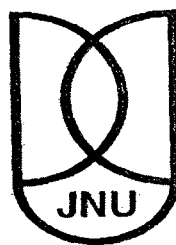


**ELITE POLITICS: A STUDY OF CHANGING SOCIAL
COMPOSITION OF POLITICAL ELITE IN ORISSA**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the Dissertation entitled "Elite Politics: A Study of Changing Social Composition of Political Elite in Orissa" submitted by me in the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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*Sundaree Mani Dakua,
my maternal grand mother*

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Abbreviation and Acronyms

AICC	All India Congress Committee
BJD	Biju Janata Dal
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
HYV	High Yielding Variety
JC	Jana Congress
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OBC	Other Backward Castes
OGP	Orissa Gana Parishad
POSCO	Pohang Steel Company (South Korea)
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
SEBC	Socially and Educationally Backward Castes
SUCI	Socialist Union Centre of India
TDP	Telgu Desam Party
UC	Utkal Congress
UPCC	Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee

Introduction

No society can claim to be truly democratic unless it provides with equal opportunities to all its citizens for effective participation in the decision-making process. In a truly democratic society no individual or group should be discriminated against due to factors on which they do not have a say. This participation is the essence of all democratic norms. Unfortunately, in every society some groups come to acquire a preponderant position over the power structure. The skills, advantageous economic and social status these groups possess buttress their political position and their status in the power configuration in the given society. Such groups are the elite. It is the ability of the elite and apathy or inability of the masses that explain the socio-economic, military, cultural and political ascendancy of the elite in every society.¹ Control over resources and high status origin and material achievements in life create social inequality. Social inequalities give birth to stratification in the society. It is pertinent here to note that social stratification should not be confused with 'elite-mass' relationship in a society. Although it is usually found that the strength of the elite is their upper strata positions in a society, the instances of rise of people from lower strata to the upper echelons and elite status are not rare. However, not going by the exceptions, it can be maintained that high socio-economic, political and even ritual status is the source of strength for the elite:

Elite generally play an important role in the progress or development of the people by virtue of the positions they hold in the society, since they excel in the field of their activity. They are expected to help others achieve progress in their lives. The problem, however, is that the elite is self-aggrandizing and patriarch for the respective societies. Any sort of turnaround in the power structure hardly affects the elite. It is found that in all societies, the resources of the state become the monopoly of the elite and the elite never fail to act as vested interests. The elite is always conservative, self-perpetuating and to make the matters worse they are also exploitative.

¹Robert Michels: *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, Collier, New York, 1962, p 13

T B Bottomore mentions that in underdeveloped countries the elite are of types such as- the revolutionary intellectuals, the nationalist political leaders, the military officers, government officials and the businessmen.² It thus follows that the elite, generally belong to the categories such as political elite, administrative elite, intellectual elite, business elite, elite of special skill and military elite. C.W. Mills argues that there exists *power elite* among the top echelons of military, economic and political institutions who move freely from one position of authority to another and enjoy other common associations and background characteristics such as schooling and family ties.³

More than sixty years after India achieved independence and the promulgation of the democratic constitution, democracy is claimed to have been devolved to lowest structure of social unit, and empowered the people. But, politics in Orissa presents a different trajectory. Although all the political and administrative machineries are working fine, only handful of castes have dominated these structure in Orissa. That's why an inquiry into the changing social composition of the political elite is necessitated. In the present study, the political elite of Orissa, that is, the legislative elite representing the people of Orissa in the Legislative Assembly are the subject of discussion. Political or legislative elite of Orissa are certainly a special class of people since only a few families have monopoly in representing the people of Orissa. The formation and development of the elite in Orissa can be traced exactly back to the days of formation of separate province of Orissa. The elite structure subsequently developed in the Congress Party activities and the struggle for independence.⁴

For historical reasons and social prerequisites of development, the Brahmins and Karans have excelled politically, economically, educationally and in other walks of life in

²T B Bottomore: *Elites and Society*, Basic Books, New York, 1964, p 25

³ C. Wright Mills: *The Power Elite*, Oxford University Press, London, 1954, p 4

⁴Kishori Mohan Patra: 'Growth of National Consciousness and Freedom Movement in Orissa', in *Indian Historical Review*, Vol.12, No. 1-2, July 1985- Jan 1986, p 317-327

Orissa. The excellence of these two castes is a historical fact. Since the days of *Chedi* ruler Kharavella of the 1st century B.C., the Brahmins acquired landed property as royal grants, and they were exempt from taxes.⁵ Priests have been commanding unquestionable honour and influence not only over the general masses but also over the rulers during the days when the monarchs used to rule, and administrators in modern times. Highly esteemed as learned people in the *Dharmashastras*, the cosmic principles, and their true upholders, the counsel of priests and Brahmins was considered highly essential for every sort of socio-political and legal institution.

Apart from the Brahmins, the Karans have been the most educated caste in Orissa. Karans are the writers' caste in Orissa and they are ritually of the same status as the Kayasthas of Bihar and West Bengal. The Karans have also occupied important positions like that of diplomats, ministers, treasurers, revenue-collectors, village headmen, and arbitrators in the court of kings. The Karans have been a caste of civil servants and salaried employees since long ago.⁶ Their positions and pecuniary benefits have brought them immense respect, influence and power in the society. Even at the village levels, the Karans who were not so rich and influential were teachers (*abadhana*) in the traditional village schools (*chatashali*). Thus, upper caste origin, educational attainment, economic prosperity and political influence brought for the Brahmins and Karans elite status in Orissa.

Subsequently, with the British occupation of Orissa, orientation of the elite underwent a change. The English wanted to create a class of English-educated Indian clerks in order to facilitate their administration. In Orissa, the Brahmins and Karans were readily available as educated people, but they lacked English education. The scope of attaining English education those days in Orissa was next to nothing. The arrangement for the same was also very scarce. Desirous persons had to go to Calcutta for higher and

⁵Manoranjan Mohanty: 'Class, Caste and Dominance in a Backward State – Orissa' in Francine R Frankel and M S A Rao (ed.). *Dominance and State Power in Modern India; Decline of a Social Order*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, p 322

⁶K C Jena: *Socio-economic Conditions of Orissa*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1978, p 49

English education. That's why, English education became the luxury of only a privileged few those who had understood the utility of education and also could afford it.⁷ Brahmins and Karans were thus the first in Orissa to acquire English education. Madhusudan Das (a Karan by caste) was the first Oriya graduate, the first Oriya to pass M.A. and the first Oriya barrister.

Whatever might have been the picture of the elite structure in Orissa, it got replenished and a new shape with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The Congress, being an all-India organization espoused the cause of pan-nationalism. The Congress workers at the provincial level, that is Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee earned name and fame all over Orissa and constituted the early political elites of Orissa.⁸ The Indian National Congress, thus, can be said to have consolidated and institutionalized the elite in Orissa. The Utkal Sabha was soon regarded as the most prominent political organization in Orissa. The political consciousness of the people of Orissa was further accentuated by their association with the National Congress and the struggle for independence. Madhusudan Das, Golak Chandra Bose, Hariballabha Ghosh, and Kalipada Banerjee, Gopabandhu Das, Gouri Shankar Roy were the early Congress leaders of Orissa. Like most of the early Congress leaders, the early Oriya delegates who attended the Congress belonged to the English-educated elite class and were moderates in their political outlook.

However, energy and enthusiasm of the leaders in Orissa was soon diverted to a different problem and that dissociated some of them from the national mainstream for about two decades from the beginning of the 20th century. Oriya political elite were more emphatically concerned about the merger of Oriya-speaking tracts and formation of a separate province.⁹ It was the earliest and the most dominating among the issues that the early political elite of the state handled successfully. Formation of Orissa as a separate

⁷ Kishori Mohan Patra, Op Cit, p 319

⁸ W W Hunter: *History of Orissa*, Bharatiya Publishing House, Delhi, 1980, p 12

⁹ Kishori Mohan Patra, Op Cit, p 321

province under the colonial yoke was no mean achievement for the elite; and thus it earned a die-hard reputation for them.

After independence, the spread of education, modernization and industrialization hugely benefited the elite to consolidate their position in the society and perpetuate their hold over the power structure. The common masses were slow to learn and assert themselves as full-fledged agents in a democratic polity. In the earlier decades after independence, factors like caste, creed, region, religion, and other calculated self-interests had not crept into politics in the state. However, such factors entered much later in Orissa politics in comparison to other states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. When in the late 1970s and particularly after Emergency of 1975, peasants' and big farmers' castes (usually OBCs) ascended in politics in north Indian states, Orissa still had the Brahmin-Karan elite at the helm of affairs. For good or bad, caste factor has never made sweep in Orissa politics.¹⁰ The Khandayats are the numerically preponderant, but yet they lack a caste appeal since they have numerous sub-castes/*jati* and other cultural differences among themselves across different regions in Orissa. Although the Khandayats constitute numerically the largest caste group in Orissa¹¹, they have not traditionally held a dominant position in the politics of Orissa. It is precisely because Khandayats are not a homogeneous or even well-integrated group, and because they had lagged far behind the upper castes socio-economically. Khandayats are divided among themselves in terms of culture and land disputes. Those Khandayats who move up the social ladder by educational attainment or occupational diversification get themselves assimilated with the Karans while those who for some reason move down the social

¹⁰J K Baral and J K Mohapatra: 'Political Culture of a Backward State -- Orissa' in B B Jena and J K Baral (ed.) *Government and Politics in Orissa*, Print House, Lucknow, p 97

¹¹As per the 1931 census estimates, the Khandayats constitutes nearly 10.29 per cent of Orissa's population, the single largest caste. There are 7.96 per cent Chasa who are also considered Khandayats, but are socially and educationally backward compared to the Khandayats. Kultas constitute nearly 1.67 per cent of population in Orissa. These three OBC castes are the cultivating castes, and are socially, educationally and economically more upwardly mobile compared to other OBCs such as the Bania (0.39 percent), Barahi (0.57 percent), Bhandari (1.22 percent), Darji (0.02 percent), Gaur (9.11 percent), Gudia (1.57 percent), Kewat (2.72 percent), Kamar (1.00 percent), Kumbhar (1.40 percent), Kurmi (0.97 percent), Mali (0.96 percent), Teli (3.16 percent), Tanti (1.68 percent).

ladder identify themselves with the Chasa, a caste considered to be OBCs and somewhat lower down the social hierarchy. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes remain still unarticulated not only as a force to intervene in Orissa politics but in other walks of society also.

No doubt, the earlier conditions were congenial for germination of Brahmin-Karan dominance in Orissa. But, the reasons why they still continue to monopolize the power structure of the state lies somewhere else. The reason, certainly, is the fragmented nature of the backward and the dalit castes. Though the Brahmins and the Karans are numerically not very large¹², they had been politically dominant in Orissa. This was mentioned by F.G. Bailey during the mid 1950s¹³, but still holds true. They are not only superior to all other castes, but also dominate the power structure and bureaucracy of the state. Most of Orissa's influential politicians have been from either the Brahmin or Karan castes. The political dominance of the Brahmins and the Karans in Orissa is perpetuated through the use of the state bureaucracy, as large portion of which is composed of members from these castes. However, over a period of time the number of Brahmin-Karan legislative elites has dwindled, and the Khandayats (an amalgamation of a number of peasant/chasa castes) have increased their number in the Legislative Assembly. But the fragmented nature of Khandayats and leadership positions of Brahmins and Karans in different political parties makes their political presence profound. Their dominance in the political realm and power relations is both a cause and consequence of their achievements and superiority complex.

In modern political discourse, the people have become central to any political analysis. Thanks to the overwhelming success and popularity of democracy, any form of government, however authoritarian it may be, can hardly afford to undermine the people,

¹²As per the estimates of the Census of India, 2001, Brahmins constitute 5.74 per cent and Karans nearly 1.48 per cent of Orissa's population. The Rajputs constitute a very small proportion (0.39 percent) of the state's population. All three upper castes combined constitute nearly 7.61 percent Orissa's people.

¹³F G Bailey: *Tribe, Caste and Nation: A Study of Political Activity and Political Change in Highland Orissa*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1960, p 23-24

who are the only legitimizing force. Thus, although all human societies are prone to elite rule and elite dominance, the masses certainly cannot be belittled. Due to the presence of elite and counter-elite, the emergence of competitive elitism is almost ubiquitous. The elite compete among themselves for the support of the masses that authorizes them to rule in a society. In other words, plurality of elite, circulation of elite and competitive elitism comes to the rescue of the democratic edifice of the society.

The success of political modernization lies in the establishment of constitutional governments. Limited governments and the principle of *rule of law* sealed the fate of all sorts of traditional governments, which were based on personality-oriented regimes and the rule of the person rather than law. However, in modern democracies, the personality factor in politics has not yet come to an end. Rather in more advanced and developed western countries, democratic elections are won mainly because of the personality of the leadership. The political elite, in a way, have replaced the traditional political leaders of bygone days.

In order to get a clear comprehension of the political landscape in Orissa, a study of the political elite, their formation, recruitment, and their social composition is highly essential. It is so because Orissa is still not only a transitional society but the roots of semi-feudal elements and traditional loyalty structure are also deeply entrenched. It is found that Orissa has a constant number of political elite. More interesting is the fact that all the political elite are hailing from those families which have earlier earned name and fame in politics in one way or the other. What it means to say this is that a distinct social recognition and influential background become the prerequisites of being political elite in Orissa. It is unanimously acknowledged that the Brahmin-Karan *social alliance* constitutes the dominant political elite in Orissa. Although the ritually superior status propelled these castes to an advantageous position not only in the society but also in politics, it is interesting to note the resilience of the combine in perpetuating their hold over the power structure in the state.

Elections are highly significant not only because they ensure democracy and legitimacy of the political elite to govern, but also because they are important mechanisms for institutionalization of power. Power emanates not only from the several institutions of the state and government, but more importantly from the very nature and structure of social organizations also. Relations of power are determined more by the economic organization of the society, social structure and protocols than by the constitutional and institutional structures. It is often found, in traditional societies, that the traditional loyalty and allegiance of the people is transformed into political allegiance. That's why in developing societies, the traditional nobilities, religious preachers, community leaders, and even erstwhile monarchs succeed in competitive electoral politics. In these societies, people come to realize (or they are made to do so) that political institutions are highly sacrosanct, and men of superior virtue and ability only should get elected into them. Thus, the people who have not yet severed their links with the traditional loyalties easily repose their faith on such traditional leaders who once ruled them either politically or spiritually or otherwise. The Brahmin-Karan dominance in Orissa falls in the same line.

In the course of four chapters, the present study makes an attempt to take note of the social, economic and material conditions of Orissa and their impact upon the political condition of the state.

The Chapter One is '*Orissa: Social Set-up and the Question of Representation*'. This chapter intends to make a study of the existing social structure in Orissa from ancient times. In order to study the social structure, the relationship among the groups of people in it and the power relationship among them are studied. The theory of social stratification gives an important tool to understand the dominant and dependent relationship between various sections in the society. Societies are stratified on the basis of either ritual purity or possession of economic resources and power or otherwise. A brief account of the functionalist, Marxist and the Weberian perspectives on social stratification is also enumerated. However, it is heeded that the division of the society on

the basis of the *Varna* system in ancient times and now on the basis of caste system or the numerous *jatis* is more appropriate in Indian society. Starting as a vocational division of the society that had nothing to do with heredity, the *Varna* system culminated in the caste or *jati* system and turned into endogamous and exclusive social units. The theorization of scholars like G S Ghurye, M N Srinivas, Louis Dumont, N K Dutt, and others on the caste system in India have been taken account of. There is unanimity among the scholars that the caste system is certainly endemic to India. Rather than class, caste system constitutes the primary basis of stratification in India. As in other Indian states, Orissa also has a caste-divided society. A review of the caste divisions and relationships between these castes in Orissa has been included in the first chapter. Study of the social structure is not enough to understand the political orientations of the people and their political behavior. Thus, a brief but succinct study of the concept of political culture (starting from the formulations of Almond and Verba to Lucian Pye and Powell) has also been attempted in the chapter. The question of representation has also been dealt with. Considering the various pros and cons of other forms of representation, the territorial apportionment of electoral democracy has been preferred. The representative democracy creates the conditions of elite democracy. The elite representing the people are looked forward to sharing many things in common with the people, but yet they are expected to be of superior virtue and qualities. It is, however, pertinent to note that the representatives of the people are both the cause and consequence of the value orientation and political culture of the people. Orissa, being in semi-feudal conditions, the people have not yet severed their links with the structure of traditional loyalty, and thus politics is more personality-oriented.

The Chapter Two is '*Elite Formation and Dominance*'. The chapter begins with the definition of elite and deals with the elite theory. A brief but succinct account of the view of scholars starting with Mosca to Michels is attempted. The chapter also has the account of classification of the elite, and also studies of the factors that contribute toward their elite status are enumerated. Coming to the Indian social scenario, the chapter discusses how the national struggle for independence brought to the fore a class of English educated public spirited people in the national life. These people constituted the

early modern and secular elite of India. However, a distinction is made between the elite of the freedom fighters' generation and the elite that emerged as result of the success of the Green Revolution in India. The elite that emerged after the green revolution was a product of increasing economic prosperity and numerical strength. In Orissa, the earlier political elite were those who were central to the formation of a separate Orissa province by uniting the scattered Oriya-speaking tracts. The Congress leadership that participated in the national struggle for independence was also the earlier political elite in Orissa. Apart from this, the chapter also documents the social background of the present elite in Orissa. It makes a study the way the ritually superior Brahmins and Karans have reigned their control over the governmental, social, formal and even informal power structure in the state.

The Chapter Three is '*The Political Elites and Politics in Orissa*'. The chapter makes a study of the social basis of politics in Orissa. It also documents how democratic elections pave the way for political elites. Elections, especially in representative democracies are significant because they entail in institutionalizing the power relations prevailing in the society. The political history of Orissa since the enactment of the Constitution of India has also been enumerated in the chapter. The role of the opposition and its activism or passivity both in the House and outside has been documented. It is contended here that the fragmentary nature of the OBCs and especially the Khandayats (the populous caste in the state) makes the Brahmin-Karan resilience in the Legislative Assembly and power structure of Orissa a reality even today.

The Chapter Four is '*Changing Social Composition of Oriya Political Elites*'. The chapter documents the election of the Chasa, Kulta, and the Khandayat castes more into the Legislative Assembly of the state. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are represented in proportion to their population, since it is constitutionally so mandated. The increasing number of Khandayat and Chasa members in the Legislative Assembly has reduced the Brahmin and Karan members in the Assembly to a minority. But hardly have the Khandayats acquired a dominant position in the government or any

other decision-making structure. The Khandayats are neither a homogeneous community nor have learnt to pose a united front against the Brahmin-Karan alliance in the state. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes feel more humiliated and exploited by the Chasas and Khandayats than the Brahmins and Karans in the society and thus a political alliance between them is almost impossible.

In the concluding section of the present study, it is contended that although in recent years the number of Brahmin and Karan political elite has dwindled and that of the lower castes has registered an increase, the Brahmins and Karans still hold important positions in the state, and thus monopolize the power structure. The attempts on the parts of the backward castes, especially the Chasa/Khandayat and even the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to fabricate alternative social alliances and reset the power equations have been meagre.

Chapter One

Orissa: Social Set-up and the Question of Representation

Politics, as understood in the simplest of terms, is management of conflict that is the ability of a political system to manage constantly shifting kinds and degrees of demands that are made on it. Plurality of interests and antagonism among the groups and communities to have control over the state's resources create pressure on the political system. Orissa presents a typical demonstration of the above mentioned truism; politics in Orissa is the contesting ground between the classes, castes, tribes and several interest groups. It has, after independence, witnessed the competition for power and loyalty between feudal and non-feudal elements¹. The political landscape is determined by several factors, including the social set-up and the economic structure. A study of the politics in a society is certainly incomplete without the study of its socio-economic structure. Since politics is not alienated from the multitude of social, economic, demographic, and other factors, an understanding of the power structure and the equations therein cannot be properly studied without their help. Thus, before making a study of the power configuration and the role of the elite in Orissan society, a detailed and clear perception of the social and economic condition of Orissa is *sine qua non*.

Social set-up in Orissa: Stratification

It is important at the outset to make a distinction between social inequality and social stratification. The term social inequality simply refers to the existence of socially created inequalities. Social stratification is a particular form of social inequality. It refers to the presence of social groups which are ranked one above the other, usually in terms of the amount of power, prestige and wealth their members possess. Those who belong to a particular group or stratum will have some awareness of common interests and a common identity. They will share a similar life style which to some degree will distinguish them

¹ Iqbal Narain, (ed.): *State Politics in India*, Meenaskhi Prakashan, Meerut, India, 1976, p xix

from members of other social strata. The Indian caste system provides an example of a social stratification system.

Functionalist perspective

Functionalists set their explanations of social stratification in the framework of larger theories which seek to explain the operation of society as a whole. It is assumed that there are certain basic needs and functional prerequisites which must be met if society is to survive. Social stratification is thus looked forward to meet these functional prerequisites. Functionalists maintain that a certain degree of order and stability are essential for operation of social systems. Talcott Parsons argues that stratification systems derive from common values. Stratification, in its valuational aspect is the ranking of units in a social system in accordance with the common value system.² Thus those who perform successfully in terms of society's values will be ranked highly and they will be likely to receive a variety of rewards. Parsons's arguments suggest that stratification is an inevitable part of all human societies. If value consensus is an essential component of all societies, then it follows that some form of stratification will result from the ranking of the individuals in terms of common values.³ Functionalists tend to see the relationship between social groups in society as one of co-operation and interdependence. Particularly in complex industrial societies, different groups specialize in particular activities. In societies with a highly specialized division of labour, some members will specialize in organization and planning, others will follow their directives. Parsons argues that this inevitably leads to inequality in terms of power and prestige. Parsons sees social stratification as both inevitable and functional for society. It is inevitable because it derives from shared values which are necessary part of all social systems. It is functional because it serves to integrate various groups in society.⁴ Power and prestige differentials are essential for the coordination and integration of a specialized division of labor. Without social inequality, Parsons finds it difficult to see how members of society could effectively cooperate and work together.

² Talcott Parsons: *Politics and Social Structure*, The Free Press, New York, 1969, p 22

³ Ibid, p 23

⁴ Ibid, p 23-24

Marxian Perspective

Marxian perspective provides a radical alternative to functionalist views of the nature of social stratification. It regards stratification as a divisive rather than integrative structure.⁵ It sees social stratification as a mechanism whereby some exploit others rather than a means of furthering collective goals. It focuses on social strata rather than social inequality in general. Functionalists such as Parsons say little about social stratification in the sense of clearly defined social strata whose members have shared interests. In all stratified societies, there are two major social groups: a ruling class and a subject class. The power of the ruling class derives from its ownership and control of the forces of production.⁶ The ruling class exploits and oppresses the subject class. As a result, there is a basic conflict of interest between these two classes. The various legal and political systems are instruments of ruling class domination and serve to further its interests. Only when the forces of production are commonly owned will classes disappear, thereby bringing an end to the exploitation and oppression of some by other.⁷

From a Marxian perspective, system of stratification derives from the relationship of social groups to the forces of production. Marx used the term class to refer to the main strata in all stratification systems, though most modern sociologists would reserve the term for strata in capitalists society.⁸ From a Marxian view, a class is a social group whose members share the same relationship to the forces of production. Thus during the feudal epoch, there are two main classes distinguished by their relationship to land, the major force of production. They were the feudal nobility who owned the land and the landless serfs who worked the land. Similarly, in the capitalist era, there are two main classes, the bourgeoisie or capitalist class which owns the forces of production and the proletariat or working class whose members own only their labour which they hire to the

⁵ T B Bottomore: *Classes in Modern Society*, George Allen Unwin, London, p 37

⁶ Ibid, p 39

⁷ Ibid, p 39-40

⁸ A discussion on how Weber treats classes differently from Marx is given in the following section.

capitalist in return for wages. During each historical epoch, the labour power required for production was supplied by the subject class.⁹ The subject class is made up of the majority of the population whereas the ruling or dominant class forms a minority.

Weberian Perspective

The work of the German sociologist Max Weber presents one of the most important developments in stratification theory since Marx. Like Marx, Weber sees class in economic terms. He argues that classes develop in market economies in which individuals compete for economic gain. He defines a class as a group of individuals who share a similar position in a market economy and by virtue of that fact receive similar economic rewards. Thus in Weber's terminology, a person's class situation is basically his market situation.¹⁰ Those who share a similar class situation also share similar life chances. Like Marx, Weber argues that the major class division is between those who own the forces of production and those who do not. However, Weber sees important differences in market situation of the property-less groups in society. Weber distinguished the following class grouping in capitalist society- the propertied upper class, the property-less white-collar workers, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the manual working class.¹¹

In his analysis of class, Weber has parted company with Marx on a number of important issues. Firstly, Weber maintains that factors other than the ownership and non-ownership of property are significant in the formation of classes. Secondly, Weber sees no evidence to support the idea of the polarization of classes. He argues that the white-collar middle class expands rather than contracts as capitalism develops. Thirdly, Weber

⁹ T B Bottomore, *Op Cit*, p 40

¹⁰ H H Gerth and C W Mills (eds): *From Max Weber : Essays in Sociology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1948, p 128

¹¹ *Ibid*, p 129-130

rejects the view, held by some Marxists, of the inevitability of the working class revolution. He sees no reason why those sharing a similar class situation should necessarily develop a common identity, recognize shared interests and take collective action to further those interests. Finally, Weber rejects the Marxian view that political power necessarily derives from economic power. He argues that class forms only one possible basis for power and that the distribution of power in society is not necessarily linked to the distribution of class inequalities.¹² Apart from class division, Weber cites status situation and party as other basis of social stratification. Status refers to the unequal distribution of social honor. A status group is made up of individuals who are awarded a similar amount of social honour and therefore share the same status situation.¹³ Unlike classes, members of status group are almost always aware of their common status situation. Weber argues that status group reaches their most developed form in the caste system of traditional Hindu society in India. Castes and sub-castes are formed and distinguished largely in terms of social honour. Weber defines parties as groups which are specifically concerned with influencing policies and making decisions in the interests of their membership. In Weber's words parties are concerned with the acquisition of social power.¹⁴ Parties include a variety of associations from the mass political parties of western democracy to the whole range of pressure and interest groups which include professional association, and trade unions.

Caste System in India

In India social stratification is based upon the caste system. It is said that earlier to the emergence of the caste system Indian society was stratified into *Varnas*, and that was called the *Varna* system. Varna literally means colour, and it was in this sense that the word seems to have been employed in contrasting the *Aryans* and the *Dasas*, referring to their fair and dark colours respectively.¹⁵ There are several passages in the *Vedic* literature dealing with the origin of the *Varnas*. In the *Rig Veda*, along with the

¹² Ibid, p 130

¹³ Ibid, p 130

¹⁴ Ibid, p 131

¹⁵ G S Ghurye: *Caste and Class in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay 1950, p 54

distinction between *Arya* and *Dasa*, there is a division of the society into three orders, viz, *Brahman*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaisya*. The first two represented broadly the two professions of the priests and the warriors. The third division was that of the common people. In some later hymns, a reference is made to '*purushasukta*' – the four-fold order of the society as emanating from the sacrifice of the Primeval Being. The name of the four orders are given as *Brahman*, *Rajanya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*, who are said to have come from the mouth, the limbs, the thighs and the feet of the creator. The particular limbs associated with these divisions and the orders in which they are mentioned probably indicate their status in society of the time.¹⁶ In the *Varna* scheme of the *Vedas*, there were only four orders, and the untouchables had no place in it. There are, however, references in *Vedic* literature to groups such as the *Ayogava*, *Chandala*, *Nishada* and *Paulkesa*, who were outside the *Varna* scheme, who seemed to be despised.¹⁷

N K Dutt contends that nowhere in the *Vedas* was there any mention of a *Vaisya* being regarded as less pure than a Brahmin and of social intercourse between the two as being degrading to the latter.¹⁸ Dutt further writes that gradually the *Varnas* came to be distinguished from each other. Each *Varna* became more and more rigid and separated from each other. He pointed out that a gradual increase in the distinction between *Varna* in terms of different rights and privileges is noticeable as we passed from the *Rig Vedic* literature to the *Brahmanic* literature, viz. in the *Samhitas*, the *Brahmans* and the *Upanishads*. In the later period the Shudras were relegated to the position of menial laborers or slaves. In the *Mahabharata* there is a theory advanced by *Bhishma* as to the origin of several castes apart from the four *Varnas*. In this *Varnas* system a person of any of these *Varnas* was allowed to marry women from his own *Varna* and from the *Varnas* below his own. Now the off-springs begotten from a wife of his own *Varna* and a wife from a *Varna* immediately below his own belong to their father's *Varna*, but the off-spring begotten of a wife remoter than one *Varna* below his own should belong to the

¹⁶ M N Srinivas, "Varna and Caste", in *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p 59

¹⁷ Ibid. P 64

¹⁸ N K Dutt: *Origin And Growth of Caste in India*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1931, vol.1, p 39

Varna of his mother. In this case the off-springs born in any of these ways would find place either in father's or mother's *Varna*. When a man cohabits with a woman of a higher *Varna* than his own then the off-springs so born are regarded as being outside the pale of the four *Varnas*. Such a son is the object of the censure from the four principal *Varnas*.

The word caste was first used in India by the Portuguese to denote several *jatis*.¹⁹ Dutt summarizes the most apparent features of the Hindu caste system by pointing out that *"the members of different castes cannot have matrimonial connections with any but persons of their own caste, that there are restrictions, though not so rigid as in matter of marriage, about a member of one caste eating and drinking with that of a different caste, that in many cases there are fixed occupations for different castes, that there are some hierarchical gradations among the castes, the most recognized position being that of the Brahmins at the top, that birth alone decides a man's connection with his caste for life, unless expelled for violation of caste rules, and the transition from one caste to another higher or lower is not possible. The prestige of the Brahman caste is the cornerstone of the whole organization"*.²⁰ These are the most salient features of the *jati* system or the caste system into which the single scheme of the Hindus has evolved.

The word *jati* means to take birth, while the word *Varna* means colour. *Varna* has been derived from 'vri', that is to choose meaning accordingly, choice of vocation. Anyway it has nothing to do, in its origin, with the purely family lineage principle involved in the word *jati*.²¹ Writing about *Varna* and caste, M N Srinivas states that, *"firstly according to the Varna scheme there are four castes excluding the untouchables, and the number is same in every part of India. But even during Vedic times there were occupational groups which were not subsumed by Varna even though it is not known whether such groups were castes... Today in any linguistic area there are to be found a number of castes. According to Professor Ghurye, in each linguistic region, there are*

¹⁹ M N Srinivas, Op Cit, p 67

²⁰ N K Dutt, Op Cit, p 1

²¹ J H Hutton: *Caste in India*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p 22

*about two hundred caste groups which are further sub-divided into about three thousand smaller units each of which are endogamous and constitute the area of effective social life for the individual. The Varna scheme refers at the best only to the broad categories of the society and to its real and effective units".*²² Thus, gradually the *jati* system came into existence with multiple castes. The *jati* system is known by the principles of endogamy and traditional occupation leading to the vivisection of the society with the idea of purity and impurity. It sowed the seeds of segregation and exclusiveness in the Hindu society. It forced the society into watertight social divisions, isolated from each other by the taboos on food, matrimony, social get-together and so forth. As stated earlier the same *jati* system was termed caste system by the Portuguese and from that time onwards use of the term 'caste' became prevalent.

C Lakshmana divides the theories on the origin of the caste system into two main categories: sociological and ethnographic. He says that to the first category belong all those theories which regard the caste system as universal form of social stratification based on the principles of ascription such as birth, kinship, and rituals. To the second category, however, belong the theories which consider caste as a typically Indian phenomenon and emphasize its preeminently ethnographic character.

Difference between Caste and Class

The caste system in its idealized form refers to the division of labour in society and is thus far from resembling the fundamental classes in Marxism. The caste ideology is not only a believed-in and conscious structure, but there are almost as many believed-in ideologies as there are castes in India. Significantly also a change of occupation does not automatically entail a change of caste. The proud land owning Brahmans remain Brahmans, and the traditional agrarian castes like the *Dhanuks* and *Dusadhs* do not cease to become so when they change their occupation. This is the difference between the caste and social class – when a worker becomes an accountant, he leaves his former social

²² M N Srinivas, Op Cit, p 65-66

class and becomes a member of another social class. M N Srinivas maintains that the distinction between *Varna* and *jati* is extremely important to sort out. The pan-Indian fore-tiered *Varna* system of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisha and Shudra does not operate on the ground. Srinivas points out that the *Varna* scheme is primarily a fiction for it does not in fact regulate social order. What empirically constitute the caste system is the numerous *jatias* which are specific to a region. Marriage rules, occupational rigidity and even village politics operated at the *jati* level.²³ Ghurye gives a detailed description of the essential features of caste system.²⁴ He sums up the aggregate characteristics of the caste system such as endogamy, occupational specialization and hierarchy with a wealth of illustrations. In Ghurye's opinion, as well as in M N Srinivas's, the relevant level at which the caste system should be analyzed is that of the *jati*. McKim Marriott's famous essay on 'Multiple References in Indian Caste System' delineates the different levels at which the various aspects the caste system become salient.²⁵ Bougle feels that the manifold caste observances and practices could be reduced to three principal characteristics, namely, occupational specialization, hierarchy and repulsion.²⁶ Dumont emphasizes hierarchy as the basis of caste system in India.²⁷ For him, hierarchy is the all-embracing principle behind the caste system. According to him, caste hierarchy is determined by the principle of purity and pollution and that is why it should be seen as a true religious hierarchy.

Caste in Orissa

The Oriya society is multi-caste, but the castes in the state are neither of equal size, nor of equal power. Some prominent castes in the state are Brahmin, Karan, Kshyatriya and Khandayat. The members of 'writer' class are known as Karans in Orissa and they are similar to the Kayasthas of North India. According to traditional definition,

²³ M N Srinivas, Op Cit, p 72

²⁴ G S Ghurye: "Features of the Caste System" in *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p 113

²⁵ McKim Marriott: "Multiple References in Indian Caste System", in J. Silverberge, (ed.): *Social Mobility and the Caste System in India: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, Moutoun, Hague, 1968, p 23-24

²⁶ C. Bougle: "The Essence and Reality of the Caste System" in *Contribution to the Indian Sociology*, Vol.12, No.2, 1958, p 67-71

²⁷ L. Dumont: *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1970, p 133

the members of ruling families and their relations are known as Kshyatriyas, and the members of militia community fighting for their rulers are known as Khandayats. However, this definition would not fit into the sociological realities prevailing today.²⁸ As Kshyatriyas are ritually superior to Khandayats, the latter tend to raise their status and try to be accepted as the former. Similarly, the former try to retain their traditional social status and not to be demoted to the status of Khandayats. However, due to social mobility, many Khandayats have been gradually assimilated to the ranks of Kshyatriyas, and some Kshyatriyas have been degraded to the rank of the Khandayats. Official position and material condition mainly account for this phenomenon. This would also explain why most Khandayats of coastal districts have become Karans, generally accepted as superior to Khandayats. The promotion of higher caste is generally legitimized by marriage bonds.²⁹

Khandayats who constitute the largest caste group in Orissa are not homogeneous and well-integrated. Nor is their caste identity properly defined and universally accepted. With the end of feudal rule the duty of Khandayats to 'fight' on the battle field expired and they had to choose the occupation of cultivating land. However, the peasant community of Orissa is, to a great extent, internally differentiated in more than one respect. They are divided among themselves not only in respect of their land possession, but also in respect of their sub-cultures. Further, the various peasant (chasa) groups inhabiting different parts of the state are known by different names. Though the leaders of peasant groups of different areas of Orissa would like to call themselves as Khandayats, these groups have local names with some cultural traits peculiar to the locality concerned.

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²⁸J K Baral and J K Mohapatra: 'Political Culture of a Backward Indian State: Orissa', in B B Jena and J K Baral (ed.): *Government and Politics in Orissa*, Print House, Lucknow, p 83-105

²⁹Ibid, p 86



In mid-1950s FG Bailey³⁰ said that Brahmins and Karans were the 'dominant castes' of Orissa. This observation, to a great extent, is still true today. They are not only ritually superior to all other castes but also dominate the power structure and bureaucracy of the state. Most of the influential politicians that the state has produced so far are either Brahmins or Karans. Similarly, most of the top bureaucrats and technocrats of the state are hailed from these two castes. Only in recent decades, that is, 1980s have there been some efforts on the part of Khandayats and Kshyatriyas to assert themselves in politics. Apart from the fact that both Brahmin and Karan politicians have strong patrons and allies belonging to the respective castes at the center. Further, being more cunning, shrewd and diplomatic than people belonging to other castes, they are more successful in politics. Moreover, within the state the Brahmin and Karan politicians get strong support from the bureaucrats and technocrats belonging to their respective castes whereas politicians of other castes hardly avail such advantage. The study of Manoranjan Mohanty³¹ on politics in Orissa also attests the truth of this thesis of Brahmin-Karan dominance. Mohanty maintains that the subjects of Brahmin-Karan dominance are the poor peasants and the agricultural land-less labourers, most of who belong to Dalit castes or tribes and the middle or lower castes. He also argues that there prevails a grand alliance between the Brahmin-Karan elites to perpetuate their grip over the state resources and maintain their dominant status.

Apart from this 'grand alliance' between these two dominant castes, the interesting aspect is the simultaneous mutual rivalry between them. This rivalry incidentally dates back to pre-independence days and it has manifested in different dimensions in post-independence days.³² The conflict is not strictly confined to the political arena only rather it is reflected in bureaucracy and even in the industrial sector.

³⁰ F G Bailey: "Politics in Orissa, Voting Pattern in Hill and Coast", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 12-18 September 1959, p 1271.

³¹ Manoranjan Mohanty: "Caste, Class and Dominance in a Backward State: Orissa" in Francine R Frankel and MSA Rao (ed), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, vol. ii, 1989, p 321-366

³² Sunit Ghosh: *Orissa in Turmoil*, Sankha Prakashan, Calcutta, 1978, p 64

Dalit castes and Tribes together constitute 38.66% of the population of Orissa.³³ While Dalit castes live in large numbers in coastal districts, the highland districts are inhabited by a large number of adivasis. In general, both these groups are economically, educationally and politically backward. The adivasis are more vulnerable since they are subject to exploitation not only by the clean caste people but also by some scheduled caste people like Panas in Ganjam and Phulbani districts and Damas in Koraput district. Besides, officials and businessmen, mostly belonging to high and middle castes, subject adivasis to exploitation. Worst of all, some adivasi elites like political leaders and local contractors have emerged as latest group of exploiters of tribals³⁴. Adivasis and the Scheduled Castes are never united, and in most cases, are antagonistic to each other over some silly matters, which have no bearing upon their political economy of existence. However, the conspiracy of the local upper caste elite to keep these two groups perpetually divided can't be overlooked. In cases of local political violence (which is almost non-existent at the state level) these two lower caste groups fight among each other. There are a number of examples where the adivasis don't accept a scheduled caste person as the sarpanch of the village Panchayat. Needless to say that such acts of the lower castes towards each other are directly instigated by the upper caste groups.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have formed all-Orissa organizations to promote and safeguard their interests. But, these bodies are better known for their ideological saber-rattling and slogans than for their functions and achievements.³⁵ Such forums are utilized by the lower caste elites to achieve political and economic clout. Whenever an Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribe politician feels that he has been denied his 'due' in politics, he mobilizes his caste organization to express his grievance. Once he gets his share of the spoils, he would conveniently and blissfully forget the common demands and grievances of his caste members. Lower caste-based social

³³ Scheduled Castes account for 16.53 per cent and Scheduled Tribes account for another 22.13 per cent of total population, *Orissa Reference Annual, 2006*, The Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 2006, p 1227-1243

³⁴ J K Baral and S B Baral: "Politics of Tribal Development", *Indian Political Science Journal*. Vol. 12, No.5. 1979, p 67-77

³⁵ *Ibid*, p 69

movements and political mobilization is completely missing in the state like most of its neighboring states³⁶ (e.g. Bihar, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh). All the Political parties of Orissa are led by the upper caste Brahmin-Karan elites.

Class Status of Oriya People

In Orissa, Poverty knows no castes. Yet, it can't be denied that social positions of castes correspond to their economic status. Orissa is largely poor mainly due to the presence of a large number of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. Further, many members of low-middle castes also suffer from poverty. Although a very few upper caste families are poor, there is not a single lower caste industrialist or business tycoon in Orissa.³⁷ Further, caste barriers augment poverty since the poor belonging to different castes fail to realize that they belong to the same group and have common interests. There is status cleavage among the poor. Because of various factors including the lack of adequate spread of education and that of effective efforts by political parties and other political groups to impart proper political training and information, caste consciousness continues to dominate class consciousness. Political elites, with vested interests in preventing the growth of such class consciousness, seldom miss an opportunity to inject parochialism into the poor groups, thus dissuading them from joining hands for their common goals.

Pressure Groups in Orissa

Pressure is exerted by various agencies on the government to promote their interests. These agencies include not only organized interest groups but also semi-organized groups and even individuals. Individuals indulge in pressure politics when they put pressure on the government to get their things done. The government of Orissa has been subject to intense pressure by businessmen who are the main economic power in the

³⁶ Ibid, p 71

³⁷ Orissa Review, The Information and the Public Relations Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, April, 2002, p 23-25

state.³⁸ Either directly or through some political leaders, they establish contact with ministers and officials, by sheer money, to win over them. Except the Kendupatra dealers of western Orissa who are known to influence the government through organized group efforts, most other businessmen of the state appear to individually pressurize the government by various means.³⁹ People of many vocations have their associations which seek to promote their respective interests. Bureaucrats and technocrats are not affiliated to any political party and they do not often launch agitations for the fulfillment of their demands. However, they are generally successful whenever they articulate some demands. Employees' Unions, affiliated to some political parties, are huge bodies and potentially powerful. But, at times, the government is also able to keep them on the defensive, by exploiting their internal divisions.

Trade Unions and Industrial Workers in Orissa

Although Orissa is not industrialized to a great extent, there is a sizable work force in the industrial sector. They are, no doubt, more politicized than agricultural workers.⁴⁰ Political parties strongly compete with each other in order to muster the support of industrial workforce. So far, the Congress and the Communist parties are the most successful in this respect. It is important to note that the CPI, which is not a major political party in Orissa, has a strong grip over the industrial workers. Similarly, the CPI (Marxist) which is hardly visible as a force to reckon with in electoral politics in the state has some strong pockets of supporters among laborers. One of the main factors why the trade unions of Orissa have not proved to be very effective is that they are controlled either by a political party which is the ruling party in the state and is in league with concerned managements, or by some other party which is weak and is not able to wield sufficient powers in the policy-making structure of the state.⁴¹ Most of the trade union leaders, who belong to the middle class, fail to genuinely appreciate the difficulties, and

³⁸ B B Jena: *People, Culture and Polity*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, p 41

³⁹ K S Padhy: *Corruption in Politics*, B R Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, p 39

⁴⁰ P C Das: *Trade Union and Politics in India: A Study of Orissa*, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi, p 13-15

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p 17

the problems of workers, and are prone to be won over by the government and management. Further, these leaders tend to lose their legitimacy in the eyes of workers who become gradually conscious of their secret dealings and links with the management, and also in the eyes of the authorities who come to believe that these leaders are purchasable.⁴² In most labor unions of the state, important office-bearers are active political leaders who lack adequate training, experience, time and genuine motivation to do justice to their role as trade union leaders. Such leadership has almost exclusively remained the domain of men and this is not surprising that women industrial workers are insignificant in number.⁴³

It is, in fact, irony of politics in Orissa that though peasants constitute a very large number of the state population, they have mostly been neglected by political parties. The worst offender in this respect has been the Congress Party. On the other hand, the CPI has always paid some attention to the problems of peasants. The Ganatantra Parishad which was the most important opposition party in the 1950s had a strong peasant organization though its activities were mostly confined to western Orissa. Similarly, for some years, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) organized some peasant organizations. During last several years, in some areas, especially South Orissa, the Naxalites and the CPI (M) have been active in organizing peasants to promote their interests. On the whole the political parties have paid more attention and devoted more energy to the industrial workers than to the small land-owners and landless labourers. The small peasants and agricultural workers of Orissa who are economically much worse off than the industrial workers are politically more apathetic and passive than the latter.⁴⁴

Student Politics in Orissa

Although Orissa observes political violence on a very minimum scale, the very word 'politics' invokes ambivalence and even despise among the masses. People even

⁴² Ibid, p 19

⁴³ Ibid, p 23-24

⁴⁴ Ibid, p 46

take credit to have kept themselves aloof from politics as if politics had a polluting impact.⁴⁵ In the public psyche, politics is synonymous to corruption and lack of character. Even politicians create an image of 'corrupt and principle-less persons' in common people's imagination. By and large, parents, guardians and teachers desist students from taking part in politics. As in other states, the students in Orissa too got politicized for a noble cause, that is, the independence of the country.⁴⁶ Once the students tasted politics, they hesitated to give it up even after India became free. Further, political parties, for the sake of their interests encouraged students to get involved in politics. Many student organizations owing allegiance to different political parties came into existence. They are more interested in promoting the interests of concerned political parties than those of students. Of course, whenever they are politically active, they loudly proclaim that they fight for students whereas their real goal is to use the students for the cause of political parties to which they are affiliated. The student's organizations of Orissa are not effective mainly due to their divisions on party lines and the betrayal by their leaders who are morally loyal to their political parties than to their supporters. However, on regional issues, these students' organizations are able to overcome their political differences and put up a joint front.⁴⁷ Such efforts are mainly responsible for the establishment of two regional universities, one in Sambalpur, and the other in Berhampur. The students of western Orissa had also launched a strong agitation in the early years of independence against the construction of the Hirakud Dam though they failed to stop it.⁴⁸

However, their agitation against the Marwari exploiters in the early 1980s did not go too far because the students were divided on party lines and the Marwaris seemed to enjoy the support of the ruling party – the Congress, which succeeded in splitting the student movement. Unlike in many states of India, the university and college teachers of Orissa do not have the right to join politics. As a result, their spontaneous urge to make their voices heard in the corridors of power is denied an outlet. This seems to motivate

⁴⁵ The issue of political culture of Oriya people has been elaborately dealt with later in this chapter.

⁴⁶ Kishori Mohan Patra, *Op Cit*, p 325

⁴⁷ B B Jena and J K Baral (ed.): *Government and Politics in Orissa*, Print House, Lucknow, 1988, p 39

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p 43

some teachers to seek to politically express themselves through the student leaders, who may be won over for the purpose⁴⁹.

Rural-Urban Divide

Orissa is predominantly rural in composition. As large as 88.18 percent of its population lives in rural areas. According to 2001 census, Orissa had only 8.4% of urban population which was much below the corresponding all-India figure that was 19.91 percent. However, the percentage of population is increasing from the earlier recorded figures. That there are only 81 towns and 4 cities in Orissa shows that the state continues to be one of the least urbanized states in the country⁵⁰. It creates a parochial orientation among the people for the lack of information, awareness. The people in rural areas are also less volatile to sudden changes and shifts in the power structure. They are also known for developing anti-incumbency much later than the people in the cities. Thus, there are no sudden shifts in the political allegiance of the rural people who conform to traditional forms of loyalty.

Most of the people in Orissa depend on agriculture which accounts for about 60 percent of the income of the state. While agriculture is the most productive system and the source of employment, the proportion of land use is extremely low; only one-third of total land of the state is under cultivation. It accommodates 77.4 percent of the working force of the state.⁵¹ For decades, this number has remained more or less stagnant. The majority of this working force is either small peasants or agricultural labourers. Because the major means of production is land, its unequal distribution is a major structural source

⁴⁹KV Rao: "The Pattern of Orissa Politics" in Iqbal Narain (ed): *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1967, p 243

⁵⁰ Orissa Reference Annual, 2006. The Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, p 248

⁵¹ *ibid*, p 257

of inequality in the state⁵². Nearly 30 percent of the rural families have more than 10 acres of land holding while more than 1.6 percent of the agricultural population has more than 25 acres of land⁵³. The level of inequality becomes still clearer when we find that the top one percent of the people own 37 percent of the total land, while the bottom 60 percent of people are either landless or small peasants.

Agricultural and Industrial Development

Land reform and land ceiling measures have not been effective and they have hardly helped in the changing agrarian structure. Orissa is still gripped by semi-feudalism. The small peasants and agricultural labourers are, by and large, attached to the old landlords. Because of this continued traditional loyalty, they are not able to identify themselves with an economic class of identical interest. As a result, a conscious agrarian class has failed to emerge in the state. Orissa is proverbially rich in resources but poor in economic development. Its economy is agriculture dominated.⁵⁴ But, the agriculture sector has remained in underdeveloped state without adequate provision for irrigation and farming and other institutional arrangements. The process of industrialization in the state has been slow. In spite of vast industrial potentials with forests, mineral and other natural resources, Orissa continues to be an industrially backward state. This vast industrial potential has been concentrated in the hilly region. It is true that as early as 1950s steps were taken at the governmental level to industrialize Orissa by making the use of its vast industrial potential. But the pace of its industrialization is very slow.⁵⁵ Only for the last few years the pace seems to have increased. Even hill districts like Sundergarh and Koraput are fast developing and getting urbanized as a result of the establishment of important industries in these districts.

⁵² B B Jena: *Orissa – People, Culture and Politics*, Kalyani Publications, Delhi, 1980, p 36

⁵³ *Economic Survey of Orissa, 2004-2005*. The Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 2006, Vol.1, p 95-105

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p 104

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p 284-285

Political Culture and Orientation

Political culture is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations toward politics among the members of a political system. It is the subjective realm which underlies and gives meaning to political actions. Such individual orientations involve several components, including (a) cognitive orientations, knowledge, accurate or otherwise, of political objects and beliefs; (b) affective orientation, feeling or attachments, rejection and the like about political objects; and (c) evaluative orientations, judgments and opinions about political objects which usually involve applying value standards to political objects and events.⁵⁶ These three orientations are interrelated and may be combined in a variety of ways, even within the same individual as he considers various aspects of the political system. The kind of orientation exists in a population will have a significant influence on the ways in which the political system works. The demands made upon the system, the responses to the laws and appeals for support, and the conduct of the individuals in their political roles, will all be shaped and conditioned by the common orientation patterns.⁵⁷ They constitute the latent political tendencies, the propensities for political behavior and as such they are of great importance in explaining and predicting political actions.

The concept of orientation to the political system as a whole may be defined in many directions. One way of characterizing political cultures is the terms of distribution of general attitudes toward the political system and the input and the output process. A political culture may thus be described in terms of the awareness of the political objects and their significance in individual activities. In the general terms it can be classified as *parochial* for those people who manifest little or no awareness of the national political systems. Among those citizens who are aware of the national system, a distinction may be made between two important general classifications. *Subjects* are those individuals who are oriented to the political system and the impact which its outputs, such as welfare

⁵⁶ Gabriel A Almond and G B Powell, Jr: *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*, Amerind Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1966, p 50-51

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p 51

benefits, laws etc, may have upon their lives, but who are not oriented to participation in the input structures. *Participants* are those individuals who are oriented to the input structures and processes, and engage in, or view themselves as potentially engaging in, the articulation of demands and the making of decisions.⁵⁸

When a particular set of political orientations are distinguishable from others in the system, it is said to be political sub-culture. Whether something is to be defined as a separate sub-culture or not depends largely on the nature of the concerns and problems in question.⁵⁹ In many of the nations in the developing areas, the problem of political sub-culture is crucial. In a nation such as India the differences of language, religion, caste and class pose enormous problems for the political regime. Even after an effective national identity has been established, the resolutions of these structural differences and the inculcation of some commonly accepted 'rules of the game' is necessary. For any political system to operate effectively there must be some level of agreement on the basic nature of politics, the general role of government in society, and the legitimate goals of policy and participation.⁶⁰

That is to say, a political culture is defined in part by the distribution of particular political skills and techniques among the population as a whole and among the political leadership. At another level, political culture is defined by the motivations that inspire both the leaders and followers. The third level of political culture which relates to associational sentiments encompasses the tone and general spirit of impersonal relations throughout the political system. It determines the degree to which the leaders are capable of working together and the extent to which the public is ready to be a constructive citizenry.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid, 53 These terms were developed in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba: *The Civic Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963, p 17-21

⁵⁹ Ibid, p 63-64

⁶⁰ Ibid, p 64

⁶¹ Lucian W Pye: *Aspects of Political Development*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1965, p 101

Political culture provides a means of linking micro-analysis and macro-analysis. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. A political culture is the product of both the collective history of the political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and thus it is rooted equally in the public events and private experiences.⁶² In transitional societies there is great confusion because the political culture tends to be fragmented and people do not share common orientations toward political action. Without a dominant political culture to guide and shape the various socializing agencies the tendency in such societies is for people to turn to political action not only with quite different expectations but also with socially undisciplined motivations. In all societies people become involved in politics for variety of reasons, both public and private. The difference is that in more stable systems people must make a greater adjustment to their personal motivations to put them in line with publicly acceptable reasons for political actions. Thus, in the more established systems it is possible to assume that the private interests of the individual and his personal values are fairly closely related to his public position and to causes he supports. In transitional societies there is often little congruence between public issues and private interests. What this means is that the political cultures of transitional societies are not only fragmented but also are not deeply rooted in the stable psychological orientations of the masses of the people. Evidence of such psychological difficulties for various developing countries is to be found in India also.⁶³

Political Culture of the Oriya People

Politics in Orissa in the initial decades after independence was known for its instability. In 1985-90 only for the first time the ministry headed by Janaki Ballav Patnaik of the Congress Party was able to complete its full term of five years. Two factors were mainly responsible for this. First, only three times, that is in 1961, 1977 and

⁶² Ibid, p 105

⁶³ Edward Shils: *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation, Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Mutton Press, The Hague, 1961, p xii

1980 that a party won absolute majority in the assembly elections. In all other elections the majority party with explicit or implicit alliance with other party or parties formed governments. Such governments, not based not absolute majority support, were vulnerable from the beginning to pressures from coalition partners. Secondly, the Congress Party in the state has almost always been plagued by virus of factionalism.⁶⁴ Even before independence, the Congress Party was divided into two groups mainly on the basis of caste allegiance. The problems of groupism and factionalism have been haunting the party since then. Personal interests of leaders rather than any ideological considerations have been mainly responsible for these sorts of factional feuds in the party.⁶⁵

Personality orientation is an important feature of politics in Orissa. Many people are more loyal to political leaders than to political parties or ideologies and principles. The relationship between a leader and a follower is a cumulative process and grows over a period of time.⁶⁶ The older the relationship, the stronger is the bond, and it is very difficult for this bond to break. When a leader quits a political party and joins another or forms a new one, his followers tend to follow him even though they may be having some reservations about the new party of the leader.⁶⁷ The rank and file of a party knows a party through their leader. In other words, the party for them is what the leader tells them it to be. For many people in Orissa, the Congress Party was the party of H K Mahatab and once he left the party, it lost its essence. The same was also equally true of the supporters of Biju Patnaik when he left the party in the late 1960s.⁶⁸ Today, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is not only created to routinize the charisma of Biju Patnaik to harvest huge electoral support, but it also came to be associated with the name of his son, the present Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik.

⁶⁴ B C Rout: *Orissa Administration*, Panchashila, Bhubaneswar, p 69-72

⁶⁵ Ibid, p 74

⁶⁶ J K Baral and J K Mohapatra: "Political Culture of a Backward Indian State: Orissa", in B B Jena and J K Baral (ed.): *Government and Politics in Orissa*, Print House, Lucknow, p 96-97

⁶⁷ Ibid, p 98

⁶⁸ Ibid, 100

In a feudal set up with a low level of political modernization, personalities rather party ideologies and principles significantly influence the people. However, the number of such personalities having great impact at the state level is not many. In general at local levels factors like personality, caste and localism have important bearing on the voter's mind.

Lack of adequate party orientation and ideological orientation and high salience of personality orientation have a bad implication for the political system of the state.⁶⁹ Political leaders, especially of non-left parties do not have much compunction in leaving a party and joining another, if they feel that such action would better their perceived personal interests. The prospect of getting ministerial berths or other lucrative positions is the main motivation for political defection.⁷⁰ Once an influential political leader decides to defect from his party for such considerations, he tries to allure some other leaders even by money power or other such temptations. There are apparently little associations between political modernization and lack of inclination for defection. In fact, leaders like H K Mahatab and Biju Patnaik who once were the topmost leaders of the Congress Party did not hesitate to leave the party. However, the record of cadre-based parties like the CPI, CPM and Bharatiya Janata Party is much better than that of the Congress Party in this respect.

Orissa is a backward and semi-feudal society and the people are generally more loyal to personalities than to political parties and ideologies. However, the commitment to the political parties is not insignificant. Many people continue to support the party of their choice irrespective of the occasional changes in party leadership.⁷¹ However, there is distinction between the commitment of the people to the political party and the same to its ideology. Many people, because of several considerations, including habits and family

⁶⁹ B C Rout, Op Cit, p 75

⁷⁰ J K Baral and J K Mohapatra, Op Cit, p 100-101

⁷¹ B C rout, Op Cit, p 78

background and socialization, back a party either having a vague idea about its ideology or without at all being aware of it. This small salience of ideological orientation on part of the people is due to the backwardness and semi-feudal character of Orissan society.⁷² Because of inadequate political development, parochial forces like casteism, ethnicism, localism and regionalism are still strong, and stand in the way of proper channelization and consolidation.

Politics in Orissa

In the initial periods of electoral politics, the Congress Party was an unchallenged political force in the state, getting a good percentage of votes from all sections of the society. This was largely due to the popularity of the Congress Party which led the agitation for the formation of the separate province of Orissa. The Congress Party continued to dominate the political scenario until 1950 when it faced opposition from the Ganatantra Punished (GP) led by the ex-princes, as well as the socialists and communists.⁷³ The GP had a strong impact on politics and in 1959 the Congress Party under the leadership of H K Mahatab had to make an alliance with it to form the government. Then under the leadership of Biju Patnaik, the Congress Party made an inroad into the tribal areas of western Orissa. By 1967, the Congress Party lost the strength to the ex-princes⁷⁴.

The former rulers of the princely states emerged as an important political force in Orissa in the immediate post-independence politics and could successfully pose challenge to the politically dominant Brahmin-Karan combine.⁷⁵ The feudal estates and political power which rested with them were the strength of the rulers. When they gradually lost these, leadership shifted to the hands of their former managers Brahmins and Karans who had moved from the plains and had been granted land in the township of the feudatory

⁷² J K Baral and J K Mohapatra , p 98

⁷³ B C Rout, Op Cit, p 83

⁷⁴ Manoranjan Mohanty and L N Mishra: "Orissa- Politics of Stagnation" in Iqbal Narain (ed.): *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1967, p 255

⁷⁵ Ibid, p 257

states. Some of these states had led the Praja Mandal movement against the rulers of the princely states and had emerged as alternative leaders. With the decline of the Princely rulers they became unchallenged elites.⁷⁶ There were some importance of the socialist parties like the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), and the communist parties like the Communist Party of India (CPI) who could gather their strength when the Congress Party was condemned for corruption and underdevelopment.

The formation of the Janata Dal in 1977 was another political development in Orissa. The Janata Party formed government under the leadership of the former Congress stalwart Biju Patnaik. The Congress Party again revived in 1980s under the leadership of J B Patnaik, who still holds the Congress mantle in Orissa.⁷⁷ The elevation of the two tribal leaders of the Congress Party, Giridhar Gamang and Hemanand Biswal to become the Chief Ministers of Orissa is indeed appreciable. But it should be added that they could not provide an independent political force within the political party and each of them were replaced by the Brahmin-Karan leadership. The present government in Orissa is led by Naveen Patnaik, the son of Biju Patnaik. Naveen Patnaik also heads the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Social Background of Legislators

Investigations into the social backgrounds of legislators speak more eloquently the story of power structure, which has roots deep in the society and economy. Although empiricism has its profound drawbacks, an empirical study of the caste, occupational and other social indicators of legislators may suggest an enchanting story above the commonsense generalization. It is important to note that only a caste or two are at the helm of policy affairs in Orissa, either in legislature or in executive despite the constitutional guarantee of minimum presence by the other communities. In this study, an inquiry into the social background of only members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs)

⁷⁶ Ibid, p 260

⁷⁷ B C Rout, Op Cit, p 88

will be undertaken, excluding the members of Parliament (MPs). Facts relating to social origin, occupational background, educational background, age of the legislators are taken into consideration.

A detailed study of the present Legislative Assembly is undertaken here. However, a comparative study of the composition of Legislative Assemblies after independence is presented in the last chapter. Out of total 147 Legislative Assembly seats, 22 seats are reserved for candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes and 34 of them have been reserved for candidates belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. In the 13th Legislative Assembly (2004-2009) only 2 candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes are elected from non-reserved constituencies; and one Scheduled Tribe candidate has been so elected. Out of total 35 scheduled Tribe MLAs, only 4 are women, and out of total 24 Scheduled Caste MLAs, only 2 are women; and out of total 147 MLAs in Orissa Legislative Assembly, only 11 are women members (including SC and ST).⁷⁸ There are only 3 Muslim members in the state assembly. Among the members, 89 are in the age group 30-50. Most of the MLAs in Orissa are either agriculturists or advocates. It is interesting to note that all the MLAs having a royal background, barring only a few, have mentioned agriculture as their occupation. Except 3 MLAs who are by qualification physicians and a few engineers, none of the MLAs seem to have jeopardized lucrative jobs for their participation in politics. There is a complete absence of university teachers in the list of representatives of the 13th Legislative Assembly. Also striking is the complete absence of cinema actors and actresses.⁷⁹

The council of ministers in Orissa is now a 21-membered body. Among them 8 are Khandayats or Karans; 4 are Brahmin, 3 SC, 3 ST, 2 OBC and only one Vaishya. There are only 2 women ministers – one general and one SC. Again, among the ministers

⁷⁸ All the data above are derived from the Orissa Reference Annual -2006, published by the Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar. P 561-572

⁷⁹ Ibid, p 575 .

majority are having either advocacy or agriculture as their occupations. All the ministers, except one are aged above 50 years.⁸⁰

Since the constitution mandates reservation of seats in the Assembly, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe can't be said to be under-represented. Had there been no constitutional mandate to reserve seats, the story would have been certainly much different. Yet, the Socially and Educationally Backward Castes (the state's version of OBCs) are really underrepresented. Except the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe, Brahmins, Karan and Khandayats, a number of caste groups are not having a single MLA. It is noteworthy that in recent years number of Khandayat MLAs is increasing at the cost of Brahmin MLAs (It will be studied in the last chapter).⁸¹

The Question of Representation

Now, more contentious is the issue of representation. Since we are not going in favor of direct democracy, we have to cherish representative democracy. The elitist claim that representative democracy is reduced to an electoral competition between the elites, and the masses are reduced only to vote and elect is very much valid. But, a question arises who must these elites be? Should they all be Brahmins, Karans, industrialists, feudal chiefs or should they reflect the demographic reality of the areas in concern. Some scholars well have raised their eyebrow whether one has to be a Dalit in order to represent the Dalits. It's not a very simple question to answer. Scholars giving a hermeneutical answer stick to the position that the representative should at least be conscious of the life-world experiences of those whom he/she represents.

Representation may be defined most usefully as a relation between two persons, the representatives and the represented or the constituent, with representative holding the

⁸⁰ Ibid, p 577

⁸¹ Subrata K Mitra: "Ballot Box and Local Power: Elections in an Indian Village", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., Eastern Avenue, Essex, England, 1979, Vol. 17, No. 3, p 282-299

authority to perform various actions that incorporate the agreement of the represented⁸². Representation is a concept of social interest largely in the context of power relations among leaders (representatives) and followers (constituents) whether in Government, school, church, business, or the family. It may well be noted in terms of scale ranging from non-relation (or bad relation) to perfect or full relation. Thus an accord of a certain degree has to be achieved before representation is said to exist. So far as the parameters of this relationship are unexplored, it is difficult to standardize the degree of the accord. H F Gosnell and Alfred Grazia⁸³ found that the classical utterances on political representation were commonly polemical, unsympathetic, and superficial. Obviously, representation must consist of unconscious as well as conscious relations, expressive as well as sanctioned actions, unknown as well as known actions. John Wahlke, Hanz Eulau, William Buchanan and L C Ferguson managed to perform the difficult task of fitting standardized inquires of several sets of US state legislators into the real life environment of representation and attaching to the representative's cognitive and perceptive structures and functions a set of postures towards representation⁸⁴. Warren E Miller and Donald E Stokes⁸⁵ undertook to question samples of electorates of various districts concerning their Congressmen. As they have exposed the facts of representation, recent studies have also disclosed the materials upon which the long-argued ethics of representation must rest.

Numerous variables do determine the representation of a group's members and the selection of their formal leaders. They may be either constructed or naturally occurring variables, such as the social composition of the group and its aggregate attitudes towards personality types and public issues. Although it is difficult to measure the effects of propaganda, they are highly germane to the study of representation. A major source of

⁸² Alfred de Grazia: "Representation" in David L Sills (ed): *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, New York, 1972, vol.13, p 461-465

⁸³ Harold F Gosnell: *Democracy: The Threshold of Freedom*, Ronald Press, New York, 1948, p 11

⁸⁴ John Wahlke (et al): *The Legislative System: Explorations in Legislative Behavior*, Wiley Press, New York, 1956, p 8

⁸⁵ Warren E Miller and Donald E Stokes: "Constituency Influence in Congress", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.56, 1967, p 45-56

change in representation may be the propagandistic operations of parties contending for the right to be representatives.⁸⁶

Nobody denies that one is likely to feel better represented if the representative is somebody like himself, that is, like-minded, somebody who acts the same way because he is (existentially or vocationally) the same. Even if representativeness is not, by itself, a sufficient condition, it can still remain a necessary requirement. In the context of political representation we are confronted with a dilemma: either we sacrifice responsibility to representativeness, or we sacrifice representativeness to responsibility.⁸⁷

Since all representational systems adopt a territorial criterion of electoral apportionment, what are actually being represented are the localities, the geographic areas. The question of what is being represented can also be approached by discussing whether representation is focused more on ideal preferences or on material interests, more on value or on wants.⁸⁸ It should be pointed out that whether or not we believe in individualism and whether or not territorial representation works as it supposed to work, we are made to vote qua individual citizens according to a territorial criterion of apportionment because it is the safest way of getting the electoral business done. If territorial representation is already exposed to tricky manipulation (gerrymandering), vocational or any other type of functional apportionment would allow no end of manipulative trickery.

A realistic view of present day representational process confronts us with a two step process: a relationship between the electors and their party, and a relationship between the party and its representatives. And the contention is that party nomination, that is, party cooptation, tends to be the real election; for while the electors chose the

⁸⁶ Ibid, p 48

⁸⁷ Alfred de Grazia, *Op Cit*, p 463

⁸⁸ Ibid, p 464

party, the elected are actually chosen by the party.⁸⁹ Of course parties, party system, and the countries are very different, and therefore generalization can be very misleading. Yet it can be argued that whenever we are confronted with rigidly and powerfully organized mass parties, the representative is likely to be far more a spokesman for his party rather than for anyone else (including his electors).⁹⁰ Representation, thus, can no longer be viewed as a direct relationship between the electors and the elected. Parliamentary representation resembles party personnel, in the strict meaning of party career man, much more than the society it was asked to resemble.

Representation is multi-faceted. It is a broad relation. It has to be defined as broadly as the range of expectations that people possess in regard to government, and hence in regard to public officials and leaders. Since many traits, events, and institutional devices affect the state of representation, the represented is approachable along numerous paths. Only a self-disciplined ruling class, inured to the presence of commanding personalities and individuals of high status, can operate representative structure over a long period of time. The mass of the population succumb sooner or later to the seductive choice of the great over the petty, majesty over meanness, feeling over calculation. These elite need not be one of birth. It can emerge from the great population, but it possesses two traits: (a) a means of maintaining solidarity on the principles of multi-faceted and rationalistic representation despite the surge of the mass of people towards single executive leadership, and (b) the skilled to govern the masses.⁹¹

Political Participation

Voters' participation and choices are unconsciously conditioned by the social and political context in which they live. Their behavior must be distinguished from their preferences, because they are consciously constrained or mobilized by institutions, by

⁸⁹ G. Sartori: "Representational System" in David Sills (ed.): *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, New York, Vol.13,1972, p 472

⁹⁰ Ibid, p 472-73

⁹¹ Alfred de Grazia, *Op Cit*, p 463

electoral system and by the limited range of voting options available.⁹² Verba, Nie and Kim argued that there is a universal tendency for citizens with higher levels of 'socio-economic resources' to be more willing to participate in politics.⁹³ By 'socio-economic resources', they meant, primarily, education and income. These resources provide the skills, the stimulation and the capability to participate in many kinds of political activity. However, influence of these personal resources varies with the particular type of activity, and with the particular institutional context. Verba, Nie and Kim distinguished three modes of political participation- (i) voting, (ii) electoral campaigning and (iii) non-partisan lobbying. Among these the activity that requires maximum personal effort should be least affected by institutional incentives and constraints, and vice versa.⁹⁴

Miller holds that the act of voting requires very little effort by the individual but it involves a great deal of institutional conflict. So the natural propensity for individuals with high resources to participate more than others should be least evident in the case of voting. Parties are thus both willing and able to mobilize relatively apathetic citizens into such an important but easy form of participation.⁹⁵ Voting involves the most institutional (that is party) conflict, lobbying the least. Voting requires the least personal initiative, lobbying the most. So, the citizens with the highest levels of education and income would be prepared to lobby most actively.

The three kinds of participation discussed by Verba, Nie and Kim have been christened as 'conventional' or 'elite-directed' to distinguish them from 'unconventional', protest or elite-challenging modes of participation such as demonstrations, strikes,

⁹² W L Miller: 'Political Participation and Voting Behavior', in Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, Routledge, London, 1992, 2nd edition, Vol. 2, p 413-426

⁹³ S. Verba, N H Nie and J Kim: *Participation and Political Equality*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1978, p 63-79

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p 65

⁹⁵ W L Miller, *Ibid*, p 413

damage to property or violence against people. Citizens tend to see at least some of these options as supplements rather than alternative to voting, campaigning and lobbying.⁹⁶

Western democracies provide responsible government but not, in general, representative government, at least not socially representative. Elected bodies are notoriously unrepresentative in the social sense. The US Congress is a Congress of lawyers, the German Parliament is a Parliament of civil servants.⁹⁷ But even at much lower levels of participation than holding elective office, political activists are socially unrepresentative. They are drawn disproportionately from those who are adding the advantage of political influence to the advantages of income and education.⁹⁸

There are a number of instances that prove that dalit leaders are elitist and insensitive towards the ambition of their caste-brethren whereas leaders from the upper castes and upper classes are more sensitive towards the destitution of these people. However, the instances of latter kind are really rare though instances of the former kind are very much ubiquitous. The argument of scholars that the vast social diversity can well be properly represented even if the mass of representatives does not reflect the diversity of demography appears absurd. Absurd because, if the case is so then there should have been no reservation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe in the popular legislative chamber; and secondly because can these upper caste/class tolerate and really afford to being represented by the backward and scheduled caste representatives even where they are in a minority. It is pertinent to quote here the American pluralist Robert Dahl that "in politics, refusing to decide is simply to allow others to decide for you."⁹⁹ My contention, here, is not to advocate reservation for backward castes in the Legislative Assembly. But, the above inquiry discloses the exclusive nature of politics in Orissa. Only except the Congress party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD), there is virtually

⁹⁶ Ibid, p 415

⁹⁷ Ibid, p 416

⁹⁸ William L Miller, Annis May Timpson and Michael Lessnoff: *Political Culture in Contemporary Britain: People and Politicians, Principles and Practice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p 34

⁹⁹ R.A. Dahl: *Modern Political Analysis*, Engelwood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1991, p 43

no space for any other organized political forum. The Communist Parties, CPI and CPM are almost non-existent.¹⁰⁰ Number of independent candidates is quite marginal and that should always be marginal also because an independent political candidate is never political. Persons of high academic qualification and more particularly university teachers are completely absent in Orissa politics, and such absence is really felt very much.

In modern political discourse, the people have become central to any political analysis. Thanks to the overwhelming success and popularity of democracy, any form of government, however authoritarian it may be, can hardly afford to undermine the people, who are the only legitimizing force. Thus, although all human societies are prone to elite rule and elite dominance, the masses certainly cannot be belittled. Due to the presence of elite, counter-elite, the emergence of competitive elitism is almost ubiquitous. The elite compete among themselves for the support of the masses that authorizes them to rule in a society. In other words, plurality of elite, circulation of elite and competitive elitism comes to the rescue of the democratic edifice of the society.

As representation can't be ensured only by electing a representative, political participation also can't be ensured only by casting vote. Politicization of students, peasants, workers and other sections and infusion of a more participant political culture is urgently needed in Orissa to inject vibrancy in the monotonous and dormant politics. More political participation can only break the monopoly of certain caste groups and only three political parties in Orissa politics. It should, however, be heeded that the political representatives of the people is directly a cause and consequence of the value orientation and political culture of the people.

¹⁰⁰ M K Mohapatra: "Orissa Legislators: Profile and Perceptions of Legislators in an Indian State", *Indian Journal of Political Science*, July-Sept, 1973, p 313-14

Chapter Two

Elite Formation and Dominance

Elites are those who excel in some walks of life or the other. A group is identified as elite in a particular field in which it influences power exercise and commands excellence. So, the term political elite may be defined as a group of high stratum decision-makers in political structure which monopolizes political power, influences major political policies and occupies important positions of political command. Toeing the lines of above definition, in India, political elites would include those – who are elected to the central and state legislatures; who occupy important positions at national or state level political parties; and those individuals who do not hold any formal position either in government or in political parties but still exercise great political influences.

Definition of Elite Theory

Robert Michels

A great exponent of elite theory Robert Michel¹ explains that elite groups result from the need for specialization. Elite members have greater expertise and better organizational skills. Specialization, expertise and organizational skills are qualities that the common masses generally lack. Apart from this the common masses are also apathetic and usually prefer to be at the receiving end of major policies, programmes, plans and benefits rather than being the initiator or creator of the same. In a sense, a society inevitably needs elites and obviously welcomes them. Michel thus argues that they are a product of the social need. Rank and file members of a society or organization tend to be apathetic and are therefore generally disposed to accept subordination and venerate leaders. All the societies and organizations thus manifest oligarchical features, that is rule by a chosen few. Michel himself held that 'he who says organization says

¹ Robert Michels: *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, Collier, New York, 1962, p 11

oligarchy'. Participatory or democratic structures cannot really check oligarchical tendencies though they can only disguise them. "However much one may try to be democratic in ones political system, there is a strong element of oligarchy in every organization. The larger the organization is, so it is argued, the greater the tendency towards oligarchy".² There is agreement that forms of representative government are merely camouflage for minority rule; the majority can't control the ruling minority. There are problems of who actually constitute the political elite and whether it is defined narrowly or widely; also there are differences on the means of their recruitment, but there is unanimity on the inevitability of the minority rule.³ Elite appears to combine some of the characteristics of both an oligarchy and an aristocracy but is not to be confused with either. It is a minority, like an oligarchy, and consists of superior people, like an aristocracy, but there is neither the sense of self-perpetuation and selfishness which neither surrounds the former nor extravagancy which is often associated with the latter.

Vilfredo Pareto

Pareto went to the extent of saying that 'history is a graveyard of aristocracies'⁴. He finds that elites make both logical or rational and illogical or irrational actions for the attainment of their ends.⁵ Elites have qualities, what he calls 'residues' like *combination* i.e. tendency to invent and embark on adventures; *persistence of preservation* i.e. tendency to consolidate and make secure; *expressiveness* i.e. tendency to make feelings manifest through symbolization; *sociability* i.e. tendency to affiliate others; *integrity* i.e. tendency to maintain a good self-image; and *sex* i.e. tendency to see social events in erotic terms which help them to rise up and maintain themselves in power.⁶ Apart from this, he refers to certain 'derivatives' like assertion, appeal to authority, appeal to sentiment or principles and verbal proofs or the ways by which actions are made to assume the appearance of logical actions.⁷

² Douglas V. Verney: *An Analysis of Political Systems*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959, p 10

³ Geraint Parry: *Political Elites*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1969, p 15

⁴ V. Pareto: *The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology*, Dover, New York, 1963, p 516

⁵ Ibid, P 517

⁶ Ibid, p 518

⁷ Ibid, P 519

Gaetano Mosca

Another theorist, Mosca asserts that “the whole history of civilized mankind comes down to a conflict between the tendency of the dominant elements to monopolize political power and transmit possession of it by inheritance, and the tendency towards a dislocation of forces and an emergence of new forces: and this conflict produces an unending ferment of endosmosis and exomosis between the upper classes and certain portions of the lower”⁸ He maintains that the people can only act politically under the direction of a small group of leaders. The elites do devise a ‘political formula’ to find out a legal and moral basis for their being in the citadels of power and represents it as the logical and necessary consequences of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognized and accepted.⁹

Harold Lasswell

Lasswell is of the point that “by this time recognition is widespread that the inclusive study of power elites is indispensable to all serious inquiry into political processes, if inquiry is directed towards the past, to retrace the sequence of change, the omission of elite data is unthinkable. If the principal aim is to uncover key factors in the arena of power, there is no avoiding the study of elites. The inquirer who faces the future, seeking to estimate the locus and speed of political encounters, must perceive the salience of elite data”¹⁰ Percival Spear is of the view that elites control a particular sphere of life though it may be influenced by other elites at other levels or in different departments of life. Elites are so important in decision-making process because of their influence and thus are the real controlling forces in a political community.¹¹

⁸ G. Mosca: *The Ruling Class*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1939, p 50

⁹ Ibid, p 52

¹⁰ Harold Lasswell, and Max Lerner (eds.): *World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, 1965, p 6

¹¹ Percival Spear: “The Mughal Mansabdars” in Edmund Leach and S N Mukherjee (ed.): *Elites in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1970, p 1-2

C Wright Mills

C. Wright Mills is of the point that elite is the product of the institutional landscape of the society.¹² Power in modern society is institutionalized with the result that certain institutions and the uppermost ranks of the hierarchy in these institutions constitute the "strategic command posts of the command structure".¹³ Elites form and operate within the social and political space accorded to them by a given society. Any study of elite includes research into how they recruit members, how much elite can unite around common goals and a clear sense of itself, and how different elites coordinate efforts to advance common interests. In the political system of representative democracies, for example, power is distributed among a variety of elites who compete with one another over specific issues, although they tend to unite over fundamental issues such as the question whether non-elites should be allowed to enter the competition. Mills argued that there exists *power elite* among the top echelons of military, economic and political institutions who move freely from one position of authority to another and enjoy other common associations and background characteristics such as schooling and family ties.¹⁴

G D H Cole

G D H Cole explains the elite in Great Britain in the following words, "the subject of the study is not, except quite incidentally, the formal constitutional structure of government in great Britain, but the actual disposition of political and social forces that determine the conditions within which the parliament makes the laws and to some degree watches over the entire complex structure of social life works. In particular we are setting out to enquire into the conflicts and agreements and by their very assumptions, limit the effective powers of parliaments and governments and of much besides, and shape the course of British political and social life. In the parlance of continental thought these directing influences and groups are commonly called elite".¹⁵ He further explains that the elite, in this sense, was what Englishmen more often called the 'nobs', the 'toffs', the

¹² C Wright Mills: *The Power Elite*, Oxford Press, London, 1954, p 4

¹³ Ibid, p 6

¹⁴ Ibid, p 8

¹⁵ G D H Cole: *Studies in Social Structure*, 1955, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, p102

'upper ten' or the aristocracy. No doubt, he adds, that the aristocracy was at that time, when the usage prevailed, an exceedingly powerful and influential political and social force. But the usage had the assumption of superiority and exclusiveness in the field of personal relations. He further adds that then the continental sociologist began to speak of elite in a much wider sense, of which aristocracies were no more than an instance.

Types of Elite

Mosca divided elite into two groups that are governing and non-governing elite.¹⁶ Governing elite comprise of individuals who directly or indirectly play a considerable part in the government, and the non-governing elite comprise the rest. So there are two strata in the population, they are a lower stratum, the non-elite or the masses; a higher stratum, the elite. Pareto observed that the upper stratum of the society, the elite, nominally contained certain groups of people that are called aristocracies. He further says that the leading artists, the business magnets, politicians and scientists who are all influential in separate spheres and with quite different responsibilities, source of power and determine the patterns of selection and reward are called elite.¹⁷ Lasswell mentioned that there are as many types of elite as there are forms of institutions. He further wrote that the concept of elite is classificatory and descriptive, designating the holders of high positions in a given society. There are as many elites as there are values. Besides, the elite of power, there are elites of wealth, respect and knowledge. Thus, these values spheres were postulated by Lasswell into eight categories, viz., *power, enlightenment, wealth, well-being, skill, affection, respect, and rectitude*.¹⁸ Elite may also be classified according to the four functional problems which every society must resolve, namely the *goal attainment, adoption, integration and pattern maintenance* and *tension management*. Accordingly four types of elite can be included, viz, (i) the current political elite (the *elite of goal attainment*), (ii) the economic, military, diplomatic and scientific elites (*elite of adoption*), (iii) elite exercising moral authority, priests, philosophers, educators (*elite of integration*) and (iv) elite that keeps the society knit together emotionally and psychologically consisting of artists, writers, film stars and top figures in sports and

¹⁶ G Mosca, Op Cit, p 50

¹⁷ V Pareto, Op Cit, p 422

¹⁸ Lasswell, and Daniel Lerner, Op Cit, p 8

games (*elite of pattern maintenance and tension management*).¹⁹ Clark has identified five categories of elite in the industrialization process, such as: *dynamic elite, the middle elite, the revolutionary elite, the colonial administrator and the national leaders*.²⁰

Factors which help individuals to emerge as Elite

There are various factors which help an individual or group to emerge as elite. Mosca maintains that wealth is one of the main factors which help an individual to emerge as elite and that in some societies priestly class emerges as elite while in some in other countries the positions of elite are occupied by hereditary castes. Mosca stresses that wealth rather than military valor tended to be the characteristic feature of the dominant class. The people who rule are richer than the brave. He further says that "in societies in which religious beliefs are strong and the ministers of faith form a special class, a priestly aristocracy almost arises and gains possession of more or less important share of the wealth and the political power. Conspicuous example of that situation would be ancient Egypt, Brahminical India and medieval Europe. Often the priests not only perform religious function but they possess legal, scientific knowledge and highest intellectual culture also".²¹ Pareto's circulation of elite theory explains the way in which the non-elite are recruited to the elite positions. Pareto contends that merit and reorganization constitute the factors responsible for the recruitment of elite. He does not rule out the possibility of the elite being recruited from the lower classes.

Ralph Milliband has considered the following factors as responsible for achieving elite position in American society, "educational qualifications are obviously not enough to reach the top layers of management and may still, quite often, be unnecessary. But the trend is towards the professionalisation of business, at least in the sense that getting a start in this particular race increasingly requires the kind of formal educational qualifications which are to be obtained in universities or equivalent institutions and this is

¹⁹ David Shills (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, MacMillan Press, London, 1968, p 203

²⁰ John Clark, T Dunlop, Fredrick H Harbison and Charles A Hyer: *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, Harvard University Pres, Cambridge, 1960, p 50

²¹ Mosca, Op Cit, p 59

even truer for other elite positions".²² He further says that the American political decision-makers are mostly sons of professional men, proprietors and officials and farmers. This means that most of the political elite are recruited from wealthy families. While writing about the elite in Germany, Milliband states that the recruitment to the elite positions is on the basis of wealth and heredity.²³

The existence of elite depends upon the foundation of social grace. The chosen persons invoke the instrument of popular appreciation to retain and justify their positions of advantage. As traditional norms of inherent inequality of mankind and employment of brutal force to coerce the dissidents have outlived their usefulness, the class of the chosen few finds its defense in the strategy of appeal to the ordinary man's recognition and appreciation of its *qualities*. As modern societies are becoming more critical of the traditional values, the elite have come to assume a broader complexion to include not only those who are at the top but also those who constitute the strata of society from which leaders usually emerge. Many factors like superior education and training, physical and mental make-up and utilization of better techniques not only facilitate the task of some people's going up on the social ladder, they also tend to create a status symbol for a particular section of people. This social composition has its bearing on the political process when we discover that even important activities like distribution of election tickets and formation of ministries are influenced by the norms of elite politics. The people may think that they may participate in the political process but in reality, their influence is largely confined to casting vote in elections. At the centre of power there is social elite which wields considerable influence.

As the existence of elite depends upon the factors of social visibility, change is inevitable whenever there is a reversal in the degree of social distinctions and values available to the men composing it. Elites thus change from time to time and place to place. Politics is struggle for power and thus a struggle for political existence is always

²² Ralph Milliband: *The State In Capitalist Society*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1970. p 40

²³ *Ibid*, p 42

existent in the compartmentalized character of society.²⁴ If there are elite, there are counter-elite as well.

Interaction and interpenetration go on to make changes in the status quo. Hence, every disturbance in the existing order of things drifts the current in order to push the governing elite and the membership it represents out of office and the counter-elites to take its place. "And the mere fact that such a push could have precisely this result tends to make the elites of the 'governing' segments anxious to minimize the purely sectional aspects of their own policies so as to discourage the counter-elites from the concerted effort to overthrow them."²⁵ Elites grow and develop in every society and compete for power. In such a situation sharing of power becomes unequal to substantiate the view of Laswell that "most influential are called elites; others are mid-elites and rank-and-file"²⁶.

S.K. Lal adopts positional, representational and event analysis approaches to empirically study the efficacy of the political elite to give shape to public policies and programmes.²⁷ Positional approach holds that it is the social, economic and political position of the elite that enables them to have the upper hand in determining and giving shape to policies. The representational approach argues that role of very influential persons of the community who may be treated as its representatives by virtue of their understanding of the power structure and their role in it as the factors for granting them a pre-eminent position in the society. The event analysis approach puts emphasis on the role of the real decision-makers for the reason that they enjoy influence on the real life of situations.

Elite in India and Change in Composition

In a traditional society, the elites are not a very highly differentiated category because elite status is ascribed and they are a close group. Recruitment to the elite cadre

²⁴ SE Finer: *Comparative Government*, Alien Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1970, p 7

²⁵ Ibid, p 29

²⁶ Harold D. Lasswell and Max Lerner (eds.): *World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, 1965, p 4

²⁷ S.K. Lal: "Approaches to the Identification of the Elite" in Sachidanand and AK Lal (eds.): *Elite and Development*, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1980, p 78

was based largely on the facts of birth and kinship. The political elite in traditional societies consisted of the king and the priestly castes. The duty of the king was to be an effective military leader, to protect and preserve the caste order and to protect the priestly castes by offering a congenial environment for purpose of religious duties. The priest was a custodian of moral norms i.e. *Dharma* which the king was obliged to enforce. Thus, the offices of the king and the priests were complementary. Yogendra Singh maintains that, “the traditional elite structure of India society remains authoritarian, monarchical-feudal and charismatic oriented towards preservation of status quo”.²⁸

Caste as a Source of Elite Position

A close study of the *Hindu* religious texts and Indian history reveals that the cardinal values of *Hindu* tradition were hierarchy, holism and continuity. Naturally the social structure of the elite in the past was based upon the principles of hierarchy, holism and continuity. The roles were derived or ascribed by the caste system. Indian history and the text books disclose that there were two important elite roles played by the king and the priest. Both of them used to derive these roles by virtue of the caste to which they were born. It was the duty of the king to be powerful military leader. The king was not only the protector of the boundaries of his kingdom but was also to protect the caste order. In addition to these duties he has to protect the priestly class and facilitate mediation and religious duties for them. The priest used to be the source of moral norms (*Dharma*) which the king was obliged to enforce. Thus the king's and the priest's roles were complementary that is to be more clear, the priest used to evolve the moral norms and the king used to enforce them.

The character of elite, whether political or intellectual, was according to Weber, predominantly feudal and charismatic.²⁹ He says that both, the *Hindu* king and the priest derived their authority from qualities inherited by birth which had behind it traditional as well as charismatic sanctions. Thus the elite status was considerably rooted in the caste

²⁸ Yogendra Singh: *Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalization*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2000, p 28

²⁹ H H Gerth and C W Mills (eds.): *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1948, p 131

system. In traditional Indian society, the elite group was a closed network. The group maintained status quo by reinforcing the members from the elite families. But still the king had the power to appoint an individual to elite position. Nevertheless the caste membership was helpful for maintenance of status quo among the elite groups in India. Western education, however, has created opportunities for individuals to emerge as elite and such western education was mostly acquired by upper castes. As a consequence of western education, the upper caste like Brahmin, Kayasthas and Baniyas and some Muslims have emerged as middle classes and from these middle classes most of the elite, including political, bureaucratic, and military and business has emerged. But the business elite have emerged, to a greater extent, only after independence. The political elite in the pre-independence days was composed of landed gentry, lawyers, commercial classes, journalists, doctors and teachers.³⁰ But as the political movement grew in strength the landed gentry was increasingly isolated and the political elite role passed on to the educated middle class and professional groups.³¹ Many of the social scientists have expressed that there is a huge gap between the elite of pre-independence and independent India.

It was observed that the recruitment to bureaucratic position during the British regime was from non-professional groups and consisted of most of the English. At a later stage, the recruitment was thrown open to Indians. However the Indian origin recruits belonged to upper castes and upper middle classes. Yet most of them were sons of professionals. Gradually the British elite dropped from the bureaucratic elite of India. After the establishment of the British rule, significant change took place in the elite structure.

After 1950s, the traditional political elites lost their previous eminence at least theoretically. With the establishment of legal-rational system of authority and spread of new system of secular and scientific education, communication channels and the establishment of bureaucratic organizations in civil as well as military spheres, a new

³⁰ B B Misra: *The Indian Middle Classes*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p 355

³¹ Yogender Singh: *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Thomson Press Ltd, Delhi, 1973, p 135

elite structure started emerging in India. The new elites were drawn largely from the entrenched upper castes of Hindu society. Most of them had undergone English education and were trained in various professions. An analysis of the caste background of these new elite which started emerging from late 19th century onwards shows that they consisted of the upper castes. As a matter of fact, these upper castes were not only the first to get educated but also the first to get English education and imbibe western values. This new elite was rooted in the traditional social structure based on upper castes. Yet, at the same time they also belonged to the emergent professional middle classes, who had acquired the western ideas without losing their traditional moorings. It was these elite which led Indians in the struggle for independence and were at the helm of political affairs immediately after independence.

In the initial two decades after independence, the same elite continued to dominate the political system though their dominance was gradually on the decline. Pundit Nehru was representative of these political elite par excellence and the death of Nehru in 1964 is symbolic of the transition by which new political elites gradually came to dominate the political system. In terms of their social orientation the elites of freedom struggle had a modern outlook and were committed to a policy of gradual social transformation through planned efforts. Some of them also enjoyed charismatic image and had earned reputation for courage, vision and action during their participation in the freedom movement. However, from 1967 onwards a new type of political elite started emerging. Unlike the old professional elite which were drawn largely from the entrenched upper castes, a sizeable section of these post-1967 elite belonged to the ascendant castes who had acquired economic power after independence as a consequence of various state sponsored measures of economic development. These elite lacked westernized educational background possessed by the earlier ones. The new elites also lacked deep-seated liberal democratic values. These elites are rural-based, having parochial outlook and always invoked regional and ethnic identity. They have a populist and pragmatic orientation in attaining political goals. They tend to prefer expediency-

based pursuit of goals rather than principled pursuit of political goals³². Their populism is reflected in their ability to mobilize masses through attractive slogans. Their lack of commitment to liberal democratic principles has been manifested in their lack of scruple in violation of democratic conventions and appealing to the ethnic identities to garner votes. They largely belonged to the newly affluent middle rung castes from rural areas and the *nouveau riche* sections of the urban society. The new elite were more concerned with attaining specific goals rather than using legitimate means for attaining these goals. The changing compositions of the political elite is reflected from the fact that more than 40 percent of the members of the Parliament and around 70 percent of the members of the state legislature are drawn from the newly affluent sections of the rural community.³³ As a result of this lack of commitment to democratic conventions and norms on the parts of the new elite, political instability and politics of defection have come to prevail in the Indian political system. Violence and other electoral malpractices have become common features of political life. Due to the parochial and regional outlook of the new elite, even separatist tendencies have started emerging and ethnic strife is on the rise.

Elites in Orissa

In a backward province like Orissa, the role of the elite and more specifically the middle class is of crucial importance. When we look at the process of elite formation and the evolution of elite in the indigenous society, another category of people come to the picture. These people can certainly be called the new middle class, following the formulation of Djilas.³⁴ The new middle class constituted mostly the bureaucrats, persons of high skill, those passing out from engineering and management institutes, lawyers and other white-collar workers. The new middle class has a peculiar social composition. Although most of them hail from the upper caste families due to prior privileged

³² Subrata K. Mitra: "Making Local Government work: Local Elites, Panchayati Raj and Governance in India", in Atul Kohli (ed): *The Success of India's Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2004, P 119

³³ Yogendra Singh: *Indian Sociology: Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1986, P 88

³⁴ M.Djilas: *The New Class: An Analysis of Communist System*, Praeger, New York, 1988, p 21 Djilas, the Yugoslav dissident and former colleague of Marshal Tito portrayed the bureaucracy, white-collar workers and specialists and managers as a 'new class'. The 'new class' enjoyed a status and privileges equivalent to those of capitalist class in Western Societies.

positions in terms of access to education and economic achievement, the entry from the lower caste population was not totally closed. Promotion of education in the welfare state and facility of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in higher education also facilitated their entry into the army of new middle class. The new middle class, of course, has no class affiliation with the upper class of country. They are mostly drawn from the relatively privileged sections of society, which is trying to enhance its share in the control over resources of the state. Increasing aspirations and gradualism goads them to join the white-collar jobs and managerial positions in the government machinery, which is considered to be a shot in the arms in achieving a sizeable chunk in the power share.

In the guise of serving the nation and working for national development, the new middle class, in fact, serves the dominant interest and big capital in the state and contribute towards their development. It can be so said that the new middle class works under a spoils system, although it gets relatively smaller shares. It will, however, be a mistake to assume that the new middle class gains the spoils individually. Rather it is a group phenomenon, that is, a group in the new middle class hailing from a particular caste, class, region or other affiliation tries to push its interests further than other groups in the new middle class. Instead of creating a new political force and altering the given power structure and dominant-dependent relations, the new middle considered it safe to join the rank and file of the existing political forces, power structure and gradually ascend to the leadership position. Although they didn't prove a complete failure, their attempt mustered no spectacular success as well. The political elite existing already at the helm of affairs checked the mobility of the new middle class with all strength. It showed dissension all over the nation.

However, in the mean time, land reforms, coupled with green revolution and commercialization of agriculture made the big farmers in the rural areas stupendously rich and powerful. They missed no opportunity to learn lessons in organization and consolidation as a political force. They also had a sizeable population and thus preponderant over all other castes and social groups in number. Transforming the

numerical strength to democratic norm and converting economic strength into political ascendancy, these new elite altered the given relations of power and the very power structure itself. The case of Orissa appears to be more or less similar. The green revolution did not succeed, land reforms were paid mere lip service and there were no indigenous industrialists apart from Gujaratis and Marwaris taking the sole charge of entrepreneurship in Orissa. Yet, the power structure registered a change. Gradually, although of late, other lower caste groups emerged as powerful political force apart from the Brahmin-Karan elite. But, either their rising number or growing strength has not brought them to the central position in Orissa politics. Although the number of Brahmin-Karan legislators dwindled in due course and Khandayats have taken their place³⁵, the latter have hardly captured the decision-making echelon. Monopoly of decision-making is still concentrated in the hands of the Brahmin-Karan elite, and more especially the Karan elite. The leadership from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe make their journey to the Legislative Assembly successful, but like cogs in the machine, they act as grateful party loyal, even if they are awarded the cabinet berths.

Orissa harbours a great majority of poor, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and SEBC (the state's version of OBCs). But, a tiny elite of Brahmin-Karans rule over them with reference to their both actual and expected activities and attributes. Ownership of wealth is one of the main reasons of inequality not only in the society but also in politics. Such inequality not only influences the socio-economic composition of the elite and the class interests they represent but also the degree of the autonomy they enjoy at the decision-making level. The elite's public policy making is thus linked to the rural landed interests that play a dominant role in the predominantly agricultural society. In Orissa land distribution at the time of independence was marked by far fewer disparities. Though the three upper castes (the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Karans) possessed more than the average-sized agricultural land holding, the Khandayats also possessed comparable quantities of land. Historically, these castes are numerically large in the

³⁵ Subrata K Mitra: "Ballot Box and Local Power: Elections in an Indian Village", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., Eastern Avenue, Essex, England, 1979, Vol. 17, No.3, p 282-299.

coastal region of Orissa, where agriculture has been the backbone of the economy. With the abolition of the Zamindari system, a fair degree of redistribution took place in this region, though clearly landless people continued to exist there as well. The net result was that, the agricultural land was more or less evenly distributed between the upper caste and the Khandayats, an OBC caste. Nearly one-fourth of all land holdings were less than 0.5 hectares in size. Nearly 87.7 per cent of all holdings were three hectares or less. This gives some idea of how small was the average land holding in Orissa. There was far less potential for political conflict to centre on the issue of agricultural land. This meant that party conflict was less likely to polarize along caste lines – between upper castes and Khandayats (or other OBCs).

Circulation of Elite

Major change in society occurs when one elite replaces another, a process Pareto calls the '*circulation of elite*'. All elites tend to become decadent. They decay in *quality* and lose their vigour. They may become soft and ineffective with the pleasures of easy living and privileges of power, or set in their ways and too inflexible to respond to changing circumstances. In addition, each type of elite lacks the *qualities* of its counterpart, *qualities* which in the long run are essential to maintain power. Pareto, thus maintains that elite having some *residues* replace those lacking those lacking those residues, and the process is a continuous one.³⁶

Besides this *circulation of elite* in the sense of being a replacement of one elite by another, there can also be a *circulation of elite* in the sense of being a process by which individuals circulate between the elite and non-elite. This process of replacement takes place in two ways: one by violent ousting of the governing elite and the other by gradual process of infiltration. When the elite no longer possesses the *residues* necessary for keeping itself in power and, at the same time, at the lower strata of the society the necessary *residues* are sufficiently manifest, then the declining elite recruits new elements from the lower strata and thereby restores its validity. Or, it may so happen that an elite decaying in its necessary *residues* is violently overthrown by the lower classes

³⁶M Haralambos: *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p 108

strong in the requisite *residues* who thus become the new elite equipped with the residues necessary for keeping itself in power.³⁷

The process of elite recruitment is a good indicator of the values and distribution of influence of the system. Recruitment pattern indicates various types of uneven changes in the society. It influences the stability of the system and affects the distribution of status and prestige. All the elite have been eager to make a concerted effort to secure their status at any cost. The state apparatus, meant in principle, for the general people is misused to serve the interests of the elite. It has been easy to deceive the illiterate, ignorant and less conscious people. While the elite really serve their own interests or the interests of the upper strata, they pretend to serve the common masses.³⁸ Hence, the interest of the masses not only gets neglected but also remains unarticulated.

Circulation of Elite in Orissa

Social structure of Orissa constitutes the upper and dominant caste of Brahmins and Karans (near to almost 8%), backward peasant and artisan castes (50%), SCs and STs (almost 40%)³⁹. However, the dominant castes i.e. the Brahmin-Karan elites (8%) take a lion's share (40%) of the seats in the Legislative Assembly. Except the MLAs of the reserved category of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe, a big majority of MLAs come from the upper caste groups. In the early years after independence, the political elites were recruited from the categories of freedom fighters and ex-princes. Now, the recruitment includes their family members and relatives, businessmen, entrepreneurs, resigned or retired bureaucrats, landlords, lawyers, and persons of money and muscle. Panchayat and Municipality elections help in recruitment of the political elite in the state, because these elites are necessarily elected by virtue of their high socio-economic status and muscle power. Thus the recruitment process of the political leaders is determined generally by their caste, class and influential background.

³⁷Ibid, p 109- 110

³⁸ J. Pathy: *Underdevelopment and Destitution*, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p 21-22.

³⁹ All the data are derived from Orissa Reference Annual-2006, published by The Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 2006, p 884-896

Elite Dominance in Orissa

The term 'dominance' is used to refer to the exercise of authority in society by groups who achieved politico-economic superiority and claimed legitimacy for their commands in terms of superior ritual status or through alliances with those who controlled status distribution.⁴⁰ This is contrast to the term 'power' which is used to refer to the exertion of secular authority by individuals appointed or elected to offices of the state, who claimed legitimacy under law to make and implement decisions binding on the population within their territorial jurisdiction.⁴¹

Electoral politics has brought to fore the dominance of the two upper castes, i.e. Brahmins and Karans. Initially, however, the rulers of the erstwhile princely states, mostly 'Kshatriyas' were a force to reckon with. With the completion of the process of integration of states, these aristocracies lost most of their power and privileges. Further they were distrustful of officials from the coastal areas, who acted more like alien conquerors. This led the princes to form a political front which could be in opposition to the Congress Party and represent the interests of this class. It resulted in the formation of the Ganatantra Parishad. The party was led by people like R N Singh Deo, who later became the Chief Minister. However, the challenges to the princess gradually weekend and petered out.

The decline of the landed aristocracy as a political force brought to the forefront the Brahmins and the Karanas of the inland areas, along with the Kultas who had been the managers of the landed aristocracy. Some of them had gained popularity through the Praja Mandal agitations, working towards the liquidation of the princes as a political force. After their decline, the middle class of the inland area, who usually are the Brahmins and Karans became dominant.⁴² Though this also brought about conflicts of regionalism between the middle classes of the two regions, it made the dominance of the Brahmins and Karans an all Orissa phenomenon.

⁴⁰ Francine R. Frankel: "Introduction" in Francine R Frankel and MSA Rao (ed.): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, Vol. 1, p 2

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p 3

⁴² R.N. Mishra: *Regionalism and State Politics in India*, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p 226

In the subsequent political process also there is marked predominance of the upper castes. The leaders of the Congress Party as well as most political parties have been dominated by the Brahmins and Karans. This is also true of other political associations like trade unions. The political life of Orissa is dominated by the Brahmins and Karans is amplified by the fact that they are castes of very thin population and yet politically preponderant over all other castes and communities in the state. The dominance of Brahmins and Karans are perpetuated by the fact that at the rural level both the Brahmin and Karan politicians have strong patrons and allies belonging to their respective castes at the centre. Another factor in their favour is that they are generally believed to possess shrewdness and diplomatic qualities which other castes including Kshatriyas and the Khandayats lack.

The dominance of the upper castes has been well manifested in the Legislative Assembly. An analysis of the caste background of the MLAs since 1961 shows that the upper castes have been dominant over the years. If one takes the number of Brahmins in the Congress Legislature Party in the years 1961, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2004, they are 18, 7, 8, 10, 4, 27, 27, 24, 28, 18, 21 and 23 respectively. Further, the upper castes, which included both the Brahmins and Karans as a whole constituted of 25, 11, 13, 4, 30, 27, 18, 20, 17, 24 in the years 1961, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2004 respectively.⁴³ This is a reflection of the dominance of upper castes. This trend of upper caste dominance can also be found in the non-Congress Parties which have been prominent, e.g. the Ganatantra Parishad (now merged with the Nationalist Congress Party), the CPI, CPI(M), the Socialist Party, the Utkal Congress, and the Janata Party, BJP, BJD. These strengths of the upper castes form an important indicator of their dominance. It is found here that the dominance of the upper castes in Orissa's society and economy is also true about its polity. One finds that the upper castes constitute about 40% of all the high positions in the political life of Orissa, as reflected in the Legislative Assemblies over the years.

⁴³ Orissa Reference Annual-2006, Op Cit, p 122-169

The dominance is even more striking because the upper castes do not constitute the largest percentage of members in the Legislative Assembly. It is the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes together who constitute the largest group in the Assembly, which is guaranteed by reservation of constituencies. However, in spite of this numerical strength, they have never managed to dominate the power structure. While their numerical strength arises from the fact that the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations are huge in Orissa and thus a large number of seats are reserved constituencies, they have not been able to be a dominant group in the power hierarchy due to the fact that they have been passive participants and loyal party workers. In spite of the fact that in the faction-ridden politics of Orissa, the tribals, especially the Jharkhand Party, have been the balance-keepers, they have at the best played a supporting role. It was always the coastal elite (upper castes) who made the Scheduled Tribe legislators collaborate with them or provoked them or tempted them to break a Government by withdrawing their support.⁴⁴ Further, the coastal elite also created divisions among them and finally resulted in the Scheduled Tribe members not getting proportionate seats in the Council of Ministers. Further, the coastal elites engineered defections among them. This was true of leaders like Biju Patnaik and H K Mahatab who engineered defections among the Scheduled Tribe legislators by promising them official benefits or monetary rewards. This stemmed from the fact that most of the Scheduled Tribe legislators sought the life style and status of the coastal elites.

Thus, we see that the Scheduled Tribe as well as Scheduled Caste legislators have always played a secondary and supportive and in most cases a destructive role which never got them anywhere near the top of the power hierarchy. They had a lot of influence as their numerical strength suggests but could never ascend to a position of dominance.

On the other hand, the upper castes especially the Brahmins and the Karans built up a structure of dominance within the state. Thus, while the Brahmins and Karans constitute only about 8 per cent of the total population of the states, their control over the power hierarchy of the state is almost 40 percent. The political parties, the ministries, the

⁴⁴ Sukhdev Nanda: *Coalitional Politics in Orissa*, Sterling Publishers Ltd, New Delhi, 1979, p 147

bureaucracy and other organs of power have been excessively and disproportionately dominated by them. This is due to the fact that the elite members of different power structures are linked with one another by several ties and this interlinking has been their most potent weapon for defending their common vested interests. These power elites cooperate with one another not only at a higher level, but also patronize their caste fellows operating at the lower levels. This linkage between local politics and state politics has been the source of power for the dominant castes in the rural areas also. The other factor, which contributed to the continued dominance of the Brahmins and the Karnas in Orissa politics, is the large population of the Adivasis in the state, that is 22.2 per cent. Concentrated in the western districts of the state, the adivasis have remained substantially cut off from contemporary social, political and economic developments. Except for their reserved posts, adivasis are hardly represented in any other sphere of public life. Even these lucky few are subjected to exploitation at the hands of people belonging to either the Brahmin or Karana caste. The benefits due to Adivasi communities rarely reach them; they are cornered primarily by upper caste officials and their upper caste accomplices. Unless, there is a strong leadership among the adivasis, this disproportionate distribution of benefits will help to preserve the status quo, where the upper castes would remain powerful enough to neutralize efforts at mobilization among Orissa's backward castes.

The dominance of the Brahmins and Karans is a consequence of a long social process and historical fact. Such a deeply entrenched structure of dominance cannot be easily waned. It needs a deliberate and concerted effort to bring the lower and middle castes under a grand social alliance to challenge Brahmin-Karan dominance. The lower caste political elite need to come out of narrow mindedness and calculations of self interests to fabricate the vision of an alternative popular social alliance.

Chapter Three

The Political Elite and Politics in Orissa

In Orissa, the upper-caste category comprises mainly Brahmins, Karans and Khandayats/Kshayatriyas. A large number of castes belong to the OBC category. Among the most prominent, numerically large and socially and educationally upwardly mobile are the Khandayats. Dalits account for 16.2 per cent of the population. Prominent among Dalit castes are the Pano, Dhoba, Keuta and Chamar. As per the 2001 census estimates, adivasis, including the Gond, the Santhal, the Munda and the Kandha, are 22.2 per cent of the state's population.

Though the Brahmins and the Karans are numerically not very large¹, they have been politically dominant in Orissa. This was mentioned by F.G. Bailey during the mid-1950s, but still holds true. They are not only superior to all other castes, but also dominate the power structure and bureaucracy of the state. Most of Orissa's influential politicians have been from either the Brahmin or Karan caste. The political dominance of the Brahmins and the Karans in Orissa is perpetuated through the use of the state bureaucracy, a large portion of which is composed of members from these castes.

The Khandayats constitute numerically the largest caste group in Orissa², but has not traditionally held a dominant position in the politics of Orissa. It is precisely because Khandayats are not a homogeneous or even well-integrated group, and because they had lagged far behind the upper castes socio-economically. Khandayats are divided among

¹As per the estimates of the Census of India, 2001, Brahmins constitute 5.74 per cent and Karnas nearly 1.48 per cent of Orissa's population. The Rajputs constitute a very small proportion (0.39 per cent) of the state's population. All three upper castes combined constitute nearly 7.61 per cent Orissa's people

²As per the 2001 census estimates, the Khandayats constitutes nearly 10.29 per cent of Orissa's population, the single largest caste. There are 7.96 per cent Chasa who are also considered Khandayats, but are socially and educationally backward compared to the Khandayats. Kultas constitute nearly 1.67 per cent of population in Orissa. These three OBC castes are the cultivating castes, and are socially, educationally and economically more upwardly mobile compared to other OBCs such as the Bania (0.39 per cent), Barahi (0.57 per cent), Bhandari (1.22 per cent), Darji (0.02 per cent), Gaur (9.11 per cent), Gudia (1.57 per cent), Kewat (2.72 per cent), Kamar (1.00 per cent), Kumbhar (1.40 per cent), Kurmi (0.97 per cent), Mali (0.96 per cent), Teli (3.16 per cent), Tanti (1.68 per cent).

themselves in terms of culture and land disputes. Those Khandayats who move up on the social ladder by educational attainment or occupational diversification get themselves assimilated with the Karnas while those who for some reason move down the social ladder identify themselves with the Chasa, an OBC caste somewhat lower down the social hierarchy.

Democratic Politics and Political Elite

With the introduction of universal adult franchise, universal education, spread of communication links, opening of mass media in great numbers have changed the face of society, politics and power structure. The introduction of parliamentary democracy followed by land reforms empowered some communities not only economically and socially but also politically.³ It was expected that the introduction of these social, economic and political measures would broaden the horizon of the people and free them from many parochial values, which they had been cherishing since long. Traditional structures were expected to yield to the modern ones. But, things took a different course. Traditional structures instead of being replaced by new ones started getting modernized themselves. A fusion of old and new took place. Old interests were geared up to achieve a new objectives, for example, caste loyalty of the masses was exploited by political elites to successfully muster gains in democratic electoral politics. The compulsions of democratic politics that was introduced anew in the wake of independence infused relevance into many of these old structures.⁴ In different states, caste associations, in stead of withering away, were actively mobilized for harnessing political support in favor of some individual political leaders or parties. The distance between the high and the low, the rich and the poor within these organizations was sought to be bridged and some sort of equality was established.⁵ The old caste associations or federations were reinvigorated and new ones formed with zeal and energy as 'levellers' and 'democratizers'. Caste was

³B. N. Das and N. B. Pradhan: "Political Factor in Economic Development of Orissa" in B. B. Jena and J. K. Baral (ed.): *Government and Politics in Orissa*, Print House, Lucknow, 1989, p 47

⁴ Atul Kohli: "Introduction" in Atul Kohli (ed.): *The Success of India's Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 2001, p 14

⁵ K.K.Mohanty: "The Caste Council of the Karmari of Rural Orissa", in B.B.Jena and J.K. Baral (ed.): *Government and Politics in Orissa*, Print House, Lucknow, 1989, p 397

not the only social structure which was adapted to the demands of electoral politics.⁶ Religion, language, tribal solidarity and other ethnic loyalties were also mobilized to gain political objectives.⁷ It is important to note that appeal to infrastructural loyalties became almost a universal phenomenon in post-1947 politics. Even class-oriented left parties were not free from these practices. They continued within their broad organizational framework mutually exclusive elements that reflected either the particularities of a regional cultural group or infrastructural group loyalties which were similar to caste or religious prejudices.

The active participation of the ex-princes in competitive electoral politics was another significant development after independence. The ex-princes emerged as a potent force in democratic politics. This development, however, lost sight in the beginning by many as the ex-princes after integration of their estates were thought to be an insignificant force. When they lost their estates and thus power with the merger of their estates with the neighboring territories, they discovered a political career in electoral democratic politics as a logical extension of their princely status. They quickly responded under the new circumstances to the offer of political status by political parties who in exchange sought votes from their former subjects. Thus, the princes in a short period assumed new and increasingly active roles within the political system. Within a decade from their entry into politics in 1952 they became a major political force in the state.

Orissa has remained as one of the poorest states in India in spite of its vast unplundered natural resources. Another glaring contradiction is a widespread gap between vast majority of the poor constituting a substantial number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the one hand and a tiny minority of the flamboyant rich comprising the ruling class and the political elite on the other. It is highly essential to know about these economic and political elites with reference to their interaction and influence, since they have a major role to play in the decision-making and development

⁶ Ibid, p 398

⁷ Rajni Kothari: "Developing Political Pattern", *Seminar*, New Delhi, 1962, June, Vol.63, No.2, p 53

process in the state. To study them through a number of general elections, especially to the state Legislative Assembly is a very good criterion to know their expected and actual roles vis-à-vis the state and the people. General elections to the Parliament and the state assembly and other representative bodies and their results give a clear picture of the promises and practices of the elite. Therefore, this chapter tries to examine the socio-economic composition of these political elites along with their affiliation to different political parties.

Socio-economic Basis of Politics in Orissa

In Orissa land distribution at the time of independence was marked by far fewer disparities. Though the three upper castes (the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Karans) possessed more than the average-sized agricultural land holding, the Khandayats also possessed comparable quantities of land. Historically, these castes are numerically large in the coastal region of Orissa, where agriculture has been the backbone of the economy. With the abolition of the *Zamindari* system, a fair degree of redistribution took place in this region, though clearly landless people continued to exist there as well. The net result was that, the agricultural land was more or less evenly distributed between the upper caste and the Khandayats, an OBC caste. Nearly one-fourth of all land holdings were less than 0.5 hectares in size. Nearly 87.7 per cent of all holdings were three hectares or less.⁸ This gives some idea of how small was the average land holding in Orissa. There was far less potential for political conflict to centre on the issue of agricultural land. This meant that party conflict was less likely to polarize along caste lines – between upper castes and Khandayats or other backward sections in the society.

The western districts of Orissa offer a stark contrast. Once comprised of princely states, where rulers possessed large tracts of agricultural land, western Orissa's farmers were given larger land-holding exemptions within the state's land reform legislation. The abolition of the *Zamindari* system had very little effect in the western parts of Orissa.

⁸B B Mohanty: 'Panchayatiraj in Maharashtra and Orissa: An Overview', *IASSI Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 3-4, Jan-Jun 2003, p 92-108

Consequently, the adivasis, who constitute a large proportion of the population in the region, remained largely landless in this region.⁹

In Orissa it is not caste, but region, which has provided the dominant cleavage driving political mobilization and counter-mobilization. Orissa has a high percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. As per the 2001 census Scheduled Castes were 16.5 per cent, and Scheduled Tribes 22.8 per cent, of the state's population. Indications from the 2001 census indicates that their proportion of the population has increased, suggesting that nearly 40 per cent of Orissa's people are Dalit and Adivasi. There is a unique settlement pattern of the people belonging to different castes in Orissa. While Dalits are generally spread in almost all the districts of the state, the upper castes are generally concentrated in the coastal districts and the Adivasis are concentrated in western districts of the state.¹⁰

Most of the adivasi (tribal) representatives come from the western region, while the upper caste politicians come from the coastal regions. Politicians from the coastal regions had dominated the politics in the state. Most of the chief ministers and other senior politicians have been from the coastal region.¹¹ These politicians have catered to the development of the coastal region above all else. Most state intervention has taken place in the coastal districts while the western region was neglected despite being rich in mineral resources. Because of the hilly terrain, the western region had also lagged behind in terms of the communication facilities. Thus, the pattern of political mobilization has revolved around the issue of the western region's neglect at the hands coastal region's politicians. The regional disparities within Orissa are indeed glaring, and are so deep rooted that they have remained the most important political issue in the state. This has stalled the full force of caste politics.

⁹Ibid, p 101

¹⁰Orissa Reference Annual-2006, The Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, p 457-459

¹¹Ibid, p 462

As in other states, Orissa's post-Mandal period provided another opportunity for OBC mobilization. While the last decade of the Twentieth Century witnessed intense political mobilization of the OBCs in Bihar and UP, and Tamil Nadu, etc., Orissa's OBCs failed in their efforts towards political mobilization. There are several reasons for this, but one of the most important is that the numerically strong (and socially and educationally upwardly mobile) OBC caste, the Khandayats, were excluded from the Mandal list. This placed them in a similar situation to the Jats of U.P. and Rajasthan. Politicians such as Srikant Jena tried to mobilise the OBCs in Orissa during the post-Mandal period, but since the Khandayats were excluded from the Mandal list, the entire focus was shifted towards the inclusion of the Khandayats in the OBC list. Thus, during the years when parties in other states were experiencing a phase of intensive mobilisation of OBCs, the OBC leadership in Orissa was focused merely on getting the Khandayats included in the list of eligible beneficiaries.

Since the Khandayats were excluded from the official OBC list, they sought to trade favours with parties: promises of electoral support in exchange for a party, one in power, taking action to get Khandayats included on the OBC list. But the Khandayats were more than once betrayed by parties that won, and they backed the wrong (that is losing) horse in the electoral race on more than one occasion. Thus their strategy of shifting allegiance from one political party to another from one election to the next proved less than effectual. The main political parties in Orissa see them solely as a vote bank. The Khandayats, especially those, with better economic status, had tried to align with the upper caste Brahmins and Karans, and had as a result shifted their political allegiance to the political party to which a majority of Orissa's upper castes had voted. Those Khandayats of lower economic status are excluded from the benefits of alliance with the upper castes, and they try to associate with OBCs of more modest economic status. As a result, the Khandayats remain a badly divided social group in Orissa, which has hampered their development as a distinct, effectual political entity.

It should also be noted that while the OBC mobilization in Orissa reflected mainly the aspirations of one caste, the Khandayats, little effort was expended to awaken other OBCs politically. These constitute a large section of Orissa's population. The Gauda, which resemble the Yadavs of UP and Bihar comprise roughly 9 per cent of the state's population, and has the advantage of geographical spread. Had the Gaudas been mobilised, the core of an OBC identity could have been forged.

There was, however, no trained and responsive leadership within the Gauda community, and also there was little impetus from among leaders of other castes for them to take action. The Brahmins and Karans have long exploited the Gaudas. The Gaudas have served these upper castes and had been reduced to a service caste. While the males have worked in the agricultural land owned by the upper castes, the Gauda women have worked as domestic servants. In the absence of any leadership, they could not be mobilised to become a political force in the state.

General Elections

In modern political discourse, the people have become central to any political analysis. Thanks to the overwhelming success and popularity of democracy, any form of government, however authoritarian it may be, can hardly afford to undermine the people, who are the only legitimizing force. Thus, although all human societies are prone to elite rule and elite dominance, the masses certainly cannot be belittled. Due to the presence of elite, counter-elite, the emergence of competitive elitism is almost ubiquitous. The elite compete among themselves for the support of the masses that authorizes them to rule in a society. In other words, plurality of elite, circulation of elite and competitive elitism comes to the rescue of the democratic edifice of the society.

Elections are highly significant not only because they ensure democracy and legitimacy of the political elite to govern, but also because they are important mechanisms for institutionalization of power. Power emanates not only from the several

institutions of the state and government, but more importantly from the very nature and structure of social organizations also. Relations of power are determined more by the economic organization of the society, social structure and protocols than by the constitutional and institutional structures. It is often found, in traditional societies, that the traditional loyalty and allegiance of the people is transformed into political allegiance. That's why in developing societies, the traditional nobilities, religious preachers, community leaders, and even erstwhile monarchs succeed in competitive electoral politics. In these societies, people come to realize (or they are made to do so) that political institutions are highly sacrosanct, and men of superior virtue and ability only should get elected into them. Thus, the people who have not yet severed their links with the traditional loyalties easily repose their faith on such traditional leaders who once ruled them either politically or spiritually or otherwise. The Brahmin-Karan dominance in Orissa falls in the same line.

Before the first General Elections in 1952, people of Orissa had already experienced two previous elections, one in 1937 and the other in 1946. But these two elections were based on restricted franchise. It was only in 1952 that the Universal Adult Franchise was introduced. Prior to independence, the first elections of 1937 enabled the Orissa Congress Party to form the government but decisions of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) made the government to resign. The Congress Party again formed the government in 1946 securing 98 out of 152 seats.¹² During 1952 general elections there were 28 reserved seats for the Scheduled Tribes and another 21 for the Scheduled Castes in the Assembly of 140 seats. The Congress Party secured 63 seats and the Ganatantra Parishad (GP) 31 seats. The performance of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party was poor vis-à-vis the GP and the Congress Party. The Independent candidates secured 23 seats with the help of whom the Congress Party formed the government under the leadership of Naba Krushna Choudhury. But, the government was soon exposed to a series of violent agitations over the recommendations of the states Reorganization Committee. Also, there were a number of administrative lapses and financial

¹² J. Pathy: *Underdevelopment and Destitution*, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p 23

irregularities in the working of several departments of the government. The factionalism became very intense between another prominent Congress stalwart Harekrushna Mahatab and Naba Krushna Chaudhury groups. Thus, factionalism along with inefficiency and corruption in administration created a stalemate in the state. Subsequently, the Chief Minister, N.K.Choudhury resigned and H.K.Mahatab became the Chief Minister in 1956.

During the period between 1957-61, Orissa Congress experienced a fierce factional struggle which ultimately led to the emergence of Bijayananda Patnaik or the popular Biju Patnaik as a powerful rival leader in Orissa Politics. In 1957, Assembly elections, the Congress Party secured 56 seats closely followed by the Ganatantra Parishad that secured 51 seats. Yet, Mahatab could form the Ministry with the help of some independents and some Ganatantra Parishad MLAs, who defected and joined the Congress Party. This was the time, Orissa politics entered into the field of intense politicking.¹³ However, in 1959, a coalition government of the Congress and Ganatantra Parishad was formed under the leadership of H.K.Mahatab. On this issue the Congress Party got divided and ultimately in February 1961, Orissa came under the President's rule.

In the mid-term election of 1961, the Congress Party under the dynamic and charismatic leadership of Biju Patnaik came to power with a thumping majority of 83 seats out of total 140. The unquestionable leader always wanted to industrialize Orissa and pull the state out of poverty and economic backwardness. Several large and small-scale projects were set up in the state. Some of them are the Paradeep port, Sunabeda MIG factory, Talcher Thermal Power Plant, Balimela Hydel Project, the Express Highway, Cooperatives and Panchayat industries etc. Under his leadership, Orissa got seven sugar mills, 21 tile-making units, 10 carpeting shops etc. The State Level Planning Board, public corporations were also set up to formulate and execute the policies and programmes of the government. Ruling the state with confidence was no problem for Biju Patnaik, but soon in less than 2 years' time he fell victim of the Kamraj Plan in 1963

¹³ P. Asthana: *Party System in India*, Criterion Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p 82

and had to relinquish the Chief Minister's post. He was succeeded by Biren Mitra, who faced from the very beginning a state-wide student agitation. Corruption charges were leveled against him and finally he resigned from office in 1965. Mitra was succeeded by Sadasiv Tripathi who managed the state till the fourth general election in 1967.

Harekrushna Mahatab and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, with many other old Congressmen, formed a new party, that is the Jana Congress (JC) to challenge the might of the Congress Party in the 1967 Assembly elections. The Congress Party faced debacle securing only 31 seats while the Jana Congress got only 26 seats and the Swatantra Party secured 49 seats. Both the Swatantra and Jana Congress formed the coalition ministry with R.N.Singh Deo as the Chief Minister. "This coalition initiated politics of commissions in the state, for instance the Justice H.R. Khanna Commission was appointed to probe into the alleged charges of corruption against the former ministers. The ministry also appointed the Sarjoo Prasad Commission to probe into certain allegations against Mahatab. However, the ministry did not last long".¹⁴ In 1971, the Jan Congress withdrew its support on the issue of granting some remission to the Kendu leaf traders by the Forest Minister of Swatantra Party. Thus, Orissa came under the President's rule for the second time. The state had to face another mid-term election.

By this time, Biju Patnaik formed the Utkal Congress, a new regional party and contested the 1971 election. On the eve of the election, the old Congress Party was divided into four separate groups – Congress (R), Congress (O), the Utkal Congress and the Jan Congress. The other parties which contested the election were the Swatantra Party, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), CPI, CPM, Forward Block, SUCI, Jan Sangh, Jharkhand Party and of course a bunch of independents. In this election, the Congress Party secured 51 seats, the Swatantra Party 36 seats, and the Utkal Congress of Biju Patnaik 33 seats. In 1972, the second non-Congress United Front Ministry was formed with the Swatantra Party, the Utkal Congress and the Jharkhand Party as partners. Biswanath Das was the Chief Minister.

¹⁴ Krushna Singh Padhi: *Corruption in Politics*, B.R. Publications, Delhi, 1986, p 28

To the incredulity of political observers, Biju Patnaik and R.N.Singh Deo – the well-known political adversaries had joined hands in the formation of 1972 ministry. The inherent contradiction between the coalition partners became obvious over various issues, including the renewal of license to the contractors of the Kendu Leaves. Somehow, the ministry survived till June 1972, when the Utkal Congress and the Praja Socialist Party merged with the Congress Party. As a result, the strength of the Congress Party increased from 34 to 94. In June 1972, Nandini Satapathy was made the Chief Minister. The Satapathy government set up the Mitra Commission to probe into the alleged deals of Kendu leaves during the Biswanath Das Ministry. But, shortly in 1973 some Utkal Congress members moved to opposition and the ministry got dissolved. Meanwhile the one time adversaries – Mahatab, Biju Patnaik and R.N.Singh Deo together formed the Pragati Party. They paraded 75 MLAs to the Rajbhawan as evidence of their support. Yet, astonishingly, the President's Rule was imposed in the state.

During the third mid-term elections in 1974, the real fight was between the Congress Party and the Pragati Party. The Congress Party won 69 seats as compared to 58 seats won by the Pragati Party. With the help of the CPI and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), the Congress Party formed the government. Nandini Satapathy assumed Chief Ministership for the second time. But, her party was not free from factional feuds. The leaders with socialist leanings within the ministry were not given equal weightage. The anti-PSP attitude was prominent. Again, the alliance of the Congress Party and the CPI encouraged factionalism in the Congress Party. The pro-CPI attitude of Satapathy was attributed to her CPI background of earlier days. One of the many factions in the Congress Party raised a campaign against Jadunath Das Mahapatra (the then Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs) and the Chief Minister for corruption and favouritism leading to purchase of books worth of several Lakhs of rupees from a private firm. Allegations were also leveled against transfer of officers in the education department on caste basis. All these along with ministerial reshuffle and the Congress-CPI alliance were some of the factors which led to political instability in the state. Besides, Satapathy was

also accused of confronting the centre and deviating from the directions. Finally, she was compelled to resign from the leadership of the legislature party in 1976. Orissa came under the President's rule for the fourth time.

Crisis of leadership in the Congress party was, however, resolved when Binayaka Acharya, who was instrumental for ousting Satpathy formed the new government. But, this time, the Congress Party ruled the state for the shortest period of only 123 days. His opponents continued to raise issues against his leadership, his inability to take decisions and his procrastination in some important matters. While the state level political scene revolved around defections, factionalism, at the national level the country was developing a different pattern of political development which led to the declaration of Emergency for 1975-77.

The elections to the Legislative Assembly were held in June 1977. The two Communist Parties – CPI and CPM won one seat each, while the independents won 9 seats. The Congress Party polled only 26 seats. The Janata Party, securing two-third majority, that is 110 out of the total 147 seats, formed the government under the leadership of Nilamani Routray. He remained a loyal follower of Biju Patnaik. But, due to intra-party feuds and lack of alternative economic policies and programmes, the Janata Party failed to consolidate its position and was finally dethroned from power in 1980.

The post-1980 period saw a different and politically stable Orissa. The decade was of J B Patnaik of Orissa and of his rise and fall. In the 1980 election the contesting parties were – the Congress (I), Congress (U), BJP, Janata Party, Janata S(R), Janata S(C), CPI, CPM and others. The Congress (I) won two-third majority, that is 118 of 147 seats. The two former Chief Ministers – Biju Patnaik and Nandini Satpathy also got elected to the Assembly. The new ministry was formed under the leadership of J B Patnaik. For the first time in the history of politics in Orissa, a party i.e. the Congress (I) remained in power and ruled for the full term under one leader. In this sense, political

stability prevailed in the state during 1980-85. In the 1985 election, the Congress Party repeated its performance by securing 117 seats out of total 147 seats and thereby acquiring again two-third majority. The CPI and the BJP secured one seat each whereas the Janata Party secured 21 seats and independents got 7 seats.

J B Patnaik headed the Congress Party and the ministry again. He happened to be a prominent literary figure and public orator of repute. He *was* a successful organizer as well as a conservationist of no mean ability. He was the uncrowned king of the Congress Party in Orissa and ruled the state continuously for nearly a decade (i.e. 1980-89). But soon after that he became infamous because there were gaps between his promises and actions. He was found more oriented towards his own people at the cost of the masses. His alleged sex-scandal, excess self-orientation, political immorality as well as crooked attitude brought his downfall. The dissident activities began in the Congress Party against his leadership. Kanhu Charan Lenka, the then Revenue Minister in his ministry was the first to speak out against his leadership and style of functioning. He allegedly ruled the state in alliance with a small coterie of his personal kin and kith – his wife Jayanti Patnaik, Basanta Biswala, the then super Chief Minister of Orissa – his son-in-law Saumya Ranjan Patnaik, and his elder brother Niranjana Patnaik. Undue interference over the state's administration caused delay and inefficiency in functioning of the government. Patnaik government was also criticized to have encouraged casteism and groupism. It was criticized for misgovernance, corruption, assigning heavy concessions to contractors and mine owners, indulging in secret understanding with opposition parties, providing tacit support to the state convention of RSS in 1981. His government failed to implement policies like economic liberalization for the poor and industrialization in the state. Both bureaucracy and the government lacked proper planning and sincere commitment to implement various policies and programmes. Patnaik's promise to develop Urdu language in the state and to solve the minority problem remained dead letters.

Gradually, factional fight became intense. In 1985 Assembly elections, a large number of sitting MLAs and ministers were denied party tickets on the charge of corruption and loss of confidence on them in party leadership. The cabinet in his ministry consisted of a large number of members who were corrupt and inefficient. It was alleged that the central assistance of Rs.150 crores for relief assistance to victims of natural calamities were misappropriated by them.¹⁵

Niranjan Patnaik had to resign from the cabinet because the Orissa High Court censured him as a "habitual bribe-taker".¹⁶ Orissa High Court had also proved starvation deaths and abject poverty in the state which spoke of the inefficiency and indifference of the J.B.Patnaik government to the situation.¹⁷ But, the greedy political elite of the time were very active in persuading their self-interest in acquiring disproportionate property. This came to light when Biju Patnaik formed his Janata Dal government in 1990.¹⁸ The party had lost its image to such an extent that it failed to win any seat in the three subsequent by-elections held in Khurdha, Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur, which accentuated feud in the party. Another factor which brought down the image of the government was the Burla tragedy of 1984 when the Marwari, Punjabi and Sindhi traders who wield a lot of political strength in Orissa attacked the students in collusion with the police and killed 14 students. The government could not punish the rich traders. Patnaik's continuance in office along with charges like corruption, sex scandal, inefficiency and strong division in the Congress Party signaled the fall of the Congress regime in the state. Ultimately, he was asked by Rajiv Gandhi to quit the Chief Ministership in the last part of 1989 following the Congress debacle in Lok Sabha elections. Hemanand Biswal was appointed the caretaker Chief Minister for the remaining period.

The Congress debacle was reflected in the Assembly elections of 1990. It secured lowest ever 10 seats only. The Janata Dal achieved 123 of the total 147 seats. The CPI

¹⁵ P. Asthana, Op Cit, p 78

¹⁶ Ibid, p 80

¹⁷ The Deccan Herald, 18 June 1985

¹⁸ The Swarajya (Oriya Daily), 25 February, 1992

got 5 seats, CPM got one and independents secured 6 seats. The old octogenarian Biju Patnaik formed the Ministry and continued for a full term. Biju Patnaik was concerned about the industrial development of Orissa. But, at the implementation level, he has always been a controversial figure. Yet, Biju Patnaik remained a charismatic figure. After coming to power, he set up charges against his predecessor, J B Patnaik. Some of his acts to unearth and punish J.B.Patnaik for his misgovernance appeared to be out of proportion, and some acts also made his personal vendetta explicit. There is a general consensus that J.B.Patnaik's arrest for disproportionate property is Biju Patnaik's political and personal vendetta. By these acts, Biju Patnaik might have tried to bolster his charisma and leadership, but his party was voted out of power in the village panchayat and the municipal elections. His ministerial colleagues were not free from corruption, nepotism and bribery. Biju Patnaik himself earned a bad name for his whimsical actions and gestures. At the instigation of J.B.Patnaik, a number of environmental groups staged agitation, condemning Biju Patnaik's obsession with industrialization. The Chilika Bachao Andolan really tarnished his image, after the study Group and the High Court gave their verdicts against the government.¹⁹

Biju Patnaik government's stand on the Mandal Commission's Recommendations is contrary to the party's declared policy. The government filed its affidavit in the Supreme Court stating that economic criteria should be used for providing reservation to the backward castes and classes. This position is quite opposed to the stand taken by the national Janata Dal. The party had always backed reservation for the socially backward castes with no reference to their economic status. But, later Biju Patnaik gained bad name for opposing reservation in government jobs. It, of course, explains the higher caste i.e. Karan origin of Biju Patnaik. But, later the 1995 Assembly election, proved Biju Patnaik's political inexpediency and unpopularity among the backward castes. J.B.Patnaik and the Congress Party missed no opportunity.

¹⁹Ranjita Mohanty: "Save Chilika Movement" in Rajesh Tandon and Ranjita Mohanty (ed): *Does Civil Society Matter?: Governance in Contemporary India*, Sage, New Delhi, 2003, p 163

In the General Election of the eleventh assembly, the unpopularity of Biju Patnaik was more clearly reflected. People developed anti-incumbency. The tactics of J.B.Patnaik gained momentum. The Congress Party succeeded in consolidating lower caste votes. By this time, the Congress Party had also appointed a large chunk of dalit and backward caste leaders in its rank and file. The Congress party secured 80 seats out of total 147 whereas the Janata Dal of Biju Patnaik got only 46 seats. Important factor here that should draw attention is that in this election the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured 8 seats, i.e. around 8 percent of seats in the state legislative Assembly. It had improved as previous tally of only 2 seats in the 1990 general election to the assembly.

This period saw the rise of the right-wing party in the state with a strong organization.²⁰ J.B.Patnaik, the unanimous Congress leader in Orissa again became the Chief Minister. This time, J. B.Patnaik appointed Basanta Kumar Biswal and Hemanand Biswal as the Deputy Chief Ministers. His confidant Jagannath Patnaik joined the cabinet. J.B.Patnaik's style of functioning and the disturbances in the state attracted heavy criticism. Corruption was rampant and law and order situation deteriorated. The kin and kith and personal friends of the Chief Minister and other family members got benefits. A number of corruption cases, sex scandals, several political murders and other notorious activities surfaced. The Indrajit Ray and Anjana rape case created turmoil in Orissa. J. B.Patnaik's direct involvement in the case and his explicit attempt to protect the culprit attracted public dissension. The corruption cases against the ministers grew day by day. At this time, the Chhabirani's murder case and J. B.Patnaik's involvement in the case tarnished the image of not only the Congress Party but the image of Patnaik himself.

In the Congress Party, there was no lack of factional feuds. Prominent leaders in the party openly rebelled against Patnaik. Opposition also grew stronger and gave a ventilation to the public dissension for J. B.Patnaik. The situation worsened when in May 1998, Hemanand Biswal, one of the Deputy Chief Ministers resigned from office for

²⁰Ramashray Roy: "General Elections, 1996: BJP's Emergence as Third Force in Orissa", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 44-45, 8-14 Nov, 1997, p 2893-99

some unspecified reason. Biswal is a tribal leader and is known for his integrity. His resignation provoked many speculations in the media and the public. Almost all the Oriya dailies were full of reports depicting the bad name and misgovernance of J. B.Patnaik. Finally, in 1999, the Congress High Command pressurized J. B.Patnaik to relinquish his post. It led to a temporary chaos in the Congress Party; horse-trading became quite common since a number of the Congress leaders showed interest to be the Chief Minister for the brief remainder term. And at last, a puppet Chief Minister in the form of Dr. Giridhar Gamang was installed by the Congress Party High Command. Dr. Gamang is a tribal leader but known for his devotion to the party High Command. While being in the post of Chief Minister, he never hesitated to exhibit his loyalty and even went to the extent of saying that, "I don't have an independent individual conscience; the High Command's order is my conscience".²¹ This made him quite unpopular.

Faction feuds were still continuing in the party. Legislators and members were actively engaged to topple the Giridhar Gamang cabinet. To the gravest misfortune of Dr. Gamang and Orissa, the super cyclone of 1999 devastated many parts of Orissa. The Gamang government became infamous and earned bad name for inefficiency misgovernance and for have poorly handled the rescue operation and the situation after the cyclone. Many ministers and bureaucrats faced corruption charges for have misappropriated the relief fund that was flowing into the state for relief of the cyclone victims. In December 1999, Gamang resigned from the post of Chief Minister. Hemanand Biswal, another tribal leader was made the Chief Minister. Confidants of J.B.Patnaik like Basant Biswal and Jagannath Patnaik were given cabinet berth. The turmoil in the Party seemed to have come to a stand still as the Congress Party prepared itself for the next general election.

Important developments had taken place in the political landscape of Orissa by then. The BJP had gathered strength in the state and at the all-India level as well. All the parties competitively appointed tribal, dalit and backward caste members into their rank

²¹The Dharitri (Oriya Daily), 18, June, 1999

and file. In this respect, the BJP surpassed every other political party in the state. The brother and sister organizations of the BJP like – the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh penetrated into the nuke and corner of Orissa, the party entered even the hitherto inaccessible tribal tracts in the state.²² Through its programmes of social activity and philanthropy, the BJP gained a strong footing among the tribals of Orissa.²³ Among the political parties, BJP appointed the highest number of tribals in the party. It even moved some steps ahead in appointing Jual Oram, a tribal leader as the State President of BJP. These steps earned ascendancy for the party in the state and acceptance of the agenda of BJP became a matter of Hindu sentiment and self-image in the state.

By this time, the stalwart of Orissa Politics, Biju Patnaik was dead, and was succeeded by his son Naveen Patnaik. Some members, including Naveen Patnaik himself wanted to make pre-poll alliance with the BJP. But, such action was deplored by the old guard of the party, who had socialist leanings and strong condemnation for the communal agenda of the BJP. To have an alliance with BJP violated very founding principle of the Janata Dal. However, a majority faction of Janata Dal broke away under the leadership of Naveen Patnaik and formed the Biju Janata Dal (BJD). Since the reach of the Biju Janata Dal is restricted only to Orissa Politics, it is referred to as a state party or regional political party. But, in terms of its agenda and programmes, the BJD is not a regional party as the Telgu Desam Party (TDP) is in Andhra Pradesh or the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is in Tamil Nadu. During his life and time, Biju Patnaik was unquestionably a charismatic leader. The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) was created to gain electoral success by appealing to the sentiments of people and their affection for the grand old man of Orissa politics. Thus, Biju Janata Dal emerged as a charismatic party. The demise of Biju Patnaik drew sympathy of the people and due to heightened propaganda in the media and other forums, Biju Patnaik's son Naveen Patnaik became equally charismatic in a very brief spell of time. He became the BJD supremo and

²²Ramashray Roy, Op Cit, p 2895

²³Ama Samayara Abhibyakti: Satabdhi (Oriya Fortnightly), 8-12 Oct, 1998, p 24-26

brought unprecedented electoral success for the party in two continuous Legislative Assembly elections.

In 2000 general election to the Legislative Assembly, the Biju Janata Dal obtained 68 seats. The BJP made a stupendous entry in Orissa politics by securing 28 seats in the Assembly. It went far ahead of its previous tally of only 9 seats in the 1995 general elections. The Congress Party's tally reduced to a meager 26 seats in comparison to 80 seats in the previous election. Naveen Patnaik headed the BJP-BJD coalition ministry.²⁴ The popularity of Naveen Patnaik rose high within few months of administration. Like his father Biju Patnaik, Naveen Patnaik remained committed to the industrial development and poverty eradication in Orissa. He maintained a clean image, efficient administration and clamped down upon corruption in public life. The sudden ousting of Nalini Mohanty of BJD, Prashant Nanda, the cine actor-turned BJP leader and Bijaya Mahapatra of BJD from the ministry on plea of corruption drew everybody's attention in the state. It enhanced the clean and corruption-free image of Patnaik. Later, Patnaik showed political bravery and principled action in ousting the entrepreneur and 'man of crores' Dillip Ray from BJD. Dillip Ray used to be a confidant of Biju Patnaik and it is said that he was nodal in separately creating the Biju Janata Dal out of the Janata Dal. The ouster of Dillip Ray earned huge popularity for Naveen Patnaik.

At the same time, the Congress Party was still struggling for an effective leadership. The party projected J.B.Patnaik as the Chief Ministerial candidate. The overwhelming popularity of Naveen Patnaik and the Biju Janata Dal checked the further growth of the BJP in Orissa. In the general election to the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly in 2004, the BJP-BJD coalition again came to power. Naveen Patnaik again formed the ministry. This time, Naveen Patnaik became more politically focused. The agenda of industrial development was vociferously pursued. The Government of Orissa signed forty-three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with various industrial houses

²⁴Bishnu Mohapatra: "Orissa: Elections and Everyday Politics; Local Narratives of a National Event", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 22-28 Jan, 2000, p 170-174

for setting up industries in Orissa. Rampant industrialization has brought dissatisfaction from the project-affected masses. In 2001 in Maikanch of Koraput district 4 tribal people were shot dead in police firing for protesting against mining and industrialization. The 2005 deal with South Korean Company POSCO raised a hue and cry and mixed reaction all over India. The January 2006 Kalinga Nagar police firing at protesting tribal people and the death of more than a dozen of tribals in police firing tarnished the image of the administration. It drew severe criticism from all corners. Another important factor to count with is that during Naveen Patnaik's tenure, the Naxals have gained a huge ground in Orissa's tribal and interior pockets.²⁵ It is often criticized that the development process in the state is not inclusive; and it is alienating the poor and depriving the tribals of their land and traditional residence and ambience.

However, Naveen Patnaik's government also started wearing certain stained marks of corruption, nepotism and criminalization that were usually associated with the J.B.Patnaik government. Pyari Mohan Mohapatra, a bureaucrat-turned politician became a close ally and confidant of Naveen Patnaik, is said to be exercising too much of influence on Patnaik. Whimsical acts of Patnaik have led to ousting of old generation Janata leaders and associates of Biju Patnaik from the party. Prominent among them are Bijaya Mahapatra, Dillip Ray, Kumudini Patnaik, Nalinikant Mohanty, Ramakrushna Patnaik. Bijaya Mahapatra has launched the Orissa Gana Parishad (OGP) – a regional political party. The OGP has not achieved electoral success in the 2004 Assembly elections. It has now merged with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). It thus presents the voters with an alternative to the existing BJP-BJD and the Congress Party duality in the state. Recently, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) of Mayawati has entered into Orissa politics. Since Orissa has a huge number of Dalit populations, it is expected to achieve grand success in future. The actor-turned politician Raj Babbar and the former Prime Minister of India, V.P.Singh also made an attempt to materialize a third front government in Orissa. This attempt has not taken much of ground, but the prospects of it can't certainly be undermined.

²⁵S N Ratha: "Welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and their Development: The Orissa Case", *Journal of Rural Development*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Jan-March, 2001, p 73-86

The Role of Opposition Parties in Orissa

Like several other states, Orissa for some initial decades after the introduction of Parliamentary democracy and universal adult suffrage remained a Congress Party-dominated state. Popularity of the Party was buttressed in the state for its role in the creation of a separate Orissa Province and its contributions in the national struggle for independence. Apart from this, all the major political leaders, influential and charismatic personalities like H K Mahatab, Biju Patnaik and others were in the Congress Party. However, the political elite, especially Mahatab and Biju Patnaik were independent-minded enough to work under the Congress High Command. Both the leaders enjoyed unquestionable faith and support of the people of Orissa. It is precisely the reason why the Congress Party faced electoral debacles in the Legislative Assembly elections after Mahatab and Patnaik resigned from Congress Party membership. In fact, these two leaders along with the ex-princes who incurred a huge loss due to government policies sowed the seeds of anti-Congress sentiment in the state.

Regional considerations, faction feuds and parochial considerations curbed the success of the Congress Party in the Legislative Assembly elections. On other occasions, the policies, programmes, and stand of the leadership made the party earn a bad name. It is important to note that most of the time when the Congress Party has lost power in the state, the gainer has not been an all-India party, but a regional party or more than one regional parties. To this category belonged the Ganatantra Parishad, the Jana Congress, the Utkal Congress, the Pragati Dal and now of course the Biju Janata Dal (BJD). Orissa, thus cannot be said to be a province with one party dominance and the Congress Party, in spite of its rich heritage and good track record, has encountered strong opposition in state politics. The tendency of Oriya people not to give full support to the dominant party, that is the Congress Party has seemingly provoked Congress government at the center to punish the former both politically and economically.

After the first general election in Orissa after the promulgation of the Constitution of India in 1951, Sudhakar Supakar of the Ganatantra Parishad (GP) was declared as the leader of opposition. The Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) were also in the opposition. Amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts of *Kharasuan* and *Sarheikala* was not successfully handled by the first ministry under Nabakrushna Chaudhury. The opposition took up the issue and started criticizing the government. It is to be noted here that the issue has not been resolved till today.

In the second general election, the Ganatantra Parishad improved its strength by securing 51 seats. But its initiative to form the government (a non-Congress one) with the help of 11 membered Praja Socialist Party (PSP) failed. The Congress Party formed the government with Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab as the Chief Minister. R N Singh Deo became the leader of the opposition party. But, interestingly the Ganatantra Parishad allied with the Congress Party to form the Ministry. In the third assembly, the Ganatantra Parishad suffered for its wrong step to have aligned with the H K Mahatab-led Congress Ministry. The Congress Party under stewardship of Biju Patnaik formed the government. R N Singh Deo of the Ganatantra Parishad again became the leader of the opposition. Dr. Mahatab's election from Angul Parliamentary constituency and Surendra Nath Dwibedi's re-election from Kendrapara Parliamentary constituency in the elections to Lok Sabha in 1962 rekindled the opposition in Orissa. The Ganatantra Parishad merged with Rajaji's Swatantra Party. The Swatantra Party, Praja Socialist Party and other opposition members challenged the Biju Patnaik government on grounds of corruption. Dr. H K Mahatab resigned from the Congress Party and initiated the formation of the Jana Congress.

In the fourth assembly, the Swatantra and Jana Congress pre-election alignment got people's mandate to form the government. It was the first non-Congress ministry in Orissa (1967-1971). R N Singh Deo, the leader of the Swatantra Party became the Chief Minister and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan of Jana Congress became the Deputy Chief Minister. Sadasiva Tripathi of the Congress Party was the leader of the opposition. The

result of 1967 Lok Sabha election and Vidhan Sabha elections weakened the Congress Party. Thereafter the opposition gained momentum. Biju Patnaik was then out of the Congress Party. He was nodal to the formation of the Utkal Congress, a regional party to give stiff fight to Indira Gandhi's Congress Party in Orissa. In the fifth assembly, the Swatantra Party got 36 seats and the newly created Utkal Congress secured 33 seats. The Swatantra Party, Utkal Congress and the Jharkhand Party formed the ministry under the stewardship of Biswanath Das. Dr. Mahatab had by then returned to the Congress Party. Biju Patnaik and R N Singh Deo promised to work together to make the second non-Congress ministry in Orissa viable.

Indira Gandhi's victory in the 1971 General Election regained glory of the Congress Party. The Das ministry was short-lived due to the fight between Biju Patnaik and R N Singh Deo. The Congress Party formed the government with Smt. Nandini Satapathy as the Chief Minister after engineering defection from the Swatantra party and Utkal Congress. Then there was interesting turn in opposition politics. Arch rivals like H K Mahatab, Biju Patnaik and R N Singh Deo came closer for the greater interest of the state and floated a new political platform namely, the Pragati Dal. Biju Patnaik was the leader of opposition. The Satapathy ministry faced the same fate as the Biswanath Das ministry, that is political defection. But, in stead of inviting Biju Patanaik to form the government, the governor recommended President's rule.

In the sixth assembly, the Congress Party made a return to power in the state with the help of the CPI. Biju Patnaik, the leader of the Pragati Dal (a combination of the Swatantra Dal, Utkal Congress, and other parties) became the leader of the opposition. Later, after the Emergency of 1975, the Janata Legislature Party was formed in the Orissa Assembly and Ram Prasad Mishra became the leader of opposition. In the seventh assembly, the newly created Janata Dal secured a massive mandate. Chintamani Panigrahi of the Congress Party became the leader of opposition. There was split in the Janata Dal at the national level. The state branch of the Janata Dal was also split into two groups. The ruling Janata Dal was named as Lok Dal. The Janata (O) was recognized as

the main opposition by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The state was put under President's rule. The eighth assembly registered the coming back to power by the Congress Party. None of the opposition parties got requisite seats to constitute a recognized opposition in the House. After some realignment, Sarat Deb, the leader of the Janata Legislature Party became the leader of opposition. In the ninth assembly, the Congress Party again came to power and the Janata Party was in the opposition. In the tenth assembly, the Janata Dal came to power with Biju Patnaik as the Chief Minister. The Opposition parties fared so badly that there was no recognized opposition in the tenth assembly.

An analysis of the pattern of opposition parties in Orissa reveals that the parties lack internal democracy. The opposition has never been a united one. Unruly behavior, ugly exchange of words in the floor of the House on the part of the leaders on flimsy grounds are the general features of opposition politics in Orissa. Unprincipled alliances and enviable adjustments are pursued for sectarian interests.²⁶ However, Orissa is still searching for an alternative leader to Naveen Patnaik. The next general election to the Legislative assembly is due in 2009. Yet, the Congress Party is in a sorry state of affairs. It is still presenting J.B.Patnaik as the party leader. So, the achievements of Naveen Patnaik are not only due to his charisma and popularity rather it is due to lack of proper challenge to his leadership and concerted political effort on the part of the opposition leaders to give Patnaik a true democratic electoral fight.

Power Configuration

It is found that most of the members of the various political parties in different Assembly elections were drawn from higher class and caste background. The political parties vie with each other to recruit persons of upper caste and class background, which has already been discussed in the previous chapter.

²⁶ B C Rout: *The State Government and Administration in Orissa*, Panchashila Publishers and Book – sellers, Bhubaneswar, 2006, p 105

Power in rural areas rests on the control over land. Results of various elections reflect social and political power of the rural rich. There is a long-felt need for a drastic social transformation which could alter substantially the relations of production by reducing disparities and eliminating entrenched institutions of exploitation. This has necessitated the affluent political elites, particularly the rural elites to work against their vested interests. But, all these have gone in vain. The elite representing the dominant economic section have displayed extraordinary concern to retain power at any cost, and to protect their interests, positions and properties. So compulsive have been the general understanding of bringing about equality that every government in power has enacted legislations that has a popular face and at least appear to be concerned for the people. But, they have never produced the desired results, for they have never been properly enacted and there has been political disinterestedness.²⁷

The factor, which contributed to the continued dominance of the Brahmins and the Karnas in Orissa politics, is the large population of the adivasis in the state, that is 22.2 per cent. Concentrated in the western districts of the state, the adivasis have remained substantially cut off from contemporary social, political and economic developments. Except for their reserved posts, adivasis are hardly represented in any other sphere of public life. Even these lucky few are subjected to exploitation at the hands of people belonging to either the Brahmin or Karana caste. Unless there is a strong leadership among the adivasis and backward castes, the disproportionate distribution of benefits will help to preserve the status quo, where the upper castes would remain powerful enough to neutralize efforts at mobilisation among Orissa's backward castes.

²⁷J. Pathy, Op Cit, p 89

Chapter Four

Changing Social Composition of Oriya Political Elite

Nearly two decades after independence, the rise of intermediary castes other than the dominant upper castes was an all India phenomenon. The old brigade of freedom fighters had died by then. The new generation had hardly any direct correspondence with the freedom movement. Targets and goals also changed over time, that is from counting India as a postcolonial polity, economy and society to make it modern, industrialized, developing and self-sufficient, even a nuclear and a south Asian power. Freeing the nation from the appendage of colonialism and giving it a new image of modern independent nation-state was catalyzed due to the great visionary Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. Introduction of mixed economy and planned economic development, welfare state and a truly democratic polity along with universal education brought about phenomenal changes in the people, society and polity and the nation.

By mid 1970s public awareness in India was much ahead and developed than any other postcolonial nation-state in our vicinity. The so-called 'green revolution' and commercialization of agricultural crops facilitated growth of rural landed elite. In course of time, the rural landed elite, which usually are a backward caste in India, also claimed its share on the resources of the state not only by reservation in service sector but also by political mobilization. These processes brought the numerically preponderant intermediary castes, having a linkage more with the rural landscape and the land, to the forefront. As a result, the upper castes and the urban middle classes were progressively challenged by the larger section of rural landed (intermediary castes) elites. A number of studies both in north and south India corroborate this fact. Studies on South India¹ suggest that ideal type of hierarchical caste and class social order never existed in the pure form. Though the Brahminical social order was dominant in the Tamil society, the

¹ DA Washbrook: 'Caste, Class and Dominance in Modern Tamil Nadu: Non-Brahmanism, Dravidianism and Tamil Nationalism' and G Ram Reddy: 'The Politics of Accommodation, Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh' in Francine R Frankel and MSA Rao (ed): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, vol.1

Brahmin priests played a secondary role and socially dependent role in economic life. The Vellalas identified with the shudras were aligned with the Brahmins, and acquired English education and became part of the upper castes². However, in the cities the Brahmins began asserting their superiority to the disadvantaged Vellalas. This led the well-entrenched Vellalas to start a backward non-Brahmin movement. This movement crystallized in the victory of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which identified itself with the backward castes.

Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, the minuscule percentage of the Brahmins also led to the dominant land owning castes – the Reddies and Kammas gradually forming a part of the middle class³. The non-Brahmin movement in Andhra Pradesh brought to the fore the already dominant Reddies and Kammas. The Telgu Desam Party (TDP) espoused their cause.

However, in North India⁴, the Brahminical social order was the most fully articulated. The 'dvija' castes consisted of the Brahmins, Kshyatriyas, Vaisyas and the sub-caste Kayasthas. In Uttar Pradesh, the upper caste Zamindars belonging to the Brahmin castes, Thakurs and Bhumihars controlled the major share of land. It was only in the western Uttar Pradesh that peasant castes like the Jats and Gujjars expanded their holdings. Similarly in Bihar, the Brahminical dominance was striking. This pattern of overlapping caste status and economic position in larger parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar was reinforced through the land revenue settlements since the days of English colonialism⁵.

However, universal suffrage offered unprecedented opportunities for the lower castes to assert their claim to political power. In Bihar, the 'Yadavas' are the single largest caste category and account for about 15 percent of the state population. In Uttar

² DA Washbrook, op cit, p 208

³ G Rama Reddy, Op Cit, p 272

⁴ Francine R Frankel, 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar- Breakdown of the Brahminical Social Order' and Zoya Hasan, "Power and Mobilization- Patterns of Resistance and Change in Uttar Pradesh Politics' in Francine R Frankel and MSA Rao (ed): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India; Decline of a Social Order*. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, p 53

⁵ Atul Kohli (ed): *India's Democracy*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1991, p 236

Pradesh also electoral politics created opportunities for the backward castes to stake their claim to power against the forward castes. All these led to a fight for supremacy among the upper castes and the backward castes conforming to the middle peasantry. The upper castes, whenever in a powerful position, circumvented the rise of the backward castes by setting up representation of upper castes in ministries and filling the other seats by including the more pliant Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, the confrontation between the upper and the backward castes didn't result in a political polarization between political parties of upper castes and parties of lower castes. Almost all political parties tried to placate these rising castes.

In Orissa, in the face of overwhelming upper caste dominance similar to other states, the changes since independence have been interesting. It was the colonial rule that the entire agricultural economy was transformed. In the '*Mughal bandi*' region, conditional private property gave way to unconditional private property, where the land owners had the right to alienate land and regulate occupancy and rent through temporary settlement act. After the disastrous famine of 1866 (*Naanka Durbhiksha*), the British administration undertook some welfare activities in Orissa⁶. One among them was development of irrigation facilities, which led to the growing of commercial crops and pulses as well as movement of goods and integration of coastal districts with the metropolitan economy⁷. The villages in the coastal Orissa were drawn into the market and the commodity economy underwent a relative expansion. Further, these led to changes like the distress selling of crops and land so that the extent of money-lending to the poor peasantry increased. A large number of small landlords emerged who leased part of their land to share croppers. Rich peasants took advantage of new facilities like that of irrigation. This brought about a degree of differentiation among the peasantry.

In the inland areas the '*gauntia*' system established during the medieval period was continued. The '*gauntias*' are local tax-collectors, who were usually the village

⁶ Sanjib Kumar Rout: 'Commercialization of Agricultural Production and Response of State Bureaucracy-Coastal Orissa during late 19th century', Unpublished Dissertation, CHS, SSS, JNU, 1979, p 25

⁷ Ibid, p 29

headmen. The *gauntia* was most frequently either a Kulta or Brahmin⁸. The changes brought about by the colonial economy made the *gauntias* more powerful as they acquired the power to evict a defaulting tenant, the right to distributing wasteland and also to mediate in transfer of *Ryotwari* land. The Khandayat and the Kultas made certain improvements in their relative standings through the colonial economy, which brought about differentiation of the peasantry.

After independence, however, Kultas and Khandayats have steadily tried to improve their relative socio-economic standing. In the face of overwhelming Brahmin-Karan dominance, their gains have been modest. However by 1970s and even earlier, the rise of Kultas and Khandayats caste was marked in the rural areas. F G Bailey⁹ shows the rise of the two castes. In the inland areas the traditional dominance was maintained by the upper castes. However, their monopoly began to be challenged during the late 1950s as a result of modernization especially the impact of market forces as well as democratic policies. This gives rise to a growing assertion and articulation of their grievances by the lower strata of population. Further hereditary professions which were not profitable before had grown immensely lucrative, fetching more income and endowing a new class status to a particular caste¹⁰.

In the study done by Arun Kumar Patnaik¹¹ on Digapahandi block of Orissa, he focuses on the changing power structure within the block. While documenting the change, Patnaik says that the leadership of the village community has slowly changed character and is not only confined to the people who depend solely on agriculture, but also people who have developed large social network and have become influential through allied activities like business and professional jobs. These sort of people have registered steady growth of their positions and asserted their supremacy within the power

⁸ Sakti Padhi: 'Property in Land, Land Market and Tenancy Relations in the Colonial Period- A Review of Theoretical Categories and Study of a Zamindari District' in KN Raj (ed): *Essays on Commercialization of Indian Agriculture*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985, Chapter-2

⁹ F G Bailey: *A Study of Bissipura Village of Phulbani District-Caste and Economic Frontier*, Oxford Publication, Bombay, 1964, p 43

¹⁰ Ibid, p 45

¹¹ Arun Kumar Patnaik, 'Power Structure and Rural Development Programme- A Study of Digapahandi Block in Orissa' Unpublished Dissertation, CPS, SSS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1984

structure of the village *Samiti*. Patnaik identifies the earlier leadership of the 1960s as 'ritualistic' as the ones having the ritual status i.e. the upper caste and powerful agriculturists i.e. landed class converged with the leadership who derived legitimacy from the consensual ideology i.e. ideology governing the hierarchical caste system¹².

A group of powerful farmers emerged after agricultural crops got commercialized. Their economic power stemmed not only from agricultural activities but from commercial activities like rice milling, rice business, and contractship under various government departmental projects and merchandising also. These farmers have also realized the role of representative political institutions in helping and guarding their commercial interests. The socio economic demands, wants, grievances and needs of the people have multiplied overtime and their unfulfilments by the leadership are unsettling the age-old images of the villagers about the leadership. This dissatisfaction with the earlier leadership has led these people to look for a new set of leaders who were expected to redress their grievances and get some of the demands fulfilled immediately. Thus, while the leadership tended to be ritualistic in earlier periods, there emerged a type of leadership in 1970s which may be characterized as the contractual leadership. This leadership derives its legitimacy from the competitive politics which has emerged by breaking the consensual ideology. This consensual leadership has emerged due to the emergence of entrepreneurial groups who also owned land. This leadership however was not necessarily from the upper caste¹³. They were from the Khandayats and the Kulta castes.

Within the social hierarchy Zamindars, belonging mostly to the upper castes lost their economic dominance quite heavily. This was due to the fact that they, as a class, were used to an extravagant living which they failed to maintain with a dwindling income. Further, their upper caste status disallowed them to do physical labor and finally lack of entrepreneurial ability brought their downfall. They were in many cases reduced to indebtedness, and therefore started selling land. This was true also of the big landlords

¹² Ibid, p 111

¹³ Ibid, p 112

who declined in power in the countryside¹⁴. On other instances, the landlord castes wanted to have middle class openings for which western education was a necessity and that was available at the urban centers. Thus, most of these landlords migrated to the urban centers. With the decline of landlords and Zamindars, the group which gained the most was the estate managers. They grabbed much of the produce of the land and consequently grew rich. Further, they invested the accumulated wealth in buying lands from the impoverished tenants and thus adding to their holdings. They moved up in social and economic hierarchy. These estate managers were drawn mainly from the Kulta castes. They were able to combine their land holdings and entrepreneurial ability which the upper castes were unable to do. Some Brahmins, Bhulias, Sunaris and Sundhis also managed to do the same. But, it was mostly the Kultas who succeeded. This rising caste began to influence the power structure in a way that land reforms could not be effectively implemented rather they benefited from the state extension programmes of rural development¹⁵. It was mostly the caste that siphoned off bulk of the rural credit in the form of fertilizers, HYV seeds and credit etc. On the other hand, the lower peasantry became alienated from land. They belonged to the lower castes and tribals like the Gondas, Chamars, Sauras etc. They became heavily indebted and gradually became attached laborers, being attached to certain land owners. It is the middle peasantry that benefited the most and rose far above their previous social status. It were they who later became capitalists, land holders, whose main income was from a relatively modernized and commercialized agriculture. This middle peasantry also started taking to educational opportunities and looked for middle class job openings. This mobility has imprinted its implications as well as sustained itself through the political processes, at least at the village and Panchayat level. So, the transition of power from the traditionally entrenched feudal and semi-feudal elements occurred gradually and peacefully without any tension.

With the establishment of the new capital at Bhubaneswar, a number of job opportunity arose. The Khandayats, who were already dominant to some extent in the

¹⁴ Binod Bihar Meher: 'Caste, Class and Politics- A Case Study of Sambalpur District, Orissa', Unpublished Dissertation, CPS, SSS, JNU, New Delhi, 1981

¹⁵ SN Rath: The Development of the Welfare State in Orissa (1950-1960), S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1977, p 61

society found new opportunities. Among the persons who occupied government and private jobs in the new capital, the Khandayats constituted more than half. Thus, modernization, market forces and democratic politics gave rise to growing assertion and articulation of their grievances by the lower strata of population. Absence of upper castes due to their historical non-availability as well as migration, occupation of jobs and establishment of new capital gave ascendancy to the Khandayats.

In recent years, there has been a decline in the dominance of Brahmins and Karans over the local power structure due to the rise of peasant castes in the power hierarchy. Along with the upper castes, there arose other peasant castes that formed a part of the rural elite by becoming the block chairman and *Sarpanch* in different localities. It was seen that gradually the peasant castes belonging to the middle peasantry and conforming to the Khandayat/Kulta castes actually strengthened their position in the rural power structure. This was possible to do so because of factors like increased migration of members of the upper castes i.e. Brahmins and Karans to the urban centers, and a modest increase in the political awareness and political participation of other castes especially the Khandayats and lastly the electoral compulsions on the part of the ruling elites of dominant castes to satisfy the emerging force by co-opting them mostly in the rural power structure¹⁶. It has been further stated that urban contact has also brought about degrees of change. There is increased efficacy of the villagers. They are no longer afraid of meeting a policeman or talking to a government official and a political leader. Further, there has been a further proliferation of power centers and a premium on youth and education for leadership¹⁷. This underlines the fact that while political awareness and political participation of the villagers has been gradual and is very much in evidence, the rural leadership has also changed character. It has assumed new shapes and centers of power have grown in number to satiate their ambitions.

Today's rural leadership is much more stratified and complex than in the past. Introduction of adult franchise and awareness has also facilitated a large part of the rural

¹⁶ JK Baral: 'Rural Politics and Development in Orissa' in Basudev Sahoo (ed), *Orissa in Perspective*, Swatantra Publication, Bhubaneswar, 1987, p 115

¹⁷ Ibid, p 117

leadership to shift from the upper stratum of the society to its middle and lower-middle strata. While the dominance of the upper castes has declined or is on the way out, it is the middle peasantry or the Khandayats which have become powerful both in economic as well as political terms. Failure of the upper caste Zamindar to take benefit of green revolution and commercialization of agricultural crops and consequent decline in their economic and socio-political dominance, their inherent aversion to physical labor restricted their choice of occupations, lack of entrepreneurial skills necessary for transforming themselves into capitalist landholders and their aspiration for middle class job openings really told upon their dominant status in the rural areas. The vacuum was efficiently exploited by their erstwhile estate managers. They not only assumed dominant status and scaled up in power hierarchy but ascended as a mighty political force all over the state. Another positive factor in their favor is that they have amassed huge landed property not only from the declining Zamindars but also from the indebted small peasants and tribals. All these factors explain the rise of the middle peasantry belonging to Khandayat, Kulta castes in politics and their increasing dominance in society.

The genesis of the middle peasantry's rise in the state politics can be traced to the faction feuds within the political parties, whose leadership consisted of the upper castes. During these faction feuds, a rebel faction sometimes looked at alternative social base for support. The most notable among these feuds has been that of the Congress Party and more specifically between Biju Patanaik and H K Mahatab. Though there were minor differences between the two leaders, the faction feuds actually crystallized after the coalition government of the Congress Party and Ganatantra Parishad, which was the handiwork of H K Mahatab. Biju Patanaik, after being the PCC (Pradesh Congress Committee) chief, sought to broaden the base of the Congress and thereby strengthen his position. He thus looked for an alternative social base. He found it in the emerging agrarian middle class as opposed to the landlords and the upper castes. He gave party tickets to a new generation of people in the villages, with emphasis on youth. He successfully accommodated a section of the emerging middle class in the political process which automatically broadened the base of the Congress Party. This new leadership remained loyal to Biju Patanaik. Moreover, when Patanaik formed the Utkal

Congress, he made a special place for the aspiring Khandayats. By initiating a shift towards the aspiring middle class, mostly identified with the Khandayats, he brought about a generational shift in politics in Orissa. This mobilization approach for looking for a new generation of leaders, especially from the agrarian middle class meant that emphasis was more in recruiting the aspiring middle peasantry than on the landlords and the zamindars and secondly on the youth as opposed to the old guards of the Congress. All other parties emulated the Congress Party and competitively made space for the Khandyat castes in the party structure. This trend culminated in the election of the first Khandayat Chief Minister, Nilamani Routroy in 1977.

A look at the Legislative Assemblies of successive periods since 1971 shows the increase in the number of Khandayat, Kulta castes. The number of Khandayat MLAs in the assembly from 1967 to the present day has been – seven in 1967, 15 in 1971, 16 in 1974, 5 in 1977, 22 in 1980, 27 in 1985, 19 in 1990, 21 in 1995, 23 in 2003 and 29 in 2004¹⁸.

However, the important offices in the government and in the bureaucracy are occupied by the upper castes. No Khandayat or any other caste than the Brahmin and Karan Chief Ministers is learnt to have headed a Government for a full term. All the parties are led by these two upper castes. For example-

<u>Political party</u>	<u>Headed by</u>
Biju Janta Dal	Naveen Patnaik (Karan)
Bharatiya Janata Dal	Suresh Chandra Pujari (Brahmin)
Congress Party	Janaki Ballabh Patnaik (Karan)
Communist Party of India	Janardhan Pati (Brahmin)
Nationalist Congress Party	Bijaya Mohapatra (Brahmin)

These parties may have recruited a large number of dalit and lower caste workers, but the command lies in the hands of upper caste leaders. Although the changing social

¹⁸ Orissa Reference Annual -2006, published by the Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar. P 891- 892

realities have compelled the parties to win over the middle castes and lower caste voters, they have remained upper caste structures in essence. Moreover, it is also found that the lower caste political elite emulate their higher caste counterparts as the role models and imitate their life style. It hardly serves the purpose of representing the dalit and backward castes.

Conclusion

Study of power is central to political inquiry. In all other disciplines of social sciences, the crux of study is to develop a comprehension of the configurations of power. Given the tantalizing social desire to turn asunder the equations of power, the focal point of all social science studies can be reduced to a pathology of power. The 'disease of power' affects not only the 'body-politik' but also the society as a whole. It has such a corrupting impact that those who have been at the top in the power hierarchy are conservative about creating even a small space for those who are trying to upgrade their social standing and hold on power structure. Those who lie somehow below the social hierarchy are either hyperactive to turn around the structure or lack consciousness to understand the structure of dominance.

The elite have, therefore, fabricated the structure of competitive elitism, masquerading as democracy to camouflage their dominance over the resources of the state. The structure of the society is so organized that it sustains only the elite and attempts of ascendancy from the grassroots are nipped in the bud. The elite not only excel in their areas of expertise but also exercise tremendous influence over the masses for their special skills. The masses, on the other, acknowledge the superiority of the elite and accept them, and in the best of the circumstances emulate them. Thus, the activities of the masses most of the time are elite-conforming rather than elite-challenging.

In Orissa, due to backwardness among the people in terms of economic achievements and educational attainment, the element of political activism is not often found. Although people are conscious of Brahmin-Karan dominance, they turn a Nelson's eye to it. The lack of activism in the population is not only restricted to the realm of established and recognized patterns of politics but in social movements also. In a way, except competitive elitism that is ensured by democratic party competition, there is no challenge to the political elite in Orissa from the people.

The regional disparities within Orissa are indeed glaring, and are so deep rooted that they have remained the most important political issue in the state. This has stalled the full force of caste politics.

If elites are based on factors of social status, economic power and knowledge, then power elites would establish relations of power in society. This would be derived from economic relations.

Weber suggests that a significant attribute of the state is its intelligence group, meaning administrative elite. It is this that imparts to society the rule of law. Thus, functionally the elite not only hold power but exercise power in tranquil and turbulent times through the administrative elite. They manage cooperation and conflict of politics primarily because society may be iniquitous in terms of knowledge, resource, status and facility of geography. This is borne out by the distinction of coastal and non-coastal, plain and hill people, western and eastern parts of the world. The issue of power and equality is in a sense an issue of the issue of relations of politics of cooperation, cooptation, accommodation and conflict, war and peace. This establishes relations of power. For example, the relations between the states and society in terms of mutually reinforcing religious institutions and interest groups.

Foucault, however, in a different context, focuses the infinitesimal traces of power, which permeates every layer of society and relationship, even that of family. If modernity stands for efficiency, enhanced capabilities and optimum utilization, then it also sharpens the exercise of power in a very efficient, albeit subtle manner. For Foucault, modernity has paved the new vistas for exercising power, which are very subtle, and efficient. Modernity is, thus, successful in producing disciplined individuals and docile bodies. Foucault's analysis of power certainly counters the claim that power emanates from the very structure of the society and its relationships. Foucault, rather, claims that no relationship in society, however intimate and familial is unaffected by

exercise of power. The main problem, critics point out, Foucault has in his analysis of power is that he only unearths the relationship of power in society, but remains short of suggesting and chalking out any ways and means to alter that given power configuration. To this critique, Foucault reacts that it was not his project to suggest alternatives to present and given configurations of power. He maintains that it was not his intention to turn asunder or alter the relationships of power since the very movement leading for the purpose will breed new configurations of power and thus turn totalitarian. The present configurations of power are certainly dangerous but not bad, the coming configurations may be worse still.

The dominance of upper castes in Orissan politics and the elite-centered approach in social life fits into the Foucauldian model of disciplined and docile masses. It is not the case that people in Orissa are unaware of the dominance of only handful of people hailing from two or three castes in all walks of life, rather people think they are not left with alternatives, and they also do not look for alternatives (perhaps in the fear of another totalitarian power configuration as Foucault mentions).

The upper caste dominance has been so stubborn that it has blocked almost all the ways for representing and ventilating the voice of those who dissent from the system. Unwillingness on the part of the elite to create democratic space for co-opting such dissents culminated in the growing Naxal activities in the state. Had the elite been flexible and democratic to allow and integrate growing aspirations from below, not only the problem of Naxalism would have been abated but the elite structure would have been more diverse, competitive and thus more democratic also.

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