

## FEMINES IN DECCAN DURING THE NIZAMS

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Drought is the biggest natural calamity. It is inevitable, and there are certain natural and manmade causes adding to the intensity and the effect of famine or drought. The rulers unfriendly policies, and ineffective policies enhanced the intensity of famine several times. There are no kingdoms in ancient periods which are escaped from the claws of calamities. Nizams state is also one of the princely states which have suffered from the famines. During the last several centuries many parts of our country have been prone to severe drought and famine conditions due to few major factors. They are Political instability, internal chaos, spreading of severe infectious diseases like Plague, Cholera etc., drastic change in climatic conditions and rapid deforestation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Famine, Natural Calamity, Manmade, Effect, Nizams, Drought, Political, Diseases*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The word "Famine", derived from the Latin word, called, 'Fames', means 'hunger'. Southard in 'Encyclopaedia of social sciences', defines famines as "a state of extreme hunger suffered by population of a region as a result of failure of accustomed food supply". Amartya Sen, in his work, 'Poverty and Famines: essays on the entitlement and deprivation (1985), defines famines as "a particular virulent manifestation of starvation causing wide-spread death".

B.M. Bhatia, in his work, 'Famines in India' (1991), defines, "Famines, under modern conditions, has come to signify an abrupt sharp rise in food prices which renders food beyond the reach of the poor who suffer starvation". He further adds that in a modern famine, food may be available at all times in the market but prices are so high that the poor people cannot purchase it (B.M Bhatia 1991).

A famine is defined as "A famine is a widespread scarcity of food that may apply to any faunal species. This phenomenon is usually accompanied and preceded by regional malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality, (Shahu 1980)

Droughts are usually the root cause of famines. In turn droughts where there is a scarcity of life giving water for the crops are usually the direct causes for crop failure in India. The failure of monsoons causes loss of crops in turn leads to a scarcity of food (Shahu 1980).

This being said, if India's recent "success" in preventing mass starvation is hardly a momentous achievement, it still remains a creditable one against the background of continuing failures elsewhere. While the "lessons from India" are

by no means easy to draw, the rich experience of this country with famine abolition strategies remains well worth scrutinizing. It is tempting to attribute her relative success in this area to a steady improvement in food production. A close look at the facts, however, quickly reveals the inadequacy of this explanation. Indeed, the period during which the frequency of famines dramatically decreased in India (the first half of this century) was precisely one of steadily declining food production per head.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this paper are as following. They are

- To study the conditions of Nizams famine effected times
- To focus light on famines on Medak Subha
- To understand the Historical changes in facing the famines

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The data has collected from the secondary and as well as the primary sources. Most of the data has collected from the secondary sources.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since Independence in 1947, total food output has admittedly grown at a healthy rate, but per capita food production levels have not increased significantly; they appear, in any case, to remain lower than late 19<sup>th</sup> century levels, and also lower than per capita food output levels in many countries affected by famines today. Moreover, the increase of production has resulted first and foremost in the reduction of imports and the accumulation of increasingly large stocks, so that the availability of food has stayed remarkably stagnant over the last 30 years. Last but not least, almost every year large and heavily populated parts of India suffer from devastating droughts which, through the "entitlement failures" they threaten to precipitate, remain quite capable of causing large-scale starvation. It is more plausible to attribute the disappearance of mass starvation in India during recent decades to the overall evolution of the economy. Sources of livelihood for the rural population are increasingly diversified, and in some areas at least the rapid advance of productivity in agriculture has substantially raised general living standards and further reduced the insecurity of rural life.

The Government's general food policy, though far from impervious to criticism, largely succeeded in stabilizing food prices and reducing the correlation between consumption and production. In many States a wide array of more or less successful income support schemes are provided a measure of protection against destitution to poor householders, and by some accounts at least a discernible trend towards decreasing poverty has emerged since the nightmare of the mid-sixties. But even this optimistic interpretation of recent changes in economic opportunities and policies does not seem to quite enough to account for the abolition of famines. In the non-irrigated, semi-arid parts of India the stagnation or near-stagnation of yields, population pressure and the increasing frequency of droughts keep the rural population at the mercy of the monsoons. The vulnerability of impoverished classes of agricultural labourers are remained an extreme one, and the need persists for a very extensive and expensive relief system. When food crises have assumed unusual proportions this relief system has been heavily taxed, and has played an undeniable and crucial role in averting large-scale starvation.

## **COLONIALISM AND FAMINES**

The famines which affected the Deccan are

- Doji Bara famine 1788 to 94 affected Hyderabad, Southern Maratha country, Deccan, Gujarat, and Marwar, around 11 million people were died due to this famine.
- In 1866 a famine in Orissa had happen. It is named Orissa Famine 1866 in Orissa and Bihar around one million people died.
- Southern Indian Famine 1876-78. It had affected Madras, and Bombay around 6.1 to 10.3 million people were died.
- Indian Famine 1896-97. It had affected Madras, Bombay Deccan, Bengal, United Provinces, Central Provinces, around 5 million people were died.
- Indian Famine 1899-1900. It had happened in Madras, Bombay Deccan, Bengal, United Provinces, and Central Provinces.

The relationship between colonialism and famines explains why there were frequent occurrences of famines in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in India, in spite of development of means of communications such as Railways and roads, colonial exploitation transformed according to the changing needs of the British economy (Bose 1994). Indian economy was given sub-ordinate position in overall colonial economic frame work. Eventually, India made as a “classic colony”. India became an exporter of raw materials, food grains and a place to invest capital; and became a good market for the machinery made goods from England (Hall Mathews, and David 1999)

The exploitation of India had begun in 1757 with the founding of British rule in Bengal. East India Company had used political power to monopolise India's trade. It had forced weavers to sell their products at cheaper prices and supplied raw materials at higher price.<sup>7</sup> It made huge profits. By 1813, Indian trade was opened. Free trade was introduced, which was called ‘one way traffic’. The machine made goods from England were allowed in to the country at nominal duties. Simultaneously, Indian goods are made to pay higher duties to the entire England and other European countries.<sup>8</sup> Therefore Indian goods were lost both domestic as well as foreign market. Indian indigenous industries were ruined.

De-industrialization was clamped on people and forced them to go back to their original profession it is none other than cultivation. Therefore the agriculture was over crowded (Bhattacharya 1991). Land revenue settlements were introduced to secure the stable income to meet the expenditure of conquest of India. As property rights were introduced, land became a saleable commodity and land revenue was demanded in cash, in view of that peasants produced cash crops for the market (Davis Washbrook 1994). Earlier they used to produce only for own consumption and local needs, commercialization of agriculture set in Indian market to enter and integrate into world market. Frequent assessment of land revenue made the cultivators to suffer from extra burden. When crops were failed, cultivators were forced to lend money from moneylenders for paying the land revenue to the state. Thus peasants were caught in the vicious circle of debt and put to lot of inconvenience (Suseela Raju G 1990). In this process, cultivators lost their lands to the money lenders, agriculture labourers who depended on daily wages lost their livelihood.

Poverty was rampant and purchasing power was declined. Colonial rule in India firmly believed in the ideas of classical political economy. It strictly adhered to the notion of free trade between metropolis and colonies. By 1860, India

became a classic colony. Exports from India increased constantly over a period of time and were always exceeded imports. They became surplus for which India never get back in return. Food grains were one of the major constituent of these exports. British rulers hardly showed any interest to intervene free trade in the public interest. They never stop the export of food grains during the famines distress, the attitude towards trade was worsened the famine conditions. The poverty of India was not because of lack natural resources or geographical phenomena, it was an end product of colonial exploitation. Therefore the frequent occurrences of famines in later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century India were manmade.

The poverty of the people was culminated in a series of famines which effected all parts of India in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were around 20 famines between 1860-1908, according to one estimate nearly 29 million people died during famines from 1854-1901. South India particularly Madras presidency also witnessed similar experience of having a series of famines during the period in-between 1870 - 1900. Four major famines were occurred in 1876-78, 1891-92, 1896-97, and 1899-1900 (Hall Mathews, and David 1999). The immediate cause for the most of these famines was the failure of monsoons, increased in the price of food grains. This was coincided by decline in employment and purchasing power. Therefore the governmental, relief efforts were either failed or inadequate. The starvation deaths sometimes accompanied by epidemics such as Cholera, Malaria etc., that is why famine mortality was increased. The great famine of 1876-1978 was ruined several parts of the residency including the black spot of ceded districts. It was spared across an area about 83,000sqre miles, and it affected the population of 19.4 million out of which 4 million people died (David Arnold). The famine of 1891-92 affected many parts. It was spread across an area about 31.069 square miles. It affected a population of 4.98 millions. The later part of famine was witnessed the out-break of Cholera. It increased the famine death. The death rate was higher in Rayalaseema districts (David Arnold, 1984).

The famine of 1899-1900 was described by Lord Curzon as a severest and most terrible of all famines that had afflicted country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, around 25 lakhs people died. In the economic history of agriculture there exist similarities and variations across sub regions, the analysis of which forms important aspect of our study. There is an implicit recognition in many recent studies that in understanding the dynamics of agrarian change of both structural and developmental in India colonial rule.

The study of agriculture, rural economy, commercialization and the changes in agrarian relations in "dry area" is a fascinating study. As result of commercialization production and productivity increased. There was shift from food crops and non-food crops. Introduction of Railways brought changes in the market conditions. Lands were concentrated in the hands of some higher sections of society, which brought changes in the agrarian relations. The poor farmers went into the clutches of money lenders. The real beneficiaries of commoditization were the land lords and money lenders. Commercialization brought rapid changes in agrarian relations in dry area of Rayalaseema in Andhra (David Arnold, 1984).

Famines and drought are two sides of the means same coin "Famine" means "extreme scarcity of food" and "drought" as "continuous dry weather.- Drought can be defined or viewed from different angles. Broadly one can divide the dimensions of drought into two namely 1. Physical and 2. Functional (Indian Govt. Drought Manual 2009)

Meteorological, hydrological and climatic factors that cause drought can be termed as the physical features of drought. Its socio-economic dimension can be termed as the functional feature. Drought is as much as a socio-economic phenomenon as it is a meteorological and hydrological phenomenon. In fact drought is a complex feature of all the above said factors. The various theories on regional variations like "Positive theory or "Martian historical approach. To explain

this concept point out that it is not only the level of rainfall. But also the social attitudes and institutional factors are there, which are crucial factors that influence the drought. There can be no second opinion "about the view that the ultimate effects of drought percolates to curb the living entities. The biotic content of the region is crippled due to adverse environmental conditions of a drought. Thus the severity of the drought is expressed in the form of biological degradation with social and economic distress.

The ultimate solution that man finds against this natural disaster is migration. Migration to another settlement where he will be able to find employment to seek out a living, generally the migration is by able bodied individuals in search of employment so as to earn and sustain the other members of the family who normally remain in the native village. In other cases the whole family migrates in search of livelihood. But in any case, the new entrant into an alien society cannot afford to enjoy the social security and freedom.

Unfortunately during the last several centuries many parts of our country have been prone to severe drought and famine conditions due to few major factors. They are

- Political instability,
- Internal chaos,
- Spreading of severe infectious diseases like Plague, Cholera etc.,
- Drastic change in climatic conditions and
- Rapid deforestation.

The impact of geographical and ecological conditions on the History and Culture of any land or region are of great significance. Generally speaking the socio-economic structure, ideology and the nature of a particular State are determined by the Biophysical and Geo-cultural nature of that region. Recently several scholars recognized the importance of geographical location in the formation of hydraulic societies (Karl Wiffifgel 1994).

Drought is a state of persistent imbalance between water availability and water need, particularly in the context of agriculture. The Irrigation Commission of India identified the drought prone areas as those areas with a rainfall less than 1000 mm and even 75 percent of this rainfall is not received in 20 percent or more of the years and where irrigation is less than 30 percent of the cropped area? Thus according to the Irrigation Commission of India's criteria Anantapur District in Andhra Pradesh is a hard core drought area with less than 750 mm rainfall for more than 75 percent of the years and the irrigated areas is less than 25 percent of the cropped area. The idea was to look at those conditions in terms of processes. Too often, poverty and deprivation get covered as events. That is, when some disaster strikes, when people die. Yet, poverty is about much more than starvation deaths or near famine conditions. It is the sum fetal of a multiplicity of factors (Charles worth 1982).

Before 1866, the Government of the Nizam did not take proper measures to combat with famines, but by 1896 followed a clear-cut programme on the lines of the British government formula. The Nizam said, 'I strongly hope that nothing will be spared either by me or by officers in keeping away the distress or scarcity and securing means of general comfort, so far as can be done by a human being' (Mir Osman Alikhan 1920) There were relief-measures and gratuitous relief. Most of these relief works were building either railways or roads to connect them. On each, several camps were established. Minimum daily wages were provided. The Famine Commissioner, after consulting local and district officials,

decided the work to be taken up in order to improve the transport and communications in the state (Mir Osman Ali Khan 1911 to 1948). Thus, poor peasants, who were looking to the state for help in such precarious conditions, further suffered from the poor houses, which were maintained poorly. State government always counted how much they spent on famine relief operations but not how much relief reached the poor and the peasantry. If they maintained these relief works well, poor peasants would have benefited much.

The integration into the world capitalistic economy led to a minimization of the effects of famine in the twentieth century. But sometimes it also caused the outbreak of a famine. We cannot argue that Hyderabad state was fully integrated into the world capitalist system, but it definitely had links with it. We may notice that the First World War pulls excessive rains affected Hyderabad state during 1918-19. The untimely and excessive rains in the year 1917-18 damaged the crops considerably in Aurangabad, Birh, Warangal, Karimnagar, Adilabad, Medak, Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar districts.

The yield was reduced to 37 percent of average annual produce. This condition further deteriorated in the following year, due to the partial failure of the monsoon in 1918-19. On the other hand, scanty rainfall affected tank irrigation in Telangana districts as these failed to receive their usual supply. In this year, both the south-west and north-east monsoon either failed or was too early or too late. In some cases, it was noted that if one tract of a village or one village had rain, other tracts or other villages did not get any.

The Famine Commissioner stated that the scarcity of food grains due to high prices intensified sufferings as never before. Generally agricultural labourers suffered in any famine, but in this even artisans and cultivators were found in distress. Groups of people moved on to the roads in search of labour and livelihood. Ordinary wage labour ceased. The charity that was given to the poor people in the villages and towns was also stopped to a large extent. Many poor people were seen loitering and begging at the railway stations. Several people sold their cattle or fields or other moveable or immovable properties and in some cases were found to have parted with their children in exchange for food. Some people migrated to other places. People committed crimes in order to escape hunger (Charles worth 1982).

During this famine, people started searching for alternate food-stuffs. They began to live on tamarind seed, senthitree seed and roots and leaves of trees. They boiled the seeds, then powdered and ate them. Due to their emaciated and weak condition, people were affected by dropsy and some died of this disease (Charles worth 1982).

The famine policy of the state concentrated on how to overcome the shortage of food grains in the affected areas. Grain merchants in the famine affected areas were induced by the government to purchase and import grain. The government claimed that efforts were made to see on the one hand that they suffered no loss by those transactions and on the other hand that they did not make enormous profits. The merchants were only allowed profit of one ana per rupee on the cost price, including cartage and railway freight. Where there were no grain merchants or where they were unwilling to sell the grain, efforts were made by the government to import and sell it at reasonable rates to famine-stricken people working in various famine relief camps. Cheap grains ships, stores were also opened where grain was not available(Charles worth 1982). The government started nearly 112 relief camps, particularly in Telangana region(Charles worth 1982). The famine relief camps in 1918-20 include Aurangabad 7, Birh 6, Medak 6, Karimnagar 18, Nalgonda 26, Warangal 27, Mahabubnagar 21 and Balharshah Railway (Karimnagar District). The people in these camps were provided various types of work including replacing or construction of state roads, sinking of wells on road sides, metal breaking and collection, repairs to irrigation tanks, kuntas and channels and earthworks for the Kazipet-Balharshah Railway line. The government claimed that the total number of people who were provided work from the relief camps was 1,37,23,732 at a cost of

Rs.28,99,316. However, this inflated figure does not show the actual number of famine affected people. In fact the total population of the state was 1,24,71,770 in 1921 (Wash Brook 1929).

The officials calculated this figure by everyday attendance. Generally the affected people came regularly to the camps for work. Mostly the same people came to the camps. Therefore, government figures are unreliable. For example if 10 people came to the camps for two days their figure was counted as 20. These 112 camps continued from 10 to 570 days (Wash Brook 1929). The maximum number of people attending in any one relief camp was 7,853 (In one of the camps in Aurangabad district). If we take into consideration this maximum number of attendance in a day in all the camps the total number of people who came to the camps were about 1,25,407 (Wash Brook 1929). These people who came to the camps were divided into three groups. Accordingly they were paid wages as follows: *First Class Workers* were mainly agricultural labourers who can do heavy work like earthworks. Of them men, women and children were paid at the rate of 4 annas 6 paise, 3 annas and 2 annas respectively. *Second Class Workers* were mainly artisans who could not do hard work. For them men were paid 3 annas 6 paise, women 2 annas, children 1 anna 6 paise. The third category was the dependents of them men were paid 2 annas, women 1 anna 6 paise, children 1 anna. These wages were mainly based on workers' requirements to sustain their life. Though the wages were meagre, it was the states' famine policy to take up relief works on payment of low wages (Wash Brook 1929).

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