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Savitribai College of Arts
Pimpalgaon Pise, Tal. Shrigonda, Dist. Ahmednagar

मानविकी एवं समाजविज्ञान की द्विभाषी शोध-पत्रिका

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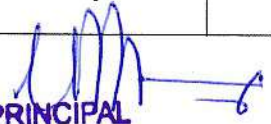
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DEVELOPMENT OF IRRIGATION FACILITIES IN SHRIGONDA TALUKA DURING BRITISH PERIOD

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Economic exploitation of India was the main objective of British Government of India. After the British established power in India , land revenue was an important part of their income. In order to ensure regular and continuous receipt of this revenue , British made a census of land in India. In 1818 A.D. Ahmednagr district came under British control. Henry Potinger established law and order in Ahmednagar district . Similarly, by dividing the district into various talukas arrangements were made to collect the revenue. The British made various reforms to maximise revenue from the land. As part of this process, the British started providing irrigation facilities in India. In 1818 A.D. the British conquered Ahmednagr district. Further in 1869 Ahmednagar district was reorganized. Shrigonda taluka was formed in Ahmednagr district in the same year. From the presented research article, how the development of irrigation facilities took place in Shrigonda Taluka during the British period. Also it has been arranged what effect it had on the economic life of Shrigonda.

Irrigation By Rivers –

Shrigonda taluka falls in the basin of two main rivers Ghod and Bhima. Shrigonda taluka falls in the left bank catchment area of Bhima, a major river in Maharashtra. Bhima river originates at Bhimashankar in Pune District. The western and southern boundaries of Shrigonda Taluka are determined by the Bhima river bed. Sangvi, Nimgaon Khalu, Gar, Kavathe, Ajnuj and Pedgaon are villages on the banks of Bhima river and they used to use the water of Bhima river. Ghodnadi is tributary of Bhima river from the north. This river originates in the Sahyadri mountain ranges of Pune district. The river runs south-east from the border of Ahmednagar and Pune districts. The villages of Hingani Dumala, Rajapur, Math, Mhase, Bori, Hangewadi, Wangdari, Kashti and Sangavi of Shrigonda taluka are on the banks of this river and they use the water of this river.¹

Apart from this small river such as Hanga , Sarasvati, Dev , Siddh , Palshi , Seena flow through the interior of Shrigonda taluka. The river Dev flows through the eastern half of Shrigonda. Further it meets Sarasvati river. Hanga river flows through the eastern part of the taluka and the Ghodnadi meets it from the south side. River Dev originates from the hilly area north east of Kosegavhan and Pisore village. This river flows through the bank of Adhalgaon and Ghodegaon. Further this river meets Sarasvati river. Shrigonda is the largest village on the banks of river Sarasvati. In the middle ages this village was famous as Chambhargonde. Where Bhima and Sarasvati river confluence, there Pedgaon was a famous area during the Yadav period and in the middle ages this place become famous as Bahadurgarh. Sarasvati is a seasonal river and its vessel does not flow.² River Sina flows through the northern part of Shrigonda. There are six seven villages of Shrigonda taluka along the course of this river.

The river Hanga originates in the hills of Parner and enter Shrigonda taluka from Chambhurdi village towards the south. This river flows through the village of Chambhurdi , Visapur , Pimpalgaon Pisa, Belwandi , Yelapne , Pisore , Hangewadi in Shrigonda taluka and joins Ghodnadi in the south. Before that, Palshi river flowing from Koregaon areas joins Hanga river at Belwandi. Two dams were constructed on the Hanga river namely Visapur (1927) in Shrigonda taluka and




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Hanga (1946) in Parner taluka.³ The Sina, Hanga, Saraswati, Dev, Palshi, Ghod and Bhima rivers flow through Shrigonda. But with the exception of the Hanga river, Sina, Saraswati, Dev, Palshi rivers rarely had water. Rainfall was better in the north than in the South of Shrigonda. As Ghod and Bhima rivers flowed towards the taluka, they also benefited very little area.

Irrigation By Wells

Till 1884 A.D irrigation in Shrigonda taluka was done in two years. One is *Pathsthal* and the other is *motsthal*, where agriculture was watered from wells with help of canals (iron or leather), that area was called *Motsthal*. The area irrigated by means of *pats* (canals) is the *Patsthal* area. Apart from this small dams were built in the taluka. This dam had to be repaired every year. This embankments were also washed away when there was heavy rain.⁴

The area irrigated by wells is more in Shrigonda taluka. Till 1882-83 A.D. there was no big lake or dam in Shrigonda. So irrigation was done through wells. But considering the total irrigated area, this ratio is also less. The reason for this, was that the cost of digging a well was unaffordable to the common man. In 1882-83 A.D. the number of stepped wells in Shrigonda taluka was 231. Digging a step well used to cost around Rs. 50 to 500 per well. The number of wells without step was 1665. The cost of constructing such a well ranges from Rs. 10 to 300 per well. The average depth of wells in shrigonda taluka was 40 feet.⁵

Compared 1851 to 1889 A.D. the number of wells in Shrigonda has increased by 48 percent. In 1889 A.D. in 72 villages of Shrigonda taluka, 428 wells were non drinkable and 899 wells were potable condition. This means, that the increase in the number of wells during this period also led to an increase in the horticulture sector.⁶ During the five years 1912-13 to 1916-17 the average area irrigated by wells in the 78 ½ villages of Shrigonda taluka was 11574 acres. In 1912-13 – 8156 acres, in 1913-14 - 10448 acres, in 1914-15 – 13099 acres, in 1915-16 – 13766 acres and in 1916-17 - 12426 acres and the total area of the five years was 57872 acres. Whereas an average area of 1174 acres is irrigated by private irrigation. This shows that there has been an increase in the irrigation area of Shrigonda taluka.⁷

In 1917-18 A.D. the number of wells in 78 ½ villages of Shrigonda taluka was as follows. The number of paved wells available for agriculture was 1028 and the number of raw wells was 301. The number of potable wells alone was 879 while the number of raw wells was 40. The number of wells available only for animal consumption was 10 and the number of raw wells was 16. The wells which were not in use in any way and required repair was 415 in numbers.⁸ In short well irrigation is more in the total irrigated area of Shrigonda. When there was heavy rain in Newasa and Rahuri area people used to reduce the use of well water. But in the year of heavy rainfall in Shrigonda taluka, people use large amount of water. J.H.Garret make such a note in his survey report.⁹

Irrigation by Ponds

Small rivers like Hanga, Dev, Saraswati, Sina and big rivers like Ghod and Bhima used to flow through Shrigonda taluka. Even though till 1926 no attempt was made to dam any of these rivers. Neither the survey settlement of 1889 to 1919 A.D. mention the construction of ponds by the government. The dam was completed in 1927 A.D. near Visapur village on the Hanga river. At the same time in 1946 the work of Limjewadi lake was completed. These to lakes were important in the irrigation reforms carried out by the British during the British era.

Visapur Dam



Visapur is a village in Shrigonda taluka and river Hanga flows near this village. In 1927 A.D. the British completed the construction of this dam near Visapur village on the Hanga river. This lake is known as Visapur dam. The storage capacity of this dam is about 1250 million cubic feet. About three thousand acres of land of Nimbavi, Pimpalgaon Pisa, Visapur or Koregaon villages went to the water storage area of Visapur dam. To the north and west of the dam there are many small streams and rivulets. The main source of water of this dam is Hanga river.¹⁰

In 1896-97 A.D. there was a severe drought in Ahmednagar district. The entire Ahmednagar district was under the influence of this drought. In the year 1899-1900 A.D. also there was a drought in the district. At this time the death rate in the district reached 66.11 per pound.¹¹ In the background of this drought the work of Visapur dam was started. During the period 1896 to 1900 A.D. people suffering from drought worked like dam. The dam was completed by the people who took part in the Deccan riots and who were prisoners between 1901 and 1927. A.D. From 1916 to 1923 A.D. criminals were employed here. Apart from this, the people of the surrounding areas were also used to work on the dam on low wages. The work of this dam started in 1896. So in 1927 A.D. the dam was completed. Visapur dam falls under the category of medium irrigation and the actual expenditure for the construction of the dam was Rs. 4044322. The area under the irrigation of the dam was 95000 acres. During the construction of this dam 13143 acre area was directly irrigated. The height of this dam is 84 feet and when the dam was built, rain was the main source of water at this time.¹²

The contribution of the British was important in the creation of Visapur dam. The British led emphasis on irrigation facilities in India for various purposes. To keep their economic interests intact, the British started providing irrigation facilities in India.¹³ Although the British had their own interests in this, Indian people were also benefiting from this things. Visapur dam turned out to be a great boon for this area. Along the Visapur dam from where, the water is released into the canal, there is a marble plaque with the persons who contributed to the construction of the dam. A text is engraved on a marble slab as a record of his work.¹⁴

It can be seen from the marble plaque next to the dam, the period of the construction of Visapur dam is from 1896 to 1927 A.D. and the construction of this dam was going on for almost 31 years. 21 lacks rupees was spent for the construction of the dam. Apart from this, 19 Lacks rupees was spent on digging canals and treatment plants. The capacity of this dam 1136 million cubic feet and the treatment works of this dam were actually completed in the year 1929. The dam was constructed during the rainy season of 1927 A.D. The length of the dam is 7440 feet and the height of the dam is 84 feet. In 1927 the length of the canal was 11 miles. The area under the actual jurisdiction of this canal is 95000 acres and the actual benefit area is 26000 acres. Engineers and officials who were involved in the construction of the dam, his work has been recorded on the board in chronicle order. The project was inaugurated on 26 August 1929 by Sir Fredrick Hughes Sykes the then Governor of Bombay province.

Irrigation facilities were introduced in Ahmednagar due the agriculture policies of the British. The following figures will show how the irrigation facilities of Ahmednagar were enhanced from 1882-83 to 1947-48 A.D. In 1882-83 A.D. Bhatodi, Ozar and Lakh dams were important sources of irrigation in Ahmednagar district. Where as the number of private wells was 26306.¹⁵ So in 1947-48 the number of government canals was 13, private canals were 136 and private wells were 46589. Apart from this, four large dams existed. From these statistics, it is



understood that , during the British era , the basic aspects of irrigation were given deliberate attention.

In this way, the works that were undertaken to prevent in the pre-independence period. As a result, the water irrigation capacity of Shrigonda taluka increased. The agricultural policies of the British definitely benefited the people of India. About 13000 acres of the area was brought under irrigation due to Visapur lake constructed in Shrigonda taluka. The agriculture sector in the Shrigonda taluka definitely benefited from this irrigation facilities started by the British.

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