been undertaken on the case study, supplementing the collected data. To satisfy the given objectives, the collected data have been arranged in such a way that it focuses on two aspects, namely

(1) The present situations of jute cultivation in the context of the decennial figure analysis and

(2) The changes brought in through the uses of new technologies in jute cultivation.

The inferences obtained from the analysis have been established with proper interpretation and reasoning.

**Choice of Techniques**

Techniques used for the analysis of the collected data are simple. Depending on the nature of the data and assessing the suitability
of the application, quantitative techniques have been employed as and when required. For understanding the general agricultural profile of the District, diversification index, cropping intensity index, productivity index along with the statistical devices as scatter diagrams, correlation equation, regression analysis and the like have been applied.

**Selection of the area for case study.**

In the present study, the selection of the area for the case study has been highly significant. This is mainly due to the fact, that, the region selected has to be such an area, which would truly represent the pattern of jute cultivation of the Hugli District. The Pursurah Block in the sub-division of Arambagh of the District is such a region, which could be considered as an ideal sample unit. The selection of the Block has mainly been based on the reasons that,

(1) The region has the highest area and yield rate in jute production,

(2) The fluctuations in jute prices as well as its production
truly represent the entire District.

(3) The jute farmers are well experienced as they are the traditional jute farmers having total knowledge of jute farming, and

(4) The region is located in an easily accessible externality on jute marketing, because, jute is such a crop which depends much on markets.

In the region, which has been selected for the case study, data have been generated mainly from the interrogations of the jute growers through a structured questionnaire, which were first prepared in Bengali, and then was translated into English ( The questionnaire has been inserted in the Appendix ). The interrogations with the jute farmers were mainly confined within heads of the families but were supplemented by the younger generation

Review of literature

Supply responsiveness of Indian farmers in the post independence period has provided many information about jute
by J.T. Cummings in "the supply responsiveness of Indian farmers in the post-independence period: major cereal and cash crops ", in India journal of Agricultural Economics, January-March, 1975.

F.A.O. of the United nation in 1975 provided a market survey on jute in, "jute: a survey of markets, manufacturing and production,"- commodity bulletin, series no.28, Rome.

P.K. Chatterjee and D.R. Mukherjee in 1979 have very clearly focussed on the price spread of jute crops published in Indian journal of Agricultural Economics, price spread and inventory demand – a study of jute crop.

In a Ph.D dissertation, Viswabharati, Sri G. Acharia in 1980 has discussed in detail price changes and supply responses for jute and rice.

S. Chakraborty in 1982 has worked on the trend of production and productivity of jute and which has been corroborated his subsequent work on regional economy in 1984 published in the journal Cambridge Economic History of India, Volume-2, edited by Dharmakumar.
In the reports of Jute Corporation of India in 1982, various aspects of jute have been highlighted.

While in the books “Commodities and the Third World” in 1983 and the “Feeding Fabric” in 1986 Prof. G.K. Sarkar has focused and analysed in detail the jute situations in the recent years and its manufacturing conditions with future prospects.

Prof. P. Bardhan in 1984 in his book “The Political Economic of Development in India”, published by Oxford University press in Delhi has discussed how political situations of India have influenced jute production.

While in 1984, Prof. K Basak and K.K. Dutta have dealt in detail the factors influencing jute acreage in West Bengal, published in the journal of Agricultural Economics (October-December).

K. Burger and H. Smith in 1985 have studied jute growing, processing and trade, published in the book, “Jute growing, processing and trade- a modelling analysis”.

B. Ghosh has discussed in 1986, the delicate situations of jute Industries in India, published in Industrial sickness in India (Mimco), September, Calcutta.
Mr. S.K. Das and P. Nayak in 1992 in their work have clearly focussed on the combination of jute cultivation in case of Intensive Agricultural System in India.

In 1997 Mr. P. K. Roy has dealt in detail on soil health and sustainable production of jute in humid sub-tropical region.

In 1998 Mr. S. K. Das and P. Nayak have discussed on jute based cropping system under rain feed condition in the context of Indian farming.


