CHAPTER - SEVEN

CONCLUSION
Keeping in view of the colonial and commercial interest of the British, the authorities in England did not deem it proper to interfere with the religious ideas and traditional beliefs of the Indians in the beginning of their rule. Accordingly, Lord Wellesley who had to conquer Orissa finally also directed to John Campbell to show due respect to the holiness of the temple of Lord Jagannath and to maintain the traditional customs and rituals when the British soldiers entered into Orissa. Orissa came under the British possession in 1803.

It may be mentioned here that considering the deplorable academic condition and decadent intellectual atmosphere of the country, Charles Grant Wilberforce, a philanthropist Parliamentarian had pleaded in the British Parliament towards the last decade of the 18th century to impart 'light and knowledge' to the people of India. Most likely this light was the light of Christianity and the knowledge was the Western education.
In the 19th century, two factors were highly responsible in championing the cause of the reform movements in India i.e. the rise of a middle class intelligentsia and the growth of media like journals, press etc. The establishment of English medium schools, colleges and universities spread the western ideas as well as formed an intelligentsia section who incourse of time appeared on the Indian scene with new hopes and aspirations. The growth of media also acted as a great social force by kindling new hopes in the minds of the masses.

But the Western ideas penetrated into the soil of Orissa very slowly. Orissa was backward both materially and intellectually from the year 1803 to 1866. The Company's government was callous in the matter of education till 1822. Up to 1835, there was not even a government English medium school in the province. It is to be mentioned here that prior to the introduction of Western education in the province, Orissa had an excellent indigenous system of mass education which was secular and democratic in character. The
indigenous institutions had spontaneous growth in the province. Though, in the early stage, there was no special academic institution for the girls, their education was not completely ignored as it has been mentioned earlier. Mention may be made here that the indifferent attitude of the British Government, the apathetic attitude of the people and their attachment to the traditional system of education were the distinct causes in hampering the introduction of Western education in the province. Further, as their educational institutions were not exotic, the indigenous system did not die off rapidly in the face of challenge from the West, although there was some amount of stagnation.

However, inspite of the obstacles, the Missionaries were the pioneers of popular education in Orissa. Besides the establishment of a Vernacular School at Cuttack in 1822, they had opened the first English Charity School in Cuttack in 1823 and became the champion of opening of a new chapter in the history of modern education in Orissa.
The Charter Act of 1833, of the Company's government encouraged the Missionaries to carry out their activities in India. Accordingly, the American Baptist Missionaries, Roman Catholic Missionaries, Spanish and German Missionaries and also the Baptist Missionaries extended their educational activities in different parts of Orissa. In comparison to northern part and also in Sambalpur Zone, the Missionaries did not take interest in spreading education in Southern Orissa in the early part of the 19th century. The Missionaries were more interested in spreading Telugu rather than Oriya which was a reason for the backwardness of education of Oriyas in the Southern region. However, the Missionaries in Orissa took interest in the establishment and management of schools for a long days. They had also rendered their services for the promotion of education among the backward classes and aboriginals.

'Purdah system' among the women of higher classes was also a cause of obstacle for the spread of education among women. But the Missionaries were very keen in the spread of education
among women. In the annual conference of the 'Bangotkal Society' held on 18 November 1883, decision was taken to encourage female education. Higher education was also encouraged among the Christian converts.

In course of time, the British Government adopted certain measure for the promotion of education in Orissa. With the spread of English education, the government had also taken steps for the spread of vernacular education. A new awakening was marked in Orissa after the great famine of 1866. General consciousness of the people grew. Demands came from the side of the people for the establishment of schools. With efforts of the British government and due to the patronage of local Rajas, education could spread, of course in a slow degree. Side by side efforts were made to provide education to women.

Like, elsewhere in India, the spread of education with a western bias brought a significant change in the social sphere of Orissa. Having received such education, the upper class
people thought of to reform their traditional society on modern ideas. Common men, being literate became keen for social change.

For the evangelization of Orissa, the Missionaries established stations and sub-stations in the province. They were not only the preachers and educators but also publishers and translators. A large number of literary work came up only because of the establishment of Mission press at Cuttack. The activities of the Missionaries led to the formation of Christian Colonies with all facilities, like roads, medical facilities, schools etc. in Orissa and the Tributary Mahals. The Missionaries played no less a conspicuous role in preparing a ground for socio-religious transformation in Orissa.

British government's measures in the abolition of Sati, Meriah sacrifice, female Infanticide etc were commendable. The British officers with a strong zeal had entered into the interior areas even when there was no good roads. Their combined efforts brought invaluable changes
in the traditional belief of the people. Abolition of Sati created a conducive atmosphere for the widow-marrying. Child-marriage became a topic of debate in different socio-cultural forums in Orissa. The periodical 'Sambalpur Hitaisini' in its issue of 18 July, 1890 appealed to the Rajas and Zamindars to use their influence against Child-marriage. The periodical 'Utkal Dipika' in its issue of August 1893 stated that consciousness in this direction dawned in the minds of the people.

The 19th century religious movements i.e., Mahima Cult and Brahmo Dharma had brought out a revolution in the Oriya society to cast away the old conservative ideas in Hinduism. Due to the development of different religious movements and the spread of Western education in the province, the Hindus also conscious of about their customs and conventions. Western impact with the spread of English education were keenly felt on the development of vernacular literature.

On the whole, the socio-religious movements in Orissa in the 19th century was highly responsible in developing a spirit of general consciousness in the minds of the people. A critical
analysis of the past and the aspiration for the future was marked. With the progressive ideas there appeared the modern concept of nationalism.