

# Introduction

The thesis entitled ‘Forest Administration in South Odisha Under the British *Raj* (A.D. 1858-1947): A Study’ is an attempt for revelation the importance of forest management in the context of south Odisha under the British *Raj*. The forests were recognised by the British as great assets of their colony having substantial potential to generate taxable as well as non-taxable revenue and hence, they felt the necessity of laying out a systematic administrative set-up over the subject. On the other hand, the forests were intrinsically considered as an integral part of the human life in the area of reference and their dependency on forests in those historical days was more prominent in comparison to that is realised in the contemporary context of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each of the decisions from the part of the colonial government on construction and re-construction of the administrative set-up had bearings on all the aspects of life of the people living in the area. By the impact of such colonial policies the relationship between the men and the forests underwent some fundamental changes and such vicissitude was rather explicitly realised in South Odisha. In the earlier part of the colonial era, it is apparent that the importance of forest administration could not attract due attention of the British administrators. The present study throws light on those parts of south Odisha which was under the administration of the Madras Presidency that become a part of the newly formed state of Odisha in the year 1936.

### 1.1 Advent of Forest Administration

The word ‘forest’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*foris*’ which means outside of a village boundary or fence that includes all the uncultivated and uninhabited land. Now-a-days, a forest means any land managed for the diverse purpose of forestry, whether covered with trees, shrubs, climbers, etc. or not. Technically forest has been generally defined as an area set aside for the production of timber and other forest produce or maintained under woody vegetation from the climatic or ecological points of view. It is defined as presence of a plant community predominantly of trees and other woody vegetation usually with a closed canopy. It is also defined as an area of land proclaimed to be a forest under a forest law.<sup>1</sup> Forests are renewable resources and natural gift to mankind. Just like other scientific developments, the science of Forestry was recognisably

first developed in Germany. Its study has always been fascinating in as much as the root of civilization and mankind was originated with the forests.

A slightest inclination towards the concepts of Applied History, as it has been resorted to in the present study results in a paradigm shift in propagation of the past events in a distinct manner revealing the shortcomings in designing or functioning of the administrative set-up of forest in those hay days of colonial regime as those has been drafted by considering the subject as an end in itself. It was definitely not falling under the set of objectives of the colonial government in its early days to make disinterested policies for improvement of forests or in the benefit of the forest dwellers. Further, it was a fact that attempt as desired from today's perspectives had not been made by the Britishers to manage the forests systematically in the interest of posterity by protecting it from ruthless destruction. However, the colonial administrators realised the importance of preserving it for their own purposes and promulgated numerous acts, rules and statutes for systematic management of the forests which were later on borrowed by the legislatures after independence.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 Scope and Importance of the Study

In the present study, what is referred to as 'South Odisha' comprises of the northern most region of the then Madras Presidency covering the undivided districts of Gañjām and Korāput, i.e. Gañjām, Gajapati, Korāput, Mālkāngiri, Nawarangpur, Rāyagaḍā and also a part of Kondhmāl district after restructuring of the districts in Odisha.<sup>3</sup>

The history of forest administration in the state had a close link with the political set-up of the state. The administration of the forests on a scientific basis dates back to the year 1883-84 when the northern part of Odisha was a part of the Beṅgal Presidency. At that time only one Division called 'Orissa Division' amongst the ten Forest Divisions comprising the whole of Beṅgal, Bihār and Odisha was under the charge of one Conservator of Forests with his headquarters at Darjeeling. For the first time, certain forest blocks in Anugul were declared as Reserved Forests under section 19 of the Indian Forest Act (IFA), 1882 with effect from January 1884. Gradually more and more forests were reserved in the Division. The year 1891-92 saw the bifurcation of Odisha Forest Division into two divisions i.e. Anugul and Puri. On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1912 a new province of Bihār and Odisha was created out of Beṅgal Presidency and part of Central Province. The seven Forest Divisions of Bihār and Odisha remained under the charge of a Conservator of

Forests. The 1<sup>st</sup> April 1936 witnessed the birth of a new province of Odisha and the Forest Department under the charge of a Conservator of Forests.

But for the region of south Odisha, the centre of administration was emanating from Madras Presidency which holds a distinct position as the place where the British first landed to propagate their colonial regime on the subcontinent. Even if MFA was in operation in the region, yet the administration was not functioning in isolation from the northern part under the Bengal Presidency. Some attempts were made to unify the applicability of the provisions made under the IFA but times and again it was not accepted by the Madras Presidency on the ground of its suitability for the region and the people living in the area.

The northern region under Madras Presidency and the southern region of old Bihār and Orissa contributed about equal areas of forests to unified Odisha formed in 1936. The Gañjām and Pāralākhemuṇḍi Divisions were transferred to Odisha from the Madras Presidency.<sup>4</sup>

The forests of Gañjām district were brought under the Forest administration for the first time in 1850 but regular reservation and forest settlement did not start till 1885-86. By 1900 almost all the blocks were reserved under the Madras Forest Act (MFA), 1882. Attempts at systematic working were made only in 1901 when a regular working plan was compiled for the management of Gañjām forests. The Gañjām and Pāralākhemuṇḍi divisions were reorganised with effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1938 and four divisions i.e. Russellkoṇḍā, Chatrapur, Pāralākhemuṇḍi and Bālligudā were formed. The arrangements were made under the initiation of Mr. J. W. Nicholson, the then Conservator of Forests of Odisha. The names of Chatrapur and Russellkoṇḍā Divisions were subsequently changed to Ghumsar South and Ghumsar North Divisions with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1941.<sup>5</sup>

The forests of Korāput district were all owned by the *Mahārājā* of Jeypore with the exception of some comparatively insignificant areas belonging to *Mokhasādārs* and *Īnāmdārs* who were tenure holders under the *Mahārājā*. The MFA, 1882 was extended to Jeypore estate in 1891. In spite of the recommendations of the Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee (PEAEC) in 1940 to introduce the IFA (Act XVI of 1927) in the district of Korāput, the Madras Forest Act, 1882 and rules framed under this Act for the management of the forests was in force up to 1952.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the study highlights the administrative set-up in south Odisha which was then a part of the Madras Presidency. Forest and forest wealth were soon recognised by the

British as natural resources and hence, attempts were initiated by them to preserve the same. For that purpose, forest administrators were appointed for the cause of the betterment of these forests particularly the preservation and conservation of the forests. During the pre-independence period the services rendered by the Forest Department is remarkable as far as the forest administration of the Madras Presidency is concerned. The present study proposes to undertake a detailed analysis of the Forest Department of the Madras Presidency and its functions in the areas of south Odisha. The British administrators gave an important position to the Forest Department as it was yielding immense profit to the exchequer.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The present work is an attempt to unravel the history of the Forest Administration in south Odisha. The issues which encouraged the researcher to take up this work are to explore about the circumstances under which the British Government was felt the requirements to set up a Forest Department in India, to analyse the measures of the Government for the betterment of the Forest Department, to study the services rendered by the Forest Department for the upliftment of the tribals, to study the various measures of the British Government formed from time to time for the development of the forests and to reduce the exploitation of forests and to deal with the rehabilitation measures undertaken by the Forest Department of Madras Presidency in south Odisha.

No conspicuous work has so far been compiled to substantiate the above multifarious dimension of the subject covering different facets of forest administration in south Odisha. Therefore, the present work has been prepared expeditiously to break the bottlenecks pertaining to the study of forest administration from different dimensions. An exhaustive approach based on scientific investigation and critical analyses has been contemplated to be the objective of the work.

### **1.4 Period of Study**

The period of the present study begins with the year 1858 A.D. when the power of administration over India was shifted from the East India Company to the British Monarchy and the study ends in 1947 A.D. when India attained its independence. There was no defined system of administration over the forest pursued by the rulers of India before the colonial British Government consolidated the system through a series of enactments. The present research work is an exhaustive micro analysis over the history of the forest administration from the level of its initiation during British *Raj* with its

background and the labyrinth course of its progress with reference to the changing objectives of the colonial governance over the subcontinent and its impact on a particular geographical area of south Odisha which was substantially covered with forest.

## **1.5 Hypothesis**

Amongst the various departments of the government, the Forest Department assumes greater significance in the area of reference as the life of the people of south Odisha was being greatly affected by the impact of every such policy due to their higher stake on the environment in which they were living. The people living in the area were familiar with the forests, forest resources and wildlife and ever realising the importance of forest on all the aspects of their life. The establishment of Forest Department in south Odisha, which was then under the administration of Madras Presidency, gave a new orientation to the people's life who were living in and around the forests. An attempt has been made through this research work to trace the legacy of the forest administration in south Odisha as it is laid down by the British.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The methodology deployed for this research work is object oriented and hence both descriptive and analytical in the way of its presentation. All the known techniques of research methodology are adopted in analysing the primary and the secondary sources available to enable the researcher to arrive at an appropriate conclusion basing upon the vital finding.

## **1.7 Sources of Information**

The sources for the study of Forest Administration in south Odisha covering the period between 1858 to 1947 are divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are mainly archival in nature and constituted all the unpublished records such as official orders and correspondences, minutes and consultations, reports and proceedings of various committees and commissions, *Gazettes* of Fort St. George, District Collectorate Records, etc. Besides the Legislative Proceedings, Enquiry Reports of various officials, Memorandums, Manuals, *Gazetteers* and the Working Plans, furnish a wide range of information to substantiate those sources. All these dependable sources available in the area make the present work authentic. The published works forms the secondary sources which include published works of eminent scholars and other books, souvenirs, journals and periodicals. These sources are mainly collected from the libraries and museums like

the Central Library of Berhampur University, the Gañjām District Collectorate Library, Library of the Revenue Divisional Commissioner (SD), Library of Vasundhara Organisation, Binayak Acharya College Library, Khallikote Autonomous College Library of Berhampur and the e-libraries like the Harvard Law School Library, the D. H. Hill Library, Library of North Carolina State College, Library of the University of Michigan, Cornell University Library, Library of University of California, Library of University of Toronto, Rastrapati Bhavan Library, Baltimore Room Library, Universal Library of London, Delhi College of Engineering Library, President's Secretariat Library, New Delhi and various other libraries in Odisha. Though the availability of the secondary sources is limited, the available records and the published works provide enough facts and figures for the present study.

The original sources for the study of Forest Administration are kept preserved in the Record Room of the Archives of Tamil Nadu and Odisha, Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad; the Gañjām District Collectorate Library, Chhatrapur; the Library of Revenue Divisional Commissioner South Division, Berhampur; Regional Chief Conservator of Forests Library, Berhampur and the Library of DFO, Ghumsar South Division, Bhanjanagar which has been extensively used for the present work. During the course of the research work, a great number of original documents containing information on administration of Madras Presidency were unleashed in digital form on the 'Internet Archive' of San Francisco, USA opening an opportunity to use such information for the first time.

## 1.8 Review of Literature

A detailed survey of literature has substantially helped to focus adequate light on various aspects relating to the present work under study. Some works focus light on the geography and demography while others throw light on the administrative set-up of the Forest Department in the Madras Presidency and the working of the department during that time. Some of the most important literary works are:

*Memorandum on the Forest Legislation Proposed for British India* by D. Brandis<sup>7</sup> is regarded as the foremost book on forestry in India. B. Ribbentrop's *Forestry in British India*<sup>8</sup> is the resume of the introduction and growth of forestry in the British Indian Empire. H. H. Haines' *The Botany of Bihār and Orissa*<sup>9</sup> throws ample light on the flora of Odisha. *Economics of Forest Resources* of N. C. Sahu<sup>10</sup> and *A Handbook of Forestry* by G. S. Padhi<sup>11</sup> also describes about the forest resources of Odisha. B. C. Padhi's *Socio-Economic Conditions of the Tribals Under the British Rule (A.D. 1803-1936)*<sup>12</sup> provides

information about the tribal people, their socio-economic conditions and the problems faced by them. Similarly, the *Hill Tribes of Jeypore* by L.N. Sahu<sup>13</sup> as the title suggested represented his study on the hill tribes of Jeypore region. The publications by the government like D.F. Carmichael's<sup>14</sup> *Manual of the District of Vizagapatam*, *The Madras District Gazetteers* by W. Francis,<sup>15</sup> *The Gañjām District Manual* by T. J. Maltby<sup>16</sup> were some authentic sources on the subject since the accounts of these scholars have been based on the original records as well as surveys conducted during that time. Moreover, the *Gazetteers* of N.C. Behuria,<sup>17</sup> R.C.S. Bell,<sup>18</sup> and edited by N. Senapati and N.K. Sahu,<sup>19</sup> N. Senapati and D. C. Kuanr<sup>20</sup> and W.W. Hunter<sup>21</sup> are mostly based on the original surveys and experiences.

In view of the discussions made above, it may be construed that a precise and comprehensive work on the history of development of Forest Administration is essential to enrich the knowledge on the subject. As such, the present research work has been undertaken to achieve that very objective.

## 1.9 Organisation of the Study

The present research work has been divided into seven chapters. The introductory chapter covers the scope, importance, objectives, period, hypothesis, methodology, sources of information, review of literature and the organisation of the study. Apart from the introduction and conclusion chapters which are indispensable for such a work, the other five chapters systematically encompasses the study on the physical features and biodiversity, forest administration, use of forest resources, misuse, crimes and punishments for the exploitation of forest resources, and forest acts, rules and regulations and their implementation.

The second chapter explains in detail the geographical features, topography, climatic conditions and the demography of the south Odisha region. It also gives a comprehensive idea about the physical features and biodiversity, and about the types of forest found in the region. It also highlights the features of forests of undivided Gañjām as well as of undivided Korāput district. It describes about the rivers, mineral wealth, wildlife i.e. the animals, birds, reptiles, aquatic animals, etc. which were found in south Odisha region.

The third chapter deals with the circumstances under which the British Government was felt the necessity to introduce a defined system of administration over the forests in south Odisha and designed the symmetry of official hierarchy in the department to achieve seamless implementation of the policies pursued by them from time

to time. It also covers the information on various working plans, about the management of state forests, about the forest administration in the estates and the procedural aspects of forest administration in operation.

The fourth chapter highlights the domestic as well as the commercial use of the forest produce by different stakeholders like the people living inside and outside the forest. It also covers the information on diversified use of timber and bamboo, the various items of essential forest produce like fibres, grasses, leaves, essential oils, tannins and dyes, gums, resins and oleoresins, drugs and medicines and various animal products.

The fifth chapter deals with the problems faced by the administration in handling the tendency of the people to misuse forests and forest products, types of forest exploitation, crimes and the preventive measures like infliction of punishment for violation of forest law.

The sixth chapter focuses adequate light on the statutory provisions and policies prevailed during that period. It focuses light on the origin and necessity of forest laws in the country. The chapter also analyses the circumstances under which the British were compelled to enact the forest laws for the country and its implementation in different provinces especially in south Odisha.

The last chapter being the concluding one is not only the compendium of the preceding chapters but meticulously designed to help the readers to arrive at a definite conclusion on the issues related to the subject and plays the role as a node to assume relationship between the historical facts and the problems and shortcomings, the sector is encountering in contemporary time.

## References

1. K. P. Sagreiya, *Forests and Forestry*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 1-2.
2. S. Sambandhan, *Handbook of Forest Laws in Tamil Nadu*, Chennai, 1990, p. 4.
3. Government of Odisha, Revenue Department, *Instructions for the Guidance of Forest Settlement Officers conducting Forest Settlement Operations under the Madras Forest Act, 1882*, Dated 12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1966.
4. *Report of the Forest Enquiry Committee, Orissa 1959*, Dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 1959, pp. 17-19.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
6. N. C. Behuria, *Final Report on the Major Settlement Operations in Korāput District, 1938-64*, Dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 1965, p. 6.
7. D. Brandis, *Memorandum on the Forest Legislation Proposed for British India*, Shimla, 1875.
8. B. Ribbentrop, *Forestry in British India*, Calcutta, 1900.
9. H. H. Haines, *The Botany of Bihār and Orissa*, Calcutta, 1961.
10. N. C. Sahu, *Economics of Forest Resources*, Delhi, 1986.
11. G.S. Padhi and A. K. Padhi, *A Handbook of Forestry*, Bhubaneswar, 1980.
12. B. C. Padhi, *Socio-Economic Conditions of the Tribals Under the British Rule (A.D. 1803-1936)*, Calcutta, 1992.
13. L. N. Sahu, *Hill Tribes of Jeypore*, Cuttack, 1942.



14. D. F. Carmichael, *A Manual of the District of Vizagapatam in the Presidency of Madras*, Madras, 1869.
15. W. Francis, *Madras District Gazetteers, Vizagapatam*, Madras, 1907.
16. T. J. Maltby, *The Gañjām District Manual*, 1918.
17. N. C. Behuria, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Gañjām*, Cuttack, 1995.
18. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Korāput*, Cuttack, 1941.
19. N. Senapati, and N. K. Sahu, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Korāput*, Cuttack, 1966.
20. N. Senapati and D. C. Kuanr, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Boudh-Kondhmāls*, Bhubaneswar, 1983.
21. W. W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. V, London, 1885.