

Indian economics in the Pre-British Period- Structure and organization of village, towns, industries and handicrafts

In the preceding discussion, we are going to understand the history of Indian economy, i.e. Study of economic activities of men over the period of time in India before the British rule. This study is little complex because India had the rule by Mughals, Marathas, Local kings and Nawabs on different parts of India. We should study the past to obtain the lessons for the present. Similarly, this study will help us in testing the hypothesis of economic theories. In this unit we shall be able to present a general picture of the villages, towns and the economic activities undertaken in India during Pre-British rule.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF VILLAGE

Old Indian villages were isolated and self-sufficient socioeconomic units, covering about ninety percent of the population of India. In 1872, 68.5 percent of male population derived their livelihood from land. Further, people who were engaged in industrial occupation had agriculture as a subsidiary occupation. Villages were self sufficient entities. There was a barter system of exchange. The means of transport and communication were underdeveloped. The old economic order was governed and regulated largely by prevailing customs and status. The joint family and the caste system decided the occupation of the individuals. Under the economic order, rent, wages and prices were determinate and regulated by the prevailing usages and customs. Rents paid by the cultivators to the landlord were customary. Wages were largely regulated by custom which regulated the remuneration of the hired labour for agricultural purposes. Custom also regulated prices. There was limited scope for the division of labor, because of the demand for their product was fixed and limited within village. There was absence of competition, so the products were stereotyped and determined by customs. A barter economy prevailed in villages. The use of money was very rare.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION:

It consisted of agriculturists, village artisans, village officers and menials. Agricultural cultivation was mainly for consumption and very little was kept for market. Each village had its own artisans and menials. Its _chamers' skinned the dead cattle, cured their hides and made the villagers sandals and thongs. Local carpenters made their ploughs. Blacksmith made shears, potters made utensils, and weavers made cotton clothing, so also the washer men, barbers had their jobs.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Peasants in Mogul India cultivated their own separate fields with agricultural practices as those employed by the European countries. They used wooden ploughs, manures, seeds and artificial irrigation to supplement rain. Wells and tanks were the main sources of the irrigation. An important feature of Indian agriculture was large number of food and non-food crops raised by the Indian peasant. The seventeenth century saw the introduction of two major crops, tobacco and maize and variety of edible fruits brought by the Moguls and Portuguese. There was substantial increase in the production of indigo, mulberry, poppy and sugarcane during seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The average productivity of land was higher in pre-British period as compared to the productivity in 1900, which was due to the greater