

Socio-Economic History Of The Jalangi River In Nadia District Of Bengal: A Review

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Abstract

The Jalangi River in the Nadia District was an important waterway during the colonial period. Traders from north-west and north-east India used this river route to send goods to Calcutta. This river served as the foundation for the construction of renowned towns such as Karimpur, Krishnanagar, Maheshganj, and Swarupganj. Swarupganj was, on the one hand, a resting place for traders and travelers coming from far and wide; on the other hand, it was an ideal place for collecting logistics. It was here that the British opened toll stations to collect duties from navigators. In addition, small towns on the banks of Jalangi included Palashipara, Gowari, Garuimari, and Abhaynagar Ferry Ghat. All these places were always crowded with people. The Jalangi and Bhagirathi rivers transported a variety of goods from Nadia to Calcutta and other locations. As the Jalangi River is a good waterway, the indigo planters built indigo factories at various places in the basin of this river. The Jalangi river nourished the Dakbanglo factory in Krishnanagar, the R.C. Ganj factory, and the Alpha factory. The indigo produced here used to go to Calcutta ports through the Jalangi River. This led to the development of Nadia's economic centre around the Jalangi River. But after the 1920s, the navigability of the Jalangi River declined due to severe economic pressures. And this happened in 1903, 17 years after the construction of a bridge over the Jalangi River at Krishnanagar. We will discuss the issues related to the Jalangi River in this article.

Key words: Alpha, Bridge, Calcutta, Economic, Ferry, Gowari, Jalangi, Port, Route, Waterway.

Introduction:

Rivers surround the country of Bengal. Numerous rivers, canals and bils have criss-crossed its chest for a long time. Rivers like the Ganges, Yamuna, Meghna, Ajay, Damodar, Subarnarekha, and Rupnarayan are just a few examples. So the history of Bengal is,

in a sense, the history of the river. Just as the history of Bengal depends on rivers and reservoirs, the history of Nadia district is full of rivers and reservoirs. The district of Nadia was once encircled by rivers such as Padma, Bhagirathi, Jalangi, Mathabhanga, Churni, Ichamati, Bhairav, Morali, Garai, Gomati, and Kapotaksha. The most important of these rivers was the Jalangi. The period of origin of this river is quite controversial. But there is no doubt that the Jalangi river was an important waterway during the pre- colonial and colonial period. However, hundreds of trades took place in this river from the start of the colonial period until the railway's establishment, and it served as a convenient communication channel for both domestic and foreign travelers. Therefore, the question arises: what was the original form of the Jalangi River? When did this river originate? How did the Jalangi River and the public establish their relationship? But before looking for answers to these questions, we will first determine the uniqueness of the current research through a literature review.

Literature Review:

The Nadia district has already been the subject of several research books. However, there is currently no published article or book on the socio-economic history of the Jalangi River. However, there are only a few published writings on the Nadia River. Sunil Chandra Das's book [in Bengali] 'Kandhe Morali Kandhe Yamuna' (Laghuchanda Prakashani, Chackdaha, 1995) is a seminal work on river research. It is mainly a book dealing with the river south of Nadia. This book mentions the names of the Morali, Yamuna, and Gomati rivers, but it does not discuss the Jalangi river. Again, Sanjit Dutta's book (in Bengali) 'Anjana Nadi Tire' (Dogachi Gram Panchayet, Dogachi, 1996) exclusively discusses the river Anjana, a branch of Jalangir. But he did not spend a single word about Jalangi river. Similarly, Supratim Karmakar's book (in Bengali) 'Nadiyar Nadi O Jalabhoomi Katha' (J. N. Chackrabourty and co., Kolkata, 2011) is an important book of regional history. However, the book fails to address the socio-economic aspects of Nadia's river system. The book is nothing but a description of Nadia rivers. Apart from these books, no other book has been published on the Nadia River in that sense. However, Balai Chandra Das's article 'Fluvial History of the River Jalangi' (Nabadwip Puratattva Parishad Patrika, Akadash Sankhya [11 part], Nabadwip, 2012) stands out as it essentially illustrates the evolution of the Jalangi River. His writings fail to capture society's close relationship with the river. Therefore, we can assert that this article is entirely original and has never been discussed anywhere before. This time, we will proceed to discuss the main topic based on this research gap.

Currently, the Jalangi River is narrow and dry. However, at the beginning of the colonial period, or in the pre-colonial period, the extent of the Jalangi River was immense. Its nomenclature reflects this greatness. However, the theory behind the naming of the Jalangi River is quite controversial. The confusion in the information received has given rise to so much controversy. This controversy highlights the greatness of the Jalangi River.

Controversy Regarding the Jalangi River:

Jalangi River is a tributary of the Padma River. Another name of the Jalangi River is Khadia. Local residents on the banks of the river still call Jalangi Khadia. Rennell's contemporary poet, Bijayram Sen, has mentioned Jalangi as Khadia in the book "Tirthamangal" (in Bengali)-

‘Chalachal Chale Nouka Nodya Bam Bhite

Temuyini Diye Nouka Porilo Khadiate’¹ (in Bengali)

(The meaning in English is: River to the left of the moving boat. The boat entered Khadia through the estuary.)

During the onset of colonial rule, specifically in 1772, Khadia was identified as Jalangi on Rennel's map.² But Rennel and Bijayaram Sen were contemporaries. So why two names? In fact, at that time, both the names Jalangi and Khadia were in vogue. But Rennel was a foreigner. He had seen Van Den Brouek's map before surveying the rivers of Bengal. Van Den Brouek came to this region in 1660. Then he mentioned the big Khadia River as Jalangi on his map.³ Rennell followed suit, referring to the Khadia River as Jalangi on his map. This proves that both the Khadia and Jalangi names were popular during that period. Therefore, we cannot definitively determine the origin of the Jalangi or Khadia river names. However, the Jalangi River, also known as the Jalangi River, originates near the village's mouth. Again, this flow of Padma was a drought before. Therefore, this river could also be referred to as Khadia. People often use the word Khadia to refer to chalky conditions. Locals may have given it the name Khadia as it comes from the Padma River.

No source can confirm the naming of the Jalangi River, and we lack specific information about its origin. The 1660 Van Den Brouek map shows the Jalangi River emerging from the Padma and joining the Bhagirathi near Ambika or Kalna. Raynell's map mentions the Jalangi River. Once more, poet Bijayaram Sen's 'Tirthamangal' prominently displays Khadia, also known as Jalangi. Therefore, we can assert that the origin of the Jalangi

River predates 1660. The question now arises: precisely how many years ago did the Jalangi River originate? In 1206, Bakhtiyar Khalj invaded Nadia. At that time, to save himself, Nadia king Lakshmana Sen escaped through the back door of the house and took shelter on the river route to East Bengal.⁴ So, did he first escape to East Bengal via Jalangi, and then take refuge on the Bhagirathi River? Or was Bhagirathi near the Ballah Dhibi (hill)? We don't care which river he fled. The question is about the period of origin of the Jalangi River. The question is prompted by the existence of a bridge on the Ranaghat-Lalgola railway, which is located near the present-day Bahadurpur. It is known as 'Khadia Setu' in railroad records.⁵ On the opposite side of this bridge is Hasadanga Bil. Jalangi River was once connected with this bil. Khadia is another name for the Jalangi River. The river Jalangi still flows by the side of this bil. At one point, the Khadia River used to flow in this direction. The abandoned Hasadanga Bil and 'Khadia Setu' provide evidence of this. Therefore, the Jalangi River used to flow in this direction during Laxman Sen. Laxman Sen traversed both the Jalangi River and the Padma River to reach East Bengal. This proves the origin of the Jalangi River or Khadia River long before 1206. It is certain that the Jalangi River originated before 1206, despite the disputed date of its origin. Observing the abandoned section of Jalangi today, it is evident that the river was quite wide during that period.

The Jalangi River was quite wide during the early colonial era. It also demonstrates that the Jalangi, a modern deltaic river, has undergone multiple course changes. Despite the Jalangi River's course changes, its significance in society has remained constant. Jalangi was the river of life for the people of Bengal, or north-east India, during the colonial period. Therefore, the poet Jibanananda Das penned the poem "Abar Asibo Fire" (I will come back again) in Bengali. He wrote:

"Abar Asibo Ami Banglar Nadi Math Gbate

Bhalobese Jalangir Dheuye"⁶ (in Bengali)

(The meaning in English is: I will come again to the river, field of Bengal. In the waves of love.)

When Jibanananda Das wrote this poem, Bengal was under colonial rule. At that time, people developed an intimate relationship with this river. The most significant aspect is that during high tide, the river experiences waves. But the question is, Jibanananda Das's poem 'Abar Asibo Fire' was written in March 1934. The information indicates that the Jalangi River was in a weaker condition than expected at this time due to a railway bridge, a dam or embankment system, and natural factors.

Therefore, the poet's description suggests that waves should not be present in Jalangi during high tide. However, during the first half of the 20th century, when the river's source and estuary were still alive, the Jalangi river did indeed have waves. The poet may have seen this scene in his childhood. In the poem 'Abar Asibo Fire,' he evoked that childhood memory and wrote about 'Jalangir Dheuye' (In the waves of Jalangi river). In 1334 BS, 32 Sravana, Poet Hemchandra Bagchi wrote a poem about the Jalangi river; which brought the river Jalangi to life. But he wrote the poem later than Jibananda. At that time, the purity of the Jalangir river had become more dirty than before. In this particular case, the poet Hemchandra Bagchi also penned a poem about the serene form of Jalangi that remained in his memory. He wrote:

‘Tabo Prem Swapno Mor, He Jalangi, Salil Shobhonay

Bhulechi Kato Je Nam, Tabo Nam Parini Bhulite’’⁷ (in Bengali)

(The meaning in English is : Your love is my dreams , Hey Jalangi, Clean & Beautiful / I have forgotten so many names, but I could not forget them.)

In fact, many people's livelihood depended on this river. Several towns were built. Like Karimpur, Krishnanagar, Chapra, Andulia, Dhubulia, etc. In addition to the development of townships, the Jalangi River served as a preferred waterway for trade, haat, fairs, and migration. During the colonial period, the Jalangi River covered most of the river-centered socio-economic zone of Nadia. The diagram below illustrates how this process operates.

Socio-economic Zone of Jalangi River:

Along the Jalangi River, various types of trade took place. The Jalangi River was plied by vessels with a variety of shapes and names. Such as Malini, Patali, Bhar, Katra, Sarong, Sangri, Khajna Khatta, Jung, Ulak, Kosa, Pansi, and Phukni boats, etc.⁸ Each boat had a specific cargo carrying capacity. For example, Malini, Patli, Bhaar, and Khatra boats had a carrying capacity of 500 to 2500 maunds.⁹ These boats operated only during monsoons. Comparatively, the cargo carrying capacity of Sarong and Sangri was lower than that of Malini, Patli, Bhar, and Khatra boats. Pansi, Khajna, and Khatta boats ply throughout the year on the Jalangi and Mathabhanga rivers. These three boats have a carrying capacity of 100 to 1000 maunds of goods.¹⁰ The cargo-carrying capacity of junk boats was 200 to 500 maunds.¹¹ The transport capacity of meteorites exceeded this limit. This boat could effectively transport 500 to 1500 maunds of goods.¹² Another important boat is the Kosa. Kosa boats used to transport goods on the Bhairava and Jalangi rivers. The carrying capacity of

these boats was 100 to 500 maunds.¹³ Although the Fukni boat primarily traveled in Jalangi, it also traversed other rivers in Nadia. Its carrying capacity was 500 to 1000 maunds.¹⁴ Not only did these boats exchange goods, but they also transported passengers. Therefore, the Jalangi River was the ideal waterway for all types of boats carrying goods or passengers.

Before the construction of the railway on the Jalangi River, specifically until 1903-04, steamers used to travel from Jalangi to Krishnagar, which was the capital city of Nadia.¹⁵ In addition to this passenger service, traders engaged in the trade of various crops.

Traders used to send various crops, such as paddy, jute, wheat, sugar, linseed, tobacco, indigo, etc., to the Calcutta port from the Jalangi River route. Apart from the Jalangi River route, the traders used to trade vegetables and crops along other river routes in Nadia. Then the British government opened toll stations in 1813 to collect revenue from shipping.¹⁶ The British government established toll stations at four locations along the rivers: Jangipur (Bhagirathi river), Nabadwip (Jalangi river), Krishnaganj (Mathabhanga river), and Hanskhali (Mathabhanga river- but Churni river is flowing through Hanskhali and not Mathabhanga river. It is worth mentioning that most commercial boats coming through the Mathabhanga River used to take the Churni River route to reach Calcutta port more quickly. On the way, traders stopped at Hanskhali toll station, where they had to weigh the boat and pay the toll. Here, the British mistakenly named the Churni River as the Mathabhanga River).¹⁷ Among these four waterways, the Jalangi river route was the most popular with traders. Calcutta Port received 609811 maunds of jute, 446177 maunds of wheat, 391756 maunds of paddy, 225958 maunds of linseed, 70245 maunds of mustard, 2995 maunds of sugar, and 116643 maunds of tobacco in 1888-89.¹⁸ But in 1889-90, the export of some goods through the Jalangi river route decreased. Like jute, paddy, linseed, etc. The main reason for this is not the decline in the navigability of the river but the shortfall in production. But overall, the trade of other products along the Jalangi River was normal. During this period, Calcutta port received 453924 maunds of jute, 322679 maunds of wheat, 178927 maunds of paddy, 184151 maunds of linseed, 165181 maunds of mustard, 2497 maunds of sugar, 119369 maunds of tobacco, 23992 maunds of silk, and 481 maunds of indigo.¹⁹ In 1888-89, the Jalangi river route exchanged 38 lakhs, 4 thousand, and 917 maunds of goods. The subsidiary value of this huge amount of goods was 1 crore, 34 lakhs, 77 thousand, and 205 rupees.²⁰ In 1889-90, there was a slight decrease in the exchange of goods. During this time, 37 thousand 60 lakhs and 210 maunds

of goods were exchanged on the Jalangi ver. The total value of this huge quantity of goods was 1 crore 29 lakhs 97 thousand 244 rupees.²¹ 1890–91 was the golden age of importing and exporting goods through the Jalangi River. The Jalangi river route exchanged 43 lakh, 69 thousand, and 585 maunds of goods during this financial year. The total cost of this trade was 1 crore, 40 lakhs, 27 thousand, and 696 rupees.²² However, the construction of the railway bridge over the Jalangi River at Krishnagar in 1903-04 destroyed this shipping trade.²³ However, various goods and passengers were still transported through the ferry service on the Jalangi river.

Along with this trade dependent on the Jalangi River, many people of Nadia also made a living from the ferry service. However, district and local boards were responsible for controlling the ferry service. There were ferry services at four places encircling the river Jalangi, namely Gowari, Palashipara, Garuimari, and Abhaynagar. The Abhaynagar ferry maintained communication between Gopinathpur and Saheb Nagar. The journey involved crossing four miles of waterways. The ferry was open every day of the week. In winter, the Jalangi River at Abhaynagar Ferry Ghat was navigable at six feet. The width of the river at the ferry was 400 feet. The local board earned an annual income of 114 rupees from this ferry.²⁴ Conversely, the Goruimari ferry played a crucial role. The Garuimari Ferry was instrumental in maintaining communication between Sabdalpur and Garuimari. The ferry travelled a distance of four miles. The regulator of this ferry was the district board, not the local board. This ferry was crucial that it was open all year round. Its annual income was 127 rupees. In winter, the river at this ferry wharf was four feet deep and 400 feet wide.²⁵

Palashipara and Gowari ferry services were more important than these two ferries. Originally, this ferry served to maintain communication between Krishnanagar and Palashi. The district board was the ferry's caretaker. The journey involved crossing a mile of waterway. Due to its popularity, this ferry was always open throughout the year. Now, in winter, the depth of the river was 4 feet. The width of the river at the ferry was 500 feet. Due to high passenger traffic through this ferry wharf, the district board earned Rs. 4228 per annum.²⁶ Similarly, the Palashipara ferry played a crucial role. The purpose of this ferry was to uphold the link between Meherpur and Palashi Para. The responsibility of this ferry was in the hands of the District Board. Annual income was 946 Tk. They had to cross a 12-mile-long waterway. It was the longest ferry service on the Jalangi River, open all year round. At Palashipara Ferry, the depth of the Jalangi River was 12 feet in winter. And the width was 600 feet.²⁷

These figures of 1938 give us an idea that the Jalangi River was still quite wide. The depth of the river was sufficient in all areas except for Krishnanagar. Actually, Krishnanagar is located near the mouth of the river Jalangi, which contributes to its low depth during winter. 2) The year-round availability of ferry services indicates the significance of these waterways. 3) District and local boards everywhere used to collect tolls from services and earn a lot of income. 4) The general public relied heavily on these ferry services. They used ferries to carry goods, facilitate crossings, and conduct small trades. In other words, the Jalangi River ferry wharf was always packed with goods, similar to the haat, or market, due to the transportation of public goods, trade, and communication. As a result, the Jalangi River formed the centre of a regional economic zone.

The Jalangi River was the driving force behind the national and regional economies of Nadia; it also played an instrumental role in the development of various townships. For example, the role of the Jalangi River was immense in the rise of Swarupganj, Maheshganj, Krishnagar, and Karimpur. Karimpur is the final boundary of the Nadia district and the final significant town within it. Bhairav and Jalangi rivers play a role in the soil formation of Karimpur township. The river's juice moisturises the soil, making it extremely fertile. Consequently, British indigo planters established their indigo factories here.²⁸ During colonial rule, Karimpur became a trading center due to its proximity to the river. But Greater Karimpur refers to Jamsherpur, Shikarpur, Dhoradah, Sundalpur, and Arabpur. These regions were mainly agricultural. The cultivation of indigo thrived in this vast area. The fertile riverine land in this region attracted poor farmers due to its relative ease of crop growth. The communication system was mainly river-based. As a result, this area developed into an ideal business centre. In the 18th century, Karimpur was a trading town for Anglo-Indian traders. But in 1312 BS (1905), the Jalangi river became narrow and the past glory of Karimpur faded away.²⁹ Despite its narrowness, the Jalangi River remained suitable for small-scale commercial traffic. Therefore, traders from Karimpur used the Jalangi River to send goods to Calcutta. One of the businessmen of Karimpur was Rameshwar Saha of Dhoradah. He acquired vast wealth by trading along the Jalangi River.³⁰ In 1905, i.e., 1312 BS, the flow of water in the Jalangi River decreased, but traders were still doing business with small commercial boats. Marwaris started living in Karimpur due to trade opportunities.³¹ Once again, the colonial government established a subdivision in Karimpur due to its tradition and prosperity. Later, the colonial government shifted this subdivision from Karimpur to Meherpur.³² Therefore, if the Jalangi River's course changes and its navigability decreases, Karimpur, despite

all its potential, could never develop into a city. Karimpur is still known as a panchayat area.

Maheshganj, another colonial-era trade center, sits on the banks of the Jalangi River.³³ When indigo cultivation flourished in the prosperous township of Maheshganj, the indigo planters started their business here. Nilkuti (indigo factory) still exists here. Indigo planters used to send their produced indigo from here to Calcutta port via the Jalangi River during the indigo cultivation era. Later, it gradually transformed into a ganj (township).³⁴ The market and navigable waterways gradually increased the number of people in this group. The river Jalangi submerged Gadigacha village, forcing its residents to relocate to Maheshganj. After that, the crowd increased. This is how Maheshganj became a prosperous township. By collecting large quantities of indigo from this area, the indigo class earns a significant amount of money, which they then send abroad via the Jalangi River.

Maheshganj is named after the famous zamindar Mahesh Pal Chowdhury.³⁵ Maheshganj gained more prominence under his son Bipradas Pal Chowdhury. He was the epitome of nationalism and a patriot. His efforts led to the establishment of a pottery factory and a shoe factory named Nadia Tannery here.³⁶ These companies sent their various products to Calcutta through the Jalangi River. As a result, Maheshganj has gained popularity among Bengalis. Actually, it was a business area. As long as the Jalangi river route was navigable, the glory of this place was bright for all to see. However, with the abandonment of the Jalangi River in the 1930s, the glory of Maheshganj has waned. Now Maheshganj is just a village.

On the other hand, since Swarupganj was located at the confluence of the Bhagirathi and Jalangi rivers, there was a wide opportunity for trade and communication here.³⁷ Due to the many markets, daily necessities were plentiful. Travellers and businessmen from far away used to come down here to gather the necessary logistics. J.H.E. Garrett's writing also shows that Swarupganj is an important trading center on the banks of the Jalangi River. There was also a colonial government toll collection office here.³⁸ Therefore, Swarupganj has emerged as a trade-centric township. Later, as the river's significance diminished, this town developed a sense of pride.

Once again, the Jalangi river gave rise to the town of Krishnanagar. The Jalangi river route made it easy to reach Bhagirathi. The Jalangi River then provided access to various parts of India. Because of the facility of the Jalangi River, Britishers opened magistrate offices, courts, and schools here. Interestingly,

even after the decline in the navigability of the Jalangi River, the importance of Krishnanagar has not diminished. At that time, the railway had already connected the city of Krishnanagar.³⁹ However, since this was not the case for other towns, the glory of the city was lost.

Many more such Janapadas were built on the banks of the Jalangi River, focusing on indigo cultivation. Near the Jalangi River, in 68 Chitka Mauza of Tehatt Thana (police station), lies a village known as Nilkuthi, home to an indigo factory.⁴⁰ The establishment of the indigo factory led to the naming of this village as Nilkuthi. Again, 19 in Narayanpur Mauza, 87 in Birpur Mauza, 30 in Gokhurapota Mauza of Chapra Thana, 112 in Putimari Mauza of Navadwip Thana, 15 in Tiorkhali Mauza, 119 in Baruipara Mauza of Maheshganj Thana, and 1 in Dogachi Mauza. There is a village called Kuthipara. Since these villages were engaged in indigo cultivation, the British constructed Nilkuthi, or indigo factories, in each village.⁴¹ The communication system in these regions was excellent. All the villages are traversed by the Jalangi River. The Jalangi river provided easy access to the Bhagirathi river, and the indigo from all these areas quickly reached the Calcutta port along the Bhagirathi route. The indigo would then be transported to England. Conversely, the British established the indigo manufacturing industry in 89 Betai Mauza of Tehatt Thana, located in the Jalangi River Basin.⁴² There are two villages in this mauza, named Civilganj and Sahebpukur. The indigo planters bear the names of both these villages. Once more, the same police station houses a village named R.C. Ganj, which is not a town but rather a prosperous Janapada. Roman Collin was a British Indigo planter. His initials were R.C. Since then, the village's name has changed to R.C. Ganj, in accordance with his initials. The distance from R.C. Ganj to the Jalangi River is relatively short. Similarly, Mauza No. 10 of Chapra Police Station, located on the bank of the Jalangi River, goes by the name Alpha.⁴³ Alpha cultivated indigo in this region. We named this village Alpha after him. Benali Canal is located on the bank of the Jalangi River at Shambhunagar in 55 mauza of Kotwali police station. It got its name Benali Canal from the name of indigo planter Benali.⁴⁴ The Jalangi River's bank hosted a few more Indigo factories. The West Bengal government office and residential area next to the present National Highway No. 12 is known as Jorakuthi.⁴⁵ Jorakuthi is the location of two indigo factories. The British also established an indigo manufacturing industry in this region. Moreover, the surviving Queensland School and Dakbungalow, located near Jorakuthi, still serve as reminders of the presence of indigo factories. The Jalangi River serves as the location for these Indigo factories. Another Indigo factory on the banks of the Jalangi River is Porakuthi.⁴⁶ Porakuthi is the Bengali word. It means burnt house or factory.

The peasants, fed up with the oppression of the indigo planters, destroyed this kuthi, or house, through fire. Hence its name, Porakuthi. This kuthi is located 40 meters from the Jalangi River in Shambhunagar Mauza. The Jalangi River has shifted to the left of the Kuthi, resulting in its close proximity. Thus, Jalangi shaped the socio-economic history of Nadia District. Therefore, the evolution of the Jalangi River inextricably links to the socio-economic history of Nadia district. This time, we can trace the origin of the Jalangi River's evolution.

Evolution of the Jalangi River:

Nadia District belongs to the new Delta. Here are the broken ones. In such a situation, the evolution of rivers and topography is normal. In my case, the Jalangi River has evolved as a result of this natural collision. The Jalangi River has changed its course many times to cover the long 207 km. This time we will try to capture the evolution of the Jalangi River during the colonial period.

Between 1660 and 1947, the Jalangi river changed its course several times. To understand the changes in the course of the Jalangi River during the colonial period, we will divide the time into two periods: 1660 to 1787 and 1787 to 1947.

The Van Den Broucks map of 1660 shows the Jalangi River joining the Bhagirathi River near Ambika Kalna.⁴⁷ According to this map, Bhagirathi then flowed through the western side of Nabadwip. At present, the distance between Nabadwip and Ambika Kalna on the Bhagirathi river route is about 50 km. But Enville's map of 1752 shows the Jalangi river joining the Bhagirathi river west of Nabadwip.⁴⁸ In 1752, poet Bharatchandra described the course of the Bhagirathi River in his 'Annadamangal' poetry.

However, we think that the course of the Bhagirathi and Jalangi rivers did not change in 1752. The terrible flood of 1747 caused this unusual change in the Bhagirathi and Jalangi rivers.⁴⁹ From 1660 to 1752, the Jalangi River underwent a significant transformation over a span of approximately 100 years. Moreover, the Jalangi River's length decreases by 50 km, reaching the western side of Nabadwip. Undoubtedly, the flood of 1747 significantly altered the course of the Jalangi River. Following this, James Rennell's map reveals further significant changes in the Jalangi River's course. Rennell's map of 1781 shows the town of Nabadwip on the east bank of the Bhagirathi river, and the Jalangi river falls around the present estuary.⁵⁰ The question arises as to why this change occurred. During the investigation, we discovered that a massive flood occurred in 1770 in Nadia, which included lower Bengal.⁵¹ After this flood, the flow of the Jalangi

River was active for some time, but from 1787 on, it was not navigable except during the rainy season.⁵² At various places, the Jalangi River began to rise and fall, i.e., completely naturally, due to the changes in its course from 1660 to 1787.

But from 1787 to 1947, the change in the course of the Jalangi River was due to natural and man-made causes. Among the man-made causes, Zamindari embankments and railway bridges deserve the last mention. During the introduction of permanent settlement in the Nadia district, including Bengal, in 1793, the Zamindars constructed embankments on both banks of the Jalangi river to safeguard their land rights.⁵³ In 1882, Mr. T. Beatty mentioned a total of 40 miles of Zamindari embankments on both banks of the Jalangi River.⁵⁴ Clearly, embankments obstructed the Jalangi river's flow. The addition of these anthropogenic factors to the natural obstructions led to the stabilization of the Jalangi River's flow. During the dry season of 1827–27, when the Jalangi River was unsuitable for maritime trade, there were indications of medium-sized boat trade in the Jalangi River. That is to say, the water flow in the Jalangi river was relatively low until 1826–27. But in 1827–28, the Jalangi River became navigable again due to the connection of the source with the Padma River.⁵⁵ In 1830–31, even in late December, daily shipping was possible on the Jalangi River. However, in 1832, a slight shift in the Jalangi River's source caused a decrease in the river's water flow.⁵⁶ However, this did not significantly hinder trade and communication. From 1840 to 1847, the Jalangi River experienced difficulties in naval trade for seven consecutive years.⁵⁷ In 1846, Richard Machell was appointed manager of the indigo factory at Patkabari in Nadia. He got into trouble several times due to riding on the Jalangi river route to Patkabari. At that time, the Jalangi River was in poor condition, as evidenced by the occasional boat becoming stuck upstream. This is found in his diary.⁵⁸ However, during the dry season, maritime trade was not feasible in the Mathabhanga River.

In this situation, the government took initiatives to facilitate trade and communication along the Jalangi river route. A figure from 1847–1848 demonstrates the initiatives taken to remove silt from the Jalangi river bed. The Jalangi River yielded 37 broken boats and two large trees during this period. Simultaneously, the condition of the river banks led to the cutting down of 40 large trees.⁵⁹ As a result, the movement of cargo boats in the Jalangi River became normal. The Jalangi River also provides a comparable communication system. Captain Bram's report shows that the Jalangi River was the important river route from Calcutta to Gowalmand and Assam for 9 consecutive years, from 1858 to 1866.⁶⁰ However, he noted that only during the monsoons did

sailors use this route. The Mathabhanga River replaced the Jalangi River after that. According to Bram, the Mathabhanga River became navigable after 1882, and this continued till 1884. Later, the Jalangi River again occupied the place of Mathabhanga.⁶¹ One of the reasons for this development of the Jalangi River is that the connection between Jalangi and Padma has not yet been severed. An 1890 map shows the sources of the Jalangi river near Mollapara in Murshidabad. There are two sources of the Jalangi River at this place. The Padma River has almost completely stopped flowing due to a festival. The Padma River channels another source to the Jalangi River, ensuring the water supply remains intact. However, it is undeniable that water flowed from the Padma River to the Jalangi River from two sources. This water was responsible for maintaining the navigability of the Jalangi River. The Jalangi River regained its abundance in 1890. So from 1890 to 1896, the Jalangi River was the main waterway from Calcutta to Golang and Assam.⁶² The Bengali newspaper 'Hitakari' supports this statement. In 1890, on July 30, the 7th issue, the Governor of Bengal arrived in Krishnanagar via the Jalangi River. He arrived in a ship known as Rotas. At that time, the ruler of Nadia was Maharaj Kshitishchandra Roy. Commissioner Smith, Secretary Stevens, and Magistrate Glazey accompanied Governor.⁶³

It is therefore clear that the course of the Jalangi river changed from 1787 to 1890 due to natural and zamindari embankments but never disrupted normal communication and trade. However, even without any damage to the communication system, trade along the Jalangi river route became impossible after 1890. Maps from 1911-12⁶⁴ and 1915-16⁶⁵ show that the Jalangi river was open at that time, but after Krishnanagr, the railway bridge caused the river's condition to deteriorate. The Jalangi River experienced a decline from 1918 to 1919. This episode marked the beginning of the Jalangi River's journey of hardships. In fact, as the Padma river moved northeastward, the change in Jalangi and Bhairav became inevitable.⁶⁶ Especially Bhairava. At this time, the source of Bhairav can be seen from Bhagbangola to Akheriganj. Despite the presence of the Jalangi River's main source, the displacement of the Padma River has disrupted its water flow. When the flow of the river receded, the water hyacinth started nesting in the Jalangi River. The arrival of water hyacinth in the Jalangi river clearly indicates that the flow of the Jalangi river was reduced then. The 1921-22 map shows that the Jalangi River is narrower.⁶⁷ However, the change in the course of the Padma River was responsible for this situation. The Padma River slopes steeply from Dewanganj in Murshidabad to Akhriganj in Patibona and from Kalidas Canal in Nadia to Kumarkhali. As the chest of the Padma River rises, the flow of water in the Jalangi

River also decreases. The 'Report on Major Rivers in the Nadia Rivers Division' from 1925 identified two primary sources for the Jalangi River. The first source, known as Bhairab-Jalangi, originated from Lalgola Ghat in Murshidabad to Muktiyarpur. Another source was from Bausmari to Muktiyarpur, commonly referred to as 'Old Jalangi'. The length of the Jalangi-Bhairab from Lalgola Ghat to Muktiyarpur was 61 miles, and the length of the old Jalangi river from Bausmari to Muktiyarpur was 31 miles. The Jalangi river stretched 102 miles from Muktiyarpur to Swarupganj.⁶⁸ The Bhairab-Jalangi river flow or source was open from 1 July to 21 October 1925, and the source of the old Jalangi was accessible from 11 August to 22 September 1925. As long as the water from these two streams came to the Jalangi River, the water flow there was quite good. In other words, the Jalangi River maintained its water flow from July to September. Then Jalangi would become unnavigable. The water flow in the Jalangi River decreased in 1926–1927.

But after the flood of 1937–38, the water flow in the Jalangi River increased for some time. In fact, when the sudden flood opened up the Sheyalmari river and the condition of the Bhairav river improved, the Jalangi river began to rush toward the estuary.⁶⁹ Simultaneously, the connection to the Padma River's source mouth also opened during this period. But this influx of the Jalangi River was temporary. From 1939 onward, the navigability of the Jalangi River began to decline. By 1947, the Jalangi River had lost its navigability and could no longer be utilised by the navy. In fact, since 1939, the Padma river's northeastward movement has led to a decrease in the water flow into the Jalangi river. The flow of water in the river Jalangi has reduced, and today it has become a dry and dying river.

Conclusion:

It is clear from this discussion that the Jalangi River was a popular river route in Bengal's pre-colonial trade map. Girish Chandra Bose's Bengali book, 'Sekaler Darogar Kahini' (The Story of the Police of the Past), also notes that the Jalangi River was a popular route for goods from north-west and north-east India to reach Calcutta.⁷⁰ From the start of the colonial period until 1903, traders from Bengal and India also preferred Calcutta for their trade via the Jalangi River route. However, from 1660 to 1787, there was a golden age of import and export of goods along the Jalangi river route. At the time, people regarded the Jalangi River as a navigable waterway. Those who could navigate these waterways safely used them. But since 1787, the Jalangi River has lost its navigability due to natural and man-made reasons. The river management policies of the colonial rulers were responsible for the rapid decline in the navigability of the Jalangi River. In

1793, the British rulers started the permanent settlement in Bengal. One of the conditions for maintaining the zamindari was sending the right amount to the government's Treasury at the right time. This requires revenue growth. Increasing production on the land was one way to increase revenue. Therefore, the zamindars of Nadia, along with those of Bengal, arranged irrigation and flood prevention by damming the Jalangi River to increase production from the land. If the zamindars of Nadia and Bengal build these embankments without adhering to the river system's rules, it will impede the river's flow. Simultaneously, the river began to rise. In 1903, the British government made a grave mistake by building a railway bridge over the Jalangi river without maintaining the proper river system in Krishnanagar. Given the Jalangi River's status as a newly formed delta river, its destruction was inevitable. The construction of Zamindari embankments and railway bridges on the Jalangi River resulted in its poisoning. However, this does not negate the role of natural causes in the alteration of the Jalangi River's characteristics. The disconnection of the Jalangi River with the Padma River and the lack of water in the river is an example of natural causes. But natural causes change the character of wetlands or rivers at a snail's pace, in which case the impact on human society is gradual. However, the addition of human factors swiftly alters the river's character, resulting in severe damage. Therefore, the British ruling class played a more significant role in altering the character of the Jalangi River during the colonial period than natural factors. Before laying the railway, the British ruling class arranged dredging to restore the Jalangi river's course. However, once the railway was established, they no longer had to make this effort. The railway offered a significantly greater potential for income compared to the Jalangi River transport system. Therefore, they viewed dredging or investing in the Jalangi River as unnecessary expenses. However, they overlooked the fact that the river plays a vital role in the lives of the people of Bengal and Nadia. Despite the establishment of railways, the Nadia people still preferred waterways for trade and communication. From 1907 to 1920, the Nadia River witnessed the importation and exportation of goods. The Nadia River then referred to the Jalangi, Mathabhanga, and Bhagirathi rivers. In 1909–10, 17213 boats plied the Nadia River annually. In the subsequent year, this number experienced a slight increase, reaching 17572.⁷¹ In other words, the establishment of the railway did not completely diminish the significance of the 'Nadia River' or Jalangi River. Rather, the government found it beneficial to collect taxes from the Nadia River or Jalangi River in the early 20th century. In 1908–09, the total duty collected was Rs. 28727. ⁷² Conversely, the Nadia River collected a total duty of Rs. 37,024 in 1910–11.⁷³ In 1911–12, a total of 17080 boats navigated the 'Nadia River', collecting a toll

of 33476 rupees.⁷⁴ On the other hand, in 1912-13, a total of 16,100 boats plyed the Nadia River, and the total revenue collected was 28,465 rupees.⁷⁵ The decrease in shipping traffic from the previous year led to a reduction in the duty rate. Even in 1915-16, the Nadia River navigation was completely reduced. So the duty collected was 15151 rupees.⁷⁶ Due to river navigability declining and railway importance rising, people chose railways. Consequently, duty collection decreased during this period. The Nadia River did not continue to rise after that point. Rather, the importance of the Nadia River is steadily decreasing. Consequently, the collection of a total duty of Rs. 13794 occurred in 1919-20.⁷⁷ This effect also extended to the Jalangi River.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the British government's lack of goodwill led to the neglect of the Jalangi river route. Regular dredging of river banks and source mouths, assessment and reconstruction of Zamindari embankments, and dredging of areas adjacent to railway bridges could have restored the river Jalangi to its former glory.

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