

# Marketing System of Conch Shell Industry of A Bengal District: Bankura

## Abstract

The present research paper is based on primary survey conducted on conch shell industry of a Bengal district, Bankura. The sample survey contains of 60 household units selected from three block of the District. At present rural conch shell producers/suppliers are struggling to market their products and services due to various reasons. Rural manufacturers are facing serious problems about technical and marketing knowledge. They are also ill-informed about modern marketing issues like quality, delivery schedule, packaging, after-sales-service, etc. The paper suggests that if proper measures are not taken to help the artisans and provide support to them, then the beautiful art will have to face destruction.

**Keywords:** Rural Marketing, Handicraft Products, Artisans.

## Introduction

The handicraft sector is a home-based industry which requires minimum expenditure, infrastructure or training to set up. They provide generous opportunities for employment even with small capital investments and become a prominent medium for earnings, are prepared by using hands or with the use of simple utensils. It uses existing skills and locally available materials. Income generation through craft does not disturb the cultural and social equilibrium of either the home or the community.

The Handicraft sector has, however, suffered due to its being unorganized, with the limitations of education, small funds, and poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional structure. Bankura occupies a leading place in respect of the expansion of conch shell industry. Bankura is known its artistically designed conch shell, since the distant past. Conch Crafts an ancient folk craft, dating back at least two thousand years. Conch shell Handicrafts play very significant role in representing the culture and customs of Bengal.

In this handicraft, the following features are noticed. There are two types of establishments (a) Independent Units which mostly purchase raw materials and sell finished goods, and (b) Auxiliary or Dadandari units which receive raw materials from brokers and supply finish products to them against what may be called wages. Of the 60 units surveyed 27 conformed to the first type while 33 came under the second category. Marketing is an vital useful function on which depends the ultimate success or failure of a production unit. Unless the goods produced are sold off on remunerative prices rapidly without to wait for long in the godowns and warehouses by the manufacturers, no productive activity can be uninterrupted and successfully carried on. It is, in fact, the 'barometer' or success and difficulty of a manufacturing sector. The primary objective of all marketing effort is to place goods in the hands of customer. In fact, marketing implies "the performances of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from manufacturer to customer or the user".<sup>1</sup> The general object of presenting this study is to observe marketing procedure of conch shell goods and marketing problems of the industry.

## Study Duration

I have been working on the Economic History of Bankura district in colonial period since 2002, when I got registered myself as an M.Phil. scholar under the University of Burdwan. I have discussed about the handicraft & commerce of the district in my thesis. Moreover, I have elaborately discussed about the traditional handicrafts of the district in my Ph.D. thesis. The above-mentioned works encourage me a lot to undertake the present study.



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**Objective of The Study**

The growth of conch shell industry improves the production of the long-lasting consumer goods of mass use especially for women. At present conch shell product suppliers are struggling to promote their products and services due to various reasons. Conch shell producers are facing serious problems about technical and marketing knowledge. They are also unaware about current marketing issues like quality, delivery schedule, packaging, after-sales-service, etc. However few studies have been conducted to access the marketing of conch shell products in the city market using retail system. The present communication reviews in this field studies in the District context. The general objective of this study is to assess marketing of conch shell products and marketing problems of the industry. This study is designed at throwing light on the present state of marketing of the conch shell products. It also aims at the formulation of suitable submission and strategy for its future improvement on sound footing.

**Review of Literature**

Mukherji Bijoy Bihari (1925) discuss about the defination of cottage industry, means to development and extend cottage Industries and its problems and some suggestion.

Majumder Jatindra kumar (1927) suggested If co-oparative societies will undertaken to solve the question of supply of raw material to the workers, which was largely controlled by the middlemen it will be benifit the workers.

Sen Dines chandra(1935) notes that the use of conch bracelets by Bengali woman was described in ancient bangle literature and suggests that conch craft developed independently in Dhaka..

Nishar Ahmed- (1980) state that the acceptable performance in marketing of handicrafts could be possible due to the special interest taken by central as well as State Government to boost up the export of handicraft article and the qualitative performance of the artisans.

Prof Dr. VenugopalRao (1994) has elaborated about marketing of handicrafts in which he has also highlighted about behavior of artisans.

According to Reardon (1998) the success of rural industries crucially depends on two major function i.e. successful marketing and internal resource generation including finance. Marketing involves everything which could be significant to lead the market.

monoranjan chandra (2002)- discuss about the origin of *shankha* in religious view , why sankha is essential to hindu owmen .

Liang, Chen et al (2002) has discussed that China has, since the late 1970s, actively pursued a strategy of rural industrialization by encouraging the developmentn of rural industries which provide employment opportunities for the additional labour in agriculture. Liang Z.,

According to Aziz (2006), in India, entrepreneurs first emerged in the rural area. They were mostly traditional artisans, cultivators and businessmen engaged in production and distribution of goods and services required by the people.

Rajagopal, (2009) highlights upon the new models of brand management in bottom-of the-pyramid markets, considering the personality traits, image, technology and reputation of firms associated with the brands. New initiatives are to manage the global brands in BOP markets comprising suburban and rural markets that need to be implemented in the existing organizational culture.

Shweta Sharma (2012) discussed about the Significance of Conch Bangles. Conch Bangles made of conch shells won by Hindu Women in Bengal, as ornaments at the weddings as a religious rite. .

Tilok Thakuria(2013) compared to the West Coast of India, there has been less investigation of ancient shell crafting industry on the East Coast. In this paper, specimen of crafted Turbinella Pyrum are examined from the port-site of Manikapatana on the Odisha Coas

**Report on Industrial Potentiality Survey of North 24 Parganas (West Bengal) 2015-2016**

Now in the perspective of global changes taking place upon the impact of WTO, the report requires to be updated to focus on the most specific areas of industrialization.

From the brief review of the existing literature it appears that marketing aspects of conch shell industry in Bankura have not been adequately discussed

**Concepts and Hypotheses**

Marketing system of conch-shell industry in Bankura District not so good ,if manufacturers will adapt the modern marketing system it may help the industry revive.

**Research Design**

The necessary data for the present study have been collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected through the "SurveyMethod" with the help of structured questionnaire from 60 units. Total sample 60 household units include 22.5 percent independent units, 27.5 percent from Dadandari units. Three Block of Bankura District namely Bankura, Bishnupur, and Patsayer selected on the basis of concentration of conch shell handicraft units.

**Findings and Discussion****Product Varieties and Uses of Conch Shell**

The wearing of conch shell ornaments is a very ancient custom religiously followed by the women flock in Bengal and neighbouring provinces . In ancient time the custom of wearing these peculiar ornaments was widespread , not only in Bengal but throughout the Greater part of India. Reference to ancient Tamil classics furnishes evidence scanty but conclusive of the existence of an important chank cutting Industry which stretched from Tinnevely in the extreme south to Kathiawar and Gujarat in the North-West. *Shankha*<sup>2</sup> is a conch shell which is of ritual and religious importance in both Hinduism and Buddhism. Conch shell<sup>3</sup> is a major Hindu article of prayer, used as a proclaim and in order to get rid of negative energy and evil spirits. It is also used as a container for holywater (*shankhateertham*). Conch, or conque, is a musical instrument<sup>4</sup>, shell dust or sell powder said to be used for ayurvedic medicines as also taken as

lime after being brunt with betel-leaves constitutes the only by product of the Industry.<sup>5</sup>In this district the principal centre of the conch-shell industry are located at Bishnupur and Bankura town . At the time of Hornell's enquiry in 1914 the industry was practised on a very extensive scale in the district.<sup>6</sup> At present there are relatively smaller artisans'communities at Bishnupur, Bankura, and Patrasayer engaged in the manufacture of conch- shell ornaments like bengles, bead necklaces etc.Occasionally expert craftman turn out whole conch-shell pieces exquisitely embellished with embossed decoration but such products do not find a market now and are therefore rarely produced, ring ,buttons and small floral designs are turned out of the part that are left after the bangles have been sliced out. The polishing of bangles and similar other minor works are done by the women and children in the artisans family.<sup>7</sup>The conch shell products of West Bengal may be divided under the following heads:conch bangle (sankha), other by products of conch shell.It is evident from the surveyed 60 conch shell units (100%) in Bankura are manufacturing Conch bangle (*sankha*). The manufacture of other by products of conch shell or decoration articles like spoons, forks, costume jewellery, table lamps etc are the distinctive feature in Bankura. altogether 32 units (53%) are engage only in decoration work on the conch shell industry, their number is naturally not large at any center in the dist.

#### **Types of Design of Conch Shell Product**

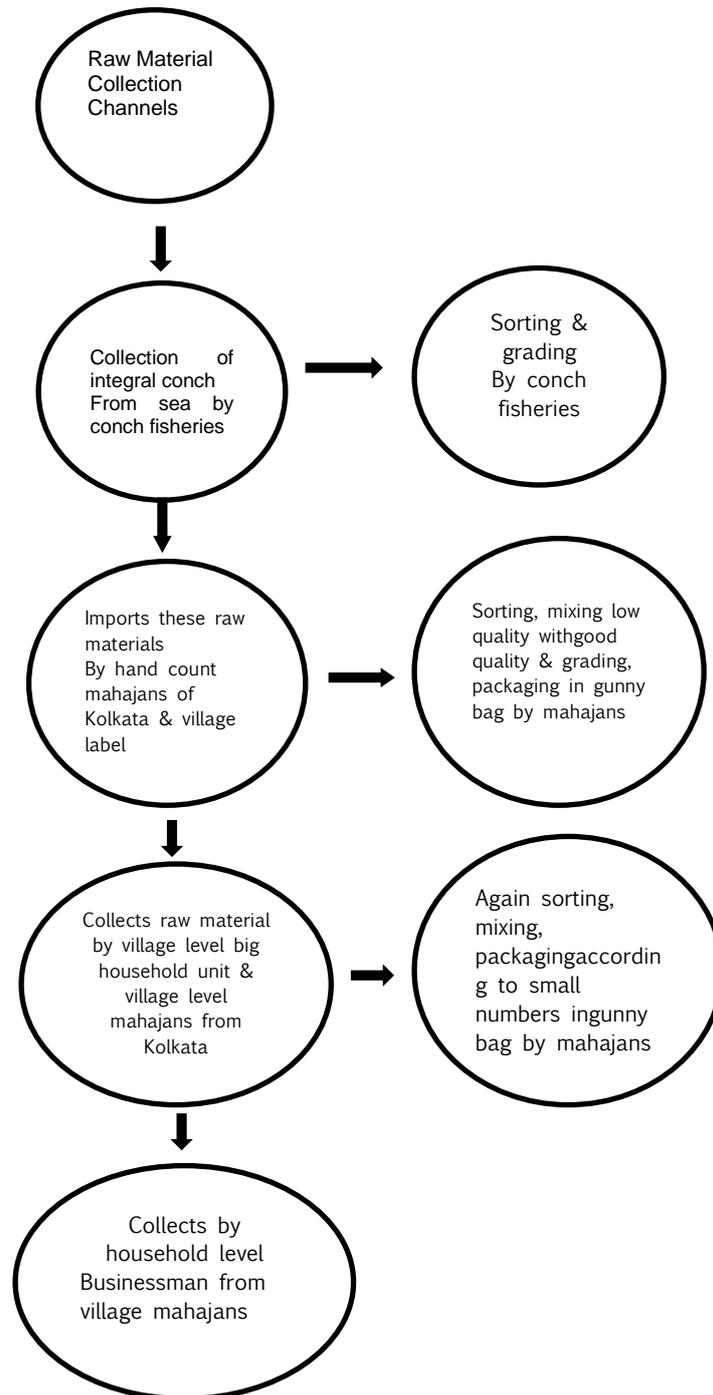
The conchshell craft is not a new art in Bankura, famous for the unique form of its arts and crafts<sup>8</sup>. Conch shell<sup>9</sup> craft is one of the most unique and most beautiful forms of handicrafts practiced in Bankura. The 'Shankharis'of Bankura hereditary art with an expertise that is honed by ages of experience and skill. Sparkling conch shells are sliced with simple hand tools and entirely fashioned to form selljewelry like bangles, bracelets, pendants and a range of other ornaments items. It is a particularly sophisticated and insubstantial craft of West Bengal. The dexterous fingers of the craftsmen turned every article they touched into a thing of joy.Craftsmen create episodes from the Hindu epic Mahabharata or stories that revolve around Lord Krishna on these shells. While some craftsmen draw the image of Lord Shiva above the shell, others construct entire episodes from the Mahabharata on it. Then, the stories of Lord Krishna also serve as popular themes forengraving the conch shells. The craftspersons keep the interest of entire country and design many different patterns and shapes of bangles. The designs crafted on the bangles to please the rich families are definitely very attractive. Designs of fish, Capricorn, butterfly, pitcher, *chillum*, lotus bud, and paddy sheaf; leaf of marigold, parakeet and bamboo line are crafted on these bangles. Decoration and engraving on conch shells are done with a variety of files. The surface of the conch is hard and is difficult to slice it. Craftspersons use diamond

cutter which has sharp teeth to cut the hard surface. Each artisan has his own unique style; it is very difficult to carve. Despite attempts to mechanize some of the processes, most chunk shell workers still employ the traditional tools and techniques. *Sankharisor* conch shell workers are a dept at making fashion bangles, bracelets and a range of ornaments out of conch shell. The craftspersons also design conch shells used to make jewelry items brooches, pendants, finger rings and ear rings like bangles, armlets, rings, lockets, buttons, hairpins and clips. Apart from engraved shells, other conch shell crafts include making items like table lamps, incense holders, ashtrays, vermilion containers, spoons and forks from the shells.

#### **Packing and Shipping Methods Used in Conch Shell Industry**

"Packing, regarding as a vital component of any industrial activity, is a mean of safe delivery of any manufactured or processed article from the point of production through various stages of the distribution, until it reaches the ultimate buyer at a minimum overall cost."<sup>10</sup> The technique of packing is not as easy as it appears to be. The producer should give special attention to this portion of business as he would gain if there is less due to breakages in transportation. The bag method of packing is safely used for conch shell to be sent to distances. Defective transportation system between the points of production and the markets hinders the movement of goods and makes primary marketing expensive, the additional charge normally falling upon the shoulders of the producers. "The functions of physical supply occupy the creation of place utility through transportation and the creation of time utility through storage or warehousing."<sup>11</sup> The main raw materials used in the manufacture of conch shell products like *sankha* is integral conch shell. These materials is not available locally which are obtained from nearer places in the State; the other raw materials are imported from other states from long distances specially from Tamilnadu and Srilanka, which is only possible through railway and motor trucks. The manufacturers favor road transportation over railways because it is quicker and there are lesser damages in transport. Internal transport is also important for shipping of raw material of conch shell, i.e., intact conch shell packaged in gunny bag from the private body/conch shell manufacturing units to the places of work of small conch shell units. For domestic transport purpose 'Rickshaws', bus, mini truck etc are in use at almost all conch shell centers in the District. Since the sale of conch shell products has improved to a great extent, they are now a day sent almost to every part of the district and the nearby States. For transporting the finished products to remote places the most important means are the railways and the roads.

**Raw Material Collection Channels**



**Structure of Marketing of Conch Shell Goods**

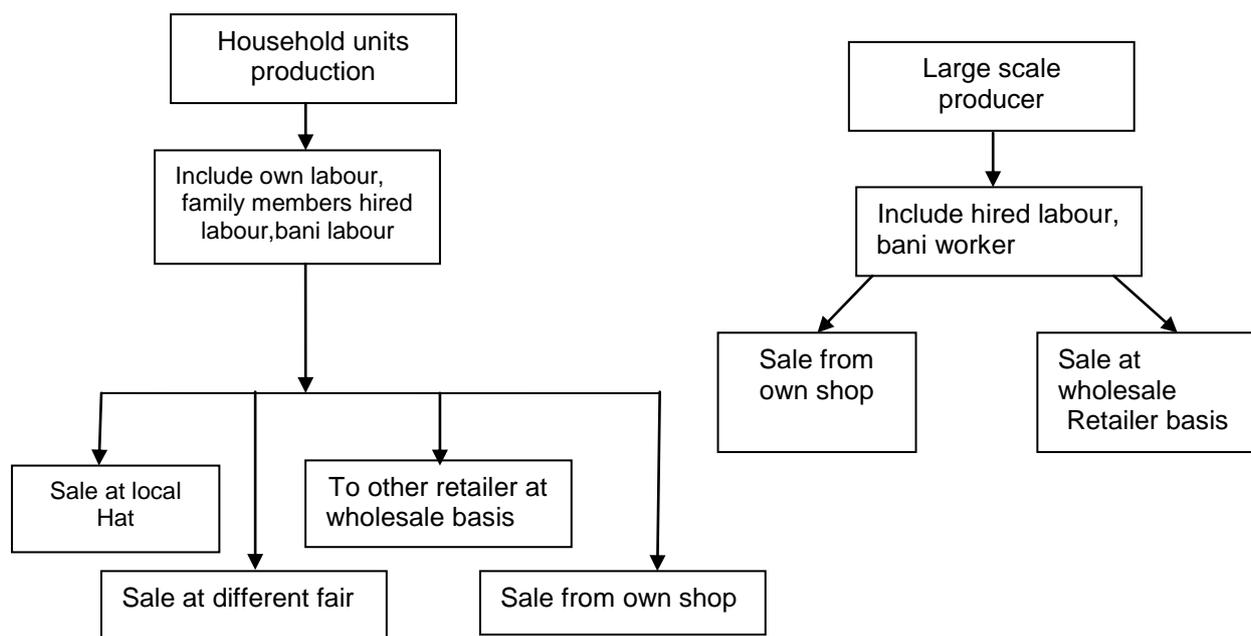
Marketing channels are the means engaged by manufacturers and sellers to get their products to the market and into the hands of the ultimate users. In conch shell industry products are distributed mainly through following intermediaries as a part of distribution network: importers, indenting agents, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, dealers, commission agents. Products are sold mainly through following market places: Small and Large Retail Outlets, Supermarkets, Retail outlets located in

Malls, Shopping Websites (Using e-Commerce and Internet), Company Owned Showrooms and Retail Chains. The conch shell wholesalers make their purchases from the small conch shell producers and the factory owners directly. They are responsible for concentrating conch shell in large quantities in their godowns and dispersing it in bulk to the conch shell dealers throughout the state. All of them have their own godowns whether in their own premises or in the rented buildings. These wholesalers are persons with strong financial capital. They have better market

contacts with the local and outside conch shell merchants and are better familiar with the day-to-day changes in the conch shell trade. On account of trading on important, they are able to save in transportation costs also. The wholesalers also make advances to the conch shell artisans, small producers when needed. Due to weak economic situation of the small producers in particular, the credit given by the wholesalers is a great help to them. In almost all principal conch shell centers in the district, a large quantity of conch shell producers is marketed through the neighboring conch shell dealers. They are the persons who maintain their own shops and stalls

and market conch shell products to local and exterior consumers mostly on retail basis. Generally, major part of suppliers are procured from the conch shell whole salers because the latter are able to give them goods on credit which the conch shell owners can seldom afford to give. Such conch shell dealers also activate in cities and towns other than those where conch shell manufacturing is not carried on in the State and outside. They obtain their necessities of conch shell goods either by direct purchase from the conch shell owners or through orders from the conch shell wholesalers.

**Marketing Channels for Sale of Conch Product**



Conch shell being a disorganized trade carried out mostly in the household properties it has its varied labour process. The main marketing channels found door-to door sales, sales in hat, bazaar etc., carrying the product to permanent sellers, sales through own counter, contract with local trader; or intermediaries of traders, contract with chief artisans, or wholesale traders, or exporters and export agencies, sales through own salesman, through advertisement, fairs etc. The conch shell producer sells their products through three different ways namely i) through selling at Hat, Shop or Fair as a retailer ii) through middleman at wholesale basis iii) through direct selling and through middleman. The marketing systems and organization existing in the conch shell industry in the State are not without their limitations. The main limitations may be brief as below:

**Absence of Common Marketing Organisation**

For healthy growth of industry in a district, availability of market for finished products in the district as well as areas adjoining the district or elsewhere is most essential. It is more essential for SSI units because of their limited capacity for marketing potential. Although some special items find their market throughout the country, most of the SSI

units depend on local markets for marketing of their products. Market potential also depends on the size of the local population and their purchasing power, living standard etc.<sup>12</sup>The conch shell producers of the Dist. have no distinct marketing organization of their own and are ignorant of the modern methods of sales promotion. Hence, they face great trouble in selling their products. The conch shell units accept such particular marketing system as they believe fit and attractive on any individual occasion. When the conch shell producers stand in essential of money, they do not hesitate to sell their products even at lower prices. They some time sell their products partly on credit which is seldom realized in full. Their knowledge about their markets is totally limited. The present systems are implemented separately and engaged relatively higher expenditure in cartage and freight. A suitable common marketing organization could easily overcome these faults.

**Inadequate Advertisement and Publicity**

Advertisement has expected special importance in modern times where a large number of firms are producing equal products with resultant cut-throat opposition. It is one of the essential functions of a good marketing organization. Unless people know about the product of any particular producer, its

merits and dominance over competing brands, no significant amount of sales can be affected. The majorities of conch shell units in the district are small manufacturers with poor financial capitals and limited production and cannot possibly meet the enormous expenses of modern advertisement. Advertisement of goods tends to increase the market as a result of which production increases. This, in turn, goes to lower the manufacturing costs. Advertisement activities are limited to occasional display and sales in big fairs and exhibitions and fixing up of stalls showing the processes of shaping and finishing of conch shell products by the State Government. However few bugger units also circulate their printed catalogue with offsets of their products.

#### **Lack of Show Rooms and Displaying Arrangements**

Lack of show rooms and displaying amenities is another important defect. Mainly conch shell units are indifferent to the benefits of show rooms and exhibiting arrangements. Small conch shell units sell all their products just after finishing their products and do not store them. In the State the units maintain show rooms to display their products either in a portion of their dwellings or in the unit premises in a varied manner but as a matter of fact, they are not firmly rooms in real sense of the term.

#### **Unsatisfactory Standardization and Grading**

Standardization implies establishment of certain standards based upon basic physical properties or qualities of commodity with a view to further sub-dividing it into numerous grades and classes, while grading only means dividing the products of varying quality and size into lots conforming to certain standard. In conch shell industry in Bankura, there is no scale to measure the quality of a fixed standard and grade of the conch shell products. There is no gradation but a combination of different qualities. Only big conch shell units in the industry do carry out proper grading of their products. Hence, they are able to get higher prices, while others who do not do grading suffer significant loss by selling their goods in mixed bulks at cheaper rates. Conch shell producers in competition do not care for quality; they focus only on quantity and reduction in costs. They compete with each other in manufacturing larger quantities and in selling the same at lower rates. The big conch shell units manufacture different types of high quality products and do not offer any competition to the small conch shell units and face no successful competition in the bazaar.

#### **Conclusion**

However, the conch shell industry has, however, suffered due to its being unorganized, with the extra constraints of lack of education, small capital, and poor exposure to new technologies, lack of market intelligence, and a poor institutional structure, lack of infrastructure & technological support, lack of consciousness of international and new trends and poor advertising campaigns are a few problems of industry which needs to be overcome. It is estimated that conch shell handicraft industry in India is all set to grow with rapid rate in future and

contribute its share towards economic development attractively.

#### **Suggestion**

A suitable common marketing organization could easily overcome several limitations. Existence of effective marketing organization and practices occupy an enormously significant place in the context of small and cottage industries. Another essential obligation of good marketing system is the gratification of consumer which is the most important goal of a business enterprise. Customer satisfaction is the heart of marketing process. The policies, programmes and strategies of the manufacture units should be planned, organized and applied to satisfy the existing needs of the consumer in the most efficient manner and to anticipate their changing tastes and buying attitudes. To satisfy its consumers more effectively, the firm should lay greater importance on the value and services provided by product rather than its mere physical or mechanical features. Further, the firm should think more in terms of profitable sale rather than more volume for its own sake. The essential requisite of a good marketing organization is the existence of suitable marketing research facilities with the enterprise. In these days of cut-throat race and greater sophistication in the tastes and habits of the consumers and consequent demanding for variety, everyday changes in their demands for various reasons, no industry can survive except it is constantly engaged in developing enhanced and sophisticated marketing systems to catch fancy of the customers. Unless the customer knows what is being produced and what are its salient features and advantage over the other similar products of other producers in the industry, no concern can fruitfully sell off its products remuneratively and quickly. Good advertisement always yields good results and the money invested in it never goes waste and in turn brings greater profits. For conch shell industry it is very vital to have a cost effective and efficient supply channel that adds value into whole value chain. Effective Distribution channel and Combined Supply Chain Management help in growth of industry and make it more modest.

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