Appendix - D

PRICES OF PROVISIONS IN COASTAL ORISSA IN THE SECOND-HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY:

The prices of provisions in coastal Orissa depended upon many local factors, the most important of which was seasonal harvest. The prices of various provisions, provided to us by Om Prakash, in the second half of the seventeenth century does not indicate any particular trend, either upward or downward. For example in 1658-59, rice was available at 49 rupees per 100 maunds. In 1661-62, it was 48 rupees. But in 1665-66, it was 27 rupees and again in 167071, it was as high as 66. In 1693-94, it was 39 rupees per 100 maunds, which were 2 to 21/2 inaunds per rupee. I Again we carne across the data regarding the prices of rice, which was cheaply available in 1687 at seven inaunds of rice for a rupee. Sometimes at Kanika, 14 maunds of rice were sold for a rupee2. But these prices, whichlOrn Prakash quotes, were mainly paid by the Dutch in Hugh for,their export to various Asian ports. But it seems, that there was not much difference between the prices of Hugli and Balasore, though in individual years they might have fluctuated due to some local factors. But we have other evidences to prove that in sinaller marts they were cheaper. For example, in 1690, the Calcutta factors asked the Balasore factors to procure rice, to which the latter reported that in Pipli it was available at 3 maunds per rupee but in November it would be 5 maunds or more.3 In Radhanagar, in Midnapore district, it was available at 4 maunds per rupee.4

1 Om Prakash, "Dutch East India Company
2 Despatches from England, 1686-92, p. 94.
3 Balasore letter dated 26th February 1690, CFR, Vol. 9; N.A.I., 2607.
The export lists of the European Companies indicates, that there was definitely an expansion of the export trade from coastal Orissa and as such, a corresponding increase in production, especially, in the silk and textile industries. But the increase in demand for commodities and consequent rise in production do not seem to have affected the price level to any significant extent. The price of raw silk, no doubt, showed violent and inconsistent* fluctuations over the period, because of bad or good harvest, as also to the competition among the three main buyers the English, Dutch and indigenous merchants as, said by Sushil Choudhury1. Though a precise price series of textiles could not be drawn up on account of the multiplicity of the types of textiles -- prices of the same types widely varying according to the size, quality, place of production, etc.

Prices of articles rose during the period under discussion chiefly because of four factors:

- The frequent Maratha inroads,
- Imposition of high duties on gross sales of the articles bearing prime necessity,
- Competition among foreign traders, and,
- Occasional natural calamities like floods, etc.

In 1738, nearly three maunds of rice could be purchased, for one rupee and one maund of kapas (Cotton) for two and a half rupees, but by 1751, the prices went up by nearly 30 percent. Then rice began to be sold at the rate of 1 maund32 seers for one rupee four annas, grains (pulses) one maund for one rupee, wheat 1 maund 32 seers for one rupee four annas. Flour -1 maund 3 seers for three rupees, oil -I -maund for five, rupees. The prices rose further thereafter and the Company's government in Calcutta took some steps to relieve the consequent, hardships of the people.2
A glance at the prices of provisions taken at random between 1664 and 1683 would show the variations and fluctuations in prices of various commodities.


2. *Fort William- India House Correspondence, 1748-1756*, Ed. by K.K. Datta, pp. XIV-XIVI.