

IRAQ AND INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AGRICULTURE DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



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Abstract:-

During the nineteenth century Iraq was weakness and deterioration in the agricultural sector. There was no development in agriculture during the reign of Medhat Pasha that the state of Iraq made good agricultural development., The Ottoman government moved away its interest from the agricultural sector and put the greatest burden on the farmers in land preparation, provision of seeds and harvest and markets sales. If these governors of Iraq would have followed the method of Medhat Pasha, Iraq could have acquired top position in the agricultural production in the world and the agricultural sector would have brought prosperity and progress in Iraq.

In India During this period, the colonial economies were open economies. They were affected by the impact of the world market and not national economies, which could determine their own fate and develop their home market. This was a common feature of all colonial economies. There were also distinctive traits mainly related to the supply of peasants and the availability of natural resources. In India, labour was abundant in supply and the prevailing mode of agricultural production was that of small peasant households. Plantations existed only for the production of tea on the hills and they recruited their labour from other region of India.

Keywords:

Comparative study , Agriculture during , Iraq and India , weakness and deterioration .

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and village industries had been major sectors of India and Iraq economy since ancient times. Agriculture had played a vital role in the economy and had employed a greater number of populations. It was the basis of the rural economy as almost the entire rural population was associated with the land in some way or another. The natural conditions of the land and climatic influences had rendered India predominantly as agricultural country. Hence, the agriculturist, cultivator or the peasant was a backbone of economic life. All other economic groups in the society like the weavers, carpenters and blacksmiths, while rendering their particular skilled functions, depended on the agriculturist for their own economic sustenance. Moreover, most of the castes which had non-agricultural economic professions did possess lands of their own. The village community functioned so much like an integrated organism that all varieties of people tended to look at the ryot as the indispensable factor of community existence. Thus, agriculture and the agriculturist represented the core of the India and Iraq economy. To know about the condition of agriculture, three factors need to examine, namely, the possession of land, the manner of cultivation and the various crops produced.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AGRICULTURE:

1. In Iraq and India, agriculture had been the most important pillar of the economy. It was the essence of the economy. The major portion of the population in both countries was engaged in agricultural activities. 80% of India's population was engaged in agriculture.

In the same way, in Iraq, 70% of the population was occupied in agriculture. The agriculture was adopted by the farmers on the basis of three main factors: the ownership of the land, the quality of the crop and the methods of agriculture and irrigation. (1)

2. Farmers were suffered in India as well as in Iraq. The daily wages they earned were not enough and thus always had to face the problems like hunger and poverty. All the members of the farmer's family had to work in the farms and thus the agriculture, as an important means of livelihood, was passed from father to son. The social condition of the farmers in both countries had always remained deprived and thus belonged to the lowest layer of the society. (2)

3. India also suffered due to natural disasters, mostly like famine, which affected human life and resulted into thousands of death. Famine in Orissa, in the year 1865-66, was one of the major famines that took place due to lack of rainfall and import of food. As the rice was destroyed which again led to famine and loss of human life? A quarter of the region's population had lost their lives. The government also did not respond appropriately and had failed to implement rescue missions. The second famine in 1868-70 led to the spread of diseases like smallpox and cholera, which increased the number of deaths to 12,00,000 people.(3) The famine that occurred during 1874-73 was due to climatic conditions. The poor monsoon led to the damage to rice crops. During 1877-78, 800 thousand people died in Bombay. The government attempted to reduce the losses, but it did not succeed. On 11th October, 1877, the Viceroy wrote to Queen Victoria:

“Whilst the Madras famine has cost the Government of India over 10 millions, the Bombay famine, under General Kennedy's management, has cost only four millions, although a much larger saving of human life has been effected in Bombay than in Madras.”(4)

During 1896-97, the fourth famine occurred. The main reasons for the occurrence of famine were the high temperatures resulting into damage of the agricultural crops and the spread of cholera which increased number of death. The number of people who died was 230 thousand because of the disease.

In the year 1907-1908, there was a famine in India. The human and material losses were very large. However, the responsive actions taken by the government to tackle the situation were slow and weak as far as the famine was concerned. It was necessary to take a serious action that would avoid a crisis. The necessary steps that should have taken by the government were:

1. Ban the export of grain and food during the famine.
2. Decrease the prices of food in the market.
3. Give compensation to the farmers for the damage of crops in order to help them.
4. Waive taxes for farmers.
5. Distribution of food to those who were affected.
6. Pass necessary laws for the above-mentioned necessities. (5)

However, Iraq did not suffer due to disaster or famine like India. But in the late nineteenth century, especially in 1877, when Iraq experienced wave of cold, which led to the damage of wheat crop.

The production was small and was not enough for the local market. The wheat traders had exported most of the crop to European markets. People in Iraq were angry because of the export of wheat by traders. They went to the port to pull down the entire crop. Consequently, the Ottoman government issued a decision which prevented the export of wheat for two years. The export was banned to fulfill the demand from local markets and relieve the tension of the Iraqi people. This step was taken by the government also to avoid the revolution against the government. The position of the Iraqi government to intervene during a

crisis was much better than the government's position in India.(6)

4. In Iraq, alike in India, the ownership of land used to pass from the farmer to his sons after him. However, very few Iraqi farmers owned land; on the contrary, most of the farmers in Iraq were working for the zamindars, who were the owners of the land and the farmers worked for them. (7)

In India, the Hindu Succession Act was binding on the farmer. The act had identified the relationship between the farmer and the land, that the Father and the Son were equal in their rights of the land. As in the case of division of land, the elder son used to take the largest share than his younger brothers. This law was prevalent in the north and south-west India.

In Bengal, the father was the owner of the land. In case of his death, the land was divided among his children. However, there were a large number of farmers in India who did not own land but were working in the farms of zamindar.(8)

5. In India, the division of the land had negatively affected agriculture. The division of land into small pieces created disorder in the cultivation of crops. A single family used to control a large area of land, and cultivate only one type of crop at one time. From the economic point of view, division of the land increased the marginal ownership of land, which was responsible for the creation of small pieces of land. This newly created land structure caused to increase the cost of cultivation and production of a particular crop, as the land was distributed among the brothers belonging to a single family. This crop was cultivated at the expense of another crop. Thus, growing crops yielded profits at the expense of other crops and so on. (9)

6. In Iraq and India, the farmers used cattle for the cultivation. However, the farmers faced the problem of providing food for the cattle. Because of unavailability of food, a large number of cattle died, which led to the inability of farmers to cultivate their land and provide manure for the land. (10)

7. The most serious problem, which was faced in agriculture in Iraq and India, was to provide water for irrigation purposes. In Iraq, the farmers tried to deal with this problem by building the canals and wells. However, these means were not sufficient to meet the needs of the ground water, particularly in times of drought. The Ottoman government intervened and provided irrigation supplies to the farmers. However, the priority of the Ottoman rulers was to collect money from farmers and impose taxes on the farmers rather than paying attention to the problems of peasants. (11)

In India, the farmers also tried to deal with this problem by building canals, wells and reservoirs. However, these means were not sufficient to meet the needs of the ground water, particularly in times of drought. (12)

8. In India, the farmers depended more on rain than irrigation by canals or wells. However, this does not mean that the rain water was the only source of agriculture in India. For 20% of the total of land was irrigated with the water from wells. (13)

In Iraq, the farmers depended more on irrigation than rain. It was difficult to rely on the rain for the cultivation of crops because the rain in Iraq was volatile and unstable. (14)

9. In Iraq, during the early twentieth century, the banks started to lend money and other substantial benefits to the farmers.

In India, since the eighteenth century, the banks began to lend money with advances to the farmers. The farmers took full advantage given by the banks for cultivation of the land. Farmers had to pay back the amounts taken by the banks as loan for cultivation immediately after the harvest, which amounted almost to two-thirds of total production. (15)

10. In Iraq, the Ottoman government did not force the farmers to plant industrial crops. However, in India, the British government had enforced the peasants to cultivate industrial crops instead of food crops because England needed the industrial crops as raw material used to manufacture the finished goods. The important cash crops were cotton, tobacco, opium, indigo, jute etc. (16)

In Iraq, the peasant had freedom in the cultivation of the crop. However, at the end of the 19th century, specifically after the European markets demand to buy the dates from Iraq that led to prompting farmers to plant palm trees to reap profits by selling the crop to traders. We find that the majority of agricultural land in Iraq was indulged in cultivation of palm trees. (17)

11. In India, money lenders and the banks used to lend money to the farmers for the cultivation of agricultural land on the condition that they would return the money taken from the banks after harvest. Farmers found that the cultivation of food crops like rice, sugar, wheat etc. could not have gained much profit to pay interest to the bank. Therefore, the farmer cultivated industrial crops such as tobacco, jute, indigo etc. These crops earned big profits for the farmers as the demand for these crops was large in European markets and it was possible for the farmers to pay back the loan amount to the bank. (18)

12. The British government in India intended to increase the revenues by enacting the law to acquire money from the peasants and by imposing taxes on agricultural land. However, the farmer's condition was underprivileged because he had to repay the loan amount and interest to the banks and also had to pay taxes on the land imposed by the British Government, which sometimes reached more than 66% of the agricultural production. Therefore, the farmers had to suffer due to such payment to bank and government. To overcome this loss, the farmer cultivated the industrial crops that generated big profits to help him pay his debts. The farmers in other areas could not bear such burden imposed by the banks and British government. As a result, in 1859-1860, the farmers in Bengal called a great revolution against the British government as the government forced them to cultivate indigo crop (a crop which was used in the industry

of textile fabrics for coloring). Consequently, the production of indigo crop was stopped for two years; however, of the British government had to intervene to stop the strike. (19)

In Iraq, the Ottoman government did not impose higher taxes on the peasants. The tax was not more than 2% of the total value of production in case of undeveloped land. In 1872, Ottoman government issued a law of the land distribution. It intended to settle the land issues of the tribes and clans. The government, during the reign of Medhat Pasha, distributed land to the peasants for planting for a maximum period of 3 years with a condition that the government would withdraw the non-cultivated land from the farmer. The government provided free seeds to the farmers to encourage them for cultivation. In Iraq, there had been no revolution or strike against the government because the Ottoman government did not force the farmers to grow a particular crop against the interest of the farmers. (20)

13. The British government, especially during the reign of the British East India Company, did not take care of the agricultural sector in India. It did not spend funds for the irrigation projects or land reclamation. On the contrary, the government invested huge funds on railway and military projects. However, in the early of twentieth century, the government had taken interest in irrigation projects especially in 1901 by Lord Curzon, who brought his reforms and projects in the field of irrigation. (21)

In Iraq, the Ottoman government did not spend money on irrigation projects or land reclamation. On the contrary, the government provided funds for the military budget because the Ottoman Empire needed the funds meet the expenses of the army for its involvement in ongoing wars. (22)

14. There had been a tradition of Zamindari both in Iraq and India since a long time. Zamindars were the people who possessed large areas of agricultural land. They belonged to the richest layer of the society. They had a prominent position in society. They were not a judicial authority of the government, but they were affiliated to the government.

In India, during the reign of the British company, the Zamindar was the helping hand for the British government to collect taxes and revenues from the farmers and pass on to the British government. (23)

In Iraq, during the period of Ottoman rule, Zamindar or feudalism was the political stage and represented the government's social class. They were closer to the government and the governor. They were not responsible for raising funds and taxes from peasants for the government, because the Ottoman government had such authorities called as *al mltizam*. He was responsible for tax collection and payment of the same to the government keeping a amount for himself. (24)

15. The agricultural production in India and Iraq was divided into two types, i.e. food crops and non-food crops. The food crops were cultivated in a very high quantity compared to non-food crops.

From the above points, it is clear that the British rulers made development in India like establishment of railway network, ports, communication network, roads, etc. These developments mainly aimed toward the ease in transportation of raw materials from remote areas in various parts of Indian states to the ports to send it to Britain, as Britain needed raw materials like cotton, indigo etc. for its industries. For this, the British government converted most of the agricultural land which was used for the cultivation of food crops such as wheat, rice, etc. to non-food land i.e. industrial crops, such as, tobacco, indigo, jute, cotton, etc. especially after the increase in demand for Indian cotton by the Japanese markets. Thus, the large proportion of land in India was turned to cotton cultivation. The British trading houses controlled the foreign trade of India and the rates of export. (25)

In Iraq the targets of biggest production were ascertained and production of food crops such as wheat, barley, rice etc. was continued on a large scale. The Ottoman government did not interfere in the amount or type of production or the proportions of food crop production which was to be exported abroad. (26)

CONCLUSION

In Iraq the weakness and deterioration was evident in the agricultural sector during the nineteenth century. There was no development in agriculture except in the era of the governor Medhat Pasha. It was during the reign of Medhat Pasha that the state of Iraq made good agricultural development. However, Iraq soon experienced weakness and deterioration as soon as Medhat Pasha resigned. Despite the fact that all elements of an agricultural country like water and soil were diversified and there were climatic changes that affected crops, the Ottoman government moved away its interest from the agricultural sector and put the greatest burden on the farmers in land preparation, provision of seeds and harvest and markets sales. If these governors of Iraq would have followed the method of Medhat Pasha, Iraq could have acquired top position in the agricultural production in the world and the agricultural sector would have brought prosperity and progress in Iraq.

In India During this period, colonial economies were open economies. They were affected by the impact of the world market and not national economies, which could determine their own fate and develop their home market. This was a common feature of all colonial economies. There were also distinctive traits mainly related to the supply of peasants and the availability of natural resources. In India, labour was abundant in supply and the prevailing mode of agricultural production was that of small peasant households. Plantations existed only for the production of tea on the hills and they recruited their labour from other region of India. There was hardly any capitalist agriculture. The Indian landlord was a renter and not an entrepreneur. Under the condition of the monsoon, it was wiser to live on the compulsorily acquired

surplus of peasant families rather than to run large farms or plantations with hired labour. Revenue demand or debt service and very often both of them forced the peasants to produce for the market. The colonial rulers could earn profit from the collection of revenue as well as from the cheap supply of cash crops grown by the peasant. On the other hand, the colony also provided a market for British goods. There was a dilemma in this import and export of goods. Expropriating the surplus value of peasants' production diminished the purchasing power of the peasants.

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