The present work is an attempt to study the British Land Revenue Settlements which were imposed by them on Bundelkhand from 1804 when they acquired possession of the province, until 1947, when India became independent.

Not much work has been done in this field and this study makes only a marginal contribution to that end. The effects of the revenue policies and also of the settlements, had far reaching consequences on the agrarian economy of this region.

The reasons for the area remaining backward till today, may be traced back to those economic policies formulated by the British and the changes they instituted to meet their interests.

Prior to the English rule in Bundelkhand, issues of land revenue, rights in land, land produce were linked with the state or rule. The mutual economic relations which existed between the various classes were inseperably associated with the authority wielding control over the area. The Governmental machinery also performed the task of administration and collection of revenue in the state.

With the advent of the British rule, a new era dawned with the innovation of new concepts of proprietorship, land revenue settlements and tenures all of which ushered a revolution in the agrarian scene. The British mainly concentrated on commercial and economic interests which formed the pivotal
on the commercial and economic interests which formed the pivotal basis of their power. Consequently, the earlier years of their rule were devoted to acquiring surplus revenue for trade. Taking advantage of their position, they penetrated down to the deepest echelons of rural organisation to achieve this goal.

In due course revenue settlements were made, which were excessively high. Further, the rigorous methods of revenue collections combined with natural calamities and the new agrarian order inflicted unprecedented hardships on cultivators who were overburdened with debts and mortgages. This had a ruinous effect on the economic prosperity of the region in so far that cultivators abandoned agriculture, sold off their land to pay the debts or even migrated to neighbouring states of Malwa, Doab and even Gujrat.

In fact one of the fundamental causes of discontentment in the uprising of 1857, was the incidence of high land revenue. Ironically, this practice of high taxation was not abandoned even after 1857. The people were burdened with heavy assessments for their active participation in the uprising. The plausible explanation may be that it was the British intention to cripple Bundelkhand economically, so that, the ideas of nurturing or sustaining another uprising were stifled and the province was divested of all means of regaining its prosperity and pristine glory.

I am highly indebted to Dr. S.P. Fathak, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Bundelkhand College, Jhansi for his kind and valuable guidance in the preparation of this
thesis.

I wish to thank the Director and staff of the National Archives, New Delhi, who made available all the various documents pertaining to this work and their indispensable co-operation.

Finally, I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the help rendered by the Librarian and staff of Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.

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