Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The present study relates to an in-depth analysis concerning the evolution of socio-cultural resurgence and nationalism in Orissa during the nineteenth century. Such a study, however, will be taken up against the backdrop of cultural re-orientation in India during the Colonial Period. To begin with, it may be observed that cultural re-orientation in all aspects of Indian life was one of the most significant developments of the nineteenth century. In fact, the legacy of such re-orientation is so powerful that it requires proper understanding and conscious assessment by scholars working on Modern India.

To elaborate, India's exposure to the Western World constituted a "unique" phenomenon as it symbolized a close contact between an industrial society committed to a "scientific world-view" and "progress" and an agrarian society wedded to "religious world-view" and "status quo". In fact, as events unfolded in India, European contacts not only brought an unprecedented change in the realm of politics and economy of the country, but also in the spheres social structure as well as in emotional and intellectual culture. These developments,
however, paved the way towards socio-cultural regeneration and resurgence in India during the nineteenth century. But the historians and scholars have generally demonstrated a strong concern for analyzing developments pertaining to the imperial polity, colonial economy and the rise of nationalism than for socio-cultural changes in India. In this regard it may be stressed that even politics in India cannot be fully understood without an adequate understanding of socio-cultural changes in the country. Thus, the present study relating to socio-cultural changes in India becomes highly relevant.

As regards the present study, it may be observed that Orissa entered into periods of political vicissitudes and turmoil following the downfall of its Gajapati rule Mukundadeva Harichandan in 1568. In fact, its subsequent political instability made the province a victim of several foreign invasions spearheaded by Afghans, Mughals and the Marathas. But none of these powers was able to occupy the whole of the province as the British did it in 1803. But Orissa in the early nineteenth century consisted of the districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore under the Bengal presidency. As regards the southern districts of Ganjam and Koraput, they formed a part of Madras presidency until their merger with Orissa in 1936. The western part (consisting of Sambalpur tract) came under British occupation till 1905, when it was transferred to the Orissa division of Bengal. Thus, the territory of Orissa consisted of the districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Sambalpur during the nineteenth century.
By way of historical background, it may be observed that Orissa experienced strong tendencies of decay, de-generation and dis-integration during the period of the eighteenth century. Social rigidity and irregular social practices were its most conspicuous features. As for the Hindu religion, it meant only outer form and rituals and as a result, the pattern of social outlook became quite stereotyped. It was after the advent of the British rule that new forces began to unleash which transformed all strata of society in Orissa.

The British rule introduced several major changes in the arena of administrative, educational, socio-economic and religious structures of the province. These measures, in fact, brought immense impact on the Oriya society, as they spearheaded the process of change towards modernity. In the political fields stability was restored after a long period of chaos and confusion in the province. Spread of education was one of their greatest achievements during the nineteenth century. The Christian Missionaries played the pioneering role in such an exercise. The British also took strong measures for the eradication of major social evils such as "Meriah", "Female Infanticide" and the practice of "Sati" etc. Socio-religious reform movements in the nineteenth century contributed enormously to the process of socio-cultural regeneration and resurgence in Orissa.
The nineteenth century further witnessed the origin and growth of a sense of nationalism among the Oriya people. In this context it may be observed that the Bengali residents of Orissa sought to wipe out the native language from the schools and law courts of the province. A vigorous protest movement was launched by the Oriya people to protect their language. The successful outcome of the movement  'Oriya Andolan' paved the way towards literary movements in the province. All these developments eventually paved the way towards the establishment of Vernacular Press in Orissa. Thus, after a long period of darkness and decadence in the province during the eighteenth century, an era of socio-cultural regeneration and resurgence engulfed Orissa during the nineteenth century.

An Overview of Literature


The scholar also consulted important works relating to socio-cultural and political history of Orissa during the eighteenth as well as nineteenth century. Some important works in this regard were: M.P. Das, ed. Odisara Sanskritika Itihas (Cutack, 1984) in Oriya, B.K. Rath, The Cultural History of
Research Questions

The following aspects will be analyzed in terms of research questions:

(1) To study the Origin and evolution of socio-cultural awakening in India during the nineteenth century.

(2) To analyze the socio-cultural setting and political history of Orissa on the road to British occupation of the province (1751-1803).

(3) To study the role of Christian Missionaries working in Orissa.

(4) To analyze the impact of British efforts towards spreading western education in Orissa.

(5) To analyze the impact of socio-religious movements in Orissa during the nineteenth century.

(6) To study the origin and growth of press, literature and cultural nationalism in Orissa.
Universe of the Study

Socio-Cultural History of Orissa During the Nineteenth Century.

Method of Data Collection

The scholar made attempts to collect materials pertaining to the study from both primary as well as secondary sources. The secondary source materials have already been mentioned in the review of literature. Primary source materials have been collected from the Government Gazettes, Government of Orissa Record, Administrative and Revenue Records. They will be mentioned at appropriate chapters. For collection of both primary as well as secondary source materials, the scholar paid several visits to the following libraries in Orissa namely, Sambalpur University Library at Jyoti Vihar, Orissa State Archives at Bhubaneswar, Orissa State Museum Library at Bhubaneswar, Orissa State Legislative Assembly Library at Bhubaneswar, Utkal Sahitya Samaj at Cuttack, Sonepur College Library, Sonepur, Sub-Collector's Office Library, Sonepur and Regional State Archives at Sambalpur.

The scholar also paid a visit to the National Library at Calcutta for collection of theoretical materials pertaining to the study.

Research Methodology

The scholar adopted the library documentation, analytical and historical methods for the present study. Data Processing has been done manually.