CHAPTER IV

FAMINES IN ORISSA FROM 1803-1864
Orissa like most other parts of India is predominantly agrarian. Before the modern times, agriculture was solely dependent on monsoon. This led to the frequent occurrence of crop failures and in turn scarcities and famines which were aggravated due to the growth of inevitable poverty. The poverty of the people, added to the severity of famines. In Europe nearly 450 famines occurred over a period of 850 years from 1000 A.D. to 1850 A.D. After 1850 when Europe became the leader of commerce and industry achieving highest material prosperity, famines and scarcities were hardly seen. It shows that prosperous and richer nation is less affected by famines and scarcities. It creates a coherent relation between famine and poverty. The economically backward and poor, are more frequently menaced by famines and it never affects the richer nations or rich sections of the society. But in the past there was no correlation between famines and poverty. Some

3. Ibid., pp.85-86.
terrible famines in the World History occurred in ancient India, Egypt, China, Greece and Rome when they were economically prosperous.5

Before British rule a major famine occurred in almost every 50 years. From 11th to 17th centuries there were 14 famines in India and from 1765 to 1858 there were 12 famines and four scarcities. During the period between 1860-1900; India experienced 20 famines.6 The recurrent famines deteriorated the living condition of the people and also increased the poverty of the masses.

Famines during Maratha Period

The Marathas took possession of Orissa in 1751 and they continued their rule till 1803 in northern parts of present Orissa, consisting of the districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balesore. This period of nearly half a century is usually considered as a dark period for the economic prospects of the province. Like the Mughals the Marathas were not helpful to the peasants of Orissa but were mere tax collectors. They were criticised for this reason that though they had been supposed as very good administrators in other parts of the country, particularly


near their capital, they could not pay sufficient attention to far off provinces like Orissa. Another criticism regarding their administration was though they are "often hailed as liberators of their homeland from Muslim oppression, they do not always appear in such a role in other parts of India, and their rule was not always an unmixed blessing". The Marathas not only contributed to the deterioration of economic condition of the province but also destroyed the basic foundation of the economic structure. People were afraid that if they produced more, the Marathas might come and loot their property. There was no question of accumulation of wealth and that might invite problems. Though there are many who praise the Marathas for their liberal views in other parts of the country, their rule in Orissa, as a matter of fact, was sad and unfortunate.

There occurred three famines during the Maratha rule i.e., in 1770, 1780 and 1792. As in other parts of Bengal the great famine of 1770 A.D. which was of the most devastating nature, was grievously felt throughout Orissa. This famine caused widespread havoc and it left behind a dark trail of death, misery and disorder in the administrative system.

About 10,000,000 souls perished of starvation and diseases and one-third of the cultivated land became waste. After all, the living condition of the people during the Marathas was grievous, for they very often suffered from famines and scarcities.

Famines during British (1803-1864)

The British conquest of Orissa began in 1803 and within the next twenty five years the whole of Orissa had come under their control. A famine occurred in 1803, on the very first year of the British occupation. It was also followed by a number of calamities which occurred frequently in the nineteenth century Orissa; and it is opined that this was the most important factor that contributed to the poverty of the agricultural population. The occurrence of famine increased with the advancement of the rule and became recurrent feature in every 3 to 4 years. The famine after flood became a regular incident and hence Orissa suffered from a series of natural calamities which were beyond the control of the people. The Government on the other hand also failed to check these calamities. Due to frequent visitation of famines the economic condition of the


*. Years of Natural Calamities are given in Appendix-A.*
people deteriorated. Both famines and poverty were the chief causes of people's suffering during the 19th century.

In Orissa the constant variation of climate and its peculiar morphological existence acted as an impediment to the agricultural prosperity for the former was not conducive to put in hand physical labour. The poverty of the people aggravated the severity of famines in Orissa. In the first half of the 19th century Orissa witnessed a series of famines in almost every year which broke down the morals of people in general and agriculturists in particular. The table shows the famines in the first half of the 19th century in 3 districts of Orissa from 1803 to 1864.

Table No.4.1

Famine Years in Orissa from 1803-1864

1803, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1817, 1828, 1834, 1836
1837, 1839, 1840, 1863.


The first half of the period under study was full of calamities like famines and scarcities. The untimely rainfall and floods were the immediate causes of scarcities in the first half of the 19th century. The province of Cuttack, observed the Court of Directors, "is subject to seasons of extreme uncertainty liable to the most remarkable vicissitudes of drought and inundations." The immediate cause of drought was the repeated failure of monsoon.

The crops were destroyed due to drought in the year 1806, owing to the failure of the rains between 17th September and 11th November. As a result of the partial failure of the rice crop in 1809 the prices rose from 8 to 10 seers higher than usual and all the former difficulties were revived. The merchants, profiting by experience, bought up all the grain on which they could lay their hands. The then Magistrate, in the hope of avoiding previous difficulties, advanced sicca Rs. 1,000/- from his own pocket to purchase supplies for the use of the troops. The grain dealers industriously circulated a report, when they had this news, that the person appointed by the Magistrate to purchase grain in the interior had an absolute

14. G. Toynbee, A Sketch of the History of Orissa (From 1803 to 1828), Calcutta, 1873, p. 87.
monopoly to control the whole supply of the province. Then the Beparis declared that they would not come with grain to the town unless this practice was put to a stop. At last the Governor-General in Council issued orders, prohibiting the interference of any Government officers with the grain market.  

Again in the year 1813 there was drought and acute scarcity prevailed in the vicinity of Cuttack. The distress was so great that the poor inhabitants died for want of food. On the 31st October 1831, the severest disaster occurred in the Balasore coast and nearly 22,000 were perished in this district. The whole coast was submerged, and the flood washed away all the standing crops and every article of food in stock. There was acute scarcity of rice in Balasore district and the poor people suffered a lot. These calamities were followed by a drought in 1833. In successive three years 50,000 human beings were destroyed by drowning and starvation. 

In 1836-37, a severe drought occurred in the province and Rs.4,52,532 of the revenue was remitted. In 1837-38 similar

16. J.W.Sage, Magistrate to Secretary to Government, 1st September 1813.
17. L.S.S.O'Malley, BOG, Balasore, p.94.
18. Ibid.
calamity also desolated the country and Rs.5,87,146 was remitted by the Government. Rice was selling in the Cuttack bazar at 10 seers a rupee and the dealers were hoarding up their stores in consequence of the protracted drought as soon as the rains set in which may be daily except, the price will fall and abundant supply be poured into the market. The Commissioner of Orissa wrote to the Collector of Cuttack, "There having become so exceedingly scarce, I am apprehensive that in a few days we shall not be able to procure any even at the high rate at which it now sells. Under the existing scarcity Government would have the risk of sustaining a tripling loss". Any interference on the grain market in the part of the Magistrate was not only impolite but was strictly prohibited. He made his best endeavour to persuade the principal zamindars and dealers to bring grain but failed. Thus the laissezfaire attitude of the Government aggravated the condition.

In 1839-40 Orissa also suffered from natural calamities. The floods and famines were so severe that the Company Government


22. Letter from B.Roope, Commissioner of Cuttack to Collector of Cuttack, 17 June 1837.

23. From A.J.M.Mills, Collector, Zilla Cuttack to B.Roope, Collector Commanding 19th Regiment, Cuttack, 17 June 1837.
was forced to remit revenue. The whole of zamindary estates suffered a lot from drought. In the commencement of the season for preparing the sarada crop the fall of rain was abundant and seasonable to a greater degree. In consequence every plough and every grain of seed that was available was employed and although great losses had been suffered by inundation last year and the means of the cultivators were straitened, the cultivation was remarkably extensive, the rain became scarce towards the end of August but the cultivators made strenuous exertions to save by irrigation the very promising crops they had raised. Their effects however were in many instances fruitless. In the month of November there was rain for three or four days, but it was of no avail where the crops had not been saved by irrigation. The average loss of sarada crops on the whole district was about 10/16. In many places it was not practicable to sow any rubee seeds. The average loss was about 12/16. The total average would be about 7/16ths. The dalua crops was also deficient owing to scarcity of water in streams and pools.24

The price of rice rose in January and February and it sold at 14 seers per rupee and so there was difficulty in collecting it. It was just impossible to distinguish the effects attributable to the drought of 1836-37, the inundation of 1839-40 in the

24. From James K. Ewart, Collector, Puri to A. J. M. Mills, Commissioner for the 19th Division, Cuttack No. 105, 7 April 1840.
province. The effect of all these losses upon the tenantry was necessarily heavy. Many have changed their habitations to avoid the annoyance of the creditors whom they cannot satisfy than to improve their condition. Many of the poorest classes who had bound themselves for a term of service to liquidate advances made to them in 1837 have been provided for by their employers, but many who would have been free had been thrown back by this fresh calamity. No Asiatic tenantry can be expected to withstand such a succession of calamities.

There has not yet been a single drop of rain and in consequence the land has no where been ploughed for the crops which ought to have been by this time considerably advanced. Many of the Zamindars have also filed detailed statements of the distribution of the suspensions which will afford on additional protection to the ryots and ensure to them the full benefit of the remission.25

In 1840, there was excessive drought in the province. So the Commissioner of Cuttack (A.J.M.Mills) proposed to sanction the remissions of revenue amounting to Rs.587,146-9-5½ on account of loss occasioned to the crops in the province of Cuttack by

25. From James K.Ewart, Collector, Puri to A.J.M.Mills, Commissioner for the 19th Division, Cuttack, No.105, 7 April 1840.
the early cessation of the last periodical rains. Mills also recommended for suspending for one year the demand of the balance of taccavi advances still due in Zilla Balasore and also suggested to take long term measures to check the country from similar disastrous effects of drought in future.  

The Sadar Board of Revenue agreed to the recommendation of the Commissioner and authorised the remissions of the sums (Rs. 587,146-9-5\(\frac{1}{4}\)) and also sanctioned the recommendation for suspending for one year, the demand of balance of taccavi advances still due in Zilla Balasore. The Board also requested with reference to annexed extract para 10th from their address to Government of the 17th ultimo, "You will immediately communicate with the several collectors and surveyors in your division to prepare a well digested plan for obviating similar disastrous effects of drought in future".  

The revenue remitted on account of droughts of 1841-42 amounted to Rs. 2,09,290. In 1842-43 the province of Cuttack also suffered from an early cessation of the periodical rains, and the revenue of Rs. 4,86,625 was also remitted.

26. From J.H. Young, Deputy Secretary to the Government of Bengal to E. Currie, Secretary to the Sadar Board of Revenue, No. 978, Fort William, 7 July 1840.  
27. From Secretary, Sadar Board of Revenue, Fort William to the Commissioner of Revenue for the Division of Cuttack, No. 282, 17 July 1840.  
In 1845 drought occurred in the northern part of Balasore district followed by inundation in 1846. A drought occurred in Orissa in 1849-50 and it was also followed by another drought in 1851 and the revenue remitted on account of this amounted to Rs.18,465/418. During the 35 years, from 1831-32 to 1866-67, Government had to remit £257,939 of its Orissa rental for droughts alone or £455,365 for the combined effects of droughts and floods. In the first half of the 19th century Orissa suffered much from famine. The Government did not take any long term or short term measures to prevent country from such calamities. It took some remedial measures such as only remission and suspension. Thus first half of the 19th century was full of calamities and the people suffered hard under the British Government which led to gradual impoverishment of the people of Orissa. The Court of Directors remarks about the province of Cuttack, "much of the distress which has been ascribed to over assessment, may perhaps be more justly regarded as the inevitable consequences of calamity of season in a country where from want of capital, every partial failure must be likely to produce the most lamentable effects". The sad effects of the failure of the potato crops in Ireland in 1845-49 might be compared with

30. Droughts in Orissa 1954-55, p.3.
similar results of famine in Orissa. Many parents sold their children for a scanty pittance, many were abandoned by these famine stricken fathers and mothers and many wandered in hopes of obtaining the means of subsistence but never met again.  

Throughout the first half of the 19th century Orissa suffered from terrible famines which show its inevitable economic decline.

The Hindu kings in ancient and medieval periods accepted the responsibility for providing relief to the destitutes at the time of famines. The people of Orissa were not facing any trouble, at the time of famines that had occurred in Orissa during the reign of indigenous kings. But now they had to many troubles under the alien rule. The kings were trying their best to save the people from famine. The people were not as poor as today. Day by day the people of Orissa had become poorer and had lost their power of tolerance with the establishment of foreign power in Orissa.

So famines could not play havoc and people were saved due to their self help. The famine policy of the British marked


34. Lallanji Gopal, Economic Life of Northern India, 700-1200, (Delhi, 1965), p.249.

the rejection of active intervention to alleviate the distress. The British rule and the progressive growth of poverty made the people of Orissa cruel victims of calamities. The following table shows the average price of rice in different periods, which depicts gradual deterioration of the condition of Orissa people:

Table No.4.2

Average price of rice in Orissa (in seers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rice per rupee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1836-46</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846-56</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856-66</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866-67</td>
<td>5 (Na-anka-Durvikhya famine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869-70</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>1½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-76</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-87</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-96</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During these years prices of rice increased rarely more than 3 times while income of people who were mostly agriculturists decreased many fold. Thus high prices which made the people poorer
led to hunger and deaths. The people's material well being declined and the poverty grew to an alarming level.

In addition to natural calamities there were a number of administrative factors which contributed to the economic hardship of the people of Orissa. There was political disturbances which was a feature from the very beginning. The Paik rebellion of 1817 proves that the Oriya people did not accept the British rule without resistance.

**British Policy responsible towards Famines**

It was the province of Orissa which was formerly called Cuttack province. The province which consisted of the regulation districts of Balasore, Cuttack and Puri was attached to Bengal for administrative purpose and the British rulers tried to prevail here all the systems they had adopted in Bengal. As agriculture was the chief occupation of the people of Orissa, the greedy rulers tried to extract revenue out of it. Since the beginning of their rule, their revenue policy proved detrimental to agriculture and greatly crippled the economic life of the people because they were ignorant about the condition of the province.

36. The three districts were formed at the end of 1828.
The first and the foremost task before the Britishers in Orissa was the land revenue administration. The British introduced zamindary system in Orissa because there were zamindars as were found in Bengal. In 1773 Warren Hastings decided to sell the right to collect revenue which the East India Company had gained from the Mughal Emperor by the Dewani granted in 1765 to the highest bidder or the zamindar for one year. Later Lord Cornwallis introduced the permanent settlement by which the Government fixed permanently the annual land revenue to be paid by the zamindar. This zamindary system was also introduced in Orissa. Under the zamindary system, the zamindars agreed to pay a fixed amount annually as land revenue to the Government. On the other hand there was no fixed amount in real terms of the revenue payable by the peasants to the zamindar. The zamindars raised the rate heavily under the permanent settlement and the peasants lost their ownership of land and maintained the life of poor tenants.

About twelve such permanently settled estates were constituted according to the finest regulations introduced by the British in Orissa. Then the system was also extended to some of the killajats

in Balasore and Cuttack districts. Subsequently, the Company Government in Orissa did not consider permanent settlement to be economically beneficial to themselves and thus they introduced a new system in Orissa by which they could periodically raise the revenue payable by the zamindars to the East India Company. By this policy, the only benefit of zamindary system i.e., non-increase of land revenue was denied to the people of Orissa. Also ordinary settlement was done in major parts of Mughalbandi, which covered an area of 6000 square miles (including Khurda). Henceforward the Kanungoes, Taluqdars, Rent Collectors, village headmen and holders of resumed jagirs, who were the officers in charge of revenue collection before the British rule were recognized as proprietors of huge landed estates and became zamindars.

The proclamation of September 1804 declared that at the end of 1815 a permanent settlement would be made of "Such lands as may be in a sufficiently improved state of cultivation to warrant the measures, on such terms as the Government shall


*. The Mughalbandi - which comprised all that plain and open part of Orissa from the Subarnarekha to the borders of Khurda which paid a regular assessment to the Mughal Government.

deem fair and equitable*. But certain changes were made in the resolution in spite of its introduction and several short settlements were provided. The proclamation of 1804 got confirmation in 1805, 1312, 1315, 1316 and 1813. Now the Government increased the assessment at each settlement without looking the real value and capabilities of the estates. As a result, the Oriya proprietors were harassed due to heavy arrears and their valuable properties (defaulting estates) were sold to Bengali speculators at a low rate. Automatically absentee landlordism became a permanent feature of the revenue system of this land. The discontented people became dissatisfied by over assessment and mismanagement which became one of the causes of the rebellion in 1817.40 Between 1805 and 1820 the revenue rose fitfully from about 11 lakhs to 13½ lakhs.

The question of introducing permanent settlement in Orissa was closed by Government because the land was not fit for that purpose. Then the regulation VII of 1822 marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of land revenue administration in Orissa by enunciating the change of policy of Government.41 The existing Cuttack settlement extended for 5 years until 1826-27 by the new regulation. The settlement

also provided for detailed measurement and settlement of the lands. The regular settlement was made in 1838, and was to continue for 30 years in Orissa.

Now the people of Orissa became aware of the British Government policy because starting from 1804 the Government had repeatedly promised in different proclamations, for an effective permanent settlement which was not introduced but the promises let to an adverse effect on agricultures in province. The immediate effect of the expiry of a settlement had been to discourage agriculture. The people were in a chronic state of anxiety as to face the state of things to come and they had been extremely distrustful to the intention of the Government. The people had still belief for the introduction of the permanent settlement after all culturable land was cultivated. The settlement of 1837 provided for heavy assessment of revenue leaving two-thirds to Government and one-third for profit and expenses to the zamindars. But the zamindars were not well treated as they were poor and improvident. It is true that some remissions had been granted by the Government from time to time on the occurrence of great calamities, but these were not timely and commensurate with the injury sustained.

42. B.Powell, *op.cit.*
43. B.R.P., November 1877, Henry Ricketts to Secretary of State, 19 November 1866.
The revenue policy impoverished the Indian peasantry. Unable to meet the requirement of the whole year, generations of peasants faced many difficulties. By 1837, the Government had acquired possession of some estates known as Khasmahals and managed those estates through Tahasildars. The cause may be stated that due to increase of revenue demand in course of short settlements many proprietors had lost their estates. Under the Mughals and Marathas the tax collection was not so much rigid as under the British.

The British trade and commerce policy had forced a large number of town and village artisans out of that profession increasing the pressure on land. The condition of the poor tenants became precarious as the assessment was heavy. They did not know about their rights and rate of rent. Though regulations were passed for the protection and preservation of the rights of ryots yet they were not effective due to lack of legislative enactment. The zamindars considered themselves as absolute owners of the lands and cultivators as poor reckrented tenants of the soil. Though the Act X of 1859 was passed in order to improve the condition of the tenants yet the provisions were met satisfactory to provide adequate protection to their life and property.

Since earliest times Orissa had a rich tradition of salt manufacture. And fine salt manufacture in Orissa had become a sort of cultivation and a natural industry through the ages before the coming of the British. In the pre-British period salt manufacture in Orissa was controlled by the coastal zamindars in the northern part of the province. In the south this was carried out by the ryots i.e., peasants-cum-Malangis on their own account on payment of a land rent, to the proprietors of the salt lands. The whole position considerably changed with the advent of the British as rulers of this province in 1803. They took over the salt affairs of the province in 1804 by making salt a subject of Government monopoly which compelled the industry for its ruin.

By the time of Lord Cornwallis the East India Company had established a monopoly both over manufacture and sale of salt in Bengal. The salt monopoly was extended over a portion of Orissa to the north of the river Mahanadi after its conquest. So extension of manufacture was undertaken by a phased programme with respect to the different parts of the province. By 1812, several salt manufacturing centres were either revived or newly opened in the two districts of Balasore and Cuttack. It was impressed upon the Government that a revenue worth more than five

lakhs of rupees would be deprived for a management cost of one lakh of rupees on extending salt manufacture under Government to the southern part of the province, which was accomplished in 1814. As a result, there were twenty four centres working in the three coastal districts of Orissa, eight in Balasore, seven in Cuttack and nine in Puri. Thus the whole of Orissa came under the salt regulations of Bengal and the revenue derived from salt monopoly exceeded the total amount of land rent of the state. The Government yielded about three lakhs from the sale of salt in this province along with the largest amount of nearly fifteen to sixteen lakhs annually, when salt was exported to Calcutta for sale.47

The price of salt increased and people felt difficulty in procuring salt even at such rates. The cause lies in the introduction of salt monopoly in Orissa in 190448 by which the flourishing inland salt trade to the north and westward of this province declined to the lowest ebb. Also the British authorities in Orissa gave emphasis to the sea-borne salt trade for supplying the Bengal market with Orissa salt. The inland salt trade of this province was neglected and subjected to restrictions in sharp contrast to the emphasis given to the

sea-borne trade under the auspices of the Government salt monopoly. The salt monopoly like that of land revenue was disastrous to the people as it was conducted by the fatal policy of a too sudden leap from one extreme end to the other. The spirit of the revolt against salt monopoly was also found during the insurrection of 1817 in the northern division of Orissa. The insurrection of 1817 opened the eyes of the British Government to the realities. The salt department now sought to reorganise the salt monopoly by a suitable system. So efforts were made in the post insurrection period to redress the popular discontent against the salt monopoly. The price of salt was reduced but it was not reduced to the extent at which it could have induced regular maximum consumption. Several attempts were made after 1844 to stimulate the consumption of salt and thereby to increase the revenue by means of successive reduction of duties. Still the price was very high even after reduction. The Government manufacture of salt was long carried on the coast of Orissa and it provided employment not only to a large number of people of that area but also to the people of other parts of the country.

By fixing the wholesale price of salt and by admitting the imported foreign salt to competition with the home made salt, all the damage was done to the indigenous salt trade.

49. G. Toynbee, op. cit., p. 70.
The sea-borne salt trade with Bengal in north was destroyed and it automatically led to economic ruin of Orissa in general.\(^{50}\) Thus it was decided to discontinue the practice and to introduce instead, a combined system of customs and excise. In 1863 the manufacture was closed throughout Orissa, throwing a large number of manufactures out of employment.\(^{51}\) After cessation of the Government manufacture, there remained considerably stores of salt previously manufactured. The condition of the manufacturers became precarious because of unemployment.

The province of Orissa frequently suffered from the opposite evils of floods, inundation and droughts. Subject to great variations the rainfall was precarious. There was not any provision for purposes of irrigation except some sort of water supply made by ryots. There was also made no attempts to improve the lands due to periodical settlement.\(^{52}\) By an Act of Parliament in 1861 the East India Irrigation Company and the Secretary of State executed a contract for the construction of works for irrigation, navigation and supply of water and other purposes in the districts confined to the delta of Mahanadi and the adjoining region.\(^{53}\) By 1866 (great famine) these works had not progressed to the satisfaction.

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51. G.N. Barlow, Collector of Puri to Commissioner, No.272, 27 November 1865.
52. RIF, 1866, Vol.I, Evidence No.52.
53. *Orissa and Project*, Contract between the Secretary of the State and the East India Irrigation, November 28, 1861.
The province suffered from twin evils of flood and drought. In the floods of Mahanadi, Kathjori and Kuakhai hundreds of square miles of the state were devastated and heavy losses were sustained on the people. In great floods hundreds of square miles of the country were devasted in this manner, and the loss on this account had been as frequent as those on account of drought.\(^5^4\)

Along with the heavy losses due to floods and inundations, the recurrent droughts made the condition of the people worse from time to time. The scanty rainfall laid to an automatic little yield which resulted in great disaster. A number of droughts and famines appeared on the soil of this land in the first half of the nineteenth century (previously discussed in this chapter).

In the first half of the 19th century there was no system of canals and irrigation. Though the East India Irrigation and Canal Company had undertaken a project since 1861, the task had not progressed till 1866. This work had further been given importance by the historic famine that had poured upon the Government to expedite the work which was given importance by the Famine Commission. It was aimed at making a link between Calcutta and Puri.\(^5^5\) The British Government made no attempt

\(^{54}\) RAB, 1871-72, Orissa Scheme, p.249.
to improve agricultural practices on scientific lines. Better types of tools, fertilizers and manures which were known in England were not utilized either in India or in Orissa.

The Province of Orissa also suffered from geographical isolation. The country was full of hilly tracts. There was only a rotten traffic with Sambalpur by boat in the rainy season. The nature of the coast and the sea was such as effectually to stop all native traffic for the major part of the year. The rivers were not used for the purpose of communication. They were inaccessible to the ordinary type of European vessels. There was no protected anchorage of any kind for such vessels on 12 to 14 feet of water even at the worst season of the year provided they entered with the aid of steam. The Dhamara port was declared one of the important ports of Orissa in 1858. It was a useful port even at the time of British occupation in 1803 wherefrom rice and salt were exported to Bengal. No attempt was made by the British to improve the inland communication in the province.

There was not any communication by road so to say in the scientific manner. There were no roads in existence in Cuttack when the province of Orissa was taken over by the English in 1803.\(^59\) There was only one mud and dust road, used in summer times but it was difficult to use during rainy season which passed from Midnapore through Balasore and Cuttack to Puri was probably the Jagannath Road. Some portions of the road was damaged and so it became impossible to cross it by wheeled carriages for which pack bullocks were used.

The railway line was not introduced in Orissa. This province was not prosperous enough as it lacked operations in the field of trade and commerce. There were no trading classes in Orissa. The only horns and hides were exported to Tamuluk by land and to Calcutta by water route. After 1854-55 export of salt from Orissa to Calcutta was stopped, because the Government of India allowed the import of foreign manufactured salt in order to be sold in the Bengal market. The people were idele to search for markets in order to sale their surplus grains. There were some export of grain by land from Southern Orissa to the district of Ganjam and the port of Gopalpur and from Balasore to Midnapore, Hidgelee and Calcutta.\(^60\) In spite


of the all round economic developments of the province its people were harrassed by the drain of wealth by the oppressive land revenue policy of the British and Orissa got nothing from the trade facilities which was granted to the British merchants in the province.

The province of Orissa also suffered from the defective British administrative set up. The Bengal Presidency included not only Orissa division, but also the provinces of Bihar, Assam and Bengal. Till 1853 these provinces were administered by Lt.Governors who were neither assisted by council nor by superior secretaries and their works were overburdened from the administrative point of view. So he had no time to look after the administration of a little division like Orissa. A Commissioner was appointed to supervise the administration of Orissa. A large number of both judicial and executive powers were vested in the hands of Commissioner of Orissa and simultaneously also the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals of Orissa. So he could not give proper attention to each corner of the province as far as administration was concerned. "The most difficult problem that the administration had to face, is the liability of the province to loss of crops from natural calamities."  

There was not any permanent land revenue system and the periodical settlement differed from time to time and the province was cursed by natural calamities. And the Government showed much reluctance in granting remissions in times of calamities. "From 1827, previous to which date there are no separate records for this district up to 1831 no remissions were allowed". 63 Thus the remissions from Government revenue only were not 'timely' commensurate with the injury sustained by the people. 64 From 1832 up to 1867 the remissions on the ground of inundation and drought were about equal, the total remissions on the former ground being Rs.6,25,844 and on the latters Rs.6,18,660 making a total of nearly 12 ½ lakhs. 65 On the other hand strict rules and regulations were enforced to extract revenue from the people without understanding their real condition by which the material prosperity in general and economic condition in particular of the province deteriorated during the period under study.

Famine was inevitable in the event of a drought when the people were poverty-stricken and where no single great public

64. G.C.Patnaik, op.cit., p.15.
work was undertaken to enrich the province. Lack of communication facilities aggravated the economic life of the famine stricken people. Lack of proper effective administration, and climatic disturbances also contributed a lot to ruin the agricultural economy of the people. Famine was regarded as a calamity which was difficult to mitigate. In the first half of the 19th century there was not any single newspaper to draw the attention of the public. During such calamities Orissa suffered a lot without much knowledge to the outside world.

Colonel Cotton was the first person to suggest the construction of an elaborate system of canals as the only remedy against the droughts and floods. Finally the Government made a compact with a new Company known as the East India Irrigation Company. It was offered to take a large irrigation works in preventing the country from the threefold object of the recurrence of drought, of protecting the harvest from floods, and of opening up communications. The Company undertook by the private English enterprise to do for the Orissa peasants what none of its dynasties, native or foreign had ever ventured to attempt, to free it from the chronic peril of drought and famine. But before the Company could finish a single one of

their canals, the terrible disaster of 1866 fell upon the province. And now the Government realising the responsibility of preserving the Orissa people from death by starvation, undertook the whole works of irrigation in the years 1868. 68 The colonial policy was changed by the great famine of 1866. So all the remedial measures adopted by the British were only after the famine of 1866. However, the great famine taught a good lesson to the Government and it was also made a guideline for the remedy of future famines.

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