CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

The Feudatory State of Keonjhar extending 85 miles east to west, and 36 miles north to south with an area of 3096 square miles, was the third largest in area, among the Feudatory States of Orissa. It has played a significant role in the Orissan History right from early times. The State comprised hilly tracts, barren land, wide forest, river valleys etc. It is a matter of pride that Keonjhar has the distinction of containing the oldest known rocks of the Earth, covering an area of one hundred square kilometers at Asanpat. The rock is supposed to be thirty-eight million years old. In general the state was covered with inaccessible forests, rivers and mountains. It is also important from the anthropological point of view. These physical features of the area provided excellent abodes to a large number of aboriginal tribes belonging to the non-Aryan group. Anthropologically its two main tribes, the Juangs and the Bhuyans, are important. When the Juangs claimed themselves as descendants of the oldest men, the Bhuyans claimed themselves as the sons of the soil or Bhumiputra. Of course, the Bhumijas another tribal group of Keonjhar made the same claim. However, the non-Aryans were the original inhabitants of the Feudatory State of Keonjhar. The peculiar topography of the region led to the creation of a number of distinct jungle tracts, and in each such tract remained in the control of one headman.
The political history of Keonjhar is rather clear and well known. This has been established by the discovery of an inscription at Asanpat twenty Kilometres away from Keonjharapra. It pushes back the history of Keonjhar to the 4th and 5th century A.D. The inscription contains an inscription of several lines and an image of Lord Siva engaged in the Tandava dance in the Nataraja form. It is evident from the inscription that Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja, son of Maharaja Manabhanja and Mahadevi Damayanti of the Naga dynasty at one time were ruling over this region. Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja was a powerful emperor and achieved remarkable success in hundred battles. He also defeated the later Kushanas or Devaputras or the Murunda Kings. Satrubhanja ruled over a well fortified territory named Vindhyatebi. Not only Satrubhanja was a powerful emperor but also earned fame as a great donor and tolerant monarch. He was also a great patron of learning, education and literature.

Again during the time of Maharaja Sri Disabhanja of Naga dynasty the territory of Keonjhar marched through glory. It is known from the painting of the Ravanachhaya cave shelter that a glorious civilization flourished in this region towards the 4th and 5th century A.D. In the Ravanachhaya cave shelter there is a painting which portrays the progress of a royal procession. The person who assumes the key position in the painting was none other than Maharaja Sri Disabhanja. Again.
this region was a center of Saivism and Maharaja Sri Disabhanja was a staunch Saiva. A civilization, contemporary to the Gupta period of Indian History, was surviving in the Keonjhar region.

The Bhaumakaras (766 A.D to 930 A.D) dominated the region of Keonjhar. It was a part of Khinjjiga Mandala and enjoyed feudatory status under the Bhaumakaras. After the decline of the Bhaumakaras, Keonjhar passed to the hands of the Somavamsis then the Gangas and Gajapatis. Keonjhar was under such dynasties and always enjoyed a semi-independent status. It paid annual tributes to Sovereign rulers and enjoyed internal autonomy. Towards the 11th century A.D. Keonjhar was under the Bhanjas of solar lineage and of Rajput origin, who had come from the north on pilgrimage to Orissa and became the master over the forest region dominated by the tribal people. It was Jai Singh, son of Man Singh, a Rajput of the Solar race and the chief of Jaipur in former Rajputana, who had come to Puri on a pilgrimage and married the daughter of the Raja of Puri and received the territory of Hariharapura or the undivided states of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanja as dowry. After this matrimonial relation, Jai Singh the man from Rajputana, became the virtual master of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanja. Subsequently, the territory was divided between the two sons born to him. The younger Joti Bhanja took charge of Keonjhar and ruled from Jotipur. This was a place on the bank of the
river Baitarani, and later shifted to a more central and strategically located place for administrative convenience and security. By paying a nominal tribute, either in cash or in kind, to their sovereign as a token of submission, the Bhanjas remained as vassals permanently under the rulers of Orissa. They were required to render him military assistance by supplying contingents of troops and other obligatory services as and when required by the sovereign authority. He was to protect the Lord Paramount's domain. To serve his Sovereign and preserve peace in his territory, he maintained a Feudal militia generally known as paikas, who were granted Jagirs, for their maintenance. They worked as cultivators in the field during peace time, and as soldiers during war. In turn the Raja granted Jagir on military tenure, which they enjoyed on a hereditary basis. These military chiefs served as intermediaries between the Bhanja King and the tenants of the soil. They were to collect tribute from the tenants and were allowed to enjoy a sort of independence and exercised authority over the principality. These small principalities were known as Khandas. Hence the Chiefs in charge of the Khandas known as Khandapatis or Khandayets.

Keonjhar passed to the hands of the Mughals during the reign of Shah Jahan. The Mughal annexation took place during the Subedarship (Governorship) of Khan-I Duran (1660-67 A.D) in Orissa. Keonjhar had immense strategic importance, and
hence, Khan-I Duran wanted to annex it to the Mughal territory. He was fully aware of its strategic importance, hence he declared war against Laxmi Narayana Bhanja the Raja of Keonjhar in 1660-61 A.D.). It ended in the defeat of the latter. Keonjhar was, thus recognised as a feudatory state under the Mughals. After the occupation and recognition of Keonjhar, the Mughals settled the area and identified it as Zamindary. The remote highlands and forest tracts of Keonjhar were excluded from the imperial administration. Keonjhar had to send tribute to the sovereign authority at Delhi. The Mughals in their settlement divided Keonjhar in Garhjat and Mughulbundee region. Normally the Garhjat portion was hilly dense forest and an impenetrable region. The direct administration of the Garhjat region was in the hands of the Raja. Again the open part was known as Mughalbundee, which was directly under the governance of the Mughal administration. The Raja of Keonjhar remained as a Feudatory Chief under the Mughals. Hereditary succession was allowed to the Raja. His rule was almost entirely traditional. It was his duty to render military service to the Mughal emperor as and when needed. However, the Mughals did not bring any administrative change, but introduced certain terminological changes. They identified Keonjhar as one of the Killahs, and the ruler was identified with a Zamindar. The Marathas merely increased the amount of the tribute paid by the Chief. The amount of tribute was fixed arbitrarily.
During the time of Pratapa Balabhadra Bhanja (1764-1767 A.D) Keonjhar passed to the hands of the Marathas. The war occurred between the armies of Keonjhar and the Marathas, which ended in the defeat of the former. Hence the Marathas became Sovereign and virtual masters of Keonjhar. The Raja of Keonjhar also paid tribute to the Marathas and remained as a Feudatory ruler under him. Keonjhar still enjoyed considerable autonomy in its internal administration.

When Orissa was under the Marathas, the British tried to bring Orissa under their control. It was again due to its strategic position. It lay on the way between the Company's northern possession of Bengal and its southern territory of the Madras Presidency. They felt the necessity of occupying Orissa to link the two, both for administrative and strategic reasons. Orissa then comprised a number of feudatory States which were under the Marathas. Such States of Orissa had profound strategic importance, and were hence, coveted by the British. The States contained both the gateways to Orissa. One was the Barmula pass in the West through which the only road to Orissa passed from the Western side. Another was the Khoonta ghat in the north through which passed the only road from Bengal to Cuttack. Besides these there were some states in Orissa which were treated as buffer states. Among such states Keonjhar had strategic importance. It was a border state that touched the Singhbhum and Chhotanagpur areas of
present Jharkhand. It was apprehended that the Marathas with the help of the border chiefs might create problems for the British in this region. Keeping this in mind the British were eager to secure the cooperation of the Feudatory Chiefs of the Marathas, on the borders of Orissa. Again the British felt that a number of Feudatory and Tributary chiefs under the Marathas were not happy with the Suzerain authority.

As such it was on the Feudatory States that the safety and security depended. In this situation the British wanted to win the support of the Marathan Feudatory States. The British planned to occupy Orissa with minimum resistance, and the least bloodshed. Keeping this in mind the British wanted to win over the Hindus by appealing to their religious sentiments. The British army and its officers were directed to pay due regard to the religious feelings of the Hindus. The British made the best of the opportunity by leaning closer to the Tributary Rajas and their subjects. The Company directed its staff to negotiate with such of the Chiefs as were likely to support the cause of the British against the Marathas. The officials were advised to be mindful of furthering British interests while ensuring that the personal interests of the Rajas concerned were not in any way hampered. Thus they wanted to win over their cooperation. The Governor General Lord Wellesley instructed British Commanders to negotiate engagements earlier on conditions favourable to their
interests. If necessary, handsome donations or financial compensation were to be paid to those whose influence and position might facilitate the peaceful occupation of Orissa. It was clearly known to the British that the Maratha officers were hankering after bribes. On the other hand some chiefs and zamindars extended their clandestine support to the British. Thus by means of diplomacy rather then bloodshed the British became successful in winning over Orissa.

The fall of Barabati in October, 1803 left the Marathas with the only option of negotiating with the British for peace. As a result of this peace negotiations, the Marathas permanently ceded the territory of Orissa including its Feudatory and Tributary States to the British. This peace treaty was signed at a place called Deogaon, and it has come to be known as the "Treaty of Deogaon". Under the second article of the treaty the province of Orissa was ceded to the East Indian Company. With the fall of the Marathas the British entered into engagements with the Feudatory Chiefs. With a view to keeping a proper understanding Keonjhar, one of the Feudatory States of the Marathas, was ceded to the hands of the East Indian Company, came under the Second and terth article of the treaty of Deogaon. Consequently George Harcourt and John Melville. On behalf of the East India Company made treaty engagement with Janardan Bhanja of Keonjhar on the 16th
December 1804. Since that day it remained as a Tributary State under East India Company.

In fact, the British thought that if the Raja of Keonjhar would have tried to resist the British could have face great hurdles in winning over the State. Keonjhar, however, did not offer the least resistance to the British. Rather the Raja of Keonjhar favoured the British occupation. The Raja of Keonjhar, unlike the other Feudatory Chiefs, was disgusted with the Maratha administration. The Marathas only collected taxes through rigorous means, but paid no attention to the betterment of the subjects. As a result of that the feudatory states groaned under the Marathas. Again the Raja did not want to lose men, money and material by an unnecessary war. However, he had realised the benefits of peace, both for himself and his subjects.

The Marathan oppression was, thus, often beyond limits of suffering and tolerance. In this circumstances the existence of a superior power to check Maratha oppression was wanted and this was filled by the British. Soon after the occupation of Orissa the British signed treaty engagements with the Orissar States. They opened negotiations with Janardan Bhanja the Raja of Keonjhar on the 16th December 1804, and a Koolanamah or counter engagement was signed by the Commissioners on the same day and was delivered to the Raja through his Vakil Prasad Das. According to the clauses of engagement the Raja of
Keonjhar professed perpetual friendship with loyalty to the East India Company. He agreed to pay fixed amount of tribute in the due time.

Of course in the treaty engagements Keonjhar which was one of the Garhjat States of Marathas was mentioned as Tributary Mahal and sometimes as Tributary State. But a definite status was not granted to it.

The East India Company through an engagement gave a definite status to the State of Keonjhar. Its ruler was given internal autonomy Keonjhar consisted chiefly of inaccessible forest tracts and mountain region. The area was inhabited by a rude, rustic and uncivilized race of people.

Again the Raja preferred the Marathan pattern of administration. In such a situation the East India Company realized that it was quite difficult to keep such state under his direct control. It would have been extremely difficult and expensive to execute the British method of administration. Since the tribute was fixed the Government would not have any means to cover the heavy expenses to be incurred thereby. The British Government knew very well that the society would not prefer the administrative changes. The Government did not want to take any risk rather he wanted to fortify his position in Orissa. Hence the British Government left the administration to the Raja of Keonjhar and remained free from burden. The
Raja of Keonjhar enjoyed internal autonomy and the British Government in the possible extent tried not to intervene in the internal matter of the State.

Of course during the whole period of the British rule, the Government could not maintain the policy of non intervene. The cases like the disputes in the matter of succession, the disputes between the two Feudatory States the bloody crime sometime committed by the Raja or by his men, the case of the boundary dispute compelled the British to intervene in the internal matter of the State. The case of the dispute of succession appeared in 1861 A.D. When the Maharaja of Keonjhar Gadadhar Narayan Bhanja died. He left his two queens. The chief queen or Patta Mahadei had no issue when a concubine Rani had two sons. Thus the dispute of succession appeared in the Feudatory State of Keonjhar. The Chief queen upheld the cause of Brindaban Chandra Bhanja a fellow of Raja family of Mayurbhanj. But the Government favoured the cause of Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja. In this matter the Government intervened in the affairs of Keonjhar. R.N. Shore closely examined the issue of Keonjhar and upheld the cause of Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja. The Rani challenged the decision in the privy council. However a great insurrection occurred in 1868 under the leadership of Ratna Naik a leader of the Bhuyan community. However the Feudatory State of Keonjhar faced an imminent danger. The gravity of the situation was so high than
on the request of Maharaja Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja the Government intervened in the matter and dispatched the army for to save the state. Initially no British regulations were applied to a State like Keonjhar which was located in the inaccessible forest tract. A number of the British Officers like Robert Ker, E-Impey, John Richardson, Henry Ricket, etc. appealed to the British Government to introduce the British Laws in the Feudatory State of Keonjhar. But this was rejected. But in 1814 the office of the Superintendent of Tributary Mahal was created for the purpose of the proper management and supervision of the States. Again according to the need of the time E. Impey suggested for the introduction of the Criminal law. After a careful consideration the British Government was willing to introduce the criminal law of Bengal.

Again it was observed that the Raja and his men misused the power. Sometimes they punished the subjects on the flimsy ground. It was seen that the Raja and his men did not hesitate to award the punishment like death sentences, mutilation, whipping etc. However this was possible only due to the absence of the defined powers. With a view to save the ryots the 'Rule of 1840' was introduced for the smooth administration of the State. The Rule restricted the absolute powers of the Raja and his men. The rule of 1840 prevented the Raja not to exercise any powers of life and death within their
territory. Again the Raja was not empowered to extend capital punishments like mutilation, whipping etc. to the ryots.

Sometimes the boundary dispute appeared with the neighbouring state. Keonjhar had the boundary dispute with the Pallahara Singhbhum etc. The British Government intervened in the matters like border dispute. The disputes were ended after the effort of the Government.

"Absolute power corrupts absolutely" The British Government could see that the Feudatory State of Keonjhar was no exception to it. They observed that the administration in those State was medieval and the Raja was autocratic by nature. The Raja was the State and his wish was the law of the State. His powers were also absolute. Of course there were a large number of subordinate officers, but the administration was carried on his personal ideas and direction. But a many times the Rajas were found to have become tools in the hands of their servants. Those servants always tried to manipulate the Raja to keep their authority and interest secured. Aga_n the Rajas lacked enlightenedness due to the lack of education. Few of them got education. Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja got h_s education in Cuttack during his minority. Of course it was mainly the circumstances in which they were brought up made them uneducated. The Servants and the Amalas in order to serve their own interests encouraged the Raja right from the days of
their minority. They made the Raja as ignorant and debauched as possible. Thus the early surrounding made them such.

The policy of the nonintervention of the British was violated with the occurrence of the insurrection in the Feudatory State of Keonjhar. Twice during the British rule, the Feudatory state of Keonjhar lost its peace and tranquility. The ryots of the State rose in rebellion in two different occasions i.e. in 1868 again in 1891. These two uprisings primarily involved the tribals especially the Bhuyans. The leaders who led these two uprisings were Ratna Naik and Dharanidhar Naik respectively. The Government intervened in these matters and solved the problem and restored peace and tranquility in the State.

Yet the British Government did intervene with immense interest in the affair of the Feudatory States when the question of Social reformation and change cropped up. The impact of the British rule was found to have been most salutary on the social system of the State. The British conquest and administration exposed the weakness and decay of the Society in the 19th Century. Their rule was marked by a number of social reforms in the first half of the nineteenth century AD. At that time the practice of Suttee, the human sacrifice and other evil systems dominated the society. Of course behind it worked the policy of the liberal Governor
General Lord William Bentinck, whose hands were strengthened by the liberal opinion advocated by Raja Rammohan Ray. Suttee was an evil social custom prevailed in the Raj families of Orissa. Besides the Raj families, it was prevailed in the families of Brahmins and Karanas. In other words it was known as Shamarana or Anumarana. It was believed that the deceased husband needed the company of his wife after his death. According to this custom women burnt themselves on the funeral pyres of their deceased husband. Such superstitions were caused due to the backwardness and ignorance. However with a missionary zeal the British Government stopped the inhuman barbarous practice of Sutee. They brought the necessary reforms by introducing necessary laws. Still in this matter they did not become antipathy of the subjects. Of course in the early stage some orthodox Indians did not cooperate with the Government and considered the action of the British an attack on their religious beliefs. But in the long run they could know that it was a road to reformation. They helped in the march of civilization ahead ignorance and superstition pulling behind.

The impact of the British rule on the economic system of the Feudatory State of Keonjhar was not as glaring as social system. During the British period any major change did not come in the economic system of the State. Thus the conditions of the ryots did not change. But on certain cases the British Government on request of the Raja helped in settling the lands
of the State. In the Feudatory State of Keonjhar the communication system was very deplorable. But the British Government made effort to build some major roads. The Raipur-Midnapur road was opened in the year 1835. However certain non-cooperation was extended to the Government. Another major road was opened from Chainbasa to Bhadrak via Keonjharga rh and Anandapur. Of course behind the construction thereby the interest of the British. They erected such roads not for own Indian but for their interests. Still the British Government indirectly tried to civilize the people of the State by expanding the method of communication. The development of communications system also developed the trade, commerce, agriculture, transport etc. Thus indirectly they helped in increasing the material well being of the people. Of course behind such intervention, their selfish interest cannot be ruled out, but still indirectly the common people got the benefit.

During the period under study the British authority mostly applied the policy of nonintervention. Of course sometimes the British intervened in the internal matter of the State. During the Great Revolt of 1857 when number of Feudatory Chiefs extended discontentment, Gadadhara Narayar Bhanja of Keonjhar remained loyal to the British. He also helped the British by dispatching the army and food stuff. Thus the Raja extended his loyalty to the British authority.
Due to his loyalty the Raja got position of Maharaja. In fact the Raja did not venture to challenge the Government. The Raja accepted the British paramountcy and functioned as an agent between the Government and the ryots. It is also said that the ryots did know their Raja but least concerned with the Government. The Raja only was given definite power position and status. With such defined power and position the Raja of Keonjhar remained under the British control. In the year 1915 Tributary State of Keonjhar got the position of a Feudatory State. In 1935 it was declared as a princely State. The same Status continued up to the Independence of India. After the merger the Princely State of Keonjhar became one of the districts of Orissa province.