

CHAPTER 11.

Population and material condition.

6. *Population.*—The variations in population of the three districts can be seen from the following table :—

	1901.		1911.		1921.		1931.	
	Total.	Per sq. mile.	Total.	Per sq. mile.	Total.	Per sq. mile.	Total.	Per sq. mile.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cuttack ...	2,060,313	564	2,109,139	577	2,064,678	565	2,176,707	596
Balasore ...	1,073,642	515	1,055,568	506	980,504	470	990,600	475
Puri ...	1,017,284	407	1,023,402	410	951,651	381	1,035,154	415

Between 1911 and 1921 there was a fall in all districts. The 1921 census followed closely on a period of scarcity, and on epidemics of influenza and cholera, while malaria also obtained a greater hold in that decade.

In Cuttack there has been a rise by 5.43 per cent in the last ten years bringing the total to 5.65 per cent above the 1901 level and 3.24 per cent above the 1911 level. In Balasore the rise in the last ten years by 1.03 per cent still leaves the population 7.73 per cent below the level of 1901 and 6.16 per cent below that of 1911. In Puri the advance in the last ten years is by as much as 8.77 per cent and brings the population to a level 1.76 per cent above that of 1901 and 1.15 per cent above that of 1911.

7. *Increase in cultivation.*—On the other hand the increase in area under cultivation has been observed to be by $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in Cuttack, 9 per cent in Balasore and $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in Puri.

In Cuttack the advance in cultivation has at least kept pace with that of the population. In Balasore the population is actually less than in 1901 while there has been a substantial increase in the cultivated area. In Puri both population and cultivated area have increased slightly, the latter by rather more than the former. The pressure of population is therefore on the whole lighter than at the close of the Provincial Settlement.

The area still left open for the spread of cultivation is very small except in some parts of the coast and in the jungle country on the western border of the districts.

8. *Material prosperity.*—Mr. James noticed some slight advance in material prosperity between 1900 and 1910, which he ascribed to the coming of the railway and the rise in the price of rice, combined with the facilities which the inhabitants enjoy for earning wages in industrial centres outside the province.

9. *Price of rice.*—The movements in the price of rice in Orissa show a curiously rhythmical rise and fall between 1900 and 1930, with a steady upward movement on the whole. Expressed in terms of seers to the rupee the average price rose to 15 in 1901, steadily dropped in the next three years to 2) in 1904, rose sharply to 10 between 1904 and 1907, dropped again to 15 in 1910 and 1911, rose between 1911 and 1915 to 9, dropped to 13 in 1917 and 1918, then rose very sharply to 7 in 1919 and to 6 in 1920. This was the highest point reached. There was another three years' decline to 12 in 1923, followed by recovery to 8 in 1924 and 1925. This level was maintained in 1926 and 1927 but it dropped again to 10 in 1928 and 1929.

and to 12 in 1930. Then came the serious slump, when the price dropped right down to 16½ in 1931, reaching 18 in November of that year.

It is not within the scope of this report to go deeply into the causes of this rise and fall. The comparatively high peak reached in 1907 and 1908 can be attributed to floods in Orissa and famine in North India. The normal rise in 1919 and 1920 was probably mainly due to improvement of world markets after the great war, while the flood of 1920 also contributed. The price seems then to have sought a more normal level until a series of flood years in 1925 to 1927 caused another rise. The recent remarkable drop is of course a world-wide phenomenon to which many factors have contributed.

10. *Emigration.*—The tendency of villagers to emigrate to industrial centres and earn wages there has increased considerably since Revision Settlement. Oriya labour in other countries constitutes an invisible export of some importance in the balance of trade of Orissa. In some parts of Orissa there is scarcely a household which does not send one member to Calcutta or elsewhere for some months in the year, while in an area in which the rice crop has been destroyed by a severe flood it is common to find that the majority of the male population has emigrated and the local post office receives a steady flow of money-orders. A comparison of the figures for the periods 1915—20 and 1925—30 shows an advance in the yearly average value of remittances from Rs. 95 lakhs to Rs. 144 lakhs. Orissa is notoriously lacking in industries of its own and it is natural that the surplus men, whose labour is not required for the cultivation of the land, should turn their attention to fields of employment outside the province. Calcutta, Jamshedpur and Rangoon are the main centres which receive these emigrants. Different localities are found to favour different industrial centres for emigration. The inhabitants of Khurda subdivision generally go to Rangoon, while Killa Aul in Cuttack district supplies many servants to Calcutta households.

11. *Exports and imports.*—The opening of the railway has encouraged trade, but the sea-borne trade has of course diminished. Taking the weight of rice at two-thirds of the paddy the following figures of rice export are quoted :—

Year,	Railway borne, Mds.	Maritime trade. Mds.	Total Mds.
1926-27	1,837,453	146,061	1,983,514
1927-28	2,155,048	148,288	2,303,336
1928-29	2,830,779	142,755	2,983,534

1926-27 and 1927-28 were bad years with severe floods, although in the latter year the rice crop benefited in some areas by silt deposit from the floods of the year before. 1928-29 was a good year, perhaps a little above the normal. I would place the average surplus available for export midway between Mr. Maddox's estimate of 29 lakhs and Mr. James's estimate of 26.73 lakhs of maunds.

Kerosine oil and sugar are imported in large quantities. The comparative figures are as follows, in maunds :—

Article of import.	1901-02.	1909-10.	1928-29.
Kerosine oil	141,623	247,864	343,250
Sugar, refined	46,891	96,850	198,841
Sugar, unrefined	113,408	130,481	

The decrease in import of sugar may be attributed to the spread in sugarcane cultivation. The increased importation of kerosine oil indicates some advance of prosperity as also does the increased expenditure on opium. The amount of opium consumed had advanced between Provincial and Revision Settlement from 372 to 500 maunds. In 1928-29 it is found to be 470 maunds but as the price per tola was advanced from 8 annas in 1901 to 12 annas in 1910 and to Rs. 1-8-0 in 1928-29, the sum spent on the drug has risen. The revenue obtained from this source was

Rs. 6 lakhs in 1901, Rs. 12 lakhs in 1911 and Rs. 19½ lakhs in 1928-29. There is also a considerable quantity of tobacco imported as the following figures show :—

1926-27	...	...	...	...	2,386 tons.
1927-28	...	...	...	...	2,683 "
1928-29	...	...	...	...	2,834 "

12. *Labour wages.*—The wages of labourers have risen along with the price level. The following table shows the figures of the three censuses of rural wages in the years 1911, 1916 and 1924. The figures are for unskilled labour in the agricultural areas :—

District	Year of census			Increase in percentage of 1924 over 1916.
	1911.	1916.	1924.	
1	2	3	4	5
	Rs. a. P.	Rs. a. P.	Rs. a. p.	
Balasore	0 2 0	0 2 6	0 4 3	+70
Cuttack	0 2 0	0 2 0	0 4 0	+100
Puri	0 2 0	0 2 6	0 4 0	+60

Mr. Maddox remarked that money wages had not risen in the same proportion as the prices of staple food crops between 1814 and 1898. Mr. James noticed the same phenomenon holding good up to 1910. There seems to have been little if any rise in money wages between the Provincial and Revision Settlements. There was a slight rise between 1911 and 1916, and a very sharp rise between 1916 and 1924. The wage level has remained constant since 1924. The rise since the Provincial Settlement was roughly in the same proportion as the rise in prices.

The system of paying wages in produce, however, still persists, but is not so prevalent as it used to be. The level of wages in kind does not vary much, the average being 4 seers 3 chataks of paddy per day.

The above applies to agricultural labour. Carpenter's wages, paid in cash are now Re. 0-8-0 to Re. 0-12-0 a day, a considerable advance on the figure of Re. 0-2-6 given by Sir William Hunter in 1875 and that of Re. 0-4-0 to Re. 0-6-0 given by Mr. James at Revision Settlement. Blacksmiths generally do piece work, but when they get daily wage it is generally Re. 0-8-0 a day, as compared with Re. 0-2-6 in 1875.

§ 13. *Halia system.*—The casual day labourer in agricultural parts is known as a *mukha*. A system, however, still prevails by which labourers are retained on undefined contracts from year to year. These are designated as *halias* or *kothias*. The *halia* is engaged yearly on *Dol-Purnima* day. The basis of his contract is a loan or advance of pay from his employer, varying in amount from Rs. 5 to Rs. 50, and the *halia*, although engaged for the year, cannot free himself from the obligation to work for his employer until he has repaid this advance. He gets a cash wage of about Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 for the year, and a daily wage of Re. 0-2-0 to Re. 0-3-0 cash or 2½ to 3 seers of paddy on the days on which he works. He generally gets an area of about 20 to 25 decimals of land as his *heta*, which he is allowed to cultivate with ploughs and seeds provided by his master. He also gets 4 to 8 sheaves of paddy per acre ploughed and one in 8 to 12 sheaves of paddy reaped. He is given one *dhoti* and one *gamcha* during the year. His total income from all these sources will amount to about

Rs. 60 per annum. Interest on the loans taken by the *halias* is nominally 25 to 37½ per cent for cash advances and 50 per cent for paddy. But actually only half these rates are charged unless the contract of service is broken. The *halia* system does not appear to lead to oppression, as the servant can generally free himself from his bond if he really wishes to. Cases of long continued service under one contract are rare.

14. *Rural indebtedness.*—The indebtedness of the rural population of Orissa came within the scope of the investigations of the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee presided over by Mr. J. A. Hubback, I.C.S. in 1929-30. On the subject of rates of interest charged by the ordinary village money-lender the Committee reported "In the Orissa coast districts much of the annual borrowing for seed and maintenance is in kind. The general rate is 25 per cent payable soon after the harvest, the loan running for a period of 4 to 8 months only. For seed grain, however, 50 per cent is frequently demanded. On the other hand an occasional rate of 20 per cent is met with. For cash loans the rate of 18½ per cent for the full year is not infrequent but the general rate is either 25 or 37½ per cent. . . . The village co-operative societies lend to their members at 15⁵/₈ per cent as a rule though a few have managed to get the rate down to 12½ per cent".

The Committee's investigators observed an average indebtedness per household of Rs. 73 but the figures calculated by members of the Committee themselves gave an average of Rs. 130. From the Committee's figures it would appear that about one-fifth or more of the households are free from debt, while about one-half are lightly in debt from Re. 1 to Rs. 105. 16½ per cent were found by the Committee to be heavily in debt over Rs. 211. Comparison with the figures for other parts of the province shows that the burden of indebtedness is, on the whole, considerably lighter in Orissa than in Bihar and slightly lighter than in Chota Nagpur.

15. *Landlords' indebtedness.*—As regards indebtedness of landlords, the analysis made by the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee shows this to be lighter in Orissa than in the other divisions of the province. Fifty per cent of the Orissa landlords are found to be free from debt, as compared with 40 per cent in Chota Nagpur and 34½ per cent in Bihar. Among those indebted, the proportion of those lightly indebted (from Re. 1 to Rs. 945) is 70 per cent in Orissa, 31 per cent in Chota Nagpur and 28 per cent in Bihar. The average indebtedness in Orissa is calculated to be Rs. 800, in Chota Nagpur Rs. 11,000, and in Bihar Rs. 4,000. These figures are not of course, claimed to be scientifically accurate, and it has to be remembered that in general the Oriya landlords are men of much smaller means than those of Chota Nagpur or Bihar. But it is reasonable to conclude that the landlords of Orissa, as a class, are not heavily burdened with debt.

16. *Co-operative Societies.*—The co-operative movement has made considerable progress since the last settlement. In 1912 there were 2 central societies with a working capital of Rs. 1, 13,671 and 82 affiliated societies. The figures of 1928 are 10 central societies with a working capital of nearly Rs. 40 lakhs, and 1,730 affiliated societies. In that year, however, the proportion of "bad" societies in Cuttack Circle was very high. Among the societies are a number of non-agricultural ones, for instance 6 for bell-metal workers in Cuttack Circle, but these are not doing well.

There should be a large field for co-operative credit in the assistance of projects for the development of valuable crops such as sugar, and indeed in a few isolated cases useful work has already been done in this direction.

17. *Changes in habits and ideas.*—The Oriya mind is naturally conservative and unenterprising. Hence the spread of new ideas is slow, and little change can be observed in the habits of the people. The common diet of the Oriya villager is still *pakhal* or boiled rice and water, taken in the morning and evening. Tea-drinking is, however, gaining ground. The consumption of opium continues to be heavy, and it is still administered to children, although Government have instructed the Excise, Public Health and Education Departments to conduct propaganda against it. The Bihar and Orissa opium Smoking act of 1928 has recently come into effect and

should effect some improvement. In the more "advanced" areas habits of litigiousness are observed to be growing. In reporting on the state of education in their camps the Attestation Officers very commonly remarked that there was a tendency for the brighter pupils to turn their superior education to account by becoming village *mamlatkars* or touts and stirring up trouble among the more ignorant villagers.

✓ 18. *Caste*.—The castes of Orissa have often been described elsewhere. The ancient Sasan system, by which Brahmins were settled in villages and given a sort of spiritual jurisdiction over the surrounding area, survives in the village names but is for most purposes defunct. Many families were found to have improved their caste designation since last settlement, or attempted to do so at this settlement. These changes were given effect to in the records only in exceptional cases, when the claim was found to be particularly well-grounded. In this way many families designated as Jena at last settlement, sought to be recorded as Rays or Mahapatras at this settlement and Khandaits wished to become Mahalayaks or Karans, Bariks or Lenkas to become Patnaiks, and Chasas to become Khandaits. Similarly among the different grades of Brahmins Pandas would style themselves as Satpathis or Mahapatras. The census figures tell the same tale. For instance in Cuttack district there has been an abnormal increase of Khandaits between 1921—1931 and a decrease of Chasas. In Balasore the decline in the number of Chasas is still more marked—from 18,168 to 11,541.

In Orissa the dhobi is also a hewer of wood, and the *Bhandari* (barber) generally performs the function of minister to the village idol. The Gours traditionally work as palanquin bearers, but a strong movement has arisen among the members of this caste to improve their status and to ban this work as degrading. This is consequent on the contact with civilization which many of their members obtain by working as servants in Calcutta.

19. *Eradication of water-hyacinth*.—The weed known as water-hyacinth spread rapidly in Orissa after the Revision Settlement, and became a serious menace to crops and to health. Ever since the question was raised in 1918 Government had encouraged local bodies to frame by-laws giving them power to issue notices for the removal of the weed and to prosecute persons who failed to comply. In 1928 Mr. N. F. Peck, I.C.S., as Collector, started a vigorous campaign and was so successful that by the end of 1929 the district of Cuttack was practically cleared of the pest. In Balasore and Puri the Collectors have followed suit and have also gone a long way towards the eradication of water-hyacinth. The unprecedented efficacy of Mr. Peck's methods has made this campaign a model to other districts and provinces. The beneficial effects of the removal of this weed are manifold, as crops, fisheries, and the health of the people are alike saved from serious harm.

20. *Health*.—Malaria is the most prevalent disease in Orissa. Epidemics of cholera and small-pox occur yearly at certain seasons with varying intensity. Skin disease, dysentery and diarrhoea, due mainly to the bad state of water-supply, are also common.