

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY OF PRICES.

160. No attempt is made to do more than give a history of prices of common rice and some comparison between the price of paddy now and sixty years ago. We can find no earlier list than that given on page 1 of Mr. Toynbee's History, where the averages for 1811 to 1817, expressed in standard seers, are—

	Seers.			Seers.
For <i>usnu</i> rice	49	|	For paddy	118

The above figures are taken from returns of police *darogas*. Mr. Robert Cornish, in a note on prices in the Balasore District, also tells us in that in 1804 rice sold at 65 seers, but forced sales to Government in that year were made at 57 seers.

Mr. Cornish also found information as to the following years :—

	Seers.			Seers.
1815	78	|	1823	58
1816	88	|	1824	57

In 1828 the price was 48 seers, while in 1831, after the storm-wave, there was a rise up to 32 seers.

The later figures ascertained by Mr. Cornish are to be found separately treated under the Balasore figures.

The following sources of information have been referred to for compilation of information on the subject of prices :—

For Puri—

- (1) Mr. Nathan's and Mr. Walsh's reports.
- (2) Mr. W. C. Taylor's Khurda Rate Reports.
- (3) Mr. H. McPherson's report on the Settlement of Puri (Sadar Subdivision).

For Cuttack—

- (4) Mr. Growse's notes of 1896

For Balasore—

- (5) Mr. Cornish's note of 1893.
- (6) Mr. Maddox's No. 869 of 23rd May, 1895.

For the Province—

- (7) The *Calcutta Gazette* and Government of India returns.

I am indebted to Babu Jamini Mohan Das for a valuable discussion as to the value of the various sources of information. A great deal of what he has written has been reproduced below.

161. The Puri report compares the prices in all the three districts.

Puri Completion Report—Puri.

For Puri we have—(1) prices of paddy compiled from various sources; (2) average prices of rice from 1861-97, compiled from monthly lists of current prices—and (3) average export (apparently whole sale) prices of rice from 1877-1897.

Up to 1893 the figures in (2) agree exactly with the prices shown in the Manual of the Government of India and both have evidently been taken from the same source. The subsequent prices agree with the prices compiled by me from the *Calcutta Gazette*.

I do not see any reason to doubt the correctness of these prices.

The prices of paddy in (1) are, however, manifestly too low, and should not therefore be relied upon. The popular ratio between rice and paddy is two-thirds.

except where husking is done at home by the women of the house, when half and half is the expected outturn. The Government of Bengal has accepted $\frac{25}{40}$, which is very nearly equal to two-thirds. Making the most liberal allowance for cost of husking, the quantity of paddy which can be purchased for a rupee should not much exceed double the quantity of rice which can be purchased for the same price. It will be seen that this is very nearly the ratio between rice and paddy in the table of prices given at page 100 of Mr. Toynbee's History of Orissa, Appendix II, and the prices for 1894-97 given by the Kanungos of Cuttack and shown in the table of Cuttack prices in the Puri reports, e. g., in Mr. Toynbee's History, the average price of *usna* rice, expressed in standard seers, is 49 seers per rupee, while that of paddy in the same measure is 118 seers.

The ratio between the prices of paddy and rice in Puri, however, differs very widely from this ratio, the average of paddy in each decade exceeding three times the average of rice. The inference which naturally follows is that the prices shown are not averages of bazar prices ruling throughout the year, but favourable prices obtained either by advances of money or at the reaping season. In the former case the interest of the money advanced should be taken into account, and in the latter case it would be unfair to make such prices the basis for determining the fairness of rent or the material condition of the people, as the people at large cannot always afford to purchase all the food-grain they require at the most favourable season of the year. The whole sale export prices (3) should not, for the same reason be relied upon.

162. The only reliable prices available for the district of Puri are therefore the average shown in the manual of the Government of India. Prices of paddy have been given for a few years only, and all of them would not stand the test referred to above. They may therefore be neglected.

The prices of rice from 1836 to 1857 have been compiled from the Collector's statements of 4th and 27th July 1896, averages having been struck at various figures shown in those statements. But some of those figures appear to be so obviously wrong that they should not be included to affect the average, which would be more correct without them.

In the two statements furnished by the Collector, it is necessary to reject the figures for many years in the early period, whether on account of the measure in which the quantity is expressed, or on account of special prices being recorded for scarcity, or for lack of information as to the time at which the prices were recorded, or because a contract rate was fixed for many years which included years of famine. The following figures supplied by Mr. Growse, the Collector of Cuttack, are accepted as forming a safe basis for Cuttack figures as to prices of common rice, 1836-46 :—

	1836	1837	1838	1839	1840	1941	1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	Average.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.
Magistrate's No. 9 of 6th January 1842.	...	24 2 $\frac{3}{4}$	47 11	45 6 $\frac{1}{4}$	20 14 $\frac{1}{4}$	26 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	...	...	...	...	...	32 15
Magistrate's Contingent Bill Jail charges.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36 12	48 9	52 8	46 0
Records of Kinu Sau, merchant of Cuttack Town.	36 12	24 15	47 13	51 2	22 8	22 8	40 0	...	...	46 10	...	37 0

From 1847-60 the figures given by Mr. Growse may be accepted for Cuttack. They are as follows :—

	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	Ave- rage.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s. CH.	s.
Magistrate's Contingent Register, Jail Chrges.	61 11	61 11	63 14	74 14	77 14	61 13	56 2	48 1	...	...	...	...	...	...	63
Prices current, office Copies in Cuttack Collectorate.	32 6	32 0	...	...	32
Do. of Prices at Brahmanbar hat.	53 0	49 10	33 3	42 0	...	...	46
Do. of prices current at Patamundai and Chandannagar hats.	30 0	...	...	...	30
Do. of prices current at Thana hat, pargana Tiran.	75 0	36 0	36 0	...	...	...	49

For 1861 and later periods the lists published by the Government of India are taken.

163. Turning to Balasore, we have a very valuable note by Mr. R. Cornish.

Balasore—Mr. R. Cornish's note. The figures which I had collected are for paddy, so that it is not possible to make use of them.

Mr. Cornish gives us the following prices :—

Seers.	Seers.	
1804 65	1847 54	(average).
1815 78	1848 60	(jail contract).
1816 88	1849 63	(jail contract for 1850).
1828 48	1850	
1831 32	1851	} 59 (average).
1832 27	1852	
1833 30	1853	
1834 30	1852 36	
1835 71	1853 48	
1836 45	1855	} 47 (average).
1839 35	1856	
1840 40	1857	
1842 68	1858 25.5	} Returns of Collector to Famine Commissioner.
1843 50	1859 28.3	
1844 72	1860 23.9	
1845 60		

For 1837, 1838, 1841, 1846, 1854 Mr. Cornish has no figures.

From 1861 onwards the prices published by the Government of India may be accepted as fairly reliable. The prices in each District are checked by those ruling in the other two since the great famine. Owing to the great improvement in communications, prices have moved very nearly within the same proportion from year to year. From 1894-98 these figures must be supplemented by figures published in the *Calcutta Gazette*.

The figures which are recorded below are, therefore, mainly derived from the printed notes of the Collectors of Cuttack and Balasore.

Averages worked out from the statistics compiled from the *Calcutta Gazette* agree very nearly with the Government of India figures, which were probably compiled from the same source.

164. From the above-mentioned sources we obtain the following information:—

Statement showing the average price of common rice in Orissa.

Year	Annual average price in seers (of 80 tolas) per rupee.	Decennial average.	Year	Annual average price in seers (of 80 tolas) per rupee.	Decennial average.
1836	43.13		1867	16.37	
1837	24.56		1868	31.27	
1838	47.75		1869	24.14	
1839	48.85		1870	29.71	
1840	21.16		1871	29.66	
1841	24.50	43.20 and 48.14 excluding 1837 and 1840.	1872	28.47	26.87
1842	54.00		1873	32.43	
1843	50.00		1874	24.37	
1844	54.37		1875	35.61	
1845	53.75		1876	26.72	
1846	52.50		1877	17.65	
1847	57.87		1878	13.70	
1848	59.56		1879	15.69	
1849	61.94		1880	20.59	
1850	67.19		1881	30.38	
1851	68.89	57.94	1882	29.98	21.26
1852	54.75		1883	26.70	
1853	55.19		1884	19.86	
1854	53.81		1885	18.34	
1855	53.50		1886	19.77	
1856	44.94		1887	22.09	
1857	40.56		1878	20.99	
1858	31.25		1889	17.08	
1859	28.31		1890	1.68	
1860	23.87		1891	18.57	
1861	33.18		1892	13.39	
1862	32.84	28.58	1893	14.78	18.28
1863	30.29		1894	15.68	
1864	33.87		1895	21.63	
1865	21.90		1896	18.40	
1866	9.76		1897	11.87	
			1898	14.84	

*1836-60 compiled from the printed notes of the Collectors of Balasore and Cuttack. 1861-93 compiled from the prices published by the Government of India. 1894-98. compiled from the *Calcutta Gazette*.

Averages for 15 years:—

1837-51	...	...	49.77
1852-66	...	...	42.67
1867-81	...	...	24.85
1882-66	...	...	19.79

165. As I have already shown, it is very difficult to get authentic information regarding prices of paddy. Mr. Nathan and Mr. Walsh obtained information in Puri from certain *maths* and private persons, and I obtained information from zamindars and others in Balasore for about sixty years. I give the following extract from Messrs. Nathan and Walsh's figures and my own to show that our figures justified almost

NAME OF OFFICER.	Name of Chakla.	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893.	1894.	1895.	1896.	AVERAGE FOR DECEN-NIAL PERIOD (1887 to 1896).						
		January. June. September.	January. June. September.	January. June. September.	January. June. September.	January. June. September.	January. June. September.	January. June. September.	January. June. September.									
DISTRICT CUTTACK—Concl'd.																		
Babu Shyama Charan Sen.	Tirtol	24	14	16	13	16	20	14	15	23	22	26	20	24	20	22	18	20
Babu Satis Chandra Guha.	Tendakura	12	12	24	15	15	15	13	14	15	24	26	11	11	11	16	15	18
Babu Amritasikher Mukherjee.	Nayagaon	16	20	21	20	20	21	20	16	17	13	14	18	15	12	15	12	13
Babu Debendra Prasad Ray.	Jagatsingpur	16	22	20	13	14	16	13	16	18	13	13	21	21	26	28	26	18
Babu Jamini Mohan Das.	Jajpur	29	25	29	26	26	24	17	18	22	16	17	21	14	16	21	16	16
Babu Khitish Chandra Sarkar.	Tirtol	12	14	16	13	16	20	14	16	24	22	26	29	24	20	18	17	18
Babu Hiralal Banerjee.	Tendakura	34	34	40	34	34	40	34	53	53	52	40	53	53	53	35	33	32
Babu Jatindra Mohan Sinha.	Bahugram	13	16	22	22	25	25	22	16	16	19	19	19	39	35	41	47	38
Babu Beni Madhab Chatterjee.	Jaganathapur	33	30	28	18	17	23	24	18	22	26	24	26	20	12	14	24	18
Babu Jamin Mohan Dass.	Patamundal	29	21	21	27	23	26	26	26	24	21	14	13	21	18	18	19	19
Babu Sriram Ch. Bose	Chandol	21	18	22	18	12	14	16	16	16	17	11	13	20	16	16	16	16
Babu Sriram Ch. Bose	Anantapur	14	12	23	22	24	25	27	22	18	20	19	18	14	12	23	22	18
DISTRICT BALASORE.																		
Babu Debendra-natha Bose.	Kamarda	34	24	29	30	30	29	22	20	16	24	19	20	24	20	20	16	14
Babu Harakrishna Mohanty.	Bhadrak	32	26	24	20	21	21	21	20	17	23	21	16	20	13	15	16	15
Babu Abhay Prasad Das.	Dolesahi	32	26	26	26	23	26	24	13	18	18	19	17	24	21	21	14	14
Babu Abhay Prasad Das.	Dhamnagar	30	30	30	30	26	23	25	20	20	23	22	20	24	19	19	21	15
Babu Abhay Prasad Das.	Agarpara	28	26	24	24	24	21	19	19	19	19	19	21	20	16	16	22	12
Babu Abhay Prasad Das.	Chandoli	27	28	27	20	16	26	21	21	18	27	23	22	21	14	23	18	16
Babu Abhay Prasad Das.	Basudebpur	12	16	12	14	16	13	14	12	14	16	16	16	13	14	23	14	32
Babu Abhay Prasad Das.	Balasore	14	12	16	20	20	19	28	16	16	20	20	19	28	16	16	20	20
DISTRICT PURI—SUBDIVISION.																		
H. McPherson, Esq., I. C. S.	Pipli	26	22	21	26	24	21	21	12	18	25	21	21	21	17	17	12	11
H. McPherson, Esq., I. C. S.	Nagpur	26	26	24	24	21	26	18	16	34	21	18	24	21	14	12	11	17
H. McPherson, Esq., I. C. S.	Kotdes	26	21	24	21	18	24	17	17	26	20	23	23	21	21	14	12	11
H. McPherson, Esq., I. C. S.	Kakatpur	33	28	21	21	17	27	21	16	19	21	13	21	23	23	13	8	12
Babu Akhoy Kumar San	Rahang	22	21	21	21	18	18	12	16	21	20	21	21	20	17	16	11	14
Babu Akhoy Kumar San	Kaunas	16	16	21	24	24	28	24	18	16	16	11	17	16	17	16	11	17
Babu Akhoy Kumar San	Gope	26	25	21	21	25	18	24	12	16	24	18	15	17	21	14	16	11
Babu Akhoy Kumar San	Bramgir	22	22	22	23	23	23	15	15	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
DISTRICT PURI—KHURDA SUBDIVISION.																		
James Taylor, Esq.	Banpur	40	27	40	41	22	32	33	33	44	38	36	36	44	38	36	36	36
James Taylor, Esq.	Gankia	42	31	47	41	31	33	34	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
James Taylor, Esq.	Dandimal	47	37	43	44	39	39	28	45	45	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
James Taylor, Esq.	Begunia	41	31	48	45	39	32	32	51	51	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
James Taylor, Esq.	Kkurda	41	32	44	44	24	30	30	43	43	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44

167. A list of wholesale prices prevalent in the mufassal between the years 1811 and 1817 is given in Appendix III, at page 100.

Prices of other commodities. of Mr. Toynbee's History of Orissa, and it will be interesting to compare it with present prices as given in Appendix O to this report. This is done for a few of the commoner articles of merchandise in the following table :-

Name of article.	Average of 1811 to 1817 per standard maund.			Price in 1899 (average per standrd maund).		
	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.
Birhi	0	15	6	2	4	6
Harar	1	14	6	2	12	0
Salt	3	4	0	3	10	0
Ghi	15	0	0	33	0	0
Cotton yarn	43	0	0	16	0	0*
	85	0	0	40	0	0
Sugar	8	8	0	4	12	0+
Betelnuts	7	0	0	7	0	0
Tobacco	5	0	0	15	0	0
Lamp Oil	9	10	0	5	0	0
Cocconut oil	21	8	0	15	8	0

* Foreign.

† Molasses.

‡ Refined White.

This list shows a great rise in the price of agricultural produce, pulse, ghee, and tobacco; while cotton yarn and oil have cheapened, and there is but little change in sugar, salt, or in the betelnut which every Uriya chews. Thus the cultivating classes gain both on the better price they get for their surplus produce and the smaller price paid for their imported luxuries.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATERIAL CONDITION.

168. Abul Fazl considered the Uriya to be very effeminate, and early writers such as Stirling and Ker describe what they term the intellectual dulness of the Uriyas. Stirling concludes his remarks by saying :—

The character of the Uriya. “In justice, however, to the bulk of the agricultural population, it must be said that the raiyats of Cuttack are extremely industrious, though they work with little spirit or intelligence and altogether the Oorias of the plains, whatever their faults, are certainly the most mild, quiet, inoffensive, and easily managed people in the Company’s provinces.”

He also mentions—

“The Balasore bearers, in whom the virtues of fidelity and honesty (according to their own conceptions of those qualities) are conspicuous”.

These early impressions have never been eradicated and to this day Orissa is by general consent the Boeotia of Eastern India.

This low opinion of the Uriya is not wholly without justification, but it is equally certain that there is much to be said on the other side and the following criticism taken from paragraph 34 of the report of the Famine Commissioners of 1866 holds good to the present day :—

“The people of Orissa are also separate and distinct, of a character and language peculiar to themselves. Their personal character has been a subject of much discussion during our enquiry and opinions are much divided about it. The Oriyahs are, we should say, physically somewhat larger boned and not so slight looking as the average Bengali though they would be at a disadvantage compared with other Indian races. Their features are on the whole good, and both features and language indicate that they are to a great degree Aryan in race. Most of them are very Hindu in religion and have much caste prejudice. The truth respecting their character is probably to be found between the two extremes of opinion. They seem to be certainly less quick and pushing than the Bengalis, and the higher classes have had much less education, it may almost be said no education; in fact, they are altogether more Boeotian. On the other hand, we do not see reason to believe that they are in their own way less industrious, they have a certain intelligence of their own, and are thought to be less skilled in fraud and in some respects more reliable. They come freely to Calcutta for service, and may be said to bear a good character there. In short, those who are accustomed to them and have become habituated to their obstinate and prejudiced ways, generally like them; those who are not accustomed to them cannot endure them. The well known Uriya bearer, so common in the European domestic service of Lower Bengal, is probably a very fair type of his country men.”

The labouring classes and the lower castes of cultivators are somewhat stupid; but for that matter the peasant of Bihar or of Western Bengal is but little, if at all, cleverer, and physically is certainly inferior. The Brahmans are obstinate and bigoted, but they are of a refined and intellectual type, and the Mahantis of the Mahanadi valley have quite as high a reputation for acuteness as the Lalas of Bihar. In our work we have had no difficulty in finding hundreds of vernacular knowing muharrirs, writing a good Uriya hand, fair arithmeticians, and for the most part careful and not unintelligent. Some of these men have shown considerable ability and a most creditable capacity for methodical work, and have been found perfectly reliable.

Even, however, among the literate class, the want of enterprise, the slowness, and the hopeless conservatism are in marked contrast to the versatility and quickness of their Bengali cousins. An Uriya can hardly be made to hurry himself, and he regards absence without leave and disregard for orders as the most venial of offences. He would as a rule far rather make Rs. 12 a month by a moderate amount of work than half as much again by staying over time. The same love of ease and dislike of hard work permeates all classes. When times were hard and numbers of agriculturists were driven to do earth-work on the railway, they might easily have earned four annas or more a day, but as a rule they would only make two annas or three annas, and then would go home for a rest two days in the week.