INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The present work is the first attempt to present a comprehensive and critical study of the economic condition of the Princely States of Orissa from 1858 to 1949. The period under study begins with the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1858 and ends with the merger of Orissa States in 1948-49. The main concern of this work is not only to examine various economic changes but also their impact on the life of the people in the Princely States of Orissa.

Upto 1840, there were nineteen princely states of Orissa. Banki and Angul were annexed to British Orissa in 1840 and 1847 respectively. Since then Angul and Banki remained under the direct administration of the British. The princely states also known as Tributary Mahals formerly 19 in number got reduced to 17. They were: Athgarh, Athmallik, Baud, Baramba, Daspalla, Dhenkanal, Hindol, Khandpara, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanja, Narsinghpur, Nayagarh, Nilgiri, Pal-Lahara, Talchar, Tigiria and Rangpur. In 1905, five Oriya-speaking states of Central Province, i.e. Patna, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Raikhol and Bamra and two Oriya speaking states of Chhotnagpur i.e. Gangpur and Bonai were transferred to Orissa division. There were still two other Oriya states namely Saraikella and Kharswan, which were still left with the Commissioners of Chhotonagpur. In 1916, they were transferred to Orissa division. Thus the number of princely
states of Orissa rose to 26. All these Oriya-speaking states except Saraikella and Kharaswan were integrated with the Province of Orissa in 1948-49. These two states were merged with the province of Bihar in 1948.

The princely states of Orissa were hilly tracts occupied by a so-called 'rude and uncivilised race of people'. Because of the inaccessible nature of the territories and peculiar nature of the people, it was felt that the British rules and regulations could not be implemented smoothly and efficiently. Further, this might anger the people of the states who were generally of wild nature. Further, a liberal policy was likely to satisfy the pride of the Rajas and bind them to the British Government. So the princely states of Orissa were exempted from the operation of general regulation system prevalent in British Orissa.

British Orissa was ruled by the direct executive authority of the British Government. The princely states referred to by the British as Tributary and Feudatory states were ruled indirectly by the British through the princes themselves. Although the British rules and regulations were not applicable to them, they were made to acknowledge British Government as the paramount power and were completely subordinate to the British authorities.

From 1814 the British Government exercised control over
the affairs of the states and activities of the princes through the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. The Commissioner of Orissa acted as the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. By a Regulation of that year, he was to keep himself informed of their proceedings, levy quit rents due from them and endeavour to establish such control over the conduct of the Rajas as would prevent the Commission of crimes and outrages.

As the paramount power, the British Government supervised the internal Government of the Princely States of Orissa. But such supervision had been quite ineffective and too inadequate. The British authorities rather gave all possible assistance to the chiefs to suppress the popular risings directed against them. In these circumstances, the Princes tended to neglect the interests of the people and oppressed them as they no longer feared them.

The people of the princely states of Orissa rose in revolt several times in the 19th century. The primary causes of their uprisings was economic. Whatever steps were taken by them to bring about improvement in the economic condition in the princely states of Orissa only touched the fringe of the problem. Undoubtedly, the British policy aimed at protecting the interest of the Princes rather than that of the people. The Feudatory Chief, being safe under the British protection,
grew autocratic in his attitude and adopted exactions and repression as the standard norms of their administration instead of trying to ameliorate the lot of the people.

Assured of the British support to their continuance in the gadi, the Raja ruled his territory pretty much according to his own idea of what was right and pursued in many cases ruthless oppressive measures against his subjects. The system of personal rule characterised the administration of the states. The rule of law did not exist.

The princely rule had terrible economic impact on the people of the states. There prevailed extreme economic backwardness. The taxation was heavy. The poverty was deep. The people suffered terribly. The growing discontent found expression in several popular risings even after 1900.

A rapid growth of political consciousness and the progress of national struggle became the distinctive characteristics of the years after 1905. In the changing circumstances, the British authorities had to be more alert to their relationship with the princes of Orissa and tried to be more friendly with them. At the same time, they wanted the princes to pay more attention than before to the promotion of the well-being of the people.
A new chapter in the British relation with the Tributary Mahals began when Sir Andrew Fraser became the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. He took special care to deal with questions concerned with the management of states. He heard that misgovernment of the chiefs generally led to the British intervention in their affairs. This policy was causing their dissatisfaction with the British rule. On personal enquiries, he knew that the cause of misgovernment was inefficiency and oppression of the Rajas. He was convinced that measures were necessary to encourage the chiefs to administer their states more efficiently and to recognise more fully their duties and responsibilities. As a means to this end he felt certain that he could not do better than introduce the system, he had himself to work in the Chhatisgarh Division of the Central Provinces, where there were a number of states under a Political Agent. He strongly recommended for the appointment of a Political Agent for the Tributary Mahals of Orissa. His recommendation was accepted by the Government of India.

Shortly afterwards, in April 1906, Cobblen Ramsay was appointed as a Political Agent for the Tributary States of Orissa, subject to the control of the Commissioner of Orissa. The general lines of policy laid down for the guidance of the Agent were as follows. The chiefs should be taught to understand their responsibility for the administration of their states. Efforts should be made to render them capable of
efficient administration. The supervision exercised over them should be only such as might be necessary to keep the British Government in touch with their administration. Briefly, the chiefs were to be left to manage the affairs of their own states without interference, so long as they worked on reasonable lines of progress, and refrained from oppression and injustice. The Political Agent was to be the friend, adviser and colleague of each chief and the Commissioner was to be the official Supervisor of both.

The wisdom of this policy was soon apparent. Hitherto, little had been done to encourage the chiefs, and a spirit, if not of actual mistrust, at any rate of aloofness and suspicion, had been engendered. They were now assured of the friendly attention and good will of government and their confidence was secured. The princes were found to have taken more interests than before in the welfare of their subjects.

After 1905 the main objective of the British policy was to secure the goodwill and co-operation of the chiefs in their efforts to counter the rising nationalist movement. The British authorities were determined not to antagonise the princes. So the Political Agent hesitatingly and cautiously pressurised the princes to adopt measures for the welfare of the people.

Such interference could not remove inherent defects
in the feudatory administration. It continued to be autocratic, corrupt and exploitative. Some halting steps adopted by the princes to modernise their states after 1905 did not bring about any improvement in the economic condition of the people. The Prajamandal Movement that emerged in the princely states of Orissa in the late 30's of the century exposed the degraded condition to which foreign rule has subjected them and their increasing miseries.

The study of the economic condition of the princely states of Orissa from 1858 to 1947 has not received due attention of the historians past and present. There were a few works on the Princely States of Orissa in the recent times. They either discusses the British policy towards the Princely States of Orissa or the people's movement in the states. A good deal of light has been thrown on these aspects by the works like K.M. Patra's Orissa under the East India Company, J.K. Samal's Orissa under the British Crown: 1905-1947 and P.K. Mishra's Political unrest in Orissa in the 19th century. All these works do not throw much light on the economic condition of the Princely States of Orissa during the British rule. My humble attempt is the first attempt to present a detailed and dispassionate accounts of the economic life in the Princely States of Orissa during the period, 1858-1947.
This work has been organised and presented in six chapters. Chapters I and II are primarily concerned with different aspects of the land revenue administration of the states. The study shows how unsound and unjust land revenue policy pursued by the princes was causing intolerable economic hardship to the peasants. The chapter-III deals with the agricultural activities in the states and provides an analysis of various factors leading to the stagnation and deterioration of agriculture. Chapter-IV presents a vivid picture of the agricultural pursuits of the tribals. Chapter-V reflects how the Princely States of Orissa were lamentably backward in Industry, Communication and Trade. In the last chapter, the general economic condition of the people and the factors responsible for the growth of deep poverty among them have been analysed.

The data for this research have been collected from the Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, National Library, Calcutta, and Board of Revenue Library, Cuttack, Kanika Library, Cuttack. In these places, I had access to the various documents, letters, reports, periodicals and so on. This thesis uses all available sources to give a clear, comprehensive account of the different aspects of the economic condition of the Princely States of Orissa during the period, 1858-1947.