

**CHANGING DIMENSIONS OF POWER STRUCTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF DEPRESSED
CASTES AND CLASSES IN RURAL ORISSA**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SUSANTA KUMAR JENA

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI – 110 067

INDIA

2000



जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI 110 067

*Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences*

July, 2000

CERTIFICATE

This Dissertation entitled “**Changing Dimensions of Power Structure and Rural Development: A Sociological Study of Depressed Castes and Classes in Rural Orissa**” submitted in partial fulfilment for the **M. Phil** Degree of this University has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University and is my original work.

Susanta Kumar Jena
SUSANTA KUMAR JENA

(Candidate)

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Dr. ANAND KUMAR
(Supervisor)

Prof. NANDU RAM
(Chairperson)

DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The academic endeavour would not have been possible without the help of a number of people who with their kind cooperation and active supervision and support have made this research work a reality.

This work is really the novel idea of my esteemed supervisor, Prof. Anand Kumar, whose supervision, guidance, intellectual ingenuity, scholastic cooperation and encouragement, suggestion and inspiration helped me in completing this academic endeavour. I also express my gratitude to Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty for his timely guidance and suggestions.

I am also thankful to the staffs and members of JNU Library, Ratan Tata Library(DSE), Central Reference Library(DU), and TeenMurti Library, New Delhi.

My seniors Bapi, Basant, Bhagabati, Bibuti, Biresh, Dama, Jimut, Prasanta & Mama, Manoj, Rabi, Abinash, Ramanath, Samir, Suman, Uma and Anoop have extended their cooperation when I needed it most. My friends, Ajaya, Bikram, Bimal, Debasis, Deepak, Dillip, Dinesh, Jitu, Kiran, Nilu, Niranjana, Prabaharan, Santosh, Sujit, Sushant, Tila, have been of immense help and encouragement through out this endeavour of mine.

I would like to mention my gratitude especially to my family members for their unflagging support and steadfast appreciation through out the process of my work.

Having been privileged in receiving such sympathy and support, I own responsibility for all the errors or omissions in this work.

New Delhi


Susanta Kumar Jena

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INTRODUCTION

After fifty years of social engineering, rural development has come to produce scores of unintended consequences. Poverty remains rampant, with a few new pockets of prosperity and affluence cropping up. Many of the development projects launched have either come a cropper or resulted in benefiting the already entrenched power groups. Another grave concern is that more than seventy-percent people, who are living in rural areas and whose primary source of livelihood is agriculture, contribute thirty-percent of the Gross Domestic Product of our country. What is new is a more apparent global and urban awareness of the enormous complexity, dimensions and implications of the problems of the development of rural societies. No wonder, the Third world is a major global problem and the dominant element in it is the rural development. From Gandhi to Nyerere, the Third world countries have had no illusions that it is their prime problem.

The eternal challenge of development is more development. Change is the law of nature. The word development suggests the evolution of human social system from simpler to complex, and higher forms. The transformation of society from finite-ending process to an endless process is one of the key features of development. Development may be defined as an activity or process of both qualitative and quantitative change in the existing systems, aiming at immediate improvement of living conditions of the people or increasing the potential for the betterment of living conditions in future. Development results in reduction of dependency on external sources-increase in self-reliance, confidence in their own strength and potentials for development, spirit of mutual respect and collective effort.

Writing on 'Rural Development' poses the question of what constitutes rural development?

The operational criterion in a definition of 'Rural Development' is improved productivity, while assuring minimum acceptable level of living which includes i) food, ii) shelter, iii) education and iv) health services. These call for a number of programmes, which are to be implemented in varied socio-economic environments. Therefore, 'Rural Development' embraces a wide range of activities and this will vary with requirements of a region and priorities assigned to the components within a programme at a particular time and a particular stage of development.

Hobhouse defined development in terms of the scale and efficiency of social organisation. Implied in this perspective was the metaphor of 'growth'. Development is thus conceived as organic, directional, cumulative and irreversible.¹ But in the middle of the present century development became synonymous with economic growth. Close on the heels of Marxian perspective the analysis calls into question the relevance of simple Gross National Product, along with the growth conception of development. The Gross National Product as an indicator came under criticism primarily for its lack of concern for distribution. Accordingly, development got redefined as redistribution with growth.² In other words, development became synonymous with 'growth and justice'.

¹ S.L.Sharma, **Development: Socio-Cultural Dimensions**, (Jaipur: Rawat Publications: 1986), p.1.

² Ibid. , P.1.

Objectives

Development is a problem foreseen in the past, and a problem at present and for the foreseeable future-a problem in, economics, sociology, psychology and education-having multidimensional and multi-directional aspects. This is the key problem especially for the countries of the Third world. There is discrepancy between the rich and poor and the powerful and powerless. The rich have access to all commodities and the poor do not get the basic needs fulfilled. This creates irk not only among the masses but also among the social scientists, planners and visionaries.

So in this study, my attempt is to examine the dynamics of power structure in relation to caste and class in rural Orissa in the context of rural development. Here I propose to

Investigate: -

1. How the caste organisations in the village affect power structure?
2. How is power derived and exercised by different castes and classes?
3. Whether inequalities in the distribution of development benefits, are associated with stratification factors of castes, class, and power?
4. What role do factions play in the village power structure?
5. Whether the depressed castes and classes take-up the charge of their responsibility of power- sharing in all-round development of their society?

Chapterisation

The present study consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces us to the basic facts of the social background of rural development, rural power structure, and their

interaction in the Indian context in general, and in the context of Orissa in particular. It also unveils the nature and scope of the present exercise. The second chapter locates the rural power structure as seen from an all-India perspective. The third chapter explores the contours of economy of rural development in the framework of developmental planning. The fourth chapter throws light on depressed castes and classes in rural Orissa and on their position in the rural power structure. The last chapter concludes the study and puts forth the salient findings of the present study.

Methodology

The present exercise being a part of the requirements of a M.Phil degree, it does not entail any fieldwork on the topic at hand. This explains the importance given in this study to secondary sources such as the Census, the government reports on various related areas and the studies undertaken by different authoritative researchers on rural development.

Towards a Conceptual Framework

Rural development has come to mean transformation in rural areas in both qualitative and quantitative senses. In the pre-independence period a number of experiments were attempted by eminent people in selected areas. Although they were successful in their experiments they could not succeed in adopting their programmes to the needs of all the villages in India. Their dreams were never fulfilled, yet the minds of planners, economists, and visionaries still remained focussed on this subject. It had been accorded priority in recent years, in the light of our long experience.

Understanding the inequalities resulting from development, Gunnar Myrdal asserts: Low average income, income inequality and social stratification are causally interrelated.... Inequality of social status is not only made more rigid and permanent by low levels of income...but itself tends to perpetuate its major cause."³ He maintains that "economic inequality is typically the outcome of social inequality and the reverse is also true."

Further, Anker Desmond gives the following working definition of rural development, "strategies, policies, programmes for the development of rural areas and the promotion of the activities carried out in such areas with the ultimate aim of achieving a fuller utilisation of available physical and human resources and higher incomes and better living conditions for the rural poor and effective participation of the people in the development process".⁴

According to Michael P. Todaro, rural development comprises :-

- i) improvements in levels of living, including employment, education, health, nutrition, housing and a variety of social services.
- ii) decreasing inequalities in the distribution of rural incomes and in rural-urban balances in incomes and economic opportunities.
- iii) capacity of the rural sector to sustain and accelerate the pace of these improvements."⁵

³ G.Myrdal, *Asian Drama- An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, Vol. I, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books: 1968), p.569.

⁴ A.Desmond, L.W., *Rural Development- Problems and Strategies*, in, *International Labour Review*, 1973, p.108.

⁵ M.P. Todaro, *Economics for Developing World*, (London: Longmans Group Ltd.: 1977), p.249.

The World Bank observed, "Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people-the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those that seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants, and the landless.⁶

The goal of development becomes the enrichment of the quality of life and its availability at minimum level to all sections of the population. It is now recognised that development is not merely the provision of opportunities for resource development in the light of appropriate science and technology but also their actual utilisation, and therefore the creation of the necessary facilities for such utilisation is power politics which play a very important role in rural development. The total networks of power relations within a community both formal and informal, determine major decisions and actions. The power structure is more than the official leaders and the recognised political parties and includes influential individuals and interest groups too. It remains a fact that all the developmental projects are invariably mediated through the power structure.

The word development should not be understood in any narrow economic growth terms. It conveys the movement of the whole system towards ever-larger measures of power to the people. Thus, they may consciously participate in building thier own future, in achieving higher production, equitable distribution, and maximum happiness for themselves-for producers as well as consumers. Hunter postulates on power structure, "power involves relationship between individuals and groups, both controlled and controlling. Power is socially structured, into a dual relationship between governmental and economic authorities in national, state, and local levels. Power is a relatively constant

⁶ World Bank Report, 1975, pp.25-47.

factor in social relationship with policies as variables. Power of the individual must be structured into associations clique or institutional patterns to be effective.”⁷

The question of differential distribution of development benefits depends on various factors such as caste, income, occupation, landholding, socio-economic status, assets, and positions held in one or more of village institutions. All these are included in three forms of stratification caste, class and power. It is, by now, more or less, recognized that “social and economic order are not identical,”⁸ and that there are at least three dimensions of stratification status (caste), class and power which constitute the minimum set of hierarchical inequalities among people. These three are correlated but not reducible to either. So power is basic to all; caste (status) and class. As Weber defines, power is “the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action area against the resistance of others who are participating in the action.”⁹

Marx emphasises, on the other hand, the inequality in the society, which is based on the economic structure. The persons who have accessibility to means of production possess power. According to Marx, “power is seen to be held by particular group, in society at the expense of the rest of society. This is a constant-sum concept of power, since a net gain in the power of the dominant group represents a net loss in the power of the rest society.”¹⁰

⁷ F. Hunter, *Community Power Structure*, (New York: Anchor Books: 1963), p.6.

⁸ H.H. Gerth, and C.W..Mills, (trans) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (London: Oxford University Press: 1946), and p.180.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.45-46.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

The problem of status inconsistency have a “composite or overall view of the individual’s position based on several status giving variables.”¹¹ Mills defined the power elite as people who have power and enjoy status. This power elite involves the coincidence of economic, military and political powers. In Mills’s explanation of power, “elite rule is in institutional rather than psychological terms”. He rejects the view that members of the elite have superior qualities or psychological characteristics, which distinguish them from the rest of the population. Instead, he argues that the structure of institutions is such that those at the top of the institutional hierarchy largely monopolise power. Certain institutions occupy key pivotal position in society and the elite comprises those who hold command posts in these institutions.¹²

The concept of power is evident not only in capitalism but also in communism, where the common people are controlling the institutions. Contrary to the acceptance of equality in communist countries, Bottomore epitomized that, “ the political system of communist countries is the pure type of “power elite”, that is, a group which, having come to power with the support or the acquiescence of particular classes in the population maintains itself in power chiefly by virtue of being an organised minority confronting the unorganised majority.”¹³

What is the correlation between class, caste, and power in rural India today? Some people have more accessibility than others. Those who have more, they are influencing, coercing or enjoying over others in a patterned way. Scholars have attributed three

¹¹ Quoted in M. Harlampos and R>m. Heald, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1994), p.112.

¹² Op.cit., Gerth and Mills, p.110.

¹³ Op.cit., Gerth and Mills, 112.

meanings to the term structure: one meaning pertains to economic or class stratification which includes such aspects as agrarian structure, property relations, income distribution and the like; another usage of the term is concerned with status or caste stratification; yet another term refers to the distribution of power.¹⁴

Klass argues that caste initially originated with the first development of an economic surplus in India and that it was the means by which tribal societies consisting of originally equalitarian class adjusted to the inequality generated by the surplus. This would place the origin of caste at the very beginning of Indian class society.¹⁵

According to Andre Beteille “caste may be defined as a small and named group of persons characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit, by tradition, of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system based on the concepts of purity and pollution.”¹⁶ Therefore, it seems that caste is primarily a social phenomenon, the sub-caste which has been the most enduring element within it, is primarily a unit of the social system of kinship, though the broader ‘jati’ was for a long time the basic unit of the social division of labour and even today caste still has definitive economic and power effects.

In contrast, class is basically an economic phenomenon. Class should be basically defined in terms of the Socialist-Marxist concept of the social relations of production. It

¹⁴ T.M.Dak, ‘Development Disparities: A Structural Perspectives’ in S.L.Sharma’s, **Development: Socio-Cultural Dimensions**, (Jaipur: Rawat Publications: 1986), p.113.

¹⁵ M. Klass, **Caste: The Emergence of South Asian Social System**, (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues: 1980), p.11.

¹⁶ A. Beteille, ‘The Reproduction of Inequality: Occupation, Caste, and Family’, in, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 25 (1), 1991, pp. 3-20.

is commonly known that Marx himself never identifies the economic or the base with technology or the labour process but rather sees this as a combination of forces and relations of production. The social classes have been replaced by a continuous hierarchy of unequal positions where the class means, “whose members have a consciousness of kind, a community of life and shared interest, there is now unbroken continuum of occupational statuses which command varying degrees of prestige and economic reward.”¹⁷ Thus it is in a very formalistic sense that we can distinguish ‘caste’ and ‘class’ and say that one is mainly social and the other is economic concept and both have probably coexisted in India since the beginning of the generation of a surplus and economic inequality.

Today, though ‘class’ and ‘caste’ are separate, and we speak of the dominance of a simple capitalist mode of production. The reason is that the beginning of capitalism under colonial rule not only began a process of separating out a ‘caste system’ from the ‘class structure’. This meant on the one hand, redefining and reshaping castes as a new kind of social phenomenon, and on the other hand, redefining and reshaping classes in the rural areas as ‘landlords’, ‘tenants’, and ‘labourers’. With this redefined caste system maintained under the dominance of a capitalist mode of production, what we are faced today is a very complex nature of caste and class. Not only do more ‘feudal’ and ‘capitalist’ forms of classes and castes relations mix, but also castes affect the existence of classes and vice-versa.

In the light of the positive association between hierarchy and inequalities in the distribution of development benefits, one would like to ask how power has regenerated

¹⁷ G.Omvedt, (ed.), *Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States*, (Delhi: Teaching Politics: 1982), p.13.

from caste and class and how power wielders have availed themselves at the expense of others in distribution of development programmes? The nature of community power structure and the extent of power dispersion, is relevant to know the proportion and characteristics of the population involved in and influencing directly and indirectly the decision-making process. The concept of power pool is employed to refer to all the persons involved in the power arena. The

power-pool consists of “ (a) those who perform power, exercising roles or those who occupy formal power positions, (b) those who are considered to be the leaders of community, (c) those who are found to be exerting influence in the decisional process, and (d) those who are capable of preventing the implementation of decisions.”¹⁸

Power initially arises out of the ritual status and economic power, whether ascribed or achieved. Other factors such as education, control over votes and the ability to exploit various resources, work as contributory factors in attaining the political power. Different individuals, groups, or castes may have various resources at their command and they may use varied skills and expertise to exploit them. Those who have more resources and exploit them to the maximum of their benefits wield more power. An individual, a group, or a caste wields power only after fulfilling certain criteria. These are:

- 1) Demographic, which includes numerical strength.
- 2) Ascriptive:
 - a) Ritual status, and
 - b) Economic status (through land ownership)

¹⁸ T.K.Oommen, *Social Structure, and Politics: Studies in Independent India*, (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Housing Corporation: 1984), p..91.

3) **Achievemental:**

- a) Modern education,
- b) Occupation, and
- c) Political power.

The dimension of caste in the power structure

To assess the impact of modernity on the power structure of the rural community is one approach to the study of the changing pattern of caste relations. An Indian village represents an organised community at all levels of interaction. The bases of such organisation include the social alignment, social controls, the social media, and the social standards.¹⁹ The rural community has its own network of relations permitted and upheld by norms and sanctions. Administratively an Indian village is considered a basic unit of the power structure of the Indian political system. The caste and village system provide “security and stability in economic, political and social aspects.”

According to Rudolph & Rudolph, “Caste system is an approximation of the ideal type of traditional stratification; a system in which rigidly ascribed and closed status group whose superordinate and subordinate relationships are legitimised by a comprehensive sacred ideology block, social mobility and change”.²⁰

Srinivas defined dominant castes: “Caste may be said to be ‘dominant’, when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, and when it also wields preponderate economic and political power. A large and powerful caste can more easily be dominant if

¹⁹ R. Firth, Elements of Social Organisation, in, L. S. Ainaur, **The Dynamics of Caste Relations in Rural India**, (Jaipur: Rawat Publications: 1986), p. 97.

²⁰ P.H. Rudolph & S.Rudolph, **The Modernity of Tradition**, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1967), p.5.

its position in the local caste hierarchy is not so low.”²¹ It has further been argued by Dube, “the dominance of caste can be expressed through abusing, beating, economic exploitation, (gross under payment) sexual exploitation, representation of the village in the inter village councils, control of local votes, and settlement of inter-caste and intra-caste disputes.”²²

Today, if not in the past, an Indian village enjoys a greater awareness of belonging to the larger community. Its links are more visible in its administrative ties with larger units like that of the tehsil, the district, the state, and the nation. There are several groups in a village, which share power and utilise it for their own interests.

M.S.A Rao has described the position of castes via the power element in the context of village life, “while the traditional pattern of power relationships between groups or castes was on the basis of patron-client relationships with an expectation of complete loyalty or allegiance on the part of the clients, faction parties in the context of modern representative political institutions are based on alliances characterized by relative autonomy. The pattern of alliances of the faction parties further reveals that it cut across caste barriers, especially the pollution line between the clean and unclean caste.... Thus the dominant caste and the unclean castes are drawn together strengthening their ties of interdependence on a more egalitarian basis.”²³ The power structure in an Indian

²¹ Quoted in T.K.Oommen, **Social Structure and Politics : Studies in Independent India**, (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing House Corporation: 1984), p.91

²² S. C. Dube, ‘Caste Dominance and Factionalism’, in, **Contribution to Indian Sociology**, No.2, 1968, pp.58-59.

²³ M. S. A. Rao, ‘Some Conceptual Issues in the Study of Caste, Class, Ethnicity and Dominance’, in, F.R.Frankel and M. S. A. Rao, (ed.), **Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order**, Vol. 2, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1990), pp. 21-45.

village exhibits a pattern of inter-caste relationships, which have been shaped and reinforced by the social and religious value systems.

The dimension of class in the power structure

The Indian feudalism was dominant and characterized by the fact that the most important means of production, the land, was essentially controlled by feudal exploiting classes at the village level. The ruling state claims to the “ownership” of the land but in practice was not able to enforce this; while on the other hand, the main producing classes peasants, artisans and labourers had certain types of rights to the land and the means of production.

The observation by Andre Beteille who has pointed out that “along with the thousands of castes, there were also infact indigenous ‘class’-classifications that divided the rural population of India into four or five main socio-economic groups according to their position in the system of production.”²⁴

The dimension of class in north- India is divided into *malik* (landlord), *kisan* (peasant) and *mazdoor* (labourers) as well as artisans and merchants. In the classifications, it can be seen that there is not only a division between the exploiting classes (village landlords, merchants, priests and state officials) and others; there are also divisions among the village tillers, between peasant cultivators and peasants usually divided into two sections, artisans and labourers and the latter divisions coincide with jati divisions. In most cases the village landlords were from traditional non-cultivating castes

²⁴ A. Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press:1996), pp. 102-111.

people from the lower caste or class have availed the opportunity of reservation and gained a lot but it is very minimal for enjoyment of power over others. Because the educated elite was overwhelmingly drawn from the higher castes that had formerly a literati tradition, that is Brahmans, Kayasthas, and others.²⁶ Men from peasant and artisan caste of Shudra status constituted the larger majority of factory workers; while Dalits could find some openings in factories or in construction of roads and railways, generally they filled the lowest, most unskilled jobs.

In the mines and plantations it was the section of lower class/caste people who were most exploited in feudal society (dalits) or those outside of feudal relations together. Merchants and moneylenders were mainly drawn from the Vaishya castes that had traditionally performed the superordinating function, and through that they gained power over peasants as *sahukars* and got control over much of the land on mortgage. They generally did not emerge as actual landlords or owners of the land but simply controlled the crops.

There is a broad correlation between the caste and class, which duplicated the main classes from the caste structure. Nevertheless, it was only a correlation, and not an identity, and in every caste there could be found some individuals who could get education, a little bit of land, and some access to new opportunities. The fact that artisans and even untouchables had formal rights to landownership, to education and to new occupations, it was connected with the emergence of 'caste' and 'class' as separate structures, separate but highly interconnected.

²⁶ Op.cit., Gail, Omvedt, pp. 25-32.

Factionalism and power structure in villages

In the context of class and caste considerations in rural India, factionalism is both an inter-group and intra-group phenomenon. Concentration of economic resources within a caste may cause fierce economic rivalries between different individuals. The hold of a few individuals in the group on the economic and political power deprives others of an equal participation in the village affairs. Thus, factions are created in the village and members from different castes align with different factions and, in the process, multi-caste alliances come into existence.

The phenomenon of factionalism was, studied by Oscar Lewis²⁷. He discussed factions as small cohesive groups within castes and that these are the locus of power and decision making and contribute to the compartmentalised and segmented nature of village social organisation. He has listed three conditions for the faction to operate successfully. They are: “(1) it must be sufficiently cohesive to act as a unit. (2) it must be large enough to act as a self- sufficient ceremonial groups... (3) it is independent of other groups.” With this point in view Nicholas has said, “ faction is a troublesome form of social organisation.”²⁸

Factionalism is eminently visible among the groups in panchayat elections. The candidature of the contestants is sponsored by the multi-caste alliances and they are sure to gain political power if their candidate is elected. Thus, the introduction of adult franchise and the establishment of statutory panchayats have brought a change in the

²⁷ O. Lewis, *Group Dynamics in a North- Indian Village: A Study of Factions*, (New Delhi; Programme Evaluation India: 1958), p.115.

²⁸quoted in, R.K.Choudhary, *Caste and Power Structure in Village India*, (New Delhi: Inter India Publications: 1978), p.18.

power structure in the villages. Kothari has pointed out that since candidates of the same caste contest against each other, the caste as a factor is losing importance and political factions and personal ambitions cut across caste loyalties.²⁹ Srinivas has observed that with the introduction of the panchayat system, the lower caste people have become conscious of their role in the power structure of the village.³⁰

In various studies undertaken by the social scientists, it is observed that power structure in the village is changing; that loyalties cut across the caste boundaries; that because of numerical superiority, the lower castes are also gaining power; that because of voting rights, new alignments are taking place and traditionally powerful men are losing ground; and that factionalism has thus, become a part of village politics.

This chapter reflects upon the conceptual understanding of rural development and power structure in general. The dimension of caste in power structure has changed and the new dimension added into caste as class. Social structure, caste dominance, and distribution of power, and factionalism are thus interrelated and are not independent of each other. In most of the existing literature the distribution of power and factionalism have been studied separately. However, to know the dynamics of power relations between different castes and classes in the village, an integrated and comprehensive study of social structure, caste, and class dominance, distribution of power will be undertaken.

²⁹Ibid., p.17.

³⁰Ibid.,p.17.

CHAPTER-1

POWER STRUCTURE IN RURAL ORISSA

This chapter deals with the power structure in rural Orissa. The points of coincidence and departure in the analysis within the context of an all-India perspective are assumed to bring forth the inherent dynamics. Needless to say, there is a need for comparative analysis. The resilience of caste system will be seen in the light of its adaptability to the change. The dominance within the power structure has congealed in the hands of a privileged section known as 'caste groups'. Therefore, the analysis of power structure is undertaken on the basis of categorisation in terms of time and the paradigm shift of the structure therein.

India's rural power structure is embedded in the dynamics of caste. A discussion on caste unfolds the economic, political and ritual aspects of social life. Indian village power structure is understood in terms of the analysis of caste as well as class. It has been observed that caste constitutes an underlying principle of rural power structure, both endogenous and exogenous changes impinge upon the caste relationship. India as a whole experiences the same historical process, although with minor variations within and across regions. Caste dominance is best understood on the basis of factors that promotes or hinders a particular caste's overall influence in different phases; broadly,

- 1) Pre-colonial
- 2) Colonial
- 3) Post- colonial

Power structure in pre-colonial period

Every region of India has had to play its expected role in a broader perspective of history under the conditions of geographical situation, and Orissa, in that regard, served both the internal and external purposes of considerable values. Orissa is like a bridge

between the northern and southern halves of India. Orissa is a small state of India but occupied the eleventh place among the populous states of the country with 3, 16,59,736 persons according to the 1991 Census. A highly important feature of the population of Orissa is its very heavy component of the weaker sections, comprising Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with 16.20 per cent and 22.21 per cent of the total population respectively. After five decades of planning, the rural development of Orissa is not satisfactory because power structure is one important aspect, which affects the growth and development of the state.

The genesis of the structure of dominance in Orissa has been discussed in terms—Brahminisation, sub-infeudation, and bureaucratisation¹. Brahminical social order was fully established in coastal region, by the time of Ashoka's invasion of Kalinga. In the 5th century the process of sub-infeudation appeared in this region. The Afghans and then the Mughals laid down an administrative agency for collecting revenues in order to maintain their rule, thus symbolising the beginning of bureaucratic structure. The 'Great Mughals' succeeded in the task of political unification or expanding their territory under their rule. During the reign of Akbar, the Mughal hegemony depended on military conquests and exercised control over the whole of the northern and central India. Their system of administration was compartmentalised in terms of the provinces, districts and parganas, and had a dual form of military and revenue administration. The militaristic basis of state was clearly defended by political alliances with local chiefs and zamindars. It collapsed when rival armies attacked it. Even the decline of small kingdoms and empires did not destroy the stability of political authority at the local level. When the Mughal Empire

¹M.R. Mohanty, *Odisha Daridra Kahinki*, (Oriya),(Cuttack: Guruprasana Press:1993), pp.49-73.



failed, state power was destroyed, but patterns of dominance in localities still persisted.

Finally, the Marathas also used the similar administrative agency. By that time the process of feudalisation and bureaucratisation had added many new dimensions to the original Brahminical order.

Pre-colonial India had witnessed the absence of centralised monarchy, with imperial sways over the entire geographical territory. Principles of Governance had not evolved let alone adherence to it. The kings or chieftains ruled over territories; mainly because of the degree or character of their armed forces.

In pre-colonial India, the jurisdictions of the states were extended to every region of a chief or a king and remained separate from each other. Generally, there was emperor or his Subedar above chiefs and below them remained Sardaras. The jurisdictions depended on the armed forces of chiefs or kings and also upon the fact as to how firmly the emperor controlled over chiefs. Although the jurisdictions used to change in time, they created cleavages between the people of the different states under the control of chiefs or Kings. Hence, naturally such type of political system firmly checked the horizontal extension of caste relations. So the Varna system allowed Brahmins to perform Hindu rituals and Kshatriyas to act as supreme leaders to rule over others. In short, it can be stated that the political limits were determinants of some effective social extension, if not more, of every caste residing in the same region.² Rural stratification occurred within lineage society very early, by almost about 500 BC. These distinctions at the level of Varna overlapped with and enforced economic and political inequalities, to embed social legitimation of secular dominance in the localised social order itself. By the later vedic period, the Dvija or twice-born varna were in place. The Kshatriya raja exercised

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² M.N. Srinivas, 'Caste in Modern India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, xvi, pp. 55-62.

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temporal power in his immediate territory, but shared a substantial amount of wealth with the Brahmins, through priestations. The Brahmins in return, performed rituals that not only ensured the success of the Kshatriya chiefs in battle, but also invested him with sacral qualities attributed to the deities for fulfilling his *dharma* of upholding the *varna* order.³

The Brahmins were mostly close to the Kings because of their priestly services. In return, the Brahmins were given large patches of land. Members of the royal family were allotted various territories, which became their private property. So, in 6th century caste dominance was at its peak, and two new religions emerged against Hinduism, namely Buddhism and Jainism. The status of Vaishya (trading community) fluctuated according to their business. The third varna derived wealth from land, cattle and trade, and was obligated to make priestations to the Kshatriyas, who offered protection or provided new lands for them to settle through conquest.⁴ Thus the Brahmins and Kshatriyas maintained their social dominance because of their ritual, caste status, closeness to military power of the king and control of the large tracts of land.

The ritual hierarchy coincided with the hierarchy of wealth and occupation especially, at the lower levels and thus provided the principle of legitimation for unequal social order. The force needed to uphold these dual varna- class stratification system was exercised by the Kshatriya raja whose sacral power was legitimated either by consecration rituals performed by Brahmins or by claims of direct links with deities through descent from solar and lunar lineages that elevated the position of the king to the protector of entire social order, including Brahmins.⁵

³ R.Thapar, **A History of India**, (London: Penguin Books: 1990). PP. 107- 112.

⁴ F.R Frankel and M.S.A., Rao, **Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order**, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press:1990), Vol. 1, p.3.

⁵ Op.cit.,M.R.Mohanty, p.3.

In ancient Orissa, the kings were the supreme rulers of the state. The native kings or chiefs appointed officials for better administration like *Khandadhipati* and *Bisoyi* in villages to collect revenue. Each village had a headman or *Pradhan* whose duty was to ensure the payment in kind to the divisional head. Individual families cultivated land, where the whole village was paying the revenue to the king.

The history of Brahmin dominance in Orissa is different. A new distinction developed among the Brahmins with the immigration of the Brahmins from the Varanasi region during the Gupta period.⁶ These Brahmins were invited by Utkal kings and were settled in concentrations known as *shasan*. Like Gupta kings, several other kings invited Brahmins to perform priestly works. Other than priestly works, they were appointed as record keepers, treasurers of some kingdoms, and also ministers in some others. As population grew some Brahmins cultivated their own land. So, the discrepancy emerged between Brahman landlords and self-cultivating Brahmins. Most of the rulers were Kshatriyas except some Brahman kings. Many tribal chiefs or rulers sought the status of Kshatriyas either by matrimonial alliance with Kshatriya kings or with royal Rajput families. They glorified their caste by inviting Brahmins to their courts. The kings invited Brahmins not only to engage them in rituals but also to introduce them into the administrative system to collect revenues.

Kshatriyas were numerically small caste. As the families expanded, most of them became soldiers commanded by royal kinsmen. Each commander was granted a certain area and the soldiers were given land to cultivate in peacetime. Some historians trace the origin of the *Paikas* of Khurda area to the cultivating Kshatriyas.⁷ This is also the reason

⁶ M.R. Mohanty, 'Class, Caste and Dominance in a Backward State', in F.R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, (ed.), **Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of A Social Order**, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1990), Vol.II, P.325.

⁷ Das.Biswarup, **Orissa: Social, Cultural and Religious aspects**, (Delhi: Sudeep Prakashan: 1985), p.47.

why some regard the *Khandayats* as Kshatriyas. Many Kshatriyas also took up trade in peacetime. After the Mughals divided Orissa into two revenue systems, the *Khas Mahals* where they collected revenue directly and *Garjats* where they reviewed tribute from the kings, the Kshatriya caste began to decline in coastal Orissa.⁸

The question of the origin of caste '*Karan*' eluded unanimity. Some scholars believe that it was a section of the ruling class belonging to the kin of Kshatriyas and they undertook the work of literary means and called then *Karanas*. Others believe that they are from number of castes ranging from Kayasthas to Vaishyas and Shudras. When a group of people worked in documentation and on a hereditary basis, a new caste Karan emerged. Kayasthas performing the same occupation as Karanas were invited from north India. Gradually, they were given land for their services; in terms of their land holdings and participation in administration, they became powerful in society.

Vaishyas of Orissa, popularly known as trading caste include artisan groups like the goldsmith and mason. Orissa that has a rich tradition of sea trade accords a privilege position to them on the basis of their wealth⁹. However, decline of trade and commerce forced the Vaishyas to take up service jobs of Shudras. Foreign invasion, mainly by the Afghans led to the pauperisation of the Vaishyas further. Gujarati and Marwari traders later filled the vacuum.

Shudras were Hinduised tribals who provided various kinds of service to the higher castes and accepted the rituals and norms of Brahmanical order. The *teli* (oil crusher), the *kumbhar* (potter), *tanti* (weaver), *badhei* (carpenter), *kamhar* (blacksmith), *gauda* (milkman) and *bhandari* (barber) fall within this category. Since the Brahmanical

⁸ M.R.Mohanty, 'Class Dominance and State Press: 1990), p.328.

⁹ B.K. Ratha, *Cultura*

order rated manual labour low and treated manual workers with contempt, craftsmen as well as peasants were treated as Shudras. Nevertheless, several groupings emerged among the Shudras, dividing them into higher and lower rank, each having varying degrees of interaction with the higher castes.

Among the Shudras, the most numerous were the peasants. In coastal Orissa, they belong to the broad category of *Chasa*. In the inland region their counterpart was the *Kulta* caste. Historically, with the process of sub-infeudation, the peasants had become tenants of various types without title to land. The number of intermediaries varied from time to time. In areas where land grants are made to the armies, the militiamen cultivated the land. By fighting against invaders they were sometimes rewarded with land as well as honorary titles by the local kings. They became a 'fighter' (*Khandayat*) caste based on land. Thus the emergence of *Khandayats* could be either from Kshatriyas or from the *Chasas* or from the both sources. While pauperisation lower the status of Vaishyas to that of Shudras, opportunities for social mobility moved the *Chasas* to identify with the *Khandayats*. The later trend has been particularly conspicuous in modern times.

The *antyajas*, who were also known as *atishudras*, were those service groups who mainly performed scavenging and cremation duties. Brahmanism declared them untouchables. In Orissa they were the *Hadi*, *Chandala* and *Dama* whose ranks were added in later years with those of the *Pana*, *Kandara* and the *Bauris*. With the growth of their population they took up other jobs as well, and by the nineteenth century, the bulk of them, particularly *Bauris*, *Panas* and *Kandaras*, had become landless agricultural labourers bonded to various landowning families.

Outside the Brahmanical social order lived the tribal population in the inland hilly regions. *Savaras*, *Gonds*, and *Pulindas* are mentioned in some of the very early historical

records. The chiefs of various tribes came to terms with local kings from time to time. These allowed them to maintain the tribal political economy undisturbed. In the earlier period, the tribal kings often put up resistance against the outside Hindu kings, but they did not succeed for long and often settled for tributary status. With the Kshatriyaisation of the tribal kingdoms, the coexistence of a non-tribal Brahmanical structure with tribal society began to evolve. It was this social structure steeped in Brahmanism, feudalism, and the beginning of bureaucratisation, which confronted the colonial regime in the event of the arrival of the British.

None of these, however, changed the way in which power was constituted at the local level. Political groupings continued to be based on kin, caste and clan, and to owe allegiance to their chiefdoms. Great territorial chiefs or rajas were autonomous heads. They appointed intermediary zamindars, who enjoyed hereditary rights of land revenue collection from primary zamindars or cultivators.

The natural consequence of such political system, which checked the tendency of horizontal extension of castes, was that numerous castes living in a particular region were instituted to interact with each other. The occupational specialisation of different castes also bound them to be interdependent for livelihood. Further, all members of every caste were desirous of availing services, facilities and advantages rendered by other castes, and it clearly meant that there was antagonism in social relationships among members of a caste. Political and economic barriers supported this tendency of economic ties, which cut across the caste barriers.

POWER STRUCTURE IN COLONIAL PERIOD

In the Hindi heartland areas the Varna was divided between the twice-born castes and Shudras. Historically, it demarcated a rigid social hierarchy, where the lower castes were deprived of education, denied social dignity and confined to manual work of cultivation or to other low status of artisan and service occupations. Untouchables, performing polluting tasks worked as bonded labour. Rajputs exercised greatest power as land-controllers. Brahminical ideology played the most important role in legitimising the status and occupational hierarchy.¹⁰

In south India, the Brahmins constituted only three per cent of population. They were unevenly distributed and controlled extensive land in some localities. They remained at the top of the ritual hierarchy. The North and South Indian caste system are very different from each other. But in one respect they have similarity, that is, the ritual distance between Brahmins and untouchables, was rigidly enforced. The distinction of purity and pollution dividing caste Hindus from untouchables was universally recognised.

In the first half of the 19th century, not only did the British conquerors encourage Christian missionaries, but reform-minded Governor-Generals instituted laws against extreme Hindu practices such as *sati*, 'infanticide' and human sacrifice. Percival Spear, believes that, fear of the loss of caste; a belief that the British rulers "meant to destroy their castes."¹¹

The impact of English empires on Indian caste system has been interpreted by Ghurye, in the light of which disruption in the caste system in modern India, anomie, and

¹⁰ Op.cit., F.R.Frankel, & M.S.A.Rao, p.6.

¹¹ Quoted in P. Kolenda, **Caste in Contemporary India: Beyond Organic Solidarity**, (Jaipur: Rawat Publications: 1984), p.118.

tension may be clearly viewed and understood.¹² Most of the people suppose that the major position of authorities and powers which were conformed to caste panchayats before the implementation of civil and penal codes by British-Raj in Indian peninsula became inherent in these codes. British authorities maintained a distinction between secular and religious matters.¹³

In the caste codes, British principles of equal opportunity and equality before law were to apply. Religious matters were left to traditional authorities. The principles of equality before law irrespective of caste were enjoyed by some peasants through judiciary but it does not mean that village panchayats or caste panchayats lost their importance in rural Indian reality. These two institutions have significant role in the solution of rural problems even today. Surely, lower caste people got opportunities to change their traditional occupations and earn more money but their claim of higher social status was opposed.

The British-Raj from time to time tried to provide financial assistance to the poor castes, but its benefit generally went to higher castes. Setting some defiled and degraded occupations aside, in almost all sections of economic action, the higher caste persons, specially Brahmans, Vaishyas and Kayasthas were benefitted upto the maximum.¹⁴ Caste, community, and lineage were the source of status and power to influence over the lower caste. Keeping this aside, wealth became a growing source of status and power for the new commercial magnates and industrial entrepreneurs who sprang from the merchant and trading communities. By the turn of the centuries, *Parsis*, *Marwaris* and *Banias* and

¹² Quoted in R.B.Mishra, *Caste, and Caste Conflict in Rural Society*, (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers: 1989), p.64.

¹³ Op. cit., R.B.Mishra, p.64.

¹⁴ Op.cit., R.B. Mishra, p.65.

Jains raised their status.¹⁵ In Orissa, *telis, banias, marwaris* and *gujaratis* and local higher castes dominate this position.

In towns and cities all over British India, a new arena emerged in which individuals who gained access to English education could achieve social prestige and political power outside the Brahmanical order through employment in government services and professions.¹⁶ The new elements in the consideration of the caste hierarchy fueled a change in the fundamental power relation as the benefits accrued to the upper castes in general and Brahmins in particular. It is argued that British-Raj created new educational opportunities where English education played a critical role in getting jobs and achieving mobility. The Raj created a new middle class, which was westernised; upper caste Hindu, English educated and mostly engaged in non-traditional occupations.

The colonial power system did not create a new middle class; it contributed to the expansion and circulation of pre-colonial elite, mostly belonging to the upper castes and the bureaucratic castes under the hegemony of British capitalist class and state. So, the organising principles of the power matrix emerge from interaction between the ruler's imperatives and ideology and the social division of labour, occupational structure, and the institutional form of the socio- historical inequalities in society.

Orissa felt the impact of British influence to a relatively lesser degree because of the late arrival of the former on its land. Land was the main source of dominance and the people with large tracts of land, had power and wealth over others. So Brahmins and *Karanas* in coastal Orissa and *Gauntias* in western part enjoyed their supremacy over others because of caste and wealth. The British government introduced English education in the system. The upper caste got easy access to this opportunity and entered into service

¹⁵ Op.cit., F.R.Frankel & M.S.A. Rao, p.9.

¹⁶ A.Kumar, *State and Society in India*, (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers: 1989), p.41.

sectors. So the landed upper strata, the *Brahmins* and *Karanas* emerged more powerful than the *Khandayats* because, they combined their land ownership with access to education and administrative jobs.

Change in rulers was not followed by a change in the land tenure system. In coastal areas of Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore districts the British decided to introduce the temporary settlement system where they initially fixed the revenue on an annual or triennial basis. Thus began the process of transition from the system of conditional private property to the system of absolute private property, where the new landlord had the unconditional right to alienate land and regular occupancy and rent. After 1836 settlement, land was auctioned to zamindars under whom a number of intermediaries operated to collect rent. In some areas officers were appointed to collect taxes directly. Temporary settlement of land led to defaulting on the part of some zamindars at the same time. Some Bengalis taking the advantage of sunset law acquired zamindaris in Orissa.

After the drought and famine, the political economy of Orissa had undergone some change. So, some people and even small Zamindars took this advantage, as they were the dominant landholders. The second settlement conducted from 1890 to 1900 provided distribution of landholdings by caste in Orissa. It showed that *brahmins*, *karanas*, and *khandayats* were the three major landholding caste in coastal Orissa.

The agrarian structure in the inland region of Orissa centered on *Gauntia* institution. The British allowed the feudatory states to retain this institution which had evolved during the medieval period. This institution operated in the *Koshal* area (the state-controlled lands) whereas the rest of the areas were under Zamindars who paid tribute to the king.¹⁷ The king appointed *Gauntia* as local tax collector. He is the person

¹⁷ B. P. Sahu, 'The Orissan Society: Past Trends and Present Manifestations', in K.L. Sharma, (ed.), *Caste, and Class in India*, (New Delhi: Rawat Publications: 1994), pp.129-131.

who was responsible for the payment of revenue tax in lumpsum and assessed the village situation periodically. His duty was to collect the revenue from the cultivators of the village and deposit the same in the royal treasury. In return, the *Gauntia* took as his salary, a part of the village land called *Bhogra* land which was usually the fertile one. Big *Gauntias* who had taken the charge of several villages, were allowed one or more villages as *Bhogra* land. Even they were free from revenue tax payment. But sometimes, such as the time of renewal of their right as revenue collectors they paid a part of their income.

According to the 1931 Gazetteer of Sambalpur the *Gauntia* was most frequently either a *Kulta* or a *Brahmin*. Historically, Brahmans were not only given land grants but also administrative tasks. The majority of *Gauntias* are Brahmans. The local cultivating caste, the *Kulta*, who were a distinct group outside the tribal, were also *Gauntias* in many areas. Another caste group called *aghria*, which also lived by cultivation, numbered a few *Gauntias* among them.

The social and political status of the *Gauntia* was fairly high in the village since he functioned as a landlord in relation to the *ryots* and was the representative of the state for collection of land revenue. Over the years the *Gauntia* became the chief administrator of the village, controlling the Panchayats, allocating house sites, deciding on irrigation sources and maintaining public tanks. During British rule, the *Gauntia* acquired the power to evict a defaulting tenant, the right to distribute wasteland and also mediate in transformation of ryotwari land. The *Gauntia* was traditionally entitled to demand unpaid labour and *bethi* from the *ryots*.¹⁸

¹⁸ P.K. Tripathy, '*Agrarian Change in Rural Orissa*', Ph.D. Thesis, Sambalpur University.

POWER STRUCTURE IN POST COLONIAL PERIOD

Half a century ago, most caste groups were directing their primary attention to improvements in their social and economic status. The important caste conference and Sabhas used certainly political questions. Many of the caste associations, which were initially organised for non-political purposes, later assumed political importance in retaining their earlier interest in social and economic advancement. In independent India the intensity of caste loyalty and casteism grew in the same proportion in which the Indian people began to get the political power and authority from Indian Government.

Following independence, a concern for rural development was keenly felt in India. The community development programme is effecting far-reaching changes in the village power structure. This is particularly manifested in the introduction of multiplicity of organisations into village India-cooperatives, schools, hospitals, and such other organisations, after a number of leadership situations. The traditional leaders can not always be fitted into these new positions, many of these positions call for some technical knowledge and education. In order to fill these newly created roles of specialised leadership, employment with requisite qualifications are needed and dominant caste has no monopoly over them.¹⁹ Organisational innovations increase the activities in a community and throw up a number of diverse leadership situations. This results in the expansion of the power pool and also changes the nature of power structure. The emerging organisational positions call for persons with new skills, attitudes and abilities,

¹⁹ T.K.Oommen, *Social Structure and Politics: Studies in Independent India*, (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing House Corporation: 1984), p.76.

which are usually, absent in the traditional leaders. Thus, an organisational innovation eventually facilitates the change in power structure and promotes dispersion of power.²⁰

The nuances of social relationships only became apparent to one familiar with the culture in which those relationships are expressed. The better one is able to absorb Hindu values and Hindu culture, the more penetrating is likely to be one's insight into social relationships. Yet the Hindu culture which helps us to sharpen the dissecting knives of sociology is not, on the whole, the distillation and systematisation which appears in the sacred books in the Sanskrit language. It is a cultural problem, which is left behind, unanswered and not needing to be answered, in the process of abstracting a system of social behaviour.²¹

Politics in post-independence Orissa continued to be dominated by the *Brahmans*, *Karans*, and the middle classes. The operation of electoral politics in the context of planned economic development did produce three important results.²²

- (i). The princes and feudal groups who were ruling Orissa were replaced by newer forces like National Congress Party, new parties and local groups.
- (ii). With the decline of princely power, the division of coastal and inland areas came to an end.
- (iii). By introducing reservations in Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha— a new power group has come to the forefront.

²⁰ Ibid. P.109.

²¹ F.G. Bailey, 'Two Villages in Orissa', in M. Gluckman (ed.) *Closed Systems and Open Minds*, (aldine: Chicago: 1964), pp. 108-109.

²² Op.cit., M.R. Mohanty , p.340

Government abolished the Zamindari system, by which the small and middle peasants became predominant in coastal areas. However, in inland Orissa, the institution of *Gauntias* still persists.

The introduction of adult franchise and the attempt to link the village with the wide political system are also moulding the village power structure. In fact, numerical superiority has become the decisive factor in the context of acquisition and exercise of power in village India. The attempt to give political representation to the ritually degraded and economically deprived lower castes, through reservations of seats for them at all levels, is a leap forward in thwarting the power and influence of traditionally dominant castes. The effort made by each political party to mobilize the largest proportion of the population for its support, led to the growth of a group of political brokers who work as effective middlemen between villagers and the political bosses at the district and state levels. These new political recruits are powerful men and by no means all of them belong to dominant castes.

Programmed and planned change envisaged in the community development scheme after independence has ensured the decentralisation of power in order to effect the participation of the masses in their own progress. Economic development programmes in Orissa centered on improved infrastructure, especially, schools, colleges, cooperatives, irrigation, and the exploitation of minerals and forests. Initially monopoly capitals set up a few industries in the inland region to produce paper and cement. Thereafter, public investment by the central government was the main source of capital. Despite, centre's crucial role in Orissa's economic development, it is not adequate. Foreign investments are very rare and even indigenous entrepreneurial development

remained negligible. The coming up of heavy industries did not make any significant impact on the agrarian structure.

After independence the central government has taken measures for the upliftment of the downtrodden people. This is also implemented by state government. The state governments had tried to change the institutions by which the lower caste (poor) people can improve their living standards. The change is imperceptible because the same people are enjoying power by several ways through their power positions.

The scheme recommends a three-tier organisational pattern of village development administration with the district consisting of Gram Panchayat at the bottom, Panchayat Samiti at the intermediary level of block, and Zilla Parishad at the district level. With the coming of new elements in the context of rural social organisation, the traditional pattern of power structure now faces new challenges. It is essential to understand the emerging pattern of inter-caste relation as affected by the reorganisation of power structure in the village.²³ An attempt is made in the study to understand the change in terms of the functioning of several institutions such as the traditional village officials, the Panchayat, the caste council, and the political parties.

Choudhury explains, “the new structure of Panchayat has enabled more castes to be accommodated in the village power structure. It is mainly caste consideration that provide the basis of power in the villages.”²⁴

The fact that certain sub-castes are dominant in the affairs of the village does not mean that other castes or sub-castes are left without any opportunity to participate in village politics. The other castes generally join one of the dominant sub-castes, so that the

²³ L.S.Ainapor, *Dynamics of Caste Relations in Rural India*, (Jaipure: Rawat Publications: 1986), p.98.

²⁴ R.K. Choudhary, *Caste and Power Structure in Indian Village*, (New Delhi: Inter India Publications: 1987), p.99.

alliances cut across caste and sub-caste barriers. Others from the wage earners class are expected to align with their masters. The changing pattern of loyalties can also be seen in the village. Even if the number of dominant castes and sub-castes is more, there are often differences at the lineage level as not all lineages in a caste or sub-caste cooperate. There may be differences between them and those may create problems within the group.

According to Srinivas, "The introduction of adult franchise and Panchayati Raj (local self government at village level, tehsil and district levels) since independence has resulted in giving a new sense of self respect and power to 'lower castes', particularly Harijans who enjoy reservation of seats in all elected bodies from village level to the union parliament. The long-term implications of these changes are even more important, especially in those villages where there are enough Harijans to sway the local balance of power one way or the other. The traditional system was possible for a small number belonging to a high caste to wield authority over the entire village when they owned a large quantity of arable land and also had a high ritual position. Now, however, in many parts of rural India power has passed into the hands of numerically large, landowning peasant caste, it is likely to remain there for sometime, except in villages where Harijans are numerically strong and are also taking advantage of the new educational and other opportunities available to them. Endemic factionalism in the dominant caste is also another threat to its continued enjoyment of power."²⁵

The dominant caste wielded power in India, where the three factors were responsible for maintaining power in the society. But after independence this has changed. The new organisations introduced into rural India opened up important power positions, for these obtain, and operate mainly in the context of developmental activities.

²⁵ M.N.Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers: 1966), pp.91-97.

Those who occupied organisational positions became important links in the dispensation of developmental benefits.²⁶

Nevertheless, political scientists have presumed to know about the intrusions of caste into politics and of politics into caste. The more confident among them have tended to argue with or to a view of 'political modernisation'. Political scientists have seen India as more or less steadily set on a natural progression away from 'tradition'. Kothari, for instance, is one of the most conspicuous of them and is the one who has done more than any other to try to draw this argument in three stages in the progression in the first twenty years of independence.²⁷

In the *first* stage, the struggle for power was limited to the entrenched and ascendant castes. There was 'polarisation'. In the *second* stage, competition developed within these castes. There was 'factionalism'. In the *third* stage, the lower castes have been 'mobilised' and shifting interests and identities have replaced steady ones. 'It is not politics that is caste ridden, it is caste that gets politicised'.

The domination of upper castes in Orissa is not only sustained by the political and economic process but also by a cultural hegemony, which has effectively contained all alternative value movements. The Jagannath cult has remained not only the dominant cultural symbol of Orissa, but also an instrument of legitimisation of dominance by the upper classes, and the upper castes.

It is fairly obvious that the picture of twenty-first century indicates a tremendous shift in our socio-political structure. We no more see the supreme ritual-political authority of Brahmins-Kshatriyas nexus as we notice in Pre-colonial or that of the

²⁶ T.K. Oommen, 'The Concept of Dominant Caste', in, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, No.4, Dec. 1970, pp.72-83.

²⁷ R. Kothari, *Caste in Indian Politics*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman: 1970), pp.20-26.

British-landlord-upper caste hegemony in colonial India. The world that the social scientists deal with is always in a state of flux. Hence, contemporary social scientists are engaged in a critical reflection on the present changing socio-political order in order to make a sense of it. And no wonder, Post-colonial India has presented a path-breaking change in India's power structure. It is no more an exclusive presence of the upper caste landlords, rather, many people from the bottom rung of the society-the Scheduled Caste, untouchables or for that matter the Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised sections increasingly come forward to the mainstream of national life through the channel of sanskritisation, dominant caste, protective discrimination, democratisation, empowerment or modernisation.

CHAPTER-2

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ORISSA

The political economy of rural development involves the interdependence of the material, political, and cultural sphere. The deep structure of rural development is unravelled if certain factors like geographical aspects, historical diversity, natural resources, regionalism, social profile, poverty, feudalism, mass movements, policy dimensions, factionalism, industrialisation, and urbanisation are taken into account. The political economy and rural development in Orissa will be understood in the light of the above factors as well as some factors unique to Orissa.

Economic development as an ideal achievement is by no means natural to any state. Even with the developmental efforts, the states are remaining backward. The economy has failed to grow in the desired manner despite concerted efforts by social scientists, visionaries, and planners. A deep-rooted malaise is observed particularly in third world countries. Indigenous structural weakness and international exploitative connections can explain this serious distortion in developmental dynamics. This dual and dialectical process of growth generated development and underdevelopment, where the world capital order cornered growth for backward and pre capitalist countries.¹

After India's independence in 1947, our planners tried but the result has not been satisfactory. It was the great hope and aspiration of the founding fathers of the Indian Republic to relieve the crushing burden of poverty. Over the years, the five-year plans have reiterated this primary goal in endless litany; yet, after more than five decades, India remains one of the poorest countries of the world, in fact, probably the largest single-country contributor to the of the world's poor.²

¹ A.K. Bagchi, *Political economy of under development*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press:1982), pp. 223

² P.Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*" (Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1984), p.1.

Over the last decades the Government has launched several programmes aimed at tackling directly the problems of poverty, unemployment, disease, and illiteracy. Some of the programmes are successful in localized regions. But in some other areas it is a failure. For example, the areas of success are the employment guarantee scheme at a minimum wage in Maharashtra, and the Antodaya scheme in Rajasthan which aimed at uplifting the poorest of the poor by helping them to acquire income-generating assets through the preferential loans which, under the Small Farmer Development Agency programme, successfully reached some farmers with holdings of less than two hectares in many districts.

India's under-development situation is best understood with reference to her colonial history. There has also been some general progress over the years in the provision of public consumption and welfare measures for the poor in the form of health and sanitation, drinking water, nutrition, housing, education, transport, roads, communication and electricity. But performance of the planning process soon after independence did little to reduce poverty and malnutrition. These facilities remain woefully meagre in proportion to the gross minimum needs. Not only did the trickle down assumptions of growth fail, but also the bottom-up models tried afterwards could not generate adequate growth to remove poverty and unemployment. At the beginning of the millennium, the country still finds 32 crores of people below poverty line despite her vast human and material resources.³

³ P.Nayak, 1998 'Political Economy of Under Development Model of NGO Intervention and Status of Weaker Section in Orissa', Vision (Vol.- xviii, No-3-4)

The political economy of development involves a comprehensive process in pursuit of freedom in material, political and cultural spheres. The interdependence of these dimensions has to be built into a strategy of intervention in the actual situation and also into any study of the development process. In case of Orissa, we have to study development and democratic transformation together.

There has been a feeling that much is being done in the name of 'development' in the state of Orissa. With the ongoing paradigm of liberalisation and marketisation, 'development' discourse has very much relied upon private and multinational corporations and our successive governments have been encouraging large-scale industries, minings and dams.

The Geographical Aspects:

Orissa is one of India's small states with the geographical area of 155707.9 square kilometers. The 1991 Census placed the population of Orissa at 3,16,59,736.⁴ The people of Orissa are primarily rural based with only 13.38 percent of the population classified by the Census as urban. It has only four small cities, three of which are situated, on the coast of Bay of Bengal. Cuttack is the biggest of them. According to the 1991 Census, the population growth rate is 19.50 per cent. Out of 86.62 percent rural population 76 percent people are engaged in agriculture.⁵

An important demographic feature of Orissa is its large tribal population, which is 22.21 per cent of the total population. The scheduled Castes comprise 16.20 per cent of

⁴Census of India, 1991.

⁵Census of Orissa, 1991.

the total state population. The Scheduled Caste population is concentrated and distributed in all the districts, while the tribal population is concentrated in the western hill districts of Mayurbhanj (57.81 %), Koraput (50.67 %) and Sundergarh (50.74 %).⁶ The SC and ST population in Orissa is 38.41 percent. The tribal population is concentrated in the western districts and it has important political implications.⁷ First, since the socio-economic conditions of the tribal population are abysmally poor, they have been generally led by non-tribal people. Secondly, since there are no easy communication lines connecting the tribal areas, development has taken place only in the coastal areas. The seats are reserved for them in the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha proportionately to their population. But, because of the absence of socio-economic resources, the representatives of the SC and ST population have not emerged as an independent political force. On the other hand, they have been pawns in the game of power politics played by rival non-tribal leaders.

Historical Diversity:

The historical differences between the two regions of Orissa have created a climate of suspicion and hostility between the people of inland and coastal areas.

The native kings of Orissa collected revenue from the villages through their divisional agents. Then, the whole territory was divided into political divisions called *Mugalbandi* and *Garjat*. *Mugalbandi* was consisting of the agriculturally prosperous coastal districts from where revenue was collected in cash by their Subedars. In the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ M. R. Mohanty, and L. N. Misra, 'Orissa: Politics of Political Stagnation' in I. Narain, (ed.), *State Politics in India*, (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan: 1976), p.241.

Garjats or the residual princely areas, the Mughals taxed the princes.⁸ In both areas, the Mughals utilized and expanded the then existing machinery of revenue collection. When the central authority of the Mughals declined, the powers and privileges of the local officials increased. This culminated in the emergence of the institution of landlords who extracted revenue from individual cultivators.⁹ In the later part of the Mughal rule there was administrative breakdown and the Maratha (1751- 1803) rulers carried out excessive extraction from the people to maintain their military. The political economy of Orissa went through a structural change during this period. In this turbulent period of Maratha invasion of Orissa, maritime activities came to a stand still and salt production declined. Agriculture and handicrafts were the only means of livelihood.¹⁰ Then British annexed Orissa in 1803. After establishing their rule, the British streamlined the revenue administration and by and large they retained the Mughal pattern. This difference between the two divisions has marked impact on their inhabitants.

Natural Resources:

In Orissa, over 76 per cent of the people are dependent on agriculture. Orissa's agro-based economy however is always upset by some natural calamities like flood, drought and cyclone. But on the other hand, Orissa has a special place in the world map of mining and reservoirs of natural resources. As per 1991 data, Orissa has reservoir of 98.7 per cent chromite, 69.7 per cent bauxite, 26 per cent iron ore, 23 per cent coalmine

⁸K.V.Rao, 'The Pattern of Orissa Politicsin', I.Narain, *State Politics in India* (ed.), (Meerut:Meenakshi Prakashan: 1967), pp.209-216.

⁹ K.C.Jena, *Land Revenue Administration in Orissa During the Nineteenth Century*, (New Delhi:Vikas Publication: 1968), p.33.

¹⁰ M.R.Mohanty, ' Social Roots of Backwardness in Orissa: A Case Study of Class, Caste and Power, in *Social Science Probings*, vol.1, no.2, 1984, p.191.

and 38 per cent graphite.¹¹ In addition to this, very good quality of China clay, granite, quartz, asbestos, gold and diamond are also potentially available in Orissa. Much of these are being exported to various parts of the world including Japan, Singapore and America. The total export of our mineral resources during the year 1990-1991 was Rs. 629.01 crores while it reached to Rs. 1674.03 crores during 1995-96. Particularly, coalmine provided Rs. 292.23 crores in 1990-91, and it rose to Rs. 932.99 crores.¹² Moreover, the state government incurred 42.13 per cent of its revenue from mining in 1995-96. Then, how about economic position of Orissa in the national level? All people know Orissa by the name of drought, poverty and backwardness.

Regionalism:

In India regionalism began to raise its head in different parts in different forms soon after independence. Regionalism in our country is essentially a product of its diversity. The historical division of the country into British Indian provinces and princely states before independence led to the disparities in the levels of politico-national consciousness. The areas of the princely states remain backward and under-developed-socially, economically, and politically-compared to the areas under the direct British administration. This created a sense of deprivation in the minds of the people of the princely states.¹³ This is true in a larger context between the states and inside a state. We can find the uneven development situation in Orissa, where the inland districts were under the princely rule and coastal districts under the British administration. The

¹¹N. Sorong, 'Industrial Advancement and the Tribal Economy', in *Fourth World*, NISWASS, oct.1999, no.10, pp.105-112.

¹² Ibid., pp.105-112.

¹³ J.K.Mohapatra, *Factional Politics in India*, (Allahabad: Chugh Publications: 1985), p.60.

prevalence of two different types of administrations in the two regions contributed to the uneven development situation.

Social Profile:

Orissa's social profile is consisting of high percentage of Scheduled Tribes (22.21 %) and Scheduled Castes (16.20 %) population. The tribal population spread among the inland districts, particularly, Deogarh, Gajapati, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Phulbani, Raygada, Sambalpur, Sundergarh,¹⁴

The demographic, electoral and historical conditions make the ten coastal districts, Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Khurda, Nayagarh, and Puri better placed in the economy of Orissa. Hence, the problem of regional disparity is a source of constant tension in Orissa. The rates of poverty and illiteracy are higher in inland regions than the coastal districts. Today, even after fifty years of independence, Orissa continues to be a state of many paradoxes, e.g., low quality of life, high poverty, high illiteracy, high concentration of tribal and backward section of the people are that account low levels of socio-economic development as compared to other provinces of India¹⁵

Orissa's elite classes come from two upper castes, *Brahman* and *Karan* (Kayastha) which are rooted in semi-feudal agriculture as well as dominant role in politics and bureaucracy. They have adjusted to the post independence situation and monopolized the new advances in parliamentary politics and economic development.

¹⁴ Cesus of Orissa, 1991.

¹⁵ J. Pathy, *Underdevelopment and Destitution*, (New Delhi: IIP: 1986,) p.1.

They did not generate enterprenureship, nor did they produce ideas of social reform and radical politics. They perform the role of an agency of the national level capitalist development managing the extraction process locally and maintaining law and order and reproducing middle class in their own image.

TABLE-I : DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ORISSA

Districts	Percentage of district population to the states population; 1991 Census	Percentage of S.C. population to the district's tribal population; 1991 Census	Percentage of S.T. population to the district's total population; 1991 Census
Balasore	5.36	18.57	10.57
Bhadrak	3.49	21.71	1.69
Bolangir	3.89	15.39	22.06
Sonepur	1.51	22.11	9.50
Cuttack	6.23	18.19	3.49
Jagatsinghpur	3.20	21.72	0.61
Kendrapara	3.63	19.83	0.40
Jajpur	4.38	22.87	7.40
Dhenkanal	2.99	16.03	12.68
Angul	3.04	16.82	11.68
Ganjam	8.54	17.91	2.93
Gajapati	1.44	8.77	47.88
Kalahandi	3.57	17.01	28.88
Nuapada	1.48	13.09	35.95
Keonjhar	4.22	11.49	44.52
Koraput	3.25	13.41	50.67
Raygada	2.26	14.28	56.04
Malkangiri	1.33	19.96	58.36
Nabarangpur	2.68	15.06	55.27
Mayurbhanj	5.95	6.99	57.87
Khandmal	1.73	18.21	51.51
Boudh	1.00	19.64	12.92
Puri	4.12	18.56	0.27
Khurda	4.75	13.62	5.14
Nayagarh	2.47	13.78	5.96
Bargarh	3.81	18.44	19.56
Sambalpur	2.56	17.07	35.08
Jharsuguda	1.41	17.15	31.88
Deogarh	0.74	14.60	33.31
Sundergarh	4.97	8.78	50.74

Source: Census of Orissa, 1991

From the above table, we find that the scheduled castes demographic composition is universal in the state. In coastal districts the scheduled caste population is more than the average of the state except two districts Khurda and Nayagarh, whereas the inland districts are very close to this average. Scheduled caste population in the districts of Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, and Sundergarh are very low. On other hand, the tribal population average of the state is 22.21 per cent. In coastal Orissa the scheduled tribe population is very low, even the lowest is 0.27 per cent in Puri.

Natural Calamities:

The natural calamities like famines, droughts and floods are general in Orissa's history. The failure of rains in 1865 led to the failure of crops and created a major food scarcity in Orissa. The transportation and communication facilities were very poor. So Food grains and other facilities could not reach in time to the affected areas. As a result, one million people or one-third population of the Orissa division died of starvation and disease. After this incident, the British government introduced several things to manage their economy. The canals were dug up in Cuttack regions, schools and colleges were established and embankments were built. Towards the end of the 19th century they constructed railway lines for better communication and transportation facilities. These policies amounted to a major intervention by the colonial states, in the deteriorating political economic of Orissa and produced far-reaching consequences. The construction of Canals created irrigation facilities in the coastal areas and more commercial crops and pulses were grown. The canals facilitated the movements of goods and the railways rapidly integrated the coastal economy with the metropolitan economy. The villages were drawn

in to the market and the commodity economy expanded. Small towns came up and the urban population increased.¹⁶

But in the mean while people could not take the hardships. To survive, in post-famine setting, they sold their land. The well-to-do peasants took the opportunity of the new facilities of the irrigation. The extent of money lending vastly increased in this situation since the poor artisans and peasants badly needed assistance. This period saw the emergence of a large number of small landlords because of these changes. Thus, the colonial policies had major effects on the agrarian economy. Needless to say that this was in the interest of meeting the demands of Britain's expanding capitalism.¹⁷

The process opened further channels for distress and migration. Oriyas were already migrated to Burma, Assam and Calcutta in search of jobs. After the 1866 famine there was a mass scale of migration to Calcutta. This process was accelerated after the introduction of railways. So, Orissa supplied cheap labour to industrially developed areas. This is prevalent even today indicating the uneven development in India. Distress migration of male members has placed the women in an especially difficult situation. The fact of favorable sex ratios in Orissa Division from 1891 to 1921 was actually the result of out-migration and not so much due to the women's capacity to survive calamities.

The government had taken several majors to solve these problems, but could not succeed. The floods in Mahanadi and Brahmani were regular features. The cultivators did not have enough incentive to work on land; they were unsure of returns after spending

¹⁶ S.K. Raut, 'Commercialisation of Agricultural Production and Response of State Bureaucracy: Coastal Orissa During the Late 19th Century', M.Phil Dissertation, CHS, J.N.U. 1979

¹⁷ Bidyut Mohanty, 'Famine Mortality in Orissa Division, 1901-1911', Paper Presented at the Workshop on Women and Poverty, Centre of Social Science Studies, Calcutta, 1983.

money. Every time there were floods or droughts, which culminated in a wave of out-migration seeking work in far-off places. So Jagannath Pathi wrote, "The large masses of the people are doused in dire poverty, unemployment, ignorance and despair."¹⁸

Poverty:

In spite of glorious past, deep historical traditions and rich natural resources, Orissa is one of the poorest states of India. Despite government's policies for development, the minimum standards of living of individuals are not satisfactory. Even today Orissa is at the lowest level of development. So, the political economy of rural development provides poverty as a valid point to analyse the process of social formation in Orissa.

The figures on literacy and infant mortality also indicate a low "quality of life index". The Percentage of literacy for males is 63.09 % and for females is 34.68 %, which is less than the all-India average of 64.13 % and 39.23 % for male and females respectively. The infant mortality in Orissa is 97 per thousand as against 71 per thousand in India. The figures on literacy and infant mortality indicate a low quality of life index. The percentage literacy among males increased from 46.90 % in 1981 to 63.09 % in 1991 and for females from 21.11 % to 34.68 %, which compares well with the all-India level.

In the fields of health and education the figures show enormous underdevelopment even though there has been a major increase in the quantum of facilities since independence. Orissa is a rural society with 86 % of its population living

¹⁸ Op.cit., J. Pathy, pp.121-127.

in rural areas as of 1991. The Urban population registered an increase from 11.82% to 14%. Out of 86% people 73% people are dependent on agricultural activities. That the rural economy of Orissa remains backward is indicated by the production figures.

Orissa's natural resources have attracted the investment in heavy industries on both private and public sectors. It is aided by foreign governments or companies. The Rourkela Steel plant was set up in 1956 in the backward district of Sundargarh not only to utilise the iron ore and other minerals but also to function as a growth pole in the region. But the tribal peoples, lower castes, and lower classes remain underdeveloped. After the government's investment in some projects or programmes a new form of exploitation emerged.

Agriculture:

The political economy of Orissa can be well visualized by her agriculture-dominated economy with 76 % of work force dependent on agriculture.¹⁹ Orissa remains backward because of the continuation of a mono-crop agricultural economy. And even this single crop was damaged by natural disaster like drought, famine and flood. Land reforms being eyewash, the rural agricultural sector manifests the landlord-dominated agro-structure. So for social formation, the upper castes, mainly *Karan*, *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* were the beneficiaries of the temporary settlement in the coastal areas and Permanent Settlement in the inland region.²⁰ Beset with this kind of uneven land relation, the weaker section of the rural economy participates as agricultural labourers or small

¹⁹ Statistical Abstracts of Orissa, 1996. P.9.

²⁰ Op.cit.,M.R. Mohanty,PP.185-187.

and marginal farmers. As non-farm jobs are meagre agriculture gets over burdened with disguise unemployment and low rate of growth.²¹

Infrastructure:

After five decades of planning, the growth or economy of Orissa is far from satisfactory. The problems of underdevelopment in Orissa remain a stumbling block owing to lack of structural change and absence of technological break through. The literature on the meaning of infrastructure is not precise to explain. The term infrastructure includes all public services from law and order through education and public health to transport, communication, power, water supply and irrigation and drainage. During the second five-year plan period the government established several public sectors for speedy development. Under public sector activation, the central government invested lumpsum amount on Hindustan Steel Plant at Rourkela and Multi-Purpose Dam Project at Hirakud. These projects transformed the economy of Orissa to some extent. These two were established in underdeveloped regions of western Orissa for the upliftment of poor. But influential persons controlled the administration by which the poor people did not get the flavor of upliftment.

Considering the above facts, the case of Orissa will provide a meaningful study area as regards to its economic, human resources and infrastructure developments. Orissa is the second lowest among Indian states in per capita consumption and income and second highest in poverty among all states. On the other hand as regards to human development index prepared for Indian states (based on life expectancy at birth, literacy

²¹ Statistical Abstracts of Orissa, 1996, p-60.

and a measure of necessary income) the ranking of Orissa varies from lowest second, sixth and fifth respectively.²²

Feudalism:

Feudal estate and political power were the strength of the princes. When the prince gradually lost these, the leadership shifted to the hands of their former managers- *Karans* and *Brahmins*- who had moved from the plains and had been granted land in the townships of the feudatory states. Some from the strata had led the Prajamandal movements against the kings and thereby emerged as alternative leaders. With the decline of the power of the princes, they formed the unchallenged elite strata. Over the years, there was more and more migration of clerks, teachers, and petty trades from the coastal plains to the tribal areas. They became the middlemen between the urban elite and tribal population. When the tribal development programme was accelerated they benefited the most from it. Thus the nexus of power was complete with the Brahmin- Karan- middle clerks, becoming an all-Orissa phenomenon. Some Kshatriyas, the caste of the ex- rulers, also formed part of this nexus in the inland hilly districts. The elimination of the feudal parties in western Orissa is dominated by the upper castes. The paradigm of political power shifted from the feudal lords to the upper caste elite, and the upper caste elite was the feudal and ex-princes.

Mass Movements:

The history of Orissa witnessed several mass movements, whether it is tribal revolts or peasant uprisings and militant anti-feudal struggles against princely states. But

²² India 2000 p.13.

the repercussion of these movements could not challenge the power structure. Because of Gandhiji's initiative the Indian Congress adopted the policy of the removal of untouchability. Gandhiji mobilised the people against the age-long practice of untouchability. The untouchables were allowed to enter the temples. From that period the sharp distinction between the touchable and untouchable has been erased. This motivated the lower castes to participate in India's freedom movement enthusiastically.

The Socialists were an important force in Orissa from 1930. They led the peasant movements in Cuttack against the zamindars. After independence they consolidated their base. In 1967 election, they reached the peak of their electoral success as they were perceived as the alternative to the Congress. Indira Gandhi took the wind out of the socialists' sail as a result of which many socialists joined Congress. The Praja Socialist Party's leadership came from the *Karans* and the *Brahmins*. Needless to say, its support base is small. The Lohiaites, however, remained anti-Congress and maintained their base in some areas. Many socialists joined the Janata party.

While the socialists failed to sustain their base, the Communists managed to stick to their pockets. These were places of struggles against landlords. But the spread of their influence to the other areas has been successfully contained by other parties, particularly the Congress.

Orissa never faced an armed struggle like that of the Telengana movement nor militant movements like that of in Andhra or Maharashtra. Seeing the mass movements in pre independence era, British conceded a separate province to win the heart of Oriya nationalists, the princes and zamindars. The British helped and provided all the means to quell tribal revolts and other peasant uprisings like *Paika* rebellion, *Ghumsur* uprising,

Sambalpur uprising and Nayagarh uprising. The politics of Orissa is quite different from that of the other states. Orissa produced stable political formation comprising the upper caste, whereas in other states, the caste and class groups are sharp and volatile.

Policy Decisions:

To understand the backward and poverty stricken economy of Orissa, one has to understand the dynamics of political economy historically. ²³ Production of certain commercial crops like cotton and sugar cane has declined because of the policy of the colonial and post-independence state. Economic differentiation within the peasant society is quite large. The peasant economy is disintegrating because of external factors. As Bailey's study of Bisipara shows, sources of income, other than from land, have brought new rich strata into the village society, which are investing in land. Bailey further argues that the caste values are not obsolete and stumbling block on the path of development of the capitalist agriculture. Social relations are capitalist in nature but the mode of production is not capitalistic because of the lack of infrastructure developments such as irrigation, roadways and transport by the government. Unscientific management of water and forest has made the economy flood and drought prone. Forced migration of surplus labour keeps the peasant economy at the subsistence level.

On the industrial front, the policies adopted by the independent state is not different from those by the colonial state, except in that there are some public sector

²³ R. K. Barik, 'Caste Systems Economic Backwardness of Orissa, *Social Science Probing*s, June 1985 p. 259.

investments which function as 'islands' in midst of poverty. The policies of the colonial state created conditions for 'deindustrialisation'.²⁴ The decline of salt and textile industries affected the economy negatively. The migration of urban people towards village led to an increase in the number of the landless labour. The central and state governments did not have a clear-cut policy of industrial development. Neither the state nor the capitalist class is interested in the industrial development of Orissa. There is hardly any private investment in Orissa.

It is, thus, not surprising that eradication of poverty and acceleration of industrialisation has been the slogans of political leaders of Orissa since independence. But the structural constraints evolved during the colonial period have made it difficult for the political leadership to succeed in any major way. The history of the last hundred fifty years or so shows how the sources of possible dynamism were not allowed to grow.

Land Reforms:

In India's independence, the government introduced land reform policies. Attempts were made by the government to shield the landholdings from time to time. The Land Reforms act of 1960 was the first initiative by the government, but provisions were challenged in several courts. The Orissa Land Reforms Act of 1973 was a further step to distribute the land among the weaker sections. In the mid 1970s 1.95 lakh acres of government land was distributed among 2.76 lakh beneficiaries. These small pieces of land are of doubtful quality could hardly mean much to the oppressed (Dalits) and Adivasis.²⁵

²⁴ Op.Cit ,R.K. Barik, p.260.

²⁵ Op.Cit Mr Mohanty p.200.

In Orissa, the number of large holdings is small. Thus the small peasant and landless have neither benefited much from land reforms nor from rural development, inspite of such programme as Integrated Rural Development (IRD) and Economic Rehabilitation of the Rural Poor (ERRP). These people are usually Dalits or Adivasis. Occasionally we find dispossessed artisans or *Chasas* as well; several micro-studies confirm this trend.²⁶

Some tenancy studies show small tenants pay higher rents whereas large sharecroppers negotiate for fixed cash rent. Landlords prefer small peasants to work hard on the former's terms to gain subsistence. Gross Productivity per acre is higher under fixed rent systems than in share cropping. In irrigated areas, large tenant holdings have appeared largely because immigrants have moved into firm. One study concludes that the new technologies are being absorbed while the exploitative hold is retained through appropriate changes in tennurial systems.²⁷

The implementation of land reforms and rural development measures is tardy, but it has generated contradictions between landowners and sharecroppers. The marginal farmers could not sustain themselves and the ranks of landless labour swell. This led to a steady process of out migration of labour. Low agricultural output and seasonal unemployment cause continued poverty in Orissa. Since the Scheduled castes are usually the agricultural labourers they suffered the most.

²⁶ J.Pathy, 'Class, Caste and Power in Orissa', *Teaching Politics*, Vol.-6(3,4); vol-7(1-2)

²⁷ K. BharaDwaja, and P.K.Das, 'Tennurial Conditions and mode of exploitation- Study of some Villages in Orissa', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, February, 1975, p.221.

Green Revolution:

Under the impact of green revolution, the middle peasantry and in some areas rich peasantry acquired greater resources or the ability to utilise the resources more efficiently. Green revolution, otherwise known as a revolution in 'water and fertiliser use' holds significance for a region whose lifeline is agriculture. Thus, it created the objective condition for *Khandayats* to assume greater importance. They have occasionally challenged the *Brahmin-Karan* domination in the past and after the green revolution it became a permanent feature.

The *Chasas*, who are by and large small and marginal farmers or landless, are yet to be fully accepted by the *Khandayats* into their political groupings. The *Khandayats* with their militia background and large land holdings seek the status and influence of the *Karans*. It is a case where class differentiation among the peasantry divides the broad cultivator caste. The *Chasas* and the dalit or the depressed agriculture labourers are divided on caste lines. This has met the organisation of agricultural castes difficult. The artisan castes such as weavers, blacksmiths, etc. whose occupation became less remunerative have suffered the most. As middle castes together with the *Chasas* they form over fifty per cent of Orissa,s population. Next to the tribals and the scheduled castes, the bulk of the artisan castes and *Chasas*, live in poverty today.

Political Instability:

Orissa politics is divided into two phases. The first phase is the politics of instability from the year 1936 to 1980. The second phase starts from the year 1980 onwards as politics of stability. From 1952 to 1980, not a single ministry completed its

full five-year term. In this respect, both the congress and non- congress governments have equally failed.

Political instability in Orissa was initially due to strong regionalism, which was manifested in the shape of the Ganatantra Parishad – later, the Swatantra Party, which was formed with the objective of highlighting the problems and promoting the interests of western Orissa. A strong Ganatantra Parishad militated against the emergence of a strong congress and prevented it from gaining absolute majority for a long time. The second factor, which seems to account for the recurrence of political instability to the absence of cadre politics and proliferation of amorphous parties whose followers, in general, are committed to personalities and patronage rather than to any ideological programme.²⁸ A factor responsible for the absence of political stability in the state is intense factionalism in the dominant party – the congress. Large defections, rise of splinter parties, and frequent political changes; are caused by factional conflicts affecting the congress party. Further, another factor in this regard is the absence of strong leadership. In the second phase or in the period of political stability the ministry was not interested to work for the upliftment of the poor people.

The above account shows that Orissa is, in general, poor and backward and is permeated by a high dose of feudalism.

Factionalism:

The phenomenon of factionalism within the caste is the locus of power and decision making. Factionalism at one level tends to spill over to the others. It has the

²⁸ op.cit.,J.K.Mohapatra,p.84.

tendency to flow down and move up. Factionalism in Orissa may be discussed at these levels, namely local, district and state.²⁹ Factionalism from top to bottom is more frequent and faster than bottom to top. In other words, it is much easier for state factionalism to seep into lower levels than for local factionalism to move up to upper level politics. On the eve of 1967 Assembly election the congress party in Orissa was rived with intra –party conflict, the party began to be split at the district level, block level and village level. The same happened a few months before the formation of the Utkal Congress in 1970. On the other hand, local factionalism has been rarely reflected in state politics. In a few cases village factionalism may have its echoing in block level politics, but it seldom affects district level politics.

In Orissa factionalism is not confined to the dominant party- congress mainly. Other political parties in the state big or small are afflicted with it. The congress party has often suffered from factionalism. In Orissa political factionalism was prevailed upto 1980.

Factionalism in state of Orissa,³⁰ suggest some points:

1. Big parties are prone to factionalism while the small parties are not.
2. Cadre parties with committed followers are less likely to be afflicted by factional politics.

On the other hand, ‘coalition parties’ with non-committed followers are prone to be victims of factionalism. As Lewis has called them occasional alliances which are the

²⁹ op.cit.,J.k.Mohapatra,79.

³⁰ Op.cit.,J.K.Mohapatra,P.82.

locus of power.³¹ A cadre party belonging to any point of the continuum – whether a left party, centre party or right party tend to be disciplined and united. In case of coalition parties, the followers tend to support personalities rather than ideologies, factional leaders rather than party programme. Factional loyalty is not strong. The moment there is a more alluring offer from the leader of another faction, the members of one faction would tend to defect to the former. The political history of Orissa from independence to the year 1980 was unstable because of factionalism.

Political Corruption:

Political corruption is common to all societies, rich or poor, advanced or backward. There is a tendency on the part of political office holders to misuse their office for personal gratification. Because of political instability political corruption is much higher.

On different occasions, inquiry commissions have been set up to look into corruption charges. But so far as no politician has been punished in the court or in the court of public. Despite charges of corruption against the leaders they have been elected by the people with big majorities to high posts.

It is public knowledge that corruption is rampant in the society. Not only the politicians, but also the bureaucrats, technocrats and contractors are involved in it. The politicians and officials help each other in this regard. That is why, P. Sainath says, “there

³¹O. Lewis, *Group Dynamics in North Indian Village: A Study of Factions*, (New Delhi: Programme Evaluation: 1996), pp.113-117.

is nexus between politicians- bureaucrats and contractors. The people know it but they are helpless to fight against these people”.

This shows that Orissa in general, is poor, backward and permeated by a high dose of feudalism. However, there is regional variance in the state in respect of its backwardness and feudalism. The coastal area is relatively developed and less affected by feudalism and corruption, whereas in the western Orissa, this problem is acute. So the socio- economic development of Orissa in general is not satisfactory. In a sense western Orissa is lagging behind coastal Orissa.

Industrialisation:

The tribal inhabited areas of the states are the regions of extremities, experiments and possibilities. High industrialisation amidst primitive habitation has exhibited various facets of different trends. After several years of industrial production, the vicinities of the producing areas do not adjust to the modern trends and remain disturbed, confused and torn apart. Within the same community, one experiences two civilizations, one the ‘modernized’ and the other the most ‘primitive’. Contrary to ‘trickle down’ theory of development, the indigenous inhabitants do not consume nor benefit in a desirable manner, the fruits of industrialisation. The large chunk of indigenous community, thus have been reduced to abject poverty and subjugated to various exploitations and dehumanization.

In the name of development, industry has devastated the natural resources and it has worsened agriculture. We have under development in the guise of development. Tribal losing lands during big industrial projects are entitled to get adequate rehabilitation and compensatory measures from the state government.³² But, neither they get land nor compensation, rather it is people with muscle and money power, hijack the well-intentioned provisions. Thus, it is not surprising to note that people displaced during Hirakud, Kolab and Ib are still struggling day-in and day-out in the hope that the generous state will come forward to their rescue and give their dues. Worst the political unwillingness, bureaucratic callousness and general inertness all close their door.

Urbanisation:

One of the major indicators of economic backwardness of a region is the extend of its urbanization. Every government, which comes to power, resolved to take up population policy on priority basis. The population of Orissa was 146,000 in the year 1951 as against 3,16, 59,736 in 1991 census. Rate of growth of population per annum in Orissa during the period 1951-61 was 1.99 percent compared to 1.78 percent during the period of 1981-91. The growth is in reverse trend, where some states experience increasing trend. Secondly, the urban growth rate increased from 11.82 percent to 13.38 percent during the decade 1981-91³³. But the rate of urbanization which indicates a certain level of industrialisation is not a good enough indicator.

³² Editorial, *The Bitark*, (Oriya), Bhubaneswar, Oct. 1999.

³³ Census of Orissa, 1991.

TABLE-II : RATE OF URBANISATION IN INDIA AND ORISSA

Years	Percentage of Population in Total Population	
	India	Orissa
1951	17.34	4.06
1961	18.00	6.32
1971	19.91	8.41
1981	21.25	11.82
1991	25.07	13.38

Source: K.M. Pattanaik – Underdevelopment in Orissa, Conference No. 1956, Indian Economic Journal.

These figures show that the influx from towns in Orissa were at much higher scale and magnitude. Deep economic stagnation, widespread poverty and lack of economic opportunities are the major causes for this migration to urban areas. Much publicised programmes of rural reconstruction and economic development of villages in fact could not bring about perceptible improvement in socio-economic life of the rural people. Population flow to town areas is unrestricted, because of viable economic opportunities and gainful employment. “In the West urbanization was the consequences of large scale production, introduction of machinery and growth of industrial civilization”.³⁴ In Orissa it has been a process of deepening of economic distress in the rural areas, which has spread to the urban areas through migration.

³⁴ R.Dutt, and K.P.M.Sundaram, *Indian Economy*, (New Delhi:S.Chand co.Ltd., 2000), p.58.

Non-Governmental Organisation:

The inadequacy and limitations of public sector has motivated a group of non-profit, dedicated, development organisations. The Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) are considered as supplementary system of network to provide aid and assist the poor. NGOs not only supplement but to a great extent act as pioneers, catalytic agents and special agents of growth. The model of NGO intervention assumes that the problems of underdevelopment, poverty, malnutrition, and backwardness can not be removed by state alone. The other condition is, NGOs can act as efficiently, and at times better than, the state in certain type of activities. Thus NGOs become a category of development agents that operate on an international basis for the micro-level development making a reality of ' think global, act local'.

Globalisation and Social Development:

The process of globalisation entails interdependence across state boundaries and among institutions. Globalisation as it is used in academic parlance, refers to the inter linkage of national economies. Therefore, a pertinent question arises as to the effect of the interlinkage on the society, especially that of its effect on the societies of Third world countries. With regards to some of the human development indicators like child mortality, infant mortality, life expectancy, per-capita income and provision of basic needs, India has witnessed better performance after the liberalisation of economy. However, the average always has the tendency to hide the peaks. The effect of globalisation on the lower section of the people can not be comprehended on the basis of

the above mentioned indicators. Criticism of the process has often been on the line of its further marginalisation of the already- marginalised groups of the society.

The political economy and the rural development of Orissa have been analysed under the general purview of the political, economic and cultural aspects. The points of coincidence and departure bring forth the similarities as well as the differences. Factors unique to Orissa influence and direct the underlying dynamics to manifest at different levels imparting unique characteristics to the developmental process. The analysis clearly shows that the strangle hold of power structure holds the developmental process in ransom. For development to be 'growth with justice' wider participation of the people from the lower rung of the society is indispensable. In a way this leads us to the study of the existential status of the depressed castes and classes of Orissa which will be undertaken in the next chapter.

CHAPTER-3

**DEPRESSED CASTES AND CLASSES
IN RURAL ORISSA**

... chapter analyses the positions of the depressed castes and classes in rural Orissa. This discussion will be presented with the help of five case studies of caste and class in Orissa. F.G. Bailey studied caste system in Western Orissa and explained the contradictory characteristics of depressed classes. J. Pathy has analysed class, Caste and Power in rural Orissa. The third study was done by P. Sainath on social, cultural and religious life of dalits in Western Orissa. A study has been conducted by Jens Lerche on jajmani relations in coastal Orissa. S. K. Mitra has analysed the norms and modalities of political choice in the context of Orissa. He has discussed about the norms and the modalities of political behaviour in Dhenkanal district of Orissa. The analysis of the power positions of the depressed classes in the present study will be based upon the above case studies.

The untouchable castes are at the lowest order in the Hindu caste hierarchy. During the British period they were considered as depressed classes. The identity of the depressed classes of Orissa had been adopted in the census of 1901. In 1901 census, the authorities divided the castes of Orissa into seven categories. The untouchables were divided into three classes; one, who had accessibility to the upper castes in some ways, two, unclean who ate fowls, drank spirit, but abstained from beef, and the lowest who ate beef. These three categories came within the category of the depressed class, and were designated as scheduled castes in the government of India Act, 1935¹. The constitution of India adopted in the year 1950 gave importance to these castes through policies of positive discrimination. Scheduled castes as well as Scheduled tribes were oppressed for many years. In

¹ Quoted in A. C. Pradhan, *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, Vol. Xxxii, Nos, 1-2, pp.148-49.

later period, other backward castes were included in the depressed classes. They call themselves 'Dalit' to broaden their consciousness as a single group.

In sociological² parlance, the term Dalit is generic, secular, and uniting enough to describe the phenomenal number of castes and sub-castes, who in the Indian context, stand suppressed and oppressed for centuries. But, in terms of demographic, legal and constitutional terminology, Dalits comprise of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes.³ According to the census of 1991, the SCs, STs and OBCs constitute 16.20%, 22.21% and 38.12% respectively.⁴

The depressed class did not constitute a homogenous or well-knit social group. There were varying degrees of social disability. The social disability and economic poverty of the depressed classes aroused no voice of protest in the traditional society. It assumed significance only under the British rule. The British administration introduced a system of legal rights, mass education, new economic system, new employment opportunities, and new socio-political consciousness, which aroused democratic aspirations in the society.⁵ But, in Orissa as well as in the rest of the country, the traditional social disabilities of the depressed classes hindered them from availing the new opportunities provided by the British Rule.

While dealing with the problem of the upliftment of depressed classes in Orissa, there are two facts.

² David, Thomas and A. K. Bharati, 'Promises, Strategies and Fate, The Ex-Untouchables of India', *Fourth World*, No. 9, (April), 1999, pp. 14-28

³ Op.cit., A. C. Pradhan, pp. 142-67.

⁴ Census of Orissa, 1991.

⁵ Editorial Note, *Fourth World*, No.9, (April), 1999.

1. The practice of untouchability in Orissa was not so rigid as it was in other parts of India.
2. Because of the varying degrees of social disabilities some depressed classes were in better social positions than others.⁶

Early Phase of Post-Colonial Social Change

In early 1950s, F.G.Bailey studied caste system in '*Two villages in Orissa*'.⁷ He explained the changing position of depressed castes and classes of two villages. He reflected upon the difference of awareness among these two clusters of villages that provided the political, economic and ritual aspects of relationship with the higher caste people. He used the concept of 'levels of understanding' and 'deeper understanding' of these lower caste groups.

The temple, on the outskirts of the Oriya village of Bisipara is built on Bisipara land. The Brahmins and other officials who care for it are Bisipara men, but the temple belongs to all Hindus in the Kondamals. After the 'Temple Entry Act' was passed, the Bisipara *Panas*, a caste of untouchables, organized a procession and claimed their legal rights of entry into the temple. The warriors, who guarded the temple, objected to the temple entry. They wanted the *panas* to enter the temple provided all other clean caste Hindus in the Kondamals were first consulted.

A scuffle ensued when an elderly *Pana* returning from the markets came face to face with a youth of the high warrior caste. A recanting of the village

⁶ Op. cit., A. C. Pradhan, p.149

⁷ F. G. Bailey, '*Two villages in Orissa*', in D. Gupta *Social Stratification*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1996), pp. 387-98.

council was called. The meeting summoned the *pana*. During the night the *panas* sent an appeal to the police, saying that their houses had been attacked by the clean castes. *Panas* demanded the intervention of a minister of the Orissa government who happened to visit that day. After the police inquiry the *Panas* appealed to the magistrate. The case was heard in 1959 and the magistrate ordered both sides to keep the peace.

Bailey mentions that the tension between the two sides was curiously compartmented. Everyday economic relationships went on as usual, and there was no communal tension in the behaviour of the master and servant. But the village council behaved as if it was in a state of siege. Money was levied to pay the expenses of witnesses at court and a proposal for hiring a lawyer. The another recounts of having heard that, the *Panas* no longer knew their place; and allegations that they were unfit to be received in decent human society. 'The incident of 1953 brought into the open great bitterness and the emotion, which we associate with social conflict', Bailey concludes.

In 1955, in the Kond Village of Baderi, a conflict ensued between the *Konds* and the *Panas* on the issue of seating in a wedding feast. The *Konds* met in council and summoned the *Panas*. The *Panas* attended and complained that their caste had been insulted. Bitter words led to fisticuffs. Two *Kond* men were assaulted in full view of the council.

But no one dismissed a *Pana*; no one resumed his property; a few months later, when the agricultural season began, the Baderi *Panas* worked as labourers in *Kond* fields, as they had always done.

Even though the Baderi *Konds* put forward many of the same reasons to explain the behaviour of the *Panas*, their attitude differs from that of the Bisipara clean castes. *Konds* insisted that the conflict arise out of government's use of the term 'Harijan'. Some of them said that in Baderi there was no real Harijan problem and the *Panas* could be kept in their places.

The events in the two villages resemble one another. In both the cases the conflict surfaced in the event of encounter between individuals. There was mobilisation of groups on both sides, occasions were the breach of the rules of ritual avoidance, but not the sole cause. In both the cases the village council met, first as a judicial body but the summons were ignored, or frustrated. When the council met the second time, it met as council of war, determining how to deal with an opponent whose equality they then implicitly acknowledged.

The differences exist in terms of the response of the two sets of untouchable castes. The Baderi *Panas*, after the acts of violence, resumed their normal posture of subservience. The Bisipara *panas*, on the other hand, were defiant and made a general issue out of the assault case. The dispute in Bisipara was much bitter and protracted than the dispute in Baderi.

The questions that arise out of these two incidents are why did the disputes occur, with corollaries such as, can these events be understood as aspects of regular behaviour, as social regularities, as part of a system and how can a sociologist explain the differing courses of the two disputes, the greater initiative shown by the Bisipara *Panas*, and the relative lack of political enterprise among the Baderi *Panas*.

Caste, Class and Power in Orissa of 1970s

The study conducted by **Jaganath Pathy** on '*class, caste and power in rural Orissa*'⁸ was based upon the social setting of 1970s. The dimension of caste in power structure is prevalent in India. Discussions around dominant and dependent castes in the villages have occupied prominent place during the 1960s. As a consequence, the question of class was neglected. This article contends that undue emphasis and unusual degree of autonomy given to caste in rural studies has led to a number of biases and distortions in the understanding of the power structure. To that effect, the article gravitates towards the broad relationship between class and caste and their interdependent and interrelated influence on the rural power structure in Orissa.

The study was conducted on three different types of villages. Pokalingia a tribal village; Talpatna, a village characterised primarily by feudal relationships; and the third one Mukundapur, is predominantly engaged in a capitalistic mode of production in agriculture. The empirical investigation into these three types of villages is carried out, precisely because of the assumption that there are variations in the level of development of forces of production. The village Pokalingia (V-P) of Phulbani district has 284 persons in 68 households. The *Kandha* belonging to the scheduled tribe category constitute a total of 210 persons in 50 households. The rest

⁸ J. Pathy, 'Class, Caste and Power in Rural Orissa', in G. Omvedt (ed.) **Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States**, (Delhi: Teaching politics: 1982), pp. 51-61

18 households and 74 persons were non tribal. Excluding the *Kamar* and the *Pana*, other castes were settled only in the last 25 to 40 years.

The second village Talpatna (V-T) was selected from an ex-zamindari area. This village was founded by the zamindar of Dharkote. Talpatna of Dharkote panchayat in Ganjam district was marked by the natural concentration of lands in a few hands and distribution of uneconomic parcels of land among a small section of agricultural population. The village had 72 households and 320 persons out of which the Kadal – a lower caste constitute three fourth of the total strength.

The third village, Mukundapur(V-M) was selected from ex-ryotwari area near a small industrial township of Aska. The roytwari system was initially characterised by peasant proprietorship. But, since then it has been widely presumed that this system was more progressive than the other types of tenures. The industry has an influence on agrarian relations. Considering the limits of growth, irrigation, and cash crops cultivation in Orissa, this village may not be a representative of Orissa agriculture. It has some similarities with a section of villages in coastal Orissa and helps in understanding the capitalist mode of production. In this village, the backward castes numerically dominate the population. The village comprised of 87 households and has a population of 390. The backward castes and scheduled castes comprised 140 households and 595 persons. *Adlia* or *Odiya* a backward caste comprised 87 households and 390 population.

These three villages constitute only 5 Brahmin and 2 Kshtriya households. The social stratification on the basis of caste hierarchy is evident in all the villages but hierarchy is a problem for them. In V-P, *Sundi* and the *Kamar* both claim the status of higher castes, and same as *Bauri* over *Dandadasi* in V-M. Even though the attributional aspect is there, the *Kandha* and *Gauda* do not take food from each other, but they accept water. Other than caste; land, labour, loan, business, faction and affinal ties are regarded as additional strength. People belonging to all castes, prefer marital ties outside their own village and usually the same village reciprocates the marriage alliances.

The class structure of these villages is closely based on the type and quality of land. In V-P, there is both communal and private ownership of land. The communal type of land is very less and the distribution of private land is unequal. In the village V-T, most of the land is with Zamindars and his ex-managers. In V-M, 28.4 per cent of the households are landless and another 45.9 percent of the households have upto one acre of land holdings; whereas only 6 percent of the households have 40.5 per cent of the total land area.

Now the class position of people is divided on the basis of land holdings. He divided it into sixty types of landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, small peasants, labourers and businessmen and others.

Landlords

There are five landlords in V-P. One landlord belonging to *Kandha* community is a tenant of this village and two families are indebted to him. The

other four landlords are small merchants of neighboring township. The village V-T has three landlords who, control 62.2 per cent of the total land. The zamindar alone employs 17 share croppers to cultivate his land. In addition, the tenants have several unpaid labour obligations, considerably reducing the poverty of labour. In 1959, the second brother of the family became the Sarpanch, having been unanimously elected. Then he became chairman of Panchayat Samiti and later became deputy minister twice. The other two landlords have class dominance but do not participate in politics.

In V-M, there are 12 landlords related to the agrarian occupation, out of which 7 are outsiders. The common pattern of land is 1:1, 1:3 and 2:3 based on the type and quality of land. The village landlords belong to the Brahmin and *alia* caste. Both are powerful and control the factions. But the other two are not interested in village politics.

Rich Peasants

There are 4 rich peasants in V-P. They belong to the tribal and backward caste categories. Two of the four landlords are active in politics. The other two landlords try to dominate each other on the basis of their landownership and tradition. There are two important points. First, the myth of tribal homogeneity does not hold true. There is a sharp development of internal differentiation within the community in relation to economy and politics. Second, non-tribals as a whole are the only exploiting groups of people.

In V-T, there is only one rich peasant (Odiya) who is generally involved in politics. Another one is *kshatriya* peasant who leads the second biggest faction of the village and owes allegiance to the congress. In the village V-M, there are five peasants belonging to upper and backward castes. Among them, one is a ward member and the other is the headman. Their dominance on the whole is very little in comparison to the landlords.

Among these three villages, the rival rich peasants belonging to the same community control political power. In the ex-zamindari village, it is between the main landlord and main rich peasant; and in the ex-ryotwari village between two inside landlords.

Middle Peasants

In V-P, there are 10 tribal and 4 non-tribal households of middle peasants. The harvest is self-sustainable. Two tribals of this class are strong supporters of the Muthahead faction. There is the *pana* caste headman of the village in the non-tribal category. There are 5 households in the village V-T, the richest among them belongs to the schedule caste. He is an active member of the CPI (Marxist). All other middle peasants are more politically conscious. In V-M, there are 14 middle peasants distributed among five castes of the village. Two of them are panchayat ward members and one is a peasant activist, who normally mobilised the people against the interests of land holding class.

From this, it appears that the power of middle peasants rests largely on their organising capacity on class lines, away from factional disputes; and this class is more capable of carrying the interests of the masses, due to their independent living.

Small Peasants

There are 22 tribal and 5 non-tribal households in V-P. Five households supplement their income by sharecropping; fourteen have harvest, farm and land labour as secondary occupation, and sixteen of them are indebted. As a whole, they play a minor role in village politics. In V-T, there are 10 households; eight of them are tenants. Their role in politics is diverse. In V-M, more than half of the households is small peasants, a historical product of ryotwari system. Twenty-seven of them are tenants and thirty-five are indebted. They are divided between the two major factions of the village.

Labourers

They are normally wage labourer. The wage rate differs for male, female and for villages as well. These people are more conscious and have participated in a number of demonstrations organised by the CPI.

Business and Others

The few petty businessmen are quite weak. In all cases, there is the predominance of exchange market with the domination of the landed class.

Changing Lower Castes of Western Orissa in the'90s

P. Sainath wrote three articles on changing caste practices of the lower castes people of Western Orissa. The first one is '*four weddings and a funeral*',⁹ which highlighted the anarchy creeping into caste system. In this he explained about the changing social condition of dalits. The second one is '*unmatched music, untouchable musicians*'¹⁰; which reflects upon the social, cultural and religious life style of the untouchables. The third one is on '*Anarchic recipes for change*'¹¹ which reflects on Brahmin cooks preparing food for dalits. He opines that, the class and power relations have combined to dent some old attitudes, and economics has induced a degree of social accommodation in the conservative caste ridden society.

Inter-caste marriages are on the rise, especially in the last two years, across the conservative regions of western Orissa. When a girl of a higher caste (Brahmin) marries a boy (Dom) of a lower caste, the inter caste conflict manifests. What follows is a funeral ceremony, undertaken by the girl's family in order to readmit them into the caste 'samaj'. The girl is not literally dead but is dead for the caste 'samaj' in which she is born. The event, generally, triggers a mobilisation of the caste groups, who more often seek the intervention of the court of law. The girl's family seeks justice in the name of the girl's minor status. The caste group that has dominance in terms of number and influence has always an advantage. Whereas,

⁹ P. Sainath, 'Four Weddings and a Funeral', *The Hindu Magazine, Weekly Edition-2*, Sunday, Feb.6, 2000.

¹⁰ P. Sainath, 'Unmatched Music, Untouchable Musicians', *The Hindu Magazine, Weekly Edition-2*, Sunday, Feb. 27, 2000.

¹¹ P. Sainath, 'Anarchic Recipes for Change', *The Hindu Magazine, Weekly Edition-2*, Sunday, Apr. 2, 2000.

the cast groups stand by their boys who marry into a higher caste, they excommunicate the girl if she marries into a lower caste. The caste 'Samaj' pursues the case in the court of law even after they declare the girl dead to prevent the future occurrence of such events. The law of societies (caste group norms) and the law of court approve of the contradictory things. The caste groups' appeal to the court of law indicates the former's subservience to the latter. The inter caste conflict is not restricted to two particular caste groups. It occurs across caste groups, in case of boys, if the boy marries a girl of lower caste, he is censured.

In most of the inter-caste marriages, where the girl marries in a lower caste than she is born in; the spouses are educated and hold government jobs. Upward mobility through inter-caste marriage seems to exist in every group.

Some of the art forms of which the lower castes are pioneers are subjected to discrimination. These art forms are intertwined with the social aspects of life. Their performance is a must at Pujas, births, feasts or funerals, weddings, festivals and puberty rituals. The centrality of the art forms in the social life, and the accomplishment of the artists, mostly dalits, however, do not transcend the discriminatory practices that issue forth from caste norms. The expertise in the art form that is central to all social function is not able to help them earn a good living.

The role of the ganabajas, folk-bands; cut across ethnic and religious barriers. Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, all make use of their services. The ganabajas are Doms and Dalits. At the end of eight hours, they get paid a meagre sum for a troupe of some six or more men. Sometimes, the clients, mostly the

higher castes, put premium on their respective bandsmen. The clients nudge their bandsmen outperform the other bandsmen. The rivalry often slips into the ugly fisticuffs. The music and dance over, the higher castes start treating these bandsmen with all the humiliation. In the words of the Ganabajana, 'At dance time, all dance around us. At dinnertime, we separate. When the dancing is on, people bump into and shove us around. But at dinnertime we are untouchable'.

The schemes for Dalits are not implemented in the fear that these people will leave their traditional job. Thus, they are prisoners of their own vocation which fail to provide them either money or prestige.

Contemporary Jajmani Relations; Case Study of Coastal Orissa

A case study was conducted by **Jens Lerche** on 'Jajamani Relations' in coastal Orissa¹² in 1992. He analysed 'jajmani' as socio-religious, patron-client relations of traditional occupation. After independence, the nature of this traditional relationship changed into a secular one.

Coined by Wisner in 1936, the 'Jajmani system' has acquired the status among sociologists and anthropologists of being one of the corner-stones of the organisation of rural social relations in India. It has commonly been viewed as an all-India prevalent system of socio-religious, inter-caste, patron-client relations, which historically encompassed practically Brahmin household, service caste

¹² J. Lerche, 'Dominant Castes, Rajas, Brahmins and Inter-Caste Exchange Relations in Coastal Orissa: Behind the Façade of the Jajmani System', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (n. s.) Vol., 27, (2), 1993, pp.237-265.

households and agricultural servants performing their hereditary caste occupations for the land owing castes. In return, each landowner was expected to cover the material needs of the households.

The perception of the 'Jajmani system' as expressing harmonious intercaste interdependence; juxtapositioned with studies emphasising asymmetrical power relations and exploitation by the landowning patrons as the organising principle of the relations.

Lerche studied Jajmani relations of coastal Orissa which focussed on inter-caste exchange relations of (i) farmer-Brahmin; (ii) farmer-service-castes; (iii) farmer-agricultural servants. 'Jajmani relations' are not perceived as one single system by the villagers but three different type of relations they exchange relations as prevalent, as it is related to Brahmin-dominant caste contradiction. This relation based on village to village and it is influenced by kingly power, namely rajas and zamindars on the one hand, and the dominant farming caste, on the other.

The asymmetrical power is based on inter-caste relations and the dominant caste influenced this power over the subservient castes. In coastal Orissa, generally, the zamindars, rajas, and a weak dominant caste belong to the dominant group. Lerche substitutes Raheja's bi-polar model as a triangular one. Hence, the power configuration in coastal Orissa is

- (i) Brahmanical power;
- (ii) Kingly power represented by local rajas and zamindars – dans;
- (iii) Kingly power represented by the dominant caste.

The *Khandayat*-Brahmin exchange relations of coastal Orissa are expressed as dominant caste kshatriya-Brahmin exchanged relations in India. Brahmin purohit performed the life-cycle rituals in *Khandayat* household. Besides this, the *Khandayats* consulted on special occasions such as illness and other types of distress. In return of services, the Brahmin of the coastal Orissa received three types of presentation; *dana*, *dakshina* and *barshika*.

The coastal Orissa villagers perceive the exchange relations between the dominant caste and the households of the service castes, which perform their services for them as a relation between a 'master' (Saanta), and his 'servants'. (Sevaka: Seva; to serve, to worship). This relationship may either be permanent or temporary.

All members of service castes are looked upon as sevakas when they perform their services for the *Khandayat* on ritual occasions such as life cycle rituals (marriage, birth, and death ceremonies). Most non-Brahmins as touchable clean castes engaged themselves in this power relation. The castes like, *Barber*, and the *Dhoba* participate, but so do the Herdsmen (*Gauda*) who carry the palanquin at weddings, the Blacksmiths and the carpenters who produce certain religious paraphernalia, the *pana* drumbeats perform their services in ritual occasions. The relationship is temporary, as it lasts only for the actual duration of the service itself. A permanent *saanta-sevaka* relationship exists between the *Khandayats* and the *Barikas* (Barbers), *Dhobas* (Warherman) and *viswakarmas* (Blacksmith and Carpenters) and in few places *Kumbhars* (Potters).

Apart from the above services at ritual occasions, each household of these service castes has been bound to perform its everyday services for the same specific group of *Khandayat* households for generations. In return for their everyday services, the service-caste households receive two types of presentations. For all households receiving *bartana*, the relation between them is permanent *saanta-sevaka* relation. *Bartana* is 'pauna', a fixed payment according to traditional right. The *sevakas* have a right to receive *bartana* and the farmers have an obligation to give it. But sometimes the *sevakas* complain regarding their *Bartana*, the farmer may try to bargain over the amount, using arguments for less payment.

However, ultimately the *saanta-sevaka* relations rest on the power of the dominant caste to maintain it, a fact acknowledged by both parties. If the service caste do not perform their traditional duties, they will be either boycotted or attacked. For the two castes *dhobas* and *barbers* the traditional relation remained there and some people organised themselves into market relations, signaling, the purely temporal nature of all *bartana* relations.

The permanent *saanta-sevaka* relations are, in these cases, replaced by more selective, temporary relations, emphasizing a few important rituals and priestations. *Dhobas*, *barikas*, *blacksmiths* and *carpenters* working outside the *bartana* system are still expected to fulfil their duties concerning the farmers' occasional religious ceremonies.

But now-a-days, some service castes households are no more eager to perform the service related to ritual occasions, because of confrontation and low

amount paid for their work. Therefore, several castes have tried to stop the performance of some of these services. The traditional occupation of the households changes. No more, service castes are dependent upon this jajmani relation to run their families. They only keep the emotional attachment of traditional occupation. The moment they are treated badly, they show their resentment. Lerche studied coastal Orissa in mid 1970s and the incident was that the *Gaudas* of the Kendrapara area decided to stop carrying the groom in a palanquin at *Khandayat* weddings as they found this too degrading. The *Khandayats* decided to coerce them back to their duties and attacked the *Gauda* hamlet. However, the *Gaudas* succeeded in driving the *Khandayats* back. Thereafter, it was accepted that the *Gaudas* of this hamlet would no longer carry the palanquin. But the *Gaudas* living outside this hamlet were not in a position to defend them and had to return to palanquin duty. After 30 years journey from this incident, the profession of *Gaudas* stopped. They are no longer carrying the grooms in a palanquin rather choose some other occupations as their livelihood.

Another instance in the mid 1970s, the *Pana* Drumbeaters of the Kendrapara area felt that they should be allowed to eat together with the guests at the weddings where they were engaged for drum beating. As the *Khandayats* did not agree to this, they boycotted the drum beating. However, the *Khandayats*, in return refused to engage them as agricultural labourers. In the end, the Drumbeaters gave up and returned to the degrading work.

The *Khandayats* have not had the continuous central position necessary to achieve ideological hegemony, to transform their dominant position into a religious principle, and to obtain the other groups' acceptance. Therefore, the top of the secular and divine power pyramids in coastal Orissa was sliced off after independence. The Saant-Sevaka relations lost their undisputed pre-eminence, and thereby their divine reason. Where *saanta-sevaka* relations continued to exist, they acquired a more secular character than they had before.

Caste and Political Process of Democratic Orissa

The fifth study was done by **Subrata Kumar Mitra**, on '*Norms and Modalities of Political Choice*'¹³, a case study of an Orissa village. The study in Kashipur, a multi-caste village with a sizeable tribal population, is at eight kilometres distance from the district headquarter.

In terms of numerical preponderance, the *Khandayats* are the dominant caste. Next to them in ritual status is the Dalua-Paika. The internal political order in Kashipur during the princely days was based on a system of reciprocal obligations. The *Khandayats* exercised power over others in the village. Their ownership of land reinforced political power and the practice of usury. They were the patrons of the local artisans and landless and marginal peasants. The *Karans* of Kashipur, are traditional rivals of the *Khandayats*. The *Karans* took British education and had access to the new professions and endowed them with the new skills.

¹³ S. K. Mitra, 'Norms and Modalities of Political Choice: Case Study of an Orissa Village', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 14, No.1, 1980, pp. 51-75.

Structurally, the village is divided into three parts. The Hindu upper-caste household is referred to as *Bhadraloks* residing in 'inner village'. The 'peripheral areas', bordering to the inner village, are largely inhabited by scheduled castes and tribes. The bulk of the tribal population lives farther away from the village in 'outlying areas'.

He has located the study on parliamentary elections in 1977 and electoral mobilisation for the Assembly elections. In the village politics, there were conflicts between *Karans* versus *Khandayats* and *panas*; but there were no overt conflicts within the upper socio-economic strata.

A second challenge to the power of the Karan-Dalua coalition came from the *panas*. The articulate and organized *panas* has long provided the leadership to the rest of the Adivasi-Harijan population of Kashipur. The transformation of traditional configuration of the power is a challenge to the power of the *Khandayats*. The social bond between the *Khandayats* and the *panas* was exploitative in social and economic terms but symbolic in terms of power. In the parliamentary election, the Harijan leader had taken the responsibility of door to door campaigning. But the *Pana* ward leader had faced increasing challenges from *pana* youngsters. So a week before the polls, the Adivasi Harijan community split into several factions. Some Adivasis, who were recipients of homestead lands and houses as gifts from the Government, were loyal to the leader. The bulk of the community especially the dissident *panas* felt that the party is important. A third

faction, through the traditional *Pana* leader took the line of 'village unity' and continued its support for the village leaders.

The Dalua -Karan leadership's success was at a cost to itself. By staying aloof and neutral, the *Khandayats* succeeded in forcing the Dalua-Karan leadership to share with them power contacts and material resources that the process of electoral mobilisation brought to them. Similarly, the dissident *Panas*, forces to mobilise support, independent of their traditional leader and of the village leadership, gained major confidence. Both of these factors caused certain changes in the configuration of power in the village. The effects of the change were clearly seen in electoral mobilisation during the assembly election a few months later.

The campaigning for the Assembly elections began in Kashipur. The Adivasis and Harijans did not come to the election meetings, in the village organised to mobilise support for the candidates. This reveals the nature of political differences in the village. The social distance between the Bhadrals and the Adivasi-Harijans increased as a result of the separate political mobilisation. The Adivasi-Harijan group attended a meeting of their communities in the area, which was convened by the congress candidate.

The level of participation in the assembly election declined sharply. But this drop is much more pronounced in the case of the Adivasi-Harijan group than among the caste Hindus. Compared to the parliamentary election, the preferred candidate of the Adivasi-Harijans in the Assembly election was much weaker. A vote for him would be practically a wasted vote. The low turn out emerges not as

the result of traditional apathy but as 'well reasoned abstention'—an indication of growing political awareness and organisation within the lower strata of the electorate.

Depressed Castes and Classes in Changing Rural Orissa : Some Interesting Aspects

In the above five case studies, we come across the position of 'Depressed castes and classes'. We need to analyse them. The period ranges from that of Bailey's case study conducted in the year 1957 to the year 2000. We will highlight the aspects of caste and untouchability, caste and association, marriage customs, land reforms, jajmani system and their participation in politics.

The sociological understanding of the Indian institution namely caste was studied by both Indian and western scholar in different perspectives. Sociologists are more interested to study caste system, because it is an age-old problem of Indian society. After independence, the government has taken some measures for institutional changes. Here the point of reference is caste, whether it is facilitating or hindering the successful implementation of an economic programme (land reforms, rural development) or in the working of cooperatives, These institutions were recognised for their role, in the government sponsored programmes of change and development. Caste was undergoing considerable changes as a consequence of urbanisation, industrialisation, democratisation and spread of education. So, here we will analyse the impact of various programmes of change and development on the institution of caste in rural India.

The features of caste is that it is 'a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position on hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste.¹⁴

Occupation and Lower Castes

Here, I shall take some of the features of the caste system to analyze the castes in rural Orissa. There is a significant change in hereditary occupation of lower castes in rural Orissa. As Lerche mentioned, the backward castes like the *gauda* (Milkman) and *barika* (barber) have changed their occupation, and some have retained their original but made them market oriented. So the occupation is more secular today.¹⁵

i) Caste Panchayat

There are two major institutions, which lost importance in rural Orissa. As a result, caste occupation diversified. The first is the institution of caste panchayat or council, which in the past functioned as a quasi-judicial institution. It governed and regulated both the internal and external relations of a caste. Each caste had a council, at the local or regional level. Generally, in the period of crisis, they called a meeting and resolved the crisis. Bailey distinguished contradictions between the

¹⁴ M.N. Srinivas, **Caste in Modern India**, (Bombay: Asha Publishing House: 1962), p.3..

¹⁵ Op. Cit., J. Lerche, pp. 256-257.

upper and lower castes as symptomatic of social change.¹⁶ This happened during the post-independence period in a significant manner. So legally castes were given freedom to choose different occupations.

ii) Jajmani

Second important cause for the caste occupation dissociation was the decline of the jajmani system. The function of this institution varied from region to region. Jens Lerche studied this relationship very carefully. Now a days it is more secular in nature. The decline of jajmani relationships has accelerated the process of dissociation of traditional caste occupations forcing the specialist castes or depressed castes to look to new avenues for earning livelihood. Such dissociation was further accelerated by other factors like industrialisation, urbanisation, spread of education, and the emergence of new occupations. Industrialisation not only attracted many of the displaced caste specialists (carpenters and blacksmiths), but also many young men who would otherwise have continued to pursue traditional occupations. Industrialisation also replaced several products, by which traditional occupation changed.

In the context of the association between castes and traditional occupations, it is important to note that members of lower and middle castes tend to move away from traditional occupations of sheep rearing, washing clothes, or cutting hair, to a job as a clerk or even a peon or messenger in the government or in the private firm.

¹⁶ F. G. Bailey, *Tribe, Caste and Nation*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1960), pp.7-8.

Members of the lower castes, in particular the 'untouchables' are engaged in traditional occupations. The dominant castes Brahmins and *Karans* manipulated the situation and took the advantage. Members of dominant caste bring economic and other pressures on dependent castes to ensure continued master-servant or patron-client relationships. But, it is no more customary or compulsory for the lower castes. The legal abolition of untouchability and even the benefits of 'protective discrimination' in removing the economic dependence of the untouchable castes are very marginal. A particular lower caste group is taking the advantage of protective discrimination. Regarding this, Marc Gallenter observed that, 'Most untouchables continue to suffer disabilities which are erroneous in themselves and which severely restricted their life chances.'¹⁷

Sanskritisation

The relative position of the different castes in the local hierarchy is difficult to pinpoint in the case of the middle castes. Each caste laid claim to higher than others. This controversy is highlighted in Jaganath Pathy's study. Further, over generations some of the lower castes had tried to sanskritise their customs and lifestyles, in order to improve their rank in the hierarchy with varying degrees of success. Sanskritisation continues to be an important process of cultural and social change in rural Orissa. The *panas* in Bisipara respect vegetarianism. The mobility of lower castes is not restricted but resented by the higher castes. The study of P.

¹⁷ Marc, Gallenter 'The Abolition of Disabilities, Untouchability and the Law', in M.J. Mahar (ed.) *The Untouchability in Contemporary India*, (Arizona : The University of Arizona Press: 1972) p.262.

Sainatha on 'intercaste marriage' in western Orissa substantiates the above observation.

The post independence policies of protective discrimination, land reforms, and other welfare measures have not significantly changed the relative status of the lower castes. There is a widespread feeling that the benefits of protective discrimination policies have gone to the urban and more influential lower castes. This has been a basic argument against continued reservation in education and employment. It is also argued that there has been a social mobility more for individuals than for groups. Such a process is conspicuously evident among the scheduled castes in rural Orissa. Individual social mobility among them is invariably followed by or subsequent to, their migration to urban areas.

Land Reforms

After independence, the central government introduced the policies of land reform. The government of Orissa introduced it in the year 1960. This policy was not successful and was mere eyewash. Bailey and S.K. Mitra had touched upon land as the main source of occupation. B. Pathy¹⁸ has analysed the power structure in rural Orissa, where land is the main source of livelihood. In this study, he has discussed the power structure of rural Orissa. Coming to the class position of the villages, the classes are defined by the relations in which the various sections stand to the means of production.

¹⁸ J. Pathy, "Class, Caste and Power in Rural Orissa" in G. Omvedt. (ed.) **Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States**, (Delhi: Teaching politics: 1982), pp. 54-57.

Purity Vs. Impurity

Ideas of purity and impurity expressed themselves in various ways in inter caste relations. Higher castes were prohibited from accepting cooked food and drinking water from the lower castes. The latter were prohibited from coming into close physical contact with the former or entering the inner portions of the house of upper castes. Traditionally, the lower castes were denied the use of the streets where the higher caste lives. Generally, the lower caste or untouchable castes were secluded from the areas of higher castes. S.K. Mitra,¹⁹ in his study defined three regions; inner, peripheral, and outlying. The last two areas are for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Now-a-days the traditionally vegetarian castes have started eating non-vegetarian food and consuming alcoholic beverages. As a result, the number of non-vegetarian restaurants and liquor shops are increasing. On the contrary, there is a sense of achievement in breaking traditional forces. Srinivas has described these patterns of behaviour as 'dual culture'.²⁰

The idea of purity and impurity is weakening day by day. But in some places the practice is still persisting. In Bisipara village, the conflict arose because of the temple entry by lower castes.²¹ Denying entry into temples is a punishable

¹⁹ S.K. Mitra 'Norms and Modalities of Political Choice: Case study of an Orissa Village', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1980. P. 56.

²⁰ Quoted in, *Ibid.* P. 71.

²¹ F.G. Baily, 'Two Village in Orissa' in D. Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1996), p. 387.

act, but traditional forces are so powerful that, this practice is widely prevalent in rural Orissa.

Closely related to the notion of purity and impurity, are the norms of caste endogamy. Ideally marriages took place within one's own caste. However, there are some perceptible changes in marriage customs and rituals among some castes in rural Orissa. The study by P. Sainath in western Orissa reflects upon both the characteristics. When a Brahmin girl gets married to a person from the lower caste, in the eyes of Brahmin Samaj this girl is considered as dead. Her father also conducts a funeral ceremony. The inter-caste marriages are, however, showing increasing frequency due to the spread of education. The emergence of 'class consciousness' among the people has increased hypogamy marriage practices. The policy of protective discrimination towards backward castes has helped them in getting jobs and acquiring higher-class status. The repercussions of this policy have expanded the barriers between the castes.

Caste Associations

The traditional society had a caste and village panchayats. All the disputes were resolved by these governing bodies. But the role of traditional mechanisms for resolving group conflicts by a village community is impossible in modern times. It happens because the 'built in mechanism' fails for various socio-economic reasons.²² With the operation of new economic forces and introduction of modern

²² S. Mehta, *Social Conflicts in a Village Community*, (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co. Pvt. Ltd.: 1997) pp. 76-83.

terms of political democracy, the traditional social institution of village like joint family, the village panchayat and caste system have become dysfunctional. They have relatively assuming new forms in recent years. Their underlying value system is operating in dissonance with the new values introduced by political democracy and there by, the result is widespread group conflicts and struggle for power. The structural determinants of political choice have clustered around the role of caste in politics. Moreover, this revolves around the confrontation between society and the polity representing, the force of tradition and modernity. In this analysis, tradition stands for the values of hierarchy and operates through castes, whereas, polity and its associate institutions such as, the judiciary, elections, and legislatures are identified with the modern value of egalitarianism.

Rudolf in his proposition on the modernity of tradition has advanced a dialectical relationship between traditional forms of stratification and modern institutions of politics, which are creating new mutations, such as caste associations.²³

The caste association is a para-community, which combines elements of traditional relationship of caste, kin, and tribe with those of modern voluntary associations. In this sense, Bailey's analysis of caste in Orissa as 'building blocks'; shows that the caste associations are fragile. But it is non-functioning of caste

²³ P.H. Rudolph and S. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1967), p. 29.

associations, which has been highlighted by S.K. Mitra and J. Lerche. P. Sainath's study reveals the strong functioning of caste associations in rural Orissa.

Political Institutions, Processes And Choices

The lower caste people's awareness came through by the introduction of adult franchise and democratic decentralisation of power. So, the pattern of leadership changed in village level. The greater dispersal of power at the grassroots is basic to the spirit of democracy. The five-year plans and the Community Development Programme launched after independence did not succeed because of the exclusion of the people in the planning and decision making. It was found that unless people coordinated the programme on their own and valued it as a practical contribution to their own welfare, no substantial result could be gained. The developmental and political objectives laid down in the Directive Principles in the Indian constitution require the transfer of power and initiative to the local elite. Therefore, the process of the creation of local self government was necessary to attain the twin objective of democratic decentralization and to get the maximum local participation in planned programme.²⁴

Panchayati Raj system in Orissa, during the past 32 years of existence, has moved through many ups and downs. The government of Orissa had passed three important acts to recognise the Panchayati Raj system in the state. Though the broad structural framework of the Panchayati Raj system in Orissa today remains

²⁴ Op. cit., S. Mehta, pp.76-83.

more the same as it was before, a substantial change has taken place with regard to its compositions and functions. The seats are reserved in Panchayat institutions according to the population of respective community.

In S.K. Mitra's case study on norms and modalities of political choice, the political act follows from a political, social or economic relation and the social, or economic institution itself performs the political function. Participation becomes a self-consciously political act when the individuals or a group examines the political implications of the action.

Norms general are primarily methods of aggregation.²⁵ With obligation norms, political support follows in the direction of social and economic obligation. In the context of rapid political and social change, the system breaks down, as the lines of social and economic obligation are not clear any longer.²⁶ Examples of this are caste associations and occupationally more differentiated bodies.

The modality emerges out of the obligation norms and functions within a moral community. When obligation exists in a social context with various functionally specialised groups in it, the resulting modality is co-terminus with jajmani system. The political bond is one of the many bonds that binds people in multiplex relationships to those based on single interest relationships as people cross the boundaries of primordial loyalties form factions and caste associations to promote very specialised interests.

²⁵ S.K. Mitra, *Power, Protest and Participation*, (London: Routledge: 1992) pp. 107-137.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-17.

Transition from obligation norm to benefit norms depends upon the internal social structure, economic opportunities, and political mobilisation. Relative numerical strength of the lower strata plays an important role, especially when the local leadership is radical and there is support of radical political organisations. Mobilisation of the *Bhadralok* and Adivasi-Harijan on caste-association lines on the pattern of Kashipur during the assembly elections is prevalent.

Large-scale changes in the structure of the economy can be another factor responsible for normative changes in political choice though the process through which change occurs may seem apparently contradictory.²⁷ The economic relation which creates social obligation between the *sahukar* (Master) and the *halia* may be used for the purpose of mobilising support. The mobilisation of Adivasi support in parliamentary election is a form of political mobilisation and this form of mobilisation is described as vertical alliance and vertical mobilisation.²⁸

This chapter depressed castes and classes include the people who are suppressed from time immemorial. After independence the government has introduced several institutional changes. But the change in their status is not satisfactory because the upper caste domination in the power structure has cornered the benefits. On the other hand the depressed castes and classes have not even the consciousness that they can change it.

²⁷ Op. cit., S.K. Mitra, p. 72.

²⁸ Op. cit., Rudolph and Rudolph, p. 26.

Caste, class, and power are related but not identical. Though there existed a close connection between caste, class and power, the association between them did not attain a maximum obtainable index and was found to be less than perfect, which suggests a certain degree of independence enjoyed by each of the factions. The class and power dimensions are gradually disengaging themselves from the matrix of caste. In the context of depressed castes and classes it is very slow in nature.

In the traditional order, the cleavages of class and power tended to overlap with that of caste. It is only after independence that under the influence of powerful forces like modern education, political development, and reservation, the strangle hold of caste began to loose. However, the role of caste in the distribution of economic opportunities and power has not weakened considerably. It can be further argued that because of their privileged position in the traditional system, people of higher castes have better access and leverage to the emerging opportunities. So the depressed castes and classes are still in the grip of higher castes. And thereby they have become obliged to the upper castes rather than participating in a radical protest.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The present exercise is directed at arriving at an understanding of the impact of rural development programmes on the depressed castes and classes of Orissa. It also aims at understanding the social dynamics behind the performance of the rural development programmes in the Oriya society which is both caste and class-based. It has given special attention to the changes brought about by the rural development programmes in the social, economic and political positions of the depressed castes and classes. The social context that serves as the backdrop for the rural development exercise has been attended to in this work to understand the interrelationships among various aspects of rural power structure in Orissa and their impact on the scope of rural development programmes in delivering prosperity to depressed castes and classes.

The power structure of rural society has both caste and class dimensions. Certain factors like ritual status, land ownership, numerical size, educational level, access to government services and political representation of individual castes contribute to the position of the specific castes in any local rural power structure. As has been shown in the first chapter of this work the twin dimensions of caste and class in rural power structure must be taken into account in any discussion on the role of the elements of rural power structure in the performance of rural development programme. In this context one must appreciate the role of factions in this scenario. This appreciation comes from the political economy and sociology of rural development in Orissa.

The political economy of rural development in Orissa involves the interdependence of the material, political and cultural spheres. The history of rural development planning in Orissa is a witness to how the political economy of the development planning has affected-positively or negatively-the performance of the

programmes and their impact on the depressed castes and classes. In this work we have taken into account certain important factors like the geographical aspects, historical diversity, natural resources, regionalism, social profile, poverty, feudalism, mass movements, policy dimensions (such as land reforms and protective discrimination) factionalism, political populism, corruption, industrialisation and urbanisation.

These factors constitute a major part of any explanatory framework aiming at explaining the way rural development programmes have affected the depressed castes and depressed classes in rural Orissa. As has been shown in the fourth chapter with reference to various studies undertaken by Bailey (1953), Pathy (1974-75), Mitra (1977), Lerche (1992), and Sainath (2000). The politics of rural development exercise in Orissa is intimately related to the extent to which the depressed castes and classes have benefited from the development exercise. The relative share of various classes and castes in the fruits of prosperity delivered by rural development programmes can be explained by using the polity- economy nexus. The political coordinates of the socio-economic planning in rural Orissa play a significant part in influencing the impact of rural development programmes on the depressed castes and classes. Taking a diversion we can try to offer tentative answers to the questions we have raised in the introductory chapter.

1. How the caste organisations in the village affect power structure?

This can be answered by referring to various studies undertaken by Pathy, Bailey, and others. Various caste organisations have used their ability to mobilise people on the basis of their caste identities. In this way they affect the local rural power structure, thereby affecting the performance of rural development programmes, especially in the context of their orientation towards the depressed castes and classes.

2. How is power derived and exercised by different castes and classes?

The rural power structure in Orissa is complex and multidimensional, that it is very difficult to answer this question. As has been seen earlier, a caste's position in the rural power structure depends on various factors such as land ownership, numerical strength, access to government posts, position in the ritual hierarchy, the level of educational attainment of its members and the unity among its members in matters related to the other caste members. Power, as derived and exercised by different castes and classes, is an external manifestation of the social dynamics working behind the inter and intra castes and classes relationship.

3. Whether the inequalities in the distribution of development benefits are associated with stratification factors of caste, class and power?

As various studies have shown, the performance of various rural development projects is highly predicated upon the rural power structure characterised by caste, class, and power. Depressed castes and classes have little or no access to the benefits of rural development programmes. It is mostly because of the factors like the role of local dominant castes, factionalism, local politician-bureaucracy nexus and etc.

4. How do factions play in the village power structure?

This question can be answered in the lights of the earlier question.

5. Whether the depressed castes and classes take up their responsibilities of power sharing in all round development?

The answer to this question is a depressing no. The social dynamics behind the present scenario is related to the absence of conscientisation, positive discrimination, and institution building. The lack of education among the

depressed castes and classes, the absence of strong political mechanism to ensure the responsiveness of the political system to the depressed sections' legitimate needs and the non-fulfillment of basic human requirements of the members of depressed castes and classes are a few important reason that can be cited in this context.

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