INTRODUCTION

This study intends to capture the essential features of the agrarian social and economic structure and the condition of the peasantry in colonial coastal Orissa during the period from 1912 to 1939 i.e., from the formation of the Province of Bihar and Orissa (1912) to the resignation of the Provincial Congress Ministry in the newly formed Province of Orissa (the province was separated from Bihar in 1936). The nature of economic forces that existed during the colonial rule and its interrelationship with the agrarian structure and the peasantry is the focus of our analysis. The focus of the study is mainly on the temporarily settled areas in the three coastal districts of Orissa i.e. the districts of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri. When British occupied Orissa in 1803 these three districts comprised the Orissa Province, which later became the 19th division of the Province of Bengal. In 1905 Sambalpur was transferred from the Central Provinces and became a part of the Orissa Division. The areas of Sambalpur and Anugul & Khondmals have been excluded from this study because they came under the Orissa Division at different times and had their separate administrative and agrarian history quite different from the three coastal districts under study.
Rice cultivation dominated agricultural production in Orissa. One of the shortcomings of Orissan agriculture under the colonial rule was that the commercial principles in agriculture by maximising agricultural production for the market was lacking. An attempt has been made in this study to understand this characteristic of the agrarian structure in colonial coastal Orissa and the factors that influenced agrarian productivity in Orissa. Agrarian protest movements were the outcome of the colonial agrarian relations in India. The period under study witnessed the strengthening of the peasant movement under the Indian National Congress and the All India Kisan Sabha all over India. Orissa was no exception. The peasants in Orissa protested against the colonial rule to redress their grievances and their struggles strengthened the struggle for independence. The thesis attempts to discuss the circumstances that aroused the Oriya peasants to join the mass movements.

Within the three districts under study, the study has focussed on the areas that were known as the temporarily settled areas of British Orissa. These temporarily settled areas in Orissa (the Districts of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri) had a common civil
and revenue administration rather different from other parts what is now known as Orissa. The study does not cover the Feudatory States of Orissa and areas that remained under the Central Provinces and the Madras Presidency because they had a different set-up of administration and agrarian relations under the British Rule. However, some references have been made to these areas in this study wherever they have appeared particularly relevant especially to link the progress of the peasant movement and the Congress activities and programmes in these regions.

The period covered in this study has a special significance in the study of agrarian history of Orissa. On 1 April 1912 Bihar and Orissa were separated from the Province of Bengal and together formed a new province known as the Province of Bihar and Orissa. Prior to that a long debate took place in the Legislative Assembly of Bengal for introducing a separate agrarian legislation for Orissa which was not existing till then. On the recommendation of the Select Committee the Bill was referred to the newly formed Province of Bihar and Orissa. In the year 1913 the Orissa Tenancy Act was passed by the
Government of Bihar and Orissa, which aimed to provide a self-contained agrarian code for Orissa. This period witnessed the formation of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee, Utkal Kisan Sangha and the important Gandhian movements i.e. the non-co-operation movement and the civil disobedience movement. It also saw the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts and the formation of the separate Province of Orissa in 1936 and the acceptance of office by the Congress in 1937. The Congress Ministry took up the agrarian issues and tried to redress their grievances as far as possible within its limited authority. These years provide valuable evidences on the working of the British agrarian policy and its impact on the economic life of the peasantry. The period also witnessed organised peasant protest movements that were closely related to the colonial agrarian relations. While trying to cover these important developments the study focuses on the nature and changes that occurred in the agrarian structure and in the life of the peasantry.

Chapter I deals with the questions on population trends, land use pattern, Irrigation and forests. The main questions
raised in this chapter are the factors that determined population growth during the period under study. The density of population and its relation to the area under cultivation, the male and female population ratio and its trend of change, the ratio between city and town population, occupational distribution according to the census, the ecological regions in coastal Orissa, the government policies and its corresponding effect on the forest rights and pasturage rights of the people, the pre-British and early colonial period irrigation system, and the change effected by the British. It also attempts a comparative study of the earlier and the prevailing system.

Chapter II traces the evolution of the British land revenue policy and the survey and settlement operations carried out in the temporarily settled areas of Orissa during colonial rule. The chapter begins with a discussion on the nineteenth century settlement operations conducted by the British government in Orissa. Thereafter the discussion is on the revision settlements conducted in the twentieth century. The chapter critically examines the question why permanent settlement was denied to Orissa and the impact of the periodic enhancement of rent on the
peasant economy. It also discusses the nature of the British revenue policy in Orissa, its results and the popular reactions to its policy.

The colonial land revenue administration and rent structure was deeply linked with the tenurial rights and the intermediate interest groups. The traditional tenurial expression of property rights was one of the factors of differentiation of socio-economic status of the owner cultivator and the farmer. In Orissa the agrarian relations were fashioned by three categories of proprietary interest i.e., class I- Permanently settled estates, Class II- Temporarily settled estates, class III- Estates held directly by the Government. Chapter III discusses the characteristics of the land tenure system, the relationship between the proprietary class and the peasantry vis-à-vis the colonial state in the temporarily settled estates in coastal Orissa and its inter linkage with the socio-economic condition of the agrarian population. Rent was the institution that summed up the zamindar tenant relationship. While various kinds of rents were located within their agrarian contexts, an attempt has been made in this chapter to discuss how the different land tenure
system and rent structure affected the economic position of small farmers, both occupancy and non-occupancy, and the agrarian labourers.

Chapter IV discusses the trend of cultivation and production in Orissan agriculture with reference to the factors that influenced this trend for the three decades following the separation of Orissa from Bengal in 1912. In this context the main questions that are raised are: what were the factors inherent in the agrarian structure that determined the pattern of cultivation and what were the overall trends in production in the districts under study. What was the extent of commercialisation of agriculture in Orissa and what was the response of the Oriya cultivators to the changing agrarian structure under the influence of market economy? What was the general tendency in the movement of prices? What relationship had emerged between irrigation and crop production? How did rent settlements and natural calamities affect productivity? While trying to answer these questions, this chapter attempts to outline the broad trends of the agrarian economy in the districts of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri in coastal Orissa.
Chapter V analyses the agrarian programme of the British in Orissa and that of the first Congress Ministry. The main questions in this chapter are did the tenancy legislations serve the purpose of the tenantry? What were its limitations and compulsions? How far did the agrarian reforms attempted by the Congress Ministry change the conditions of the peasantry?

The discontentment of a large section of the peasantry over the colonial agrarian policy in Orissa gave birth to a series of protest movements particularly in the 1930’s. These movements were either guided by the peasant organisations under the Kisan Sabha or the Congress. In chapter VI we examine the nature and extent of the peasant movement in coastal Orissa and the British response to these movements during the period under study. The main questions raised are why the peasants joined the protest movements? What were their grievances and demands? How were they mobilised by the leaders? How far did the peasant organisations in Orissa like the Utkal Kisan Sangha and the Lok Sabha achieve their goal? How did the Congress shape the popular perceptions and what were the circumstances that aroused the Oriya peasants to join mass movements?
The last chapter sums up the main findings of this research effort to understand the formative factors which went into the making of Orissa's agrarian History and the economic life of the peasantry in the period between the formation of the Province of Bihar and Orissa (1912) and the termination of the Congress Government (1939) in the newly formed Province of Orissa.