

## CHAPTER VIII

### OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADES

#### OCCUPATIONS

ACCORDING to the statistics obtained at the census of 1901, the number of persons in the district supported by agriculture is 934,451, which represents 56 per cent. of the total population. Of this number 33 per cent. are actual workers, and the remaining 67 per cent. dependents. Among the workers the largest groups are (1) rent-payers, who number 271,000, exclusive of 15,000 who are partially non-agriculturists; (2) agricultural labourers, who number 25,000, and (3) rent-receivers, who number 12,000. The next most numerous class consists of those who are supported by the various industries; these number 264,290 or 15.8 per cent. of the total population. Forty per cent. of this class of the population are actual workers and amongst them the largest groups are (1) fishermen and fish-dealers 22,500, (2) milkmen and dairy farmers, 9,500, (3) cotton-weavers, 8,300, (4) oil-pressures and sellers, 8,000, (5) rice-pounders and huskers 8,000, and (6) grain and pulse-dealers, 7,000. The professional classes number 38,420, which represents 2.3 per cent. of the total population. Of these 41 per cent. are actual workers and 59 per cent. dependents. In this class are included 4,400 priests and 2,000 persons engaged in the practice of medicine. Commerce has only 16,173 followers, of whom 34 per cent. are actual workers; the commercial classes form 1 per cent. of the total population. Among those engaged in other occupations are 90,000 general labourers, many of whom, however, probably are mainly agricultural labourers, and 5,000 boatmen.

There is a great disinclination among the inhabitants of Nadia to allow their women to work in the fields;

## BRASSWARE

The only places in which the brassware industry is carried on to any extent are Nabadwip and Meherpur, and even in these two places no really fine work is attempted; practically nothing but utensils for ordinary household purposes, and for use in religious ceremonies, is turned out.

## SUGAR MANUFACTURE

Sugar-refining by European methods has been tried in the district, but it proved unsuccessful. There are, however, some refineries in native hands at Santipur and Alamdanga.

The sugar dealt with is almost entirely that derived from the juice of the date-palm. The following account of the manufacture of this class of sugar is taken from Mr. O'Malley's Gazetteer Volume on the Khulna District:— "The first process consists of tapping the tree, which begins when the tree is ripe and continues each year thereafter. When the rainy season is over and there is no more fear of rain, the cultivator cuts off the leaves growing out of the trunk for one-half of its circumference, and thus leaves bare a surface measuring about 10 or 12 inches each way. This surface is at first a brilliant white, but becomes by exposure quite brown, and has the appearance of coarse matting. The leaves are cut off by a man who climbs up the tree supporting himself by a strong rope, which he passes round the tree and his own loins. He slides the rope up and down with his hands, setting his feet firmly against the tree, and throwing the weight of his body on the rope. In this manner his hands are free, and he cuts the tree with a sharp knife like a bill-hook.

"After the tree has remained exposed for a few days, the tapping is performed by making a cut into the exposed surface in the shape of a broad V, and then cutting down the surface inside the angle thus formed. The sap exudes from this triangular surface, and runs down to

the angle where a thin bamboo is inserted, in order to catch the dropping sap and carry it out as by a spout. Below the end of the bamboo an earthenware pot is hung at sunset, and the juice of the tree runs down into it. In the morning before sunrise the pots are taken down, and are generally full. The juice is extracted three days in succession, and then the tree is allowed to rest six days, when the juice is again extracted for three days more.

"The next process consists of boiling the juice, and this every ryot does for himself, usually within the limits of the palm grove. Without boiling, the juice speedily ferments and becomes useless, but when once boiled down, it may be kept for long periods. The juice is therefore boiled at once in large pots placed on a perforated dome beneath which a strong fire is kept burning, the pared leaves of the trees being used with other fuel. The juice which was at first brilliant and limpid, become now a dark brown, half-viscid, half-solid mass called *gur*, which is easily poured when it is still warm, from the boiling pan into the *gharas* or earthenware pots in which it is ordinarily kept. It is then sold to refiners, and manufactured into sugar."

## MINOR MANUFACTURES

There is a factory at Kushtia, under European management, in which are manufactured machines for pressing sugarcane on the well-known Bihia pattern. The ryots have taken readily to these machines, which are a vast improvement upon the primitive methods which were formerly adopted for extracting the juice from the cane. The machines are generally let out on hire, as the price of them is beyond the means of most cultivators. At Ghurni, a suburb of Krishnagar, clay figures of remarkable excellence are manufactured; they find a ready sale wherever offered, and have received medals at European exhibitions. Little or no manufactures are carried on in Nadia in working up fibres or reeds into mats or baskets.

## FISHERIES

A not inconsiderable proportion of the population depend upon fishing for a livelihood:—The following description of the methods of capture employed is taken from Mr. O'Malley's book on Khulna:—"The methods employed for catching fish are both numerous and ingenious. One favourite engine consists of a large bag net suspended on two long bamboos stuck out at one side of the boat: sometimes the boat with the net thus expanded under water is driven slowly against the current. Sometimes otters are tied by a rope to the boat, and trained to plunge about by the side of the net, so as to frighten fish into it.<sup>1</sup> The fisherman then raises the net quickly by standing on the inside ends of the bamboos, and thus gets all the fish that may be in it. Another common method (rather applicable to marshes than to rivers) is as follows. On the surface of the swamps, large patches of weed called *dhap* are formed, which on the subsidence of the water, sometimes float out of the marshes and so down streams. These patches the fishermen fix by placing stakes round their circumference, and then leave them for a day or two. The fish congregate beneath them, and the fishermen by drawing a net round the place and removing the weeds catch them in large quantities. On the borders or shallow rivers branches of trees are also placed in the water for the same purpose, viz., to attract fish to one place.

"The fishermen in the marshes often carry in their boats an instrument like a long broom, with spear heads in place of bristles. When they pass a big fish they dart this collection of prongs at it, and usually succeed in bringing it up impaled on one of its points. This, however, is not a regular, but only supplemental, mode of fishing, for men do not go out to fish armed solely with this weapon. On narrow shelving banks a round net is sometimes used. The fisherman goes along the bank,

1. Otters are rarely, if ever, used in Nadia.

watching till he sees a place where some fish are lying. He then throws his net in such a manner that before touching the water it has spread out into a large circle. The edges of the net are heavily weighted with lead and falling on all sides of the fish imprison them. Cage-fishing by means of fixed cages of wicker work is also common. Every little streamlet, and even the surface drainage on the fields and ditches, show arrays of these traps placed so as to capture fish. The same method is used, but on a larger scale, in shallow and sluggish rivers, where, in many cases, lines of wicker traps may be seen stretched across the river from bank to bank. Another plan for capturing fish is by attracting them at night by a bright light and trapping them.

"The methods described above are used by single fishermen, or by a few men together. The fish, however, have sometimes to stand more formidable battues, when a party go out with nets or cages, and laying a large trap, drive into it many hundred fish at a time."

## TRADE

The exports from Nadia consist mainly of its surplus crops, and among these jute takes the foremost place. During the last two years the average export of jute has been close on one million maunds per annum, in addition to which some twenty thousand maunds of gunny bags were exported. About three-quarters of this large export is carried away by railway and the rest by water. Next to jute come gram and pulses, of which from one-quarter to one-half a million maunds are exported annually, the actual quantity varying with the outturn of the *rabi* crops. Unrefined sugar and *gur* between them form an important item in the list of exports; in 1908-09 over 140,000 maunds of these items were exported. A considerable amount of linseed is grown in the district, and in good years the export of this article is not far short of 200,000 maunds. Other oilseeds are of little importance. The export of

Indian made cotton goods is steadily decreasing, and in 1908-09 they only reached the inconsiderable total of 1,983 maunds.

Among imports the most important during the past two years have been rice and paddy, which between them have averaged nearly one and a quarter million maunds per annum. Other important articles of import are coal from Bardwan and Manbhum, and salt, kerosene oil and piece-goods from Calcutta. There has been of late years some increase in the use of small articles of luxury, such as umbrellas, shirts, coats, cigarettes and enamelled iron goods, and the import of these shows a corresponding rise.

#### TRADING CLASSES

The principal castes engaged in commerce are Kayasths, Telis, Baruis, Sahas, Malos, Namasudras and Muham-madans.

#### TRADE CENTRES

The chief railway trade centres are Chuadanga, Bagula, Ranaghat, Damukdia and Poradah: there are also less important centres at Darsana, Sibnibas, Kumarkhali, Krishnagar, Debagram, Kushtia and Chakdaha. Those of river traffic are Nabadwip, Kaliganj and Matiari on the Bhagirathi; Karimpur, Tehata Andulia, Krishnagar and Swarupganj on the Jalangi; Hanskhali and Ranaghat on the Churni; Hat Boalia, Chuadanga, Subalpur, Ramnagar, Munshiganj, Damurhuda and Kissengunge on the Matabhanga; Nonaganj on the Ichhamati; Alamdanga on the Pangasi; and Kushtia, Kumarkhali and Khoksa on the Garai. Opportunity for trading purposes is freely taken of the numerous fairs and religious festivals which are held in the district. The best attended of these are the festivals held at Nabadwip in February and November; at Santipur in November; at Kulia in January; and at Ghoshpara in March.

#### TRADE ROUTES

The external trade of the district is carried on by the Eastern Bengal State Railway and its branches, and steamers and country boats on the rivers. A large amount of rice and paddy is also imported into the district by carts from Jessore and Khulna. The internal trade is carried on by country boats and carts. The greater part of the trade, both import and export, is with Calcutta.