CHAPTER IV
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PEOPLE.

A. Social Life, the Raja's position, the nobility, caste system, the aborigines, position of women, general customs and manners, food, habitation and recreation, Palace life.

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A. SOCIAL LIFE.

For most part of the nineteenth century the Feudatory States of Orissa were considered inaccessible to the outside world; they were impregnable to modern ideas; communications there were under-developed, education, both of the Rajas and the ryots, was nothing remarkable; the habits, manners and customs of the people were primitive. With so much handicaps the construction of the social and economic history of the small State of Nilgiri is a very difficult task. The paucity of data is a positive hindrance to the formulation of a general and rational thesis. This problem becomes all the more complicated when we take into consideration the attitude of the Rajas towards revealing or codifying anything relative to their State and society and the condition of their people. Even the contemporary British officers connected with the affairs of the States found it too difficult to gather sufficiently accurate statistics under the heads of social, material, moral and intellectual condition of the people therein, as most of the native Chiefs had not as yet learnt to appreciate the advantage of collecting the necessary information. 1

1. BJ(P)P No.20 of October 1884; W.R. Larminie to Government, No.1024 of 8th July, 1884.
Recording the history of one's own State and people, maintaining details of administration, or preserving important pieces of information for the benefit of posterity were not in the nature of Indian rulers, big or small. The Tributary Rajas on their part did not have the desire to delve deep into the boring details of administration, nor did they bother about maintaining records thereof; neither did they have the inclination to part with any such information about their States and affairs to any outsider. The first British writer of Orissa history, Andrew Stirling, thus observed in 1822 about the Rajas, "Such were their jealousy, contumacy and untractableness that even if they condescended to furnish any returns at all, they would be entirely false; whatever information they supplied to Government were mere color de rose reports which might at first sight lead a general reader to regard the management of the States by the Rajas as satisfactory; but to a keen observer of the state of things they would appear in a quite different light.

The State of Nilgiri was contiguous to the British district of Balasore; there was absolutely no barrier to separate the two peoples in the Mughalbandi and in the State, except politically. Therefore, the

1. BJ(P)P No. 6 of November 1885; C. T. Metcalfe to Government, No. 1449 of 22nd July 1885.
culture, tradition, life-style, habits, food, clothing, housing, the beliefs and superstitions of the two peoples hardly differed.\(^1\) Very few regional variations in social life and in complexity of economic organisation were to be marked among the peoples of these two regions mainly because of their physical contiguity, uniform culture and tradition.

THE RAJA'S POSITION IN SOCIAL LIFE.

At the apex of the society stood the Raja who enjoyed a unique and unrivalled position. There being no intermediate class between the Raja and the ryots the former was looked upon as the Mahap of the latter.\(^2\)

As he ruled the State in his personal capacity instead of being guided by set rules, he was the pivot of the administration, and as such the central figure in the social and cultural life of the State. Chiefship was hereditary and was determined by the law of primogeniture, subject to the formal recognition of the British Government of India. The eldest son of the Raja, from whichever Rani he might be born, was entitled to the quddoo.\(^3\) The heir-apparent used to be styled as Tikait Baboo and Yubraj until his installation as Raja.\(^4\) The remaining sons

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1. AR- 1882-83, P-70.
2. Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Condition, P-7.
3. Pachees Sawal; Sawal Nos. 4 and 5.
4. Index- Nilgiri Adoption, P-7.
and brothers of the Raja received only the grace of the Chief in the form of khorekposek or maintenance grants, and had no claim to the guddee. On failure of natural heirs rajgee would pass on to an adopted son, and in the absence of an adoption to the brother, the brother's son, and the lineally closest male descendant in the family of the Raja's paternal grandfather. An illegitimate son, born of a Phoolbehaie or a concubine could succeed only in the absence of legitimate successors.

Raja Ramchandra Mardraj Harichandan was descended from a slave girl; he occupied the guddee not through a normal process of succession but by eliminating the legitimate successors by dint of his cunning during the last days of the Maratha regime and just on the eve of the British occupation of Orissa. It seems that the succession of a female ruler was not preferred even though occasions for such an eventuality were there at different times. Only a dowager Rani played some role in the administration of the State as a Regent, but not as a Ruler.

THE ARISTOCRACY

Unlike in traditional monarchies there was no aristocracy or nobility in the State. Traditionally, the

1. Pachees Sawal, Answer No. 9.
3. Pachees Sawal, Answer Nos. 10 and 12.
4. BRP(R) OSA, Accn.No.8; Impney, Superintendent, to W.B. Bayley, Secretary to Government, 14th October 1815.
5. Judicial From; No. 2 of 28th July, 1835, Para-5.
Feudatory Rajas themselves formed the Aristocracy of the Gajapati rulers of Orissa. Some powerful feudatories had lesser Zamindars under their control. But the Rajas of Nilgiri did not have any subordinate Zamindars or any landed aristocracy under them. Nilgiri itself was under the hegemony of another powerful State, Mayurbhanj. It became a separate political entity only three-quarters of a century before the British occupation of Orissa. Even after the State became independent of the control of Mayurbhanj in 1728,¹ there did not develop any class of nobility in Nilgiri. This was because no class of people or even individuals in the State did enjoy any security of tenure. The only people who enjoyed some privileges were the jagir-holders; but they did not form a compact class by themselves. They were a heterogeneous group which included the highest caste in the Hindu society, i.e., the Brahmins, and also the meanest – the Pans, who were considered untouchables. Thus, there was no intermediate class between the Raja and the ryots.

**CASTE SYSTEM.**

Below the Raja was the multitude of ryots.

The population mostly consisted of two ethnic groups, the Hindus who formed the majority, and the aborigines.

¹ Cobden- Ramsay, op.cit., P-240.
A few Muslims and native Christians resided in the State, but their number was too small to merit mention. In 1872 they numbered 19 and 35 respectively.\(^1\) The small Christian community belonging to the American Free Baptist Mission was established at Mitrapur in the year 1855.\(^2\)

The principal feature of the social life of the Hindus was the caste system which followed the general pattern prevailing throughout Orissa. The social status of a person was determined by his birth in a particular caste. The Brahmins in the State enjoyed the same status and followed the same occupation as did their counterparts elsewhere in other parts of Orissa.\(^3\) By virtue of their profession they occupied the highest position in the social hierarchy, reserved to themselves the exclusive right of interpreting the holy scriptures, determining religious rituals, and officiating in public and private ceremonies of the Raja as well as the ryots. The Rajas bestowed their patronage on them in the form of rent-free land grants to attain spiritual merit for themselves as well as for their ancestors. The Brahmuttar grants consisted either of entire villages given collectively to a group of Brahmins, known as Sasans, or detached holdings to individuals.\(^4\) The holders were required to

\(^1\) Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol-XIX, P-217.  
\(^2\) Cobden- Ramsay, op.cit., P-272.  
\(^3\) Hunter, History of Orissa, Vol-II, P-78.  
present coconuts and consecrated threads to the Raja and offer benediction three times daily. The Brahmins were respected by all other classes and enjoyed great honour and veneration in the society. They were not liable to any bethi or beqar or any other levy of the type to which other villagers were liable. The community was considered to be the repository of learning. But in actual practice the Brahmins in the State were far from being enlightened and learned. Being secure of their means of livelihood through royal patronage the Brahmins bothered little about their intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

The other superior caste, next to the Brahmins, was the khandait. This caste formerly supplied the State's peasant militia on the basis of jagir. Since their military services were not required under the changed circumstances of the British rule this caste was chiefly engaged in cultivation. The ruling family of Nilgiri belonged to the khandait caste.

Besides the two upper castes, the Hindu society in the State comprised innumerable sub-castes, each clinging to its customary profession with a fanatical fervour. The Bais Baniya, Baniya, Kapariya, formed the trading castes;
the Ahir and Gaur were the pastoral castes; the Chasa, Kurmi, Gola, Mali, Tambuli, Dogra came under the agricultural castes; the Kamar, Kansari, Sonar, Barhai, Kumbhar, Sankhari, Teli, Thuria, Sunri constituted the artisan class, while weaving was the profession of the Tanti, Patua, Tulabhina, Sukli and Hansi; the Matiyal was a labouring caste whereas the Keut, Gokha, Danda Chatra, Ujiya, Mala formed the boating and fishing castes; the Rarhi and Ganrar were engaged in the preparation of food, and the Dhobi, Bhandari and Amanth discharged personal service to the villagers.¹

Untouchability existed in the society with the intensity of a religious bias. The Haris, Pans, and Kandras were regarded as the most degraded castes. Any Hindu coming in contact with them even by accident was supposed to commit a great sin, and had to undergo several expiatory rites in order to be restored to the privileges of the society to which he belonged.²

The Rajas attempted to uphold the caste system as a strong pillar of the social organisation in the fashion of ideal kings in ancient India. When some people imbued with the Gandhian ideas, took a first step to bring a racial assimilation through inter-dining they had

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² C.F. Magrath's Separate Census Compilation of Nilgiri, 1872.

² Orissa Tributary States; Their Present Condition...P-27.
to face the wrath of the Raja as late as in the 1930's. The Rajas took up the role of the custodian of public morals and religion. Infringement of caste rules and restrictions was liable to punishment.

ABORIGINES.

The aboriginal tribes and semi-Hinduised aborigines constituted a sizeable minority in the State's population. In the 1872 census the aboriginal tribes, mainly the Kols and the Santahals, and the semi-Hinduised aborigines like the Bathudi, Bauri, Bhuya, Pan, Kandara, Khadal, etc. formed 18.03 per cent of the total population. The aborigines as a class were lazy and thoughtless. They were very imprudent in nature, and bothered little for the future. They were not very fond of cultivation. Whatever crops they produced from their dahi cultivation they quickly exhausted in prodigal enjoyment, drinking, merry-making during harvest. For the rest of the year they lived by their own labour and depended on the forest for fruits and roots.

The social life of the aborigines, particularly the Kols and Santahals, was intimately embroiled with superstition. Sickness or diseases, they thought, arose

2. States' Report, P-93.
from no other cause than the displeasure of the evil spirits who resided in the hills and forests adjacent to their habitation. Such spirits were the Santhal's gods and goddesses. They believed that sickness could be averted or cured by incantations, called "juni-mantras". All Santhals had a fondness for learning these incantations, but some, probably from having better memories, remembered a great number of verses than others, and enjoyed the reputation of being medicine men or gunjas. When incantation would fail to cure a sickness, resort was taken to sacrifice of fowls or goats, and, in extreme cases, human beings. The faith in the infallible efficacy of a human sacrifice occasionally led them commit homicide, which resulted in criminal offences.

The aborigines had unshakable faith on the supernatural powers of witches and wizards who could, they thought, cause miseries and misfortunes to befall any house-holder by their evil influences. Belief in potent magic and miracles was a way of their life, though it sometimes landed them in trouble. They would not hesitate to murder a wizard who, if they were convinced, had caused their suffering. It was a common custom where affairs went persistently badly with a family or

1. BJ(P)P No. 18 of November 1886; Metcalfe to Government, 23rd July 1886.
2. AR- 1885-86, P-53.
3. GR- 1923-24, P-5.
a village to call in a wizard or sorcerer as an exorcist, or to indicate the source of trouble in a family or village where affairs were not prospering, or to point out the person who had cast an evil spell. Such a sorcerer indicated the source of the trouble, and prescribed methods of cure.¹

Changing times could not bring any improvement in the life-style of the aborigines. They were still very conservative in their modes of living and far away from education. By association with the non-aboriginals they had learnt to speak Oriya, most of them joined in Hindu festivals also.² It seems they were slowly getting Hinduised in their life-styles.

POSITION OF WOMEN.

Women did not enjoy any special status in the society. Their education was pathetically neglected. They had to depend entirely on their male relations - parents, husbands, and sons - at different stages of life. They did not perform any work other than the household work, nor did they have any right to the property either of their parents or husband.³ Only the wives of the Raja had some sort of right to property and livelihood. The

² Final Report, P-57.
³ Orissa Tributary States, Their Present Condition, P-26.
Ranis enjoyed this privilege out of the grace of their husband. The Senior Rani traditionally acted as the Sebait or the Manager of the debottar department of the State, known as the Thakur Mahal, besides landgrants and customary allowances for her maintenance. Similarly, the other Ranis received grants of land and monetary benefits befitting their status. Never in the history of the State did a Rani ascend the guddee as Ruler; only one dowager Rani, Chitra Dei, was appointed Regent for her minor son in 1833. This practice was, however, not allowed to recur anymore as the Government was apprehensive of a repetition of the same misrule as was witnessed during Chitra Dei's Regency. Under identical circumstances Rani Parimala Dei was refused Regency in 1893.

GENERAL CUSTOMS AND MANNERS.

Though there was no restriction on polygamy common people were generally monogamous. Child marriage was widely practised. Since pre-puberty marriage, as prescribed by the Smritis, was the order of the day, girls had hardly any voice in the settlement of their marriage.

The system of Sati or the burning of widow on her husband's funeral pyre was not so rigidly followed

2. BJ(P)P No. 20 of October 1893; W.R. Ricketts, Manager of Nilgiri State, to Superintendent, 4th August 1893.
4. Ibid, No. 4 of March 1888; Metcalfe to Government, 22nd June 1888.
in the State as in other Feudatory States of Orissa. While cases of Satī were reported from the two neighbouring States of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar,¹ no such incident occurred in Nilgiri either in the family of the Rajas or the ryots. When Raja Gobinda Chandra died in 1832 none of his Rānis committed Satī; all three of them - Lakshmi Dei, Saomelua Dei and Chitra Dei - survived their husband.² The practice was officially prohibited by the agreement of 1842.³

The practice of widow re-marriage was frowned by high caste Hindus, but it prevailed among certain lower castes, and was known as 'Bala'. The State authorities discouraged the practice of widow marriage. While in British India great social reformers encouraged widow marriage, the Rajas of Nilgiri used to levy a tax on widow marriage, which acted as a restraint.⁴

As girls did not have any property rights, the birth of a son was sincerely desired. A son would not only secure the inheritance of property but also would perpetuate the line and perform various funeral ceremonies, and guarantee salvation of the soul of the parents as well as that of the ancestors.⁵ The common people did not have the free option of adoption on

1. BRP No. 87 of 25th November 1839.
2. AD(Cr) P No. 32 of 15th January 1833, R. Hunter, Superintendent, to J. Thomason, Acting Secretary to Government, 3rd January 1833.
3. Aitchison, op. cit., Vol-I, P-317, No. XCIX.
4. States' Report, P-93.
5. Index- Nilgiri Adoption, P-1.
failure of natural heirs; they had to get the permission of the Raja for adopting a son on payment of a salami.\(^1\) The Rajas could adopt their successors subject to confirmation by the Government.\(^2\) Adoption was generally made before the boy was six years old,\(^3\) and the adoption ceremony was performed as per provision in ancient Sastras, as of Manu.\(^4\) To get a son a Raja could spend a lot of money in the performance of Yajnas and Homas.\(^5\)

FOOD, HABITATION AND RECREATION.

Rice, being the major crop, formed the staple food of the people. Cultivation of wheat was not yet known to the people,\(^6\) and consequently it was not a part of the diet of the common man. Millet, pulses, and vegetables were grown and collected for diet. Fish constituted a regular item in the diet for both the rich and the poor.\(^7\) Tribal people consumed an alcoholic drink, called Handia,\(^8\) which was prepared from rice and mahua. The habit was looked down upon in caste society.

3. BJ(P)P No.4 of March 1888, Metcalfe to Government, 22nd June 1888.
Chewing betel was a common habit both with the old and the young.¹

In matters of housing the people did not show any remarkable break from past practices. The majority of the peasants dwelt in small houses made of mud with roofs thatched with straw which was abundantly available locally. The poorer of them shared their single room with their pet animals, especially the cow and the goat. The well-to-do and the economically better off made a greater use of timber in their houses which were more spacious, depending on the size of their families, and had separate space for their livestock, and for storage of seeds and foodgrains.² The rooms, however, gave a representative picture of their conservative outlook. There was no provision for ventilation, windows were small and limited, and the entrance was the major outlet for light and air. Of course, houses were kept very clean with regular plasterings of walls and floor with mud mixed with cow-dung.

The needs of the people were very common and simple; household furniture was scanty and did not go beyond mats, made either of straw or date-palm leaf, to sit and lie upon, and rarely cots. Earthen pots were used for cooking. Vessels made of brass, bell-metal and

¹ Final Report, P-55.
² Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Condition... P-8.
copper constituted the valuable household articles.\(^1\)

Locally manufactured **muqni** stone utensils were greatly in use.\(^2\) In every aspect social life represented a perfect specimen of the ecological balance between man and nature.

The majority of the inhabitants were Hindus. So the numerous religious festivals and fairs, unique with the religion, provided a welcome relief from the drab life in the villages. In habit the people were somewhat expensive. They spent a good amount of money on fairs and festivals and rituals. Following the traditional Indian custom money was also spent on ceremonies at birth, marriage and death, even if it sometimes necessitated contracting a debt for the purpose.\(^3\) Pilgrimage, particularly the one to Puri, was popular and was very ardently desired. The dominance of the Hindu culture was so widespread that even the aboriginal and non-aboriginal tribes who were despised by the leaders of the religion were increasingly participating in the Hindu festivals, and even worshipped Hindu gods.\(^4\)

**PALACE LIFE.**

The Rajas were habitually polygamous. There was no limit to the number of consorts a Raja could accept.\(^5\)

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2. BJ(P)P No.24 of July 1876; Ravenshaw to Government, No.64A of 9th June 1876.
5. *Pachees Sawal*, Answer No.1
Gobindachandra, Krushnachandra, Kishorechandra – all married more than once. The different **Ranis** had separate designations. The senior **Rani** was known as **Bada Pat-mahadei** the second Rani as **San-Patmahadei**, the third as **Nua-Patmahadei** while others were called simply **Mahadeis**.¹

In addition to being polygamous the **Rajas** could hardly escape the contagion of another most pernicious evil; that was the concubinage. The practice was widespread and deep-rooted everywhere in Orissa Garjat.² A **Raja** could take a woman as his wife by the formal offering of a flower garland. As per custom the bride brought with her a girl of her own age-group; this maid was accepted by the bride-groom along with the bride as his secondary wife by the present of flowers. Such a maid occupied a higher position in the **Raja**'s family than that of the ordinary female servants. They were known as the **Phoolbehaies**.³ Their sons, though considered illegitimate, were entitled to succeed to the **qudee** under extraordinary circumstances. A **Phoolbehaie** and her children received patronage in the form of rent-free grants of land and allowances.⁴

The private life of the **Rajas** was devoid of morality; it was often marked by extreme sensuality and

¹. **Pachees Sawal, Answer No.2**
². **Utkal Dipika, 4th March 1876.**
³. **G.C. Praharaj; Purnachandra Bhasakosa, Vol-V, P-5250.**
⁴. **BJ(P)P No.20 of October 1893; Ricketts, Manager of Nilgiri State, to Superintendent, 4th August 1893.**
extravagance, vices and voluptuousness, dissipation and debauchery. Addiction to promiscuity was a main trait of their character. Addition to promiscuity was a main trait of their character. Public money was squandered away with gay abandon on public women who were coming to the State in great numbers from Calcutta, Benares and other parts of India to quench the Raja's thirst for pleasure and to please his guests. Before the licentious indulgence of the Raja the liberty of women was always in danger. The last Raja, Kishorechandra, used to say that it was the Raja's right to enjoy women. Any woman on whom fell the liking of the Raja might at once be conducted to the harem or to a camp in the jungles to promote his perverted luxuries. Raja Kishorechandra's fondness for pleasure prompted him to organise dance, theatre and band parties. Kheda for catching elephants and shikar were organised without the slightest consideration of the hardship caused to the people.

B. ECONOMIC LIFE.

The economic organisation of the State, like its social stratification, was essentially feudal in character. The State in its political, social and

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1. SRG (Bengal), No.3, P-68.
4. Orissa Tributary States; Their Present Condition, P-9.
5. S. Rout, Ed. op.cit., P-47.
economic organisation manifested almost every prominent feature of a manor of the Age of Feudalism. Economically self-sufficient, it contained all classes of people and institutions useful to a medieval society: the priest with his traditional first position in the hierarchy, the peasant bearing the burden of government, the blacksmith, the potter, the weaver and other rural craftsmen supplying the limited needs of an under-developed society; the absence of an enlightened and educated middle class; the Raja secured in the seclusion of his castle or the garh; limited use of money and the predominant prevalence of the barter system; and the absence of an urban life. Continuity and stagnation rather than change characterised most aspects of the people’s life. The organisation of rural economy was marked by no dramatic discontinuities from the early medieval period. There were very limited breaks with the past.

AGRICULTURE.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the population and rice was its staple food. More than 86 per cent of the total cultivated area was occupied for the production of only one annual crop of rice.¹ A comparatively smaller area, locally known as the 'toila' or the 'Pal' land was

utilised for the production of the commonest variety of pulses and oil-seeds. Valuable cash crops, such as tobacco, cotton, and wheat were comparatively little cultivated or wholly unknown.  

Side by side with the regular plough cultivation, there existed another form of cultivation, the dahi or shifting cultivation. This primitive system of cultivation was limited only to the aborigines who had in earlier times no fixed habitations. They first selected land to squat upon where they found that there was enough room for dahi cultivation. They cleared the jungles around; large trees were ringed and the smaller ones were cleared by the hatchet and fire. The soil was then scratched with primitive hand-ploughs, and miscellaneous crops, such as early rice, maize, millets, oil-seeds, turmeric, etc., were raised for two or three years. When they found that the soil was exhausted they moved to another locality where they commenced similar operations. The earlier site was abandoned for a fresh one and was allowed to rest until again covered with jungle, when the same process could be repeated. This wasteful system of dahi cultivation received a check towards the beginning of the present century when the State authorities started

2. AR- 1887-88, P-47.
taking interest in the conservation of the forests.
The aborigines were also gradually becoming Hinduised
and settling in villages.\footnote{Cobden-Ramsay, op.cit., PP-72-73.}
By 1921 there was almost no dah\hspace{0.1em}i cultivation in the State.\footnote{I.P.Singh, Superintendent of Nilgiri State, to the
Political Agent, Orissa Feudatory States, No.1303 of 4th September 1921, S.D.O's.Library, Nilgiri.}

Though the entire population depended more
or less on cultivation, the basic process of production
and the level of techniques were left virtually
unaffected. The techniques of production were very
primitive, and there were practically no changes in
the method of cultivation.\footnote{Final Report, PP-38-40.}
While the land itself in
several parts of the State was not fertile enough to
yield a rich harvest, the skill and knowledge of the
cultivators were not encouraging. The agriculturists
here, like those of the British districts, clung to
their former practices with pertinacity and pursued mere
routine process in growing produce.

The small peasant economy largely persisted
as the basis of the organisation of agriculture. No
capitalistic farming affected the rural economy of the
State. The small cultivators who formed the backbone of
the society, after paying their rents and cesses and
other feudal dues, had very little surplus which could
be appropriated for the improvement of their tillage.
They had seldom enough capital that could be invested in the land for making permanent improvements or experimenting with different productive and cropping innovations.¹

The ryots, like a people in the cradle of civilisation, were conservative in the extreme, and were opposed to any type of innovation. They never took pains to improve the state of their agriculture. There are two possible modes in which the produce of the earth can be increased: one by rendering fresh and fallow land cultivable and the other by improving the fertility of that which is already cultivated. The first method is practicable where waste lands are plentifully available for reclamation; but in Nilgiri large-scale reclamation was not possible because of the topography of the State and the policy of the government. The impenetrable forests, the rocky hills, and the paucity of rivers were the physical impediments which operated a great deal in stopping the progress of agriculture.² The people's interest in bringing fallow lands under cultivation was further checkmated by the government policy of imposing a heavy salami on fresh reclamation.³ More galling was the fact that the waste lands had often been twice re-assessed by the Raja,⁴ which discouraged the people

1. Orissa Tributary States; Their Present Condition... PP. 17-18.
4. BJ(P)P No.15 of April 1908; L.E.B, Cobden-Ramsay, Political Agent, to Commissioner of Orissa Division, 17th September 1908.
to no small degree. The other alternative of increasing the produce of the land is only attainable by the application of capital and of skill to agriculture which could not be expected in so backward a society as of Nilgiri. ¹

The profitability of agriculture could have been increased under the circumstances, only by commercial cropping and improvements in communication. But both these possibilities were out of question in the State; the former was little known, and, as regards the latter, there were no facilities for carrying on traffic with the more advanced Mughalbandi districts for the greater part of the period; consequently the energy of the people was not roused to a sufficient extent to produce more foodgrains with a motive to profit. Despite the engagement of the entire population in agriculture it was never taken as a business for profit except as a way of life.

The rotation of crops was quite unknown. The peasantry adhered closely to the immemorial custom of growing one particular crop only in a soil which in other seasons of the year might have been utilised for the growth of some other crops also.²

1. Orissa Tributary States; Their Present Condition . . . P-20.
2. Ibid, P-23.
In some ways the State policy itself, particularly the high rates of land revenue, was the severest brake on agricultural production. These rates were the highest on the fertile land,¹ which further discouraged investment in agriculture.

The proprietary right of the land belonged exclusively to the Raja who, as the sole landlord, leased it to his ryots in small portions at a rate of rent generally fixed according to the quality of the land and the value of the out-turn it was capable of yielding. But no relationship founded on permanent basis existed between the landlord and the tenants. In the absence of any occupancy right the ryots had to live under the constant apprehension of eviction. It is in consequence of this that the cultivators' interest in the improvement of the land was adversely affected.

On the other hand, the Rajas, the real proprietor of the land, had no leisure, inclination or ability enough to improve their estates. They had no capital to invest in a project like this. They were more disposed to fineries and outward elegance than to any work which could conduce to the material prosperity of their State.

If little improvement was expected from above, still much less was to be hoped from those who occupied the

¹. BJ(P)P No. 15 of April, 1908; F. W. Duke to CS, GOE, No. 532 P of 28th March 1908.
land under them, and were always in danger of being dispossessed, or of the rents being made liable to enhancement should the productive power of the land be in any way increased.¹

FAMINE AND NATURAL CALAMITIES.

The State enjoyed complete immunity from the devastation of floods. Its rivulets - Suna, Tangana and Ghagra - never overflow their banks. The territorial surface of the State being largely undulating in nature, flood water discharged itself with a great velocity and did not last for more than a couple of days at a time.²

Occasionally the State suffered from drought and famine. The great famine of 1866 which raged through the coastal districts of Orissa and took a heavy toll of lives also affected the Nilgiri State. But no record of the plight of the people and the loss of life is available. The British historian of Bengal, C.E. Buckland, noted, "the suffering was very great indeed,... the roughest estimate of the mortality could not be given. The population was sparse, but in so large a territory the loss of life must have been considerable" since the State was contiguous to the worst affected district of Balasore. No relief measures were undertaken by the Ruler.³

1. Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Condition... P-24.
3. C.E. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors, Part-I, P-351.
One relieving feature of the Garja life was that in times of dearth and scarcity the inhabitants could take as substitute for rice the different fruits and roots which were found in abundance in the jungles of the State. This was observed to have been the case in 1865-66 when the whole country of Orissa was visited by famine and thousands of her poor people died of sheer starvation. The State of Nilgiri in spite of the failure of crops and without asking for any aid from Government manfully stood the brunt of it. This was true for the aborigines, but, for the general inhabitants the solace was unreal.

In a State which was without good roads and communication and in which professional grain dealers were almost unknown, comparatively slight misfortunes, such as unseasonal drought and a failure of fruits and jungle produce following on two or three short harvests might convert a temporary pressure into scarcity and sharp distress.

Though the State was fortunate to witness fewer visitations of flood and famine, it had to bear the brunt of periodic cyclonic storms. A most devastating cyclone passing through the State was recorded in 1876.

1. Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Condition... P-52.
2. BJ(P)P No.1 of November 1890; C.F. Worsley to Government, 31st August 1890.
The same year on 16 April a most extraordinary and destructive whirlwind occurred on the boundary between Nilgiri and Mayurbhanj. In half an hour it swept away a clean road through the jungle, demolished several villages, and destroyed 98 human beings, 600 heads of cattle, 400 sheep and goats, and large number of wild animals. Men and animals were lifted from the ground and literally dashed to pieces against trees, rocks and houses; limbs and mangled portions, both of human bodies and of the carcasses of brutes, were subsequently discovered scattered in all directions. An amazed Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals informed the Government, "Difficult as it is to believe in the occurrence of such a phenomenon, yet the above list of casualties which occurred in the Nilgiri territory is quite accurate and was ascertained by the Raja under the Collector's order".¹

Cyclones of lesser magnitude continued to hit the State and caused serious damages to property.²

IRRIGATION.

The annual average rainfall in the State was not so low; it was 70 inches in a year. But it was apt

¹. General Report on the Administration of the Orissa Division for 1872-77; Ravenshaw to Government, No. 408 A of 16th July, 1876.
². BJ(P)P No.227 of August 1887, Ricketts to Superintendent.
to be uncertain and capricious. As agriculture depended solely on rain water, any vagary of nature was bound to affect it. Late rains often delayed the beginning of agricultural operations; cessation of rain mid-way in autumn affected it, especially on highlands, and ushered in drought. Excessive rain and cyclones in the early winter damaged standing crops and affected harvesting while scanty fall during the same period heightened drought and destroyed crops. Partial failure of crops, caused by lack of or excess of rain, was of frequent occurrence. The annual administration reports reveal that the cultivators were hardly able to get a satisfactory out-turn of crops in any single year. This was due mainly to the vagaries of the monsoon and other climatic factors. Rabi crops, mostly depending on winter rain, was similarly vulnerable to its failure. The failure of crops was a recurring feature in the State.¹ The preponderance of monoculture meant that the large-scale failure of the single crop nearly ruined the peasants, and this was why chronic indebtedness never parted company with the cultivator.

Statistically, the amount of rainfall would have sufficed for good cultivation, but its irregularity often belied the agricultural prospects. Again, due to

¹. AR- 1882-83, P-71;
AR- 1886-87, P-21.
want of sufficient reservoir it was carried away through the numerous mountain drains into the rivers. The only escape from such helplessness was artificial irrigation. Unfortunately, there was practically no system of irrigation by artificial means, either through the efforts of State authorities or through private endeavours.  

A very small amount of the revenue collected from the ryots was fed back to agriculture for purposes of irrigation. No irrigation project worth-mentioning was taken up by the State. The only thing that the State did was, to allow the people to use the State bunds and reservoirs for purposes of irrigation through their own efforts. Whatever irrigation was done through private efforts was not adequate to guarantee a sound return. In some places where it was found practicable the people laid bunds across the rivulets to store up water for the purpose of husbandry; water running from the hills was dammed in the neighbourhood so as to afford ready means of irrigation. In hilly and undulating parts this was absolutely necessary and was done at a comparatively low cost; but in the lower levels having an even surface such works were not very common as it was costly. The right to make simple improvements by the ryots in their holdings by digging wells was recognised very late, though

3. AR-1884-85, P-34.
generally improvements, like tanks, could not be made without permission.¹

INDUSTRIES.

Other than agriculture, stone-quarry works, weaving, oil-pressing, pottery, smithery, basket and mat-making and other socially useful crafts were the industries of the State. The stone work was one of the principal sources of income of the ryots of Khadpur. There was an abundance of a specimen of black chlorite stone, locally known as the Mucmi stone. The stone was quarried with great labour from the summit of a very inaccessible range of hills, and carried down in slabs and blocks to the villages below where the greater part of the population was more or less employed in cutting the stone into shape and finishing up very excellent plates, dishes, cups, pots and a variety of useful articles. The finishing was done by turning in a rough lathe.² This stone-ware was highly prized and had a ready market outside the State. Large quantities of finished goods were exported to Calcutta and other centres of trade every year.³

The weavers in the State catered to the needs of the lower and middle class people by supplying

². BJ(P)P No.24 of July 1876; Ravenshaw to Government, 9th June 1876.
³. Ibid, No.6 of November, 1885; Metcalfe to Government 22nd July 1885.
their home made coarse cotton clothes. Coarse tussar cloth was also manufactured in fair quantities.\textsuperscript{1} Cocoons were available in the State forests. A very sad feature of the weaving industry of the State was that it was gradually declining towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The native loom was unable to compete with the cheap English manufactures which found easy way into the State from the Balasore market which was barely twelve miles away. Consequently the weavers were being gradually and steadily attracted to the more remunerative pursuit of agriculture.\textsuperscript{2}

The other artisan communities like the potters, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, the basket-makers, etc., met the requirements of local population by their respective products. Though the artisans were quite limited in number in contrast with the vast agricultural population, they were capable of meeting the demands of the society.\textsuperscript{3} Of course, the state of manufacture was in keeping with the mode of life the people led.

The organisation of industry in the State remained basically pre-modern as the society itself was backward. The traditional consumption pattern of the society created demand for a limited variety of consumers' goods. The simple standard of living of

\textsuperscript{1} Administration Report of Nilgiri State, 1942-43, P-12.
\textsuperscript{2} BJ(P) No. 1 of November, 1890; C.F. Worseley to Government, 31st August 1890.
\textsuperscript{3} Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Condition... P-18.
the people and their minimum necessities did not require
the organisation of industry in a wider scale. The bulk
of the production was meant for rural markets inside the
State itself. Therefore industrial organisation in the
State remained limited to small units using very little
capital. This too was determined by the traditional
social hierarchy. A craftsman generally followed his
hereditary occupation bequeathed to him by his predecessors.
He could not give up his family or caste profession in
favour of another; a weaver or a blacksmith or a basket-
maker could hardly aspire for other lucrative trade than
that of his forefathers, except of course, agriculture,
under the prevailing social system. When heredity was the
chief determinant of an artisan's choice of trade, his
family was naturally the basic unit of production, and
his home the typical workshop. The artisan worked in his
residence often with the aid of family members. All the
rural manufacturers came from such hereditary families,
and the same social classes generation after generation.

Very few of the artisan families were well-to-do;
most of them came from the lower strata of the society.
The artisans were considered as servants of the community, and in social hierarchy they were below the peasants.
Their economic life was either at or below subsistence
level. The bulk of their capital came from the little

surplus from a season's earnings or in rare cases from their meagre savings. The State never subsidised or helped them in any way; rather it exploited their labour through novel impositions. The main concern of an artisan under such circumstances was the security of livelihood. He had little scope of diversifying his organisation or multiplying production for consideration of profit. An artisan amassing wealth and establishing himself in the society was a rare occurrence.

The technique and the technology adopted by the manufacturers were backward. Industry simply meant handicrafts which were based exclusively on manual labour, development of professional habits and traditional, cheap, uncomplicated implements. Technical improvements were not traceable nor was there any innovation in technology. The factors that affected productivity and kept the local industry where it was were the relatively simple and stagnant demand, small capital, little economic incentive, limited market, and above all, the social system.

One important feature of the economic life in the State was the absence of any line of demarcation between agricultural and manufacturing activities. The peasants often manufactured goods for their own consumption while the rural artisan possessed lands

1. States' Report, P-98.
for personal cultivation. This was a very long established custom in the Indian economy.¹ Many traditional craftsmen living in the villages received rent-free lands for cultivation.² Rural artisans and craftsmen were, by and large, at the same time also peasants having cultivation as their major or subsidiary occupation.

TRADE AND COMMERCE.

The people were essentially agricultural. Their wants were few, and those could be easily met by local supplies. Articles of domestic use in a cultivator's family were very common and crude in nature, and these were supplied by the village artisans. Therefore large-scale trade in any particular commodity was very much limited.³ As it was a predominantly subsistence economy the majority of the inhabitants generally consumed what they themselves produced or secured from their neighbours on the basis of customary arrangements and barter. Under the circumstances virtually every one was involved in exchange as producer or consumer, usually both.

Internal trade in its crude form was conducted mainly through two ways: one, through barter system in the village itself, and the other, in the weekly or

bi-weekly village fair or the Hat. The village artisans like the potter, the blacksmith, the weaver, the basket-maker, etc., did not have to carry their produce to any distant centre of trade; marketing was often done at his workshop-cum-residence through direct sale or exchange with the buyer. In majority of such transactions mediation by traders was not at all required.

Internal trade was very limited; it was confined to sale and purchase at local markets, the number of which was not very large. Occasionally, the village artisans and the cultivators carried their commodities to a local market or Hat. But regular markets in the State were organised at a very later stage.

Fakir Mohan Senapati who came to the State as Dewan in 1871 found that there were no markets at all in Nilgiri. A graphic description of the position of trade in the State is given in his autobiography:

"If at all some articles of necessity have to be purchased messengers are sent to Balasore town, or to the Shahji Hat at Remna, six miles to the north of the State Headquarters. Occasionally, two or three widows bring vegetables for sale twice or thrice a week from the Shahji market to the Garh. Some shop-keepers occasionally open their shops in the Garh (headquarters of the

2. AR-1886-87, P-65.
State) but the amlahs and the Raja's henchmen take articles on credit and never pay. The traders, disappointed, leave business and the garh.¹

The first weekly market was started by Fakir Mohan in the 1870's. The nature of transaction in the hat was in keeping with the stage of civilisation in the State. All those from the neighbourhood who wished to buy or sell assembled at the hat and disposed of their commodities by retail. The farmer brought the produce of his lands, the artist that of his workshop, and the fisherman that of his snares. Small traders attended to buy up goods for exportation, to sell those which had been imported, or to act as intermediate agents between the producer and the consumer. For this purpose was reserved a space of ground, divided by narrow paths into plots like the parterres of an old garden, and each plot was occupied by two or three vendors while the buyers walked about in the path.²

In the hat the peasant sold his produce directly to the consumer as well as to the middle men. This marketing system was designed for buying and selling in small lots, the bulk of the purchase being made not with a view to re-sale but for consumption by the peasants and artisans. The system of measurement

1. F.M. Senapati, Atma Jeevan Charita, P-51.
was very primitive and varied from place to place. Articles commonly sold in the village fair were rice, vegetables, salt, sugar, gur, spices, fuel, betel, handia, dry fish, muqni stone utensils, country clothes, tussar clothes, forest produce, etc. The hats served a very useful purpose inasmuch as they saved the ignorant ryots from the clutches of unscrupulous mahajans to whom they used to sell the produce of their lands at prices very much lower than prevailing rates.

The export trade of the State cannot be called a flourishing one. The produce of the land was almost sufficient for local consumption. Whenever a small residue was left in a good season of harvest, it had to be converted into capital or to meet the exigencies of the time. Rice and foodgrains of any sort were not largely exported at any time. The articles of local manufacture also did not deserve any special mention as they were of a coarse kind necessary to meet the bare wants and requirements of a rude society. The only articles which formed staple commodities for trade were the forest products and the muqni stone utensils. The State forests supplied large quantities of timber.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
5. Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Condition, P-37.
which was regularly exported to Balasore and Churaman. The stone-quarries of the State provided with another important article of export. Utensils made of the muqni or black chlorite stone to the value of about Rs. 50,000/- were annually exported into Calcutta and other centres of trade. The other forest produces exported from the State were fuel, charcoal, lac, hides, horns of deer and buffaloes, sabai grass, tussar, nux vomica, sunari bark, mahul, karanj, harida, bahada, anla, etc. Small quantities of rice, mug, birhi, kulthi, chana, tamarind, arhar, rasi, tila, mustard, masur, jute and gur were also exported. The only articles of import were salt, sugar, kerosene, mustard oil and Manchester cloth - things which could not be locally manufactured. A marked feature of the trade in the State was that it was monopolised by traders from the neighbouring British district; the people of the State hardly took any share in it. Even the stone-quarries were leased to the Mughalbandi people. Mining lease was granted to Moll-Schutte and Company, a Calcutta based

1. BRP(J), OSA, Accn. No. 183, "Extract of a Report from the Late Commissioner at Cuttack, dated the 20th December 1814".
2. BJ(P)P No. 6 of November 1885; Metcalfe to Government, 22nd July 1885.
6. BJ(P)P No. 14 of December 1886; W.R. Ricketts, Manager of Nilgiri State, to Superintendent, 12th June 1886.
company for quarrying granite for road metal, stone sets, etc. Contractors from outside the State took lease of the various forest products.

The lack of transport facilities constituted a major hindrance to external and internal trade. Good roads, canals, and navigable rivers are the means which can facilitate the progress of inland trade. But the want of these three in the State was most conspicuous. In majority of the villages there were only pathways which could not be used for the purpose of trade. They could only be used for pack-animals and extremely rarely for bullock-carts. But in areas where there were not even bullock paths, all produce had to be carried to market places by villagers on their heads or shoulders. Since the State did not have any navigable rivers there was no transport by water. Thus in the absence of transport facilities commodities could not be sent outside the State so as to fetch handsome profits to the producers. Besides these, there were other obstacles also in the way of the extension and progress of trade. Among these the insecurity of movable wealth and the difficulty of accumulating it, the ignorance of mutual wants, the peril of robbery in conveying merchandise and the certainty of extortion were prominent.

1. BJ(P)P No.16 of September 1907; F.W. Duke to Government, 14th August 1907.
2. Utkal Dipika, 28th July 1928.
The people were fortunate to gain some facilities for commerce at the turn of the present century with the opening of the then Bengal-Nagpur Railway which ran through the district of Balasore. The State of Nilgiri was very close to the Railway line, and the people had the advantage of Balasore, Khantapada, Bahanaga, and Soro Railway Stations on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. They obtained better prices for their commodities by taking advantage of these facilities.1

ROADS AND COMMUNICATION.

The over-all improvement of any society depends largely on its system of communication. Unfortunately the means of communication in the State of Nilgiri were extremely bad. Throughout the 19th century it did not possess any land route worth the name.2 The only road worthy of note was a metalled road from Shergarh on the Grand Trunk Road to the headquarters of the State.3 It was about five miles in length, of which three miles were in Balasore and were maintained by the Road Cess Committee of that district while the remaining two miles were maintained by the Raja.4 As regards village roads there were none deserving the name; whatever existed were only

2. BJ(P)P No.R 1 of December 1888; Worseley to Government, 9th August 1888.
pathways in between villages, which were completely inaccessible in the rainy season. Otherwise there were no communications with the interior of the State.

While the State was sadly in want of roads, road-making was not so easy. There were serious impediments to it which the State authorities did not try to overcome. The nature of the country made road-making difficult as well as expensive. The lines had to be made with professional skill, and the country being generally high and undulating, deep cuttings through hard or laterite soil and high embankments had to be made. The other hindrances were the shortage of funds and the reluctance of the Rajas to undertake the construction of roads. Despite constant stimulation from the Superintendents the State administration did not earmark the necessary funds for opening out communication for the material improvement of the State. Only in the present century some improvement was made in the means of communication by the construction of a few unmetalled roads connecting important villages with the headquarters. They were the Nilgiri-Kaptipada Road, Nilgiri-Boulgadia Road, Kantisahi-Mitrapur Road, Nilgiri-Mitrapur Road and Sujnagarh-Ajodhya Road. These roads

1. AR- 1883-84, P-125.
2. BJ(P)P No.18 of November 1886; Metcalfe to Government, 23rd July, 1886.
3. AR- 1887-88, P-142.
were not only poorly constructed, but remained for the most part unbridged and unrepaired. The total mileage never exceeded fifty, and further improvement was hardly forthcoming.  

Communication through navigation was altogether absent as there were no navigable rivers or canals in the State. The three small rivers - Suna, Ghagra and Tengana - used to dry up immediately with the close of the rainy season, and remained as sandy beds for three-quarters of the year. This accounted for the absence of traffic by river in the State.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The people of the State frequently suffered from such epidemics as cholera, small-pox, malaria, influenza. The other common ailments were fever with enlargement of spleen, digestive disturbances and skin diseases. The unhealthy climate of the State and the unhygienic living of the people caused such diseases.

For two-thirds of the year, beginning from early winter to late summer, there was little or no rainfall. The result was that wells, tanks, and other reservoirs of water were soon dried up; the people had to drink

2. Ibid, P-16.
3. Ibid, P-23.
and to use for all domestic purposes any filthy water they could get in mid-summer in the months of April, May and June when the temperature began to rise higher than it usually was at other times in the year. The poorer classes who were the general sufferers, frequently felt the deficiency of the ordinary food-supply, and were ill-fed particularly during this period of the time. Consequently, cholera and small-pox broke out in many parts of the State and occasionally took an epidemic form, and caused great mortality.\textsuperscript{1}

With the on-set of rain people started taking the filt and polluted water from small pools adjoining almost every house, and quickly suffered from indigestion. As usual, after the cessation of the rains there were many cases of malarious fever, dysentery and diarrhoea.\textsuperscript{2}

There was no privy system and the people generally polluted the drinking water. The average villager lived with his cattle under the same roof in a crowded, ill-ventilated dingy house and had very little sense of public hygiene. Besides, the presence of innumerable small pools provided a very conducive ground for large-scale breeding of mosquitoes.\textsuperscript{3}

While the mortal diseases were of common occurrence, the people's habits and attitude used to

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1. AR- 1889-90, P-93.
2. GR- 1908-09, P-9.
3. AR- 1884-85, P-45.
further worsen the situation. Cholera and small-pox were not considered to be diseases of the body, but as visitations from an offending deity, and medicines in such cases were considered to be worse than useless. When the epidemic appeared, nothing was, therefore, done for its prevention or cure beyond making offerings to the offended deity, and when that did not suffice to appease the deity's anger, and deaths became more frequent, the people considered the village to be under a ban, and started leaving it in a body, and retired to the hills and other places, leaving the sick within to the mercy of Providence. The change, as might be expected, very often did much good and arrested the progress of the epidemic.  

Public measures for the prevention of the diseases and the enlightenment of the people were very inadequate. The State did not possess a dispensary until the turn of the century. The superstitious people had little faith in the efficacy of vaccination and inoculation. The European Manager of the State, W.R. Ricketts, had appointed a vaccinator in 1889 to introduce vaccination, but failed to persuade the people to get themselves vaccinated. The people of the

* A supernatural force considered to be capable of causing devastation.
1. BJ(P)P No. 6 of November 1885; Metcalfe to Government, 22nd July, 1885.
2. AR- 1888-89, P-55.
State, one and all, declined to avail themselves of the vaccinator's services. After persistent persuasion the people accepted inoculation, but they did this not for its medical utility but as a religious institution. They got their children inoculated not to protect them from the contagious disease but to secure for them the blessings of goddess Sitala. Whenever children were inoculated, parents made offerings to the goddess instantaneously. They understood that by inoculating and thereby invoking the blessings of the goddess and making her offerings forthwith, they could be able to appease her anger.

The aborigines were more superstitious than the other inhabitants. Most of the aboriginal tribes had no system of medicine of their own. They ascribed sickness to the anger of their gods or the practice of witchcraft of some suspected person, and so, when there was any very serious or general sickness in a family they either offered homage to the offended deity, or tortured and even killed the suspected witch or wizard, according as the priest ascribed the sickness to the one or the other cause.

While the contagious diseases continued to remain virulent and widespread, the rate of infant mortality was very high. This was due mainly to the

1. AR-1888-89, P-52.
2. BJ(P)P No.9 of December 1887; Superintendent to Government, No.1418 of 2nd August 1887.
3. AR- 1884-85, P-46.
ignorance and neglect of elementary precaution on the part of the mothers and those who assisted at the time of birth.

When the people suffered for their ignorance and superstition, the efforts of the State authorities to alleviate their miseries were not adequate. The only dispensary at the State headquarters rendered very inadequate medical service to the State.¹ Even in the 1940's those very common diseases were threatening to assume ominous forms.²

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

Due to the paucity of statistical data it is not possible to form an instant opinion of the state of animal husbandry in the State. But the standard of the general outlook of the people and the absence of a veterinary hospital in the State are clear proofs that the health of the live-stock was not given due consideration. Cattle-owners, tempted by the large amount of poor grazing provided by the jungles, generally preferred to have a large number of poor animals than a few number of good animals. The cows and the bullocks in the State were, on the average, of very small size and poor stamina; the

¹. GR-1928-29, P-20.
same was true of the buffaloes. This was due mainly to the haphazard method of breeding and poor grazing. At the Settlement of 1922 an area of five acres of pasture land was reserved for one hundred heads of cattle on the average. This was not at all adequate. Moreover, instances of waste land and scrub jungles which could have been used for grazing, being reclaimed were numerous. Such indiscriminate reclamation resulted in serious dearth of pasture lands. In some villages where all scrub jungles had been brought under the plough, the cattle had to go over a distance of three or four miles into dense jungles where they were exposed to the attack of wild animals. The poor stamina of the average cattle rendered them peculiarly liable to diseases, and unable to resist attacks.

The common diseases of cattle were foot and mouth diseases, anthrax, rinderpest, haemorrhagic septicaemia. The people were very fatalistic where diseases of cattle were concerned. They could not overcome the conservative prejudices, and stuck to the time-honoured methods of treating infectious diseases. They failed to learn the rudimentary method of isolation to check infection, which often resulted in a heavy loss of cattle.

1. GR- 1923-24, P-20.
3. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
Rinderpest frequently resulted in large number of casualties. As there was no veterinary hospital in the State patients could not be treated by proper methods. The State had given jagir, called Gobaidya Jagir, to one person for treating cattle belonging to the Raja. His services were utilised by others as well. Besides, there were local physicians for treatment of cattle, but the methods adopted by them were primitive and insufficient in an age of growing complexities.

POPULATION.

The population of the State as gleaned from the decennial census reports was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>50,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>56,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>66,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>68,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>65,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>68,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>73,109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that the population of the State, even in the 20th century, was increasing at a very slow rate, and for the first three decades of the

1. GR- 1930-31, P-20;
   GR- 1931-32, P-64.
present century it was almost stationary showing signs of little progress. This was quite against the general trend marked in the neighbouring British districts. The general economic condition of the people and unhealthy living accounted for the slow growth of population. Undue physical exertions and exposure to the inclement seasons, galling poverty, limited supply of food and periodical epidemics were the restraints which constantly operated in keeping down the number to the level of the means of subsistence. It is a law of nature that population increases when the means of subsistence increases, and becomes limited when the means of subsistence is limited. Though the State was immune from the dreads of floods and famines, it witnessed virulent epidemics periodically in the form of cholera and small-pox which accounted directly for a large number of deaths.\(^1\) The outbreak of influenza in the year 1919-20 swept away a good portion of the population.\(^2\)

Malarial fever was reported to have made its appearance in the State in the present century, but it occurred annually without fail.\(^3\) Though it did not become a dramatic killer, the indirect impact of malarial tendency or its chronic presence on population growth was

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3. Ibid, P-23.
not negligible. Malarious fever striking at young children and pregnant women would have a considerable effect in lowering the birth rate. Available statistics relative to the records of birth and death show the balance tilted in favour of the latter. Between 1911 and 1921 there were on the record 16,732 births against 18,890 deaths. The rate of infant mortality was similarly very high. All these factors which contributed to keeping down the population can be ascribed to the inadequacy of medical care, and ignorance and neglect of primary precaution.

Besides the visitation of epidemics, the depredations committed by the numerous wild beasts which roamed over the forests were by no means small. Hundreds of people died every year of snake-bite. Numerous deaths occurred in this way every year of which no register had ever been kept, or any notice taken either by the Raja or the people themselves.

LABOUR AND WAGES.

The people in the State can be divided into two broad categories; first, those who tilled their lands and lived on its produce, and the second, those

2. GR- 1929-30, P-160.
who had no tillage of their own but were employed in
others' fields receiving wages daily or annually for
their labour. Persons who had no land or had land too
small to sustain them had to earn their livelihood by
physical labour. The State had a dearth of skilled
labourers who had to be procured from outside.¹
Majority of the unskilled labourers were employed on
agricultural work and occasionally for State works.
Agricultural labourers were of two types. First, those
who were employed under contract for one full agricultural
year, second, those that were temporarily employed in
the fields when occasion arose. For the purpose of
engaging labourers of the first class the agricultural
year was taken to begin on the day of Dol Purnima, the
full-moon day in the month of Phalgun, which usually
fell in March. On that day all contracts between the
cultivators and their agricultural servants, called
Hallas (literally ploughmen) ended according to the
common law of the country, and fresh contracts were
made on or after that date for the coming year.² It
rarely happened that in the middle of the year the
master dismissed his servant or the servant quit his
master's service. It was to their mutual interest to
adhere to their agreement.

The loan of a few rupees (usually one rupee)
or of a few maunds of paddy in lieu of cash formed the

1. AR- 1884-85, P-37.
2. BJ(P)P No.1 of November 1890; C.F.Worseley to
   Government, No.1620P of 31st August 1890.
primary condition on which agricultural labourers were employed from year to year. Their other remunerations were the following: five seers of paddy per day, one or two pieces of cloth, donation of a few pice on important festival days, one sheaf of paddy per day during the harvesting season, and produce of about half to one acre of good paddy land.¹ These were the ordinary rates of wages, but these sometimes varied, and were regulated by the ordinary law of supply and demand.

Temporary men employed on agricultural work got four to eight seers of paddy a day. These men were required during the puddling, transplanting and harvesting seasons. When employed for puddling, transplanting or other temporary work, they were paid at the above rates; but when harvesting, they got one out of every twelve sheaves they cut and conveyed to the thrashing floor.²

As money was in limited circulation payment was mostly made in kind and occasionally in cash. Notwithstanding the rise in prices of foodgrains and the cost of living there was no appreciable change in the price of labour. It remained almost stagnant throughout the last five decades of native rule. The

¹ BJ(P)P No.1 of November 1890; C.F. Worseley to Government, No.1628P of 31st August 1890.
² AR- 1889-90, P-123.
following table will show how the price of labour remained almost unaffected in the face of rising prices of food grain.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Price of Paddy</th>
<th>Price of Labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) 1887-88</td>
<td>1 maund 20 seers per Rupee.</td>
<td>3 to 6 annas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) 1943-44</td>
<td>1 maund at 8 Rupees.</td>
<td>4 to 6 annas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason for such a stagnation in the price of labour was that its supply far exceeded the demand. Enough of labour was available at any time in the State,² whereas the demand for labour for any other purpose than that of agriculture was very much limited.³ The wages of labourers, therefore, were generally too low. Low wages and uncertainty of employment resulted in limiting the labourer's means of subsistence severely. In times of hardship, particularly during years of crop failure, the condition of the day-labourers became very much wretched. A majority of the agriculturists found themselves unable to keep the field labourers in their service and discharged them. The latter was thus out of employ. This is why large number of men generally went out of the State in search of employment to the Mughalbandi regularly.⁴

¹ (a) AR- 1887-88, PP-51, 53.  
(b) Administration Report of Nilgiri State, 1943-44, P-17.  
EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION.

The people of Orissa States were essentially home-loving by nature. Their wants were very few and were locally supplied and satisfied. Within their States they got nearly all they required. They had plenty of land to cultivate and reclaim, and therefore, did not feel the necessity of emigrating elsewhere. People generally emigrate from places where there is not sufficient cultivable land to places where it is plentiful. In case of Nilgiri there was no sufficient inducement for the people to emigrate. Under the prevailing circumstances they generally disliked leaving their homes. To the majority of them the outside world was a terra incognita which held no incentive to emigrate to.¹

Some sort of internal movements of the population were going on on a small scale, particularly among the aborigines. Most of the aborigines lived by labour and were generally employed on earth-work. Some of them lived by 'dahi' cultivation. They did not have any fixed habitation, and emigrated from place to place in search of virgin lands for their dahi cultivation.²

Occasionally during years of scarcity labourers and landless classes, particularly the low-caste people, left their homes temporarily and went in

¹ BJ(P)P No.20 of October 1884; W.R. Larminie to Government, No.1024 of 8th July 1884.
² AR- 1887-88, P-47.
search of employment to the neighbouring British
district of Orissa. But people of other States rarely
came to reside in Nilgiri as it held no novel attraction
to them.¹

As the people were mostly agricultural, their
economic condition was determined by the crops they were
able to produce during the year. The land-holders were
principally Hindus who formed the most important and
numerous class of residents, while the majority of the
day-labourers were either aborigines or semi-Hinduised
aboriginal classes belonging to the lower rangof the
society. Though there was a sprinkling of artisans and
handicraftsmen, the majority of the people were dependent
on the agricultural class for employment. When, therefore,
in any year there was a failure of agriculture, the
dependent classes suffered generally.² Thus, agriculture
being the chief means of subsistence among all classes,
and even supply of jungle fruits and roots on which the
non-Aryan races lived for many months during the year
being more or less dependent on rain, the prosperity of
the society as a whole depended chiefly upon timely and
sufficient rainfall. As the monsoon was often uncertain
and irregular, the economy was uncertain and unstable.

Unlike the Hindu cultivators, the aborigines
were not very fond of wet cultivation. The lands cultivated

². AR- 1889-90, P-42.
by them were generally of an inferior kind. They had a fondness for dahi cultivation which was entirely dependent on seasonal rainfall. Even in the most favourable seasons they used to get only a scanty crop which was not sufficient to feed them for a whole year. Spend-thrift by nature, they had little thought for future. Being as they were greatly addicted to drinking, they consumed the crop as fast as they could in feasting and bartering it for liquor, and when the store was exhausted they depended heavily on physical labour and the forest for the rest of the year. They got out in the morning to the jungles and came back in the evening with the roots and fruits they gathered with which they fed themselves for almost half the year. When therefore there was an unusual drought they suffered more than others owing to both sources of their support failing simultaneously.

Though the State was economically self-sufficient, and the sole determinant of the material condition of its people was the weather, yet on rare occasions the people's economic life was seriously affected by circumstances which were beyond their control and understanding. During the two world wars and the

2. BJ(P)P No. 9 of December 1887; Metcalfe to Government, No. 1418 of 2nd August 1887.
3. AR- 1889-90, P-44.
great Economic Depression of the 1930's the plight of the people was nothing uncommon. The scarcity and dearness of living that ushered in with World War I affected every aspect of their life. The World-wide Economic Depression of the 1930's had its impact on the economy of the State and its inhabitants. There was a considerable drop in the total real income of the State owing to the continuation of the world depression in trade and the lack of demand for commodities. Although generally the crops were good and there was no serious epidemic, the State, like British India, was severely hit by the general trade depression. Revenue from forests, excise and also from miscellaneous sources, such as hide license fees, was severely curtailed. Though food was plentiful owing to the cheapness of rice, the State subjects had difficulty in raising the necessary cash to pay their rents, and for many of them the purchase of extra commodities and luxuries was out of the question.

The worst was, however, yet to happen. World War II towards its concluding stages hit the ryots seriously under the belt. In 1942 there was a large-scale damage of crops due to cyclone, insects and untimely rain. This combined with the war conditions

1. GR- 1914-15, P-139.
made the situation more precarious. Price of paddy started increasing; there was an abnormal rise in the cost of other essential articles due to war conditions, as in other parts of the country, and the people were naturally hit very hard. But there was no respite from suffering the next year. Whatever crops the peasants had been able to collect in the previous year finished up by the next summer. The prices of paddy and rice shot up still higher, and as most of the people, tempted by high prices, sold out all their stocks, severe scarcity began to be felt as early as June 1943. The helpless ryot who understood little the complexities of global economy put his hands for sustenance on his last resort, the land, the prized possession of a cultivator. The land registration office became unusually crowded. A fairly big number of ryots mortgaged their lands for money and paddy loans to ward off the distress. More tragically, an equally good number had to sell their lands to meet the emergency.

With all its vicissitude the picture of village life was never one of acute discontentment. Taught to treat poverty and adversity with the traditional Indian resignation the people took both joys and sorrows with remarkable equanimity.