

## Economy of Ancient Bengal - Roots to the Development of Bangladesh : An Overview

Mallick Anwar Hossain\*

Dr. Abdul Maleque Talukder \*\*

**Abstract :** Geographical evidence indicates that much of Bangladesh were formed 1 to 6.5 million years ago during the tertiary era. Human habitation in this region is, therefore, likely to be very old. The people of the ancient Bengal were very much dynamic. They were involved in different types of economic activities due to the necessity of life. Ancient Bengal was very much resourceful with its fertile land, natural beauties, natural resources like, rivers, forest, crops and different kind of flora and fauna. Besides, people of the ancient Bengal were technically sound. Environment of Bengal influenced people to participate in different types of economic activities. With the growth of population, however, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture. Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early age and played important parts in the life of the people. The most noteworthy among these seem to have been textiles, sugar, metalwork, stonework and pottery. The role of the rivers in the economic geography of Bengal is very much important. They fertilized the soil by the silt, which they carried; they eliminated, to a large extent, the need for artificial irrigation and being navigable for inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. The raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloths came into Bengal from China and were exported to Damirica by the way of the river Ganges. Two factors seem to have promoted the early growth of economy of the ancient Bengal: first, the qualitative and quantitative development of Bengal's industries and secondly, the unrivalled facilities for movement afforded by the seacoast and river-systems of the Bengal. The use of metallic coins of the ancient Bengal as the medium of exchange marks a big forward step in civilization, especially in its commercial and economic aspect. The article looks into the economy of ancient Bengal as development roots of present Bangladesh economy. The article also looks into the socio-cultural trends of ancient Bengal.

### 1. Introduction

Bangladesh have a long history with its natural resources and geographical position from the ancient period. It is also resourceful with its natural beauty, fertile land, river routes and economic activities. It is said, "Bangladesh has a hundred gates open for entrance but not one for departure" - Bernier. Bangladesh is a new state in an ancient land. An

\* Senior Assistant Secretary (OSD), Ministry of Establishment

\*\* Deputy Director, Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, Savar, Dhaka

American political scientist has described it as "a country challenged by contradictions". On the face of it, the recent twists and turns of her history are often inconsistent. It is neither a distinct geographical entity, nor a well-defined historical unit. Nevertheless, it is the homeland of the ninth largest nation in the world whose groupings for a political identity were protracted, intense and agonizing. The key to these apparent contradictions lies in her history. Etymologically, the word Bangladesh is derived from the cognate "Vanga" which was first mentioned in the Hindu scripture Aitareya Aranyaka (composed between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D.). Legend has it that Bengal was first colonized by Prince Vanga, the son of King Bali and Queen Sudeshna of the Lunar dynasty. According to linguists, the roots of the term Vanga may be traced to languages in the adjoining areas. One school of linguists maintains that the word "Vanga" is derived from the Tibetan word "Bans" which implies "wet and moist". According to this interpretation, Bangladesh literally refers to a wetland. Another school is of the opinion that the term "Vanga" is derived from Bodo (aborigines of Assam) words "Bang" and "la" which connote "wide plains." Geographical evidence indicates that much of Bangladesh were formed 1 to 6.5 million years ago during the tertiary era. Human habitation in this region is, therefore, likely to be very old. The implements discovered in Deolpota village in neighboring West Bengal State of India suggest that paleolithic civilization in the region existed about one hundred thousand years ago. The evidence on paleolithic civilization in Bangladesh region is limited to a stone implement in Rangamati and a hand axe in the hilly tip of Feni district. They are likely to be 10,000 to 15,000 years old. New Stone Age in the region lasted from 3,000 B.C. to 1,500 B.C. Neolithic tools comparable to Assam group were found at Sitakunda in Chittagong. Hand axes and chisels showing close affinity to neolithic industries in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have been discovered at Mainamati near Comilla. The thinly forested laterite hills in eastern Bengal dotted with fertile valleys provided a congenial environment for neolithic settlements. However, the archaeological evidence on transition from stone age to metal age in this region is still missing.

Bangladesh have a history of two thousand years. Bangladesh is naturally resourceful from its very beginning to present. It has also colorful scenic resources. So world famous tourist Huean Saung and Ibna Batuta visited the country for the fulfillment of their mental thirsty. Evidence from the history it was observed that the Portugies, Olandaus and East India Company selected the Bengal as business place. The British also ruled the country in the backside of the screen but in favor of the East India Company. So it is historically proved that the Ancient Bengal was very much resourceful with its fertile land, business field, natural beauties,

natural resources like, rivers, forest, crops and different kind of flora and fauna. Besides, people of the ancient Bengal were technically sound. So it is assumed that there remained much more economic activities in ancient Bengal. The economy is one of the important factors for development of a country and as well as people welfare. The economic condition of ancient Bengal is the foundation of present economy of Bangladesh. The trends of economic development in Bangladesh are not smoothly run on.

The article looks into the economic conditions of ancient Bengal. The materials available for the reconstruction of the economic history of Bengal in ancient times are extremely meager. The paper is based entirely on secondary data which encompass relevant books, journals and web page information.

## 2. Geographical Background of Bangladesh

Bangladesh passed a large history with its origin. Four ancient historical territorial units deserve consideration in the context of modern Bangladesh: Pundra, Vanga, Samatata and Harical. The founder of these territorial units was Gupta. The Gupta established the territorial units by removing forestland for crop cultivation (A. Kader, 1998). At present Bangladesh lies between 20 34 N and 26 38 N latitudes and between 88 01 and 92 41 E longitudes, covering 143,998 square km and comprising, according to the recent estimates, a population of about 135 million (BBS, 2003). The south parts of Bangladesh lies the Bay of Bengal and other three parts covered by India.

**Physiology:** In 1957 B.L.C. *Johnson (1957)* offered a physiological classification of Bangladesh with 9 distinct areas according to the land type. The term physiography has been taken to include the combination of the geographical materials in which particulars kinds of soil have formed and the landscape in which they occur.

**Soils:** twenty-one general soil types have been recognized for Bangladesh. These soil types have been grouped in to three physiographic units: floodplain soils, hill soils and terrace soils (*H. Brammer, 1971*).

**Climate:** Bangladesh shows the broad features of temperature regime. It begins to rise from end of March and maximum in May to July. But in the month of July rainfalls occurs and continue up to September. In the month of December to February there arisen cold weather. Sometimes Bangladesh faced south-western depressions that cause high tide and storm-waves, the coastal areas take a tremendous battering.

**Vegetation and Fauna:** Many kinds of fruit tree, timber yielding plants, and forest trees are grown in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is said to possess

200 species of animal, 750 species of birds, 150 species of reptiles and batrachians and over 200 species of marine and freshwater fishes (*H.E. Rashid, 1977*).

**Rivers and channels:** Bangladesh is said the country of rivers. Most of the town and business centre was established near the side of the river. Internal and external business goods easily move from one place to another through rivers and channels.

### 3. Political Dynamics of Ancient Bengal (326 B.C. to 1204 A.D.)

The earliest historical reference to organized political life in the Bangladesh region is usually traced to the writings on Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C. The Greek and Latin historians suggested that Alexander the Great withdrew from India anticipating the valiant counter attack of the mighty Gangaridai and Prasioi empires, which were located in the Bengal region. It is not, however, clearly known who built these empires. Literary and epigraphic evidence refer to the rise and fall of a large number of principalities in the region which were variously known as: Pundra Vardhana (northern Bangladesh), Gauda (parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh), Dandabhukii (southern West Bengal), Karna Subarna (Part of West Bengal), Varendra (northern Bangladesh), Rarh (southern areas of West Bengal), Summha Desa (south-western West Bengal), Vanga (central Bangladesh), Vangala (southern Bangladesh), Subarnabithi (central Bangladesh), Navyabakashika (central and southern Bangladesh), Lukhnauti (North Bengal and Bihar) and Samatata (Eastern Bangladesh). There are two schools of opinion regarding the political evolution of ancient Bengal. According to one school, the Bangladesh region in the ancient period was an integral part of mighty empires in north India. These historians maintain that Gangaridai and Prasioi empires were succeeded by the Mauryas (4th to 2nd century B.C.), the Guptas (4th-5th century A.D.), the empire of Sasanka (7th century A.D.), the Pala empire (750-1162 A.D), and the Senas (1162-1223 A.D). Specially, the Pala Empire, which lasted for more than four hundred years and reached its zenith in eighth and ninth centuries under the leadership of Dharmapala and Devapala is cited as an example of Bengal's political genius. The revisionist historians are of the opinion that the traditional interpretation overstates the role of all-India empires in the political life of the Bangladesh region. They maintain that epigraphic evidence suggests that only some of the areas, which now constitute Bangladesh, were occasionally incorporated in the larger empires of South Asia. In their views, political fragmentation, not empire, was the historical destiny of Bangladesh region in the ancient times. Inscriptions attest to the existence of a succession of independent kingdoms in southern and eastern Bengal. These local kingdoms included the realms of Vainyagupta

(6th century), the Faridpur kings (6th century), the Bhadra dynasty (circa 600-650 A.D.), Khadaga dynasty (circa 650-700 A.D.), Natha and Rata dynasty (circa 750-800 A.D.), the rulers of Harikela (circa 800-900 A.D.), Chandra dynasty (circa 900-1045 A.D.), Varman dynasty (circa 1080-1150 A.D.) and Pattikera dynasty (circa 1000-1100 A.D.).

Opinions differ on the reasons for political fragmentation in Bengal. Some scholars attribute it to Bangladesh's topography especially to difficulties in negotiating its swamps and marshes, its unending maze of rivers and creeks and dislocations caused by the Bengali rainy season. Others emphasize the frontier character of the region, which attracted from north India a continuous stream of rebels, heretics, and malcontents who destabilized the political life. Some scholars maintain that political fragmentation was fostered by a lack of corporate life at the village level. Specially, the village organizations were weakest in the eastern and southern areas; the corporate life of villages gradually increased in the western areas. Political fragmentation was, therefore, endemic in eastern and southern areas, which now constitute Bangladesh. The primacy of the individual in social life and the concomitant institutional vacuum in Bangladesh region was not, however, an unmitigated shortcoming. The weakness of social, political and economic institutions provided a congenial environment for freedom of religion. The Buddhist rulers continued to rule Bengal long after the resurgence of Brahmanism in the rest of north India. Nowhere in South Asia were the deviations from the Brahmanical orthodoxy so glaring as in the Bengal zone. The esoteric cults like Vajrayana, Shajayana, Kalachakrayana, Nathism, the Bauls and the folk cults flourished in pre-Muslim Bengal. Throughout history, small kingdoms blossomed and withered like wild flowers in the region. In an environment characterized by weak political institutions, heresy, heterodoxy and alien faiths thrived in defiance of the Brahminical orthodoxy.

#### 4. Ancient Civilization

Bangladesh is the frontier of South Asian civilization. It is the natural bridge between South and South East Asia. Because of its location, Bangladesh was the intermediary in trade and commerce between the South Asian sub-continent and the Far East. This region, as a distinguished historian observed, "played an important part in the great cultural association between the diverse civilizations of Eastern and South Eastern Asia which forms such a distinguished feature in the history of this great continent for nearly one thousand and five hundred years". Tradition has it that a Bengalee Prince Vijayasingha who established the first political organization in that island colonized Sri Lanka. Gadadhara, another Bengalee, founded a kingdom in the Madras

State in South India. Bangladesh region also played a seminal role in disseminating her beliefs, art and architecture in the wider world of Asia. The Bengali missionaries preached Mahayana Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago, Kumaraghosha, the royal preceptor of the Sailendra emperors of Java, Sumatra and Malaya peninsula, was born in Gauda. The Bengali scholar Santirakshit was one of the founders of the Buddhist monastic order in Tibet. The great Buddhists sage Dipankara Srijnana, also known as Atish (10th-11th century) reformed the monastic order in Tibet. The Bengalee scholars Shilabhadra, Chandragomin. Abhayakaragupta, Jetari and Jnanasrimitra were venerated as great theologians in the Buddhist world. Ancient Bangladesh also witnessed the flowering of temple, stupa and monastic architecture as well as Buddhist art and sculpture. There was discernible influence of the Pala art of Bengal on Javanese art. There was a close affinity between the scripts used on certain Javanese sculptures and pro-Bengali alphabet. A group of temples in Burma were built on the model of Bangladeshi temples. The architecture and iconographic ideas of Bengal inspired architects, sculptors and artists in Cambodia and the Indonesian archipelago. The influence of Pala art in Bengal could be easily traced in Nepalese and Tibetan paintings, as well as in Tang A.

## **5. Rural-Urban Settlement and the Economy**

The most noteworthy fact concerning the economic life of the ancient Bengal is the preponderance of rural settlements. The people established themselves in villages, and organized there lands-the fields, meadow and woodlands to serve their essential needs. The rural people lived in compact groups and not in widely scattered habitations. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture. The village also contained ordinary roads and paths. A few villages are also stated to have been in possession of woodlands or jungles, which meet their fire needs. It is thus clear that various types of land attached to the village which organized them for exploitation according to certain systems and customary practices, so as best to satisfy human needs.

Bangladesh was primarily a land of village; town settlements were by no means rare. References have already been made to a large number of these towns as known from epigraphic and literary evidence. There are three factors of growth of this town: first, it was a place of pilgrimage; secondly, it was the seat of a court or the capital of province; and finally, it was advantageously situated along the main trade route of North Bengal. A few towns primarily developed due to administrative and political reasons and also possibilities of trade in the towns. Further, an analysis of the sites and positions occupied by the ancient towns of the Bengal shows that they were of such a geographical character that they

could be utilized as 'nodes' or centers of routes by land or by water. It is clear that most of the rural population was mainly dependent on soil and its product i.e. agricultural activities. The urban people involved wide variety of functions like, commercial, industrial, political, judicial and military. The most distinctive characteristics of the towns were their comparative richness and luxury.

## **6. Land Tenures and People Livelihood**

Land was the bedrock of ancient Bengal's political economy. It was the main source of wealth and the chief support of life. Even so, our knowledge of the system of land tenure as they obtained in this province in the ancient times is extremely vague and incomplete. Most of the early copperplate grants refer to the sale or gift of wastelands for pious purposes. Inscriptions ranging from the eighth to the twelfth century, and belong to Pala, Sena and other contemporary dynasties, introduce a new things. Kings in favour of temples and religious foundations with rare exceptions made these. The conditions and immunities attaching to these grants are found enumerated in the copperplate charters, which register them. In the early stage of the ancient Bengal the tenant enjoyed their land without rant. It is obvious that these were grants in perpetuity, rent-free, and accompanied with the assignment of the all revenues according to the crown. They made over to the donee merely the state share of the produce and other state right in the land alienated or convey to him the proprietorship of the land as well, that is, an out and out gift of soil and revenue both.

## **7. The Economic Activities of Ancient Bengal**

### **7.1 Agriculture and the Economy of Ancient Bengal**

The beginnings of agriculture in Bengal, as in the rest of India, have to be traced back to the pre-historic past. Even so, it seems very probable that in the initial stage both settlement and agriculture followed the courses of the great river systems of the province, which acted as powerful fertilizing agents of the soil in their neighborhood. With the growth of population, however, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. One can discern indication of this extension of cultivation in the copperplate inscriptions of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. It is possible, though we have no positive evidence to prove it, that this movement of agricultural force and varying effect from century to century, and from region to region. The founder of these territorial units was Gupta. The Gupta establish the territorial units by removing forestland for crop cultivation. It seems that in the initial stage both settlement and agriculture followed the courses of the great river -systems of the Bengal acted as powerful fertilizing agents of the soil in their

neighborhood. The role of the rivers in the economic geography of Bengal cannot be over-estimated. They fertilized the soil by the silt, which they carried; they eliminated, to a large extent, the need for artificial irrigation; and being navigable far inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. With the growth of population, however, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture.

The pressure of a growing population, the growing desire of priests for material prosperity, and the religious zeal of kings, all served in various ways to organize. A widespread attack on some of the 'negative' lands of the province, which settlement and agriculture had at first avoided. Concerning agricultural practice as it obtained in ancient Bengal, it is not possible to draw any comprehensive picture. It seems certain, however, that paddy was cultivated from a remote antiquity as the staple food-crop of the people. Rice is one of the most important crops of ancient Bengal. Rice, as we all know, is sown in three different ways - broadcasts, by drill, and by transplantation from a seedbed where it has been broadcast sown. Of these, the third method is, as a rule, the least risky and the most profitable. That it was known and practiced in this province at least as early as the fifth century A.D. seems clear from the aforesaid statement of the great Sanskrit poet. Another food-crop cultivated was probably sugarcane. The classical author, Aelian, speaks of a kind of honey expressed from reeds, which grew among the prasioi. Lucan says that the Indians near the Ganges used to quaff sweet juices from tender reeds. Besides the above, contemporary records mention a variety of other crops grown in different parts of Bengal.

## **7.2 Industry and the Economy of Ancient Bengal**

Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early age and played important parts in the life of the people. The most noteworthy among these seem to have been textiles, sugar, metal- work, stonework and pottery.

**Textile Industries:** A pure and finer form of linen was called dukula. It was of three varieties; the first, produced in lower Bengal, was white and soft; the second, produced in North Bengal was black and "as soft as the surface of a gem;" while the third, manufactured at suvarnakudya in kamarupa, had the "colour of rising sun." It is significant that wild silk of the best quality is still produced in these districts. The Muslins is the finest sorts 'among the exports of Bengal. In the fifteenth century Ma Huan, the Chinese traveler witnessed five or six varieties of textile goods being manufactured in this province.

**Sugar Industry:** Another industry, which seems to have made considerable headway in our period, was sugar. The Bengal was probably one of the earliest homes of sugar-cane cultivation.

**Salt Industry:** The manufacture of salt by means of evaporation either from infiltrated sea or from sub-soil brine was also probably known and practiced in the certain areas.

**Metallic works:** Different kinds of metal works have been known from early time.

The history of textile manufacture in Bengal goes back to the remotest antiquity. At the time when the Arthasastra of Kautilya was composed, it was already a well-established industry with a wide reputation in the country. The author mentions four varieties of textile commodities, which were produced in Bengal in his time, viz. Kshauma, dukala patroma and karpasika. Kshauma was linen but of a coarse variety, being mixed with cotton its chief seats of manufacture were pundravardhana and benares. A pure and finer form of linen was called dukula. It was of three varieties; the first, produced in lower Bengal, was white and soft; the second, produced in North Bengal was black and "as soft as the surface of a gem;" while the third, manufactured at suvarnakudya in kamarupa, had the "color of rising sun." It is significant that wild silk of the best quality is still produced in these districts. Karpasika obviously meant cotton fabrics. These were manufactured in various parts of India, but vanga and six other regions, as Kautilya affirms, produced the best variety. It is thus evident that as early as the time of Kautilya Bengal had attained to great eminence as a seat of textile manufacture. The records of the succeeding ages tend to show that age retained this eminence down almost to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It may be noted that the periplus of the Erythraean sea, written in the first century A.D.; includes "Muslins of the finest sorts" among the exports of Bengal. In the fifteenth century Ma Huan, the Chinese traveler witnessed five or six varieties of textile goods being manufactured in this province. Another industry, which seems to have made considerable headway in our period, was sugar. We have already cited evidence to show that Bengal was probably one of the earliest homes of sugar-cane cultivation. The manufacture of salt by means of evaporation either from infiltrated sea or from sub-soil brine was also probably known and practiced in the certain areas. Different kinds of metal works have been known from very early time. No settled agricultural community could get on without blacksmith, whose service were required in the manufacture and repair of agricultural implements; and contemporary evidence proves that apart from agricultural implements. The blacksmiths manufacture other articles of general use like water-vessels of iron and weapons of war such as arrowheads, spearheads and swords.

### **7.3 Trade and the Economy of Ancient Bengal**

The Jataka stories, the account of Strabo and Pliny and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea prove the high antiquity of Bengal's inland and foreign trade. Two factors seem to have promoted this early growth of commerce: first, the qualitative and quantitative development of Bengal's industries and secondly, the unrivalled facilities for movement afforded by the seacoast and river-systems of the province.

#### **7.3.1 Internal Trade of Ancient Bengal**

The chief routes of internal trade were probably the waterways of the province, in proximity to which stood the principal towns. The role of the rivers in the economic geography of Bengal cannot be over-estimated. They fertilized the soil by the silt, which they carried; they eliminated, to a large extent, the need for artificial irrigation: and being navigable far inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. It is probable enough, although statistical data are lacking that throughout the ancient and mediaeval periods they bore the greater part of the inland traffic of the province.

#### **7.3.2 Foreign Trade of Ancient Bengal**

The history of Bengal's foreign trade may be traced back to at least four or five centuries before the birth of Christ. Strabo refers to 'the ascent of the vessels from the sea by the Ganges to palibothra (Mc. Crindle, 1901) and his information is probable driven from Megasthenes' account. A number of Jataka stories mention merchants and businessmen taking ships at Benares and then either coasting to cyclone or adventuring many days without sight of land (R.K. Mukherji, 1912). The commodities exported from ancient Bengal are Gangetic spikenard, pearls and muslin of the finest sorts.

#### **7.3.3 Trading Routes of Ancient Bengal**

As early as the first century A.D. raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloths came into Bengal from China and were exported to Damirica by the way of the river Ganges. In the later period this route became the greatest highway Buddhist pilgrim travel between Magadha and Tibet. In later centuries the overseas trade of Bengal seems to have increased both in volume and extent. This is probably the chief reason of the phenomenal growth of Tamralipti as a port of first rate importance. Taking Tamralipti as the centre, we find radiating from it three principal routes of overseas trade. The first led in a southeasterly direction past the coast of Arakan to Burma and beyond. Most of the early voyages from Tamralipti to Suvarnabhumi were probably made along this route. But there was a second line of overseas trade with the Malaya Peninsula and the Far East.

Ships came along the coast up to Paloura, near modern Chicacole, and then proceeded right across the Bay of Bengal. A third line of trade led in a southwesterly direction past the coasts of Kalinga and Coromandel to South India and Ceylon. Besides the sea-routes, there seem to have been a number of land-routes by which Bengal's foreign trade was carried. One of these was the route, which connected Pundravardhana with Kamarupa.

### 7.3.4 Export and Import

A third line of overland trade seems to have led through the passes of the Himalayas, past Sikkim and Chumbi Valley to Tibet and China. As early as the first century A.D. raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloths came into Bengal from China and were exported to Damirica by the way of the river Ganges. In the later period this routes become the greatest highway Buddhist pilgrim travel between Magadha and Tibet

### 7.4 Monetary Activities

The use of metallic coins as the medium of exchange marks a big forward step in civilization, especially in its economic aspect. The question as to when metallic coins were first introduced in Bengal is involved in obscurity. It is certain, however, that they were known and used several centuries before the commencement of the Christian era. A few gold coins of the Kushan kings have been discovered in Bengal; but there is nothing to show that they were used as medium of exchange within the province. With the establishment of the Gupta Empire, Bengal shared in the currency system introduced and maintained by that dynasty. The coinage of the Gupta monarchs was based essentially on gold and silver, though copper was not unknown. The discovery of a large number of Gupta coins, both of gold and silver, in almost every part of Benal, shows that they came into fairly wide circulation within the province. But this raises an intricate problem as to the rate of exchange between gold and silver in Eastern India about the middle of the 5th century A.D. It is clear, therefore, that under the Sena. Kings cowrie shells served as the medium of exchange in Bengal. In other words, "payments were made in cowries and a certain number of them came to be equated to the silver coin. The purana, thus linking up all exchange transactions ultimately to silver, just as at present the rupee, the silver coin, is linked up to gold at a certain ratio.

### 8. Conclusion

Bangladesh have a glorious economic history of its ancient age. The economy of ancient Bengal is known as a development roots of Bangladesh. With the growth of population, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture. The tenent enjoyed rent-

free land and they cultivated it with their own capability. The river systems of the Bengal acted as powerful fertilizing agents of the land and people had grown different types of crops like, rice sugarcane etc. Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early age and played important parts in the life of the people. Some of them were textile, sugar, salt and metallic works. The river being navigable far inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. So important commodities like, pearls, muslin were exported from the Bengal. The ancient Bengal was resourceful and people were technically sound. The name of Bengal as sources of natural resources spread all over the world and attracted business communities which contributed to the economy of ancient Bengal.

## References

- Bangladesh Beurue of Statistics (2003) : Statistical Pocketbook.
- Bangladesh Sangbad Sansta (2006) : Dynamics of Ancient Bengal (326B.C. to 1204 A.D.). Retrieved from [www.bssnews.net/about\\_bangladesh.php](http://www.bssnews.net/about_bangladesh.php).date: 23.11.2006
- Brammer, H. (1971) : Technical Report-3. Bangladesh Soil Resources, Soil survey project.
- Chakravarti, D. K. (1992) : Ancient Bangladesh: A Study of the Archaeological Sources, published by University Press Limited, Motijhill.Pp1-30 and 56-78
- Chakravarti, P.c. (1976) : Economic Conditions of Bengal, pub by the Dhaka University, World University press, Ramana.Pp643-669
- Crindle, Mc. (1901) : Ancient India, p.16
- Islam, M.N. 1990: Bangladesh: Bangalee Afna parichayer Sandhane, published by Sagar publisher's, the New Baily road, Dhaka Pp. 167-180
- Johnson, B.L.C (1957) : South Asia, London
- Kader, A. (1998) : Land Record and Survey
- Majumder, R.C. (1976) : The History of Bangal, vol-1, pub by the Dhaka University, World University press, Amana.
- Mukherji, R.K. (1912) : A history of Indian Shipping, Pp 31,161
- Proto and Pre-history: Ancient Bengal (326 B.C. to 1204 A.D.): Bangladesh's Contribution to Agriculture Economy Foreign Affairs Tourism. [greenbangla.com/? History: Ancient\\_Bengal\\_%28326\\_B.C.\\_to\\_1204\\_A.D.%29](http://greenbangla.com/?History: Ancient_Bengal_%28326_B.C._to_1204_A.D.%29).Date: 24. 07. 07
- Rashid, H. E (1977) : Geography of Bangladesh, Dhaka
- Sur, A (1994) : Bangla O Bangali Bibartan (An ethno-cultural history of Bengal), pub by Sahitilok, 32/7 Bedon Street, Kolkata. Pp.106-111 & 253-259
- The Social Economic Activity of Bengal: Retrieved from [www.iwha.net/b\\_abstract.htm](http://www.iwha.net/b_abstract.htm)-132k. on 12.09.07