Land is one of the basic needs of the people. From the day of man's appearance on the earth to till to-day land has occupied a Unique position. In course of time it has become the basic quality of his standard of living. It is quite clear from the fact that, his life starts at the cradle with the touch of the earth and ends when he finally cremated on the ground. Land sustenances his whole life. Rightly speaking land is the most important necessity of Man from cradle to grave.

In fact in the evolutionary process of civilisation with the settlement of man permanently at a place the importance of land increased. Land came to be used for different purposes. With the growth of Kingship unclaimed lands were brought under state Control and on private land kings collected revenues. Kings also donated land exempted from all taxes to different donees.

In this context the region now called Orissa and was far greater in ancient time than its present position experienced the same process of development. It was then divided into many petty political kingdoms like Kalinga, Kosala, Utkala, Odra, Kangoda etc. They witnessed the rise and fall of many ruling dynasties like the Nandas, the Mauryas, the Chedis, the Matharas, the Nalas, the Somavamsis, the Gangas etc. In between 350 A.D- 1110 A.D., a good number of inscriptions particularly copper plate grants were issued by them in which
endowments were made in shape of land. All those land grants brought to light so far contain bits of information regarding kinds of land, ownership and tenures, measurement, revenues, legislations and agriculture. Further, they mention the names of places of their issue, donated land either cultivable or forest tract etc., explaining the land system prevalent then.

All these inscriptions reveal the socio-religious and economic significance of our glorious past. It recognizes the importance of land on the very existence of human civilization. Thus, land which is an important branch of economy in no case is a less important section of history. For the reason a study of land system on the basis of epigraphic evidences seems to be useful. Moreover, it will help us to correlate the present with the past. It means an understanding of it can help us to reject many evils prevalent in the land structure till to-day with a harmful effect on our socio-economic existence. Besides, we can practiced many good elements of our ancient past that are not being practiced at present.

But no sincere attempt has yet been made by any scholar for a specific study of land system in context to Orissa during 350 A.D.-1110 A.D. A handful of works on it by a few scholars are available only on Indian context. They are "Land system and Feudalism in ancient India" by D.C. Sircar (1965), Early Medieval villages in Northern India by A.K. Chaudhury (1971), Bengal peasant life, by L.B. Day (1926), The Agrarian system in India by U.N. Ghosal (1930) contribution to Hindu Revenue system, by U.N. Ghosal (1929).
But so far as history of Orissa is concerned we don't come across any exclusive work on it. Only a few scholars have made some general references on it while dealing with other fields particularly socio-economic aspect of people in ancient Orissa. Some of these works include *Orissa, Social cultural and religious aspects* by B.S. Das, *Studies in the economic History of Orissa from ancient time to 1833 A.D.* by B.S. Das, *Life in Medieval Orissa* by A.P. Sah, *Bhaumakaras the Buddhist kings of Orissa* by B. Das, *Administration and Society in Medieval Andhra (A.D. 1038-1538) Under the later Eastern Gaṅgas and Suryavamsa Gajapatis* by C.V.R. Rao and *Cultural History of Orissa* by B.K. Rath. It also includes some unpublished Ph.D. thesis viz. *Early History and culture of South Kosala* by J.P. Sahu, *Life and Culture in Medieval South Kosala* by N.K. Dash, *Feudatory states of Medieval Orissa* by R.R. Ray, *State and Society in Early Medieval Orissa* by B.N. Tripathy, *History of Orissa in the seventh Century A.D.* by D.B. Mishra etc. Besides a few articles are noticed here and there dealing with this aspect. However, none of these works throws a good amount of light on different aspects of land system in Orissa as a whole or part either. Moreover those works though refers to some epigraphic records are mainly text based and have not fully emphasised the land system in Orissa. Further, newly discovered land grants in the recent years providing more useful informations are not referred by these works.
So far no attempt has been made by any scholar to make an exclusive study of the land system in Orissa during this period. The present work is the first honest attempt of its kind which views and highlights the different aspects of land system in the said period of Orissa in a comprehensive manner. The study of this work is restricted to C.E. 350-1110 A.D. only because of presenting a comprehensive picture of all its aspects.

Inscriptions are the primary source of the work. Orissa is the storehouse of epigraphic records. Large number of inscriptions of different nature and of different kinds have been discovered. Thus, the present work is mainly an epigraphical study being supported by our ancient texts and traditions. Works like inscriptions of Orissa, Epigraphia indicā, corpus Inscriptionum indicarum, South Indian Inscriptions etc. and many ancient texts have been consulted with for this work following the methodology of historical research. All possible care has been taken to present it perfectly and comprehensively.

To make it perfect, concrete and practical literary texts have been dealt with on different contexts. Among them Epics, Purānas, astrological books, Buddhist and Jaina literature, drāmā and other secular character books are important. They reveal many things about the land ownership, land revenue, kinds of land, agricultural produces etc.
The work in the following pages is divided into seven chapters for a comprehensive and planned study of the problem. The opening chapter being an introductory one gives an insight into the process on which land came to be valued in human life. It is observed that value of land in Orissa evolved in the same process as happened in the case of India, which finally led to the development of land system.

Chapter II deals with the different forms of ownership and tenures prevailed in ancient Orissa. The chapter reflects how the different form of ownership led to the rise of an intermediary class who cultivated their land not by themselves but by others to whom the land was not belonging to. It also highlights the bearings of land tenureship in the history of Orissa. Besides, it presents a brief analysis on the rights of the donees over the lands and land transaction.

Chapter III deals with the different land grants issued by kings and others including the private individuals. It is observed from the study of land grants that they were granted for various purposes of personal and public utility. The places of issue and villages donated reveal that Orissa in ancient time was for greater than its present limit. This chapter also aims at presenting a brief sketch on the nature of land grants.
Chapter-IV is solely devoted to the survey and measurement of land and the different kinds of revenue collected from there. Rightly speaking the remarkable features of this Chapter are the local variations and regional development of the units of land measures and revenue collection under different dynasties ruling over different pockets of Orissa.

Chapter-V, which deals with the kinds of land and agriculture of Orissa under the period of survey, embodies a clear picture on different kinds of land available, methods of cultivation, irrigation facilities, implements, agricultural products and others.

Chapter-VI gives an understanding to inscriptive place names and how they are a sure index of land kind and agricultural products produces there. These placenames as seems were named after the land having the concerned nature and products. As such it also recognises the large scale production of those products there.

In chapter-VII an attempt has been made to summarise and conclude the most important and lasting informations gleaned from the above chapters having its impact on the evolutionary process of man and the Society. In this Chapter a brief comparison of the out come of the study with the land system of British period has also been presented. It
is evident that though the forms of land changed in different time making suitable to Society and environment the quality and compact remained same.

Thus, the study of land system based on epigraphic records perfectly explained the agricultural economy, flora and fauna, land ownership tenures, revenue, measuring units, agriculture and the continuity of landed structure in Orissa.

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