

**CULTURE AND POLITICS:  
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE  
JAGANNATH TEMPLE COMPLEX**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

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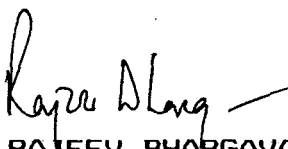



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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled **CULTURE AND POLITICS: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE JAGANNATH TEMPLE COMPLEX**, submitted by Ms. Lopamudra Tripathy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. This is her own work.

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

  
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LOPAMUDRA TRIPATHY

## PREFACE

A preface is the proper onset to the work that is to be done, a point of entry to the reader to introduce him to the work that follows. This shall contain a synopsis of the work that is to be done here; the various questions to be addressed and the central theme of this dissertation.

The very uses of the term culture makes it a difficult word to study. This work studies culture in a broad sense and does not delve into the various definitions of culture. Culture as understood here is a way of life - a broad context within which actions are rendered intelligible. For sometime now there has been an attempt to free culture from merely meaning a thing of the past, as a tradition, a something that exists "there" far from daily usage; something that is to be decorated in the shelves or may be performed occasionally like dance or music. It is something which is performed regularly and is evident in everyday life.

The intention of this study is an enquiry into the Jagannath cult on a slightly different basis from all the work done earlier. Firstly, this work shall view the cult not merely as a religious, but as a religio-cultural complex. Secondly, though believed to be the bastion of Hindu conservatism, a part of pan-Indian Hinduism, this work shall

claim its difference by not treating it with an elitist bias but as a popular complex. This is referred to as popular because it shapes and informs the life patterns of most people in Orissa. The family, individuals in a family and all families constituting a social system have their cultural informers. They have their religion, popular myths and rituals. This work provides an insight into meanings beyond what their home spun contents might suggest. One can trace their everyday life to cultural symbolic systems, represented by this religious complex. Activities around family, festivals and seasons have specific cultural meanings. It gives form to cultural concepts, of people, of family as a whole, of life and death. The cultural forms of each area is different and ever-changing, each generation and every locality creates, destroys and recreate cultural images. Each festival combines form, thought, feeling and sentiments and reveals socio-cultural meanings. In this study all these questions shall be dealt elaborately taking examples from the Jagannath cult.

Since no study can be done in a vacuum, a proper theoretical background has been considered essential and thus utilized. This work shall use as its methodology review of literature, from secondary sources.

This study progresses with a few assumptions:

- (1) Culture is not either high or low and that it is broad context within which people's actions are rendered intelligible. It, therefore, informs the life patterns of all people, the rich as well as the poor.
- (2) Cultures are seen to arise from local needs and, therefore, there are local variants of culture, giving rise to regional cultures.
- (3) Since, culture in the Indian context is hardly defined away from the religious, a regional popular culture which has its tracings in a religious symbol is explored into.
- (4) Culture interacts with other social structures, as politics, in this work and even has an inherent politics operating within itself.
- (5) Since culture is not static, it changes and adapts itself to other cultures. This change influences social and political changes through a process of interaction.

The first chapter delves into a theoretical enquiry into the notion of culture and is sought to be the background on which further enquiry is installed. It is divided into four sections, the first dealing with the evolution of the concept of culture, tracing its origin the various uses of the term over time till today. The second deals with the various sociological and anthropological understandings of culture. This shall also discuss the commonsensical use of the term and what people understand of it in their daily life. It shall direct the work in the proper perspective, by talking of culture lived away from elitist conception of culture. The third consists of the various methods through which culture is both transmitted and preserved, the oral and written traditions in culture. The fourth shall be a brief account on the interaction of politics and culture and the way the term political would be used in course of this work.

The second chapter initiates into the religious complex theoretically informed and placed in context of the nature of culture described in the previous chapter. It delves into the understanding of popular culture in the first part. Since it is difficult to study India as one cultural entity and defining the cultural independent of the religions. The



second part shall elucidate the meaning of cultural with a strong flavour of the religious. The third part elaborates the various theories with a proper example of the Jagannath cult. The essential connections are established between the popular ways of life and the temple complex, tracing down the presence of popular elements in the high Hinduized temple.

The focus of the third chapter is the interaction between culture and politics. Culture does not exist in isolation, this chapter regards the two culture and politics as independent structures which come in constant contact. It makes an enquiry into the point of contact of the two structures, tracing down the political in culture and the cultural in politics. The theories forward in this chapter are again cogently explained with the example of the same cult; It takes into consideration the various ways through which politics makes use of cultural expressions and the way culture utilizes a politics of an independent kind for its survival.

The fourth chapter is one on cultural change. Since culture is something that is most widely tampered with, this chapter makes an investigation into the changes that are

prompted within this culture due exogenous and endogenous reasons. The first part as in all chapters consists of theories of cultural change primarily in the context of India. The second part consists of the various changes within this traditional complex, change in cultural structure changing the whole set up - a massive process of demolition of one structure to build upon it a new attitudinal and behavioral structure due to various simultaneous processes of modernization, secularization, etc.

Finally, a conclusion, which discusses the various derivations of the study. Finalizing the orientation of the work, answering the most important question as to why one chose to do this work at this point of time. It also briefly mentions the questions that this work raises and the possible questions which could have been dealt in course of work.

**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION TO CULTURE**

## CHAPTER I

Human involvement with the notion of culture is as old as humankind. One believes that even the most primitive of people had a definite way of conducting themselves a broad context within which they related to each other, understood each other's action and communicated with one another. The capacity to operate in the context of culture has perhaps been the most important source of our strength. People have survived through culture, evolved with culture and have acquired a distinctiveness of their own because of culture. Culture does not merely stop after giving one identity, it interacts most actively with other structures of the society shapes them and is in turn shaped by them too. Though culture as a term was most generously used through the ages, the all encompassing all inclusive, modern anthropological nature of culture was understood after the publication of E.B. Tylor's work "Culture and Civilization". From there on started a different kind of enquiry into the nature and meaning of culture. Culture and politics have had interactions from the beginning but a categorical and independent enquiry into culture -- politics per se is quite a modern phenomenon.

The interaction between culture and politics is of extraordinary importance to a state like India where culture

is the centre of all activity. Apart from this, each world event and social situation gets proper explanation in the cultural context, starting from the fall of Soviet Union, which to most social scientists has great cultural connotations to the rise of United States as the most powerful nation in the scenario of world politics.

This chapter is divided into three broad sections, the first dealing with the evolution of the concept, tracing its origin, development and changes in the use of the term over the years, the second shall deal with the various anthropological and sociological explanations to the term. This shall include an elaborate discussion on the commonsensical conception of this term. The third consists of the various ways through which culture is transmitted and preserved, the oral and written traditions in culture. There shall be a brief account on the interaction of politics and culture, the way the term political would be used in course of this work etc. Later there would be one chapter discussing the relation between the two.

## I

The purpose of the first part is to delve into the history of the term culture, the semantics of the term, meaning of the word in various contexts, its place of origin and the consequent development through the ages. It is

important to go through this exercise, firstly, because it shall tell the various possible uses of the term culture and secondly, to give a clear picture of the context in which culture will be used all through this work. Over the years this concept has moved down incorporating new ideas, shedding off all those ideas it once represented, broadening itself and changing itself in accordance with the demands of time. An attempt to define the term would merely lead to confining the word into a framework. But a definition herein would allow us to visualize the phenomenon that is denoted by the concept. It enables all investigators to "see the same thing" and communicates uniform meaning to all those who use the term. The various phrases which would seem as definitions would be in truth to understand the purpose of this work.

There are four stages through which Raymond Williams traces the development of this term.

(a) In "keywords", Williams traces the word to its Latin roots, wherein he says that culture was a noun - process - as in the culture of crops or rearing and breeding of animals.

(b) The 18th century saw the extension of the term which now came to be referred to the growth and cultivation of human attributes. This meaning of culture continued

through the age of Enlightenment where the terms culture and civilization were used interchangeably. By the 19th century, this Enlightenment thought was abandoned for "civilization usually denotes a special aspect of more advanced artifacts, good, technical processes, ideas, habits and values." Equating the two terms would mean excluding the primitive societies of any culture at all when even the most primitive had acquired some degree of culture. They too had a ceremonial side to their life, their births and deaths, the way their rituals were conducted, their symbolic and decorative art. The two were distinct processes. Evolution of culture begins when a people attempt to realize itself in an objective form. Every culture gives rise to its own peculiar civilization and civilizations are analyzable in terms of their cultural traits and forms.

(c) Culture was no longer viewed as a general process of human development, where it merely meant art, literature, creativity, inspiration and aesthetics. It now came to be seen as a social process, or particular set of code of conduct or attitudes -- a social process which shapes a distinct way of life of a distinct people. This broadening of a particular process to a general, was according to Williams, the beginning of the word culture in its modern usage. To quote Williams "in our time the most general and common meaning of culture is to indicate a whole way of life

of a distinct people or other social group."<sup>1</sup>

(d) In the 19th and 20th centuries one witnesses other shifts of usage, where Williams acknowledges the variability within this one kind of culture, existence of plural cultures, the high culture and mass culture. The various aspects of pluralities in culture like popular, folk and mass culture shall be dealt elaborately in the consequent chapters.

As Raymond Williams points out the different senses in which the word is most frequently used, "one at the fringes in the tea-shops and places like that, where it seemed the preferred word for a kind of social superiority not in ideas and learning and not only in money and position but in a more intangible area relating to behaviour, yet, also secondly where it was an active word to indicate powerfully some central formation of values in a more general discussion with what seemed to be a different implication, a use which made it almost equivalent to society, a particular way of life, an American culture or Japanese culture."<sup>2</sup>

Standing back from this survey of the historical development of the word "culture" Williams suggests that its current usages are likely to fall within one form or amalgam

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1. Raymond Williams, Culture, (London, 1981), p.11.
2. Raymond Williams, Keynotes, (London, 1976), p.10.



of the following options:

- (1) a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development;
- (2) a particular way of life, whether of a group of people or a period;
- (3) the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.<sup>1</sup>

The last two meanings relate most closely to the concerns of this work. One must understand that the concern is not in taking each of these separately but in understanding the relationship of the two. The second would mean dealing with particular social groups, their characteristic mode of thought, behaviour and social organization and the third would represent anything from the popular music to films etc. This work shall bring to light how the third interacts with the second and what is its influence on the former.

Talking of the various uses of the term in different contexts, Sapir, distinguishes between a culture which embodies any socially inherited element in life of man and one which refers to rather conventional ideal of individual refinement, the same term appears in two distinct semantic

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1. Ibid., p.80.

fields. It is not that the concept of culture has been defined in two different ways, but that the same term stands for two different theoretical concepts.<sup>1</sup> The different contexts in which culture is used as Bauman writes can be broadly put into 3 categories:

- (1) when a person has failed to live upto group standards. He is said to have "lack of culture";
- (2) Transmitting culture would be the leading function of an educational institution;
- (3) Then in terms of "level of their culture" when we grade people.<sup>2</sup>

Culture, therefore, in the first could mean two things:

(a) Culture can mean refinement, eloquent mannerism, artistic excellence, good behaviour, etc.

(b) It could even mean that the person fails to act in accordance to the values and norms of the group. Incapacity to act in a culturally standardized manner leads to lack of culture.

The second implies the survival of culture through transmission of the same. The individual actor who is the

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1. Refer to Zygmunt Bauman, Culture as Praxis, (London, 1973), p.3.

2. Ibid., p.7.

carrier of culture, is an object of the culture he transmits. As an individual carrier he is culturally created and conditioned and as a transmitter he creates culture.

The third and the first have similarities as long as they are grading or ranking people. A cultured, well mannered person is an antonym of an uncultured person. Secondly, this word is also utilized to account for the differences between communities of people. Similarly, as a cultured man is graded higher than an uncultured. Communities can be ranked in accordance with their cultural standards. The Germans could have rated themselves as more cultured community than the Jews as the English did to the Indians during colonialism.

Culture, therefore, is a word which needs to be carefully handled. Operating simultaneously along several competing axes of meanings, one needs to pay close attention to the context in which it is used in order to determine which of the several possible meanings is/are being proposed.

For some time now there has been attempt to free culture from merely meaning traditions, aesthetics, art -- something that exists far from daily usage. This work is a part of the larger attempt and accepts the truth and premises upon which that belief is grounded.

Culture is not merely a study of aesthetics as some scholars would have us believe, defined with an elitist and aristocratic bias. A notion of culture which arrogantly neglects the inclusion of the mass, wherein a flavour of the mass is distinctly missing. Most of these scholars believe culture as available only to a few, privileged people, for, for them culture is merely art, painting, literature, etc. Hannah Arendt sees the rude masses as capable of only consuming and destroying cultural objects. "Cultural objects are not renewable and hence, the touch of the masses simply destroy them."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from Arendt, the major critiques against mass culture are Adorno's and Walter Benjamin's. Their apparently uncompromising defence of modernist art and critique of mass culture have led scholars to say that Adorno is an elitist defending esoteric, artistic modernism against a culture available to all.<sup>2</sup> His lament at the predicament of culture means further manipulation and reification through the "culture industry" makes his disdain evident for culture of the mass. The very name culture-industry spells his apprehension about the misuse of culture. It would be a

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1. Quoted in Hiren Gohain, Popular Culture and Consciousness in 19th Century Bengal, (Calcutta, 1991), p.3.

2. Bernstein, ed., The Culture-Industry-Selected Essays on Mass Culture (Routledge, 1991).

consumerist factory which makes produces and sells culture as customer's demand. Adorno's cultural conservatism is evident when he comments, "Light art has been the shadow of autonomous art. It is the social bad conscience of serious art."<sup>1</sup>

There are, however, some strong reservations against the formalist argument. (1) Culture is "art", art is autonomous and has no social functions. Art exists for art sake. Representations in art would mean subjecting art to instrumental (propagandist or sentimental) interpretation.

It is erroneous to merely understand culture as art. Art can be there for art sake but representational art does not necessarily destroy art. Scholars who believe in the sociology of art say that art suffers impoverishment if it is not representational. Social problems and conflicts are reflected in literature and there are various artists who have portrayed decay in their art too. To quote Plekhanov, "The tendency for artists who have lively interest in art for art sake arises when they are in hopeless discord with the social environment in which they live."<sup>2</sup> Art is never an individual production and one need not really be in discord with society to appreciate art. Art is flexible  
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1. ibid., p.9.

2. Unnithan, Indra Deva, Y. Singh, eds., Towards a Sociology of Culture (Delhi, 1965), p.64.

enough to adapt itself to social stratum and changes when the stratum changes. How can somebody who borrows form a public arch of meanings make it purely autonomous; the essential content always remains social.

Standardization of art does to a great extent degenerate art, when it is no longer made to satisfy human needs but with an intention to make more and more profits. But, however, it is impossible to leave the majority out of minor delights in life, especially when the age of capitalism desires a mass production of art.

Secondly, the most important point of disagreement is the non-recognition of any other art form excepting the "high". The formalists entertain no division of art like the popular-culturists. They exclude the folk and the popular art forms as ordinary activities and no culture. Popular culturists deconstruct the notion of culture as a product of the creative mind. The individual writer is an ensemble of social relationships and cannot stand in absolute isolation from society. According to Williams, "there is no ordinary activity, if by ordinary activity one means the absence of creative interpretation and effort. Creativity cannot be specialized to an individual and all other activity described as ordinary. These ordinary activities

are deeply social in the nature."<sup>1</sup>

High culture is therefore minority culture which screens entrance into its domain the criteria of inclusion are normally difficult to satisfy and therefore is instrumental in making the majority move away, making itself un-understandable and unavailable for most. The basic issue of all popular culturists is to remove this false 'power-play' in the politics of culture, rescue it from "merely meaning the cultural", placing it in a broader context, expanding and transforming the nature of culture. The mass which was considered the many headed multitude or , low, ignorant and unstable is now seen as positive potential social force. They are, in simple terms, in an attempt to democratize the meaning of culture.

As one can form now on sense we are moving in the direction where the nature of culture is more inclusive and accommodating, not merely a sociology of culture but also an anthropological understanding of culture.

## II

Till now one has only discussed about the various uses of the term culture, but nothing has yet been mentioned about the content of culture, i.e., what is it that consists

1. Allan O. Connor, Raymond Williams (London, 1989), p.104.

of culture and what all can one include as culture. Anthropologists and sociologists have defined and explained the term differently from each other. Out of this debate between "What is culture?" first between the anthropologists and then between anthropologists and sociologists, grew two major theories of culture-theory of "culture patterns" best represented by Kroeber and the theory of social structure represented by Radcliffe Brown. In Great Britain, Malinowski and his followers are regarded as students of culture and of culture anthropology, while Radcliffe Brown and his followers are regarded as students of social structure and social anthropology. In United States the contrast between culture and social structure symbolized the institutional rivalry between anthropologists and sociologists.

The first all inclusive definition of culture was stated by Tylor. According to him, "Culture or civilization is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities of men as a member of a society."<sup>1</sup> This inclusive term of culture was continued by Franz Boas and Malinowski. Both the culture-pattern theorists and social structure theorists borrowed from this definition of Tylor.

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1. Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, Vol.III, p.627.



The major assumptions of the pattern theory represented by Kroeber and Klucholn is clear in their definition of culture. "Culture consists of pattens, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of the human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts and essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected), ideas and especially their attached values, culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action and on the other hand as conditioning elements of further action."<sup>1</sup> Culture, as is evident, from this includes broad general principles (highest common factors) of a particular people. They assume that the totality of human culture contains a broad range of patterns which provides the general framework for all individual cultures. This is the universal which is not yet fully known but can be discovered through comparative-historical studies. The culture pattern differs in degree of consciousness and complexity, the simplest patterns are behaviour expressed in customs, dress, diet, work and the more complex underlying the social, political, economic system of religion, etc. This theory accepts that culture is created by individuals and groups and interacts with them as well as with the environment. Sapir, Boas, Benedict,

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1. Ibid., p.628.

Linton also confirm to this theory

The theory of social structure was first developed by Radcliffe Brown. Social structure, as he defined, "was a network or system of social relations including persistent social groups and differentiated social classes and social roles."<sup>1</sup> All kinds of social phenomena - morals, laws, etiquette, religion, government, education - cannot be studied in abstraction but in their direct and indirect relations to social structure. Since, non-literate and simple societies are assumed to have no historical records this study was initially restricted to civilized societies, but developments in social anthropology and studies of simple societies by Redfield, Firth and peasant and of modern communities by Geertz, Freidman and others broadened the scope of this study and brought it near to the scope of the study of social structure.

Radcliffe Brown and other adherents of this theory tended to avoid the term culture and his avoidance was based on the claim that they studied social structure and not culture. For example, Fortes uses "culture" in the same sense as Kroeber and Kluckhohn when he says, "standardized ways of doing, knowing, thinking and feeling -- universally obligatory and valued in a given group of people at a given

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1. Ibid., p.530.

time are seen as symbolizing or expressing social relations."<sup>1</sup> Further, Radcliffe Brown says, "the study of social structure the concrete reality with which we are concerned the set of actually existing relations at a given moment of time which link together certain human beings."<sup>2</sup> So at the very heart of social structure we find the concept of culture.

Both are holistic theories essentially as they try to cover all aspects of society and culture—law, politics, economy, technology, art, literature, language, religion, philosophy. Both theories have explanatory aims though each finds different factors as primary. While the social structure theory assign explanatory value to social relations, the pattern theory does not specify but leaves the range open from anything like religion to technical invention. Anthropologist in contrast to sociologists consider their whole subject matter as culture whereas for sociologists it is society and social structures. While the former analyze customs, traits, behavioral patterns, the later concentrate on social relations and its product.

Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Merton Manheim speak of the sociology of culture. Sociology defines regularities

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1. Ibid., p.531.
2. Ibid., p.531.

and formal expressions through the action of individual actors. Thus, individuals are recognized as the basic category of all social sciences whose varying modes of interactions yield to abstractions like culture. Sociology of culture witnesses two complementary developments.

(i) Growing awareness about the contingent nature of social problems and possibility of interdisciplinary communication.

(ii) Precision and sophistication in methodological and conceptual foundation and meaning of culture and society and its inter-relationship. Mannehiem treats culture "as an outcome of social structure which is derived from a group's involvement in which the performance of one depends upon the performance of others."<sup>1</sup> This view was later expanded upon by Raymond Williams. A sociology of culture, as he says, "enquires actively and openly into received relations and into other possible and demonstrable relations,"<sup>2</sup> where received relations would mean relations already present and enquire into other strands of relations not very obvious. Culture influences and interacts with other structures in society like politics, economy and other forms of social

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1. Unnithan, Indra Dev, Y. Singh, Towards a Sociology of Culture (Delhi, ), p.7.

2. Raymond Williams, Culture (London, 1981 ), p.10.

life. Culture is a distinct way of life within which a distinctive signifying system is seen not only as essential but involved in all forms of social activity. This includes not only traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also signifying practices from language to art, philosophy, journalism and fashion which now consist the complex and extended field of culture.

Culture as conceived in this work would not only include intellectual discourse and abstractions which involves things as abstract as points of view but ordinary notions of common decency, movements and gestures. Roland Barthes concretizes this view when he says, "...The customs and rituals which form the texture of our daily lives, the festivals and celebrations of holidays which punctuate the yearly calendar, the music we absorb, the sports we can take part -- all these are not normally regarded as problematic. To the extent that they comprise the cultural wall-paper of an everyday existence, we are over-familiar with them and do not consciously register their impact.... The part they play is far from insignificant and inconsequential."<sup>1</sup> The excitement of studying culture is therefore in noticing the un-noticed, to regard and understand those aspects of daily life we normally take for granted, for simple artifacts are

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1. Quoted in Tony Benet, Popular Culture: Form and Meaning, Vol.4, Part 2 (Open Univ. Press, 1981), p.5.

as much a part of your culture as monumental scriptures and non-sensical rhymes form much of our cultural context as timeless epics. Every word, every sentence, every single expression of life represents intelligibility because people who expresses them and understand have something in common. This commonality of beliefs, ideas, attitudes form the basis for social communication. Francis Mulhern in addressing to the problem of definition of the term offers a catch - all definition of culture as "the complex unity of those practices that produce sense."<sup>1</sup> We are culturally influenced when we are engaged activities of transaction with the social environment. Culture conditions social existence.

Culture, therefore, as one can see is not located in the "hearts and minds of men". The members of a society are so called because of sharing essentials. The privacy theory of culture is discarded for our purposes. Culture presupposes action in the public sphere. No man communicates through a personal code. Culture as Geertz says, "is public because meaning is."<sup>2</sup> But the public meaning of culture does not suffocate an individual's individuality. The group and the individual are in constant interaction and it won't be too high a claim to say that group is individual

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1. Ibid., p.79.

2. Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973).

writ-large and the individual a microcosm of the group. As Benedict writes, "The life history of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in his community. From the moment he is born the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behaviour. By the time he can talk, he is a little creature of his culture, by the time he is grown and is able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his. Every child born into his group will share them with him."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, most people think of culture as something which requires a kind of an agreement, a tacit contract exist. People communicate and their actions rendered intelligible in the context of culture. This communicative action contains the elements whereby actors reach an intersubjective understanding. This communicative action presupposes a set of background assumptions which Habermas calls a "life-world" which is a way of life. This life world is culturally transmitted, linguistically organized of interpretative patterns."<sup>2</sup> The interpretative patterns form the basis of interaction.

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1. Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (New York, 1951), p.2.
2. J.H. Turner, Structure of Sociology Theory (Jaipur, 1987), p.205.

(i) Actors possess implicit and shared stocks of knowledge about cultural traditions, values, beliefs, linguistic structure.

(ii) They know how to organise social relations and patterns of co-ordinated interactions.

(iii) They understand how people are like, how they should act and what is normal and abberant.

Culture as one will use in this work would basically mean a group activity, something that is shared by all members of a group.

If one accepts plurality in culture, accepts the high and elite culture as contrasted to the popular or mass culture, regional cultures, sub-cultures, local cultures etc.; one moves on the premise that there is no one single culture, universally applicable to all. There are two theories forwarded for the ~~universalism~~ and differences in culture. The Classical Evolutionists believe in the unilinear course of evolution of culture. This view holds that men are psychologically similar everywhere and similar stimuli incite similar responses. Tylor and Morgan speak of the "psychic unity of mankind" where growth of religion have similar beginnings everywhere. The diffusionists are of opinion that since the capacity of man to invent is limited,

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the beginnings of culture have remained same, the traits once invented in one place slowly get diffused to other places. Culture changed through changes in methods of utilization of energy. Montesquien analyzes the variations in culture as different expressions of the general spirit of mankind. "Mankind is influenced by various causes, by climate, religion, laws, the maxims of government morals and customs whence is formed the general spirit of nations. In some countries, some of these causes act with greater force and in other in the same degree weakened."<sup>1</sup> Ruth Benedict in the "great arc of traits" spells out the universals which are available to all, out of which particular societies select and reject. Therefore, some aspects of life which seem to us important are underplayed by some and greatly elaborated by others. As Williams in his book Culture and Society remarks "any culture in its whole process is a selection, an emphasis and a particular tending".<sup>2</sup> Sapir sees the variations in culture as "culture-drift", a gradual move away from the universal cultural content. This accounts for cultural variations not only among nations but local drifts with one vast notion. Selection and rejection tend to grow into unique patterns which govern a particular

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1. Unnithan, Y. Singh, eds., Towards a Sociology of Culture, (Delhi, ), p.41.

2. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, (Harmondsworth, 1968), p.323.

group of people. The significance of differences in culture will be evident in consequent chapters when we talk of a regional variant of culture and cultural changes.

When one talks of culture of a group, or regional culture, one cannot stay away from assuming that culture has its geographical homeland, called the "culture-area". Geographical areas mark a high level consistency of traits and customs which remarkably differ from neighbouring areas. However, culture areas are not water-tight compartments and do not have frontiers like in any organisation of space. There exists as Kaviraj puts it, "fuzzy areas" in culture. Boundaries do exist, groups begin and end but they tend to shade off into each other rather than forcefully stand apart. It would be impossible to say where an Oriya culture ends and Bengali culture starts. The marginal areas often share both ways of living.

Though there is an existence of differences in culture, culture is an external factor which is internalised through various processes of socialization. Therefore, one can adapt and change to different cultures as it is not a biologically transmitted complex transmitted via germ cells. Culture is learnt and acquired, indoctrinated from childhood. A child of Indian parents born and brought up in America would be more like to be culturally akin to Ameri-

cans than to Indians. Culture allows new ideas to be tried out in its context. The desire of conformity to cultural standards and norms does not rule out novel experiments. It has great propensity to move, change and adjust itself to new situations. It adopts, accommodates and even dies.

### III

After having discussed so extensively the nature, content and concept of culture, it is important to know how cultures live on? How is it that we relate to the past? How do values and behavioral systems live on? The oral and written traditions in culture facilitate its survival.

Culture survives through social transmission. Even when the content of culture changes there is a strange odour of the past. So many things in their embryonic form in the past have attained fullness now. It is almost like one's present being stretched into the past. This enables us to relate to our past, sometimes nostalgically, sometimes naively and even romantically even though we have never lived in the past. Though, on the surface looking into the past may ineffect lead to encountering another culture, but there is no feeling of alienness about it. When one refers to being the product of culture, it is not to say that we are looking backward, but it is experiences that filtered down to the "now". Culture is filled with the presence of

the past, the now and is a reservoir of futuristic happenings.

When one says culture survives most powerfully orally, one does not merely refer to language and speech, non-verbal, behavioral, expressions and actions can said to be oral culture. It has its own symbols to convey, its specific message, its way to say something important and de-emphasizing on certain aspects.

Language is one of the most vital carriers of culture. Each group has its own sets of signs and symbols and these common structures of signification give rise to language. Language becomes a part of the common reference world, inter-subjective meanings shared by all and creates an identity among all people. Through common language, experiences can be commonly felt and understood. For example, the word "abliman" in Hindi has no equivalent in English, but has a specific connotation in the cultural context. Language determines cohesiveness and easy transmission of culture, though in the modern context, bilingualism is much in practice, speakers may have cultural values of one and use the language of the latter.

Simple societies mostly transmitted cultural patterns either through language or through practice and behavioral patterns. Culture as Habermas puts down, is transmitted

through communicative action. This is interaction among agents through verbal and non-verbal symbols to understand their mutual situation. Cultural patterns are reproduced linguistically through organized stock of interpretative patterns. This is to say that, (i) Reaching and understanding through communicative action serves the function of transmitting, preserving and renewing cultural image. (ii) Communicative action co-ordinates interaction and meets the need for social integration and group solidarity.

Transmission through oral methods necessitates learning by the ear, or what is called the "shruti" tradition in India. Retention of cultural symbols through hearing has remained powerful method of cultural transmission long after even written memory came into existence. People of a group mostly memorize their social behaviour. It is through practice and imitation, mechanical repetition of traditional gestures and speeches of his social group, individual unconsciously memorizes most of the behaviour needed for social action. Social memory accepts oral methods more easily. Socialization and memorization of cultural symbols is done in the most interesting fashion. It is amazing the way children are socialized into particular cultures. Roland Barthes in his analysis of toys feels that toys are a primary way of socializing and conditioning a child's mind. "Toys are essentially a microcosm of the adult world of

social institution, always mean something, can convey something and this something is always entirely socialized, constituted by myths or the techniques of adult life."<sup>1</sup> Made by adults, toys are a means to convey adult messages to children regarding their way of life and how they would be expected to deal and behave socially. Apart from this, story telling, superstitions, fables, folk songs become the vehicle of cultural transmission, wherein age-long values are passed from generation to generation. Though not all purpose of story telling is to inculcate cultural ideals, mostly they familiarize children with the good, bad, ugly.... rights and wrongs, prohibitions, etc., nailing into frail minds symbols that form a part of the larger social milieu. The child is since then being chiselled into a creature of a culture ready to move into the cultural world as it grows up.

Performing arts and music have been both a part of written and non-written culture. They also spring from deep cultural roots and are manifestations of our thought processes and value system. Oral memory and written memory can co-exist in the same culture.

The next most effective form of social and cultural transmission is through written-forms. Written material

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1. Tonny Benet, Popular Culture - Forms & Meanings, Vol.4, (Open Univ. Press, 1981), p.53.

expedites the process of cultural transfer and makes communication widespread. "A system of writing is a technique applied to spoken language in order to give it visual form".<sup>1</sup> Needless to say all cultures have their share of written material which help as references to particularities of behaviour. India remains one which has a strong written tradition, where you have myths, stories, fables, epics and even superstitions written down. Writing dissolves the danger of mortality of ideas and feeling. We have religious texts, ritual texts which spell out each detail of social behavioral criteria. Writing about culture is an effective method to store culture. Films, magazines, journals are all forms of written culture, apart from paintings and cultural symbols. Written form spells greater permanence and there is less danger of forgetting or even manipulating. But, since writing requires extra technical knowledge and special abilities not all people can write culture; which thereby makes it a less convincing carrier of culture.

Writing can occur both ways, where one from within the culture writes about his own culture, or another from a different culture writes about it. Writing about cultures, ethnography, was relatively a late phenomenon. Ethnography as method came into existence to make certain cultures  
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1. Conrad Arensberg and Aurthur Neihoff, Introducing Social Change (Chicago, 1970) p.38.

available to all outside the particular culture.

Writing about culture, either from within or by the other has certain problems.

(i) Culture is never static and photographing culture into a book is impossible. As James Clifford writes, "Cultures do not hold still for portraits". Attempts to do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of temporal focus, the construction of a particular self other relationship and the imposition of negation of power relationships."<sup>1</sup> Writing might involve deliberate exclusion and rhetoric and over-emphasis of certain events. Texts could exclude all the facts that do not catch the ethnographer's delight. As Harry Louis Pratt points out, "the anthropologist, the preserver of culture then becomes the interventionist corrupter of culture."<sup>2</sup>

(ii) Writing involves fixing and giving an idea or material immortality as Kaviraj would say. But, insignificant day to day practices and experiences often go unnoticed and can never get proper expression through writing. This leads to the curtailing the space of culture and stagnate it in a rigid framework. Oral traditions allow manipulation

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1. James Clifford, George Marcus, Writing Culture (Delhi, 1990), p.10.

2. Ibid., p.44.



and even encourage change. To quote Kaviraj, "Enormous and essential structures of social exchange and communication are entrusted to oral continuity rather than written codification."<sup>1</sup> Oral continuity is flexible and old things never lose their hold or minds of the folk for the form lingers long after the meaning is forgotten.

(iii) Writing involves interpretation and thus analysis and understanding. The ethnographer inscribes social discourse and writes it down. He turns a passing event which exists in the moment of occurrence into an account. One does not write down the event of the speaking but the "said" of the speaking. In short, "what we write is the (thought, content and gist) of the speaking. It is the meaning of the event and not the event as the event."<sup>2</sup> When an observer writes; he experiences culture in one way understands it through the world of his meanings and then uses this meaningful experience to communicate to people. The anthropologist, therefore, entertains the danger of investing the culture he studies and therefore indulges in judging the culture, for a completely objective study shedding of his cultural luggage is extremely difficult. You have wierd

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1. Sudipta Kaviraj, Writing, Speaking and Being (Unpublished).
  2. James Clifford, George Marcus, Writing Culture (Delhi, 1990), p.19.

Traditional cultures as we shall see in the later chapters come to remain with the transmission of culture both orally and in written forms. Both have their distortion and perversions but in spite of such disadvantages it still remains a powerful influence on people's mind conditioning and even to a great extent determining their way of life.

Culture does not exist in isolation. It actively interacts with other social structures and other aspects of the social system. This work will enquire into the interaction between culture and politics, the way culture influences politics and is influenced by it. The sociology of culture, as we have earlier seen stresses the importance of the interaction of culture and its relations with structures, sometimes evident and at times not evident. Therefore one can agree with Raymond Williams, "that activities in society are not essentially separate and autonomous and since they are all carried out by human beings, the influence, inter-mix and trace of one another might not be an impossibility." There exists (as we shall see later in Chapter III, with proper explanations) a twin process-culture in politics and the politics within culture. The former indicates the obvious within culture. The former indicates the obvious interaction between culture and politics, wherein politics makes use of cultural symbols to gain

legitimacy and acceptance. For example, the pre-independence phase of Indian politics mostly emphasized moral aspects in politics, an emphasis on the spiritualization of politics. The latter emphasizes on the fact that culture too has a peculiar politics operating within itself; It brings into light the "power" in culture to exist within a social milieu, the various structures within culture which helps its growth, progress and sustenance. Most importantly, apart from the obvious fact that politics of the age was reflecting cultural symbols by the very fact that politics was effectively making use of culture symbols facilitated culture to acquire its legitimacy too. Both make effective use of each other to exist. The study of culture in politics is quite an old phenomenon but the study of politics in culture stretches and widens the horizons of political science to non-political dimensions in life. When every aspect of national activity, agriculture, industry to sports and literature has a political projection, culture cannot be immune from its political manifestation. The power of culture, to widen its scope, adjust to changing situations, giving novel expressions to age-long values, being able to provide various interpretations brings to light the politics operating within culture. The capacity of culture to play its own power-game, the capacity to widen its space for protest and then the capacity to resolve such conflicts reflects the political within culture. The power within

culture is evident through a number of instances.

(i) Whether it is the formalists or the cultural pluralists the very fact of recognition the different cultures, the elite and the popular, the high and the low reflect the power equations existent within culture. Though popular or low culture would be more understandable and acceptable to all, the restrictions and the restrains to the entry to high culture speaks of the power of the high over the low.

(ii) All pervasiveness of culture is in effect the power of culture. Culture has within its power to expect confirmation to all its prescriptions. A "cultural deviant" would easily to be tried publicly. To quote Sudhir Kakkar, "Culture is so pervasive that even when an individual seems to break away from it as in states of insanity, the madness is still influenced by its norms and rituals."<sup>1</sup> Or as Devereaux states in the same line "Culture seems to be giving the directive don't become insane but if you do, you must behave as follows...."<sup>2</sup>

(iii) Power in culture is evident in cultural writings. It has its own "power-brokers". When somebody from within a particular culture writes about it he creates and even

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1. Sudhir Kakkar, The Inner Eye (Delhi, 1981), p.9.

2. Ibid., p.9.

misrepresents cultural values. Cultural texts, like the religious texts in India, have since long been deliberately misrepresented and manipulated by brahmins to dominate all people who do not either have access to the texts or do not have the technical ability to read the texts. Likewise, if an ethnographer "the other" writes about culture, the culture becomes vulnerable to the author, who constructs culture as he pleases to do so. Most simple societies entertain the danger to being culturally violated and dominated.

(iv) Codification of culture gives it a rigid framework, therefore, dominates and expects extreme conformity to its own standards.

The politics in culture would be more extensively discussed in the later chapters. This account was to familiarize one with all aspects of the political that shall be used in the later chapters.

As mentioned in the initial pages only those aspects of culture have been discussed which shall find an echo in the following chapters. Since, this work intends to analyze a popular culture which inhabits a particular culture-area, a particular regional culture, which has elements of both the high and popular, only those aspects which shall facilitate the analysis of that culture are taken into consideration. From the above theoretical elements one weaves out some sort

of model in which the particular culture can be discussed. It shall not merely explore the aesthetics in the culture, but shall; enquire how the high elements have been popularized and the way the popular sentiments relate to the high.

One is not looking for an overarching theory to study culture, for study of any culture cannot be done at one go. Knowledge of culture grows in spurts, cultural analysis is often broken into disconnected sorties. The very essence is to be recreated over and over again. The aim of the culture is not to achieve more, its primary aim is "to be" to influence and to be present. Culture influences the poor as much as it does to the rich. There is no man without culture, a way of life, it is available to all. Isn't the poor man of India culturally akin to the rich of India then the poor of elsewhere? Culture is the way a society or community conducts itself in public.

Culture is not studied for culture-sake. Cultures are studied to find out the changes, changes in the pattern of thought, themes of art and literature, value orientations and norms of evaluation, ideologies and utopias which change with changes in social structure. Viewing culture in this light the following chapter would investigate into a regional variant of culture which has its interaction most closely with a temple complex.

**CHAPTER II**

**RELIGION AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM**

## CHAPTER II

Culture includes ordinary notions of common decency, movements and gestures apart from intellectual discourse and abstractions. It is a whole way of living of a distinct people and belongs as much to the marginalized sections of people as it does to the rich. Culture as used in this context would be a popular notion in contrast to the elite conception of culture.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first explores the notion of popular culture and the way it is used in this work. It also highlights on how the popular is different from the elite and the folk. The second section is a discussion on the various theories of culture which have been used to study popular and regional variants of culture in India. As culture in India is hardly explained away from the religious, the third section is an account of how culture in India has a strong flavour of the religious. It also questions the popular belief of an All-Indian culture, a composite culture that exists in India. The fourth part elucidates all the above sections taking an example of the Jagannath cult which is a regional culture, woven around a religious complex, informing the life patterns of a people of a particular region. Primarily, believed to be a bastion of Hindu conservation this section brings about the popular



elements present in this high traditional complex.

I

Popular culture came as reaction against the arrogance of the formalists and demonstrates interest in the cultural forms of the people, in the cultural texts and practices outside the sphere of dominant culture. Though, the concept of popular culture was not fully developed till the 19th century it always remained a powerful element in cultural analysis. It is generally believed to be more reactionary in its content as it stands as a competitor to the formalists, bringing out the cultural forms of the marginalized and undermined sections of people.

Popular culturists recognize the existence of plural cultures — the high or the dominant and the popular or mass culture. Williams defines high culture saying, "...fundamental explanation lies in the history of minority culture of means and production, the appropriation and expropriation of skills, effective knowledge and powers of practical decision."<sup>1</sup> This suggests that all people who have equipped themselves with better skills and knowledge would by virtue of their superiority reign over the common mass whose fate is only in being led. Common or popular culture is more accessible and places little or no restrictions on the entry

1. Allan O Connor, Raymond Williams (London, 1989), p.32.

interpretations of particular communities, even on India. Herodotus writes, "...a tribe with heels in front and toes backward and ears that hang down to their feet which are used as covers at night."<sup>1</sup> There are many writers who have written volumes on cultural habits of people without even being with them once.

(iv) Merely noticing observable behaviour is not culture. That would as Geertz would say be a thin-description of culture. Observing the surfaces and all that which merely coincides with the cultural observer is not culture. Observation should include interpreting and understanding the core of the culture, where the observer is in "search of meanings". And it is often impossible to reach the core of the culture for it even leads to excessive interference into the social structure. Locking oneself up into excessive cultural analysis is alienating oneself from the culture. A thick description of culture needs intense, objective and fair analysis of the structures of signification.

But all this does not mean that writing of culture is impossible or meaningless but often inadequate and incomplete. This does not mean one stops writing and analyzing cultures for that would herald the end of cultural history.

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1. Quoted in Milton Singer, When a Great Tradition Modernizes (Delhi, 1972), p.13.

to any of its activities. This means that all people can and do belong to popular culture but only a few belong to the high. So, apart from the fact that popular becomes popular by exploring into the daily patterns of the marginalized section, it is popular by the sheer majority of its followers.

There are some theorists who make further categorization between the folk and the popular. According to them, common people consider things that happen in their life worthwhile to register and stick to archaic forms of expression like poetry, ballads and performing arts. These are constituents of the folk. This is not to suggest that the folk and the elite constitute entirely different entities, they too borrow and lend each other. This give and take creates a popular which is neither folk nor elite. Historically, therefore, the folk and the elite contribute to make the popular. Folk restricts itself to a village and popular refers to culture at a regional level. Popular is that which is accepted by a number of individuals and is accessible to the layman. Anything that is popular is simple, unmediated and transparent. A popular poet, for example, does not need to acquire any skills of literature to write poetry. He speaks as he speaks to his fellowmen, no attempts at perfection are made and he enjoys greater freedom than his elite counterpart, who has to be technically

sound and true to the framework of his training.

Though the elite culture contains elements of All-Indianness, the popular and folk are necessarily varied. So there are more popular and folk varieties of culture than the elite. Keeping this in mind this chapter shall explore into a regional culture which is popular in nature.

## II

All these could become easier to understand when elucidated with an example nearer to home. While the concept of a national culture is a debatable one, the existence of pluralities (elite, popular, regional, folk) is a reality in India. Definitions of culture usually include words like "shared" or common with reference to habits, values and achievements. Sharing or group participation is indeed the very essence of the cultural concept. A culture develops when groups of people living in constant interaction come to share certain ways of behaving, thinking and doing things. Although each individual does not act mechanically in complete conformity to cultural patterns in all situations one, however, can discern a range within which most, if not all behaviour falls. India, being a vast country with various kinds of people residing one is confused as to what the real Indian culture is. You first have the confrontation between Aryan and Dravidian culture; then Hindu, Buddhist,

Jains, Muslims confronting a western culture... one is at crossroads trying to identify one single India. The multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and highly stratified Indian society represents a culture of extreme complexity.

Ralph Linton, Julian Stewart, McKim Marriott, Robert Redfield and M.N. Srinivas have done extensive studies on the complexity of Indian cultural system. They have all dealt with one problem most extensively and that is existence of various sub-cultures within a dominant Indian culture which to one's mind is very difficult to trace and therefore equal to non-existent.

Ralph Linton offers a set of concepts which would be useful in discussing the question and nature of cultural participation. He classifies cultural participation into three categories. "Those ideas, habits and conditioned emotional responses which are common to all some adult members of a given society are universals."<sup>1</sup> This is a level of integration at a very broad level -- an all India level. Then he recognizes the cultural behaviour characteristic of sub-groups within a society -- occupational and regional groups. This cultural behaviour is called "spe-

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1. Unnathan, Indra Deva, Y. Singh (eds.), Towards a Sociology of Culture (Delhi, 1965), pp.4-6.

2.

cialities". Since, these specialities are shared by all members of the sub-group therefore it can be called the universals of the sub-groups. "Alternatives", the third category is open to individual choice or which are shared by groups of individuals who do not constitute a socially recognized category. This is the most fluid category wherein people from both the zones interact. What one wants to confirm is that there is less chance of tracing down All-Indian universals.

Julian Steward speaks of national patterns, a set of formulated nation-wide institutions like economic system, organized religion and governmental structure which affect all individuals, but within this framework there could be as he says, "a fairly small segment of society that consists of people substantially like himself and who therefore may be said to have a sub-culture."<sup>1</sup> He tends to find a grain of similarity, a national consensus on the fact that all sub-structures are coloured by the existence of a common national framework.

M.N. Srinivas approaches the study of a national culture from the concept of a "spread". The spread of any cultural element is the area in which it is shared, the

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1. Ibid., p.409.

groups by which it is carried.<sup>1</sup> For example, Hinduism had a national spread, but had its indigenous regional colours too. He had divided Hinduism into All-India and Peninsular Hinduism -- Hinduism as it was practised in various regions and locales.

Various scholars have, therefore, tried to trace the all-India content of certain aspects of Hinduism. For example, the broad categorizations on the basis of caste is certainly an All-Indian phenomenon, and the brahmins performed a particular kind of job all over, i.e. they were the traditional repository of knowledge and would selfishly guard their knowledge against any intrusion. Sudipto Kaviraj, in his "Writing Speaking Being", analyzes that at the elite level there was a strong integration into national culture but there were local strands and regional acculturations of this national culture. Sanskrit was therefore the Indian phenomenon and the vernaculars regarded as the regional and low. "While elite discourse could range across the entire subcontinent the discourse of the subordinate groups would necessarily remain trapped in the closed boundaries of their vernacular dialects. Thus, while conservatism and reaction would be subcontinental inspread, dissent was condemned to be mostly local."

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1. Ibid., p.411.

Indian culture therefore discuss three major sub-structures:

(i) Elite Sub-structure: This is the great tradition, a highly sophisticated and systematized form, the various disciplines of knowledge, arts, and religion and metaphysics etc. This tradition is mainly Brahminical, Shastric and Sanskritic.

(ii) Folk Sub-structure: The vast majority of the Indian population is the bearer of the folk, and this is not to say that the folk culture is parochial and local. There are striking unities among the folk cultural forms all over India. But this is a more popular form, there is high degree of participation by the population and number of shared elements is greater.

(iii) Tribal Traditions: They are a cultural system in itself. They maintain their identity in relative isolation and are often localized, customary and diverse.

However, none of these cultural structures are represented in their pure form by a distinct section of society. The folk and the elite elements are found to be existing simultaneously and the existence of one is the pre-requisite of the other. They interact and influence each other. There is often an elitization of folk elements and tribalization of the folk. The difference among them is the



degree of systematization and specialization.

At the end of this analysis one finds that in spite of a spoken All-Indian culture there is a more dynamic presence of regional and sub-national cultures, though a universal cultural thread does exist and sows India into India.

### III

Most Indian scholars while writing about culture have not made attempts to alienate religion from culture. The very definition of culture spells something highly sacred - to revere traditions and the past. True, religion is a dominant part of culture and influences the Indian way of life most overwhelmingly, but for us culture still has a dominant religious content. Religion as a cultural system, as a whole way of life strings the whole of India into a kind of unity. To ones knowledge, language and religion continue to determine the major cultural lineaments of Indian society and together they exert an influence which is most pervasive and powerful.

As C. Rajagopalachari comments in "Our Culture". "If there is any honesty in India today, any hospitality, any chastity, any philanthropy, any tenderness to dumb creatures, any aversion to evil and any love to good, it is due to whatever remains of our old faith and old culture. God

resides in the heart of every living being. This is our culture shaped by our religious beliefs."<sup>1</sup> Further, Jawaharlal Nehru says, "I have often wondered that if our race forgot Buddha, the Upanishads and forgot the epics what then will it be like? India would be uprooted and would lose the basic characteristics which have clung to it and given it distinction through out these long ages. India would cease to be India."<sup>2</sup>

So, the normal way a non-Indian would visualize India was that it was leader of spiritual east and opposed to the material west. The whole confusion starts because one does not know when religion stops and culture starts, all cultural symbols give enough scope to be interpreted religiously. As Milton Singer<sup>3</sup> observes in his book Modernization of Great Tradition, modern leaders starting from Gandhiji, Ram Mohan Roy, Aurobindo were all accepted and allowed greater legitimacy for they could adequately exploit the religious sentiments of the people. Gandhi's spirit of non-violence was therefore the message of peace as pursued by Buddha, Mahavira, Vishnu. Opler links religion to the Indian lifestyle most lucidly when he says, "...Religion justifies the exist-

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1. C. Rajagopalachari, Our Culture (Delhi, 1963), p.39.
2. Chaman Lal, Culture in India (Delhi, 1971), 'Introduction'.
3. Milton Singer, When a Great Tradition Modernizes (Delhi, 1972), refer to Chapter I.

ence of his life, the tie between his ancestors and sons, it holds its kin together in family rituals. It provides travel adventures and new experience, connects his village with others... it offers a means of keeping in touch with married daughters... strengthens group consciousness...."<sup>1</sup>

The pervasiveness of religion into culture, starts from personal cleanliness, music, dance, to sculpture, etc. Our beggars go begging singing religious songs and the poor even acquire religious status because of their poverty.

Religion comes down as a social and psychological phenomenon. The problem here is not in explaining what religion is but to trace all places where religion is found. It is because of this religion in India is so unmanageable. Religious culture is not reflected in God, the specific contents of culture "is embodied in images and metaphors, its adherents to characterize reality. This is an attempt to go beyond prevailing definitions of religion centred around God and spirits, but to see religion as a whole way of life which gives rise to a particular world view. This world view prompted by religion pervades the "community - unconscious" as Sudhir Kakkar says. They decisively influence people's way of thinking, perceiving and categorizing experience, percolating down to everyday life of ordinary people

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1. Ibid., p.42.

giving it form and meaning. Religion, which is "dharma" is a social force which cements and holds social life. It has different meanings in various contexts. The difference between religion in the west and the east is that, in the west religion is only a part of their lives and there were strong substitutes to religion which overpowered the church. Industrialization and secularization were the most powerful contestants of religion. In India, on the contrary, there was no such equivalent movement to totally dismantle this religious entirety. This would mean to bull-doze the whole system and build on its debris - a new culture devoid of religion. "To other people religion is only a part of life, there are things religious and things secular. To the Hindus, his whole way of life was religion.... Life to him was religion and religion never received a name from him because it had from him an existence from all that had received a name."<sup>1</sup>

All that the above discussion leads us to is that India should not be viewed and conceptualized as one-cultural entity but as a complex cultural universe. To consider a single stream of culture in India is to oversimplify the understanding of culture. Each nation has certain homogeneous traits, characteristics and style of its own but these

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1. Bankim Chandra quoted in T.N. Madan, Religion in India (Delhi, 1991).

do not always coincide with all other regional cultures which are simultaneously lived; local cultural traditions have distinct and recognizable characteristics of their own. However, one should understand that the encounter of the local and national is not always in form of collision, there is in fact a great degree of permeability whereby the local contributes to the national and vice-versa. It is a healthy process of give and take.

Further, the linguistic classification of states helped to maintain regional, and sub-cultural differences. The evolution of culture areas could be a product of a country's history, its diverse landscape and lack of effective communication. Once a cultural region evolves and matures, its basic traits continue even though subsequently exposed to influence from other cultural regions -- certain cultural traits get internalized in particular cultural/geographical areas.

#### IV

There is still a bias against exploring into the regional variants of culture. Orissa is a good example of a regional culture woven around the sacred complex of Puri. It is a study of the popular life world which is informed and influenced by this temple complex. It is a cultural system that provides meaning and purpose for people to

construct their reality around. They integrate, acts, utterances and events of their temple into their daily life. It sustains the norms upon which the integration of the Oriya society depends. Objects chosen for religious veneration, as we shall consequently see, were things that were practices of daily life elevated to a symbolic value. In short it represents a ritualization of daily life. A word of precaution should always be introduced here. No claim is being made that Orissa is Puri, or that this is the only influencing cult. There are many other cults at the sub-regional levels in spite of which the Jagannath cult manages to retain its importance.

Though there has been enormous work done on the origin, development and organization of this cult and even though a number of writers have randomly mentioned in different contexts the way this temple complex influences the daily life patterns of Oriyas, no systematic interrogation has been done on this aspect independently. This work claims its difference when the whole set-up is rendered explanation with theoretical explanation. The connection between the earlier chapter and this one lies in the fact that all claims regarding the nature of culture is broadly explained here with an example.

Orissa here is treated as a "culture-area", which

consists of regional culture informed by a religious complex. Religion is given extra-emphasis and many practices of everyday life are traced down to this complex. The temple as it stands today is a symbol through which patterns of behaviour are socially acquired and transmitted. It relates to the past and the present adapting, accommodating, changing, for culture is never an one-time event, it is a reality which is constantly tampered with.

As Clifford Geertz writes, "sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos - the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood and their world view - the picture they have of the ways in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order."<sup>1</sup>

The temple complex is regarded as a symbol through which people conceive their own reality. "This conception of the people endows the symbol with meaning. "Cultural acts, ,construction, apprehension and utilization of symbolic forms are social events and they are as public as marriage."<sup>2</sup>

The temple was constructed in 1135 A.D. and dedicated

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1. Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), p.89.
2. Ibid., p.91.

to the principal diety of Orissa, Jagannath (Lord of the Universe). Romila Thapar, in her Cultural Transactions in Early India, explains generally the genesis of temples which can be utilized for this project too. "The genesis of the temple appears to have been a small shrine room housing an image as the nucleus of the cult.... The simple room acquires adjoining structures. With the conversion of a cult into a sect and the patronage of local political authority also thrown in, the small shrine evolved into a complex structure associated with Hindu temples. The temple comes to dominate the landscape when it takes the form of a structure as determined by architects, builders and craftsmen - it is initially an architectural form built to identify a place of worship. But from the moment of the expansion it takes on the qualities of a social symbol."<sup>1</sup>

The temple is more than a place of religious identity. For some it houses their diety, its architecture and sculpture convey the knowledge of aesthetics, the music and dance of devadasis is part of the place's musical tradition, (they are referred to as wives of God-Kings), the "*mathas*" attached to the temple were places to train priests which develop into centres of formal education. The recitation of Geeta-Govinda within the temple precincts to devotees assist

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1. Romila Thapar; Cultural Transactions in Early India (Delhi, 1987), p.33.



the process of interaction and assimilation of the high culture with local culture. Inscriptions on the temple walls are legal documents, recording the property rights and administrative functioning of the temple. So, there are different reasons to identify with the temple. All the Kings of Orissa have known to refer themselves as the feudatories "rauta" of Jagannath Puri. The daily ritual of the temple was replicated in the royal household for the deity was considered the king of kings. The temple to quote Geertz was an "Exemplary Centre", a model of social action, an ideal towards which life outside must strive for.

"The notion that the King's court and capital and at their axis the king himself, form at once an image of divine order and a paradigm of social order. The court, its activities, its style, its organization, its whole form of life reproduces albeit imperfectly the world of gods, provides the visible likeness of an invisible realm. And because it does this, it also provides an ideal towards which life outside the court, in the kingdom as a whole ought properly to aspire upon which it should seek to model itself as a child upon a father and a peasant upon a lord and lord upon king and king upon God."<sup>1</sup> The temple is organized in the pattern of a household from which both the royal family as well as the others can imitate from.

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1. Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed (London, 1968), p.36.

Though there is considerable confusion about the origin of this cult, there is a consensus upon the fact that the dieties are of tribal origin and the peculiar shape of the Jagannath figures is certainly a result of their tribal origin not because such figures are typical of tribal origin but because they are typical products of the process of Hinduization."<sup>1</sup>

Traditions relating to the origin are found all over Orissa. Balabhadra and Subhadra, the other dieties, are similar to look at complying to the general standards of Indian beauty as opposed to Jagannath who has a very curious shape. He is flat on the top and has enormous round eyes. He is believed to be the Hinduized form of Narasimha, the original deity of the temple. Since, Narasimha is a prominent God in both realms of high Vaishnava theology and popular religion, he was the ideal agent of Hinduization. He is, in fact, still considered the guardian diety of the temple and all performances from cooking to puja are preceded by offerings to him. The identification of Narasimha and Jagannath was probably the beginning of the cult and this is further supported by local tradition of Puri which suggests that Narasimha temple, which is within the temple complex,

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1. Ancharlott Eschman in Herman Kulke, ed., The Cult of Jagannath and Regional Tradition in Orissa (Delhi, 1986), p.100.

is older than the Purushottam temple.

Moreover, tribal shrines hardly have anthropomorphic images of gods, they have wooden or earthen posts. The dieties in the temple are made of wood thereby emphasizing a strong tribal elements. "Moreover the same tribes, whose cults were incorporated are still living as tribal and semi-tribal communities in this region and Hinduization can be observed in the making."<sup>1</sup> The tribal origin is further emphasized by the existence of the "daita", a special class of sevaks who are considered of a tribal lineage, who worshipped the God in the beginning. They consider Jagannath as their family diety and consider themselves as the "*rakta-samparka*", the blood relation of the diety.

Therefore, as one can see the result of the conflict between the non-Aryan and Aryan is not the complete dismissal of one against another but a of one cultural pattern with another. This accumulation of tribal religion into the temple is extremely important because it points out the significance and the impact which tribal culture has and has had within Hindu culture. Adapting such a mode of worship attempts to unite people belonging to divergent theological settings under a common platform. Greater legitimacy is bestowed upon the temple its all-inclusiveness attitude.

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1. Ibid., p.85.

Whether, Vishwvasu, the tribal chief who worshipped Jagannath initially, would be allowed into the temple today with its existing Brahmanical trends is a different question but it certainly claims Jagannath as the king of Orissa. On the surface, the tribals have as much claim on Jagannath as any other man. To corroborate this view L.S.S.O. Malley writes, "the elasticity of Hinduism is clearly marked in Puri. At one end the scale is the Oriya Brahman with his scrupulous observance about ceremonial purity and at the other end are semi-Hinduized aboriginals who still cling in part of at least to the animistic cult of their forefathers."<sup>1</sup>

Like all religious conceptions these images carried within them their own justifications. There are reasons for their existence. Judging from epigraphic evidence it is clear that the Jagannath trinity had become well established by the 12th and 13th century. The number of Shiva temples clustering around the hill which is crowned by a Vishnu temple is unusual. Before the instalment of Vishnu, Puri was Saiva-Saktapitha.

Orissa kings at different periods of time accepted the essence of all religious faiths and cults. This temple built by Chodagangadeva encouraged a policy of religious

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1. Manoranjan Mishra, Bharati, Vol.I, No.10, July 1972, p.81.

inclusiveness but who professed to be a Saiva himself. During this period Vaishnavism had made its advent in Orissa and had quite likely impressed the common people.

"The selection of the cult in Puri for royal patronage had political reasons."<sup>1</sup>

The delta region of Mahanadi was of great importance. Since, Chodagangadeva was an outsider, he had to legitimize his rule vertically, within the newly conquered area. Moreover, he had to establish his rule against other powers which would make his rule legitimate horizontally. By deciding to build the highest temple for a Vaishnava diety he simply would dismantle his rival kings who were fanatic Saivas. He therefore strongly appealed to the popular sentiment which was overwhelmed by the Ramanuja's Vaishvana movement.

"It is obvious that the cult which could satisfy the necessities of both these types of legitimation must have two qualities. Vertical legitimation was best achieved by a cult with a strong autochthonous even aboriginal elements which could comply with need of territoriality and of integration. But, for the needs of vertical legitimation a strong degree of Brahmanization was required, only a diety known and respected to High Hinduism could be expected to be -----

1. Herman Kulke, (ed.), op. cit., p.182.

recognized. Jagannath cult offered both pre-requisites - it retained strong aboriginal elements and was a Hinduized cult which had been brahmanized enjoying royal patronage".<sup>1</sup>

Till a certain period of time the three dieties were worshipped separately, but from a certain period onwards they were worshipped together. It could be possible that the act of bringing together the three dieties was carried out by some king due to religio-political grounds. Kulke writes that "it was under Anangabhimadeva III (1211-1238) the decisive interpretation took place which attempted to integrate the major dieties of Orissa into Jagannath cult. This development raised to Jagannath to a supreme position and led to the settling down of competing strands of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Saktism in a sibling relationship. Experiments to combine Vishnavism and Shaivism were done a number of times in the south and the west, but the Ganga kings successfully united the major conflicting strands of Hinduism into a great synthesis. "With Ramanuja, the great south Indian philosopher and reformer (1056-1136) a new wave of Pancaratra system emphasized Krishna's relations to his sister Ekanamsa and his brother Balarama. Ekanamsa was interpreted as Durga or Subhadra and Bakrama or Balabhadra

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1. Herman Kulke, Annacharlott Eschman, G.C. Tripathy, eds., ibid., p.183.

as Shiva."<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Ramanuja can be further seen in the subdued representation of eroticism, the unique feature of the temple being the emphasis on sibling worship rather than conjugality. This caters to the propagation of the joint family system in Orissa as we shall see. At various points of development the couple existing in Puri, prior to the Jagannath triad, Shiva Bhairava and his Sakta counterpart, could have been reidentified as Krishna and Radha. According to Kulke, the concept of Radha as a beloved of Krishna and not his legal wife was not a popular belief in Orissa and moreover, since Ramanuja himself was opposed to the erotic elements of the Krishna cult, his influence had positive influence on why the development of the Puri theology moved away from the concept of the couple. The idea of the divine couple was thereby repressed and Subhadra was reinterpreted as his sister. However, mundane it may sound, popular minds read into the practices of the temple quite differently, they see in the God's household a reflection of their own.

Lakshmi, the consort of Jagannath, is not placed within the main sanctum because ideally a good wife of the young

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1. Herman Kulke, "Anangabhimadeva the Veritable Founder of the Jagannath Trinity at Puri", Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, No.1, 1981, p.131.

brother maintains a physical distance from "dedsura" (her husband's elder brother). The emphasis of the sibling relationship is seen else where. Had Jagannath been the only God in the temple complex, his spouse Lakshmi should have been the most revered goddess within the temple. On the other hand, Vimala, the tantric counterpart of Shiva is the most revered diety inside the temple. The temple reflects the picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, how the society actually operates. "This is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view describes and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented in an image of actual state of affairs which such a way of life is an authentic expression.... Whatever else religion may be it is an attempt to conserve the fund of general meanings in terms of which each individual interprets his experience and organizes his conduct."<sup>1</sup>

The most unique feature of this temple is the total humanization of the diety. He lives like a temporal being. The temple is organized as a palace and the arrangements are all befitting a great emperor. Tradition attributing human habits to the God is nowhere more evidenced in this culture. God is treated as a social being and not merely a theosophi-

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1. Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), p.127.



cal or religious realization but a socio-cultural institution. In the words of Sitakanta Mahapatra, "It is necessary to realize that what is generally called as Jagannath cult is not a cult in the narrow and united sense of a school of thought or a system of rituals or liturgies.... If it has a looseness of organization as a system of philosophy, if its liturgical or religious concepts have not been seen against the backdrop any particular Hindu sect or sects to assess its deviation and differences from them, it is like Hinduism, more of a cultural matrix than a systematic school of philosophy and religion."<sup>1</sup>

Although in a subdued form, the presence of Lakshmi, his consort places the God just as a common husbandman with a household of his own. Similarly, Lakshmi portrays the ideals of an Oriya wife, being central to the household activities and yet having a personal feminine domain. This is highlighted in the legend of "*Shriya-Chandaluni*", when Lakshmi once enters the outcaste woman's house and accepts her offerings. When she was about to re-enter the temple, on the advice of his elder brother, Jagannath bars her path. There is a quarrel between the two when Lakshmi in rage leaves her husband's abode and curses them with misery and pauperization for having ill-treated a woman. Misery and

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1. Sitakanta Mahapatra, "Ecstasy of Love and Communities", Smarika, 1979, p.34.

poverty set into the Lord's household till they are forced to go to the Chandala's house to ask apology of Lakshmi. She beseeched to forget her anger only if there shall be no discrimination between castes and against women - all should partake the holy food of the temple without distinction of caste. There is therefore a remarkable observance of castelessness regarding the holy food. This led to the establishment of "*Ananda-Bazar*", a unique institution in the Jagannath temple. This is a small market complex within the temple where all offerings made to the diety are sold in public. It is a place for communal eating where all castes can have the offerings of the God without contempt for each other.

On another occasion, during the festive Rath Yatra, Lakshmi is barred from the privilege to accompany her husband to the summer palace. She is deliberately left back to overemphasize the sibling importance. She is left uncared and alone in the temple; she is even jealous that the sister is given importance over her. On the 5th day of the departure, she decides in anger and humiliation to see her husband and in her worst moods breaks the wheel of Jagannath's chariot while retruning back. All does not end here, on the schedule day of return of the dieties, Lakshmi takes a look at the returning chariots from the "*chahani-mandapa*", literally a pavilion from where one can see. Once Balabha-

dra and Subhadra enter the temple, the doors are slammed on the face of Jagannath by the devadasis so as not to allow his entry into the temple. A lively fight is ensued by the divine couple, till the misunderstanding finally sorted out. The element of "abhimana" is beautifully expressed here. Her exclusive indulgence only with her husband and not his sister brings forth the subtle relationship between the husband and his wife. It is normal, therefore, to refer to an Oriya woman as the Lakshmi of the household. To offend a woman almost amounts to offending Lakshmi. All this has extreme social implications, where there is a re-enactment of common emotions that are felt among all people. People can thereby relate to the divine couple at a very personal level.

On occasions, Jagannath sends a betel leaf after dinner to his wife. The motive of offering a betel leaf by the lover to his beloved is very common in Orissan paintings and folk songs.

There are numerous explanations of the three dieties, their shape, their colour. A.P. Singhdeo says that there are three idols, because they represent three phases of the soul, denoting creation, *sthithi*, preservation and *pralaya*, the destruction. According to one recent interpretation it is advocated that the three colours of the dieties represent the three basic colours of all races. The point highlighted

is that the trinity of the cult of Jagannath by embodying these three races symbolically aims at the unification of mankind as a whole."<sup>1</sup> Though the authenticity of such an interpretation is doubted to the popular mind this explanation makes the trinity more powerful as a social existence.

The peculiar imagery of *Daru devata* (wooden God) is mysterious. Flesh and blood are not essential for the construction of the Divine corpus, there is no necessity for hands and ears as in the human form "because he only observes... he neither rescues nor does he take revenge on anyone."<sup>2</sup>

As recorded in the Persian travelogue by Mahmud-bin-Amir Wali, the author gives a vivid description of the temple rituals and ceremonies. Although one cannot say for sure, it is believed from *Haft-Iqlim* of Anim Ahmed Razi that there were no restrictions to entry of Muslims into the temple of Jagannath. It may also be mentioned that the "*Mahanta-Seva*" of the temple (the elephant-riders) was usually entrusted with the Muslim sect. The Raja of Puri, the care-taker of the Puri temple had even passed an order

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1. A.P. Singhdeo, "Shri Jagannath Cult of Orissa", Smari-ka, Dec. 1969, p.47.
  2. Benimadhab Padhi, "Daru Devata: Symbol of Indian Culture", Orissa Review, July 1969, p.43.

that only when a Muslim was not available would a Hindu be appointed in his place. This view was corroborated by Gholam Hasain Salim, the author of Razus-Salatin.<sup>1</sup>

The involvement of all category of people in the complex, gives the complex legitimacy and allows people of all category to identify with it. Like any temple complex it is great source of employment, where people are paid both in cash and kind for their duties. Their rights, duties and responsibilities are codified in a palm leaf document called "Karmani". A few important kinds of Sevaks are mentioned below. This is not to suggest that the temple complex operates within an absolute egalitarian network of relationship. This shall be referred to in another chapter.

*Pandas:* Apart from the Brahmin priests who perform the daily function of puja, there is another category of "pandás" who are in charge of gathering pilgrims. They would on regular basis go to various places around the country to introduce a large number of people into Jagannath-dharma. Essentially they have established in perpetuity the sacred link and network of relationship between the public and the sacred complex.

The most important category of servitors are the  
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1. Refer to M.P. Dash, "The Temple of Lord Jagannath and the Car Festival", Orissa Review, Vol.XLIX, No.11, June 1993.

"Daitas" and the "Suaras" who consider themselves as the kin of the dieties. They play a leading role in the performance of rituals from the bathing ceremony to the end of the car-festival. When an important person of this community dies, his body is taken near the Lion's Gate of the Jagannath temple and is cremated with some fire from the temple kitchen. During the "nava kalebara" when old images are buried in the burial ground in "Koili Baikuntha", the daitas observe funeral obsequies. Apart from them, there are the "Bhitarchu Mohapatra - the first man to go for the "dwarafita" (to open the door) ceremony, the "Muduli" - in charge of temple utensils, "darji" - to stitch the clothes, "mukhapalaka" - to make tooth sticks, the "hadapanayaka" - who offers betels to the dieties.

W.W. Hunter writes in his account "As long as his towers rise upon the Puri sands, so long will there be in India a perpetual and visible protest of the equality of man before God... The poorest caste learns that there is a city on the far-eastern shore in which high and low eat together."<sup>1</sup>

However, the power structure is strongly inclined to the brahmins and among the non-brahmins it is the daitas who

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1. W.W. Hunter, "The Shrine of Jagannath" Smarika, 1984, p.2.

are most important. Though people of the other castes served as equals in the temple complex, they kind of accepted their caste status outside the temple premise. The degree of isolation between the superior and inferior castes involved in the temple service was marked by maintenance of physical distance.

The Oriyas have made this cult their daily life. They observe all their ceremonies and pujas in accordance to the prescriptions of the "*Madala-Panji*", the temple chronicle.

The humanization of the God is most evidenced in the way the daily rituals are conducted in the temple. A very important feature of the daily ritual of the temple is that the rite of bathing and dressing of the diety is performed not as a part of the daily puja but as a separate rite in the daily "*niti*" (routine). Ordinarily the day starts at five o'clock, when the temple doors are opened, beds and other things placed the night earlier are taken out and the "*Abakash*" performed, when the diety is to perform human functions like brushing his teeth.... he brushes his teeth with a typical tooth stick called the "*Kumbhatua-dantakathi*" - a twig found in the jungles - normally used by the ordinary people. After the first offering of "*bhog*" is finished, the doors are opened for "*darshan*" till the "*mahaprasad*" the daily lunch which is offered is given in the afternoon - after which the temple doors are closed for "*pahada*".

The dieties are said to take the afternoon nap during this time. The whole process starts again till after dinner the Gods are lulled to sleep by the melodious tunes of the *devadasis* singing the Geeta Govinda.

When the summer becomes unbearable, the God is given a sandalwood bath and taken for a boat ride every evening. This is called the "*Chandara Yatra*" which commences with the Hindu new year beginning in mid-April. It is a festival when thousands of people accompany the moving idols - the representation of the dieties to the Indradyumnatank in the evening, devadasis sing to the dieties on the boat. People accompanying the dieties think it auspicious to take a dip in the tank while the dieties are enjoying their boat-side.

The "*Snana-purnima*", the bathing festival, which follows the Chandan Yatra is a ritual bath that is given to the dieties as a result of which the lord catches a cold and is afflicted with fever. His ailment necessitates confinement to the sanctum-sanctorim. This is called "*Anasara-gara*". During this there is no darshan given and they are kept on a diet of fruits and apart from the "*daitas*", their kinsmen, none else are allowed to see them. They are treated by the *Raja-vaidya* - the king's physician. This is the time when the dieties discoloured during the bathing ceremony are repainted and rejuvenated to make a fresh appearance for the



Ratha Yatra. The *Rath Yatra* the most famous ceremony is most splendid of all celebrations. Surendra Mohanty, in his book "Lord Jagannath" traces the car-festival as remotely connected with the early fertility cult of the tribal people. "Akshya Trutya", the folk agricultural festival throughout Orissa is the day when construction of the cars begin. It is significant because the farmers start sowing seeds for the new crop on this day. The entire process from Chandana yatra to the end of Rath Yatra, which commences with the commencement of monsoon in June "symbolizes the youthful sprouting of seeds which now require rains to sustain and nourish.

It is believed that the water that is sprinkled on the chariots by the king during the "*Chera-pahanra*" and during the Snana Purnima, acquired from a special well within the precincts of the temple has the medicinal value to curb smallpox and chicken-pox.

The dieties are carried out of the temple in a typical rhythmic walk called the "*pahandi*" which is associated with the traditional beginnings of the Odissi dance. After the dieties are placed on the chariot, the king of Puri, is required to sweep the floors of the chariot. This is called the "*chera-panhara*". This could be a symbolic rite to demonstrate that the king is like all others a humble servant of the God. This is the time when people of all castes

can go and touch the deity and embrace them, there is no discrimination as regards caste, creed, colour, nationality. All people embrace the God, as one does to a friend, therefore the God often referred to as "*Dinabandhu*" - the friend of the poor. *Madan Mohana*, the representatives of the Gods are placed last in the chariot. The popular belief is that they see to the fact that all necessities of the God are placed in the chariot, nothing left behind and the temple doors properly locked. Two chests are deposited in everybody's chariots - these chests contain clothes, ornaments and materials required for their nine day outing.

When the Yatra begins, it is believed that in the older times devotees throw themselves to be crushed under the wheels of the ratha to attain salvation. This has probably given rise to the European word "Juggernaut".

The menu prepared in the kitchen has elements of the popular - the use of the "*Kudua*", (clay utensils) the poor man's utensils are used to prepare the food in the temple kitchen. Certain vegetables like potatoes and tomatoes, which are not indigenous vegetables are forbidden to be used in the temple kitchen. Jagannath's daily menu has cakes made out of contemptible rice barn and dishes of the commonest pot-herbs. As is written "he teaches us a lesson in patriotism too. In his most hospitable kitchen sugar and

potatoes are still taboo as till not long ago these were imported foreign stuff."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever is done in the shape of welfare of the family of the individual is attributed to the Lord. In marriage and other religious ceremonies none ever forgets to invite him first. People think it necessary to satisfy their guests with "*mahaprasada*". Before entering any social relations like marriage, etc., concerned parties take an oath in front of Jagannath to make their relation firm and permanent. During the "*saxana-yatra*", the sleeping ceremony which lasts for three months, all important social ceremonies like marriages, etc. remain suspended and are resumed only during the *Devothanna* (the rising ceremony).

Festivals play an important and integrative function in the society. All major festivals of the peasant society are integrated in the temple culture. The temple celebrates Dusherha, Ganesh puja, Holi etc., excepting that in the temple it is performed according to brahmanical rites and outside performed locally and non-brahmanically.

The popular element is all the more emphasized with the kind of literature associated with the God. The folk stories, legends, myths associated with this diety are en-

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1. Mayadhar Mansinha, "Jagannath the Splendid Synthesis", Smarika, December 1969, p.21.

shrined in popular imagination. More than that, the kind of people associated in composing the folk songs makes the whole system more popular. The composers of the songs, *jananas* and *bhajans*, devotional songs dedicated to Jagannath, come from the lowest of castes. Dasia Bauri and Bhima Bhoi are legendary characters in the cult of the Jagannath. Their *janans* and *bhajans* are sung by the pandits and beggars alike. They are excellent not only in their musical value but are beautiful even in their poetic content. These popular songs became the theme for literature in the years to come. Stories around Jagannath and his life were introduced from the popular realm into high literature. There are dramas and public performances with his popular stories as the central theme. An Odissi recital is considered incomplete without an *abhinaya* from Geeta Govinda. Theatrical performances open with an invocation to the God. The floral decoration that the dieties use as their head-gear during the Rath Yatra are called the "*tahia*", is the head-dress of an Odissi dancer. Not only that, Jagtannath even had Muslim followers. "Salabeg", a Muslim devotees has composed the most enchanting Oriya bhajans which are till date recited.

He is referred to in various names, Patitapaban - Saviour of the downtrodden, Dinabandhu - the friend to the poor. The most interesting part is the non-formality that

is associated with the cult. "Dhulia-darshan" (to see the Lord even with a dusty feet) shows not the godliness in the worship, but expresses pure love and sincere devotion. The poor, therefore, establish an independent relationship with the God without the mediation of the priestly caste.

Men and women are named after him, villages market places, shops and farm yards named after him. There are little verses dedicated to him, written behind vehicles. This symbol embrace a whole gamut of human emotions and endeavours. Each devotee solicits, surrenders, abuses and communicates about his most anguished self in the most informal of ways. It is humility and communitas as Sitakanta Mahapatra writes. The bawdy singers called "dahuka", sing rowdy and crude songs during the ratha-yatra. They use crude and local songs which as said popularizes the relationship among the devotees and the God. It signifies the earthy nature of the God.

He is God, who is abused, loved, hugged and dragged... the strongest in the Hindu pantheon, he is God who eats, sleeps makes merry, suffers physical ailment, poverty and he who goes on exciting expeditions.

This chapter should not be taken as an eulogy which takes the diety to great heights. It merely explores the social content of the temple complex and therefore deals

exclusively with this aspect. It is an endeavour to trace down the popular element in the high Hinduized temple complex without going into historical details. As is shown, the temple is seen as akin to an Oriya household and informs and influences the life patterns of the Oriya people. Myths and folk tales are given special importance because they help to formulate the belief systems of the common people. A common sensical and popular understanding of a cultural symbol which is religious in nature is given the highest priority. It first highlights the reasons as to why the Oriyas identify so personally with the sacred complex. Important political questions, the relation of the cultural complex with the politics of Orissa have deliberately been left out and shall be dealt with in subsequent endeavours.

**CHAPTER III**  
**CULTURE AND POLITICS**

### CHAPTER III

In the first chapter there was a brief account of the interaction of culture and politics. This chapter shall enquire into this aspect more elaborately. Culture does not exist in isolation and politics does not operate in a vacuum. Since culture is more than artistic and intellectual activities including within itself a whole gamut of practices from arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising it is extremely difficult to keep away the interaction of culture with other structures, more specifically politics. Moreover, since politics today addresses questions which are not exclusively political in nature, the expansion of politics into non-political horizons, more specifically, cultural horizons is most natural. The "sociology of culture", as we have seen, stresses the importance of the interaction between culture and other structures, sometimes observable and at times dormant. One can see some logic in Raymond Williams when he says "that activities in society are not essentially separate and autonomous and since they are carried out by human beings, the influence, intermix and trace of one another might not be an impossibility."<sup>1</sup> There exists, therefore, a twin process - culture in politics and politics in culture, apart from the third

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1. Raymond Williams quoted in Marx, The First Hundred Years, p.24.



dimension, which is that both culture and politics are independent structures and interact with each other. The former indicates (a) the obvious interaction between culture and politics, where politics makes use of cultural symbol to gain legitimacy.

(b) It could also mean that each politics has a certain culture within itself to give it a distinctiveness of its own. The use of the Gandhi topi or a Nehru jacket by Congress men makes them more easily acceptable to the masses. The second indicates that culture too has a politics within itself. This explains "power" in culture to exist within a social milieu, the various structures within culture which help its growth and sustenance. The capacity of culture to play its own power-game, to widen its space for protest and then the capacity to resolve such conflicts reflects the political within culture. The power of culture is maintained through its own propagators. The people who write about culture demand a status merely because they make others aware of what 'their' culture is all about. Writing is a powerful way through which cultural dominance is maintained. So, power, dominance, conflict resolution and cultural producers which sustain the dominance of culture would be referred to as the political here. One shall, therefore, see that all those lived practices and age long values that people can so easily identify with, trace down their every-

day living to the religious complex, as mentioned in Chapter II, can also be regarded as the politics in culture.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first deals with the obvious interactions between culture and politics, the second discusses the not-so-obvious relation between the two structures. These two sections shall include cultural theorists who have delved into the relationship and political theorists who have recognized the importance of culture in politics. The third section shall go back to the Jagannath culture and enquire its interactions with politics of Orissa in the theoretical framework woven in the first two sections.

## I

The importance of politics and culture is emphasized when one sees that politics of particular places are culturally contextualized. Cultures differ in accordance to the form depending upon the kind of symbols they give rise to, the sentiments that they evoke etc. Culture is a major symbolic form of representation and each culture interacts differently with social structures. So, "all impressive system of ideas must be placed or replaced in their true social or material context... and look at the whole body of activities and conditions within which these ideas and

systems are generated."<sup>1</sup> A piece of art, therefore, could be timeless and is appreciated over a period of time for different reasons and each time interpretations to it are different. As Raymond Williams says, there is an emergence of politics of a new and independent kind which is changing in character with the social mood. Different kind of social mobilizations are being inspired through cultural movements.

Taking an example from our context, secularism is a political term which has made queer adjustments to the Indian cultural context and therefore, secular India has different convictions and principles than secular USA or secular Russia. Politics tends out of necessity to find bases in society and proceeds through taking into consideration aspects which are culturally specific. As Taylor says, "...all descriptions are culturally specific. The values of one culture are frequently not replicable in another and we can find nothing exactly corresponding to them...."<sup>2</sup> Public activity would be impossible without shared ends and goods. We are capable of fighting together in war because we have a common understanding of culture.

Politics, when culture-specific acquires legitimacy easily. Cultural structures like "caste" as Rajni Kothari

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1. Ibid., p.27.

2. Charles Taylor, Social Theory as Practice (Delhi, 1983), p.32.

writes in his book Caste in Indian Politics, shape and influence politics of modern India. An attempt to set up a new social order devoid of caste has not been possible and the very institution of caste is undergoing change under the impact of modern politics. As he writes, "those who complain of casteism in politics are looking for a sort of politics which has no basis in Indian society."<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to keep politics impervious to its influences. It is in India a powerful factor of political participation and mobilization.

The success and failure of a particular political phenomenon depends upon the culture of the place. Less educated and religious minded people have a different approach to politics than others. To continue with an earlier example of secularism in India, while the western definition of the term would be public life where religion is not admitted, the Indian way would mean respect to all religions, taking into consideration the significance of religion in public/social life. Since religion has long remained a powerful social and cultural force most political authorities have been tempted to use it for publicity and acceptance. There are others who have used religion unconsciously. So, as Ashis Nandy writes, when modern Indians

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1. Rajni Kothari, Caste in Indian Politics, (Delhi, 1985), p.41.

project the ideology of secularism into the past and say both Ashoka and Gandhi were secular, they forget that Ashoka was a practising Buddhist and Gandhi a practising Hindu and both derived their tolerance from religious philosophies than secular politics. Secularism, therefore, is a modern expression looking for a space in society which is tradition oriented. It is difficult to disagree with Nandy when he says, "...it locates itself in traditions outside the ideological grid of politics."<sup>1</sup>

The interaction between the two structures of politics and culture is far clear in the writings of Gramsci. Gramsci's work lessened economism in Marxist theory, postulating culture variously conceived from style of life, values and ideology which was crucial to both capitalist domination and proletarian resistance. Gramsci, as Merelman argues, says "that supportive culture allowed capitalist domination and therefore in the absence of counter-hegemonic culture, proletarian resistance to domination could not succeed."<sup>2</sup> Though the concept of culture has never been theoretically defined by Gramsci it functions loosely between world of art on one hand to politics on the other. Just as culture has

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1. For an extended discussion, see Veena Das, ed., Mirrors of Violence (Delhi, 1990).
2. Richard Merelman, "Cultural Imagery and Racial Conflict in U.S.", British Journal of Pol. Sc., Vol.22, Part 3, July 1992, p.315.

only limited autonomy from other practices, within Gramsci's theoretical schema its meaning is dependent upon other concepts. He was trying to bring about political change by changing culture at the proletarian level to enable them to see through the designs of the bourgeoisie. How could this political situation change and if revolution was an answer, what would be the symbols of revolution? To this, the answer was the use of culture, the most potent integrating factor. "The need to integrate political and economic activity with an organ of cultural activity has arisen and is most strongly felt...through this the proletarian revolution will gain in compactness and in energy for conquest."<sup>1</sup> Further political and economic action presupposes moral, religious and philosophical problems which the economic and political bodies cannot discuss in their own organizations. If socialism was to be an integral view of life there should be a cultural association to discuss the problems clarify and propagate them. They would, thereby, create a socialist culture, a socialist way of life with the help of a kind of intellectuals who primarily work in the field of culture - like writers, artists, film-makers. These intellectuals would direct and transform the common-sense of the people by developing a common language for

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1. Forgas David, Geofery Nowell, eds., Selections from Cultural Writings of Antonio Gramsci (1985), p.13.

communication. They would, therefore, as Kaviraj writes, "cancel the capitalist form into socialist form."<sup>1</sup> Politics would, thereby, turn into a cultural activity and political indoctrination would be carried on in the same way as culture is socialized.

Culture is a force for instigating nationalist feelings. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) though claims to be a cultural organization makes use of cultural symbols with deep political undertones. They act to extend their strategy to every sphere of activity. They realize that even sports can be an effective arena to create bonds of brotherhood apart from making blantant use of words to inspire cultural familiarity.

Another interesting way through which cultural assets are used to mobilize people into political action is to use narratives and myths which are traditionally popular. Narratives provided a basis for collective action and Indian society particularly rich in this tradition makes extensive use of it. "Hinduism implicitly recognizes by its own handling and deployment of narratives, their immense political potential."<sup>2</sup> To mobilize a set of people against another

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1. Sudipto Kaviraj, "Capitalism and the Cultural Process", Journal of Arts and Ideas, No.19, May 1990, p.63.
  2. Sudipto Kaviraj, "Imaginary Institution of India", Occasional Papers, NMML, XLII, Aug. 1991, p.10.

er all one is required to do is to identify the hostile party with "asuras" and depict the whole conflict as a fight between good and evil. These narratives provide an easy solution to a set of impatient politicians who convince the mass more easily but powerfully.

Apart from this, traditional cultural artefacts like poetry, painting, art and writing significantly reflect contemporary political situation. Writing has a tremendous potential of political use, by the use of which in a commonsensical way it is made accessible to a majority. . Films, radio, television are cultural carriers and producers which pervade all categories of people. Use of these mechanisms would be a convenient and inexpensive method to reach a wider category of people. They are the most popular cultural resources used for political purposes.

## II

The non-confrontational and less obvious forms of interaction of politics and culture is important to understand the politics in culture and culture in politics. Any kind of tampering with the people's way of living, any violent social and cultural change or massive political transformations which are not welcome can lead to protest against this power. However, people protest against this power not in the form of major strikes or riots but silently



through day to day struggles on factory floors, in place of work, over leisure etc. They do not often make news headlines but as James Scott says, "vital territory is being lost and won here too".<sup>1</sup> Protest here is a political activity and the methods of protest are cultural. These methods are often the weapons of the powerless. This kind of cultural protest is often an individual act, of a small community of people. Gossip, slandering, malice, ridicule and social laughter are methods of resistance. Language, a cultural form is the most relevant way of defying and denying power equations, a major way through which people indicate their discontent and anger. Jokes, puns, swearing, complaining within family confines are political expressions through cultural forms.

In another interesting occasion Michael Roberts, while studying a community of Sri Lankan Buddhist speaks of "noise as a form of cultural struggle". This is about a typical drum called Tom-Tom used by the local people as a cultural practice. This system of beating the drum was objected by the colonial rulers for they thought it disturbed the peace of the place. The ensuring of orders to stop this practice led to religious frictions among the two cultural categories, the rulers and the ruled. There was a struggle for

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1. James C. Scott, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (London, 1986), p.6.

symbolic space. As a reply to tampering with their culture, the people who used the drum began to conceive "this noise" not as a religious customary necessity but as a weapon to protest against rulers. They combated further encroachments into their valued cultural domains and to protect their sacred space. These were the various ways through which culture was used for political purposes.

The second aspect would be a cultural group with a peculiar presence in politics. Cultural deviant groups like the "punks", "reggae" etc. represented a particular culture and were politically active in a way which was typical to their culture. They were a part of no conscious class struggle, and had no attachment to any particular party but were able to transform the everyday and the common place. They would, by virtue of being representative of particular class be associated with various political issues. In 1960's they sang for the Vietnam solidarity campaign and in 1978 they were used to revolt against racism and carnivals. They were cultural groups who did not indulge in conscious politics but reacted and responded to political moves in ways exclusive to their cultural living and social existence.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Refer to Tony Bennet's essay "Popular Culture: Pop Music and Post War Youth: Subcultures", Bloc-5, Units 18 and 19/20, for extended discussion as cultural deviants.

Analyzing Foucault's writings would enable one to trace down cultural elements in his writing though none of his works are apparently cultural in nature. Most of his writings, like others, were responses to his immediate cultural milieu. He categorically explains politics in society in treating particular individuals in a particular way. He was thereby questioning situations which had hitherto remained outside the field of traditional political analysis. The politics of culture was evident in the way, particular societies treated the two deviants, lepers and the mad. The segregation of these two categories of people evidenced the power of a particular category of people (the healthy) over the diseased. They resorted to cultural methods of treating them and segregating them. The definition of the mad always depended upon the elite and madness was a judgement which had cultural connotations, than a fact. The mad were therefore available for discussion by the powerful. Apart from formal means of social control exerted through power structures like police, laws, prisons, these were other effective methods of power discourse in all cultures.

One can, therefore, see that politics and culture interact at levels. In the first part of this section, protest is taken as an example of political activity and methods of protest was through the use of cultural weapons which were traditionally not regarded as protest weapons.

In the second part, cultural symbols were used differently not merely as a cultural symbol but as a source of disturbance to safeguard cultural space which was politically encroached upon. The third part had political writings which reacted to particular milieu and how cultures carried on the process of power discourse.

As is evident from the above discussion both politics and culture make effective use of each other to exist and acquire legitimacy. The very fact that politics makes extensive use of culture makes its impact on people more powerful.

### III

From the above theoretical proposition one weaves some sort of model on the basis of which one would explore into what has happened in the relation between the Jagannath culture and politics in Orissa. It is important to see the kind of politics that this temple complex serves to acquire legitimacy in a constantly changing world and the way it maintains its influence on the people. It has over the years reflected the socio-economic and political reality of the state. As mentioned above, there are two kinds of politics manifest here, the first is the obvious, more observable interaction between the two and secondly, the politics the temple generates from within to keep its influ-

ence unhindered.

The Jagannath temple has been intricately woven with the politics of Orissa since its inception. Though initially the cult had remained away from the centres of political evolution, the temple's impact on the common man and the significance attached to the temple by the people drew it in to the mainstream of politics.

To start with, Jagannath has from the beginning remained closely associated with the royal family ruling Orissa: firstly, because he was the "Ista-Devata", the family God of the King of Orissa and secondly, because of the royal patronage showered on it helped him acquire the status of "Rashtra-Devata", the state deity of Orissa. The powerful Gajapati, King of Orissa was nothing more than a humble servant of the God. As Kulke writes, "Kingship became a part of the cult and the cult became a part of the Orissan kingship and its main source of legitimation.... The new relation between the Jagannath cult and kingship in Orissa found their lasting manifestation in the construction of the present monumental Jagannath temple."<sup>1</sup>

The act of bringing together the three competing strands of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Saktism under one  
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1. Kulke, ed., The Cult of Jagannath and Regional Tradition (Delhi, 1986), p.139.

platform and placing them in a relationship of siblings had significant political connotations. The King was thereby doing two things, (a) appealing to the religious sentiments of the common people, which was a vertical legitimacy, and (b) gaining power over other kings who were strict Shaivites which was what Kulke refers to as horizontal legitimacy. The construction of the temple and uplifting the God as the Rashtra-Devata was a clear appeasement of the Vaishnava followers who constituted the majority in Orissa then. Most researchers who have worked on it have agreed that all decisions of the temple had political significance. "...Since Anangabhimadeva's time the central hindu rulers of Orissa were unconcievable without a direct relationship with Jagannath temple at Puri and only the rulers who could claim to control Puri and its cult was acknowledged as the legitimate ruler of Orissa."<sup>1</sup> From then on any king who would usurp power would need the special legitimation that he would receive from the priests of the temple.

Even when the Muslims came to Orissa it has been noticed that their intentions were never to destroy the temple for they were aware that the temple was a vital source of revenue, apart from being a repository of people's senti-

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1. Herman Kulke, Jatannath - the State Diety of Orissa, Sri Sri Jagannath, the Symbol of Syncretic Indian Culture, Sri Jagannath Central Library, Puri, p.21.

ments. Likewise, when the Marathas took over Orissa they were aware that their own rule over Orissa depended a lot on their control over the temple. When the British fought the Marathas to gain Orissa, they too guarded the complex as jealously as their predecessors, being aware of the importance of a religious complex. Wellesley, on occupation of Orissa writes to the local English officers, "on your arrival at Jagannath, you will employ every possible precaution to preserve and respect due to the pagoda...."<sup>1</sup> Initially they took complete control over the administration of the temple. But the direct participation of a Christian government in an idolatry shrine came under severe criticism from the missionaries. They began a powerful struggle against the administration and were successful in disassociating the British government from the temple, but the excessive hue and cry around the temple raised the political importance of the temple complex. As James Pegg wrote in his History of Baptist Mission in Orissa, "on the contrary our struggle against Juggernaut led to further importance of the cult."<sup>2</sup>

A cultural complex which had such intense political interaction through history cannot suddenly lose its political significance in independent India. There is no direct

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1. P. Mukherjee, "Policy of Lord Wellesley towards the Jagannath temple, Shri Jagannath Smarika, Vol.II, p.7.
2. Herman Kulke, Shri Shri Jagannath Library, op. cit., p.25.

or marginal political interference of the temple and its sevaks in governmental institutions today. More importantly, since times have changed, the coming of modern institutions and secularization have considerably contributed to change in the kind of politics, it was earlier associated with.

Jagannath has been a potent mobilizing factor for the people of Orissa. This complex gives Orissa an identity and along time has remained the basis of Oriya nationalism. The role of the temple in the construction of a national and therefore a political identity for the people of Orissa is significant.

Callous kings with no concern for the proper management of the temple called for immediate action from the people. In a meeting of Utkala Sabha, a committee was formed consisting of Madhusudan Das, Ramashankar Ray and Baidyanath Panda to prepare a scheme for the administration of the Jagannath temple and to prevent the mismanagement of the temple by Raja Mukundadeva. What is striking here is that one of the committee members was a Christian, but his religion did not come in the way of his appointment as a member. One must notice that similar protests against temple mismanagement in relation to Lingaraja temple of Bhubaneswar and Sarala Chandi was paid no heed to.



Modern Oriya literature introduced nationalist feelings using the symbol of Jagannath. Myths and popular stories around him were politicized brilliantly. In the 19th century Ramashankar Ray introduced a legend of Jagannath "Kanchi Kaberi" into popular literature. This myth is about the Gods accompanying the King of Puri in a war against his enemies; the King of Kanchipuram. This story of God going to war acted as a moral boost to the soldiers, a subtle way of introducing confidence into the minds of people. The constant companionship of God was a way to instill into popular minds the political importance of the Triad. Any assault on Orissan Kings was a direct assault on Jagannath. The narratives around this diety became a potential political weapon against enemies. "The great yearning for Jagannath is to some extent the outcome of centuries of companionship in suffering between the people and their God. In every disaster of Orissa, Jagannath has borne his share and in every fight before an invading power, he has been their comrade."<sup>1</sup>

The development of the printing press, journals and magazines popularized the cult for, with that, literature was flooded with poems and stories on Jagannath. The Sa-tyabadi school established in 1909 by Gopabandhu Das and his

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1. N.K. Sahu, History of Orissa (Calcutta, 1956), p.5.

colleagues drew the majority people into the nationalist movement in the name of Jagannath. In his "Bandi ~~er~~ Atma Katha", (more of a political pamphlet) he mentions that if "the world were a tank and India a lotus in it, then the filament of that lotus would be Nilachala, Puri."<sup>1</sup> During the census operations of 1921, there was growing resentment in the far flung boundary districts of Orissa; which were bastions of anti-Oriya activities. Madhusudan Das tried to unite all the antagonistic feelings with a lot of symbol mongering around Jagannath. Right from this, to the prolonged fight against the Bengalis to safeguard the independent identity of Oriya language. Jagannath was most actively used to instigate Oriyaness.

The decision of Gandhi to start his "padayatra" from Puri may be traced as the importance of Jagannath to the people. Till the present times the popularity of Jagannath as the symbol of Oriya identity remains. Local politicians are aware of the importance of the temple for creating local networks of influence and control. The political elite, aware of the wider and deeper areas which influence politics often regulate politics accordingly. As Geertz writes "some of the most critical decisions concerning the direction of public life are not made in parliaments and presidiums but in

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1. Kulke, ed., op. cit., p.373.

the informalized realms."<sup>1</sup>

Frisking through "grey-literature", all messages of most popular politicians in souvenirs etc. never forget to mention the name of Jagannath, as a symbol of purity and togetherness of Oriya people. Political speeches and public speeches always make different references to Jagannath in different contexts, be it a protest against governmental authorities or a conference on environment. There was a conference on "Jagannath Consciousness" held in Cuttack organised by Sadashiv Rath Sharma in which J.B. Patnaik, the then Chief Minister of Orissa raised the fame of Jagannath to the state of universal. Most election campaigns start from Puri, which is considered auspicious; public meetings are staged in front of the temple strategically, for that is the central place which is full of activity all through the day. In the 1971 elections the Pragativadi Dal, a political party, fought state elections with a symbol of a plough and a wheel which symbolized agricultural advancement but this was "interpreted by the founder of the party at a meeting in Puri as the symbols of Jagannath and Balarama, (the *hala* being the weapon of Balarama and Chakra that of Vishnu) who were thus invoked to be the presiding deities of his party.

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1. Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), p.316.

Having been elected, the first Prime Minister of Orissa in colonial India, Raja Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev paid his visit to the temple to get his blessings. This is a practice which lives on when winning parties after every election attribute their victory to Lord Jagannatha and pay their respects before entering office. One does understand the effect and significance of these actions, they do deepen the faith of the common people who can identify better with the people in power. The temple exerts inference in the localities and integrate them into a wider political sphere. The temple's importance over others under it is politically more significant than the rest.

Sentiments and emotions play a crucial role in formation of nationalistic consciousness. Images and symbols articulate the emotions of people. People in the west of Orissa might have some resentment over the economic and political affluence of the coastal Orissa but do have strong religious sentiments attached to the temple. Writers like Gangadhar Meher have played a crucial role in bringing a synthesis between regional and Oriya cultural identity through Jagannath. Moreover, the *Madalapanji* (temple chronicle) traces down strong relationship of Jagannath with western orissa. Therefore, in spite of the a strong Sammalai cult in Sambalpur district it does not necessarily obstruct people from identifying with this God. This cult

does not make any attempts to compete with indigeneous sub-regional cults rather but finds out means and connections to peacefully co-exist with them. It would not be too erroneous to say that the capacity to manipulate itself to different demands at different times remains central to its powerful existence.

Though there are many who rebel against the idea of Orissa being equated with Puri, (and most rightly should not be thought so), but people from all over Orissa identify with this God as their own and there are at present 931 temples dedicated to Jagannath, in all of which the deities are worshiped in the correspondence with the main temple at Puri. Jagannath, as Kulke remarks, has come to be closely associated with and symbolizes this feeling of oneness. During the time when Oriya language was to be recognized as merely a dialect of Bengali Jagannath began to symbolize a secular force to see in the language-centred Oriya nationalism."

#### IV

So much so, for the obvious relationship between politics and this cultural complex, but as has been mentioned, there is a politics within culture which propels it to move on its own, its own cultural carriers to transmit the essentials of the culture. The temple has its own politics which

helps it to acquire legitimacy to live on.

The capacity of the traditional set up to accept and transform in accordance to change in attitude of people speaks of the internal politics of the cult. It provides immense scope for the old values to be reoriented and fitted into the complexities of the modernized state.

The temple complex provides its own power-equations; strongly inclined towards Brahmanism. Though most scholars writing on Jagannathism take pride in the apparent absence of caste distinctions and its claim egalitarianism as its basic principle, one cannot overlook the aggressive fundamentalism of high Hinduism and orthodoxy which remains till to day its central theme. However, this Brahmanization of a popular cult must have given the complex a kind of legitimacy by putting it at par with other Hindu religious complexes. It would thereby have the same kind of aura, the aura of exclusiveness and unattainability; giving it a proper status vis-a-vis other temples. It is in the same relationship of high culture and popular culture, where the high is considered powerful merely by denying entry to all categories of people.

This cult today consists in it, its relation of domination and subordination. Like Geertz writes ideas - religious, moral, practical and aesthetic - must be carried by

powerful social groups to have powerful social effects, someone must revere them, celebrate them, defend them and impose them. They have to be institutionalized in order to find out an intellectual existence...." The Brahmins, the most privileged in the caste hierarchy with the help of royal patronage introduced strong brahmanical dominance. Though the cult is believed to have its origin in the tribal culture the ongoing process of Hinduization brought into it and inevitably so, a system of rigidity and conservatism. This needed priests to perform the daily rites ritually and the earlier rather informal way of communicating with God now needed *mantras* and *lokas*.

Manoranjan Mohanty describes the upper caste domination which is not only sustained by the political and economic process but also cultural hegemony which has effectively contained all alternative value movements. At the centre of this symbol system lies the Jagannath cult.

There were institutional arrangements within the temple to perpetuate this Brahmanical domination. The Mukti-Mandapa Pandit Sabha, consisting of learned and orthodox Brahmins were there to protect the Sanskrit and Shastriya traditions. Until today this assembly of brahmains continue to stay laying down elaborate rituals of the temple. All conflicts among *sevaks* are sold, any clarification required

regarding the temple and its rituals is given by them. They even lay down punishments for offences done in the temple precincts.

Rituals in the temple are performed by two categories of priests, the brahmins and daitas. Though, Mohanty believes that daitas are not allowed the same social status as pandas in spite of retaining their power to worship, one can see the temple system being dominated by the "panda-daita nexus". The daitas have greater power for they perform the puja during the prosperous Rath-Yatra. They are better-off economically than the pandas and have always claimed a higher status in the temple hierarchy as they have considered themselves as blood relatives of the deities. There is a strange system of hierarchy in the temple. On one hand it is a big zamindari itself and an instrument of legitimation of dominance by the upper classes and upper-castes. (Both the old and new power-structures remain intertwined with the temple.)

The Deula-Karanas, who are in charge of writing the daily temple chronicle belong to the high caste too. Codification of cultural practices as has been mentioned in earlier chapters gives excessive power to these people to misrepresent and manipulate facts accordingly to keep their dominance on. These people have the space to construct a culture as they please to do.



However, popular sentiment can and has rebelled against these power-brokers as much as it had accepted it over the years. The first protest movement against these discriminatory practices was the "Mahima-dharma" a strong reaction against sanskrit tradition and a Hindu movement which turned against Jagannath worship in particular. The first sect who forced their movement into the temple went to drag the statues out and burn it in 1881. This movement was led by one Bhima-Bhoi who is believed to have composed the best lyrics dedicated to the Jagannath triad. The "Chaitnya movement" is also considered a rebel movement and gained ground under royal patronage of Pratap Rudra Deva (1497-1540). The simplicity and discrimination against no caste appealed to the popular religious sentiments and had a powerful effect against the establishment of brahmanic power. The most important aspect to be noticed in here is that, this temple complex instigated conflicts and revolts against itself and its practices from time and time and equally provided space for reconciliation and resolution of such conflicts. These occasional spurts of dissatisfaction and resolution helped to maintain the popularity of the cult apart from keeping it in the mainstream always.

Gandhi and Vinobha Bhave denied to enter into the temple in protest against the fact that untouchables were

not allowed into the temple. Mohan Nayak, a Congress dalit leader who ventured into the temple was beaten and thrown out by the pandas in 1948. There are gross press releases as in June 1987 speaking of an intention of the government to erect a viewing tower near the temple so that all those do not have access to the temple including non-Hindus, foreign tourists and dalits can have a glimpse of the temple complex".<sup>1</sup> Things have merely changed at the institutional level with the introduction of Fundamental Rights. The temple can only boast of egalitarianism and cultural synthesis in the way that it stands for, if all people shall be allowed into the temple. Like all traditional Hindu places of worship the Sanskrit culture once established was jealously guarded and reproduced by high castes. The appropriation of the Sanskrit traditions and continuance of it led to the tendency of non-inclusiveness in the Jagannath cult.

The Sankaracharya's matha (institution) in Puri established the power of brahmins and drew the temple into the politics of mainstream Hindu temples and integrated it into the network of all India Hinduism. The present Sankaracharya and his public declarations in favour of "Sati" etc. reveals his intentions of making a political career out of his religious status.

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1. Ibid., p.359.

As in all traditional fundamental complexes this are hadits share of a strong system against women. Women were mostly engaged as dancing-girls (devadasis or maharis) the only job available to them. This was a way to propagate temple prostitution. They were mostly exploited and allegedly prostitutes to the servitors and priests. They were even made to believe that having such relations with temple priests was auspicious for them. This was a crude system of exploitation which continued till 1955 on the basis of satisfaction of the sexual urges of God. The mahari system degenerated into divine prostitution with these women becoming religious and traditional social victims.

The bawdy lyrics sung to God during Rath Yatra is condemned as a system against women. As a colonial officer writes, "lavicious sculptures disfigure his walls, in decent ceremonies disgrace his ritual and dancing girls with modest eyes put modest female worshippers to shame." On the other hand, these crude rituals give it a further element of popularity bringing him a little closer to the common people.

How does the temple continue to exist with so many flaws? The temple has within itself the capacity to stylize its vices into virtues. How does this happen? There is a strong politics of myths within the temple. The innumerable

legends and myths associated with the temple shape the common people emotionally in favour of the temple. They are more real to the millions of people than any amount of historical data, however baseless and untrue one alleges them to be. Centuries of faith cannot be removed overnight. Since they are in most parts unwritten they provide, as all oral tradition does, space to change, and accommodate to the demand of time.

Since, in India, as Kaviraj writes, the internal mechanism was oral and there was rarely a standardized written institution there was great flexibility of the eternal religion, Sanatan dharma which could therefore keep constantly changing. At different times different myths were given primacy and people chose among the vast resources and emphasized different elements of their culture. Any allegation against the Brahmanical order would get to the forefront legends of Dasia-Bauri, a lowly caste man who when not allowed to enter the temple prayed so relentlessly <sup>that</sup> God himself came down to the temple door to accept his offerings. This was a major way of appeasing the low caste as is done to Muslims, by projecting a Muslim poet, Salabega, as the most popular devotee of the God. This kind of appeasement created a "false-consciousness" among people. Powerful people continued to maintain their hegemony over others giving them concessions here and there to keep their power-

equations intact. It is amazing that when in South India riots were run against Brahmins, none took place in Orissa, in spite of strong brahmanical dominance. The mass is very strategically accepted into the temple hierarchy in a way that they find less reason for cultural resistance. The elite communicate with the mass by echoing the achievements of the subordinates but effectively maintaining their places of dominance.

The temple is not merely a religious place. This confinement of the temple complex merely to the religious is a construct of modern. The temple to many is what a park is to us. It is a major source of recreation, an important place for social gathering. Old women are even seen fixing marriages for their sons and daughters with others. So, the reasons to visit the temple are many and different people have different reasons for being in the temple. The popularity of the temple remains because it organizes festivals, patronizes the arts, feed the poor and gave grants to charitable institutions. Had the temple been there only for religious purposes it would loose its popularity soon, but its umbrella functions actually contain the political elements to help it maintain its cultural dominance, treading secular grounds.

The temple has its own mechanisms to attract tourists.

The pandas, the pilgrim hunters go to far flung areas to convince devotees and guide them to Puri. They are credited with raising the temple to a pan-Indian status.

The Rath Yatra is a religio-cultural event and a dramatic device to celebrate the unity of the people who have their faith embedded in a particular God. It is important to take into consideration the way the popular press constructs the Rath Yatra for its readers, the way it states and defines what it is all about, the radio commentary and most recently the day-long telecast of the whole event imbibes into the mood of every person a sense of festive feeling. The broadcast of popular politicians, the security arrangements, the guardians of law, the police, do not merely induce a sense of religious excitement but also registers other social obligations, it fulfills its political intentions too. The vast network of associations, the innumerable of people involved in its work, the broad category of people that it employs all help to maintain the temple's cultural existence.

Other social movements or rather political movements who claim to be cultural in nature also have influence on the people of Orissa. The kind of feverent Hinduism all over India in the name of Ram shall take long to penetrate into Orissa. If as the RSS people call for "The country can have only one Hindu culture and so all must accept Ram, if

not as divine at least as the nation's hero".<sup>1</sup> It shall take long for Ram to dismantle Jagannath's popularity and replace it with its own. Most recently, the BJP in Orissa is garnering support in the name of Jagannath. For when Hinduism is at stake how can Jagannath not be threatened? There is support given to these organizations in the name of Hinduism. There is hardly any vote gathering in the name of Jagannath, for every party, Congress, Janata, BJP claim to have equal access over the deity. Unlike, in the north the BJP has no one exclusive God to itself to mobilize support. But, this is not to anyway conclude that Jagannath has not got the potential to turn into a Ram like political figure he could be capable of any such communal disaster if exploited in that direction. "There is communal potential in even any representation of religiosity but this does not make the representation communal."

As R.K. Barick writes, "Strangely, the Ram cult did not appeal to the popular psyche and it never became so popular in rural Orissa. Temples were never constructed in his name.... Stories around him never became a part of popular commonsense".<sup>2</sup> However, one has reservations against such a

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1. Niladri Bhattacharya (ed.), Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags, (Delhi, 1993), p.7.
2. R.K. Barick, "Popular Culture and Political Elite in Orissa", Occasional Papers, NMML, No.XXII, Nov. 1990, p.7.

belief that Rama did not acquire any popularity. The Dandi-Ramayana written by Balarama Das in 15th/16th century was an indigenous contribution, a Ramayana which had taken into consideration Oriya social conditions and a particular cultural milieu.

The BJP has a field day in getting support from those areas which has a considerable Muslim population. It would be difficult to utilize Jagannath as a symbol to divide two religious communities on communal lines. Popular sentiment is geared towards Jagannath but not against any community. An Oriya Muslim would have more in common with Oriya Hindu than U.P. Muslim, they even speak a language more akin to Oriya than Hindi or Urdu. They dress like Oriyas and perform certain pujas. A Muslim would not even think twice before swearing in the name of Jagannath. "Salabega" a Muslim poet had gained much popularity due to his undaunted devotion to the triad. In effect, however, the Muslim would not be allowed to enter the temple precincts. Remember the hue and cry over Indira Gandhi's desire to visit the temple. Symbol mongering in the name of Jagannath is an age long process but politicization of the deity to divide the population is not evident.

So, the culture survives primarily due to the tentacles that it has spread all over, the way it conducts its daily



affairs makes him greatly acceptable and accessible to all. It survives because it does and more importantly people think it does influence and pattern their life style.

As was intended, this chapter went about sorting out the various possible relations and points of contact between culture and politics. The theoretical constructs in the first section were applied to study the local variant of culture in Orissa, explaining both the politics in culture and cultural symbols as used by politics. However, the changing social moods have inspired changes in the traditional culture and its relations with politics which shall be treated in the following chapter.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**CULTURAL CHANGE**

## CHAPTER IV

The preceding chapters have dealt with the various aspects of the nature of culture. Transmission, adaptation and interaction of culture reveals the fact that culture is not static; change being essential to its character. Since culture is a process, movement being inherently built into it, change is inevitable to it. Plainly, cultural change is a process whereby societies change "their patterns of culture", which are evidenced in norms, beliefs, values, attitudes of people. This chapter deals with cultural change. It is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the theories of cultural change, the changes that evolve in culture, changes in the content of culture, how these various changes are prompted in etc. The second section deals with the changes noticed and registered in some aspects of the Jagannath culture Orissa.

Cultural changes may be due to endogenous and exogenous factors: demographic changes, changes in technology, changes induced due to change in the government structure, changes due to alien rule, in the Indian context, the experience of colonialism which remains as a critical moment in the cultural life of the nation. New relationships and mobilizations of social group within a society give rise to far-reaching changes. Cultural change could also be due to

contact with different cultures. This is called of "acculturation". This is the process by which "group of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact with subsequent changes in original cultural patterns of either or both groups."<sup>1</sup> With the coming of the Muslims, there was a certain degree of Islamization of the Indian attitude, we started internalizing a few of their habits, as they did of ours and with the Britishers, came the first and the last ever era of stray and lasting change. This long and sustained contact of two societies, where there is a great amount of diffusion cultural elements is the most powerful factor for cultural change. In the words of Ashis Nandy, "This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases within colonized societies to alter their cultural practices once for all. In this process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern west from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The west is now everywhere, within the west and outside in structures and in minds)."<sup>2</sup> Cultural change is a more obvious phenomenon in developing societies for they are caught in the web of transition, a movement from the traditional values and incapable to resist the ongoing process of modernisation. However, modernization is a relative term

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1. S.C. Panchbhai and Siddiqui (eds.), Acculturation and Social Change in India (Calcutta, 1989), p.56.
2. Ashis Nandy, Intimate Enemy, (Delhi, 1983), p.xi.

and what is modern for Indians may be considered primitive for Americans. Modernization is introduced at different times and therefore levels of modernity differ and are congruent to the social values and indigeneous cultural peculiarities of the society. There is, therefore, an un-uniform level of change everywhere. All societies do not go through the same process of modernization, the experience of modernization for India is different from that of Japan. Change is prompted because values and attitude change, what was yesterday is not today and as Brecht says, "What was popular yesterday is not today; for people today are not what they were yesterday."<sup>1</sup>

So, transition and movement is universal phenomenon and social transformation is a never-ending process.... what keeps social transformation in permanent transition is culture.

It is not that changes are always accepted gracefully, each culture has a certain degree of conservatism. There is great insecurity involved in change. All societies try to preserve some of its conservative elements to render it different from the others and somehow socializes its members from the beginning, enculturates them where they are made to believe that their cultural system is the best. So there is -----

1. Brecht, Popular Culture, Block-5, 1974, p.51.

a great degree of resistance to change. Fraser in 1963, writes about the failure of American project to introduce sanitary latrines in a village area for, it considerably intruded into the cultural practices of the village. Firstly, the concepts of public health were different and secondly, women were resistant because this would deprive them of going out for these expeditions which enabled them sort of a relaxation and most importantly, it would defile a ritual sense and go against a cultural order.<sup>1</sup>

The success of a modernizing nation depends upon its capacity to convert its assets in its tradition to current advantages. All social systems have some aspects which are more reciprocal to change, and has greater qualities to adapt to other systems components. This means that in a changing system we pursue a path of selective retention and replacement of traditional elements.

Conrad and Niehoff, in Introducing Social Change, speak of introducing change through change-agents, who often have a completely different set of customs and beliefs from the people that they try to influence. Merely knowing the elite and governmental officials is not enough to effect change for they are often more open about accepting change than

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1. See Conrad and Niehoff (eds.) Introducing Social Change, Chap.1 (Chicago, 1971).

others; the most important is to effect change into the mass. The change agents must therefore be extremely sensitive to the people and themselves have to be effective communicators and in case of incompatibility of a certain kind, he must be able to rework and adapt to local conditions - a change is more acceptable if it is gradual, non-confrontational and not abrupt. The cultural agents must also depend upon cultural resources like 'local language', the 'writing' etc. which make the whole task a lot easier and more meaningful rapport is established thereby. Cultural change requires the communication vehicle and in order to spread new ideas they have to be verbalized.

Cultural changes occur with diffusion, with interaction and borrowing from the other. "Diffusion is primarily an economy of effort".<sup>1</sup> It is easier to borrow and imitate from the other since it both saves you from utilizing your time and energy. The occasion for such diffusions are many, exposure to new people, military occupations, and all people you come in contact with who perceive their social reality differently than you do. Apart from this, there must be a cultural willingness to adopt it. "A cultural system can change in respect to borrowing when the members cannot believe that the adoptions of new ideas is more advantageous

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1. Ibid., p.73.

than maintaining old customs."<sup>1</sup> In such a situation the cultural agent comes from a relatively culturally uplifted situation and effect change due to his power over the other, which could be either political, economic and even cultural.

There are other universal processes which bring about cultural change like modernization, secularization and industrialization. Initially these could be phenomena which monopolized by the west but certainly had their effects on other traditional societies. They could penetrate through cultural carriers, through dispersion of technological affluence, economic help and the kind. These are powerful changes which can also induce a chain of reactionary changes from within. For example, mechanization of agriculture does not stop at that merely, its introduction triggers a whole gamut of changes in people's attitudes to work, work ethics, and the income level giving rise to adjacent changes in style of dressing up etc.

Peter Berger approaches the relation between culture and change from yet another unique angle. His pre-eminent concern is with the effects of modernization on human consciousness. According to him, there are wide-ranging alterations in the everyday experience of people, their assumptions and convictions. He derives his orientation to mod-

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1. Ibid., p.75.



ernization from Weber "where the infrastructure of modernization is rationality".<sup>1</sup> Political institutions of society particularly the modern bureaucratic order is the primary carrier of modernization" - the institutional concomitants of a technologically induced economic growth".<sup>2</sup> Among other factors which carry the pollens of modernization is the socio-cultural pluralism in the 'city'. Pluralism, as Berger says, manifests itself in values, morality and belief systems. There is a distinguishable split in the social structure of the modern world between the public and private sphere; where the public constitutes of things like education, communication, bureaucracies etc. and private constituting activities primarily surrounding the family.

Apart from this modernization is characterized by an increasing range of 'deinstitutionalization'.<sup>3</sup> Earlier, we had defined channels of behaviour and social relationship and an overall world view which coincided with every other member of your community. Deinstitutionalization is just contrary to this, i.e. rules in discourse, social life, expectations of other, behaviour and conduct all begin to deteriorate. What could formerly be taken for granted,

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1. Robert Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, Kurzweil, Cultural Analysis, (London, 1984), p.55.
2. Ibid., p.55.
3. Ibid., p.59.

socially, now appears to be different.

Modernization brings about significant alterations in the world of believers in religion. It is more or less always accompanied by the process of secularization which he defines as "the process where sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."<sup>1</sup>

But, as we know modernity levels are differently everywhere, therefore, each place undergoes change different due to different historical experience and various kinds of cultural contact. All systems are responsive to stimuli, but the degree of this response varies depending upon the character of their prior institutional framework and historicity. Had the Aryans not come in contact with Dravidians, had the Muslims and Britishers not come, both our past and present would be knit differently.

Social change in India is a vast and complex phenomenon. M.N. Srinivas has mentioned "Sanskritization" and Westernization, which to a great extent explain features of religious, cultural and social changes in India. Both these processes can occur simultaneously, Sanskritization addressing itself to a particular set of people and westernization to a broader category. The latter is a more universal

1. Ibid., p.61.

phenomenon not confined to any particular section of Indian population.

"Sanskritization is a process whereby a "low" Hindu caste or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, "twice-born" caste."<sup>1</sup> Since caste is an all-India phenomenon, this kind of change is universal to all castes all through India. It could be possible that all castes of a particular locality share certain cultural similarities, i.e. the Brahmins and Harijans of a particular area share certain similar cultural forces, the language they speak, the festivals they celebrate, but their way of living is substantially different. The lower castes deprived of such things often emulate and imitate the high, appropriating their ways as their own. So, it is "sanskritization" which prompts a woman of a low caste to dress up like a woman of a high. This, according to Srinivas, is an "important aspect of rural social change in the 20th century."

Westernization is a process introduced by Britishers who brought with them new technology institutions, knowledge, beliefs and values. This is a kind of change

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1. M.N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, (Delhi, 1972), p.6.

which a non-western country undergoes as a result of prolonged contact with a western one. This is a process which brings about fundamental changes in old institutions, apart from introducing new areas.

"In the political and cultural field westernization has given birth not only to nationalism but also to revivalism, communalism, linguistic consciousness and regionalism".<sup>1</sup> In the first phase of westernization, the people under influence, lived their preferential life as if the western world while their domestic and social life continued largely to be traditional. This cultural schizophrenia is a phenomenon which occurs till date. Considerably, people have changed in their ways of dressing up but are unable to break away from the traditions at a personal level. Privately, they remain committed to values of their own. "The new elite had two faces, one face turned towards their own society while the other turned towards the west."<sup>2</sup> Non-modern elements co-exist with the modern ones in the social as well as the cultural level.

In his, Modernization of Indian Tradition, Y. Singh speaks of a similar process of Westernization but makes a difference between primary and secondary modernization. The

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1. Ibid., p.55.

2. Ibid., p.80.

first is the "emergence of a westernized sub-cultural pattern through a minority section of Indians who first came into contact with western culture. This includes the sub-cultures of Indian intellectuals and scholars who not only adopted many western cognitive patterns and styles of life but also supported its rapid expansion". In the second type of primary westernization there is a general diffusion of western cultural traits, dress, food, change in the habits of people. This kind of westernization was diffused among laymen as well as the upper class, among villages as well as urban people.

The categories of secondary westernization "led to radical change in the response-pattern of educated Indians to the phenomenon of westernization in orientation and ideology and now westernization meant nationalism and secularism", the universalistic legal super-structure, expansion in the system of education, new forms of politicization, new media cultural transmission, printing facilities, transport and communication."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from changes introduced from outside, there have been, as Y. Singh would call them orthogenetic process of cultural change. "We define these processes of change as orthogenetic because categories of cultural innovation that

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1. Ibid., p.93.

were sought to be introduced for such reformations were drawn from the structure of primordial tradition itself." New values and cultural theories are not imbibed from foreign systems but changes were inspired from within the system. The past changes here, but at the same time there is persistence of certain aspects of the past. As Louis Dumont writes, "at that moment the pull towards new ideas was irresistible but when native reactions come up, there develops a defence and illustration of the native culture in terms of ideas and values, partial importations combine with assertion of old themes in new forms."<sup>1</sup> For example, caste hierarchy persists in India since the Vedic age but due to orthogenetic modifications it was rendered more rigid and subject to greater non-equalitarian sanctions. Hierarchy which was primarily a functional principle was endowed with religious overtones.

Ashis Nandy in an essay of Cultural Frames for Social Transformation, speaks about the continuities of cultural products in India. According to him, "all changes can be seen, discussed and analyzed as deeper continuities - every change however enormous is only a special case of continuity".<sup>2</sup> What one can gather from such an assertion is that no

1. Louis Dumont, "Are Cultures Living Beings?", Man Series, Vol.21, No.4, 1986, p.593.
2. Ashis Nandy, "Cultural Frames for Social Transformations", Alternatives XII, 1987, p.118.

change is ever so overwhelming so as to totally erase the trace of its past existence. Cultural systems do not go in for drastic changes alienating themselves from their antecedents, they often resist massive and spectacular changes and try to recombine their existing processes rather than totally discarding them - they ingrain only those things which are acceptable to their present set of combinations. For example, as Nandy would say of the change in the Indian caste system with slight alterations as needed by contemporary India. It is through constant reinterpretation of your tradition even to give deviant and improper interpretations that you allow the cultural survival of certain cultural products. This is to say that cultural significations are addressed differently in different historical epochs, for, the people evoked are not the same set of people.

Change cannot be introduced into society from nowhere, it has to be properly and strategically introduced in places where people are most attached to: to places and feelings to which people are most sensitive to. Only then the impact of change is felt.

Since all traditional structures have undergone change in context of all different movements like modernization, sanskritization etc. the traditional religio-cultural complex of Puri could not remain immune from such changes

which was an All-India phenomenon. There are changes in the interaction between the religious and social, a kind of social and cultural metamorphosis, internal changes, in forms of economic activity, political organization, values and ideologies. There are changes in the people's attitude towards the temple, which no longer merely stands as a religious symbolism - a whole lot of other activities are associated with the temple complex. This does not imply that these changes are beyond recognition, it is capable of retaining in itself factors through which it sustains itself in the fast changing world.

Changes, which are cultural, were prompted by changes in other structures. Development in the transport system, communication and mass media, educational system, the accelerated pace of expression of ethnicity and local and regional consciousness and the fast pace of development brought about changes which were not directly cultural but had strong inclinations to change the cultural too.

Moreover, as Ashis Nandy says, since Indian society is more organized around its culture than politics, changes in culture were violently resisted than changes in the political. So, it was easier to encroach upon the political system first and then imperceptibly introduce changes into the cultural sphere rather than confront the cultural sphere directly. This would mean challenging the very existence of



the society. Keeping this in mind, the colonial rulers manipulated cultural changes via political domination, primarily in the name of development. It consequently seemed as though cultural change was the by-product of political domination.

The British from the beginning knew the strategic importance of the Jagannath temple to the people of Orissa and took care that they receive their revenue unhindered and made the most significant attempt to popularize the temple outside Orissa. The first road connection to Puri was finished in the modern sense between 1811 and 1826. This was the first attempt to connect Puri to other important places, for, it connected Bengal in the north to Puri in the south and, needless to say, the Bengalis consist of at least 70% of the tourists coming to Puri. Calcutta being central in those days, politically economically and culturally, it was important connecting Puri to Calcutta. Accordingly, this road was called "Jagannath Road" built along ancient routes. Apart from railway connections, now-a-days there are buses running from Calcutta to Puri.

Jagannath lost his position as one of biggest landlords only recently. The landed property of Jagannath lost its importance in accordance to the new agrarian policy with the abolition of large estates. This was done by the Orissa

Estate Abolition (Amendment) Act 1974 inspired by political movements and social mobilisation. Earlier, he was the biggest 'rauta' (zamindar) and all land endowments given to him by rich people would be under the control of the temple and would be leased to peasants who would pay regular rents to the temple fund.

The economic importance of the temple is not to be underplayed. It remains the main market for agricultural products, for which the temple has the largest demand. For the various offerings of the temple, it needs immense quantity of agricultural products like rice, ghee, etc. Around Puri there are a number of small villages which cater to the requirements of the temple, one village consists of potters who make the pots in which the food offered in the temple is cooked. There are various categories of people still employed in the temple who directly depend on the temple for their livelihood.

The temple administration in Puri was the most complex. Earlier, the Rajas were in charge of the temple estate and endowments and the "36 Nijoga", the 36 varieties of sebaks working within the temple. The first act enacted after independence was Shri Jagannath Temple Amendments Act in 1952 or Orissa Act XIV of 1952 which was to check mismanagement of the Temple audits and endowments by sebaks. A special officer was appointed who would submit his report

called the "Record of Rights" which give an elaborate details of the rites, rituals and ceremonies and festivals, apart from rights and duties of the pandas and priests and record of sources of the income of the temple. Further there was the Shri Jagannath Managing Committee, with the Puri raja as the Chairman and the Collector of Puri as the Vice-Chairman. This was done as an attempt to strengthen the influence of the state government in the affairs of the temple. There is the office of the Administrator who is appointed from state services and the Shri Jagannath temple Fund constituted in 1955 to keep an account of total income and its expenditure details. The bureaucratic process in the temple makes it more manageable and accountable to the public. The role of the Puri raja in the temple affairs today is a mere formality after entry of secular institutions into the complex.

The state government also is equally concerned about the maintenance of the temple complex. The little shops within the temple complex pay a rent to the Administrator. The Puri wholesale co-operative store opened a branch within the temple land in 1972, the SBI declared that the donations for Jagannath temple would be transferred to the account of the Temple Administration, free of collection of banking charges. The collection of temple donations into closed boxes have made the income of the temple proper. There is

even a bus-service under the responsibility of the administration started in 1969. It was from the beginning of the 19th century that the Raj began to create new institutions which drew much of local affairs within the framework of government institutions.

Apart from such institutional changes which are more or less accomplice to modernization there are attitudinal changes among people of the traditional society.

Education has remained the most powerful agent of modernization. Traditionally, education was given in the "mathas" or places of learning which surround the temple complex, the content of education was metaphysical and it was only the privilege of the upper caste and classes who were allowed to be educated. With the coming of the new educational system, the whole orientation and organization changed. People are no longer being trained on the basis of caste and class, new schools were set up with different syllabus other than purely a religious one. New subjects were entertained. The training earlier was to orient the students to employ them in the temple as servitors, to wisely qualify them as a priest. The possibility of choice has become broader now. A brahmin's son no longer studies to merely serve in the temple but to venture into other fields.

"Identity was passed on successively from one generation to the next. One does what one's father does, one is who one's father is and so on...."<sup>1</sup> Though a brahmin's son still becomes the one to serve in the temple but alternatives to serve in different vocations remain open. The priests have ceded much of their status and authority to temple administration and have come under a lot of pressure from government and different reformist movements. Most of them express the hope that their sons will find better jobs outside the temple. Not that they want the whole system of priesthood to collapse but think of it as rational desire to make life easier.

The power and authority of the priests have lessened in the modern days. Their serving in the temple earlier was able to give them an esteemed place in the social hierarchy. Priests today are literally pauperized leading a life with a meagre income of donations apart from the little pay that they get as temple sevaks. Their identity in the public sphere and their social status is threatened tending towards anonymity and impersonality. Their social status, when threatened, can be an explanation to their excessive orthodox and conservative attitude. They cling even more intensely to faltering traditions giving it the colour of

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1. Robert Wuthnow (ed.), Cultural Analysis, (London, 1984), p.65.

fanaticism. This remains the only exclusive way to sustain their identity in a fast homogenizing world. This could be one reason why "pandas" and "daitas" do not allow any refreshing changes and radical reformations within the temple's hierarchical structure. As Geertz mentions in his Islam observed, "they split themselves into two, living spiritually in the past and physically in the present".

In a number of ways people involved in the temple structure have tried to rework traditions into more effective forms and have tried to express their religiousness in secular activities. Secularization of attitude, however, does not indicate the complete abandonment of religious beliefs and practices. For, as we have seen, in the above case, modernity can create extremely favourable conditions for religious conservatism. Moreover, secularization in India has made cultural adjustments. Though there is a strong ongoing process of modernization and secularization, the basic core of fundamental values of religion go unaffected. Religious values are subject to diverse forms of mystification, where cultural symbols and structures of authority were re-negotiated and rendered new meanings in the changed context.

There is a degree of secularization seen in the lifestyles which are distinctly different from their traditional

lifestyle. For example, earlier Indians ate their meals sitting on the floor which was served in a particular way, at a fixed time. Though we can see the retention of these habits in one's own house, people have adjusted to reforms outside home. They would not mind now to have their food on the dining table if invited for dinner or lunch. Eating which was earlier a religious act is now transferred to the realm of the secular. Particular vegetables are not cooked in the temple kitchen till now, for they are not considered indigenous products but forbidden vegetables are consumed by all people outside the temple. Food habits as one sees have considerably secularized.

Most people now nurture a secular attitude to art forms. It would be impossible for a girl from respected family earlier to learn dancing or being trained in music, for that was traditionally associated with devadasis who were never seen as respectable women. Dance as a theory of aesthetics is fast gaining ground and can now be visualized away from the temple precincts.

Style of dressing up has been another factor which has contributed to the process of homogenization among different classes of people. As shown earlier the temple is a bastion of caste discriminations in spite of its claim to egalitarianism. However, the discrimination is not apparent outside the temple due to the universal adoption of western way of

clothing. The arrogance of brahmin priest in his traditional attire is washed away with the universal trouser and shirt becoming popular. Lifestyles change slowly and it is, therefore, not fair to expect any mechanical changes, it is only over time that they are coming to accept a loss of their identity.

Institutional changes within the temple are also seen with the religious museum called "Niladri-Bihar", which exclusively popularizes the cult apart from the temple library which contains books and magazines and pamphlets on the temple complex. Modern methods are now used to popularize traditional cultures.

Governmental undertaking of temple complex led to introduction of modern structures within the temple complex as we have seen earlier. Bureaucratization of the temple procedures, the establishment of a police-outpost within the temple precincts, appointment of state government officials as the head of the temple administration has led to the systematic and strategic inlet of the modern institutions into a place of religious conservatism. Traditional institutions attached to the temple have also undergone change. The institution of devadasis was alive till 1955, till the temple was under the administration of the Hindu king. After the takeover of the temple by the Government, the



devadasis turned to the State Academy of Music and Dance to keep the tradition of Odissi dance living.

Popular mind as in the social sciences have images of the modern world and forces that brought it into existence incorporate some notions of secularization as a process. In the whole process religious significance does not diminish but reinterpreted as religious degeneration. What is important is that this cult is not only religion, or as Ashis Nandy would explain as religion as ideology but as religion as faith. It covers a broader area than mere religious and ritualistic significance, where religion is taken a whole way of constructing one's social reality. Religion as ideology "which identifies entire populations as sub-national, national or cross national for essentially political and socio-economic interests must be contained, because this can prompt more fanaticism and fundamentalism.<sup>1</sup> It is easier to challenge and dismantle religion as ideology but not as faith for this is more encompassing and has greater impact over the minds of the people. Therefore, the average Hindu is undisturbed by change, for his faith still has not been shaken. It is not that people start to view the world and lives without the benefit of religious interpretation as Peter Berger defines of secularization, but find out ways

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1. Rustom Barucha, Question of Faith, (New Delhi, 1993), p.11.

and means to act dually: that is believe in modern institutions and make up their belief compatible with the former. Therefore, there is the existence of two individuals in one person, one a modern man and another with his religious beliefs. So, to agree with Berger, there is clearly a distinguishable split in the social structure of the modern world between the public and private sphere. The public sphere is dominated by enormous public institutions including religion and a private sphere constituted primarily by activities around the family. The individual in modern society is aware of this dichotomization and in course of daily life the individual keeps migrating back and forth between these spheres. The temple complex here is the public space and the individual confronts it as a matter of occupation and the private sphere is his personal. So, there is no linear transformation of the traditional into the modern, tradition co-exists with the modern. Individuals in modern days are no less pre-occupied with sacred occupations. New sacred constructs are being heralded in.

The whole development of the place around the temple into a city linking with other major areas has changed the face of the religious city. The earlier "mathas", (formal centres of learning) which were traditional lodging houses of people still remain but Puri has otherwise developed a number of hotels in western style which therefore caters to

a wide variety of tourists. It has developed from merely being a place of pilgrims to a cheap holiday resort. The more religious prefer to stay in religion mathas while others can live in lavish hotels.

The government is more concerned with the development of tourism and tourist resorts near to the sea-shore. The newly made marine drive which connects Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar does not touch the core of the temple city. The improper planning of houses gives no scope to change the structure of the city. The elite in India prefer to go to a place like Puri again and again without even once visiting the temple. Shopping centres which were once around temple, have now shifted to the sea-shore with the city developing faster on that side.

The forms of interaction between the high and low have changed, the traditional modes of contact were reversed. Earlier all this would happen within the temple complex, the learned men would explain the mass the complexities of the temple culture, where the dance of devadasis was integrated into musicology. Interpretations were different and the vast association of the temple were not properly explored into. Significant developments were also evident in the sphere of high and serious culture in theatre and novels. There was an extension in the range of representable and forms of representation. Modern interpretations and new

ways of looking at traditions were invented. The issues that culture earlier addressed itself to and the means by which it did so changed. Change was visible and reverberating in its effects in the transformations taking place in the ways of life of all social classes. There was the dominant social use and implementation of a new technical means of cultural production and reproduction and transmission which have considerably restructured social relations.

Modern media has the capacity to be a source of shared values to mass audiences whose needs and responses are relatively uniform. It reflects and mediates socio-cultural differences and uncovers the meaning system of which those lifestyles are a symptom. It reinforces the values and attitudes and helps in the whole process of socialization. The self and the "I" embodied in a culture is reflected and extended in its dominant forms of mass media. While portraying something other than their own an alternative social reality is constructed, the possibility of another kind of living is entertained.

These new means of communication represent major technical advancement. With the introduction of "printing-machine", the culture has received a more popular colour than ever earlier. Books, magazines on the temple culture are abundantly available. It gives an elaborate historical

details and the various legends and myths which were till yesterday alien to people and have now become more sensible literature. People have greater access to the complexities surrounding the temple. Media does not merely transmit of modern knowledge but also knowledge of traditional epics and mythology.

Writing, and spread of education as we know are measures through which the minority culture filters into the realm of the majority and more and more people citizens become a part of the community to which they did not belong till now." There is therefore a democratization of culture through the medium of what Raymond Williams, would call as "cultural producers". Extension of mass media education leads to an even distribution of all that was once considered as the exclusive domain of the high. At least people are becoming aware of the discrimination and differentiation within the temple complex. There have been a number of films made on the triad and cassettes which popularize the songs dedicated to them.

There is popularization through the traditional paintings -- "pata-chitra" which depict scenes from the Geeta Govinda. These are plastering of masks which are designed by religious motives connected with the cult of Jagannath and often been a religious character. The use of loud colours in these paintings are coincidental with the colours

that are used in the chariots of the deities. Apart from this we find "miniature deities" which carried back by tourists. Not that all buyers take the idols for an exclusively religious reason but even as mementos to be decorated in drawing rooms. Commercialization has in a way contributed to the popularization of the cult. One can therefore see the relation of the people and the religious symbol changing more so in the direction of the secular.

Mass media, such as films, radio, books and newspaper do their share to keep the cultural complex living. They do not merely popularize the cult but also reinterpret the religion in accordance to the time. The telecast of Rath Yatra on the national network brings the grandeur of the ceremony to different people, where people participate in the whole affair more closely without being physically present. Most importantly some people even prefer to watch it on the T.V., for that saves them the pain of being there in the crowd and they can view the whole ritual more clearly than what they could ever do if physically present. To most this was a religious performance while to many others it was a spectacular social gathering. To toe the lines of Barucha "by manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else yet continues to remain itself".<sup>1</sup> Many people go there

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1. Rustom Barucha, Question of Faith (Delhi, 1993), p.15.

first as spectators, for fun-trips, many other purposes other than merely religious. Moreover, the commentary on the radio and T.V. explain in detail the significance of each ritual making the whole affair more intelligible, enabling more number of people involved in it.

The political significance of the temple complex has also changed over the years. The initial association of the temple with the political was that the King of Puri was its administrative head and the temple was closely linked with the royal family. With the coming of independence and later years the use of Jagannath has changed in the realm of politics. All political parties make use of this symbol to popularize and legitimize themselves. They are extremely instrumental in viewing the temple not merely as a place of religious identity but as the source of the whole Oriya cultural texture. With this the temple complex has assumed the potential to be politically exploited. It could be and dangerously so, used the way Ram is being used by the BJP. Keeping the political tactics of the BJP in mind the temple is assuming a different kind of political significance.

At the end one can safely assume that the various changes that took place in a religious traditional culture have been explained in light in the theories explained in the first section of this chapter. Various changes were prompted due to cultural contacts with alien cultures and

cultures within India itself. Modernization and secularization which were changes in itself inspired internal changes too. Traditional structures like the caste system etc. changed with inspiration from within. Though there are changes in all aspects cultural changes is a process of selective retention. Apart from overwhelming institutional changes, attitudinal changes of the people employed within the temple complex, their relation with the cultural symbol, the interpretation of the cultural and the representation of the cultural have considerably changed, the temple has retained its basic religious identity and more so as a major cultural information of the Oriya people.



## CONCLUSION

This write-up should be considered brief as a discussion, or an assessment of the work done, the various questions that it answered and the questions that were raised in course of this work. Instead of a conclusion, it is more of an appraisal of the whole work.

One thing that is to be mentioned at the outset, is that, one is not on the look-out for an overarching theory of culture in context of which all aspects of culture can be enquired into. Since this work intended to analyze a popular culture which inhabits a particular culture area, with elements of both high and popular, tracing a religious complex as a cultural symbol, only those aspects of theories which seemed to facilitate this kind of an analysis were taken into account. The use of various theories summarized theoretically relevant summarized theoretically relevant contributions of this study. This work is primarily descriptive and analytical instead of being an answer to a series of questions.

The first chapter while discussing the notion of culture, dealing upon the semantics of the term also mentions that culture "culture-lived" rather than caging culture into aesthetics, art, music etc. The argument relies that even our ordinary modes of thinking and speaking secrete deeper

meanings. It was important, in my opinion, to go through this exercise because it made clear the manner in which culture would be used all through this endeavour. The meaning of culture for the purposes of this study has been broad, to encompass and accommodate a whole range of activities, from a way of life, to aesthetics, to journalism, fashion etc. It is primarily used to endow a particular people with an identity, where people share essentials or as Geertz, would say the core elements of a culture. Core elements are those which establish a sense of identity or even referred to as the "psyche of the members of a community". Culture, therefore, far from meaning merely proper mannerisms, eloquent behaviour and artistic excellence, is a social process which indicates a whole way of life - a particular set of code of conduct or attitudes. The general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development have not been sidelined. A brief argument of the high culturists versus the mass culturists was just to understand the importance of a culture-lived than to make it decorative. In the contested terrain of culture, the elitists have attempted to suppress and silence popular cultural practices, customs and idioms of the mass and tried to homogenize the field of cultural practices with their vision. Their blatant disregard for "popular culture", their attempt to make culture an instrument of power by making it

unavailable to most, has been soiled by people who consider culture more as a way of life.

The tensions ensued between the anthropological and sociological explanations to culture find a passive culmination in the "sociology of culture" which takes into account the pattern theory of anthropologists and the social-structure theory of sociologists. Thus, it recognizes the fact that individuals are the basic category of all social sciences whose varying modes of interactions yield to abstractions like culture. Raymond Williams' "Sociology of Culture" has informed a prime part of this study, for it enquires actively and openly into received observable relations as well as possible unobservable demonstrable relations. Culture as a distinct signifying system is seen not only as essential, but involved in all forms of social activity. Sociology of culture recurs in the following chapters, when possible contacts of culture and politics are being discussed.

Culture does not aim to achieve anything, its primary aim is "to be", to influence and to be transmitted so that it lives on. If culture is a way a social group conducts itself in public, there are ways and means through which it seeps through generations. Oral and written traditions in culture are major cultural carriers. Especially, in India, where the "*shruti*" tradition, i.e. retention of cultural

symbols through use of verbal and non-verbal practices, has been the most powerful method through which people memorize social behaviour, practices, imitate traditional gestures and enable culture to live on. Stories, fables, myths and even toys, as Barthes says, are major ways to "culturize", as socialize, children into an adult world. Oral culture is given a little preference over written culture, for the latter tends to fix and make rigid, certain ideas giving material immortality, thereby giving culture no space to change and alter when alterations require. Writing culture is disadvantageous because it is selective and most everyday practices of great cultural import often go unnoticed and remain unmentioned. The first chapter ends with an informative note trying to familiarize us with all the concepts of culture that shall be used for the whole study, trying to weave out some kind of a model in which a particular culture can be discussed.

With the first chapter as a theoretical informer, one proceeds to the second which elaborates on the concept of popular culture. Popular culture is seen as a long standing reaction against formalist culture. Popular, as meant here, is common and accessible to all categories of people; the rich as well as the poor. More than the spectacular aspects of ceremonial and ritualistic life, it enquires into the daily patterns of the common mass. The popular, is popular

by virtue of the sheer majority of people who can identify with it. With this conception of the popular, one moves to explore into a regional variant of culture woven around a sacred complex of Puri. Religion being the basis upon which Indian social life is defined, deep cultural concerns of this religious cum cultural complex is traced down. This complex is considered popular because of the variety of people who identify with it and their identification does not always entail a religious overtone. Its popularity is high because of its capacity at the appeasement of different people. To some it houses their diety, to some it gives aesthetic pleasure, where music and dance of this complex becomes part of performing traditions.

This study is not done only on observable behaviour, an understanding is sought in the connections between the organization of an Oriya family and the temple complex, the sibling relationship finding its sense in the joint family system, the man-wife relationship etc. It is a system that provides meaning and purpose for people to construct their reality and sustains within it, norms upon which the integration of Oriya society depends. Thereby, an understanding of this kind does not bypass the internal descriptions of the participants of culture. This would in words of Geertz, entail a "thick description of culture", to fail to grasp the way people grasp their specific situations, their moti-

vations, orientations etc. is to fail to understand them. Though, the core of the culture, that description which individuates it or makes it what it is, is often impossible to reach, descriptions are sought from the specific stock of interpretations and web of significations. Not to go beyond the apparent would be like mis-describing their social reality. Therefore, an attempt has been made to understand the temple, not merely as a place of religious identity, but to know why the temple exists as it does and why do people relate to it the way they do.

Objects which are chosen for veneration are practices of daily life, elevated to symbolic value. The temple stands as a symbol through which patterns of behaviour are socially acquired and transmitted. The humanization of the deity and his living like a temporal being facilitates people to relate to him informally and directly without the intermediary Brahmins. One, therefore, hears people refer to him as one refers to a friend, addressing, calling him, as one talks to people in a conversation. All this has tremendous social implications, for there is a re-enactment of common emotions felt by people within the temple. The temple, as Geertz says, is an "exemplary centre" a model for social action, an ideal towards which life outside must strive for. Myths associated with it make Jagannath not only a religious figure but a part of the sentiments of

people. In spite of the ongoing process of Hinduization of an initially tribal shrine, in spite of it being regarded as a bastion of Hindu conservatism (for one remembers the hue and cry during Indira Gandhi's desire to visit the temple) it has its popular elements. It contains within itself a ritualization of daily life of a common man of Orissa. Festivals mentioned show which relationships or segments are highlighted by specific festivals. Particular festivals like the Chandana Yatra, Rath Yatra "Lakshmi-Narayan bheta" highlight certain aspects of family life and kinship system. The culture is carried forward by unformalized unwritten body of interpretations, subject to internal variations but which can nevertheless be identified as a collective tradition since many people share it.

The chapter on culture and politics, I personally feel is central to the work. Exploring culture as a sociology of culture, it explains the various points of contact and ways of interaction between culture and politics. However, all these questions are answered in the context of three simultaneous axes:

- (1) Interaction of the two independent structures of culture and politics.
- (2) Politics in Culture.
- (3) Culture in Politics.

The first is the way culture is taken as independent, containing in it nothing but the cultural where culture would contain dance, music, literature, way of life, emotions and values and the political essentially defined in nature of the government, state authority etc. This is when the political forums makes blatant use of cultural contents. For example, During a political meeting, parties propagate particular cultural forms like a dance recital. This way both the dance form is propagated and the party gains a recognition, but each interact with each other independent of its particularities, culture portraying purely the cultural and politics purely the political meeting only at the fringes. The "culture in politics" phenomenon is not very far from the former conception. In fact, viewing broadly, the two merge somewhere. This way politics make use of certain cultural symbols to gain legitimacy and accessibility to a majority of people. It makes space for a particular culture its own. For example, in the pre-independence phase of Indian politics mostly emphasized moral aspects of politics emphasizing on the spiritualization of the same, or as now, the Gandhi *topi* or a Nehru *jacket* is almost a sign of recognition for Congress people. They have therefore developed a culture of their own to make their politics look different. Another important aspect that is suggested herein, is that, politics of particular places are cultur-



ally contextualized. All system of ideas are always placed in their true social and material context, specific kind of activities are generated within specific systems. In this light, one can see that secularism which is a political term has made queer adjustments to the Indian cultural context. In a society which is tradition oriented politics of secularism has different connotations than what it has in USA or Russia.

From this one comes to the politics in culture. There is a peculiar kind of politics operating within culture which helps it survive. It brings to light the "power" in culture to help it exist within a social milieu; to maintain its all encompassing and accommodative image. There are various structures within culture which help its growth, progress and sustenance. The capacity of culture to play its own power game, its capacity to widen its scope for protest and then resolve such conflicts that arises out of its system reflects the political within culture. Culture, therefore, has the power to weave a "devi" out of Indira Gandhi as it make a "bapu" of Gandhiji. However, political is used in a certain context in this work and the politics in culture is primarily referred to as:

- (a) The division within culture, into low/mass and high culture makes evident the power-relations between two aspects of culture. In this light, the Jagannath

culture would be referred to as a high culture due to its strong Hinduized and Brahmanical traditions, but popular because of the number of people who can trace down their life patterns to this cultural complex.

- (2) The all-pervasiveness of culture is the power of culture. The way through which culture makes itself all-pervasive and all encompassing speaks of the politics of culture. Narratives, myths, reflecting within itself the common and providing itself as a cultural informer to most people makes it so accessible. Cultural producers, which act as cultural carriers and creators, like films, books, journals etc. are ways through which culture gains popularity.
- (3) Power in culture is evident in cultural writings. Culture has its own power-brokers, own set of people to further its powerful social impact in various ways. These people control cultural symbols like texts etc. misrepresent and manipulate it to keep their status in the hierarchy intact. Cultural writers from within, or ethnographers from the "other" create and construct culture as they perceive it to be.
- (4) Ensuing of conflict, protest and resolution of conflicts have been important ways through which culture has had a powerful social existence.

However, the two phenomena politics in culture and culture in politics interact with each other in two ways. One is the more blatant way, in the obvious way, where politics makes use of culture unabashedly to gain acceptance among people. This would be the way BJP uses religious sentiments of a people and exploiting their religiosity for petty gains. The second is the not-so-obvious way, where the interaction of two is subtler and non-confrontational. Protest against power is done not in an outright manner as strikes and riots but silently through use of cultural resources like language, attitudes etc. Gossip, slandering, jokes, puns and social laughter are ways to make evident the discontent against a particular culture. So, a political activity of protest is done through the use of cultural symbols, the use being almost unconscious and unintended.

Jagannath culture has made use of the two, politics in culture and culture in politics. Narratives and myths are propagated within it to make different categories of people acceptable to it. According to the needs of time different myths are given primacy over others, the story of Bhima Bhai, or the one around Lakshmi are all expressions to accommodate the low caste and the women respectively, since the cultural system is most believed to work against the low caste and women. This way the temple maintains its influ-

ence as the most potent cultural informer of the life patterns of the people. The complex has been used unconsciously as the most potent integrating factor to instill nationalistic feelings etc. It has its own power brokers and power equations, its own way of conducting power relations. The brahmins and the high castes have successfully manipulated the whole system in favour of themselves without loosing out on the element of the popular and without disturbing their dominance over most. The popularity of the temple is maintained because apart from its religious obligations it fulfils certain secular duties, of patronizing arts, giving grants to charitable institutions. This way the whole society is organized more around its culture than its politics. Any change in the political has less resistance but a change in the cultural makes it equal to threat to life.

With this, change in a cultural oriented society is noticed in attitudes and behaviour people apart from institutions etc. Politics which is supported by state authority plays a same role as economics and scientific changes played earlier. It directs the way and nature of cultural change. The information and media system brought about significant changes in the tradition oriented society. A new basis for politics is seen where re-defining older concepts of Indianness and culture which is by nature traditional,

compatible with modern citizenship. While politicians play a creative role in mobilizing the people projecting culture in a different way, they are demolishing an ancient status system by undermining the earlier social leadership. They have consolidated their power as a group and occupied the apex of a new hierarchy. A society which had a different category of people at the head of the hierarchy have been pushed into incognito, a group which traditionally manipulated and preserved culture is now exchanged for a new group of political activists working in the arena of culture. There is an attempt to alter Indian cultural self with the impact of Westernization, modernization and sanskritization, but all these changes are brought about with a subtlety so that people do not trade off their Indianness to the west in one go. Change occurs gradually and incessantly.

The main question which needed an answer at the on-set is why did one choose to work on this project at this time?

The concern of this exercise is not exclusively cultural or political. When one asks, what is secularism in India or what are the reasons behind such feverent communalism, or on what idiom does one counter communal ideology? As is evident, these questions indicate a cultural concern. Though they are primarily political concepts, politics is not addressing to questions merely political here, one has to go beyond the realm of the political for an answer which

"could be" found in the cultural sphere. Political analysis, therefore, has led to a subtle shift in the agenda of political enquiry. If various political movements make political gains cashing in on culture, why do people identify with these various movements? How do people believe parties which make such claims? The answer to both the questions is in the fact that this society is more organized around its culture than its politics. Any threat to culture is, therefore, considered as threat to the self. Keeping this in mind all structures use culture as an easy way to gain legitimacy.

Since, in India, culture is hardly defined away from the religious, everything cultural has a strong flavour of the religious. Religious complexes and religious figures have immense impact on the psyche of all people. They are considered the model to conduct life upon, mostly in the model of God, so the virtues of Rama and the bravery of Lakshman is considered essential for a fulfilling life. Moreover, as Nandy has argued, religion is not only "religion as ideology", it is religion as faith. It is a repository of sentiments and attitudes of people, every act and utterance in daily life has a religious connotation starting from bathing to begging. The west could do away with this blatant civil use of religion because there were powerful institutions which could prove as an alternative to reli-

gious culture.

Dismantling of religion was attempted but without much gain, for our concept of secularism enhanced religiosity keeping religion in constant play. But, the only way to tackle this kind of religion which is more of a cultural system, a social force, is not an outright confrontation with religious values. This might even rage into a stronger religious fervor. Secondly, as both K.N. Panikkar and Nandy argue, the nature of socialization is a crucial element in making up cultural perspectives and identities. Primary socialization within the confines of family tended to instil religiosity. Peer groups and the public space accepted such things as cultural norms. Since, our society was powerfully organized around the culture, any attempt to change culture was strongly resisted, while the political made a headlong entry into the western framework. So, the backward elements in cultural space remained while political space had accepted the norms of the West. Since, people could be more appeased through the cultural, the politics now has to be explained in cultural terms than vice-versa. There is in India, therefore, an uneasy mix of the western political and the indigenous cultural.

Two things need to be mentioned here:

(i) Politics of place is culturally contextualized,

(ii) both culture and politics make use of each other to gain ascendancy over the people.

Even Marxists like Gramsci, Raymond Willinas understand the relevance of the cultural matrix in politics of a place. So when Gramsci says, "socialist revolutions are a product of long, complex, molecular transformations of mass consciousness and cultural emancipation of popular masses. it brings forth the fact that socio-cultural dimensions are inducted into the super-structure and are potential in process of transformation. Moving further on this, one arrives at a conclusion that politics of particular place is closely intertwined with culture, so politics today operates to create an identity which has cultural undertones. This can be referred to a "politics of identity"; the Sikhs of Punjab tried to create politically a cultural identity of a people utilizing a religious symbol. This could also be true of the Germans who played on the politics of identity, trying to create a political identity through cultural methods. This is different from "politics of interest", whereby, political parties play a game to acquire more profits for themselves. The BJP kind of politics utilizes both the concepts, i.e. they effectively play their card of politics of interest masquerading it in the name of politics of identity, when they say their aim today is to maintain a cultural identity. This group has all rights to perform and



act in consonance with their culture till their assertions do not go against other co-existing groups of their society.

What one gathers out of this, is that the Jagannath culture too, has such widespread implications. It is as mentioned, not merely a religious entity, it is more of a cultural informer, conditioning the life patterns of a people of a particular region giving it a different cultural identity. It has within itself the capacity to weave out its own "politics of identity" and has within itself the potential of being used and dangerously so, as BJP uses Ram. The significance of this representation could change over time. Religiosity of people has remained unaffected by modern and technological developments and whenever people have problems to directly refer to something as religious, they use the cover of the cultural.

The romanticization of the cult through syncretism and synthesis is not the goal of this work. The popularity of this cult primarily remains due to two things:

(a) The various categories of people who identify with and relate to it.

(b) Dharma or the religious sentiments of the people woven around this complex is another important factor of its popularity.

But, as we have seen, culture changes over time, there could be a transformation of the status of the people working in the complex. The involvement of the various kind of people, mostly non-Brahmins could be marginalized by the Brahmins or vice-versa. This would lead to changes in the attitude of the people, one at the identity level, where they would no longer be able to relate to the diety or even in the sphere of dharma, where people would stop relating to it at a religious level. These are questions that have been left unanswered.

No assessment is complete, till it is able to raise questions for further work. There have been a number of questions that have remain untouched or marginally tampered with in course. For example, does cultural pluralism (as is found in India) mean an outright confrontation against forces of homogenization? Does this kind of an assertion lead to disturbing the collective identity of a nation as a political unit? Should or should not one's group culture be de-emphasized and assimilation be required? These questions could be theoretically dealt upon as they are most relevant to a place like India and primarily in the modern political context. There were a number of questions regarding the Jagannath culture which remain untouched. It is important to seek whether there has been any homogenising effect on this regional culture with the ongoing process of Hinduiza-

tion? Does Pan-Indian Hinduism make attempts at encompassing this popular culture? How do popular and high culture interact?

Taking the time constraints and space-constraints into consideration, these questions which certainly needed extensive discussion remain unanswered or schematically answered. Questions of this kind need to be dealt and explored independently and it was impossible to cater to so many questions in a work of this kind. Moreover, some of these questions required proper empirical study which was not possible in course of this work. But, however cultural studies remain a powerful method of social analysis as it has the potential to provide solutions to problems arising away from the cultural grid.

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