INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been a significant phase for the development of trade and commerce in India. It was characterised by an acceleration in the pace of urbanisation in different commercial centres. There was a marked increase in the degree of urbanisation in the subah of Bengal, the hinge of English trade in the eastern coast of India. The number of towns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Bengal, that had comprised of the present geographical areas of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had significance.

The study does not restrict the geographical areas of Orissa within any political boundaries since the political map of Orissa has been subject to many wax and wane during our period. Until the Mughal acquisition of Orissa, it was extended from present Midnapore district in the North to Rajahmundhry (Godavari) in the south. But it seems that the regions beyond Ganjam were under the control of the Golconda Sultans. In the entire seventeenth century the region from Midnapore to Chilka was assigned the status of a province with an independent Nawab, but most of the time he was subordinate to the subehdar of Bengal, so far revenue was concerned. In this arrangement also sometimes Midnapore and Balasore port remained under the jurisdiction of Bengal. The regions beyond Chilka to Ganjam became a battle-ground for territorial supremacy between the rulers of Orissa and Golconda. Though the regions from Godavari to Ganjam remained under the kingdom of Golconda, in contemporary literature it was still known as “Orissa Coast”\(^1\) also popularly called as “Gingelly Coast”.\(^2\) In the account of Thomas Bowrey, this coast extends from the Bay of Corenga at the point Godavari to Jagannath (Puri) in


the north. When the Europeans founded their settlements in Orissa, the factories at Balasore, Pipli and Hariharpur remained under the Council of Bengal, where as the factories Ganjam, Bimlipatnam and Vizagapatnam remained under the Council of Coromandel. That is why the scholars of Indian maritime trade generally treat the regions Balasore and Cuttack as part of Bengal in their study and Gingelly coast as part of Coromandel.

As early as 1895, C.R. Wilson in the Preface to his “Early Annals of the English in the Bengal” pointed out that the necessary connection between the stages of the English advance into Bengal have yet to be understood. So far a region-wide study concerning some research monographs are available on the four regions of India by scholars such as Tapan Ray Chaudhury, S. Arasaratanam, M.N. Pearson, Ashin Das Gupta, Surendra Gopal, Om Prakash, and Sushil Chaudhuri, etc. Their studies have shown that though each region of India appeared to follow the same broad trends in trade, structure and institutions yet at the same time, they had many dissimilarities. If each of these regions evolved with different trade cultures, it also leads us to arrive at an irresistible conclusion that differences in trade patterns are bound to crop up inside a region, from place to place or province to province depending upon the nature of its political, economic, topographical and cultural background.

It is generally agreed among scholars that the study of trade on the Western Coast of India is incomplete without a thorough and a special reference to the Konkan coast lying between Malabar and Gujarat Coast. The need for a special study on Orissa which adjoined the Bengal and the Coromandel Coasts arises from a similar concern. Only then the study of the trade of the Eastern Coast of India can be said to be fully understood.

The Indian sub-continent and its merchants had created extensive commercial ties and trade networks not only with various parts of Asia but also with Europe from the

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sixteenth century onwards. The chief centres of commerce in Mughal India were Gujarat, Bengal and Coromandel and Malabar coasts. The most important consumer goods which the first three regions exported were textiles of both finer and coarser varieties, where as the exports of pepper was sole preserve of the Malabar region. The other items which these region exported were saltpeter, cotton, silk, opium, indigo, sugar, and food stuffs, etc. But their import was mainly restricted to the expensive items like spices, war-horses, elephants and bullion, etc. consumed mainly by comparatively rich people. The internal commerce was also based on the same principle as the external commerce; here also people exchanged their surplus with each other. However, among all the seaports in the coastal Orissa, Balasore was one of the most prominent and productivity manufacturing commercial centre during our period.

The activities of Bengal merchants had certain distinct features. They acted as brokers to the Europeans Companies which could not deal directly with the producers for the provision of goods for Europe. All of them were primarily merchants, buyers and sellers of different commodities and their business extended to any class of goods which was expected to yield a profit. They also acted simultaneously as Shroffs or money-changers and bankers received deposits and arranged remittances by means of bills of exchange or letter of credit. Through their various agents they frequently acted as middlemen, especially in the transactions between the European Companies and the political elites.

The local merchants of Orissa played a significant role in the region’s trade. They took active part in its trade with different parts with India as well as with Asiatic countries. They also acted as middlemen between producers and the European merchants. The local merchants of Orissa belong to both the Hindu and Muslim communities. The English Factory Records mention the names of Khem Chand, Chintaman Shah, Suraj Shah, Hira Shah, Kalyan Rai, Rajaram, Ram Narayan, Gangaram, and Gopal as the principal merchants of Balasore. All of them were Hindus. We have also references to the
some Muslim merchants of Balasore with whom the English contracted for purchasing goods in 1684.4

Many of this merchants were wealthy who had command over large infrastructures of commercial operations while other merchants were having limited capital. For example, even after promising to pay Rs. 30, 000/- to Nawab Saf Shikan Khan in 16721. Khem Chand had resources to indemnify the English and others and this consideration led the English to deliver to Khem Chand Rs. 7, 500/- which was his share.6 Again in 1674 Khem Chand paid Rs. 50, 000/- to Rashid Khan, the Nawab of Orissa.7 These details go to indicate the wealth of Khem Chand, who was an influential and prominent merchant of Balasore. In 1679 the English considering the insolvency of Gopal abated a portion of money that he owned to the Company.8

The local merchants of Orissa carried on trade with different parts of India, e.g. Calcutta, Dacca, Pulicat, and Cochin. We have references to the merchants of Balasore carrying on trade with Calcutta in the sixties of the eighteenth century. They use to send iron, stone plates, rice and some other commodities. Their imports from Calcutta to Balasore consisted of tobacco and certain other commodities,9 which has been discussed in Chapter III. Sometime before 1684, a gomastah of Khem Chand purchased huge quantities of ‘Cassaes’ at Dacca.10 There is mention of ship of the merchants of Gingelly Coast being burnt by the Portuguese in the ‘Road’ of Pulicat in the early twenties of the

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9 EFI, 1670-77, New Series, I, p. 250.
seventeenth century. In the thirties of the seventeenth century Manrique found at Pipli a ship belonging to the local Shiqdar being sent to Cochin laden with merchandise.

The merchants of Orissa carried on Asiatic trade, viz. with Ceylon, Tenasserim and the Maldives. Bowrey in the seventies of the seventeenth century mentioned that the merchants of Balasore and Pipli were sending their ships every year to Ceylon, Tenasserim and the Maldives Islands foe the purpose of trade.

The European Companies trading in Orissa had to depend on the local merchants regarding the supply of goods for export. Some of them acted as brokers of the Europeans Companies and helped them in financing their purchase. At the initial stage of commercial operations of the English in Orissa when lack of ready money and difficulty in selling European goods were the main hindrances to their trade the merchants took part-payment for goods supplied by them in the articles imported from Europe.

Besides paying much custom duties, the merchants were subjected to many other exactions. During the Subahdari of Shaista Khan the merchants of Orissa had to make contributions towards strengthening the naval defence. The merchants belonging to the Hindu community had sometimes to make extra payments. The Hindu merchants of the Gingelly Coast besides paying the usual taxes and duties had to pay many extra taxes that the Muslim Governor of the place used to charge from them. Although some of the

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14 Ibid., pp. 232-33.
EFI, 1670-77, II, p. 345.
EFI, 1668-69, pp. 309-11.
richest Indian merchants lived there, they could not display their wealth for fear of extortion by the Muhammedan officials as well as for the fact that after their death their properties would belong to the Emperor. 18

The merchants were forced to pay large amounts of money to the Subahdars and also were harassed by the local officials in some other ways. When Malik Kasim became the ‘Governor’ of Balasore in 1673 Walter Clavell, the chief of the Bay Factories, and his councils feared that he would give trouble to the local merchants, at Balasore and force to wind up their business. Their fears came to be true and in August 1673 Malik Kasim created such conditions as would make the merchants prefer to leave the place. 19 In 1680s the merchants of Balasore who traded with Calcutta were so much oppressed by a gomastah that many of them left the place and transacted their business at Kanika. Some who remained at Balasore were greatly distressed. 20

The merchants exercised considerable influences on the local government. In 1654 at the insistence of the local merchants Malik Beg, the local Governor, opened the goodown of the Dutch at Pipli which were previously sealed by him as the Dutch refused to grant passes to the Indian ships to go to the countries in the Malay Peninsula and Achin which were then under the control of the Dutch. 21

The English sometimes solicited the intervention or the mediation of the merchants in the hour of need and trouble. The former attempted to procure a parwana from the Nawab Saf Shikan Khan in 1672. Though the parwana was procured through the intervention of Boremul (Puran Malla) the Governor of Balasore, during the transaction the merchants Haricharan, Khem Chand and Suraj Shah accompanied

18 Ibid., pp. 126-27.
20 Ibid., p. 250.
21 EFI, 1651-54, pp. 269-70.
Boremul taking with them some presents for the Nawab’s diwan and other officers and this ‘smoothed the way’ (i.e. the way of obtaining the parwana). In 1679 there was a dispute between the English and the Dutch over a house and a piece of land at Balasore. The English decided to procure Kanungo’s stamp through the mediation of Khem Chand if it be necessary to validate their claim. They also sought, the good offices of Khem Chand and Chintaman Shah in 1685 to settle an affair with the local officials.

Balasore grew to prominence as a manufacturing and commercial centres and as a seaport from the thirties of the seventeenth century. The destruction of the Portuguese of Hooghly in 1632 attracted the Dutch and English to open trade northwards. At the same time the growing scarcity of piece goods at Masulipatanam on account of the famous and widespread Gujarat famine of 1630-31 necessitated opening up of new centres of trade and the advance of English from the East Coast up the Bay of Bengal. Ralph Cartwright, the leader of the expedition sent by John Norris, English agent at Masulipatanam, was granted freedom of trade in May 1633 by the Mughal Governor of Orissa, Agha Muhammad Zaman of Tehran. Equipped with a “parwana of trade of free of customs or duties and build house or ships”, the English merchants Cartwright and Thomas Colley, returned from Calcutta to Hariharpur and started building a factory there (May 1633). Leaving Colley in charge of it, Cartwright went to Balasore (June 16) and established a factory there also. at the intervention of Mir Qasim, the Governor of the district. Like the English, the Danes also wanted to established factories at Balasore in order to escape from the oppressions of the Portuguese.

The importance of Balasore grew as a result of expulsion on the Portuguese from Hijli by the Mughals in 1636 and the consequent decade of trade at Pipli and other neighbouring places. The silting up of the river Alanka and the Patua reduced the

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advantage of Harishpur harbour in comparison with the road of Balasore. It also increased the difficulties of Hariharpur which could be brought to Balasore on land without much difficulty.\textsuperscript{25} Inspite of these advantages of Balasore, the results of the efforts of the English there during the first decade were not very discouraging.

Balasore was an emporium of cotton yarn, cotton and \textit{tassar} manufactures of the interior hinterland and surrounding places. Most prominent among the centres, arranged in order of quality of goods manufactured, were Suro (Soro),\textsuperscript{26} Harrapore (Hariharpur),\textsuperscript{27} and Mohunpore,\textsuperscript{28} all specialising in the manufacture of \textit{Sannoes: Sanas}: a kind of fine white cotton goods,\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ginghams}: an Indian cotton cloth,\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Orammalls} or \textit{Rumal}: handkerchief,\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Cassaes} or \textit{Khasa}: a fine thin cloth were all varieties of cheap, but well made cotton manufactures available at Balasore. Of the other goods produced in Orissa were \textit{Sticklac}.\textsuperscript{32} Turmeric,\textsuperscript{33} Saltpetre,\textsuperscript{34} and Rice.\textsuperscript{35}

It would be inappropriate to say that the economy of Orissa was only confined within the limits of the region. Agriculture had dominated in the share of economy through out the period. The inland trade had consisted of the hinterland-trade and trade

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{25} Master's Diary: Vol. II, Ed. by R.C. Temple, p. 84.
\item\textsuperscript{26} Suro or Soro in Balasore district, midway between Balasore and Bhadrak, 20 miles from Balasore.
\item\textsuperscript{27} Harrapore (Hariharpur) near modern Jagatsimhapur.
\item\textsuperscript{28} Mohunpur in Midnapur district.
\item\textsuperscript{29} Wilson, Vol. I. Index; \textit{EFI}, 1655-60, p. 188n.
\item\textsuperscript{30} Bowrey; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 231n.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 133n.
\item\textsuperscript{32} Master's Diary: Vol. II, p. 70.
\item\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 279. \textit{EFI}, 1651-55, p. 47, 95, 271.
\item\textsuperscript{35} \textit{EFI}, 1646-50, Vol. XXIX, p. 166.
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with the neighbouring and distant towns. The export trade of Orissa had been integrated with commercial activities of European merchants at various centres in Bengal. Orissa had trade relations with Bengal and Golconda. There was a regular supply of Orissan cloth goods from Balasore to Patna in the seventeenth century. The foreign trade of Orissa, as conducted through Balasore was not significant. The commodities imported by the English into Orissa, Bengal and Patna through Balasore, were broad-cloth of various colour, scarlet, copper, quick silver, lead, vermilion, glasses.\textsuperscript{36}

As a corollary to the new pattern of trade, there took place the growth of various commercial organisations and practices. The technology of the period was simple and cheat and within the reach of the artisans. The relation among the various commercial goods and the merchants and the political authorities was characterised by 'consensus and conflict' of interest. There are other components that had contributed to the developments to the merchants activities and commercial organisations in Orissa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The evaluation of the aforesaid aspects of the coastal Orissa's economy has been done in eight chapters.

The first chapter deals with the background of Orissa in four sections consisting firstly on her historical ascendancy of the rulers and geographical locations. The chapter refers in a wider sense about the unique position that Orissa enjoyed in the geography of India. An attempt has been made to analyze the strategic position of coastal Orissa, that she played in the cultural fusion of the north and south as well as in the maritime trade of the Indian Archipelago. In the sections on social conditions, we discuss on some of the aspects of the general social conditions and particularly the social structures of the period under review. The section also focused in detail about the caste system, the communities engaged in various kinds of occupations to earn their livelihood and their food habits, etc. Some light is also thrown on the social institutions, educational system and religious life of the people. The political consciousness of the period is highlighted through the role of

\textsuperscript{36} Bowrey, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 231-32.

the authorities and the inhabitants of the region. In this context special reference is made to focus on the role of Subehdars and Mughal supremacy on the land. The last section represents the resources and productivity of the soil along with the territorial arrangements and revenue administration of the Mughal government.

The second chapter focuses on major theme of the thesis on commercial organisation and about the role of local merchants with special reference to the English East India Company. An attempt has been made to analyze the appearance of the European Companies on Orissa coast and their settlement on the region. The chapter also deals with the occupation and activities of indigenous merchants, particularly about Khem Chand and Chintaman Shah who were the most influential personalities of the period. The third section is devoted to the activities of the European Companies and their links and transactions with local merchants and provincial authorities. The fourth part of the chapter deals mainly on the composition of trade indicating coastal Orissa’s relations with other trading centres of India as well as outside India. The final section is on the growth of various commerce centres in coastal Orissa during the period under discussion.

The third chapter deals only with the ports of coastal Orissa in our period. About the ports, it is mentioned how the European Companies became interested to settle on Orissa’s port towns. Special attention is made to analyze some of the major ports of coastal Orissa such as Balasore, Pipli, Hariharpur and Gingelly coast and how it was utilised by the merchants communities.

The fourth chapter which primarily deals with the growth and development of trade is divided into four sections. The main aim of the chapter is to highlight coastal Orissa’s trade networks with various other regions. Starting from household levels to far-off countries, coastal Orissa had a widespread network. The last section of the chapter focuses the participation of the private local authority and interlopers in the trading activities of coastal Orissa.
The fifth chapter examines the exports and imports of commodities to and from coastal Orissa. The data used in this chapter has been collected from various original works including the English and Dutch Factory Records of various dates and indicates the rate of the items and their demands in foreign nations.

The sixth chapter is on productions of coastal Orissa, subdivided into three sections namely, agricultural production, industrial production and forest production. Agriculture predominates the overall productions of coastal Orissa in our period, but industrial and forest production was also not insignificant. In fact, textiles constituted a significant item of export from coastal Orissa, although it was not on the same level as in other parts of India.

In the seventh chapter, the decline of the coastal Orissa’s trading activities in the last part of the period under study is discussed, owing to certain significant developments taking place, that is, the silting of the rivers, debtiness of indigenous merchants, emergence of Calcutta port and finally the Anglo-Maratha hostility.

In the concluding chapter, some vital questions are raised regarding the maritime trade of the region, its importance and impact on the people. An overall view is made to analyze the conditions of the local merchants, their state of economy, transactions with other merchants including European factors and commercial organisations. It also tried to find out the trade routes of Orissa and its connections with inside and outside the country both by water and land ways.

The present work covers a period of two hundred years. This is mainly to overcome the quantitative and qualitative limitations of the sources. The information is not available in a continuous series. The gaps in the data do not permit us to limit the period of the study to only few years. However, source material for the whole period under review are sufficient. Our information regarding the precise share of agriculture, manufacture and trade to the total economy of Orissa is inadequate. Inspite of these limitations, the Factory Records, Travel Accounts, the Diaries, the translated Persian
sources, contemporary Oriya works, etc. do furnish to see what had been the trend of the economic development of coastal Orissa from the seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries. In the present work an attempt has been made to integrate and analyse different types of information to construct a reliable picture of the various aspects of the economy of coastal Orissa during the period under study.