CHAPTER - I

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN THE
DISTRICT OF BURDWAN

The name of Burdwan comes from the original word "Vardhamana",¹ which means "increasing or prospering". From the agricultural point of view the nomenclature is more or less justified from early days till now. The district occupies a unique position, because it is a place of intercourse and mingling between Aryans and tribes. Besides, it is an area lying between hilly upland and plain land.

Agricultural Conditions during the past: Agriculture has been a national wealth from the early period. During ancient times Burdwan was rich in agricultural production. Agricultural operations during the ancient times were considerably dependent upon nature. During Vedic period, India showed rapid progress in agricultural production. In fourteenth century, at first Kankaa and then gradually other areas of the district were conquered by the Mughal emperors. The method of cultivation in the ancient period was different from that of the mediaval period. In the mediaval period, the different classes of intermediaries, chief farmers and jagirdars were grouped into one class designated as 'Zamindars'. The slow progress of cultivation was
characteristic of the sixteenth century. The Pathan Sultans provided permanent residence to Muslim soldiers and other state employees by donating landed property to them. This system is known as "Ayma" and those enjoying it are called "Aymadar". There was a large number of "Aymadar" in the district. After 1570, the whole of Burdwan with the South Damodar came under the Mughals. In the year 1583, the Mughal commander, Todarmal had a measurement made of the area of the whole district and the quantity of crops produced. According to the variation of production, the land of the district was classified into high class, middle class and low class land. One third of the total production was taken as a Government revenue. This classification of Todarmal was modified by extensive zamindary system and "Chakla system of Murshid Kuli Khan". But principally Burdwan was under 'Sarkar Sarifabad', 'Selimabad' and 'Mandaran'. "The western part of the district was under 'Mandaran', the south eastern part was under 'Selimabad' and the rest was under 'Sarifabad'". The seventeenth century was the period in which satisfactory production of agriculture was achieved. At the later part of the seventeenth century the Burdwan Raj dynasty was established. It was founded by Babu Ray and his successors were Krishnaram Ray, Jagatram Ray, Kirtichandra Ray, Chitraraj Ray, Tilakhand Ray, Tejchand Ray, Pratapchand Ray, Mahatabohand Ray, Aftab
Chand Ray and Bijoy Chand Ray. The agricultural growth had been relatively slow from 1694 to Plassey (1857). In the early eighteenth century four-fifths of the people were dependent on agriculture. In the mid-eighteenth century Burdwan was attacked by the Marathas. Cultivation stopped as a result of this invasion. Under the Maratha rule land was cultivated by the peasant proprietors called mirasdars or hereditary owners of their fields. "So far with regard to the samindars, with regard to the Ryotos or cultivators, Mr. Shore is equally emphatic.

"In every district throughout Bengal, where the licence of exaction has not superseded all rule, the rents of the land are regulated by known rates called Mirik, and in some districts each village has its own. These rates are formed, with respect of the produce of the land, at so much per bigha (a third of an acre); some soil produces two crops in a year of different species, some three." 5

During early period, cultivation of paddy and sugarcane was "much better" 6 due to utilisation of green manure, oilcake and due to different systems of sugarcane cultivation, i.e. "hole and furrow system". 7
In the mediaeval period, the Zamindar was all in all; he helped the tenants by improving irrigation dams, bunds, roads and supplying seeds, cattle and instituting hats, bazars to open up the rural areas to civilisation. The per capita land was more than one acre in Bengal. Gradually, the population increased more in proportion to the area available for cultivation. The agricultural prices were very low. There is no dispute among economic historians, that in the eighteenth century Bengal was a rich and populous country. During 1760, prosperous Burdwan was under the East India Company. Just three decades later William Fullarton described, "In former times the Bengal countries were the granary of nations, and the repository of wealth, commerce and manufacture in the East.... But such has been the restless energy of our misgovernment that within the short space of twenty years many parts of these countries have been reduced to the appearance of a desert. The fields are no longer cultivated; extensive tracts are already overgrown with thickets; the husbandman is plundered; the manufacturer oppressed, famine has been repeatedly endured and depopulation has ensured". The surplus agricultural yield was not invested in the country for economic improvement but it was invested elsewhere for the beneficiaries of "British aristocracy, moneyocracy and millicracy". There was a great famine in
the district since 1770. In 1780, the condition of Burdwan Raj was very pitiable. It may be stated that several disintegrating factors were inherent in the decline of agricultural situation. (i) There were internal conflicts between Jagirdars and Taluqdars. (ii) A large amount of revenue was taken from peasants for land lords' luxurious mode of living. (iii) There were famines due to natural calamity, transport difficulties and outward migration of labourers to the prosperous towns. (iv) There was distress transfer of land by agriculturists due to the influence of urban moneyed classes.

The characteristic features of semi-feudal economy created by the British were transformation of the old peasant proprietors into various types of tenants by increasing the rate of rents, introduction of sharecropping, use of forced labour, primitive division of labour and out dated technique of cultivation, production only for household consumption, and use of water for irrigation from artificial sources. Moreover the land tax levied by British Government was heavy and fluctuating. The people of the district began to pay the actual land tax from the British period.

After some time Burdwan Zamindari which was in a sad plight was saved by the "Pattani system". The zamindar created "Darpattani and Sepattani", under him for better
realisation of land revenue. This system applied legally from the year 1819. East India company described that Burdwan was the most productive district of Bengal. In 1815, the same area was referred to by Hamilton in the following words: "That this district continues in a progressive state of improvement is evident from the number of new villages erected, and the increasing number of brick buildings both for religious and domestic purposes, nor is there any other portion of territory in Hindusthan that can compare with it for productive agricultural value in proportion to its size. In this respect Burdwan may claim first rank, the second may be assigned to the province of Tanjore in the Southern carnatic and no less than seven-eighths of the land in Burdwan was then under cultivation". On the British accession, Burdwan was found to be the richest tract of Bengal and the most settled and oldest cultivated district. But after a few years, the people of Burdwan were affected by famine and they could not have supply of adequate food for themselves.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Lord Cornwallis created the Zamindari system which had permanent settlement as its foundation. There were the Zamindari system in the past and the feudal system existed in the Muslim period. Indications are available of the existence
of Aymadar, Jaigirdar and Dihidar in Muslim period. After the fixation of revenue of Todormal, the landlords were known as Zamindars. From Muslim period the peasants were the owners of agricultural field of their village. The passing of the 7th Act in 1779 and 5th Act in 1812 helped the Zamindars to collect land revenues easily. The Zamindars did not fail to take the full advantage of those two acts. Many permanent peasants lost their land and employment. James Mill remarked that Zamindari system was the cause of crimes like, dacoity and snatching. "In the lower provinces of the Bengal presidency the land is held by Zamindars, on payment of an annual sum fixed in perpetuity, the estates being liable to be sold in default of payment under the provisions of Act I of 1845. The only land at the disposal of Government consists of estates which have been thus sold, and purchased on the public account. The rate of land tax can not be given, but is believed to amount on the average to about half the rental". The revenue act of 1859 made by Lord Canning had given security of rent and tenure to the tillers of the soil. Lord Ripon's tenancy act passed in 1885, gave cognizance to the peasants' various rights and thus founded their future economy. But in the meantime arose another problem, that was the emergence of the middle class.
They were the money lenders, they lent money to peasants at high rate of interest at the time of their needs and grab their lands, when they fail to repay the loan. In this way the agricultural fields of the peasants changed hands to non-agricultural people, many among whom were immigrant and unable to work as cultivator. So there flourished the system of share-cropping. There was an influx of the Santhals from adjacent areas due to malaria and poverty. First agricultural farm was started in 1885 by Burdwan Raj and "is situated at Palla on the bank of the Eden Canal".\(^{13}\) In the later part of nineteenth century the extension of cultivation was made, specially in the Western Part of the district, "which a hundred years ago was an unpeopled wilderness of sāl forest and jungle".\(^{14}\)

**Causes of Decline:** During the period eighteenth century and nineteenth century, the crops were much affected by pests and suffered either from excessive or deficient rainfall.

There were different types of natural calamities like famine, which affected the growth of agricultural production. In 1765, there was famine as well as failure of crops due to deficiency in the annual rainfall. "Burdwan suffered seriously in the great famine of 1770\(^{15}\) due to drought. In 1862, the
eastern part of Burdwan was attacked by 'Burdwan fever' and gradually the fever extended towards the west. Burdwan was one of the districts of lower Bengal in which the famine of 1866 due to drought was severely felt. The famine was very acute in Raniganj area. In 1874, there was another famine in the western part due to low production of crops in 1872, untimely rainfall in 1873 and 'Burdwan fever'.

There were other types of natural calamities like flood, cyclone, earthquake, which affected agricultural production adversely. In 1823, 1855, two floods occurred. "The great cyclone of 1874 caused widespread damage in the district, the vortex passing right over the town of Burdwan itself. The storm was throughout accompanied by heavy rain, and the Banka and Bhagirathi over flowed flooding the surrounding country. The earthquake of 1897 was felt all over the district and the most recent having occurred in August 1909". During 1904, failure of crops took place due to scarcity of rainfall over some portions of the district. In 1909 owing to heavy rains the Banka and other rivers over flowed and flooded large tracts of country and the crops were damaged by their continued immersion. A few serious floods occurred in the Damodar during 1913, 1914, 1917-18 and 1922-23.
Malaria, Cholera and Smallpox in a milder form persisted during the decade 1901-11. The rolling upland of infertile western Burdwan was comparatively free from epidemic and there was some gain in population with no corresponding agricultural gain. Further east lie the low agricultural plains, which are subject to inundation from the Damodar, Ajay rivers and are extremely malarious.

From 1906, Burdwan became a centre of terrorism. The First World War started in 1911. The slow rise in population during the decade 1911-21 was due to various causes. War, floods, famine and diseases like malaria and influenza were the contributing factors. Malaria was also responsible for increasing the death rate. The industrial area of Asansol was one of the exceptions, where coalmines attracted a large number of immigrants. The district suffered from influenza in 1918-19 and also from dropsy, which appeared as an epidemic in 1928-30.

There was great failure of crops during the period from 1925-1934 due to various natural calamities. The general increase in population in the district during the decade 1921-31 was due to employment of Santhals in railway workshops, rice mills, and other industries. The construction
of the Damodar and other irrigation canals also helped the increase of population in the area. On the eve of the Second World War, there had been increasing pressure on agriculture. During the decade 1931–41 there were unprecedented growth of population everywhere. The amount and distribution of rainfall in most of the areas were also unfavourable for agriculture. Floods and drought often damaged the production of crops. After the Second World War in 1939, the economic and political situation became critical. In 1943, there was a great flood in Damodar as a result of which the crops were destroyed and many villages were submerged. The percentages of population for several decades in different parts of the district are shown in the map (Fig. No. 2).

Transportation Problem: Transportation was one of the problems till the mid-nineteenth century, since railway lines were first constructed in Bengal only in 1853. In 1912, according to the Director of Agriculture, "The insufficiency of railway culverts are put forward as causes of deterioration". 17

Condition of drainage, soil and natural vegetation: "The western portion of the district is a promontory from central India, and consists of barren, rocky and rolling country,
Rivers Of 18th Century

Source: Chatterjee, S. P. *Bengal in Maps*

Ajoy R.
Dwarka R.
Jagat R.
Mangalkote

Rivers Of 20th Century

Fig. No. 3
shut in on the west, north, and south by hills. The rest is a delta, the south-eastern edge of which approaches the sea-board, and is of the most recent formation.\textsuperscript{18}

The district was formed by the uncertain and changing courses and siltation of the rivers the Damodar, the Ajay and the Ganges. The agricultural condition was not the same throughout the district. Waterlogging and floods occurred more over the central and eastern portion, due to the presence of rivers and streams throughout the low land. The silt and mud carried by the Damodar and the Ajay made the land fertile. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Bhagirathi began to march towards the east (Fig. No. 3). Rennel’s Map (1779) showed the shifted position of the rivers. In the west of the Bhagirathi “the changes of river course are few. Even the Damodar had almost ceased to flow through its eastern channel before entering the Bhagirathi above Hooghly”.\textsuperscript{19} All the rivers, the Banka, Behula, Bhagirathi and Kana Damodar had been silted up and their capacity were reduced. For that reason the frequency of flood gradually increased. The waters of the two western rivers the Ajay and the Damodar were not available for agricultural purposes in Bengal. On account of drainage problems of widespread waterlogging, decline of fertility, jungle growth and prevalence of malaria
and agricultural decline, decrease of cultivation and population from the period of mid-nineteenth century took place. In the pre-independence period the condition of drainage, climatic (rainfall) are shown in the relevant maps (Fig. No. 4).

The eighteenth century Burdwan was "the garden of Bengal", the cultivated area shrank into half during a period of only 40 years, 1891-1931. Such decline of agriculture, which is probably unprecedented in the world, is associated with the decay of the distributary river system of the Ganges, the absence of overflow irrigation, waterlogging and malaria over vast areas, whose prosperity was so graphically described by mediaval travellers". 20

In the wake of the floods in the past the agricultural condition was improved for several years. On the whole, the average cultivators were fairly prosperous. Another unfavourable factor leading to the decline of agriculture was the decline in population. During 1872-1891 there were 6.5 per cent decrease of population due to 'Burdwan Fever'. The period 1891-1901 was the period of recovery. During the next decade, there were repeated epidemics of cholera and malaria.

In the western part of the district, there was one problem and that is, the labourers were more interested to work in factories and collieries than in cultivating fields. From the period 1905-06, the agricultural conditions were less
favourable and gradually declined in the district. The main causes of agricultural decline centred round the ingress and egress of rain and flood water. The rivers were silted up and in many instances entirely dried up. The agricultural condition of Burdwan was deteriorated owing to the loss of fertile alluvial deposits because of the disastrous effect of the shutting out of the Damodar water.

The bed of the Damodar was slowly rising due to greater deposit of silt in comparison to other river beds. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the courses of the Hooghly and the Damodar rivers were changing more frequently. "In most of the cases flooding by itself is not an evil, in fact it is necessary in the interest of public health and productivity of the soil, and also for the conservancy of the river and drainage system of the country". Rise of the flood level necessitates higher and higher embankments. Sudden and concentrated discharge of water through breaches are much more harmful than gradual inundation. From the economic point of view it can be inferred that without siltation agricultural land cannot be fertile. Therefore, the remedial measure of the flood problem was the formation of marginal flood embankment, though it was a temporary expedient.
In the past soils were mostly suitable for the growing of paddy and sugarcane. The soils of the western part were formed directly from the subjacent rock and altered by wind, water and other atmospheric disintegrating agencies. The greater portion of the eastern part was formed by the materials transported by hill streams. The eastern part became more and more fertile than the western part. The Map (No. 4) shows the soil condition of the district in pre-independence era. "The Fever Committee showed that the fever was associated with relative infertility of the soil owing to lack of inundations, Dr. Elliot commented on the associated lack of cultivation". 22

In the western part of the district, during nineteenth century, there were forests with human habitation. The land was not used for crop production. The western part was "at one time a wilderness of forests and jungles, but the culturable lands have now been almost entirely reclaimed and turned into good paddy fields". 23 Forests of tropical deciduous type were in strips in the plains, mainly along the river banks. The forests were reclaimed by man for growing crops. The map of natural vegetation (Map No. 4) shows the condition of forestry and natural vegetation in the past. Gradually the method and extent of cultivation has progressed.

Before Independence, areas of forest were more extensive in P.S. Kanksa, Memari, Purbasthali, Ausgram, Barabani, Salanpur and Jamalpur. The great deficiency of the district specially of
its western and central parts, was the proper supply of water for irrigation purposes. The methods of cultivation in the western part depended upon the storing of rain water, as there was no canal and other irrigation system. Wind erosion and, to some extent, water erosion took place over the western part. In the eastern part, where the velocity of water was high, sheet, rill and gully erosion took place. Until 1930, there was a great demand of water for irrigation purposes for all crops except for pulses at the western and west-central parts of the district. Then the western part was unfit for cultivation because the land was high and there was lack of water for cultivation. The land tenure was simple and method of cultivation was primitive, but gradually fallow land was turned into paddy fields. The following Table (1) shows the utilization of land sub-division wise during pre-independence period.

**Table - 1**  
(Area in Hectare)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total areas</th>
<th>Net cropped areas</th>
<th>Current fallow</th>
<th>Areas not available for cultivation</th>
<th>Cultivable waste</th>
<th>Jungles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>332732.40</td>
<td>228219.04</td>
<td>12114.52</td>
<td>62677.88</td>
<td>20950.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asansol</td>
<td>161751.94</td>
<td>91385.90</td>
<td>4874.62</td>
<td>37714.37</td>
<td>3152.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalna</td>
<td>9888.60</td>
<td>73451.04</td>
<td>3358.75</td>
<td>11643.87</td>
<td>6532.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katwa</td>
<td>104973.85</td>
<td>76715.00</td>
<td>4404.25</td>
<td>15306.37</td>
<td>5902.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agricultural Statistics by plot to plot, 1944-45.
Crop pattern and rotation of crops: Due to the introduction of cash crops such as jute, potato and the steady rise in the price of paddy the agricultural production was much better. During the year 1910-11, paddy production was good, but there was failure of jute on account of drought and sugarcane production, too was poor for want of proper manure. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was no regular system of rotation of crops. Before 1915, the percentage of existing fallow lands to net cropped areas was 45 and percentage of cultivable waste to net cropped area was 24.5. Poverty as also shortage of food grains started from 1942-43. Upto the period 1945, the area under Aman paddy and Rabi crops increased in Burdwan and Asansol, but Bhadoi crops decreased due to drought in 1945. Jute was grown in Kalna and Burdwan. Moreover, the district of Burdwan was rich in potato. Asansol suffers mostly from drought. The western part was not fertile like the rest. The mixture of the two soils, such as laterite clay and red sand are most suitable for sugarcane cultivation and alluvium soil for paddy cultivation. During the period 1930-40, "the damage to crops by floods is believed to be about 10-15 per cent in the district as a whole". Generally the worst affected areas were Pandaveswar Union (Asansol), the Police Stations of Katwa, Ketugram, Mongalkote, Rayna, Jamalpur and
Khandaghosh. Subhas Chandra Bose showed greater awareness to the economic problem. In his presidential address to the 1938 Congress, he called for "greater use of science and agricultural capital in order to increase output". The Table (2) shows the acreage of different crops subdivision-wise during pre-independence period.

**Table - 2**

(Areas in hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the crop</th>
<th>Burdwan</th>
<th>Asansol</th>
<th>Kalna</th>
<th>Katwa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aman</td>
<td>198540.15</td>
<td>73783.46</td>
<td>55094.01</td>
<td>63854.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boro</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>414.92</td>
<td>667.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus</td>
<td>8347.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8906.15</td>
<td>4592.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram</td>
<td>1567.59</td>
<td>268.96</td>
<td>2771.29</td>
<td>1957.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>1062.51</td>
<td>702.22</td>
<td>208.69</td>
<td>803.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>187.59</td>
<td>.47.18</td>
<td>70.55</td>
<td>235.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musur</td>
<td>1926.86</td>
<td>93.27</td>
<td>1878.35</td>
<td>1162.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 contd.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the crop</th>
<th>Burdwan</th>
<th>Asansol</th>
<th>Kalna</th>
<th>Katwa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mug</td>
<td>503.94</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>220.56</td>
<td>372.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maskalai</td>
<td>1372.34</td>
<td>69.45</td>
<td>57.59</td>
<td>63.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khesari</td>
<td>329.83</td>
<td>1761.30</td>
<td>768.52</td>
<td>562.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arhar</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td>705.79</td>
<td>222.06</td>
<td>189.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>31.18</td>
<td>381.75</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>13.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>1165.30</td>
<td>1051.95</td>
<td>404.23</td>
<td>1214.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td>220.52</td>
<td>24.66</td>
<td>103.56</td>
<td>80.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Til</td>
<td>114.05</td>
<td>26.44</td>
<td>82.01</td>
<td>125.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato</td>
<td>3784.88</td>
<td>251.79</td>
<td>1186.41</td>
<td>831.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jute</td>
<td>469.03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1205.56</td>
<td>225.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dofasali</td>
<td>11989.42</td>
<td>2379.13</td>
<td>9672.01</td>
<td>5108.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cropped area</td>
<td>240208.45</td>
<td>93765.07</td>
<td>83123.05</td>
<td>81823.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NET SOWN AREA

- 50 - 60%
- 60 - 70%
- 70 - 80%
- ABOVE 80%

TWICE CROPPED AREA

- NIL
- 0 - 1000
- 1000 - 2000
- 2000 - 3000
- 3000 - 4000 Hectare

CULTURABLE WASTE LAND

- 0 - 5%
- 5 - 10%
- 10 - 25%

LAND UNDER RICE

- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100%

Source: 'Bengal in Maps', Chatterjee, S.P.
1977

Fig. No. 5
According to 1931 census, there were 1,20,000 land owning farmers, 22,000 tenant farmers and 1,30,000 agricultural labourers in the district of Burdwan. The concentration of tenant farmers, agricultural labourers and land owning farmers were considerably more at the eastern part, south eastern part, central and eastern part of the district. There were low percentages of net cropped area (below 60 per cent) at the western part of the district. The Map (No. 5) shows that the eastern part of the district was agriculturally very productive than the western (above 60 per cent net cropped area to total area). During that period, the demand for agricultural labourers was highly seasonal (from April–May to August–September and November–December). The double cropped land in pre-independence era (Map No. 5) was about 18,225 hectares, which was high in Kalna, Memari, Purbasthali, Monteswar. The Map (No 5) shows that the culturable waste land was more (above 10 per cent) at the western part of the district. About 80 per cent of land was under paddy (Map No. 5) all over the district except in P.S. Faridpur, Kanksa, Ausgram, and Purbasthali due to presence of jungles. There were more lands (above 8000 hectares) under Aman paddy over the eastern part. There were smaller proportions of Aman land in the western tract due to the undulating high land and insufficient rainfall. The land under paddy was above 2500 hectares only in P.S. Purbasthali, Kalna and Jamalpur.
The low proportion of area under this crop was due to non-availability of favourable conditions. The land under Boro paddy was very low (below 600 hectares) in Katwa, Monteswar and Purbasthali, because of scarcity of irrigated water during January-March. Ketugram and Ausgram occupied above 400 hectares of land for wheat and jute was grown only in Purbasthali bordering the Bhagirathi. Potato was grown more in the south-eastern part of the district. During the period before Independence several other crops (maize, barley, gram, pulses and sugarcane) were produced in the district.

Land Tenure System:

Before Independence the land tenure system in Burdwan was of the intermediate rent paying type consisting of properties held under the Zamindars. The tenure system comprised "(a) Patni taluks with their subordinate Sepatni and Dar-patni tenures; (b) Mukarrarī taluka, (c) Istimrārī taluks and (d) Ijāras including Dar-ijāras and Zar-i-peshgi-ijāras.

The tenure held by actual cultivators comprise (i) jamā or jot, (ii) meādi jama (iii) mukarran and maurasi jamā, (iv) Korfā and Dar-korfā and (v) bhag jot".26

From the nineteenth century, most of the lands began to be fragmented and scattered. The peasants preferred Aman crop,
which produced much more yield than Aus. Before Independence, the agriculture of Burdwan was in a stage of stagnation for a long period. "The reasons for this stagnation will have to be sought among the key variables such as land, labour, capital, technique and organisation on which depends the agricultural output". 27

From the early days Burdwan got most of the advantages of irrigation from Government as well as private canals. After Independence the course of the river Barakar was interfered with due to the commencement of the Maithon Dam under the Damodar Valley Project. The cultivation of wheat had become popular and was making rapid progress in the eastern, northern and central parts. It will be noticed that after Independence more people depended upon agriculture than before.

Agriculture during the planning period: In the year 1950, the Fifth Plan programme was launched. During the First Plan (1950-54), the highest priority was given to irrigation and power system. During the Second Plan (1955-56), a new approach was made for agricultural development based on selectivity of area and concentration of efforts. There were no changes in techniques in the period from 1947 to 1950. Technological backwardness was responsible for the stagnation in agriculture. "Cropped area fluctuates with the prevailing weather conditions
and agro-economic situation. Total cropped area increases with the increase in the area sown more than once and decrease in the fallow area. 28

During the first two plan periods, the irrigational facilities were increased in the district. As a result the proportion of net area sown was high under irrigation. Due to lack of suitable irrigation, monoculture was practised. Gradually the production of sugarcane declined because it takes about a year for production. "Sugarcane plantation, involving a great amount of labour, was found to be commercially unattractive. This is perhaps the main reason why acreage under sugarcane fell. 29

Present condition of agriculture: In Burdwan double cropping was started in a small scale from planning period. Thus the scope of increasing double cropped area expanded gradually. In the district, there were no particular regions for certain crops. It is evident that the crop combination regions are highly dynamic and are subject to constant changes. 'The people's plan' suggests that the ultimate solution is collectivisation, because "the success of this plan for increasing the productivity of agriculture can be materially assisted through the promotion of collectivisation of agriculture in the place of the present cultivation of tiny, uneconomic holdings. 30
If the farmers take recourse to Japanese method of cultivation it would be possible to improve the yields to at least 10 per cent, but the main problem is technological lag and farmers lack of training. The Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) was adopted in 1960. The district of Burdwan reported higher output than other districts, During 1966-67, a new approach was initiated as strategy of agricultural development. In the fourth plan (1968-69), agricultural policy was given a new orientation for the good of weaker sections and backward areas. After 1966-67, from the period High Yielding Programme was introduced in the district, traditional methods of cultivation was transformed into modern scientific methods. The new method i.e. HYV programme of paddy and wheat require improved seeds, sufficient and optimum irrigation, fertiliser, pesticides, bright sunlight, scientific or modern implements, more capital and assured fair market.

The new agricultural policy should ensure intensive utilisation of land, create widespread productive employment and reduce disparity. "The consolidation of fragments of land holdings into compact areas should be an important aspect of land policy since this measure results in both operational economy and production benefits." There is
a number of serious obstacles to the widespread cultivation of high yielding varieties in the district. There is very great scope of improving the condition of agriculture in the district, but any such remarkable improvement has not yet been possible due to socio-economic negligence and technological lag. Many years have passed after the introduction of HYV programme, but it is strange that a part of the district (Western part) produces single crop of low yield and that, too, in monsoon season. There is a great disparity of agricultural technique and production between western and eastern parts of the district.

REFERENCES:
3. Ibid, p. 35.
4. Ibid, p. 35.

7. Ibid, p. 244.


15. Ibid., p. 100

16. Ibid., p. 99

17. Bentley, Chas. A. 1925. p. 20. 'Malaria and Agriculture in Bengal'. Bengal Secretariat Book Depot., Calcutta.


