CONCLUSION

Throughout the period of British rule India constituted two different political entities: British India and Princely India. British India was under the direct rule of the British authorities and was regarded as British territory; the inhabitants there were treated as British subjects. Princely India, on the other hand, comprised more than six hundred States, ruled by local dynasties of Rulers, who were under the protection and political control of the British Government and had acknowledged the supremacy of the British Crown. Princely India was heterogeneous in character, containing very large States like Hyderabad and Kashmir whose rulers enjoyed wider powers, and small States like those of Kathiawar and Simla hills whose rulers exercised limited powers. Though these rulers had no freedom in external relation, they enjoyed considerable power and authority in their internal administration. The Indian States were considered to be outside British India, but the British authorities as the Paramount Power reserved the right to interfere in their internal affairs whenever it was deemed necessary to do so.

In British India the system of administration was a better one; it was gradually being modernised through phases of liberal democratic reforms; the people enjoyed
the benefits of modern education, social and economic reforms, rule of law, and self-government. But the Indian States represented a very sad picture. They remained wedded to medievalism politically and socially. Backwardness and stagnation rather than change and prosperity were the marked features of life in the Princely States. As late as 1929 the Butler Committee found the Indian States "patriarchal or quasi-feudal which still linger in a medieval atmosphere and... are purely under autocratic administration."¹ Most of the Princely States suffered from misrule and had a system of administration much inferior in standard to that of British India. The system of government was despotic, autocratic and personal, with no semblance of legislation by popular consent; the administration was above public opinion; there was no independent judiciary, no rule of law; the destinies of the people depended on the whims, the idiosyncrasies, the fads and passions of their rulers. Laws were issued in the form of orders and decrees which did not have any broader foundation than the mere caprice of the prince, who could repeal, amend and suspend them at his will and pleasure. Life, property, freedom, and honour and dignity of women were at the mercy of the ruler. A subject could not sue the prince for infringement of his rights.²

Administration Reports of these States were carefully coloured and varnished to conceal the misdeeds of the rulers from the knowledge of the Paramount Power.

The Indian States represented a belated example of those crude forms of politics which the rest of India had outgrown. While commenting on the nature of government in the Indian States, Ranga Iyer noted, "One-man rule is bad enough even when the man is able, but when it degenerates into the rule of a man who is addicted to the worst vices of Oriental despotism - women, wine and idle amusements at the cost of the people - it becomes a nightmare." This was true in cases of most of the Indian rulers who had little education and enlightenment and whose personal characters were reprehensible.

The situation was worse in the smaller States than in the bigger ones. The big States had sufficient resources to maintain a systematic administration, which was to some extent impersonal. But the small States were economically less viable; their poor finances did not permit them to maintain a sound system of administration; while major portions of their resources went to maintain the princes and their families, the Rulers were hardly able to afford an ideal administrative machinery. Their administration was, therefore, more personal and autocratic.

1. Ranga Iyer, India - Peace or War, PP-162-63.
and less committed to the welfare of the people. Consequently, misrule, oppression, inefficiency and corruption became more acute and rampant in the petty States. Nilgiri, being a very small State in Orissa, exhibited all such evils in their worst manifestations.

The British Government as the Paramount Power were largely responsible for such a sorry state of affairs in the Indian States. From 1858 onwards the British Government consistently followed the policy of preserving "the privileges, rights and dignities of the Princes", because the Princes were regarded by the British as the bulwarks against the rebellious movement in British India. In 1930 Professor Rushbrook - Williams, a British protagonist of the Princely States, made the following observation in favour of the British policy of bolstering the Princely States: "The situation of these feudatory states, check-boarding all India as they do are a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in a debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful loyal Native States". 1 In 1921 the British Government had instituted the Chamber of Princes so that the Princes could be effectively set against the growing strength of the nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership.

1. Quoted in R.P. Dutt, India Today and Tomorrow, P-218.
In order to perpetuate their imperialistic interests in India, the British not only supported the princely rulers but vested enormous powers in them in matters of internal administration. As the system of administration in the States was autocratic and personal, its character and quality depended on the character of the rulers. The rulers on their part generally acted on the assumption that the more the people remained backward the safer would be their position. Naturally, there were no innovations in the system and standard of administration, no liberal reforms, no improvement in the social and economic life of the people.

While the British authorities increasingly used the Princes as pillars of Imperialism, the latter became more and more oblivious of their obligation to their people. They came to view that they were maintained in their authority not by the will of their people, not by the sanction of any assembly, not by reason of any conquest or military might, but by the accident of birth or adoption, and by the recognition and support of the Paramount Power. The security and protection that the British Government guaranteed to the princes resulted in the perpetuation of antediluvian anomalies and anachronisms, and constituted the backwaters of reaction, unaffected by the flowing tides of the 20th century, harbouring the barbarism and the morals of the middle ages.
The Orissa States came under the British suzerainty early in the 19th century. In 1803 the forces of the East India Company occupied Orissa which was then ruled by the Bhonsla rulers of Nagpur. In November 1803 the Government of the East India Company concluded treaty engagements with eleven feudal chieftains who were formerly feudatories of the Maratha rulers of Nagpur. Within a little more than a year similar treaties were made with five other chieftains, thus bringing the number of the Orissa States to sixteen. They were Angul, Athgarh, Banki, Baramba, Daspalla, Dhenkanal, Hindol, Keonjhar, Khandpara, Mayurbhanj, Narsingpur, Nayagarh, Nilgiri, Ranpur, Talcher and Tigiria. Together they were known as the Cuttack Tributary Mahals. The British Regulations were not extended into these territories; the Rajas were allowed considerable freedom in their internal administration, not as sovereigns with absolute rights but as subordinate allies under the supreme authority of the British.

The Tributary Mahals were given special treatment not because they ever used to enjoy any independent status previously, but because the British were guided by their own imperialistic and colonial considerations. None of the Orissa Rajas ever enjoyed political independence; from the time of their creation they formed integral parts of Orissa; they were created for administrative convenience and for purposes of defence.
Not even the most powerful of them ever imagined to be outside the territory of the kings of Orissa. The British authorities out of their own selfish interest kept some of the Orissa States outside the operation of Government regulations and laws while extending the same to some others, even though all of them were originally holding exactly the same kinds of sanads. The territories which were called the Tributary Mahals were considered inaccessible and the people rude and uncivilised; these circumstances, the British apprehended, would have made the application of Government regulations difficult and expensive; moreover, the British authorities were apprehensive of armed resistance from the Chiefs whose characters and capabilities were little known to them.

On the other hand, several other ancient Zamindaries in the coastal tracts were subjected to the laws and regulations of the British Government. They came to be regarded as the permanently settled areas and were called Kilajat or Ekrajat States. They were Kanika, Kujang, Harishpur, Dampara, Marichpur, Sukinda, Darpan, Ali, Madhupur, Patia, Chhedra, Bishnupur and Kakala. These territories were considered economically more viable, so they were brought under the direct rule of

2. BRP No.13 of 20th December 1814, Report of J. Richardson, Commissioner at Cuttack.
the Government of the East India Company while the Tributary Mahals were allowed to maintain separate identity.

The relation of the Orissa Rajas with the British authorities varied according to the changing political situations and the colonial interests of the Paramount Power. During the first few years the Company's Government followed the policy of non-involvement and non-interference in the States' affairs as a matter of expediency. The repeated suggestions of local British officers for greater control and supervision over affairs in the Mahals were rejected by the Government. The Superintendents of the Tributary Mahals were required to limit their interference in the internal affairs of the States to matters of a political nature, to the suppression of feuds and animosities between the Rajas of adjoining Mahals or between the Rajas and their ryots, to the correction of systematic oppression, violence and cruelty practised by any of the Rajas or by their officers towards the inhabitants, to the cognizance of any apparent gross violation by them of their duties of allegiance and submission, and generally to important points which, if not attended to, might lead to violent and general outrage and confusion, or to contempt of the paramount authority of the British Government.
Though the Company's Government outwardly stuck to the principle of non-interference, it had to intervene at times and interpose its authority in such matters as settlement of disputed succession, and problem of law and order. In 1840 Rani Chitra Dei of Nilgiri was ousted from power for misrule and the State was temporarily attached. Banki and Angul, two other tributary states, were confiscated and made permanent Government Mahals in 1840 and 1848, respectively. The Government did not hesitate to abandon the traditional policy of non-interference when it was a question of expediency and the interests of the Government clashed with those of the Rajas.

After 1858 the Government established closer control and supervision over the States and interference in their internal administration became more frequent. The British Government accepted the moral responsibility for a minimum of good government, security, peace and order within the territories of the Tributary States; interference consequently took place in cases of oppression and injustice, disputed succession, disturbances and gross financial irregularities. During the period from 1858 to 1908 the Government interfered in the affairs of the States of Baud, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Narsingpur, Despalla and Khandpara on different occasions. In case of Nilgiri interference took place in the 1880's to suppress a meli
and to decide a case of ambiguous adoption. Again in 1905 Raja Shyamchandra Mardraj Harichandan of Nilgiri was suspended for a period of two years and a half for his complicity in a torture case. Besides active interference, periods of the Rulers' minority and court of wards were utilised to streamline the system of administration in the States which was extremely irregular and outmoded.

The political status of the Tributary Mahals remained dubious for a long time. The local British officers and the Government of Bengal treated them as part of British territory while the Government of India was not clear as to the exact relation subsisting between the States and the British Government. The doubt was cleared in 1882 when the Calcutta High Court decreed that the Tributary Mahals were not British territories. The Governor-General in Council accepted the decision as final, but no substantial change occurred in the practical dealings with the States. The Government still reserved the right of interference in the affairs of the States whenever it was deemed necessary. The sovereignty of the British paramountcy over the States remained unaltered to all intents and purposes. Though fresh sanads were given to the Rajas in 1894 there was no addition to their powers. The sanad only defined the several powers of the Rajas, prescribed certain duties and obligations for them and required them to consult and comply with the wishes of
Despite all the clamour for rights and privileges the authority of the Rajas remained a fiction; their power was more apparent than real. They had to honour the will of the Paramount Power on any and every matter. This fact was well understood by the Rulers. In 1946 the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj candidly expressed the Rajas' position in a letter to the ruler of Dungarpur in the following words: "Our authority is a farce, the real Rulers are the Residents and the Political officers. We are puppets and tools in their hands... The will of the British Government in India must be and is carried out, whether under the cloak of advice or open pressure. We are powerless to resist".  

After 1908 the British authorities gradually relaxed their control over the Orissa States and allowed the Rajas a free hand in their administration. Their power and status were raised so that they, along with innumerable other princely rulers, could be utilised as effective counter-weights to the rising force of Indian nationalism and the growing influence of the Indian national Congress. Thus the smaller States of Orissa which were originally tributaries of the Kings of Orissa and used to render service to them for the

1. H.K. Mahtab, Beginning of the End, Appendix-I; Letter from the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj to the Maharawal of Dungarpur, dated 9 May 1946, P-51.
enjoyment of their possessions were deliberately raised from the status of ordinary estates to that of full-fledged States. The control of the local British officers over these States came to be gradually ended. Along with the introduction of the Mont-Ford Reforms in British India the Governor in Council of Bihar and Orissa was appointed as the Agent to the Central Government for the Orissa States. Then with the introduction of the Government of India Act, 1935, the Orissa States were completely separated from the Province and were given full powers of rulers.¹ In the last sanad granted in 1937 the judicial powers of the Rajas were considerably increased. The States were further divided into three categories - A, B and C. Bamra, Baud, Dhenkanal, Gangpur, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Patna, Sareikela and Sompur belonged to class 'A'. Nilgiri belonged to Class 'B' along with Athgarh, Athmallik, Baramba, Bonai, Daspalla, Hindol, Khandpara, Kharswan, Narsingpur and Talcher. In Class 'C' were included Ranpur, Pal-Lahara, and Tigiria.

The permissiveness that was allowed to the princely rulers in the last phase, i.e., from 1908 to 1947 encouraged the Rajas to indulge in all sorts of frivolities and luxuries. The princes failed to fulfill

¹. Mahtab, Beginning of the End, P-61.
the British expectations of acting as bulwarks against the Congress and to immunise their people from the contagion of nationalism and democracy. On the other hand, the Rajas found themselves alienated from their own people, which is not at all a good omen for any monarchy. The Maharaja of Mayurbhanj wrote to one of his counterparts in 1946, "During the long years of British suzerainty over Indian States, the Rulers have come to depend more and more upon the support of the Paramount Power, and less and less on the support of their people. Indeed, one result of the British policy towards Indian States... has been to undermine the authority of the Rulers over their people. Our people have thus been alienated from us. British India, again, while befriending the cause of our people has painted us as mischievous relics of an archaic system which is propped up by the British authorities merely for their own purposes".¹ The Rajas' failure to satisfy their people through the introduction of social, economic and political reforms in line with the prevalent patterns in British India led to explosive situations in the States and finally to popular agitations.

The internal administration of the State of Nilgiri, like other Orissa States, remained in the hands

¹ Mahtab, Beginning of the End, Appendix-I, P-46, Letter from Maharaja of Mayurbhanj to Nawab of Bhopal dated 19th September, 1946.
of its Rajas. The British Regulations relating to the administration of justice, police, law and revenue were not applicable to the State. Certain limitations were prescribed concerning the criminal powers of the Raja who was prohibited from exercising the powers of life and death; he had to transmit cases of murder, homicide and other heinous offences to the Government for trial; all residuary powers rested with the Government and were exercised by the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals. These restrictions were, however, removed in 1937. In civil cases the Raja's authority was supposed to be supreme inside his State, and here he was guided by no prescriptions or limitations of any sort. Maintenance of law and order was exclusively the Raja's business. He distributed justice to his people through courts constituted and empowered by him. The laws of British India were not applicable to the State; the Government simply desired that the spirit of British Indian Acts should be observed in the State, but the Rajas preferred to be guided by their own discretion and not to be tied by any restrictions.

The system of administration in Nilgiri remained feudal and backward. None of the five Rajas who ruled the State during the period from 1803 to 1947 could be called a benevolent ruler. No one of them ever
bothered about the welfare of the people. They were cruel, oppressive and exacting landlords who lived like drones upon the public wealth. The officers of the State were no better than their masters. While most of the highest officers - the ḍewans - were disinterested outsiders or retired Government servants, the amlahs were invariably inefficient and corrupt officers who not only catered to the Raja's perversion but also bled the State coffers white in order to line their own pockets.

Like the general administration, the land revenue administration was faulty and anomalous. It benefited neither the ryots nor the State. Rents were exorbitant; the ryots had little right on the lands they cultivated. Fear of harassment by the officers in the absence of any rules and regulations, and the apprehension of eviction at any moment the Raja liked were constant hindrances to the improvement of agriculture. The ryots showed little enthusiasm in reclaiming waste land for cultivation due to the Raja's policy of imposing heavy salami on reclamation. On the other hand, the defective policy of granting rent-free lands recklessly for various purposes resulted in the loss of huge revenue to the State. Often the total area of rent-free lands far exceeded the assessed areas from which the Rajas earned their major income. Besides the land revenue, the other
sources of income of the State were the forest, excise, the different cesses and miscellaneous fees and fines.

The State budget was never designed for the subjects' welfare. A disproportionately large amount went to the personal expenditure of the Raja and his family, and a very small fraction of the budget was earmarked for public welfare measures like education, public health, communication, irrigation, etc. Funds allocated to different departments of government were so cleverly manipulated as to benefit the Raja and his household.

The Rajas took little care of the education of their people. General education was so backward that by the time the State merged with the Union of India in 1948 the highest educational institution existing in the State was only an M.E. School. Education of women and aborigines was nothing remarkable.

The subjects were treated as serfs. No class of cultivators - Lakhrajdars or the ryots - had any right on the land they cultivated. Besides the high rates of rent on land, the people had to pay several other feudal dues like the magan, bheti, bethi, rasad, marriage fees, etc., which were most unjust and irritating; they had to accompany the Raja in his shikar expeditions and kheda at the cost of their own interests and comforts. While the people's existence was a life-long battle with adversity the Rajas led a life of ease and comfort.
In social organisation the State did not exhibit any improvement on its medieval feudal structure. The Raja stood at the apex of the social hierarchy and enjoyed unique privileges. In the absence of security of tenure there did not develop any aristocracy or nobility in the State. Caste distinction was very prominent; the Brahmans enjoyed their traditional position and privileges, followed by other caste Hindus like the Khandait, Kayastha, Chasa, etc. The lower castes were treated as untouchables, and any contact with them was considered a taboo by the caste Hindus. Widow marriage was not ordinarily allowed whereas child marriage, particularly of female children, was widely accepted as an established practice. Women did not enjoy any special treatment in the society, and were principally engaged in household works. The people were generally monogamous, but there was no limit to the number of wives a Raja could marry, in addition to concubines. Palace life of the Rajas was not free from vices. Licentious indulgence and promiscuity constituted a glaring trait of their character.

The aborigines and semi-Hinduised aboriginal tribes constituted a sizeable minority of the State's population. They were very conservative and medieval in their outlook. Their superstitions, lack of education and exploitation by the upper castes left them as backward as they were centuries ago.
Economically the State was self-sufficient to a great extent. Agriculture was the mainstay of the population. Rice was the staple food; cultivation of wheat and other cash crops was unknown. Though the State was immune from devastating floods, it suffered from occasional famines, droughts and cyclonic storms. There was no irrigation project worth the name; the ryots depended solely on the monsoon which was often uncertain and capricious.

The principal industry of the State was the stone-quarry works. Fine qualities of Mucmi (black chlorite) stone utensils were made and exported annually. The village artisans and craftsmen like the potter, the carpenter, the weaver, the black-smith, the basket-makers supplied the crude and limited wants of the people. Such artisans manufactured their commodities at their homes with the assistance of their family members, using little capital, traditional implements and age-old techniques handed down from generation to generation on a hereditary basis. The State hardly provided any incentive to industry.

Internal trade was very limited and was mostly confined to sale and purchase at local markets. The State exported timber, Mucmi stone utensils and other forest products and imported salt, sugar, kerosene and Manchester cloth. Lack of transport facilities greatly hampered the growth of trade in the State. There were no good roads, canals or navigable rivers.
As regards public health the people in general were not very much conscious of their health and hygiene. Cholera and small-pox used to take epidemic forms and swept away great number of lives periodically. Influenza, malaria and other minor ailments were constant companions of the people. While the superstition of the people multiplied their sufferings the efforts of the authorities to take preventive measures and properly educate the people were very inadequate. Little care was taken for scientific and methodical treatment of domestic animals.

As the people were essentially agricultural their material condition was determined by the monsoon. In a year of sufficient and well-distributed rainfall they made a good harvest and lived happily, while in a year of scanty rainfall and adverse weather they suffered badly.

Having groaned under an abject form of autocratic misrule, oppression and exploitation for decades, the people of Nilgiri made sporadic attempts to get their grievances redressed. On several occasions they protested against agrarian and economic distress. In 1838 they remonstrated against a Rani's misrule and started a no-rent campaign. In 1874-76 and again in 1884-86 large-scale agitations were launched against recurring feudal exactions and exorbitant rents on land. In the year 1928 thousands of people left their homes and hearths, and fled to the neighbouring British
district of Balasore to escape from the Raja's exploitation and oppression. The people's discontent against the Raja assumed a new dimension and direction when the Congress leaders started taking interest in the State's problem. With active support and guidance of the Congress leaders a large-scale agitation was launched under the auspices of the State Prajamandal in 1938. The movement was a success; the people gained certain economic benefits, they were also granted civil liberties like the freedom of speech and association. This was a unique achievement since by the year 1938 none of the Orissa States granted their people the right to free speech and association.

The success of the Prajamandal movement in Nilgiri was largely due to the support extended by the Provincial Congress leaders and the policy pursued by the Indian National Congress relating to the State's problem. By 1938, as a result of the interaction and co-ordination between the Prajamandal and the Indian National Congress, the Prajamandal movement had become a part of the nationalist movement. The Congress leaders expressed their concern for the suffering of the people in the princely states, denounced princely misrule and held the British authorities responsible for the people's miseries. Addressing the All-India States' People's Conference at Ludhiana in February 1939 Jawaharlal Nehru
denounced the princely order in the following words:

"This system has vanished from the rest of the world and, left to itself, it would have vanished from India long ago. But in spite of its manifest decay and stagnation, it has been propped up and artificially maintained by British imperialism. Offspring of the British power in India, suckled by Imperialism for its own purposes, it has survived till today though mighty revolutions have shaken the world and changed it, empires have collapsed and crowds of princes and petty rulers have faded away. That system has no inherent importance or strength, it is the strength of British imperialism that counts. For us in India, that system has in reality been one of the faces of Imperialism. Therefore, when conflict comes, we must recognise who our opponent is".¹

Nehru held, "Conflict in the States is only incidentally with the Rulers. In effect it is with British Imperialism".² Various struggles in the States came to be integrated with the major struggle against British Imperialism. The growing pressure of the States' People's movement resulted in

¹. Indian Annual Register, 1939, Vol-I, P-438.
². Ibid.
considerably breaking down the artificial legal barriers between the British India and Princely India, and the Congress had openly come out to take up the cause of the people's movements in the Princely States. Under the changed circumstances the British Raj was fast losing its legitimacy. No wonder, within months of the British departure from India the entire princely order collapsed like a house of cards.

The co-ordination between the Prajamandal and the National Congress intensified the people's movement in the States. The Nilgiri Prajamandal endorsed the Congress Party's demand for freedom on the outbreak of World War II in September 1939. The Quit India Movement had tremendous impact upon the people of the State, for which they suffered repression by the Durbar. Raja Kishorechandra Mardraj Harichandran was temporarily deprived of his administrative powers from 1942 to 1946 for his failure to provide good government. Soon after his re-instatement in 1946 he had to face the people's demand for responsible government. On the eve of the Independence of India the Prajamandal Party of the State started preparations for the establishment of a provisional popular government. The Raja made a frantic bid to forestall the people's movement by setting some loyalist aborigines against the Prajamandal party. A veritable civil war ensued. Large-scale violence, chaos and confusion
reigned supreme inside the State. The situation was saved from further deterioration by the timely political and military action of the Government of Orissa and India. The Orissa Government with instructions from the Government of India took over the State administration on 14 November 1947, and put an end to the prevailing anarchy and uncertainties. Raja Kishorechandra Mardraj Harichandran finally appended his signature to the Instrument of Accession on 1 January 1948 whereby the State merged with the Union of India. The abolition of princely rule and the amalgamation of the State with the Province of Orissa ended century-old autocratic misrule and paved the way for the people's advancement on modern democratic basis.