

## CONCLUSION

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Modern scholars depicting a picture of stunted economic growth in pre-independent India present two different models of theory. One school held the view that the chronic poverty of India was due to the British rule as the colonial market forces made India's national interests subservient to the imperial interest of England. While the other line of thinking blames India's under-development to demand limitation and supply constraints, a legacy inherited from the Mughal period. The second school is also of the opinion that lack of exploitation of natural resources, unstable labour supply, limited size of the commodity market, lack of capital formation because of the backward nature of agriculture, technology, rural impoverishment through taxation structure and persistence of a subsistence economy- all these factors cumulatively restricted the domestic demand. The demand limitation emanated from the maximisation of land rent and usurious credit relations which ate away the saving capacity as well as purchasing power of the peasantry was responsible for traditional poverty of the peasantry. The very concentration on agriculture under subsistence level was also related to demand limitation. Orissa, as an integral part of India with continuous frustration of capital formation that ushered in crisis points in different phases in her today's agrarian economy, however, comes under these two models of research.

The study of the societal change of Orissa, comparatively an underdeveloped region in eastern India prompts the present scholar to look backward and introduce a picture of the land and its people under the historical perspective since the twentieth century dawns in this region with the forces of nationalism as well as the demand of separate identity for the Oriyas on linguistic norms. The long cherished goal of a separate statehood for Orissa was of course attained on 1 April, 1936 with rejoicing. But the political economy of Orissa beneath that rejoicing would reveal that it was at a very low level of development with low per capita income and without preconditions for industrialisation. Of all the factors held responsible for a stunted economic growth in Orissa, the land revenue policy and administration of the British Raj seems to be the most notable one.

One of the remarkable features of the British rule in Orissa was maximisation of revenue through land settlements. The net collection of revenue in 1901 was increased by 20 % compared to the settlement of 1837 and it was further increased by 53 % in 1935-36. The maximisation of revenue was justified by the Government since expenditure in civil administration and works of public utility was increased. The British Raj also anticipated that restoration of law and order in the countryside would create a congenial economic environment to enhance cultivation process. But the supposed peasant's

prosperity was quite illusory. The proverbial poverty and misery imposed on the peasantry was proved by the recurrence of natural as well as man made scarcities arising out of natural calamities like famine, draught and floods throughout the period of the present study. It is a popular belief that maximisation of revenue made the native Zamindars defaulters leading to purchase of Zamindari estates by the new rich entrants from urban centres like Cuttack and Calcutta. Eric Stokes believes that the emergence of land market in India is a direct consequence of development of new proprietary right in land. Perhaps this is not true in case of Orissa. It is because of the fact that during the Ganga, Gajapati and the subsequent Muslim rule in Orissa land was regarded as property open to sale and mortgage. With the maximisation of revenue during the rule of each dynasty fixation of land rent had been stepped up. During the declining days of Muslim and Maratha rules imposition of various abwabs over the artisans, particularly the weavers and merchants was frequent. In the distribution network at a time when money supply was inadequate, sale and purchase of land became regular features. During the formative phase of the British rule land was recognised as a social commodity due to greater pressure on cultivable land. Frequent short term settlements made the legal machinery declared land inalienable. The British Raj was determined to explore maximum yielding capacity of the estates.

But the hereditary Zamindars always found themselves defaulters when most of the holdings were non-revenue paying. As a result, maximisation of rent over ryots led to desertion of rent paying holdings leaving the land fallow and thus creating famine conditions. But auction purchase of landed estates did not lead to eviction of the Zamindars from the estates. They remained under possession as "Khutkinadars". Sometimes they were replaced by their near relations giving rise to family feuds.

But it would be wrong to assume that entry of new speculative Zamindars marked the ruin of traditional native landed aristocracy. Although the new Zamindars were mostly non-agriculturists, interested in mainly getting quick outturn from the control of the estates and to become rich overnight. Most of them were 'Umlas' and lawyers, who were looked down upon as imposters by the cultivators, settled ryots as well as by the non-revenue paying land-holders attached to the Zamindary establishments. These new farmers of revenue succeeded neither to resume non-revenue paying service tenures nor to realise maximum rents from the ryots. It was because of the fear of large scale plunder of holdings with their half-ripend produce making them in turn defaulters. Instances are there when passive resistance of the ryots had compelled the British Raj to return the estates to the traditional Rajahs. Thus

absentee land-lordism was a feature of the agrarian economy. The decline in agricultural production led to monoculture in place of diversified agriculture and increase in rice cultivation. As a result export became harmful to the agrarian economy associated with the decline of salt, cotton and silk textile production. It left marginal farmers to starve in times of crop failure. The Zamindari estates became uneconomical and in consequence the estates changed hands regularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century as well as in the early decades of the twentieth century Orissa.

A different picture from the Mughalbandi to Garjat areas of Orissa could be found. The traditional Rajas in the name of good Government for maintaining their lavish life style and a class of unproductive parasite subjected the peasantry to a new scale of inhuman torture when population stepped up volume of rent. But still then a wave of educational development thread out a class of middle peasantry who were using education to find out new avenues of income and thus rolled the machinery of property making in their villages. It was this class of middle peasantry which assumed the leadership of nationalist movement in the Garjat areas as well as the coastal Orissa under Gandhi's leadership. With a strong Hindu overtone the ideas of Gandhi amply suited to the objective conditions of Orissa, so long nurtured in the social and economic system of Jagannath cult. The stability in the

social fabric of Orissa with its caste system and feudal hierarchical structure was the guarantee of Gandhi's mass based non-violence movement which was totally absent in the fluid social fabric of Bengal which witnessed a 'narodnik' terrorist experimentation and which in turn gave rise to a communal flare up. But this was absent in Orissa. But simultaneously tyranny of the Rajas and side by side the emergence of a leadership on the agrarian economy gave incentive to a broad mass based movement under the National Congress. Sometimes it took violent forms but that was exceptions, provided by the rulers sometimes but never was communal as in Bengal.

Besides, the fate of marginal farmers became unenviable. The population pressure on land, absence of knowledge about scientific input, creeping decline in village level industries made the sale of individual holdings a regular feature. The distress sale during famine conditions made the price of land low. But due to paucity of data it is difficult to show the statistics of such sale of individual holdings during the period of present study. But it was quite visible when the number of occupancy ryots decreased and the number of non-occupancy ryots increased only due to large scale land alienation arising out of steep rise of rent of settled ryots. The contemporary Oriya literature had shown how the money lenders and affluent tenants were purchasing land under mortgage by conditional sale from the poor and ignorant peasant folk. But it would be wrong to brand all land sales as distress

property for consolidation of holdings for improving cultivation through pre-emptive purchases. Even sometimes the small land as sub-tenant came under such sales only for their failure to continue the agricultural operations without any external assistance. This type of land sale only changed the ownership of holdings but not possession and swelled the rank of share-croppers which became a new feature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century agrarian economy of Orissa.

The maximisation of revenue led automatically to maximisation of land rents converting produce rents into money rents. Innumerable abwabs, cesses and free service remained unchanged where possibility of opening up new cultivable lands remained under the control of the Zamindars. But there was a limit to collect both produce and money rents in terms of yielding capacity of the soil. Beyond that limit rents could not be collected for fear of desertion of the laborious 'thani' ryots. Equally beyond that limit holdings could not be settled to a 'Pahi' ryot even on temporary leasehold tenures. As a result land remained fallow resulting in non-collection of rents accelerating famine conditions and making Zamindars defaulters.

The phenomena of large scale distress sales arising out of eviction from holdings and resumption of service tenures led to pauperisation but not to depeasantisation

altogether. The ownership of holdings changed hands but the peasants continued to cultivate as 'Pahi' ryots or as share-croppers of the holdings they sold. The resumption of service-tenure made the position of tenure-holders deplorable because in many cases by distress sell they were converted into 'Pahi' ryots. The society witnessed the enhanced status of the settled ryots possessing implements for agricultural operations. The position of the settled ryots as well as 'thani' turned 'pahi' ryots became more secured. But the fate of the share-croppers and new reclaimer of lands who converted the shifting cultivation into resumed lands as well as the condition of the ryots possessing resumed service-tenures who had no saving capacity or implements of their own to carry on cultivation without external assistance became miserable. As tenants at will they had to either agree to the terms of the Zamindar or to migrate to other estates or villages where they could secure better terms by opening new cultivable lands.

The increased volume of rent did neither mark any increase in the material prosperity of the holders nor could provide the peasantry incentives to produce more. Rather the enhanced rent ate away the surplus income from land. Again large scale land alienation leading to 'toila' cultivation in plain and 'Podu' cultivation in the tribal area resulted in diminishing return in the cultivation process. That state of the economy was

encouraged in absence of adequate capital input necessary for a virgin land which the large scale denudation of forests demanded in tribal areas. As agricultural operations in this area of hostile nature were not organised, it was unthinkable that the ryots could evolve agricultural entrepreneurship for capitalist market mechanism which some nineteenth century British officials expected.

As to the mode of production, the cultivators remained firmly to their old traditional methods of cultivation. They considered it perfect and sound in absence of development in infrastructure and lack of rapid capital formation in the country side. Since the advent of the twentieth century with an environment of technological change world the over, one may not find any improvement or change in the simple agricultural implements in this region. The peasant went on tilling his land exactly as his forefathers did. He refused to pay any attention to new capitalist mode of production when the agrarian economy of Orissa was tagged to the world capitalist market system. To the vast mass of peasantry having uncertainty of tenure and distraint from occupancy rights, adoption of improved methods of cultivation was an object of fear. Since improved cultivation might invite enhancement of rent it would eventually lead to distraint from holdings. Thus owing to lack of capital input in agriculture there

was no possibility of multicrop cultivation throughout the year except the monoculture of paddy cultivation. Cash-crops could not be developed by the peasants of Orissa and subsistence agriculture with possibility of marginal profitability in one crop cultivation throughout the year ate away incentive to improve such cultivation. Even the cash crop was not encouraged either by the chain of intermediary tenure-holders who were fast diminishing from the agrarian scene or by the emergent middle peasantry who acquired alternative avenues of income only to expand cultivable holdings without sowing any interest for cultivation.

Cultivation in this region was mainly a way of living and produce was not meant for the market economy. A farmer used to sell his share of the produce for meeting demands of usurious money lenders, land rent, and unavoidable exigencies like vagaries of nature, ceremonies and rituals. He could save little for improving production and could make no organised attempt to control the market forces.

When the commercial agriculture and plantation economy developed in the neighbouring regions like Bengal and Bihar, in Orissa the condition was not favourable to the development of this phenomenon. The variation of climate leading to inundation, flood and draught caused insecurity in cultivation. The inundations and floods were however, endeavoured to be controlled with protective embankments and canal

system, though the arrangement was inadequate. The roads, railways and canals for traffic nodoubt were constructed. But the persistance of a hierarchy of parasitic intermediaries and mounting expenditure in unproductive socio-religious rites prevented saving capacity of the peasantry. Except rice no cash crop could develop in large scale for the very socio-political constraints coming down from generations. It was also due to the inhibition of the landed gentry to undertake risk to boost up the investment in agricultural experiments and encourage rural entrepreneurs to explore market avenues for selling out new output.

Besides, the cultivation of cash crop required finance. But the peasantry of this region were overburdened with debt because of the increasing rate of land rent and interest on the loan from village Mahajan. In addition to the expenses incurred out of fresh cultivation, socio-religious occasions and the cost of day to day living they were reluctant to execute fresh loan for cash and commercial cultivation with uncertain demand in the market. In this region there was no capitalist or financial house to give peasantry loan on easy terms and the seeds required for cash crop cultivation. Thus, the people of this region concentrated more upon paddy cultivation which required seasonal rainfall for a fair harvest.

The crisis in the agrarian economy of Orissa may be revealed in terms of decline of village handicrafts leading to loss of demand for agrarian products and heavy concentration of population to subsistence agriculture. In the commercial sector also the age-old method of internal trade and village craftsmanship came to an end. In spite of these agrarian disturbances the general deteriorating economy of Orissa could not be improved in absence of developing industries. Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century Orissa presented a picture of disquiet and stagnation with rapid withering away of village industries.

It is also noticed that unemployment in this region was due to mainly prevalence of the wage-goods gap. It was the inability of the economy to provide in the short period the required surplus of wage-goods necessary to lessen the severity of the disguised under-employment, that inhibited expansion in employment and in investment. Only by making good the wage-goods gap through a quick expansion in the output, it was possible to raise the employment potential and thus to initiate an upward cumulative process. As it was not possible to accomplish this either by the British Raj or by the Indian middlemen, the only alternative solution to the impending socio-economic problems was immigration of population.

The stunted growth in the economy in Orissa was undoubtedly the result of the British Raj reflecting the process of pauperisation of the peasantry and collapse of the balance between agriculture and village based industry. But fulfilling the mission of the whiteman's burden the British Raj fielded its double mission in Orissa : one destructive and the other regenerative. Under the backdrop of a disintegrated agrarian economy urban life got a momentum. A modernisation process was started in the life and culture of the middle segment of the population. There may be three premises to define the nature of modernisation and the role of the emerging urban middle stratum of the society for the socio-cultural regeneration of Orissa. Firstly, the process of modernisation was associated with the advent of British rule in Orissa. Secondly, crisis in the agrarian economy, decline of its village crafts and industry were the first result of the British rule. This decline was registered despite the Government's economic and political measures to ameliorate the deplorable condition of the primary producers which led to the emergence of the relatively affluent middle peasantry. Thirdly, the British rule as the catalytic agent for a societal change paved way for the emergence of a non-peasant urban middle class. It was the class that received new education, got class of recipient of new job opportunities and as such availed high social status and thereby became the vanguard for the advent of industrial capitalism.

The rise of this so-called middle class in Orissa was associated with two phenomena : one, decline of agrarian economy with its attendant traditional social structure and the other was the modernisation of life and culture, generally termed as Renaissance. No doubt, the Raj was instrumental in creating imbalance between agriculture and industry owing to its very colonial interest leading to heavy pressure of population on land, decline of traditional village based industries, migratory movements towards urban growth centres and pauperisation of the tillers of the soil. There was also the paucity of capital formation due to colonial rule and therefore less industrialisation. In this regard even the new middle class could not help industrialise the economy owing to the inherent contradictions within its class composition. Their non-peasant class interest prompted them to collaborate with the Raj to rule the country and not to work for economic regeneration while they could not identify themselves with the rising expectations of the people below them.

Besides, the middle class, a microscopic segment of the population, suffered from an inherent contradiction. They accepted modernisation on the western line but not self-generating modernity and could not develop an outlook similar to the middle class of England. Consciously they posed themselves as westernised liberals but in the emotional plane they remained attached to the traditional values.

They emphasised the spread of vernacular education in villages, while for them who lived in towns they preferred English education propagated by the Christian missionaries, which only a few rural people could afford to impart to their children.

Despite these limitations one should not lose sight of the positive and regenerative aspect of the programme of the middle class. They played a leading role in the progress of Western education and supported the reformist tendencies of the Raj to eliminate the maladies from society. They encouraged the development of press, journalism and also established political associations with the dual pious motives for bringing political cohesion among different segments of the population and economic nationalism. These factors, with the development of a capitalist market economy and the proverbial poverty of the people paved way for a general consciousness besides the urge for an identity of Orissa. With this background, the process of leadership formation in Orissa emanated from the question of increased mass participation in the main plank of the freedom movement as well as the environment created out of the constitutional development by the British Raj.

The process of leadership formation in Orissa however followed three distinctive phases. The experiments of council Government took a definite shape with the emergence of Madhusudan Das who became an accepted leader of Orissa

at the initial phase. Being the champion of the Oriya Movement, Madhusudan founded Utkal Sammilani, a premier political association of Orissa through which he lamented on various socio-cultural and economic issues. The leadership of Madhusudan was rejected by the emergence of Satyabadi movement. In the second phase, Gopabandhu Das took the lead and Orissa became an experimental laboratory of Gandhi. The development of Orissa followed an all India stream of nationalism while the main plank of regional self determination remained at the forefront. In the third phase Gopabandhu gave way to the dynamic leadership of Harekrishna Mahatab with increased peasant participation in the freedom movement.

On 1 April, 1936, Orissa became a separate province on the line of linguistic thinking while Indian national movement was marked with momentum and ablazement. Thus the political economy of Orissa in the twentieth century prior to 1936 presents an interesting topic of discussion on the issue of the economic discontent of a rather political movement. As such, the study happens to be a pointer to the peasant participation in the freedom struggle up to the first four decades of the twentieth century Orissa.

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