CHAPTER III
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The Setting: Socio-Cultural History of Orissa in the Eighteenth Century

(a) Location, Topography and A Brief Historical Account of Orissa Upto the British Occupation

As a province, Orissa extends from 17°N to 22°34'N latitude and from 81°29'E to 87°29'E longitude on the eastern coast of Indian Peninsula. It is encircled by the states of West Bengal on the north-east, Bihar on the north, Madhya Pradesh on the west, Andhra Pradesh on the South and the Bay of Bengal on the east. As regards its topography, Orissa is a maritime state with a coastline of about 250 miles along the Bay of Bengal. It has also an extensive plateau which slopes gently into the coastal plain along the Bay of Bengal. The river Mahanadi, flowing west and east through the plateau, cuts into two well-defined parts. The northern part is an extension of the Chotanagpur plateau and the southern part is covered by hill ranges known as the "Eastern Ghats". Towards the West and south-west of the state, there are four well-defined physical regions of the state namely, the northern plateau, eastern ghats the coastal plain, the erosional plains and river basins of the central table land.


But the composition of its population, is somewhat different from most other states in India. It comprises a relatively large component of persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes, who, however, are quite different from the rest of the State's population. They mostly live in the forests of Eastern Ghats and the northern plateau. Further, they remain isolated from the main stream of socio-economic life. They are economically backward, who depend for their livelihood mainly on forests and shifting cultivation or a primitive form of settled agriculture. But they attach strong identification to their own culture and traditions, which made them less responsive to changes around in Orissa.\textsuperscript{79}

As regards the political identity, Orissa remained under foreign control for a long period of time. Such a control began under the Mughal and Marathas when it was a part of the Bengal Subah. Also, from the advent of English rule in 1803 until 1912, it was part of Bihar and Bengal Presidency in British India. It was only on 1 April 1936 when Orissa got the status of a separate province. Thus, from the fall of its last ruler Mukundadeva Harichandan in 1568 till 1936, Orissa lost its sovereignty for a long period and remained scattered. In the process she lost her political importance, cultural identity and economic well being.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{79} For details see, National Council of Applied Economic Research, ibid, p.2.
\textsuperscript{80} J.K.Sahu, op.cit., p.1.
This was, however, not the exact picture of Orissa during the ancient and medieval periods, when it was so large that it extended from the mouth of Ganges in the north to the Godavari in the South, from the Bay of Bengal on the east and the Amarakantaka of Vindhya region on the west. During the early part of the Christian era, Orissa was known as "Odra", "Utkala", "Kalinga" and "Tosali" in different periods of its history. The reference about Kalinga is found from the great epic, Mahabharata and in the literature of the later Vedic period. In the Buddhist literatures like Digha Nikayas and the Jataka stories, we find several references relating to the past glory of Kalinga which extended from the rivers Krishna in the south to Subarnarekha towards the north. This prompted Asoka, the Maurya ruler of Magadha, to invade its territory. But after a most bloody battle against the people of Kalinga, Asoka became the great disciple of Buddha. From the narration of Rock Edict XIII of Asokan era, we get some picture of the strength and courage of the people of Kalinga who transformed the heart of Asoka from a ruthless cruel emperor to a peace maker.

After the Asokan era, Kalinga once again came to the forefront during the period of Kharavela, who flourished in the first century B.C. His Hatigumpha inscriptions throw light on military expeditions as conducted by him. His expeditions and patronage towards jain saints have left proud foot-prints on the

history of Orissa. As stated by Pliny, a foreign geographer, the people of Kalinga occupied the eastern coast of India below the Mandi and Malli and the famous Mount Maleus. During the period of the Imperial Ganga dynasty, the territory of Orissa extended from the rivers Ganges to the Godavari.

Geographically, however, Orissa forms a "bridge" between North and South India, with a type of cultural assimilation between "Aryan" and "Dravidian" ways of life. While its river valleys and coastal plains resulted in the growth of populous "Aryan" civilization, its hilly regions on the other hand were specimens of primitive "Dravidian" or tribal culture. Further, its coastal regions enriched with many ports and cities served as the gateways for the overseas trade and colonisation in ancient Orissa. Thus, through its geography itself, Orissa was able to build of her history and culture in course of time.

Like the Kalingas, the "Odras" and "Ukkalas" or "Utkalas" were indigenous tribes of Orissa, who lived in regions known after their names. But gradually these tribal races were Aryanised. For instance, Sailodhava dynasty established its rule over "Kongoda" region with the help of the "Fulindas", a powerful tribe from the south. After extinction

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83. For details see J.K. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p.2.
of Kalinga, however, the "Bhaumas" of Tosali became powerful. The Bhaumas originally hailed from the ancient Utkala tribe. Thereafter emerged the Mandala States as headed by different tribal chiefs. For instance, the Kodalaka Mandala was ruled by the "Sulkis" and that the Bhanjas ruled over Khinjali Mandala and Khijjinga Mandala. As for the Chakrakota Mandala, it was ruled by the Chindaka Nagas who were of South Indian Origin. Thereafter, the dynasties which ruled ancient Orissa were the Somavamsis (from the tribal regions of Madhya Pradesh) followed by the Gajapatis and the Gangas. 84

As regards different religions, they have their own roots in the land. The tribal races, however, became gradually Aryanised through interactions with different religions namely, Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism. As regards Buddhism and Jainism, they progressed significantly during the reigns of Asoka and Kharavela respectively. They lost their popularity thereafter. Following the fourth century A.D., however, during the Gupta Age, Brahmanical activities increased considerably both in India as well as in Orissa. It may be mentioned that the Matharas, the Vasisthas, the Sailodbhavas, the Somavamsis, the Bhaumas, the Gangas, the Gajapatis were all patrons of Brahmanism. As regards the art and architectures of Orissa, they do have a unique style of their own. For instance, the temples of Lingaraja and Konark are considered as peak pieces of art in

84. Ibid.
the world. They represent the cultural heritage of Orissa. Also, in the field of sculpture and art, Orissa occupies a proud place in India. Further, in the field of making coins, the people of Orissa attained quite a bit of excellence. 85

A survey of Orissan art indicates that in the images of both Hindu and Bhuddha cult there is the super expression of art and imagination and that these images are of human as well as of animal life. Such projections, however, have been viewed by scholars differently. While some viewed that the Orissan art was influenced by the Mathura School of Art [which flourished in northern India], others contend that the Amaravati School of Art [in the South] was backbone behind Orissan style of Art. It is quite possible that both the Mathura and Amaravati Schools of art might have influenced the Orissan art. Such an excellent tradition of art and sculpture, however, continued till the end of the thirteenth century, with the "Konark" temple standing out as the most famous specimen of Orissan art and architecture. 86

The Gajapati period is regarded as the golden era in the history of Oriya literature. The greatest "Mahakavya", Mahabharata, written by the Oriya poet Sarala Das (in Oriya language) as well as Kalpalata and Ramabibaha were produced during this period. Also, the Panchasakha in Oriya literature


flourished during this period. Out of them Jagannath Das wrote *Bhagabat* and *Balaram Das Ramayana* (known as Dandi Ramayan). Other important works of the period were *Kesaba Koili* by Markanda Das, *Rasakulya Chautisha* by Batsa Das, *Nirguna Mahatma* by Chaitanya Das, *Sunya Samhita* by Achutananda Das. The Oriya literature of the period was patronised by Vaishnavism (both Orissan and Gaudya). But gradually Oriya Vaishnavism lost its position and Gaudiya Vaishnavism became popular following the advent of Sri Chaitanya in Orissa. During the Suryavamsi dynasty, the Oriya literature was expressed generally in the form of "Kavyas", "Puranas", "Lokagita", "Sangita" and that the "Palmleaf" was used as the main material for writing. 87

With this socio-cultural background, an attempt will be made to touch briefly upon the political history of Orissa upto the British occupation in 1803. To begin with, the Medieval period of Orissa was rich with many heroic personalities who extended their territory from the river Ganges to the Godavari in the south. But such territorial expansions did not last long, as during the reign of the last ruler of Suryavamsi dynasty namely, Prataprudra Deva, the territory was attacked by Krishna Deva Ray, the powerful King of Vijayanagara dynasty. At that time Prataparudra Deva was totally occupied with the Gaudiya Vaishnavas and as a result Krishna Deva Ray occupied a large part of Orissa lying to the south of Godavari.

Following the death of Prataparudradeva, however, the condition of Orissa became most miserable as he was succeeded by two incapable sons. As the situation deteriorated further, the throne of Orissa was occupied by Mukundadeva Harichandana a person from Telengana.  

The reign of Mukundadeva, however, was full of internal conflicts. Apart from problems at home, he faced another trouble from the Afghan Sultan of Bengal, Sulaiman Karrani. In fact, he developed bad relations with Sulaiman due to two main reasons. Firstly, Mukundadeva gave shelter to one Ibrahim-Sur, who was detested to by Sulaiman. The latter demanded for the surrender of Sur which was flatly refused to by Mukundadeva. Secondly, Mukundadeva developed friendly relations with the Mughal emperor Akbar, which enraged Sulaiman. In fact, finding Akbar preoccupied in the war of Chittor (1567-1568) Sulaiman sent a powerful force to Orissa under his son Bayazid. Mukundadeva responded to the attack by sending an army under two generals namely, Chhotray and Raghu Bhanj, who unfortunately deserted him during the battle. Following this, Mukundadeva was killed and Sulaiman Karrani occupied Orissa.  

The Afghan rule under Sulaiman continued for twentyfour years (1568-1592) which, however, failed to give an uniform system of administration to Orissa. It also evoked  

a great deal of controversy and resentment as the Afghan rulers raided many Hindu temples. Prominent among such acts was the attack by "Kalapahara", a Hindu infidel on the Jagannath temple. In the process the Afghan ruler Sulaiman became highly unpopular among the Hindu Community until his death in 1592. In the meanwhile, the relations between the Mughals and Afghans became strained following the death of Sulaiman Karrani. He was succeeded by his eldest son Bayazid, who was a man of insolent and harsh character. Very soon a plot was hatched to overthrow him as he alienated support from a large number of Afghan nobles and was killed in the process. He was succeeded by his younger brother Daud, who also emulated his brother's bad conduct in several respects. Further, he did not follow the good policy of his father by paying allegiance to the Mughal empire Akbar. In fact, he complicated matters by reading the "Kutba" and by manufacturing royal coins in his own name. Being by these developments the Mughal army made an attack on him under the leadership of Khan-i-Khanan on 6 August 1574. In the battle that followed near Patna, Daud was defeated decisively and fled to Bengal. The Mughal army thereafter moved towards Bengal to pursue him under the leadership of Munim Khan. It defeated his army once again near Tanda, the capital of Bengal, on 28 September 1574. Daud, thereafter fled to Orissa and began organising an offensive against the Mughals

90. For details see Ibid.
from his military base at Balasore. A combined military offensive by the Mughals under the leadership of Khan-i-Jahan and Raja Todarmal was launched against the Daud at Rajmahal on 10 July 1576, which eventually resulted in the defeat of Afghan army as well as the death of Daud. The Mughal general Raja Mansingh, however, completed the final conquest over the Afghans on 10 April 1592.

As for emperor Akbar, he sought to popularize his administrative system in Orissa with serious attempts to redress the grievances of common people. In this context, Raja Todar Mal was deputed to Orissa for land revenue settlement and to augment the revenue resources for the Mughals. Todar Mal, after a survey, divided the entire territory of Orissa into the "Garjat" (feudatory), "Mughalbandi" (coastal) areas. In his revenue policy, Todar Mal made the stipulation that the people in Garjat areas would pay their taxes in cash, whereas the revenue collection in the Mughalbandi areas (under their direct administration) would be collected both in "cash" as well as in"kind". For the said purpose, the "caury" currency was used as the common medium of exchange among the Oriya people.

As regards the religious policy of the Mughals, true to his well-known credentials, Akbar resorted to a most tolerant attitudes vis-a-vis the Hindus. He denounced the iconoclastic and persecuting policy as followed by the Afghan rulers against the Hindus. Also he ordered that Afghan soldiers would not be

92. For details see Ibid, pp.9-19.
93. For details see Ibid, pp.158-165.
allowed either to invade or to desecrate the temple of Jagannath in Orissa. Further, Raja Man Singh, his military general nominated Raja Ramachandra Deva as the founder of Bhoi dynasty in Orissa as the Superintendent of the Jagannath temple at Puri. Besides these, the Queen of Raja Man Singh constructed the "Mukti Mandap" of the Jagannath temple. But such a policy of toleration as well as non-interference vis-a-vis the Hindus did not continue for long as his successors namely, Jahangir and Shah-Jahan resorted to a major twist in favour of traditional conservatism and orthodoxy. However, these Mughal rulers did not resort to the policy of religious persecution as followed by the Afghan rulers. The reign of Aurangzeb, however, turned out to be most humiliating towards the Hindus as he resorted to a series of temple destructions. Further, he patronised conservative Islamism by appointing religious officials for the restoration of Islamic laws. In this regard he appointed Shaikh Junaid as "Mujtahid" and Rahmatullah and Sayyid Muhammad Ghaus as "Qazis" for Orissa with headquarters at Cuttack. 94

A new phase in the political history of Orissa, however, began following the death of Aurangzeb. The Mughal empire lost all its glory and began to disintegrate fast. It could not maintain its foothold over Orissa which, in course of time, went into the hands of Murshid Quli Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, who declared himself as the Nazim of Bengal, Bihar and

Orissa. But Murshid Quli Khan did not rule for long as he died in 1727. He was succeeded by Nawab Sujauddin who sent his son Taqi Khan, to become the Subedar of Orissa. Taqi Khan, perpetrated a reign of terror in the state until his sudden death in 1735. He was succeeded by Murshid Quli Khan II, the son-in-law of Nawab Sujauddin. But in the meanwhile, Nawab Sujauddin expired in 1739 and was succeeded by his second son Sarfraz. But the new emperor faced tremendous opposition to his rule from four prominent nobles namely, Haji Ahmad, Ali Vardi Khan, Alam Chand and Fateh Chand, who successfully to kill through a conspiracy. After the exercise, Ali Vardi Khan was made the new Nazim of Bengal. Following his take-over, Ali Vardi deputed Sayyid Ahmad to remove the Subedar of Orissa, Murshid Quli Khan II as he was appointed during the tenure of Nawab Sujauddin. Sayyid Ahmad, successfully completed the mission. But one of the trusted lieutenants of Murshid Kuli Khan II namely, Mir Habib did not accept the defeat of his master gracefully as he rushed to Raghuji Bhonsle, the Maratha ruler of Nagpur, for military help. Prompted by the request, the Marathas made a march on Orissa and a long process of military engagements took place between them. Gradually however, Ali Vardi due to old age and illness became tired of war and decided to enter into a peace of agreement with Raghuji Bhonsle in 1751. It was a tripartite agreement between Bhonsle, Mir Habib and Ali Vardi. Under the agreement it was decided that the territory of Orissa between the river "Subarnarekha" in the north to the lake
"chilka" in the south would be occupied by the Marathas, while the areas beyond river Subarnarekha would remain under the Nawab of Bengal. Also, according to the treaty, Ali Vardi agreed to pay to the Marathas annually rupees twelve lakhs as "Chauth". Thus, the territory of Orissa came under the control of Maratha rulers of Nagpur beginning in 1751.

As regards the Maratha rule in Orissa, it continued for over fifty years (1751-1803). The Marathas divided the province into two divisions on the Mughal pattern. While the Mughalbandi regions comprised generally the plain and fertile lands with a good population, the Garjat areas were barren and hilly tracts with scanty population. Further, while the Mughalbandi areas were administered directly by them, the Garjats were ruled by feudatory/tribal chiefs. The general character of Maratha administration was military in nature. It represented a most blatant picture of "misrule, anarchy, rapacity and violence".

But the road to British occupation in 1803 was somewhat "slow" and "stormy". To begin with, their contacts with Orissa prior to the conquest (1633-1803) could divided into two distinct phases. In the first phase (1633-1757), they retained a marginal interest in Orissa. Their entire

95. For details see Ibid, pp.9-28.
attention was concentrated on development of commercial and trade transactions until the Battle of Plassey in 1757. It was only during the second phase (1757-1803) and especially after the grant of Dewani by the Mughals to the English Governor Robert Clive in 1765 that the British changed their attitudes completely. In fact, after 1765 the British entertained a clear desire to have a firm foot hold over Orissa. They initiated the process through diplomatic channels with the Marathas between 1757 and 1803. This period (1757-1803) has been described as the "Period of Diplomacy". 97

To elaborate, the East India Company established several trade centres in India namely, Surat, Aramgaon and Maslipatnam, from where the Company sent an expedition to Orissa in 1633. The English party took the route of the Portuguese and Dutch traders and was led by Ralph W. Cartwright. After reaching Orissa, it proceeded immediately to call on the native ruler of Orissa, "Telenga Mukunda Deo" as well as the Mughal Governor both stationed at Cuttack. But they encountered stiff opposition from both Portuguese and Dutch traders who were firmly entrenched in Orissa. But the "undaunting enthusiasm" of the English party eventually succeeded in persuading the Mughal governor to allow them to establish factories at Harishpur, Balasore and Pipli. 98

98. For details see P. Acharya, Studies in Orissan History: Archaeology and Archives (Cuttack, 1969), pp. 212-221.
The East India Company thereafter went smooth sailing in Orissa until it ran into a period of long dispute with Shayista Khan, the Mughal Subedar of Bengal and a series of military engagements took place between them. But by 1690, the Company realizing the futility of their ambition to subdue the Mughals, decided to come to terms with the Mughals. Following the settlement, the Mughals permitted them to rebuild their factories in Bengal as well as at Balasore. A phase of smooth relationship thereafter ensued between them. 99

But the political interest of the Company in Orissa began to swell immediately following the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and especially after the Mughal emperor Shah Alam granted the English Governor Robert Clive, the Northern Circars on 12 August 1765 consisting of Cicacole, Rajamahandri, Ellore and Guntur, which included the district of Ganjam in Orissa. Further, through this award the British got the dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which included the single district of Midnapore on the Orissa side. In the process the British acquired the two extreme ends of the Oriya-speaking tracts in the second half of the eighteenth century while the middle portion of the province remained in Maratha hands. By this arrangement, Orissa remained in the lines of communication between the English territories in Bengal and Madras. For any movement of troops or exchange of forces

99. For details see R.D.Banerji, op.cit., pp.64-65.
between the two territories, they were forced to depend totally on the mercy of the Bhonsles of Nagpur who ruled Orissa. This aspect became quite critical in February 1781 when the English governor Warren Hastings was to send an army under Colonel Pearse to meet the recalcitrant forces under Haider Ali of Mysore. In fact, the ruler of Nagpur permitted the troops through Orissa only after the British paid thirteen lakh rupees as well as provided a loan of twelve lakhs rupees to them.\(^{100}\)

It may be mentioned that the British made earlier efforts to obtain Orissa through negotiations. For instance, Robert Clive sent Thomas Motte to Nagpur in 1767 to negotiate for cessation of Orissa to the British on payment of money. But the negotiation, failed as the amount demanded by the Bhonsle was too high.\(^{101}\) Subsequently also, Lord Cornwallis requested the Peshawa to intervene personally to persuade the Bhonsle for the cessation of Orissa to the Company. But all such plans failed and by the end of the eighteenth century, the British decided to occupy Orissa, if necessary, by force. Such a critical decision was taken by Lord Wellesley after he became the Governor General in 1798. He made elaborate preparations for the conquest of Orissa once it became clear to him that war with the Marathas was inevitable. It was decided that the main British force would move from Ganjam, which would take the responsibility of subjugating the coastal

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100. For details see C.U. Wills, British Relations with Nagpur State (Nagpur, 1926), p. 241.
areas up to Puri and thereafter proceed towards Cuttack to capture the fort of Barabati. It was stipulated further that a part of this force would proceed towards the Barmul Pass to prevent any attack on Orissa from the Maratha quarters. Colonel Campbell was given the responsibility to lead this military operation. A second military force was entrusted to Captain Morgan for the occupation of Balasore from Calcutta. A third contingent was organized at Jaleswar under Lt. Col. Ferguson to proceed on land to the south to join Captain Morgan at Balasore. A fourth force was kept ready at Midnapore under Lt. Colonel Fenwick to safeguard the territory of Bengal from any possible Maratha attack from Seraikela side. With such elaborate preparations, the British finally conquered Orissa in three different phases: Firstly, the southern part (Ganjam district), next, the Coastal and Central regions (consisting of Cuttack, Jaleswar and Bhadrak) and finally the Western part (Sambalpur region). The process began with the capture of Barbati fort on 14 October 1803, following their conquest over Ganjam and Puri. As for the territories in the northeast of river Subarnarekha, they were occupied after Balasore came under their control on 22 September 1803. The Marathas were once again defeated by Major Forbes near the Barmul Pass on 2 November 1803. Following these defeats, they opened negotiations, for a peace treaty on 30 November 1803 through an intermediary of Raja of Berar namely, Jaswanta Rao Ramachandra. Eventually, peace treaty was signed at Deogan on 17 December 1803. In the process the occupation of a major portion of Orissa became complete. But the final phase the
annexation of Sambalpur by Major Broughton on 3 January 1804. After defeating the Maratha Governor Tantia Fadnavis, Broughton concluded a series of treaties with the feudatory chiefs of Sambalpur, Raigarh, Saranggarh, Rairakhol, Gangpur, Bamra, Sakti and Bargarh, whereby these local rulers opted to remain loyal to the British. Thus, by early 1804, the three districts of Puri, Cuttack and Balasore on the sea coast along with the sixteen tributary mahals in the hill regions to the West constituted the Orissa Province under the East India Company.

(b) The Social Setting of Orissa in the Eighteenth Century

The period of eighteenth century was described by historians as the "dark age" for India. True to the national setting, socio-political developments in Orissa witnessed a similar pattern. To begin with the downfall of Hindu Kingdom in Orissa was followed by a most difficult phase of internecine warfare as well as frequent military invasions from foreign quarters. In the process the Afghans ruled Orissa (from 1568 to 1578) followed by the Mughals who reigned from 1578 to 1751. The province was thereafter occupied by the Marathas who continued in power until the East India Company conquered Orissa in 1803. Thus, the eighteenth century Orissa witnessed the foreign domination which, in fact, created an adverse impact on the socio-economic life of people. But the impact of Maratha rule was more eventful and profound than that of the Mughals.

The nature and character of Oriya people in the context of its social setting need some elaboration. By and large the Oriya people are rather simple by nature but ignorant and backward by character. The topography and environment of the province largely contributed to such a process. But foreign travellers and historians offered strikingly opposite views in this regard. For instance, the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, while castigating the Oriya people for their "unimpressive, uncivilized and rough nature", also eulogized them as "brave, impetuous, intelligent and trustworthy". Another foreign visitor Thomas Bowrey, while giving a geographical account of the province, (during 1669-1679) described the Oriya people as "poor, idolatrous and low-spirited". Another English traveller Thomas Motte, while undertaking his journey through Orissa in 1766, to conduct negotiations with the Marathas at the behest of Robert Clive, described its people as "lazy, treacherous and cruel". As for the Mughal biographer and historian, Abul Fazl, the Oriyas were basically "effiminate" by nature and character.

Such a description, however, is not corroborated by one Senior British official who observed:

"... they [Oriyas] are separate and distinct of a character and language peculiar to themselves. Their features are on the whole good, and both features and language indicate that they are to a great degree Aryan in race. We do not see reason to believe that they are in their own way less industrious, they have certain intelligence of their own. The people were kindly and good-humoured, remarkably law-abiding ..." 107

Such a characterization is usually referred to the native population living in the Mughalbandi and plain areas during the second half of the nineteenth century. The view of Andrew Sterling in this regard appears to be more convincing. For instance, while concurring with the observations of some foreigners that they were noted for their "intellectual dullness", he, however, characterized the plains people as "most mild, quiet, inoffensive and easily-managed people." 108

As regards the tribal people living in the hill tracts of Orissa, there appears to be no divergence of opinion among British historians. For instance, they were described as "wilder" than their brethren living in coastal areas. 109

Also, they were found to have been "shy, sullen, inhospitable and uncivilized" and that their chiefs were "grossly stupid.

barbarous, debauch, tyrannical and enslaved to the most gruelling superstitions". At the same time some tribals (principally the Khonds) displayed certain distinct traits in their character. For instance, they were "bold and fitfully laborious mountain peasantry of simple, but not of undignified manners" and that they were "upright in their conduct, sincere in their superstitions, proud of their position as land-holders and tenacious about their rights". Further, they were "a cheerful and industrious peasantry, very hospitable but tenacious of their customs and superstitious". Simultaneously, they were found to be quite "reserved, polite, truthful, simple, generous and ready to talk to people who knew their language. In general, however, the Khond people were great lovers of "liberty". Subsequently, however, another British official Verrier Elwin described their character as "most difficult, timid and suspicious of all the Orissa highlanders". Such a change in nature and character of the Khond people was probably due to their long conflicts with the British over "Human Sacrifices" and "Infanticide" during the nineteenth century.

As regards the economic living of Oriya people, Alexander Hamilton in the first decade of the eighteenth century observed them markedly "poor" with a large number of beggars.

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110. See Andrew Sterling, op.cit., p.25.
However, the feudatory Chiefs, their officers and money-lenders enjoyed an affluent life. As for the common people, despite their abject poverty, they were never thrifty and niggardly in spending on their social festivities and religious ceremonies. On the whole while the rest of India suffered their worst during the eighteenth century at least the people of Orissa made honest efforts to lead a happy and contented life against heavy odds. In fact, they sought every opportunity to cultivate the "art of peace" and to promote the "prosperity of their fatherland".

Religion also played an important role in the social life of Oriya people. To begin with, Orissa was described as the holyland of Hinduism. Some of its early Muslim conquerors remarked that, "this country is not fit subject for conquest; it belongs entirely to the Gods". William F.B.Laurie, a British Officer posted in Orissa observed:

"... Orissa may be compared to a huge cauldron which has been boiling for many hundreds of years into which ignorance, stupidity, and bigotry have cast so many poisonous ingredients that it is difficult to say when the contents will become purified and good."

113. As cited in P.R.Mahapatra, Some Aspects of the Economic Life of Orissa (Bhubaneswar, 1984), p.266.
114. For details see Rajendralal Mitra, The Antiquities of Orissa (Calcutta, 1875), vol.1, p.2.
Despite these criticisms it may be observed that the Hindus of Orissa, as elsewhere in India, were a "most conservative, devoutly religious and priest-ridden people strictly observing ceremonial purity.\textsuperscript{117}

Further, Orissa is a land of temples, where people offer sacrifices and prayers to gods and goddesses. There was, however, a subtle difference between the temples of the plains and that of the highlands. For instance, while in the plains, the temples were characterized by the domination of Brahmin priests, vegetarian deities, absence of animal sacrifice and strong links to the Jagannath Cult at Puri, their counterparts in the hilly regions were diametrically opposite to all such features. The domination of non-Brahmin priests, non-vegetarian deities, animal sacrifices and independence from ties to the Jagannath cult constituted the major features of the temples lying the highland Orissa.\textsuperscript{118} However, the influence of Lord Jagannath was quite profound in the life of the Indians in general and Oriyas in particular.

Religion in the villages mostly consisted of a "deity", usually a female one described as "Gram Thakurani", who was believed to have helped people in adjusting to the tragedies of life.\textsuperscript{119} But the religion of tribal people was somewhat different from the plain people mainly on two major
\begin{itemize}
\item O'Malley, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, op.cit., p.185.
\item Girraj Gupta, ed. Religion in Modern India (New Delhi, 1983), p.235.
\end{itemize}
aspects. For instance, the tribal people did not attach importance to the conception of "good", "morality", and "conscience". Also, their "Gods" and "Spirits" were of different nomenclature with varying degrees of power.\textsuperscript{120} The tribal religions consisted of the "Nature Gods" namely, the Gods of the "Sun", the "Moon", the "Sky", the "Rain", the "Wind" and the "Mother Earth". Besides these, there were many deities embracing individual villages, hills and forests. Further all their Gods were propitiated by regular sacrifices. In fact, all the tribes observed a ceremonial year which was closely connected with their agricultural operations, such as "before sowing", "during the process of growth" and "after the harvesting".

Priesthood formed another distinguishing feature of the religion under which all caste Hindus barring the Brahmins, were totally subservient to it. Usually priesthood constituted an ancient institution to which divinity was attached for both plain and tribal people. In this context, McPherson observes, "the "Khond priesthood, like every other priesthood lays claim to divine institution".\textsuperscript{122} But, with the passage of time, the Khonds did not attach much importance to priesthood and resorted to the institution of one priest to remain under the over-all charge "Chief God". This prompted a host of earlier tribal priests to resort to trading in magical arts and sorcery.\textsuperscript{123} In the


\textsuperscript{121} For details see Ibid, pp.XXIII-XXIV.

\textsuperscript{122} McPherson's \textit{Report Upon the Khonds of the Districts of Ganjam and Cuttack} (Calcutta, 1842), p.75.

\textsuperscript{123} W.W.Hunter, \textit{Orissa}, op.cit., p.94.
process there developed superstitious beliefs among the people consisting of various myths, magic, witchcraft, sorcery and sacrifices in the eighteenth century.

With this background an attempt will be made to analyze developments during the Mughal and Maratha administration in Orissa. To begin with, it is observed by R.D.Banerji that the Maratha rule was no different from that of the Mughal administration as "the shell of government remained Mughal but the core was entirely changed". According to him, the Maratha administration was fatal to the welfare of the people as well as prosperity of the country. It exhibited a picture of "misrule, anarchy, weakness, rapacity and violence combined". The Mughal administration, on the other hand, was always busy in war. It mainly depended upon the local Hindu officers who helped them to understand the administrative problems concerning local issues. But the Maratha administration, as compared to the Mughal rule, was highly unpopular in Orissa, as the people were extremely scared of the Marathas. In fact, their revenue collection method was so harsh that many times the Oriya people used to hide themselves in the jungles and made their houses dark at night. Even the weeping children became silent when their mothers told them that the Marathas might hear the cry and appear on the scene.

124. See R.D.Banerji, op.cit., p.117.
125. For details see Ibid, pp.146-147.
During the Mughal rule, the medieval society in Orissa reflected a good sense of hospitality to the strangers. The Mughal rulers were generally quite friendly towards the strangers and offered them warm hospitality. This was reflected in the account as provided by William Bruton, who was a member of the English party to Orissa led by Ralph W. Cartwright in 1633. For instance when Bruton met the Mughal Governor along with a friend at Cuttack, he was provided with a horse for transportation; Cots and other comforts were also provided to them. The guests were, regarded as gods and at some places even the Christians were treated as such by Brahmin officials. But this was not a common phenomenon as in many other places foreigners were not allowed to enter into the houses of local natives. But the foreign guests in all cases were provided with decent food. However, they were allowed to take rest in the cowshed outside the houses.

Following the Mughal rule a new class of nobility emerged in Orissa, who received strong support from the Maratha Subedars. This noble class generally used horses as a symbol of dignity and fashion and helped the Maratha administration to stabilize itself in Orissa. These people owned huge landed property and enjoyed certain extra privileges like the use of "palaquins".

The system of giving "Nazrana" was very common in Orissa. During the Maratha rule, it was a very common practice to give some presents to the officer for meeting him. Such presents, however, were according to the rank or status of the person interviewed. The Subedars gave presents to the native Rajas and the common people made presents to the Subedars. When the foreigners of a high rank wanted to meet some officers, then presents were exchanged between them. This practice was very common in the feudatory states of Orissa. This type of taking "Nazrana" made the Maratha administration "corrupt" as the Maratha Subedars were easily bribed by the Britishers. In the process the Marathas began to lose their hold over Orissa.130

The road and transport system under the Marathas was not well-developed in the eighteenth century. This forced the travellers to cover their distance through horses. For their convenience, however, trees were planted near the roads to protect them from the sun. Also, "Sarais" (Dharmsalas) were established to give accommodation to them during the night. However, separate "Sarais" were constructed for female travellers. Further, servants were kept in the Sarais to look after the guests as well as to feed the animals. On the whole, the Oriya people were highly religious and superstitious. Their religion life was pious as they observed several festivals during the whole year. Out of these, the "Rath Yatra" or

Car festival of Lord Jagannath was the chief festival. It was observed with great pomp and show. Apart from "Rath Yatra", the "Durga Puja" was also performed with great pomp and splendour. But it was generally celebrated in large villages and towns.131

Agriculture was the principal occupation for most of Oriya people during both the Mughal as well as Maratha periods. While at the fag end of Mughal period there were signs of prosperity in the social hierarchy, yet the general economic condition of Orissa deteriorated due to the absence of strong central government, constant drain of wealth by foreign rulers and the tyranny of local officers. Due to constant exploitation, also, common lands were converted into feudal lands and in the process a new class of rural labourers emerged in Orissa.132

It may be highlighted that the most of the agriculturists depended on the mercy of rain, which varied from year to year resulting in famine. Despite such pressures, the Maratha rulers did not spare them from their high demands of "awabs", "tolls" and customs duty on raw goods. Also lack of governmental support forced many weavers from Orissa to leave for Midnapore, Bankura and Birbhum and in consequence the village-level industries suffered terribly and that the cotton-producing

lands were slowly converted to paddy fields. But since the price of labourers was kept deliberately low to minimize the cost of production, it ultimately resulted in the migration of artisans to outside-Orissa. Also the Maratha rulers failed to encourage the cultivation of cash crops. This process severely affected the village economy during the course of the eighteenth century.133

The educational system in Orissa prior to the British occupation was primitive. Education was confined to traditional teachings in the "Pathsalas" by the "Abadhanas" and the medium of instructions was both Sanskrit and Oriya languages. The main subjects of teaching were arithmetic, letter writing and reading. The Pathsalas were financed mainly by the Zamindars and local Rajas. During the period of Islamic rule, there developed "maktabs" and "madrasahs" for the Muslim children where rudimentary teachings on language and religion were imparted.134

Thus, the medieval Orissan society, while reflecting a high sense of hospitality to strangers also emphasised on simplicity of life and unsophisticated way of behaviour.

133. For details see B.C. Ray, Orissa Under the Mughals, op.cit., pp.71-77.

134. Ibid, p.164.
The cultural aspects of Orissa were quite significant in the eighteenth century. To begin with, the interplay between external invasions and religious developments within the province prompted significant changes in the socio-cultural life of the Oriya people. For instance, the medieval Orissa found two hostile religions (namely, Hinduism and Islam) often moving simultaneously towards the principle of "co-existence". Also, Islam made its impact on the Oriya society, as it prompted the development of the native language and literature. Further, the Muslim rule helped to focus sharply on some major ideas and problems relating to the areas of literature, religion, art and architecture. These aspects, embraced the major parameters of cultural environment that prevailed in Orissa during the eighteenth century.

To elaborate, the literature of the eighteenth century developed tremendously during both the Mughal as well as the Maratha periods. To begin with, in the pre-Muslim period, the Sanskrit language was normally used for literature. As regards the Brahmin scholars, they used to receive both respect as well as patronage from the Kings. As a result, Sanskrit grew as an aristocratic literature confined only to the highclass Hindus. The common people, however, did not develop any contact with this language. But gradually the Oriya literature found its place in the society as the Sanskrit language was not commonly understood by the people. It was
following the advent of "Vaishnavism" that prompted the need
to propagate its religion through a literature which could be
easily understood among the common mass of people in Orissa.
Following this, a large number of Oriya poets began to write
in the native language. Such a trend was further facilitated
during the Mughal period. In fact, the Oriya literature became
quite rich during this period as it contained both the artistic
skills combined with high philosophical ideas.

At the same time, several important writings in Sanskrit literature pertaining to "nataka", "Kavya" and "purana"
were published. They were however, dedicated in the honour of
different gods. Prominent among them were Haladhar Misra,
Sangita Kalpalata, Basantochhaba Mahakavya, Krishna Das Badajena
Mahapatra, Gita Prakash, Anadi Mishra, Manimala Natika, Gangadhar
Misra, Kosalananda Mahakavya, Kaviraj Gopinath Rath, Naisadhamah
Kavyatika, Krishna Srichandana, Abda Duta, Raghunath Das,
Bhakti Kavyam, Kalanirnaya, Utpata Tarancini, Kavi Nityananda,
Sivalilamrutta Mahakavya, Krushnalilamrutta Mahakavya and
Brajasundar Patnaik, Suloachana Madhava Kavya or Madhabiya
Charitam.

The Muslim period brought certain changes in the
field of writings. For instance, while the love between Radha
and Krishna was the principal theme in all earlier writings, in

135. In the "Panchasakha" literature, we find the influence of
Vaishnavism. The Vaishnab poets began to write in Oriya
language to popularize the religion.

136. B.C. Ray, Orissa Under the Mughals, op.cit., p.188.

137. S.N. Das, Odia Sahityara Itihas (Cuttack, 1966), in Oriya,
the Islamic period, emphasis was placed on the life of "Rama". Further, instead of concentrating their attention on the love story of Rama, writers began to portray in their "Kavyas" several characters who expressed both the aspects of happiness as well as sorrow in human life. Also, during the Muslim period, works on Lord Jagannath were given more emphasis than on other subjects. In fact, the Raja of Khurda patronized several poets by asking them to dedicate their works in honour of Lord Jagannath. But as political instability crept in, the ruler of Khurda could not devote much attention for the promotion of Oriya literature. The initiative, thereafter, was taken up by other local rulers like the Rajas of Ghumsar, Parlakhemidi and Badakhemidi in Ganjam district, who took great interests in patronizing the court poets. 138

During the Mughal period, the Oriya literature was crowned with great poetic talents. To begin with, Dhananjaya Bhanja and Upendra Bhanja opened the "Kavya age", with their style of writing which brought a remarkable change in the traditional approach to literature. As these poets belonged to royal families, they were quite acquainted with old Sanskrit works. Expression of ideas in easy manner and without taking much labour as well as without any literary skill prompted Upendra Bhanja to attempt something "new", "dignified" and "idealistic". He also decided to imitate Vaishnava Poet Dinakrushna Das who in his Rasakallola displayed keen interest

138. For details see Ibid, p.366.
in "ornate" poetry. Such a trend for "richness", "ornatory beauty" was marked a speciality in the writings of Upendra Bhanja. He was a mighty "literary acrobat" who showed his great skill also in verbal jugglery. Also, in the art of alliterative composition, he was second to none. But as a literary artist his works was rather uncommon. For instance, his writing style and selection of words were such that every word had a different meaning of its own. His major contribution, 'Vaidehisa Vilasa' was an example of "Chitra Kavya" narrating the story of Ramayana in "ornate versification". Some scholars, criticised his techniques as "stupid pedantry". This is, an unfair assessment as his poetic genius and talent can hardly surpassed by any other poet in Orissa. His major works were *Vaidehisa Vilasa*, *Koti Brahmanda Sundari*, *Subhadra Parinava* and *Lavanvabati*.\(^{139}\)

It may be observed that before Upendra Bhanja, there were many poets who emphasised on religious poems. For them, the spiritual attainment was considered as the only aim of life. But Upendra Bhanja was not satisfied with only narrating spiritual aims. Rather he gave more emphasis on material happiness of human beings. As he lived during the period of cultural degradation in Orissa following the Mughal rule, his writings were quite social as well as timely.

\(^{139}\) For details Pathani Pattanayak, *Odia Sahitya Itihasa* (Cuttack, 1993) in Oriya, p.386.
They displayed a clear picture of the existing Oriya society. He wrote nearly seventy or eighty works and was adored with the title of a poetic "Guru" or "Kabi Samrat", the King of the Poets. 140

It may be mentioned that many Muslim-converted Oriyas also became well versed in the native language and literature. Salbeg was one among them, whose devotional songs became quite famous. Also, the Islamic impact on Oriya literature and language was quite rampant as many Persian were used in the Oriya poems and "Kavyas". Towards the end of their rule, however, due to constant warfare, the Mughal rulers did not take much interest in the development of Oriya literature. It was the turn of the local Rajas and Zamindars thereafter to take active interest in patronising the poets and learned people. 141

Following the Maratha occupation, however, the people of Orissa believed that the new regime would develop their cultural aspects as they were Hindu rulers. But instead of becoming good rulers the Marathas resorted to such harsh methods that people regarded them as "dacoits". However, some Maratha rulers namely, the King of Berar patronised poets and Pandits in his court.

141. For details see S.N. Das, op.cit., pp.301-302.
Among the writings which enriched the Oriya literature during the Maratha rule were Jadumani Mohapatra's Raghava Bilasa, and Prabandha Purnachandra. Devadurullabha Das's Rahasya Manjori and Bhupati Pandit's Prema Panchamruta. Apart from these literateurs, Sadananda Kavisurya Brahma was a Vaishnava Poet who wrote in both Oriya, Bengalee and Sanskrit languages. His works were, Lalita Lochana, Yucala Rasamruta Lahari and Prema Tarancini. Besides them Kabisurya Baladeva Ratha was a prominent Oriya poet who served in the courts of various Zamindars. He was a writer of "Champu" which was accepted as the most popular lyric poetry during his period. His writings, however, concerned mainly on love stories between Radha and Krishna. Besides these, Brajanatha Bodajena was another bright star in the sky of Oriya poetry. His contribution to the Oriya literature was impressive. His writings, however, were totally different from those of his contemporaries. For instance, his Samara Taranga was a "historical ballad" which described the battle between the Marathas and the Raja of Dhenkanal. His Chatura Binodo, as a "sattire" was quite innovative.\footnote{142}

In the history of Oriya "Kavyas" the writings of Purusottam Das was somewhat different. For instance, his writings were mixed with both historical facts as well as
sharp imaginations. His *Kanchi-Kaveri Charita* was a "historical ballad". It constituted the earliest influence of Oriya literature on Bengalee writings. This period also witnessed the emergence of the blind poet Bhima Bhoi in the Western Orissa who provided a new lyricity and expressiveness to Oriya language. He was an illiterate Poet who converted himself to "Mahima Dharma" later on. His poems were full of compassion with a deep feeling of identification for the sufferings of people.\(^{143}\)

Thus, despite political instability in Orissa literary developments did not suffer during the eighteenth century. Infact, both in Sanskrit as well as in Oriya languages, literary developments reached its zenith with Upendra Bhanja dominating the scene with the unique style and use of word power which were rather remarkable. The period is described in Oriya literature as the "Riti-Yuga".

As regards the impact of religions, it formed the backbone of the society in the eighteenth century. Apart from the two major religions of India, various religious groups exited in Orissa prior to the Muslim invasion namely, Vaishnavas "Sakta", "Natha" and "Saiva" cults. Among them, the Gaudiya Vaishnavism flourished with royal patronage. But all religious sects centred round the institution of Jagannath Puri, which emerged as a great abode of Hinduism. It was the

principal sanctuary of Hindu ideas. It was after the Afghan occupation of Orissa under Sulaiman Karrani that efforts were made to establish Islam as the state religion. Kalapahar, the general of Sulaiman Karrani, was deputed to destroy the Hindu temples. In the process the temple of Lord Jagannath, the main abode of Hinduism, was destroyed partially. Such a development aroused a great fear in the minds of Oriya people that the Muslims were out to destroy their religious faith.\footnote{For details see A.B. Mohanty, ed. \textit{Madalapanji}, (Cuttack, 1940), p.61.}

But such a policy underwent a transformation with the advent of Mughals in Orissa. For instance, Akbar's policy of tolerance and non-interference encouraged the Hindus to worship rather freely with their gods. Following his death, however, such a policy changed somewhat under his successors. To begin with, during the reign of Jahangir, Mughal generals Hasim Khan and Mukarram Khan made repeated attacks on Hindu temples, which forced the priests of the Jagannath temple to transfer the idol from place to place. Also during the reign of Shah Jahan, his general Mutaqad Khan invaded Puri to plunder the temple and to murder the King. It is mentioned in the religious chronicle "Madala Panji" that in order to save the idol as well as the priests of the temple, Raja Narasingh Deva, of Khurda, offered his head to the Mughals. Further, during the reign of Aurangzeb, the emperor passed orders for the destruction of Hindu temples in Orissa. In the process the
temples at Tilkuti and Kendrapara were destroyed and mosques built in their place. Also, sometimes priests of Jagannath temple and the Raja of Khurda, Divyasimha Deva offered bribes to Muslim generals in a bid to save the temple and the idol. For instance, when the Mughal general Ekram Khan and two of his brothers threatened to break the idol of Jagannath, the Raja of Khurda paid a bribe of rupees thirty thousand to the Governor of Orissa to save the temple. 145

During the reign of Murshid Quli Khan II, however, his general Mir Habib took an active interest for the reinstatement of the idol of Jagannath at the temple at Puri, which pleased the Hindus greatly. At the same time the Hindus continued to pay a heavy amount as pilgrim tax called "Zijiya" when they came to visit the temple at Jagannath. During the period of Mughal rule, several Islamic religious institutions like mosques and tombs were established for Muslim saints like Shah Mansur, Panja Shah, Malang Shah and Mastan Shah in different parts of Orissa. These saints were well known for propagating their ideals such as "piety", "kindness", "pious and exemplary life". These religious preachers were respected by both the Muslims and Hindus in the province. Further, some pious Muslim governors also granted lands to the poors and destitutes in Orissa. Also, some Muslim governors like Ali Vardi Khan provided monetary help to Hindu

145. For details see Ibid, p.64.
gods and saints to maintain their religious institutions. Thus some Islamic personalities acquired great respect and popularity among the native population.\textsuperscript{146}

As for the Marathas, they were quite interested for encouraging the worship of Hindu gods in Orissa. They introduced the practice of paying annually 20,000 Kauris for charitable purposes, which was spent for three major purposes. For instance, some amount was given to the Brahmanas who were mainly in charge of the thirtytwo Thakuras or idols. Also, some amount was spent for the poor persons and for the old widows. Besides, some amount was spent for supplying food and clothes to the poor travellers who came from different parts of the country.\textsuperscript{147}

After capturing power, the Marathas showed a lot of interest for the worship of Jagannath and for the management of the temple. Their growing interest developed for several reasons. To begin with, as Hindus, they felt some obligation towards Lord Jagannath. Also they found out that the Hindu section was quite unhappy about the manner in which the Muslim rulers treated their gods and religious institutions. Finally, the temple of Lord Jagannath both from sentimental and economic view points, was a highly sensitive subject for the Marathas. For all these reasons, they gave special attention for the

\footnotesize{146. For details see Sudhakar Pattnaik, ed. \textit{Chakada Pothi} (Cutack, 1959) in Oriya, p.28 and B.C.Ray, \textit{Orissa Under the Mughals}, op.cit., p.129.}

\footnotesize{147. For details see A.B.Mohanty, op.cit., pp.65-67.}
betterment of the Jagannath temple. They issued passports to pilgrims who intended to visit the temple. Also, they sent request letters to the government of other states to issue such passports in the interest of the pilgrims.\textsuperscript{148}

The Marathas were also quite liberal towards the Muslim religion. They allowed the Muslims to practise their religion freely. The government took necessary steps for the maintenance of the Muslim institutions. They granted money to the persons incharge of mosques. Also, they confirmed the lands to these institutions as granted by the previous Muslim governments. Further new lands were granted to some mosques. One of the most important development was the grant of one hundred acres of land to Gyasuddin, a priest of Jajpur Mosque.\textsuperscript{149}

The period of eighteenth century Orissa may be regarded as one of "tolerance". While some Muslim generals attacked the Hindu temples yet, the process of religious synthesis was most visible in the province. This is demonstrated by the fact that during the Mughal rule, attempts were made to develop the Hindu religious institutions and that during the Maratha rule, several grants were made to maintain the mosques and tombs in Orissa. The eighteenth century was further notable in the fields of art and architecture. To begin with during the Muslim rule, Islamic architecture found

\textsuperscript{148} For details see M.N. Das, ed. History and Culture of Orissa (Cuttack, 1977), pp.150-151.
\textsuperscript{149} For details see Ibid, p.151.
its opening in Orissa as several mosques were built at Cuttack, Balasore and Jajpur. They were known for excellent Islamic architecture. Further, the century witnessed the development of "pictorial art" manifested on "Palm-leaf". In the Pre-Muslim period, painting on the walls of the temples used to receive special encouragement and that wealthy persons decorated their own buildings with paintings. But gradually, the painting shifted to clothes and palm leaves. But the Muslims showed absolutely no interest in palm leaves and used papers in their places. This aspect prompted the Oriya painters to try their hands at painting on a paper. However, such paintings were made on mythological events. At the same time it may be mentioned that the most important collections in Oriya literature like - Bhagabata Gita (Jagannath Das), Vaidehisa Vilasha, Rasika Harabali, Dashapoi (Upendra Bhanja), Sarbanga Sundari (Lokanath Das), Ushavilasa (Sisu Shankar Das), Adhyatma Ramayana (Gopala Telenga), Rasa Binoda, Rasa Kallola and Artatrama Chautisa (Dina Krishna Das) were incorporated in the palm-leaf manuscripts. 

Such palm-leaf manuscripts containing the theme of art, however, were collected principally from the mythological and "Puranic" stories. In several cases, the themes of Vaishnavite literature were described in the pictorial art. Further, themes relating to Ramite, Saivite literature and Jagannath worship were incorporated by the Oriya artists in

their respective paintings. While analyzing these developments, B.C. Ray opposes the views of O.C. Ganguli who stated that the subject matter of the artist was the "Perennial theme of Vaishnava literature". Despite such controversy, it may be concluded that these pictorial arts represented a high quality of work, full of expressive feelings and sentiments. These could be compared equally with the excellent art of sculpture in the age of Konark.\textsuperscript{151}

Thus, the cultural life of Orissa in the eighteenth century period was not that dismal as in the socio-political fields as presented above.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, p.187.