

## **Provincial Trade And Odisha (14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D): Growth And Decline**

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### **Abstract:**

*The Primary Objective Of This Paper Is To Critically Examine That Aside From The Mainstream Industries And Factories; The Wide Ranging Trade Relation Of Odisha With So Many Other Parts Of The World From The Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century Portuguese Settlement To The Final Arrival Of The British East India Company In Late 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The Ceaseless Maritime Engagement Of Odisha With Diverse Distant Lands Indeed Made Odisha Further Prospered And Independent. However With The Invasion Of The Mughals Along With The Socio-Cultural Domain, Economic Independence Of Odisha Was Also Greatly Compromised .As, Trade Of All Kind Was Done Through The Sea Route Special Reference Has Been Given To All The Major Ports At Places Like Pipili, Balasore, Chilika And Puri.*

**Key Words:** Kalinga, Balasore Road, Cotton, Linen, Silk

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Being situated on the shore of the Bay of Bengal and having enjoyed all the privileges to develop her maritime activities, Odisha from time immemorial had her reputation as a seafaring country. In the glorious ancient period, the Kalinga (the former name of present Odisha) Ship helped the people of Kalinga in establishing colonies in the Indian Archipelago. It is said, the people of Kalinga were the pioneers in colonizing the far off lands of Sumatra, Java, Indonesia, Burma, Siam and other places. The main ports of Odisha from which the Kalinga ships plied were Mausolin (Masulipatnam), Kalingapatnam, Chilka, Puri, Chitrotpala, Hijli, Tampalipi, Harisipur and Balasore. The maritime trade with Indian Archipelago, Burma and other Islands brought a vast amount of wealth to Kalinga. The glories and prosperity of ancient Odisha was probably due to her foreign trade and commerce with the distant lands.

It is a well-known fact that the Indian merchants with trade centres in Balasore and Pipli prior to the arrival of European traders carried on extensive coast-wise trade with the Malaya-Indonesian Archipelago. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the supply of provisions and textiles to Malacca was made from these Odishan ports. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Indian merchants from these ports travelled as far as Bantum, Pegu, Tennasserim and Achin and even to the Red sea ports of Aden and Jeddah in the Middle East.

So long the Hindu Kingdom of Odisha was independent and Hindu Kings gave encouragement and offered royal patronage, the maritime trade was very thriving and considerably adding to the national wealth of the century. With the advent of the Muslims to Odisha (from the year 1568) change took place not only in the political condition of the country but also in its social and economic condition. After the Muslim conquest of Odisha during the time of Akbar, the centre of gravity, being changed some of the Southern ports of Odisha including Chilika and Chitropala lost their former glories. The northern ports, particularly Balasore, Pipli and Harisipur came to much more provision than before. This brought the traders of these countries into direct contact with India. The Portuguese being the first of them to come here, were followed by the Dutch, the English and the French, all of whom had trading settlements in different parts of India and obtained certain concessions from the Mughal ruling authority at the centre and its governors in the Subas. The 17<sup>th</sup> century, more particularly, remained as an important period in the annals of Odishan history under these favorable circumstances Balasore, Pipli and Hariharpur grew into prominence as important commercial and naval centres on the Odisha coast.

## **I. European Trading Settlements:**

### **The Portuguese :**

The importance of Odisha as a great trading province is evidenced by the existence of factories by five European nations during the period under survey. The Europeans who first had their trading settlement on the coast of Odisha were the Portuguese. A short time after the discovery of the sea route to India (1498 A.D.) the Portuguese came to the coast of Madras and had their settlements there. The native people of Madras got so much frightened at the growth of a foreign power that they in a mass rose against the Portuguese and made their position untenable. As a result, the Portuguese were forced to move to the northward in search of another place for their settlement and succeed in establishing a town at Pipli in 1514 A.D. But it is not known whether these Portuguese obtained any Sunad from Raja Prataparudradeva, the then Gajapati ruler of Odisha for their settlement. Madalapanji or any other Odia sources is silent about the matter. First it was a time when the attention of the Raja of Odisha was directed to a serious attack made by Krishnadeva Raya, a powerful king of Vijayanagar empire. Prataparudradeva defeated near Kondundu by his opponent in the same year i.e. 1541 A.D. This is how the Portuguese perhaps by taking advantage of the confusion and chaotic state of affairs had their settlement at Pipli.

Once the Portuguese settled at Pipli, the Raja of Odisha, being a generous as well as religious minded person by nature was constrained to accept the fiat accomplice. Pipli, being situated about 4 miles from the starting place of the Subarnarekha river rose up as great centre of Portuguese trade<sup>(7)</sup>. In fact the Portuguese monopolised the entire trade on the coast and fleet commanded the whole sea board from Chittagong to Odisha for a century i.e. from 1514 A.D. to 1615 A.D.

Thomas Colley mentioned in 1633 Pipli as the 'namcient randy voes' (i.e. ancient rendezvous) of the Portuguese. In 1636 the Portuguese obtained a permission from Mutaqad Khan (1632-41), the nawab of Cuttack, to establish an additional residence at Pipli.

The Portuguese brought from Mallaca and Maccao spices, woollen cloth, tin, lead, quick silver and vermilion and purchased at Pipli many kinds of white cotton, cloth, muglin, butter, nice, gingelly seed and such other goods. The Portuguese also had their settlement at Balasore, on the river Barabalanga. Campos opines that they settled in Balasore in 1625. From masters account it is known that on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1676 the English teased out the land where the Portuguese houses at Balasore were situated.

### **The Dutch:**

In Odisha, the trade monopoly of the Portuguese for a century had to be challenged by the Dutch with the help of native powers. The Dutch managed to enter the Bay of Bengal and handled a considerable amount of commercial transactions in Odisha from their factories located at Gingelly coast, Pipli, Balasore and Harishpur (Harispurgarh), T. Bowen opines that Gingelly coast was commodious for navigation sake, enjoying many pleasant and good harbor<sup>(9)</sup>.

Pipli was another important centre of Dutch commerce. But here also the date of their coming to this place is controversial. At first it was held that the Dutch came to Pipli in 1625. Modern researches show that they actually came to Pipli in 1627. In 1636 the Dutch decided to withdraw their trade from Hugli to Pipli because the monopoly of all trade at Hugli was granted by two merchants and the governmental authorities of the place being unfriendly to the Dutch placed many impediments on their trade. The Dutch left Hugli for Pipli in January 1657. At the later place also they faced opposition from the Muslim merchants, but by obtaining grants from the emperor they succeeded in making Pipli factory their "Stable and profitable concern" by 1639. Thereafter, the Dutch had a flourishing trade at Pipli and this factory at Pipli was described by John Marshall (1668-1672) as a homogeneous one. There is reference to the Dutch demolishing their factory at Pipli by 1676.

The Dutch carried on extensive trade in Odisha. Textile goods, silk, saltpetre, wax, rice, sugar, butter, opium etc. were the commodities which the Dutch traded in Odisha. These commodities were exported from the Odisha to different Asiatic countries and Europe. There are several references to the volume of trade carried on by the Dutch. In the fifties of the 17th Century they could ship from Pipli 2000 tons of refined saltpetre annually<sup>(11)</sup>.

### **The English:**

The coming of the English in Odisha as merchants and the establishment of trading settlement on the Odishan coast dates back to the fourth decade of the Seventeenth Century. Prior to that the English had their trade settlement at Mashlipatan (1611) and Surat (1612). The draft treaty concluded between Jahangir and Sir Thomas Roe in 1616 mentioned that the English "shall come freely" to any

port in the territory of “said king of India as well as in Bangala and Syndu (sind) as in the lordship of Surat”. But at that time they made no serious attempt to extend their trading operations to Bengal for several reasons. Firstly, the English merchants on the Madras coast traded mainly in Calicoes of Golconda, besides those of some Hindu countries further south. Secondly, the products of Bengal were easily procurable at Masulipatam, they had no intention of venturing to purchase them directly from the authorities at Masulipatam about 1626. This resulted in their withdrawal from that place in 1678. Thus they lost a convenient base for further expansion of their trade till they returned again to that place in 1630.

Regular attempts to open trade with Odisha (and Bengal) by the English seems to have had the purpose of commerce, that is further evident with the Voyage of Hopewell (Ship), dispatched in July 1631 under the charge of Thomas Robinson who was sent from Masulipatam to Pipli. At Calapara they were favorably received by Baqir Khan Subahdar of Odisha, who was then present there. The sound adventure by the Pearl (ship) in August 1632 proved no better. The (Pearl) had been sent from Armagion to exchange lead, quick silver, vermilion, cloth etc. for rice, butter and piece goods but the enterprise failed. Yet it was held to have discovered “some places and ports which may yield benefit (yield benefit) to our employers in future time”.

John Norris, English Agent at Masulipatam in the spring of 1633 sent a party of eight Englishmen, consisting of two merchants (Ralphcart Wright, the leader & colley) and six sailors (one of them was William Bruton, Quarter Master of the Ship Hoperwell) in an expedition north wards in search of trade facilities. The party which took a country junk (locally manufactured boat) expected golden profits from this voyage. They sailed the Odisha coast and anchored at Harassappore (Harsapur or Harishpurgarh) situated in the extreme south east of the Cuttack district on the mouth of the river Patna on eastern day ex. the 21st April, 1633. When the English landed there a Portuguese master of frigate and his followers attacked them but they were rescued by “Lucklip” the nogger or Vice King.

There are some later reference to the establishment of factories at Ganjam, Cuttack and Balaramgarh. But even in these case definite dates of their establishment are not known.

### **The Danes:**

The Danes attempted to trade in Odisha as early as the thirties of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. They tried to find a factory at Balasore in 1633. But their attempt in this respect did not succeed till about 1636 When they established a trade centre at Balasore and ships of very considerable burden came there annually from Europe. In 1640, they sent two ships from Masulipatam to the Bay of Bengal of which one returned to Narasapore and the other met great troubles while returning, that prevented the Danes from sending any ship to the Bay for the purpose of commerce. This non carnival of ships incensed Melek Beake (Malik Bag), the ‘governor’ [officer-in-charge] of Balasore, who according to Bowery, poisoned the inmates of the Danish factory at Balasore seized their goods and demolished the factory. This was the prelude to a conflict which lasted for about thirty five years. When for the next time the Danes with their ships arrived in the Bay, they found the deplorable condition of their settlement there being no hope of getting any satisfaction to the damages declared was against the local authorities. The Danes captured in 1647 a ship belonging to a Muslim. There were 8 elephants in it. After this we have no details about the conflict between the Danes and the Mughal authorities at Balasore still 1672. Walter Clavell, the English factor reported in July 1674 that the Danes captured four “Bengal Vessels”. But according to Bowery the Danish Commander refused to seize five “Bengal Vessels” that came to Balasore from Ceylon and Maldives islands.

The trade of the Danes would have been totally wiped out had they not secured some privileges of trade from Nawab Shista Khan. This was possible due to the efforts of Wilke Wsgbert (the Chief of the Danish factory). By spending a sum of 4 or 5 thousand rupees as presents and bribe, he succeeded to procure from Nawab Shaista Khan a Parwana for custom-free trade by the Danes in Bengal and Odisha<sup>15</sup>. The Danes continued to carry on their business at Balasore.

The settlement of Danes at Balasore was consisting of about 7 acres of land and was known as Dinemardanga. The Danish factory was fortified by a natural most which connected it with the river and defended it from land attacks. On the north side the merchants had excavated a small clock for shipping.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid efforts, the trade of the Danish company in Odisha did not prosper to the same extent as those of the other European companies mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it got very little help from its home government which was urgently necessary for its survival. Secondly, its conflict with the local authority in Odisha put it in disadvantageous position till the

seventies of the century and by that time the European companies having established themselves firmly in Odisha, the Danish Company could not compete with them.

### **The French:**

The efforts of the French to establish commercial contact with Odisha began from 1673, when a French ship, the *Flamond*, came to Balasore Road. Her Commander was well received by the local 'governor', Malik Kasim. He provided them with a house and even lent them a sum of Rs.3,000/- to establish a factory here. Their ship was attacked and captured by the Dutch. The French at the instigation of the 'governor' of Balasore complained to Shaista Khan, the Nawab of Bengal against the Dutch. But ultimately the Dutch retained the vessel after some trouble and by paying to the Nawab and other officials. The French were discharged with good words as well as a Parwana (in 1674) permitting them to establish commercial settlement in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. In expectation of the French East India Company's help in establishing trade settlement at the aforesaid provinces, Duplessis acquired site for settlement at Dacca, Kasimbazar, Hugli and Balasore. But as he got no response to his repeated letters to the French authorities at Surat, and a ship resources dwindled, he left for Pondicherry and reached there on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1674. There he pleaded for establishing trade settlement in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.

The main items in which the French traded in Odisha were sugar, Linen, Silk, Wax, Saltpetre, Sonnoes etc. We do not find reference to any European commodities imported by the French to Odisha for financing their purchasers there. So it is likely that they used bullion for this purpose.

### **Articles of Trade:**

Odisha, in the medieval period, with her surplus products of agricultural as well as industrial, carried out inter-provincial and foreign trade. Rice being profusely cultivated, formed the major part of export not only to different parts of India but also outside India. Balasore was a great rice exporting port from where the stored rice was sent to Bengal and different parts of Mughal Empire. Rice was taken as a share of government from among the people.

Odisha was an excellent and extensive cloth manufacturing area. Balasore was the main centre for the export of such commodities confected from various parts of Odisha. The cotton and textiles manufactured in Odisha had wide market in foreign commodities. The principal articles of trade for export from Odisha were saltpetre, turmeric, sugar, cotton, yarn, taffetas raw silk, sannoes, tincall, duasuttee or coarse soil cloth. Saltpetre was most important among them. Gingham and Millas were also collected for export.

Among other articles exported from Odisha, iron, stone dishes, stone cups, copper, pipes, sugar, salt, grains, turmeric, ginger, sandal wood, long pepper and short pepper, brass plates etc. are worthy of note. The principal articles of import into Odisha were lead, quick silver, vermilion, copper, alum, brimstone, broadcloth, cowries, coral, dried fish, tobacco and various articles of luxury. Elephants, elephant-tasks, arecanuts, cinnamon and conch shells were also imported into Odisha.

The whole trade of the English East India Company consisted in the sale of broad cloth, perpets, copper, iron, lead and a few other commodities from Europe and in the purchase of pieces-goods, silk, drugs, saltpetre and other articles of the cargoes of their , returning ships.

### **Internal Trade:**

Odisha had extensive trade and commercial relationship with Bengal, Bihar, northern India, Gujarat, Surat, Dacca, Kerala and the places in the eastern coast viz. Narssapur, Vyagapatam, Masulipatam, Pulicat, Madras and Modapallam.

The principal articles of exports from Odisha to different places were rice, gram, butter, sugar, textile goods, gingelly seed (*Seasamum indicum*), Salt, iron, stone-plates, maina bird, lead and broad cloth. Odisha imported mainly articles like tobacco, spices and saltpetre. There are also occasional references to the import of rice and salt into Odisha. The imports of rice and salt might be of superior quality.

There was regular supply of Odisha textile goods from Balasore to Patnain of Bihar. Thomas Bowery, in the seventies of the 17<sup>th</sup> century observed that the various cotton manufacturers at Balasore like Sannoos, singham orummals (Rumasl), cotton yarn and other goods were sent to Patna. Odisha exported salt to Patna. Birds of Odisha were sold at the markets Goraghat. Abdul Latif mentioned in 1609 that main birds were brought from Kutch and Odisha to Ghoraghat.

### **External Trade:**

With the coming of the European merchants and the establishment of European factories during the period under review Odisha's trade and commerce with many countries of Asia and Europe took a different dimension. The European factors viz. the English, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes and the French controlled the whole of Odisha's external trade by establishing contact with the Odishan merchants and producer of different articles of investment. Among all the European settlers, the English had a better share in the external trade of Odisha.

References are many in the factor records and European travel accounts to the mercantile marine of medieval Odisha. Ceasar Frederick in the sixties of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century mentioned that every year in the ports of Odisha about 25 or 30 ships big as well as small were laden with rice, various kinds of 'bombast clothes', gingelly (sesame) oil in large quantities of butter, lacca (lac), long pepper, ginger, mirabolans and large quantities of herba cloth. Manrique informs us that Odisha was one of the twelve Kingdoms of 'Bengal' which were much frequently visited by foreigners and more than one hundred vessels were loaded every year with rice, sugar, oil, wax and other similar articles in the ports of Bengal.

Odisha had extensive trade contacts with Maldives Islands. Alexander Hamilton in 1708 observes that the Maldives had to depend on Odishan rice as it was not produced there. Further, he informs that Odisha supplied butter and cloth to the Maldives. Odisha imported colonies and coir from the Maldives Islands. Ibn Batuta (1333-46), referred to the import of colonies from the Maldivian Islands of Bengal.

Odisha's articles of export to Maccao consisted of rice, butter, gingelly seed and cloth in the twenties of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese exported the above mentioned articles to Maccao from Pipli.

The exports from Odisha to various parts of Europe were textile products of different varieties e.g. gingham, sannoes, rumals, gurrahs, mulmuls, cassas, hammams, nillaes, salampores, Calicoes, peniascoes, silk rumals, cotton yarn, sugar, 15altpeter lac, turmeric, iron, wax and opium. The commodities imported into Odisha from Europe were broad-cloth of various colours, scarlet, bullion of gold and silver, vial of eight (Spanish dollar), copper, quick silver, lead, vermilion, coral, glasses, knives, brimstone, speltor, ivory, Sappan wood (a kind of good used in dyeing) and some articles of luxury. All these articles imported were not in demand in Odisha, hence such articles were transported to Bengal and Patna by the Merchants.

## **II. Role of Local Merchants in Odishan Trade:**

The European traders during the period under discussion had the necessity to engage the services of Indian brokers in their business operations. Some of them were influential merchants on their own account and were exceptionally rich and naturally they played a very important, sometimes dominant, part in the commercial life of the country as a whole, besides assisting the foreign companies in their commercial pursuits.

The brokers or otherwise known as the local merchants or native entrepreneurs played a significant role in Odisha's trade. The brokers or local merchants of Odisha belonged to both the Hindu and Muslim communities. The English factory records as well as the travel accounts mentioned the names of Khemchand (Chimcham), Chintamom Shah (Chintamund), Kalsan (Callian), Rajaram (Robjiram), Ramnarayan (Narcin), Hira Shah, Suraj Shah as principal merchants of Balasore.

The merchants of Odisha also carried on trade with Asiatic countries. Bowery in seventies of the 17<sup>th</sup> century referred to the merchants of Balasore and Pipli sending their ship for the purpose of trade. In March, 1630 Khemchand in his ship brought elephants from Tenasserim to Balasore.

The total merchants were subjected to the payment of internal customs duties as well as other exactions, to the government officials. During the Subahdarship of Shaista Khan the merchants of Odisha 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 officer of the place used to charge from them. Sometimes the merchants evaded internal customs duties by eluding the constant vigilance of the Faujdary Officials. Both Saf Shikam Khan (Sufi Khan) and Rashid Khan exacted large amount of money from Khemchand. The later also demanded from other merchants at Balasore money varying from Rs.10,000/- to Rs.50,000/- according to their capacity to pay as easy as July, 1680 Chintaman was severely reprimanded by the Hugli authorities for "boggling" about a debt he owned to the company. In 1681 the Hungli council refused to give Chintaman Shah any share in the investment because of

his private engagements with nawab Rasheed Khan (sometimes, Governor of Odisha, 1674). However, Khan Chand supplied his associate with the proceeds of his own share hoping that the Bay Chief and the Council could pardon him on his representation and continue to employ him as before. In 1685 Chintaman Shah was indebted to the E.I. Company, when a ship owned jointly by Chintaman and Khemchand arrived at the Balasore Road, it was seized by the Captain John Nicholson on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1686. It was this conflict among the irreconcilable forces in the economic situation which made their investments insecure and proved their existence precarious.

The local merchants of Odisha in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century faced various difficulties in their trade operation. They were subjected to custom duties and many other financial extortions from the side of the government officials. The Muslim nobility on their part, made constant endeavors to exclude their Indian associates and the foreigners from the internal trade by enjoying as highest bidders the trade monopoly of particular commodities. The increase in volume of private trade, the effect of natural calamities like floods and droughts and the political uncertainty owing to the Maratha wars (in the forties of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) had added to their difficulties. Gradually the merchants listed their foreign trade. Their condition in some cases became so precarious that as evidenced, they had to give up trading activities and took shelter under the religious shrines.

### **Decline in Trade Activities:**

The internal as well as external trade of Odisha, which received new strides in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century with the participation of indigenous and foreign merchants, could not continue to flourish for long. By the term of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many factors were at work which hindered the prosperity of trade.

Firstly, the merchants had to offer bribes and presents to the Mughal Officials for procuring trade privileges. To cite a few examples Rashid Khan, the Mughal Governor of Odisha took Rs.5000/- for the Dutch for renewal of their Farman. For procuring a Parwana, in respect of their trade privileges in Odisha and Bengal, the French had to pay Rs.10,000/- to Nawab Murshid Quli Khan in 1722. Secondly a race for procuring more and more trade privileges started amongst the European trading companies. Although the main purpose of granting privileges was to smoothen the trade activities, it could not become so.

During this time, the responsibility of the geographical factor for the decline of trade can hardly be ignored. The port towns Balasore, Pipli and Hariharpur, which were important commercial centres of Odisha, were suffering from accumulation of silt on the mouth of the river. As a result, the mouth of the rivers became unsuitable for ships to come in. This factor with the passage of time took away the commercial advantages of Odisha's ports. Odisha's participation in foreign trade and commerce, consequently declined.

The first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed complex problems. In the first place the Indian traders (belonging mostly to the nobility and state officials of the empire) who had larger share in the trade lost their Asiatic trade. The general impoverishment of the nobility, the political turmoil in the twilight of the Mughal empire and a general crisis in the feudal economy resulted in setting a trend of decline in trade. The local merchants of Odisha in the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century lost their foreign trade. Their participation in the foreign trade declined. The English traders during this time in the one hand had eliminated the other foreign traders from the Odisha market and on the other hand themselves shifted their centres of trade from Odisha to Bengal. extant.

### **III. Conclusion:**

A survey of Odisha's economic life must be viewed with the forces of continuity and change that took place during the centuries when she was under the Muslim administration. As regards the land arrangements and officials, the Mughals after the conquest of Odisha, did not bring revolutionary change. Rather they retained the main features of the Hindu system with Persianised nomenclature. Unlike a few officers like Subahdar, Diwans, Fajdar, Amil, Amin, Karori, Chaudhury, Ganungo, Talukdar and Maqaddam got introduced into the administrative circle. Since land revenue constituted the major source to the imperial exchequer, in Odisha revenue settlement, land measurement, revenue assessment and collection became more systematic, better organised and scientific. The introduction of Akbar's uniform land measure Jarib, called Barah Dati Padika, extension of cultivation issue of Patta to the rent payers, fixation of jamma in rupee, and preparation of rakaba accounts in Persian, the court language, remained as important contributions of Muslim administration.

**Further Reading:**

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