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AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ODISHA DURING COLONIAL PERIOD (1866-1947)

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Abstract

The economy of Odisha was mostly depended on agriculture since time immemorial. The agricultural practice was very primitive and traditional. During colonial rule the cultivators of Odisha used the same agricultural practices. The agricultural production depended on favourable rainfall. Low rainfall creates drought situation. In 19th century, Odisha suffered drought and famine condition. The farmers were depended on ponds, wells, stream etc, with some traditional method of irrigation system which was not sufficient to control the drought. There was no improved canal system or irrigation system till 1866. The colonial government undertook some irrigation project after the famine of 1866. It was helpful to develop agriculture in Odisha. Economic development in colonial Odisha was characterized by British economic exploitation. The British exploited Odisha's natural resources, including minerals and forests for their own industrial growth. The British built railways, roads and canals improving transportation and irrigation facilities.

Keyword :- Economy, Agriculture, Colonial, Cultivations, Irrigation.

INTRODUCTION -

The economy of Odisha was closely connected with agriculture. During the pre-British periods, little attention was paid the development of agriculture. Large tracts of land either had been deserted or kept under insufficient cultivation. Most of the people did not have the confidence nor the zeal to produce. There was no certainty as to who would reap the benefits.¹ The coming of the British was a great change for the agricultural community of Odisha. However, the Government did not indicate any immediate benefits for the agricultural workers. They were primarily a commercial group and their main interest was to expand the commercial activities. They realised that in a province like Odisha their commercial activity was directly connected with agriculture. There was little they could think of independent of agricultural problem. It was in this background that the British officers were attracted towards the agricultural problems of the province. They had to adopt such an agricultural policy so as to cripple the native industry. This would mean encouragement for their own industrial project.² For the Development of agriculture the Britishers focused on new crops cultivation like indigo, Jute, and tea which was the important cash crops. The Britishers built canal and irrigation systems for improving water management and crop production. They also introduced new farming techniques and tools increasing agricultural productivity. After the great famine of Odisha, the Britishers gave special attention towards the growth of agriculture.

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT DURING COLONIAL PERIOD:-

Odisha was conquered in 1803, when the province was in a state of chronic anarchy. Once again the people of Odisha found a system trust upon them which aimed at transforming their way of life. After British occupation Odisha, Britishers collected excess amount taxes from farmers. They learnt cultivations to cultivate cash crops. The policy of land revenue administration under the British had deep impact on the society. Land was not merely a source of income, it was the very basis of existence for the people of Odisha. This was not fully understood or appreciated by the British officers and their agent's coming from Bengal. The relationship between the cultivator and the landlord on one side and the government on the other, became a vital social problem. This was the worst part of social impact arising from the land revenue policy of the British in Odisha. The position was different in other British administrated provinces. Their land revenue policy had brought innumerable social changes leading to a rejuvenation of social life.



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INTRODUCTION OF NEW CROPS:

Crops failure is an important cause of famine of 1866. So success of crops depended mostly upon nature and good rain. Failure, deficiency unseasonability of rains led to failure of crops and shortage of food stock leading to rise in prices which went beyond the reach of people and instant sufferings started. Because food shortages led to starvation and widespread deaths in Odisha. The embankment construction to check floods, became unnecessary evils and these created havoc in the in the natural drainage system.³

During British rule new crops cultivated in Odisha. Indigo, Sugarcane and jute, Tea, Coffee, Rubber, opium these are the new crops started to cultivate in Odisha. These are the cash crops after famine. Other crops like groundnuts, oilseeds and tobacco cultivated for only export purpose. The introduction of new crops had a lasting impact on Odisha's economy. These new crops promoted commercial agriculture according to the demands of British market. The peasants focused on cash crops as per necessary of market. It also affected to produce food crops. Gradually the Agricultural techniques developed.

EXPANSION OF IRRIGATION SYSTEM:

The importance of irrigation till 1866 was very little known to the people in general and government in particular. So irrigation Schemes in Odisha and India during the period under study was a story of planless and un co-ordinated efforts to a country where water is more valuable than land. In 1815 Lord Hastings recognized the value of irrigation. In 1850 Dalhousie saw the vast waste lands of India wanting water and he wanted to convert them into plains of prosperous cultivation. The company's government conceived that an elaborate irrigation system would act as a safeguard against famine, drought. About irrigation Sir Charles Trevelyan wrote, irrigation is everything in India, water is more valuable than lands because where water is applied to land it increases it's productivity at least six fold and generally a great deal more and it makes land productive which otherwise would produce nothing. Rule of East India Company came to an end in 1858 and India was put under direct rule of queen Victoria. After transfer of power to her Majesty's Government. Earl of Mayo was appointed as viceroy (1869 to 1872) when a large scale modifications were done to the existing irrigation works are new irrigation canal systems were executed. The irrigation project in the coastal areas, as originally envisaged comprised for closely connected Schemes, viz The Mahanadi series of canals, The Brahmani & Baitarani Series, The Subarnanekha series.

In 1901, the Govt. of India appointed 1st Indian irrigation commission to report on irrigation as protection against famine in India, The commission submitted their report in 1903 in which they recommended definite policy regarding the selection, financing and maintenance to irrigation works. For this the famine commission went to the extent of suggesting the establishment of a distinct irrigation department.⁴

CANAL IRRIGATION:-

While embankments have existed from times, Canals are of recent construction and their origin to the East India Irrigation company. The company started with a most ambitious scheme for a system of canal for navigation and irrigation extending from Calcutta to puri. The works began in early sixties and were partly completed in 1867-68 When government took over from them at a Valuations and completed with great modification The works sanctioned included the taladanda and machhagaons canals for irrigating the lands between the Mahanadi and the kathjori rivers, the Kendrapara and pattamundai canals for irrigating the area between the chitrat pala and the Birupa and three ranges of High level canals for irrigating the strip the lying at the foot of the hills from Cuttack to Bhadrak.⁵ It branches off from Kendrapara canal only after 800m below its head and runs along right bank of Birupa River downs to Indupure and pattamundai. Finally it connects to Gobri extension canal at Alka after a circuitous course 47 miles (75 KM). It left bank forms a protection embankment against the floods of Birupa Brahmani. Gobre extension canal system is the Shortest Canal system having length of 6 miles (9.6 KM). It serves as a connecting link between the terminus of the Gobre canal on Gandakia Revere and revere Brahmani



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at Alka as a navigation channel. It receives water partly from pattamendai canal and partly from Rivers and irrigates mostly in utikan area.⁶

IMPROVED FARMING TECHNIQUES.

At the beginning of the company's rule in Odisha, the oriya cultivators were conservative and did not know the new improved methods of cultivation. The Mughal historian Abul Fazl called oriya peasants weak, effimiorate and tradition bound. The British administrator A Stirling supported this assessment by saying that industry and enterprise were foreign to the oriya cultivation.⁷ After the famine of 1866 the government of Bengal made futile attempt to popularise carolina paddy seeds. The cultivation of drought resistant aus paddy, brought from the central provinces, was also encouraged. To teach peasants about the value of canal irrigation twenty reyot wari farms were started in 1873 under the authority of irrigation department in the Cuttack district. In these farms new crops were experimented with the object to demonstrate a comparison between irrigated and non irrigated land.⁸

The response for developing farming technique was most encouraging among the rulers of Gujarat states. They tried to attract the attention to the peasants of their respective states to adopt scientific farming, to get substantial financial advantage either from increased outturn on from the reduction of expenses in cultivation.⁹ The Most noticeable crop experiment was carried out by the king of Bamana, Sir Basudev Sudal Deven in the state farm situated at Ballam. The elightened middle class of Odisha like Fakir Mohan Senapati complimented this programme by influencing the peasants to adopt new mode of cultivation by bring seeds from Calcutta.¹⁰

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ODISHA DURING IN COLONIAL PERIODS.(1866-1947)

Economic development in Odisha was significantly impacted by British rule. Infrastructure Development, Industrialization and agricultural growth these are important development. Overall, the colonial period brought economic benefits to the people of Odisha.

AGRARIAN CHANGES:-

The conquest of Odisha in 1803 impacted on some agrarian change. They introduced permanent settlement (1793) in Benga, Bihar and Odisha in which fixed land revenue was collected from peasants. This created a special class of landlords, or Zamidars. They decided to introduce short term settlements to find out real owners and taxable capacity of the soil, to frame proper rule and regulations for effective collection of land revenue, to determine the relation between proprietors and primary producers of the soil, and to eliminate intermediaries for on the production sector of the mahals.¹¹ This system created many difficulties to peasants and increased proverty.

The British encouraged cash crops like indigo, jute and rice which were meant for export. Due to cash crops cultivation gradually the food crop production declined. Which was affecting food security. The increased land revenue policy and cultivation of cash crops led to widespread poverty among peasants. This agrarian charges created to social unrest and peasant revolts.

INDUSTRIAL DECLINE:

Odisha had a long established reputation in many cottage industries from time immemorial especially wearing, salt and metal work. British Trade policy was responsible for the destruction of cottage industries in Odisha. Odisha was famous for wearing industry. Tassar and cotton clothes were made by handloom in many places some of which were prized for their fine texture and durability. But this cottage industry did not thrive in the face of competition with cheaper imported fabrics from Manchester. Thus died on industry which supported a large number of people. Similarly the monopoly of salt trade seriously affected the poor people. The salt industry which supplied livelihood to 40,000 families in Odisha was ruined,



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while the destruction of local industries forced the masses to take up agriculture as the only means of support the inequities land revenue policy and the vagaries of nature filled the cup of their misery. The enhancement of rent, imposition of illegal cases and absentee landlordsism proved harmful to the tenants. Odisha was the only province of Bengal which lacked government's incentive for promoting trade commercialization of agriculture that led to economic backwardness of Orissa.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:-

Communication, an important infrastructure of the economic development of a state was less developed in Odisha during British period. Odisha had no good system of communication before famine. Roadways and waterways were generally unmetalled not properly bridged and impassable during rains. The famine commission recommended for speedy improvements in roads canals and Parts to provide transport to different parts of Odisha to break, isolation. After famine of 1866 AD, Government began to give attention for the construction of the new road and maintenance of the old one. The grands Trunk Road from Madras to Calcutta via Odisha was completed by public, Depart. ment in 1875 A.D. This road was one of the most important Highways that parsing through Odisha. In 18734.D the minor Roads like Cuttack- fuel Road, Cuttack & Somepur Road, Jajpur - Kerasingh road, Indupur-pattamundał Road, Jagatsinghpur- Kujangarroad reconstructed.¹² In 1853 AID Dalhousie started the construction of Railway Roads. The primary motive behind undertaking the construction of railways in Odisha was to connect with the major ports like Madras, Bombay and Calcutta.

The railways started in Odisha on 20.7.1894 When the first train from Khurda Road to Bhubaneswar, a distance of 11-76 miles started. The inauguration of railway System in orissa opened the dawn of communication revolution in Odisha. It provided stimulus to agriculture production and facilitated decline of indigenous industries. By connecting Calcutta with Madral it enables the people to go out side for education and employment. It created a new stream of political and social consciousness for the people of Odisha it opened political, social and economic transformation of Odisha.

GROWTH OF TRADE AND COMMERCE:-

The growth of trade and commerce impacted to economic development of Odisha. The development of reads, railways, canals and ports facilitated export and import trade by providing mobility of people to move to different Place the articles of export and import varied from district to district and place to place. Rice was Rice was the principal export all over the districts of Odisha. The chief centers of internal trade were Khurda, Pipili and Banpur, Cattack, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Jaleswar and Balasore.

Berhampur, Ganjam, Khallikotee Hinjilicut, Chhatrapur, Gopalpur, Paralakhemundi, Aska, Jeypore, Rayagada, Koraput, Sambalpur, Jharasuguda, were the principal centre's of trade in Odisha. The greater part of the local trade was Carried on at the various hats or Markets. The chief articles of export from different districts of Odisha were Paddy rice, vide, ghee, bidi leaves, oil seeds, fish, dried fish, coconut and other forest products. Similarly the chief articles of import were coal hardware, vegetables, spices, mustard oil, salt, sugar, tobacco and Several Jungle products.

Maritime trade of Odisha under the British rule adversely affected the economy of Odisha. It proved to be more harmful then helpful. The merchants of Odisha did not gain from export and import trade. The British developed infrastructure like ports, roads and railways plenty of rice was exported to madras port, ceylone, Maldives. Islands. The imports im Calcutta, Bombay and were chiefly made from madras port.¹³ All the ports of odesha recorded appreciable fall in the sea-borne trade on the whole, the industry was not thriving and the weavers were taking up other means of earning their livelihood in increasing numbers.

CONCLUSION:

Agriculture formed the main features of the economic life of the people, yet there existed several crafts and industries in Odisha during period. Odisha's agriculture and economy made significant changes. The British introduced new crops and infrastructure. From the survey to infrastructure development in Odisha, the fact clearly emerges that in- spite of



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large percentage of the total plan outlay allotted to the development of irrigation, power and transport and in spite of rapid expansion of these facilities, they proved inadequate to meet the present and future requirements, The level of development of each infrastructural facility. The pattern of development of its constitution elements and the priority between them would depend on the pattern and policy of industrial and agricultural development and the type of technology used.

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