later on. But in the nineteenth century, for the convenience of our research studies, it is proposed to include only

the modern Midnapore and Bankura districts of Burdwan division. Midnapore is situated between 21.36° and 22.57° north latitude and between 86.33° and 88.11° east longitude. The district owes its name to its chief town 'Medinipur', meaning the city of the world. The other district of Bankura, figuring in the centre of the Burdwan division, is situated between 22.38° and 23.38° north latitude and its westernmost extremity by 86.36° and 87.46° east longitude. The name of its chief town owes its origin to aboriginal population of the region and almost the whole district belonged to the estate of Bishnupur Raj family.

South West Bengal or Southern Radha (Dakshina Radha = Takkana Ladam of Tirumala inscription of Rajendra Chola) embraces the cross-sections of two cultural streams of Indo-Aryan and native aboriginal elements of the region. This region from the remote past had strategic, political and commercial importance to the successive Hindu, Muslim and British conquerors and also to the inhabitants of the soil. Paucity of adequate archaeological evidence and historical literature is a great hindrance to writing a connected socio-economic history of this region.
This area was never thoroughly subdued by the rulers of Bengal and Orissa to the extent of maximised revenue extortion, since the soil and sub-soil were never thoroughly exploited owing to the very primitive nature of tools of production utilised in the agricultural process, resulting in a near-subsistence agrarian economy with little scope for developing village crafts. The Jungle chiefs were variously described as "rebellious free-booters" and their subjects as "chuares . . . bred up as much for pillaging as cultivating. They paid quit rents; sometimes they did not pay at all". 7 From the middle ages the central authority at the Nizamat left their political privileges untouched in their inaccessible shelters. Moreover, this region supplied valiant warriors to contribute to the military strength of Bengal. The Jungle chiefs, like the 'Wardens of the Marches' in Europe, maintained trained militia of paiks and chuares (aboriginal levies) and enjoyed usufruct of the soil they made cultivable for generations of non-revenue paying qatwali and chakren lands.

Since the advent of Mughal rule the highest tier in the agrarian economy consisted of an affluent peasant class, generally known as zamindars who enjoyed usufruct of non-revenue paying lands, were responsible for maintaining local law and peace but did not directly cultivate the soil. Below this class of landed proprietors stood a middle
peasant group, who owning primitive tools of cultivation, was actually in possession of the soil and usually paid rent to the ruling tier of the society either in produce or cash. Expansion of cultivation process by denuding forest lands was actually made by them through the utilisation of labour of peasantised tribal folk to answer to the pressure of extortion of revenue from the rulers of Bengal. At the lowest stratum of the social formation stood the landless wage-earners, peasantised tribals with little idea of cultivation process and working as day labourers to the vast mass of peasantry, traders and artisans.

British land settlements not only threw this lowest stratum of the agrarian society from the actual cultivation process but also dispossessed the paik chaur sardars (captains = naiks = laiks) who actually owned and possessed landed estates for generations together. The peaceful middle peasantry actually participated to resume their holdings under possession in new land settlements and thus became ultimately the target of rebel chaur ryots who were being dislodged by the farmer through resumption of non-revenue paying chakran, paikan and ghatwali holdings into malgoozary (settled) holdings.

This region had also a strategic value. As it embraced the borders of modern Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, important trade routes traversed the area for generations through which the Bengal rulers could easily send army towards the Deccan or Maharashtra. In fact, the Calcutta government sent army
contingents to Madras under Peiarce in the 1780s. The possession of this region was considered necessary by the East India Company Raj in the eighteenth century to make it a buffer state against any possible Maratha aggression from the then Orissa and envoys from Calcutta always followed the route from the Jungle Mahals to Orissa.

The economic importance of this region was undeniable. Originally it was ceded Mir Qasim to the Company in 1760 to help defray their military expenses. It covered large rice and salt producing tracts and contained dense forests with valuable trees like bamboo, pissal, mohua, and sal which were denuded throughout the nineteenth century for timber and railway sleepers. The native merchants secretly transported salt to north India through the long-existing trade routes along this region and the Company's government had to make elaborate arrangements for checking their alleged illicit trade by setting up check posts.

2. The time frame of the present study:

(1805-1900) The period from 1805, i.e., the year of creation of the Jungle Mahal district, which ultimately lost its identity in modern Bankura in 1833, to 1885 when the Bengal Tenancy Act was enacted and broadly up to the end of the nineteenth century, has been selected for the present study.
This is a period of transition in the agrarian economy of this region which spelled the end of the feudal agrarian land relations in eastern India and heralded the dawn of a capitalist economy characterised by the building up of factories and rail-roads and associated phenomena of the steam age of India. Within these ninety five years of the British rule, the frontier line of the Bengal Presidency had been continuously extended like the 'wild west' of the United States of America till in the last half of the nineteenth century it included the Nimki Mahala (salt tracts) of Midnapore district and outlying Jungle Mahala (forest tracts) with Bhum-suffix, some of which were absorbed later in the districts of Bankura and Midnapore.

In 1803, Puri, Cuttack and Balasore, three coastal districts of Orissa of about 3,907 sq. miles, were ceded to the Bengal Presidency from the kingdom of the Bhonsales of Nagpur, thus extending further the frontier of south West Bengal. But with the creation of the districts of Midnapore and Bankura the Orissa districts were detached from them and added to the province of Orissa since the mid-nineteenth century. In 1805, the Jungle Mahal district was created by the Company's government to safeguard against any possible peasantised tribal resistance movements. But in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century sporadic agrarian revolts became widespread.
Eventually in 1833, the year of the Charter Act, the Jungle Mahal district was abolished, and changes in the administrative machinery were introduced with a view to safeguarding the interest of the primary producers. In 1834, the town of Bankura was transferred from the South West Frontier Agency to Burdwan and a Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector were placed in charge of 'Bishenpur' with headquarters at Bankura. But Bankura district attained its present dimensions in 1879 when the subdivision of Bishnupur was created. It was not until 1881 that a separate District Judgeship for Bankura and an administrative unit were created. 9 Thus the two districts of Midnapore and Bankura included the truncated portions of three contiguous provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa of eastern India with ethnic, cultural and geographical homogeneity and as such constituted a gateway to the north and south of India. Thus the districts of Bankura and Midnapore took their modern shape through the nineteenth century which is the locale of the present research study.

The years 1859 and 1885 were significant for the present study since Rent Act X of 1859 and Tenancy Act VIII of 1885 constituted landmarks in the agrarian history of Bengal. Throughout the nineteenth century efforts were made to improve agriculture as well as the material condition of the new land captains, endowed with paying capacity after the resumption of vast area of non-revenue paying holdings of the rising middle peasants. Welfare measures were
adopted to irrigate land, embankments constructed and public health and education ensured for agricultural expansion.

On the other hand, this period is marked by the introduction of 'Laissez-faire' policy in British India. The Company abandoned its policy of investment in village crafts, paving the way for importation of machine-made textile goods. The Charter Act of 1833 also facilitated the import of cheap Liverpool salt, which led to the change in Company's salt policy. The Railway lines were opened up in the last decade of the nineteenth century connecting the coastal region of Orissa with Calcutta and Madras, seats of two Presidency Governments. In the same period important decisions were taken regarding administrative rearrangements of irrigation projects in Orissa and in Midnapore and Bankura.

But in the economic history of a particular region within a particular period of time it is difficult to affix the suitable starting and terminating points as history is a continuous flow of development. However, during this period it is possible to notice the process of change leading to social tension, paving the way for the rise of an educated middle peasantry, advent of a class of capitalist farmers as well as pauperisation of the primary producers, in the agrarian economy of the twentieth century.
3. Historical and literary works containing research materials:

This area tended to be a source of much headache to the successive Hindu, Muslim and Christian rulers but received scant attention from historians. Some scholars, ignorant of its historical backdrop, advanced hypothesis about its cultural heritage and social norms, which could never be tested from empirical evidence. The misunderstanding about their ways of life is no less focussed in ancient Sanskrit, Pali and Bengali literature. Even the Vedic literature and literary works like Acharanga Sutta refer to these people in contemptuous language. But the lowest stratum of the population of Radha received new justification and value in Kabikankan Chandi (last decade of the sixteenth century\(^\text{10}\)) and Dharma Mangal of Ghanaram Chakravorty (first half of the eighteenth century\(^\text{11}\)). From the Charyapada literature also a glimpse may be had into the economic life of ancient Bengal and Orissa.\(^\text{12}\) All these printed literary and archaeological sources throw a flood of light on the political history of the region but disappointment comes in search for statistical data regarding the rate and volume of investments of the state in the public works or the volume of trade carried on by the then merchants with neighbouring countries.

In the medieval period, many printed and translated literary works like Tarik-i-Firuz Shahi (14th century A.D.)
by Sams-i-Siraj Affif,\(^1\)\(^3\) **Ain-i-Akbari** of Abul Fazl (16th century A.D.\(^1\)\(^4\)), **Seir-ul-Mutakherin** by Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai and other minor works like **Riyazus Salatin** of Moulavi Abd-us-Salam supply valuable information on the political history of the period and the economic life of the people. But these accounts were coloured by religious fanaticism of the rulers, punctuated by the Muslim victory complex. The alien authors ignored the prevalent socio-economic phenomena shaping historical developments. The contemporary European accounts are valuable in understanding the trade and industrial conditions of the period.\(^1\)\(^5\)

However, the accounts of foreign merchant travellers like those of Bowrey and Streynsham Master as well as the printed factory records edited by Foster, which are fragmentary and lacking in statistical data, only help scholars to make general observations on the demographic changes of the period as well as on the rates and volumes of state income and investment in public expenditure, on the condition of public finance as well as on the rate of investment of the entrepreneurs shaping the country's economic destiny.\(^1\)\(^6\)

The British civilian writers like J C Price and W W Hunter, mainly on the basis of their access to Midnapore Collectorate records as well as the Revenue and Judicial records of State Archives, some of which were published by W K Firminger, had drawn a very dismal picture of the
struggle between the local elements and the early conquistadores in a formative phase of British rule in Bengal. The authors of the district Gazetteers and census report, 1951, and some Indian writers like Joges Chandra Bose and Trailokyamohan Pal have more or less followed the beaten track.

Information can be had from some treatises on Orissa written by the British civilian historians. Andrew Sterling, the first British historian of Orissa, in his work *An Account Geographical, Statistical and Historical of Orissa proper or Cuttack* (1828), followed the despatches and reports of the British administrators like those of Walter Ewer and Henry Ricketts, some of which were printed recently to glorify the peasantised tribal resistance movements of the period. In 1872 W W Hunter published *Orissa* in two volumes of the *Annals of Rural Bengal* and narrated the history of the English as settlers and Governors in Orissa (1635-1871) to describe the British administration in Orissa which contained, as John Beames views, many inaccuracies. In 1873 George Toynbee, the then Commissioner of Orissa, published a sketch of the *History of Orissa (1803-28)* which deals admirably with the military occupation of the province and the subsequent measures to suppress agrarian disturbances. John Beames also presented a paper in the Asiatic Society in 1883, entitled 'Notes on the history of Orissa under the Mahamadan, Maratha and the English', now available in print.
These learned treatises as well as despatches and reports in the form of manuscript records of the Revenue and judicial departments from the nucleus of the present study on the economic life of the people in frontier Bengal. But these civilian orientalists relied upon archival materials and, for the Indian sources, they had to depend on the vernacular interpreter pundits who had no acquaintance with modern historical methodology. Owing to their basic limitation as foreigners ignorant about the Asiatic way of life, many inaccuracies, punctuated by white man's superiority complex, crept into their studies. Their study aimed at satisfying the commercial and imperial interests of the Raj and at inculcating knowledge of the oriental value system in the successive young civilian administrators who would rule the country of which they knew precious little.

They, no doubt, studied original sources but they made no exhaustive study of the then available literary sources and relied on some vernacular evidences like the Madja Panji, temple chronicles of Puri, which proved to be unhistorical narrations with the exploration of new epigraphic and numismatic evidences. Their observation regarding the successive Hindu, Muslim and Maratha governments was vitiated by the self-interest of an alien foreign ruler ignorant of the historical traditions and cultural values of the subjects they ruled. (Present research would reveal that the British
rule was no less beneficial but no more tyrannical than those of their predecessors.

4. **Historiography of the twentieth century: Limitation of the Historical Literature of the period:**

   Historical literature basked in an atmosphere of militant nationalism in the twentieth century since a spirit of protest against the British Raj inspired them. The nationalist historians then found in the sporadic peasant resistance movements the first articulate expression of the struggle for independence, a protest against the so-called drain of wealth by the British rulers. However, their works lacked sufficient statistical data and their views did not hold solid ground when they are put to the acid test of historical facts and forces behind them.²³

Some economic historians of the present generation put emphasis on the beneficial character of the British rule. They repudiated the theory of exploitation and drain of wealth²⁴ by the Raj. Many other civil servants put emphasis on natural calamities like flood, famine, drought and natural hindrances like poor fertility, geographical limitations and tropical maladies as obstacles to economic development of the region in order to reach the stage of a self-reliant economy. But available region-wise
data in the archival records would prove the inadequacy of the arguments put forward, even though they contain some justification.

To some modern historians, peasant unrest was the

manifestation of a crude form of protest against the infiltration of Hindu population and culture, which is termed as 'Sanskritisation', resulting in the withering away of the so-called tribal life and production culture.

To some other scholars the genesis of peasant unrest may be found in the British revenue experiments of the period which caused dislocation in the prevailing currency system. They neglected to analyse the undercurrents of parallel socio-economic forces at work and their inter-relations which gave this unrest an inter-state cosmopolitan character.

Recently a group of historians like B C Ray, P Mukherjee and K M Patra reconstructed the administrative and revenue history of Orissa, some parts of which had socio-cultural links with the frontier Bengal. But none attempted to explain the economic decline of the state in terms of modern trends of historical analysis. Moreover, relying on study in archival sources, they have neglected to utilise socio-anthropological data strewn over the whole of Orissa and its neighbouring districts of Midnapore and Bankura which had close links with Orissa for generations. Others
have highlighted the British viewpoint and do not explain why the Midnapore and Bankura districts of the present century, despite so many beneficial measures undertaken by the British government for modernisation of the economy, failed to sustain a self-generating agrarian society under the colonial framework.

5. Objectives of the present study:

The present author, in dealing with the nineteenth century agrarian history of south west frontier Bengal, is confronted with two problems. The first question is, whether contrary to the claims made by the British historians like W.W. Hunter, despite modernisation measures adopted by the British Raj, the agrarian economy of south west Bengal had declined, and if so, why? Secondly, whether there was a crisis in the traditional leadership in social framework for a possible regeneration of the economy and, if so, why there could not emerge a national leadership to complete a possible self-generating process of modernity of the economy through reforms and regeneration from inside. To many historians, the answer lies in an analysis of the Indian economic backwardness in the nineteenth century. To them, the backwardness of India and as such of south-west Bengal was the outcome of colonial exploitation. The Raj for very existence, wanted to create a girdle of underdeveloped economy on the periphery of his metropolis in order to maintain
the tempo of prosperity of its imperial market economy. The theme of studies of the British and Indian historians may be summed up as follows: (a) The British Raj restored law and order in the country through reforms and social regeneration in terms of administrative, economic and cultural modernisation. (b) But the inadequacy of capital investment in agricultural and industrial development for south west Bengal in particular, commensurate with her need, led to the economic underdevelopment of the region in the world perspective. (c) Consequently, there was the phenomenon of a stunted growth of the middle class leadership when the old traditional aristocracy failed to respond to the challenging situation arising out of modernisation programme adopted by the Raj. (d) Confronted with the challenge of the imperial motive of exploitation of the Raj, response came from both tribal and traditional societies through resistance movements in terms of popular revolts.

These historians could not answer why the modernisation of the administrative and political machinery of India by the Raj could not arrest the crisis in the agrarian economy by enhancing the potentiality for leadership formation of the middle class. Sushobhan Sarkar and other Marxist historians viewed that the British rule contributed to the emergence of an elite middle class in Bengal and this class was responsible for the economic and cultural
regeneration of Bengal, popularly known as 'Bengal Renaissance'. On the other hand, H R Ghosal, N K Sinha, Binay Chaudhuri and Amiya Kumar Bagchi found that despite spectacular regeneration in the educational and socio-cultural framework in the Bengal Presidency, the village crafts languished, her oceanic trade came to a standstill and agrarian economy registered a creeping decline owing to the capitalist challenge of an alien rule following the 'Laissez-faire' policy. The industrial revolution converted India into a monopoly market for selling machine-made finished goods of England, for purchasing raw materials at a cheap rate and dumping her outmoded machinery.

The present scholar, confronted with a mass of documented source-materials demanding an analytical framework, differs from their conclusion. The economic decline of this region started in the sixteenth century when Muslim rule changed its agrarian institutions. The process was accelerated by the short-lived dual administration of the Maratha and the Company's (1751-1803) governments in parts of the region. The present study delves into the causes of the economic underdevelopment, a creeping degeneration which continued unabated despite the benevolent measures adopted by the British Raj during the nineteenth century. It also analyses the
constraints, both socio-economic and political, which stood in the way of leadership formation for a possible economic regeneration of the region in the backdrop of colonial India. Therefore, in the present study, two fundamental questions have been probed and some cogent arguments put forward to explain the following:

(1) Why economic degeneration of south-west Bengal, namely modern Bankura and Midnapore districts, could not be arrested despite beneficial measures adopted by the British Raj for the modernisation of administrative machinery and socio-economic environment;

(2) Why no regenerative force could emerge in terms of national leadership and middle class and middle peasant entrepreneurship for accelerating the process of modernisation in the socio-economic life of south-west Bengal.

6. Basic Hypothesis tested:

The basic hypotheses tested in the present study are: (1) British rule had a beneficial aspect but not to the extent of meeting the socio-economic needs of this region. (2) The problems of nineteenth century south-west Bengal are not only economic and administrative crisis but this crisis had socio-cultural and religious dimensions also which engulfed the totality of the
social formation. (3) There was a slow growth of middle class leadership throughout the nineteenth century since the socio-religious values and institutions and distortions through the exploitative colonial rule stood in the way of national regeneration which depicted the crisis in traditional leadership. (4) In the nineteenth century, creeping decline of the agrarian economy could not be arrested owing to the exploitative tendencies of the British Raj. But this crisis in the agrarian economy was the climacteric point of a process which had started from the dawn of Muslim misrule in the region that accelerated the process of drain of wealth from this region paving the way for the crisis in the agrarian economy. (5) The economic decline of this region in the final analysis was partly the result of her degeneration in the traditional socio-economic institutions starting since the dawn of Muslim misrule, partly the end-product of geophysical environment in the Indian sub-continent and partly the terminating point of a drainage system accelerated by the colonial exploitation of British Rule.

7. Methodology followed:

To test the above hypotheses the following methodological framework has been undertaken.

A.(a) To visualise the total picture of economic degeneration of this region consequent on the administrative and
revenue experiments of the British India Government, the official records, kept in different archives in India, have been consulted. (b) To understand the socio-cultural environment of the nineteenth century it is necessary to catch up with the main trends of modernisation in the mental consciousness of the emerging middle class. To do this, contemporary literary works, vernacular journals, and contemporary printed government reports kept in different archives and in private and Government libraries in India are consulted. (c) To establish the hypotheses so derived from the archival and literary sources the process of quantitative and comparative analysis of statistical data has been undertaken to assess the economic underdevelopment of the region in the perspective of world situation. (d) To find out the echoes of crisis in traditional leadership studies of private papers are undertaken. These papers are kept by eminent individuals, nationalist leaders and litterateurs. Due emphasis has been given to oral history and folklore.

B. Collection of archival materials preserved in the different Record Rooms of the Government: (i) From the National Archives of India, New Delhi, besides Foreign and Home Departments Proceedings, the present scholar has had the privilege of collecting data from public works, Revenue, Agriculture and Famine branches of the
Home Department which the historians writing history of this region have so far overlooked. (ii) From the State Archives of West Bengal, Calcutta the proceedings of Lt. Governor of Bengal-in-council in the Revenue, Judicial, Miscellaneous, General, Salt and Public Works Departments have been consulted to study the correspondence between local administration and central administration at Calcutta on administrative and economic issues. Besides these papers Board of Revenue proceedings volumes, records of different districts of Bengal, private papers concerning salt, cotton and opium have also been consulted. (iii) From the State Archives of Bhubaneswar, Orissa, attempts have been made to study records concerning salt tracts lying between Bengal and Orissa which had a close commercial and social connection between two states. (iv) Attempts have also been made to study contemporary printed reports, census papers and Gazetteer literature published by the authority of the British Government. These reports were found in the West Bengal Government Secretariat Library, National Archives of India, and the State Archives of Bhubaneswar. The reports, accounts and narratives, while giving the view point of the civilian administrators, also depict the then traditional society and complete bankruptcy of both the traditional and emerging leaderships to catch up with the main trends of development associated with the administrative innovations of the Raj. Besides, settlement papers and registration
records have also been consulted. Title deeds of individuals have been taken into consideration to give a clear picture of the pattern of land alienation. Local records, found from the grass roots level through field studies, therefore, played a major role in this study to find out the caste and income groups and compelling facts of land alienations and the resultant crisis of the nineteenth century agrarian economy.

C. Collection of non-archival materials:

Simultaneously with the collection of data from the archival sources emphasis has also been laid on the works of contemporary literateurs who form the elite section of the emerging middle class. Contemporary vernacular newspapers and periodicals like Hindu Patriot, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Dainik Basumatā, Bankura Darpan etc. have been studied. These valuable newspapers not only delineated the socio-economic picture of the nineteenth century south-west Bengal but revealed the formative phases of the contemporary political and national consciousness. Thus archival records throw light on the British viewpoint, while the vernacular literature and regional newspapers echo the native response to the exploitative aspect of British rule. Different court records kept by the erstwhile kings of former native states have been consulted. From the literature and newspaper sources a list of literateurs has been prepared who represented the then elite section of the society and tabulation works were
made on their parentage, locality of their birth, caste, educational attainments and their attitude towards socio-political problems. The study revealed an environment not conducive to social entrepreneurship for capital formation necessary for economic regeneration of this region.

D. In the present study a comparison has been made between the data recorded by the British administrators and the same derived from the vernacular newspapers and periodicals. The paucity of socio-economic data was greatly felt as the government compiled only the agrarian statistics beginning from 1884. The data collected from the field studies for land alienation and leadership formations may seem inadequate. But even then the exercise may have some corroborative value to the future generation of scholars. The statistical tables derived from the vernacular newspapers are mainly based on the Government statistics, reports, studies of local vernacular reporters.

8. Chapterisation :

This thesis may be outlined in five chapters. The first chapter deals with the background of the nineteenth century agrarian unrest, specially the peasant resistance
movements consequent on the introduction of Permanent Settlement and associated law and order measures of the Company Raj which completely upset the established socio-political structure in the agrarian economy. Some historians held that colonial rule was responsible for the peasant unrest consequent on the break down of the traditional subsistence economy while some others viewed that this crisis in the agrarian economy had started since the beginning of the Mughal rule. The process, which was accelerated during the British regime leading ultimately to pauperisation of the peasantry, was responsible for violent responses. An analysis of the changing peasant economy since the eighteenth century would reveal that this process of pauperisation of the peasantry, leading to the societal change and insubility of traditional leadership, had started earlier since the fifteenth century, a process which was accelerated by the advent of the Company’s rule. This chapter deals with the end products of the successive revenue settlements of the eighteenth century leading to the Permanent Settlement in the region. The Permanent Settlement brought in new problems and, as a result, many traditional landed aristocrats (zamindars) lost their estates. The new farmers, who had been associated with the traditional landlords as naibs, vakils and tahasildars in benami (proxy) transactions purchasing estates from traditional land captains, could not collect land rents from ryots (peasantry) and thus
lost their estates for arrears of revenue and the resultant vacuum was filled up by a new generation of rich proprietors.

Moreover, maximisation of revenue to explore the yielding capacity of the soil, leading likewise to enhancement of land rents and gradual replacement of produce rent by money rent, tended to be oppressive to the actual producers in resumed land settlements. In the changed environment they had two alternatives, either to revolt against the new system of exploitation or to migrate to the newly opened up uncultivable salt and forest tracts in South Bankura and south and south-west Midnapore. This chapter deals with the successive peasant resistance movements and evaluates their causes of recurrence. The chapter deals with the resumption of non-revenue paying lands by the Company’s government, and also explains how the paternalism of landed proprietors was thrown to the winds since a part of the zamindari (revenue paying estate) was put to auction and bought by unknown purchasers at different sales. Consequently, estates were fragmented, bringing hardship to a class of ryots enjoying non-revenue paying lands.

In this background of unrest, the Raja of Burdwan introduced the pattani system which ultimately spread to other areas, specially to Bishnupur. The second chapter deals with the pattani system and the extortion of new
revenue farmers over the peasants which ultimately led to the Rent Legislations of 1859 and 1885. The aim was to safeguard the interests of the emergent relatively affluent middle peasantry who following the new land legislation starting from the Permanent Settlement, became permanent land holders. The perpetuation of their interests in land was thought to have ensured an investment of their surplus savings in their newly acquired holdings for possible land improvement. The second chapter also deals with the welfare measures adopted by the Government to improve the law and order situation, on the one hand and to ameliorate the economic condition of the relatively affluent emergent middle peasantry of this region on the other with a view to enhance the yielding capacity of the soil in order to counterbalance the maximisation process of revenue settlements in the resumed estates. But the government expectations were belied as this chapter would show.

These measures regrettably failed to increase production. The Government undertook halting measures to develop the means of communication necessary for the easy mobility of internal merchandise and attempted to introduce scientific farming to cultivate commercial crops. Despite all these measures, a brewing crisis in the agrarian economy could not be averted.

The third chapter discusses the problems connected with the exploitative tendency of industrial capitalism
and break down of village-level industries. Owing to the shrinkage in internal market following the changing life style of the social elite and loss of foreign market after the collapse of the Company's trade monopoly in 1833, the village crafts failed to compete with British goods. The constraints to both internal and external market expansion by indigenous entrepreneurship explain the paucity of capital formation that again led to the decline of village crafts like salt, textile and metallic implements which factors ultimately accelerated the process of rural pauperisation.

The fourth chapter deals with a pertinent question as to why there was no economic growth despite restoration of law and order and the welfare measures adopted by the colonial Government. Some problems have been identified to find out answers to the following questions: a) Was there any perceptible change in the technology and other means of production? b) To what extent mineral resources were exploited? c) What were the problems which checked the growth of cattle power necessary for agricultural operations? d) Was there any dislocation in the distribution pattern of man-power? The question crops up since the process of pauperisation was interlinked with the demographic changes of the period. e) What factors accelerated the process of large-scale alienation of land? An analysis of factors like maximization of land rent, changing mode of payment through
transition from produce rent to cash rent and usurious credit relations would clarify the picture of land alienation. But a pertinent question arises, was there any process of depeasantisation rather than pauperisation in heightening the crisis in the agrarian economy?

This chapter deals with the failure of Government efforts to implement technological change in the production sector and depicts the declining condition of public health, cattle power, paucity of fertilizer application and other inputs which explain why the Government could not respond properly to the overall demands when the cry was for maximisation of rent and land revenue. It explains the changing agrarian relation due to the transfer of land ownership and the cumulative credit relations leading to formation of unproductive usury capital which was not used for land improvement but for land alienation leading to pauperisation of the peasantry.

The British rule, despite its injurious impact on the political economy, had also a regenerative aspect, since it ushered in a new age of so-called Renaissance leading to the growth of the middle class connected with land. Thus the last chapter deals with the process of regeneration of a significant albeit minor segment of the population of south-west Bengal within the framework of
crisis in the colonial economy, consequent on the impact of western education in changing their way of life. An analytical model has been prepared to explain the economic aspect of the growth of the middle class consequent on the introduction of the modernisation measures in the region. Attempts have been made to discuss the rise of political consciousness of the people which led to the formation of institutions like the National Association, regional literary associations, and political formations which paved the way for a sustained nationalist movement against the foreign rule.

These chapters are followed by a conclusion in which the present scholar attempts to present his views on the topics discussed in these five chapters. The answer to the question as to why there could not be any sustained economic growth in this region lies partly in the injurious effects of the exploitative rule of the successive foreign regimes of which the British rulers were the last in the line of succession, and also in the consequent stunted growth of native entrepreneurship which failed to respond to a challenging situation after the British paramountcy in south west Bengal was established on a solid foundation.

The present scholar would also like to submit the constraints under which he had to conduct his research and the problems he could not overcome. While strenuous efforts have been made to assess the changes and continuity in society, the author has failed to procure socio-
anthropological data from the grass-roots level of tribal and peasant settlements situated in many inaccessible parts of the region.

The source materials for the nineteenth century socio-economic history of south-west Bengal, available at the different archives and record rooms of India and abroad, are of such a vast dimension, that the author had to become selective. Besides, resource constraints stood in the way of his examining the records of the India Office Library, London, including some valuable private papers of the different Lt. Governors of Bengal and the Governor Generals of India. One problem is with the locality of the study.

Elaborate discussions have been made to define the region and the present author has selected the territorial limits of modern Bankura and Midnapore as the locales.

Another problem concerns the timeframe of his studies. One cannot fix a deadline and demarcate a period by averring that development or degeneration started from a definite point of time. The causes of slow growth of national consciousness and economic nationalism in the nineteenth century, which later took the shape of freedom struggle, obviously could not be dealt with properly. The statistical tables prepared by the author are not obviously complete because of the paucity of economic data. But even then
the author tried to complete the picture of crisis in the agrarian economy together with the regenerative aspect of urban life under the impact of the British rule in this particular region by tapping a broad spectrum of source materials and analysing available historical models. The author would deem it a privilege if this study evokes questions for further probing by the future generation of scholars.
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