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COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE DURING THE BRITISH REGIME

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Abstract:

Since the ancient times, the Indian economy and the social system was dependent on agriculture only. Most of the people were dependent on agriculture. As the Indians were involved emotionally with the agricultural lands, they could reconcile the thought of 'land-sale'. The agriculture was looked as a mean of subsistence. During that period needs of the people were fulfilled on the local levels; so villages had become self-reliant.

KEY WORDS:

Agriculture , Indian Economy ,british Regime .

INTRODUCTION

When the British rule emerged in India, the traditional rural system got collapsed. After the British established their predominance in Bengal, they intended to absorb and oppress Indians economically. This Oppression resulted into the bad situation of peasants along with the traders. As the English people held the commercial tendency, they measured everything in terms of loss and profit. Through the commercial criteria, they first made lands sellable. The British gave away Indian traditional agricultural methods and commercialized them. They sponsored the manufacture of yields which they needed. Consequently the concept of "the production as per need" got substituted by the "production for profit".

As there had been "industrial revolution" in England, they needed the raw material for their industries and hence they compelled Indians to manufacture the production which they wanted. As British people gave priority to the cash crops, we started feeling the scarcity food.

At the same time, due to the revenue policy of British, agricultural circumstances were worsened. Imposing many types of taxes, farmers were oppressed on the large scale. They took away the production they wanted and absorbed the Indian farmers. They made India a settlement providing raw material. Here began the real commercialization of agriculture.

1)Commercialization if the Indian Agriculture (Meaning and Nature)

A)Meaning:

The demand of raw material from India increased in England; especially raw material of cash crops like cotton, blued, tobacco, sugarcane, oil seeds. Even peasants preferred to cultivate these cash crops because they would get hard cash as soon as the yields were available. Hence naturally the area of such cash crops increased. This process in termed as 'commercialization of agriculture'.

1) Dhananjay Gadgil:

“Agriculture for sale in market instead of using in home purposes is called as commercialization of agriculture.” Or “Cultivating crops according to the demands of the market and earn hard cash can also be called as commercialization of agriculture.

2) “Aiming at agriculture for trade; not limited to a village or town but to gain hard profit by selling the agricultural goods in markets means the commercialization of agriculture.”

3) “To cultivate the crops which make maximum income is the commercialization of agriculture.”

B) Nature:

The British people compelled Indian peasants to cultivate cash crops. They compelled to cultivate such crops that could supply the raw material in England. England had to be dependent on India for cotton after the end of the bipolar wars as America had ceased to supply cotton to England. Consequently it was indispensable for England to make compulsion on Indian farmers to manufacture cotton. Similarly they also needed tea, sugar, jute opium, etc. So they compelled the farmers to take their production, and also they were attracted towards the cash crops for they got hard cash. Hence to cultivate land for the production that gives maximum income or profit is the commercialization of agriculture.

The British Government began to collect the land revenue in the form of money. The former method of tax in the form of 'an object' disappeared in course of time. And as this revenue was to be paid in the form of hard cash, peasants laid emphasis on cash crops. The sum the peasants got in the form hard cash enabled them to pay the land revenue. This laid to the faster commercialization of agriculture.

Due to the commercialization of agriculture, the Indian economy grew too weaker to control the poverty of farmers as their income lowered down. On some occasions farmers began to sell or to mortgage their lands. In the greed of earning more money, they began to emphasize cash crops, as a result of which the commercialization of the agriculture got fostered.

In this process, cultivation of the cash crops is aimed at capitalism. During the British regime, the cultivation of tea, wheat, cotton, sesame, jute, tobacco, opium was made with the objective of commercialization. Through this process, the British aimed at fulfilling their needs and to gain more profit.

Causes of Commercialization of Agriculture

In the pre-British period, Indian farmers used to cultivate the crops as per their own needs. This condition changed in the British period. Indian farmers were compelled to cultivate the crops which the British needed for the industries in the England. The farmers emphasized the cash crops such as cotton, blue, opium, jute, sugarcane, etc. that have acute demand in the market. In fact, the farmers did not have the need of such crops in their day-to-day life. In the world of commercialization, needs of market were thought to be more important. Farmers used to get more money out of cash crops in comparison with the food grains. It is here that commercialization had been brought about. The main causes of the commercialization of agriculture can be stated as follows:

- 1) Indian peasants needed more money to pay the increasing land revenue.
- 2) British Government made a large investment in India with the aim of gaining large profit.
- 3) The means of communications were increased so far.
- 4) The trade in India and abroad enhanced on the large scale.
- 5) There was a great demand for Indian goods in abroad.
- 6) Production of cash crops was made compulsory for Indian peasants.
- 7) The industries in England needed the raw material.
- 8) Money was needed for the hard cash trade and commerce.
- 9) Paisa a new currency came into existence.

Thus, there were many reasons for the commercialization of the agriculture.

Land Revenue and Commercialization of Agriculture

During the British period, many significant changes happened, Self-reliant village life became substituted with dependence of Indian farmers, the production from agriculture was thought enough to fulfil the needs of village or a farmer's family needs. In the traditional system, some part of the grains had to be given in the form of revenue and main thing was that according to the income of the farmer revenue was collected.

During the British period, revenue became the mean of income. The revenue had to be paid in hard cash compulsorily. They collected the revenue in different ways like Rayatwari, Mahalwari or Kayamdhara tax methods. They made compulsion to pay the revenue in the form of hard cash. So the people began to take loan for the payment of the revenue. The traditional method of giving objects in the form of tax stopped and

tax transactions began to happen in hard cash. The farmers needed hard cash. The main reasons for it: -

- 1) For the payment of land revenue in hard cash on right time.
- 2) To return the loan taken by moneylenders.
- 3) To purchase various goods from the market.

In this economic system, hard cash was essential for the payment of revenue. The farmers needed hard cash in the commercialization of agriculture. The industries in England needed raw material and the Indian land was rich for supplying the raw material. And from this commercialization of agriculture was emerged. There was a one way profit for the British people from this revenue system and the commercialization. On the contrary there was a tremendous loss of Indian farmers on both fronts as they were oppressed and absorbed. After 1858 Indian agricultural goods had a great demand in England. But contradictorily Indian farmers did not get any profit from this. It is because that they had to pay more taxes, mediators and traders purchased farmers goods in minimum price and obtained a great profit. Traders, moneylenders, capitalists and British people were benefited out of this commercialization. The British brought the Gujar and Marwadi caste people in Maharashtra from other provinces. "This is a well known fact that Tepokar was brought by British from Gujarat to Mumbai city." These traders established their predominance in the trade of cotton. Many Marwadis occur in Amravati in which reference of the trader Dhanaraj occur. They used to purchase the entire cotton fields and auction them. This led to the economic absorption of the farmers.

Government Schemes and Commercialization of Agriculture

After the American bipolar wars, British began to concentrate on Indian agriculture. In fact, these schemes of improvement of agriculture were emerged through the needs of British people. They encouraged the Indian farmers by constructing canals, dams and percolation tanks. In 1829, the chief of Dapoli Agricultural School Dr. Lush was given the work of cotton cultivation in behalf of "Bombay Deccan." The Government established research institutions for the improvement of cash crops like sugarcane, cotton etc. Consequently after 1850, gardening area got enlarged and the farmers were inclined to cultivate the cash crops. In this way farmers used to get various prizes through the Government Schemes and they got engorgement to take cash crops, which led to the commercialization of agriculture.

Consequences of the Commercialization of Agriculture

In the British regime the commercialization of agriculture resulted into very dangerous consequences. It resulted into considerably wretched plight. The relation of the income did not remain with the needs but it got centred on the element of profit. This profit did not reach to Indians but British obtained tremendous profit out of it. Therefore the contemporary commercialization of agriculture was not so beneficial to the Indian farmers. It resulted into a disparity in the agricultural life. The following effects of the commercialization of agriculture are explicit:

- 1) Due to the commercialization of agriculture cash crops got priority.
- 2) Because of the compulsory cash crops food grains decreased and it resulted into the scarcity of food.
- 3) The self-reliance of the villages got vanished and they became dependent.
- 4) Due to the wretched plight of the farmers, they became passive and their living standard got lowered down.
- 5) Peasant class became poor.
- 6) The matters of sale and purchase of land began due to the commercialization.
- 7) For more production and profit, region wise special zones of the production were created.
- 8) Farmers became poor and bankrupt.
- 9) Due to the commercialization a supplementary atmosphere was created for the development of national economy.

In the agricultural field, the production method of aristocracy in the middle age got substituted with the modern capitalism. In this way there have been many effects which can be seen on the lives of Indian farmers.

Evaluation / Conclusions

Totally the commercialization of agriculture stood beneficial for British only, and for India it held out tremendous loss. Although the process of the commercialization was not bad, British people took the disadvantage of Indian farmers. This resulted into the economically wretched plight of the farmers.

Due to the commercialization of agriculture dependence of the self-reliant farmers grew faster. Importance of cash crops increased as a result of hard cash transactions which came instead of exchange of objects. Instead of 'need', 'profit' became the support poll of agriculture. These farmers, who had no capital had to become landless. As the revenue collection was the way of absorption of the farmers, the commercialization of agriculture was too, the way of absorption. This is how the Indian agriculture and farmers came into the wretched plight. Therefore Indian farmers and agriculture have got prolonged effects.

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