CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS
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The present work is a study of the origin, and nature as well as evolution of peasant uprisings in Orissa during the Pre-Nationalist Era (1757-1857). Special emphasis is given to an analysis of nature and pattern of peasant uprisings in India during the same period. After coming to power following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company worked to enlarge revenue collections in India. This was reflected clearly in its land revenue policy and settlements beginning with the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793. As a result, practically all sections of agrarian classes in India were affected due to heavy revenue demands of the British government. The economic burden fell more heavily on the lower strata of the peasantry than on more affluent ones. These developments prompted the Indian peasantry to rise in revolt against their oppressor landlords as well as the feudatory chiefs and the British government. A series of popular and agrarian uprisings in the process took place in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa during the period under study (1757-1857).

The present work is divided into seven Chapters. Chapters I and II form the "Introduction" as well as "Frame Work to the study while Chapter VII provides the "Summary and Concluding Observations". Chapters III to VI incorporate substantive portions of the present study.

Chapter II contains three sections namely, "Definition and Scope of the Study", "Nature and Role of Peasantry : The International Settings", and "Peasant Uprisings in Colonial India : A Framework For Analysis". The term peasantry has been defined as one who lives in a rural area and who works predominantly in agriculture, wholly or in part for his livelihood. In the Indian context, the peasantry included the agricultural labourers, share-croppers, tenants, rural artisans as well as marginal and small farmers. As regards the concept "Peasant Movements", it refers to "such uprisings as are based on agrarian needs that seek salvation from suppression by political lords, aim at the redressal of grievances, want to share a part of the power or overthrow the whole power hierarchy and through these achievements, want to change their social structure". As regards the ideological orientation of peasant movements all over the world, these had been influenced by three major trends namely, "Marxian", "Nationalist" and "Social-Reformist". Based on these trends, Danial Thorner and A.N. Das have expounded their five fold classification of peasantry namely, landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and the agricultural labourers. Such classification, however, suffers from the fact that there is considerable overlapping in India between the categories of the
"middle peasants" and "poor peasants", as well as between the "poor peasants" and "landless labourers". This confusion prompted a group of scholars led by Ranjit Guha to analyze the tribal, peasant and other lower class movements under a new framework called "subaltern" studies.

This study indicates that the peasant uprisings in Colonial India depicted certain distinct trends. Firstly, the historical experience in India demonstrated that given an opportunity, a peasant is as rational, perceptive and receptive as elsewhere in the world. The main problem lies in the fact that poor peasants are unable to take risks in adopting innovations required for participation in mass action. This is due to the oppressive agrarian structure prevailing in India which often impeded their participation in mass action. Secondly, there was a close inter-relationship between the peasant and the social movements during this period. Thirdly, British Colonialism brought about a tremendous transformation in the socio-economic realms of India. In the process there emerged a high degree of differentiation within the Indian peasantry. This has prompted several scholars in India to provide a perspective concerning the dialectical trends of the agrarian movements during the British period. Out of these, the model as presented by Kathleene Gough in her study on the "Indian Peasantry Uprisings" has been adopted for analysis by the scholar.

Chapter III provides the setting for this study. It contains three sections namely, "The Agrarian Structure and Land
Revenue Administration in Colonial India". "Evolution of Peasant Insurgencies in India: Their Origin, Nature and Pattern (1757-1857)" and "The Origin, Nature and Pattern of Peasant Uprisings in Orissa (1757-1857)". It has been mentioned that the new system of land revenues administration, as introduced by the British, created a dominant class of land-holders and the cultivating peasantry as well as the exploiting community of village money-lenders. In the tribal areas, especially, the material condition of the peasantry was pretty dismal. Also, the new tenure system had deprived the tribal population of their community rights over forests and lands. It had in particular alienated the aborigine community because the British encouraged the influx of external population into their areas the Zamindars, forest contractors, traders and money-lenders, who had exploited them thoroughly. The agrarian discontent, as well as the attempt to bring about a total or partial dislocation of tribal society and economy, contributed largely to a series of insurrections during that period (1757-1857).

As regards the origin and nature of agrarian and popular uprisings in Orissa during the period under study (1757-1857), these could be traced principally to developments surrounding the British occupation of Orissa. It had all started with the agrarian discontents concerning short-term land revenue settlement as introduced by the British during 1804 and 1816 as well as their judicial system and police administration. Other contributing factors leading to agrarian uprisings in Orissa were the imposition of the new currency system (Silver Sicca in place of
the old "Kauri" currency) and the operation of the salt monopoly.
All these developments stimulated a series of agrarian uprisings
during the period under study (1757-1857). These have been
categorised under three broad headings: "Restorative Rebellions",
"Mass Insurrections" and "Terrorist Vengeance" and "Religious
Uprisings" by following the theoretical framework advocated by
Kathleen Gough. Out of her model, however, the category of
"Social Banditry" has not been incorporated as not a single case
study pertaining to that existed in Orissa during that particular
period (1757-1857).

Chapter IV analyzes the origin and evolution of the
first category of Gough's model namely, the "Restorative
Rebellions". It contains the story of three major rebellions:
the Parlakhemundi Uprisings (1767-1836), Khurda Revolts (1817-1824)
and Sambalpur Uprisings (1827-1857). The Uprisings in
Parlakhemundi (1767-1836), commenced following the removal of
French dominating over that territory as well as the advent of
British rule into the region beginning in 1776. It has been
mentioned that the native ruler of Parlakhemundi, Raja Narayan Deo
refused to submit himself to the control of the British, resulting
in the first phase of uprisings. The second phase, however,
commenced following the imposition of Padmanabh Deo, a British
loyalist, as the Manager by the English in 1831. The peasantry,
led by some Bissois stoutly resisted such the British imposition
and revolted rather openly demanding the restoration of their
native Bhanja rulers. The British troops, crushed these revolts
mercilessly in 1836. The Parlakhemundi case study demonstrates the example of a "restorative rebellion" in Orissa.

The second case study relates to Khurda revolts (1817-1824). Its origin could be traced to developments following the British occupation of Orissa in 1803. It was initially spearheaded by Raja Mukunda Deva II, the deposed ruler of Khurda in December 1804. The humiliation meted out to him stirred the religious sentiments of the people of Khurda including its peasantry, prompting them to rise in revolt against the British. The rebellion, however, met with a sad failure. The second phase of Khurda Uprisings, began sometime in 1817, when a large number of "Paiks" and "Ryots", as well as some feudal Chiefs and Zamindars participated actively in a rebellion against the British. The leader of the movement was a strong royalist namely, Bakshi Jagabandhu. Under his leadership, the rebels made a strong bid to place the formal ruler of Khurda, Mukunda Deva II as the head of the state. But such a movement failed to achieve even its minimum objectives by the end of 1824. This study represents a typical case of "restorative rebellions" in Orissa.

The third case study relates to Sambalpur Uprisings (1827-1857). The origin of the revolt was traced to the misrule, tyranny and treachery as perpetrated by the Marathas following their occupation of Sambalpur in 1800. In fact, the installation of Bhup Singh as Governor as well as internment of Chauhan ruler Jayant Singh, prompted the people of Sambalpur (under the leadership of Chief Queen Ratna Kumari) to raise the banner of revolt.
against the Marathas. The British thereafter occupied Sambalpur in 1804 with the help of Rani Ratna Kumari. But the British decided to hand over the districts of Sambalpur and Sonepur back to the Marathas in 1804. Such action prompted Rani Ratna Kumari to wage a long struggle until her death in 1817. The British occupied Sambalpur for the second time after the battle at Sittalbeld on 26 November 1817. A second phase of popular uprisings took place (following the installation of Queen Mohan Kumari to the throne of Sambalpur), following the death of Maharaj Sai in 1827. The reign of Mohan Kumari, however, witnessed a series of protest, rebellion, and sporadic chaos due to acts of favouritism, nepotism and administrative inefficiency. This led to popular rebellions in Sambalpur which very soon spread to Padampur, Chandaspur, Khariar and the borders of Bargarh. But the accession of Mohan Kumari, was contested to by Surendra Sai, a rival claimant to the throne. But the matter came to a head when Narayan Singh, a favourite of Mohan Kumari, was made the Raja of Sambalpur by the British on 11 October 1833. The claims of Surendra Sai was rejected by the British on the ground of his alleged complicity in the disturbances against Rani Mohan Kumari. This provoked Surendra Sai to launch the resistance movement beginning in 1837. The British troops crushed these revolts and put Surendra Sai, his brother Udant Singh and uncle Balram Singh to confinement at Hazaribagh Jail in 1840. The next phase of insurrection commenced after Surendra Sai along with his followers were released from the prison after the mutineers of 1857 revolt
had broken open the Hazaribagh Jail. Surendra Sai, thereafter proceeded to Sambalpur to press his claims to the throne. But as his claim was rejected, Surendra Sai resorted to mobilizing the loyal tribals and Zamindars and launched a military operation against the British forces. During the period from 1849 to 1857, the British administration created severe disaffection among all sections of people in Sambalpur. But the restorative movement failed because Surendra Sai took the decision to submit himself before the British authorities in 1862. Thus, Sambalpur Uprisings constituted a case study under the "Restorative Rebellions".

Chapter V embraces an analysis concerning the origin and evolution of "Mass Insurrections" in Orissa. It contains the case study of three major rebellions namely, Ghumsar Rebellion (1753-1853), Peasant Uprisings in Nilgiri (1838-1840) and Nayagarh Revolts (1849-1852). As regards the first study, the popular and peasant uprisings in Ghumsar took place in two distinct phases: I (1753-1835) and II (1836-1866). In the present work while Phase I has been covered under the "Mass Insurrections", Phase II has been analyzed in the category of "Religious Uprisings". By way of background to the uprisings, it has been mentioned that Ghumsar witnessed the scene of continuous rebellions against foreign rule spanning well over the hundred and thirteen years. It begun at first against the French as early as in 1753 and lasted till 1757. Thereafter, the uprisings was directed against the British during the period from 1756 to 1866. The history of the struggle in Ghumsar is full of many thrilling events, heroic
feats and fights against the British authority by successive rulers the turbulent Krishna Bhanja (1754-1773), the refractory Vikram Bhanja (1773-1782), the conciliatory Lakshman Bhanja (1782-1788), the rebellions of Srikara Bhanja (1801-1815, 1818-1832) and the belligerent Dhananjaya Bhanja (1801-1815, 1832-1835). It was in 1835 that the last Bhanja ruler Dhananjaya Bhanja expired in the hill tracks of Ghumsar after fighting a long drawn battle against the British forces. Following this, the English government took over the administration of Ghumsar estate and terminated the Bhanja dynasty permanently from their ancestral kingdom. It may, be mentioned that during the long period of struggle the popular masses (including the peasantry of Ghumsar) participated actively behind the resistance efforts as spearheaded by their kings vis-a-vis the English.

The second case study relates to the peasant uprisings of Nilgiri during the period from 1838 to 1840. This insurrection constituted the first phase of a series of peasant uprisings that took place at different periods of time in 1838-1840, 1873-1876, 1884-1886, 1928 and 1938-1947. During the first phase of uprisings (1838-1840), however, the people of Nilgiri (including the peasantry) voiced their strong protests against the misrule, unjust conduct as well as exploitation by the dowager Rani Chitra Devi and her brother and regent Shiba Charan Patnaik. As the Rani functioned completely under the influence of her wicked brother, the people of Nilgiri felt greatly annoyed and extended their full support to the revolt by Hari Babu, a distant relative
of Chitra Devi. The rebellious forces under Hari Babu, carried away much cattle property of the loyalists of the Rani. The conspirators intended to kill the Queen Mother along with her minor son. Further they planned to take over the control of the royal place and the administration of Nilgiri. The British, dealt the situation rather firmly. As for the peasantry, they wholeheartedly supported the coup against the Rani as engineered by Hari Babu. The uprisings in Nilgiri may be described as "Mass Insurrections".

The third case study relates to the revolts in Nayagarh. It has been mentioned that agrarian uprisings took place in Nayagarh twice during the second half of the Nineteenth Century. The first uprisings, took place between 1849 to 1852. This was engineered against the oppressive activities of the ruler of Nayagarh Brajabandhu Singh Mandhata. It has been mentioned that the ruthless ruler resorted to a number of arbitrary taxes and illegal cesses. He antagonized all sections of people in Nayagarh such as "Sar barkars", "Daleis", "Dalabeheras", "Paiks" and the common ryots. Besides them the tribals also felt agitated over the oppressive measures implemented by the ruler. All these prompted the peasantry to join the popular revolting against their ruler. But the revolt was suppressed ruthlessly by the British government.

Chapter VI embodies an analysis relating to the origin and evolution of revolts relating to "Terrorist Vengeance", and "Religious Uprisings" in Orissa. It contains the case studies of
three uprisings: "Guerrilla Warfare in Mayurbhanj (1781-1796), "The Kol Disturbances in Bamanghaty (1821-1836)" and "the Kondh Rebellions (1836-1856)".

The first case study relates to the guerrilla warfare by the peasantry in Mayurbhanj against the British government beginning in June 1781. It describes as to how the guerrillas of Mayurbhanj resorted to terrorist tactics by attacking the English possessions from Belorachar to Khunta. Their military thrust, in fact, forced the British Collector at Midnapore to seek help from Nana Mukunda Rao, the Maratha Faujdar at Balasore. The guerrilla atrocities, however, continued unabated until the death of Damodar Bhanja in 1796. During the military operations against the British, the ruler of Mayurbhanj received the unstinted support from his people (including the peasantry).

The second case study relating to "Terrorist Vengeance" pertains to Kol Disturbances in Bamanghaty of Mayurbhanj state. These uprisings were spearheaded by the Kol Sardars of Bamanghaty under the inspiration of Sarbarakar Madhab Das Mohapatra who decided to fight against his ruler Raja Jadunath Bhanja. In fact, these disturbances created the bone of contention between the Commissioner of Tributary Mahals at Cuttack and the Governor General's South West Frontier Agency at Hazaribagh. As events unfolded, the disturbances in Bamanghaty formed a chain in the series of Kol insurrections that took place in three phases: in 1821-1836, 1866 and in 1881. During the first phase the wrath of aborigine tribals was principally directed against the British
interference in the Kol tracts. In the process a struggle for power ensued between the Raja of Mayurbhanj and the Sarbarakar of Bamanghaty.

The final case study relates to the "Religious uprisings*. It analyses the origin and evolution of the Kondh rebellions (1836-1856). The origin of these rebellions are traced to the Ghumsar Uprisings (1753-1835) as has been discussed earlier. Following the death of Ghumsar's ruler Raja Dhananjaya Singh, the British undertook annexation of Ghumsar. This development, prompted widespread disturbance in Ghumsar as well as in the surrounding regions (especially in the Kondh tracts) for the restoration of Bhanja dynasty as well as for the practice of the "Meriah" (Human Sacrifice) system which prevailed widely in the region. The Kondh rebellion, however, constituted an important part of the tribal resistance movements in Orissa during the nineteenth century. Under the leadership of the charismatic personality of Dora Bissoi and his illustrious nephew Chakra Bissoi, these valiant tribals had fought an unequal battle against the formidable British army, the result of which was bound to their certain military defeat. Despite this, these immortal tribal leaders have carved a glorious place for themselves not only in their community but also among the people of Orissa.

On the basis of the "Summary" presented above the concluding observations are offered. To begin with, the British sought to restore law and order in India during the period under study (1757-1857) through the mechanism of administrative and
economic reforms as well as the process of cultural modernisation. The response of both the tribal and the traditional peasantry in India to this effect was often through resistance movements. As far as Orissa was concerned, these movements were channelized as in the four models enunciated by Kathleen Gough "restorative rebellions", "mass insurrections", "terrorist vengeance" and "religious uprisings".

Secondly, while British rule in Orissa led to certain beneficial aspects such as "stability", it also resulted in certain injurious impacts as well. For instance, the successive land revenue settlements (to augment additional resources for the British) proved quite disastrous to the economy of Orissa. Many traditional landed families were obliterated when their estates were confiscated and sold out to new entrants and speculative Bengali revenue farmers. Climaxes of popular discontent manifested themselves in popular protest movements, as in case of Khurda (Paik) revolts.

Thirdly, the peasant movements in Orissa exposed the evils of the British system and prompted the English to move towards administrative modernization. For instance, the European Officials in various feudatory states were given more power to deal with the local problems. The Political Agents were instructed to accelerate the process of conflict resolution as well as to restrain the process of agrarian uprisings in the feudatory states.
Fourthly, the study clearly dispels the myth propagated by some colonial historians that peasants in India were essentially "inert", "passive", "docile", "fatalistic", "unresisting" and "bogged down in the quagmire of superstitions and other worldly fantasies". Such historians attribute the crucial role in uprisings to outside agitators who resorted to "deliberate instigations" to spearhead these peasant uprisings. This study of Orissa, however, clearly indicates that these movements were largely autonomous in character, the so-called "interventions" by "outside elements" were rather marginal and often were a late phenomenon. The roles played by different rulers of Orissa, as well as by charismatic leaders of feudatory states such as Surendra Sai, Bakshi Jagabandhu, Dora Bissoi and Chakra Bissoi present a clear scenario in this regard.

Fifthly, prior to their annexation of Orissa the East India Company had not considered it prudent to act offensively with regard to the native states. They looked at them from the standpoint of their commercial interests, and a half century passed before they converted themselves from a peaceful trading body into a power anxious to establish their sway through territorial aggrandisement. Such a process, became compelling following their spectacular victory over the Bhonsle government in 1803.

Finally, the peasant resistance movements in Orissa were quite virulent, especially explosive in the feudatory states. The British, succeeded in suppressing them by using
superior military force as well as through clever political tricks and maneuvers. Despite this, it may be observed that leadership of peasant rebellions in Orissa during the pre-1857 period constitute a glorious chapter in the colonial history of India. These valiant rebel leaders carved a glorious place for themselves amidst their communities as well as throughout Orissa.