

Caste and Community Decision-Making Process : Case Study of An Orissa Village

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

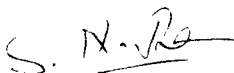
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D E C L A R A T I O N

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Caste and Community Decision-Making Process : Case Study of an Orissa Village" submitted by Premananda Khuntia for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) is his original work to the best of our knowledge and has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University.

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


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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To My Beloved

FATHER

MOTHER

ARJUN BHAI

&

BHIM BHAI

CHAPTER - I

ABOUT THE STUDY

India, after long years of colonial rule opted for democracy, secularism and planned development. All these programmes which are still in operation and directed towards the socio-economic changes in the country have their own achievements as well as failures. When one examines both achievements and failures, particularly the working of democracy in Indian States, one does feel a bit pessimistic about the democratic future of India. At the same time, however, one cannot ignore the fact that substantial change has occurred during the last decades in a society which was in a state of near 'stagnation'¹ for the past two centuries. For whatever the worth, it deserves to be examined.

Village socio-political systems, however, have registered changes as a result of the operation as well as the working of the planned development programmes of change. The phenomenon of political change in rural India itself has been an area of research interest for a number of social scientists. Such studies needed to indicate the direction, quantum and adequacy of change which have occurred in the Indian villages. An ideal solution would be to undertake a study of a village political change particularly the making of

1. For details see A.H. Somjee, (1971), Democracy and Political change in Village India, Orient Longman Publication, New Delhi pp- (IX).

decisions at the community level.

This dissertation is an attempt on a microscopic scale, in that direction of a village in Orissa. The generalizations and conclusions, no doubt, are valid and applicable for the small universe under investigation. They are by means typical to that village, but the emphasis and the need of the work may also be seen elsewhere.

To say few words, it is a fact that not many will dispute that the contemporary Indian politics and society are passing through a period of transition. While it is very difficult to speak of the specific directions of the change, what we can do at this stage is to merely identify the forces at work in the transition and try to grasp the nature and extent of change, the working of the newly introduced democratic procedures, the changes in the social, economic and the subsequent spontaneous changes in other fields wherever they are observable. The traditional socio-political structure which remained at a stage of near 'stagnation' for centuries now has interacted with the forces released by a host of factors. The rapid growth of education, improved means of communication, increased rationalized structure of administration, industrialization, employment scope, economic development and the universal adult suffrages with the newly established democratic procedures ideals and institutions have played vital roles. Above all the socio-economic changes brought into the Indian society by the planned development programmes, democracy,

secularism, medias brought the subsequent changes in Indian political system. They have, infact, directly or indirectly questioned the traditional and status oriented privileges which lie at the root of the Indian structure. One of the most important and perhaps a direct consequence of great significance observable is some kind of loosening up of the conventionally established political authority-relationship on the one hand and the awareness that public policy decisions can be influenced on the other. This is as evident in most part of India is clearly observable concerning the welfare of a small community of Kangeilo the village which has been studied.

The main contention and concern in this dissertation is the operation of a democratic political system in the village itself. It is our contention that the changes in the socio-economic and political life of the village have induced reactions in the various aspects of political life of the community; especially in the field of the decision-making at the village level. However, the post-independence developments triggered off a series of processes which materially altered the distribution of power in that community and the emergence and demonstration of the collective authority in the village expressed through the newly constituted village council. Subsequently, the reaction in the social system and the role of caste in the decision-making process of the community have been examined.

The Coverage

The first Chapter of this dissertation is confined to the introduction i.e. about the study. At the outset a brief history of rural India and the post-independence changes in the villages is sketched. The aim of the study, the coverage and the methodology of the study is also mentioned in the introduction.

Chapter two describes the village setting in detail. Situation of the village, its size, population composition, housing pattern, communication facilities and amenities are given as clearly as possible. Some peculiar characteristics with their impact on the village life observed about the village are noted in this chapter. The ethnic segmentation of the whole village, the major caste groups and tribes inhabited, their occupation, association the definite association, interaction, intercourse and interdependence of the major caste groups of the village have also been outlined. Besides that, some aspects of socio-economic ties and interdependent relationship overthrown by caste barrier and the established relationships running across the village have been narrated clearly.

Chapter three explains in detail the political system of the village. The structure and functions of the traditional village authority, the newly constituted 'Gaon Desh', its evolution, membership, tenure, powers and functions,

various theories of decision-making, the decision-making process at caste, locality and village level, etc. have been analysed in this chapter. Besides that, group dynamics and the collective nature of the authority of the 'Gaon Desh', the sanctions behind its decision-making, the cohesiveness in the village and the character of collective dominance of different caste-groups² have also been examined in detail in this chapter.

Chapter four summarizes the study. The changes in the socio-economic life of the entire village, the changed nature of decision making process at the village have been assessed in the summary. Finally, some conclusions based on this study have been drawn. On the whole the cohesive nature of the village has been emphasized.

In Appendix I, some cases of decision-making observed in the village council have been analysed with the assessment of their importance to the Community, as a whole. Appendix II contains the translation of the rules, regulations adopted by the 'Gaon Desh' which have been collected from the proceeding books I & II.

In recent years the related literature on the concept of decision-making and the theories of decision-

2. The nature of collective dominance of caste groups in decision-making process of the village level has been given in Appendix-I with detailed analysis.

making power has drawn the attention of many scholars and social-scientists. The importance of the topic is such that Brunoleoni speaks of that modern man is redefined as the decision-making animal rather than the social or political animal. A lot of research work on this subject have been done in Western countries as well as in India also. Most of the western scholars on the subject have spent their whole time and energy on sophisticated decisional models and the choice behaviour of man.

But the contribution of Indian writers to this field largely skirt the theoretical domain which lies in the area of management of enterprise, defence strategies and others. Writers like Rathi Sawhney (1969), Dilhip Mukherjee (1969) on defence, S. Chakraverty (1960) on class of simple decision models, H.K. Paranjape on Planning, Bhambri (1963) on Cabinet making, Subramaniam on the facts and value in decision-making, Desai on techniques of decision-making and S. Jaynathana (1967) on decision-making in family are most important ones. Nobody has attempted the study of decision-making process at the village-community level which we think will be very interesting to take up. However, the limitations of the study cannot be ignored.

Methodology

This study is based on the method of participant-observation and interview. Firsthand knowledge about the village, the people, their activity on community life have been investigated. An attempt also have been made to study the people's choice behaviour on political activities with special emphasis on the decision-making or its process at the community level. The meetings which is a regular feature in the village has enabled us to investigate the community. However, the study is limited to a village in rural Orissa the conclusions of which may or may not be applicable to other villages in India. The data collection and observation were made during the year 1985-87 and the use of governmental data has not been entirely relied upon.

Finally, the village selected for study has been chosen for some interesting reasons. Firstly, the village is becoming important because of the united nature of the villagers and the successful working of the village council which is not under the Statutory Panchayats introduced by the government of Orissa. Secondly, because of my personal contact and relationship with the active members of the council and good communication. And last but not the least, the peculiar nature of the village, her people and the community with which I was constantly in touch in this area inspired me to work.

CHAPTER - IIVILLAGE KANGEILO : SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Setting : The village of Kangeilo is located in the Kamakshyanagar Tehsil of the district of Dhenkamal in Central Orissa. A small river Ramiala runs west to east and the village is situated between the river and a mountain in the south. In the west a small hillock separates the village from the neighbouring village Pippla. From the foot of the mountain in south, the village is covered with green trees, when one sees the village from a distance on the hillock, it presents a smiling face almost surrounded by sugarcane fields with green foliage at any time of the year. The village settlement has two parallel lines of houses with a wide road in between. Behind the two lines of houses with mud walls and hay roofs, small and big trees of mango, cocoanuts and jackfruit are seen in almost every house. A little bit away from the village and on the bank of the river Ramiala are the grooves of mango and jackfruit valued for their produce and the shade they provide in summer.

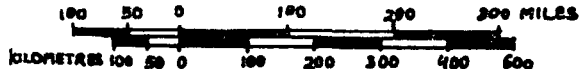
Kangeilo is connected by a metalled road of 11 KM long to Mahulpal, a village on the way between the district and subdivision headquarters. Kamakshyanagar

LOCATION OF
ORISSA

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DHENKANAL

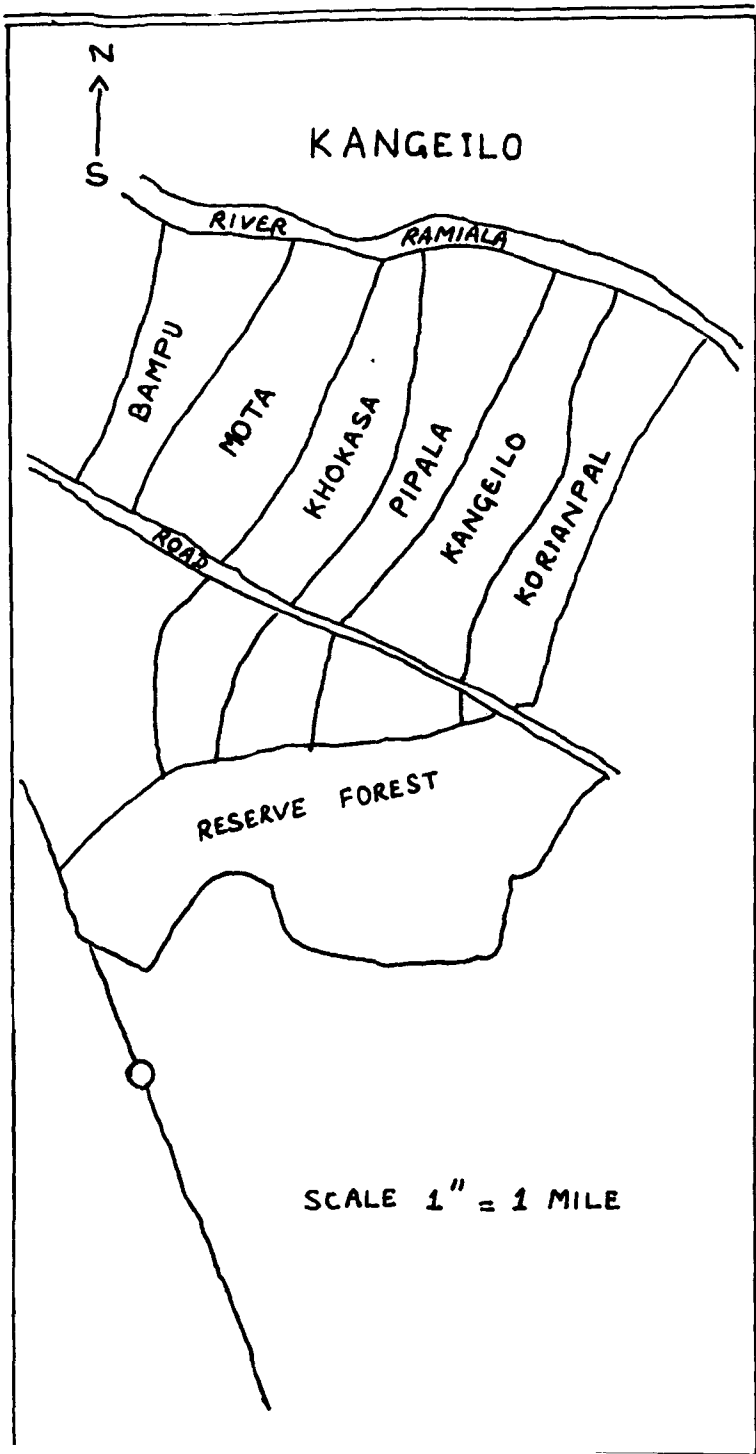


the subdivisional headquarter with the main communication point to other important places of Orissa is a small town and nearest to the village. The village has two straight lines of houses of one Kilometer long, the road of which joins the metalled road at a point to Kamakshyanagar.

During Summer there is a path way directly from the village to join the main road in north about 5KM after crossing the river. But during the Rainy season, the traveller must have to go 11 KM round, following the metalled road which leaves the village and joins Kamakshyanagar-Dhenkanal road near Mahulpal. To the north a cart-track leads through the paddy fields and crosses the river on the way to Kamakshyanagar.

History of the Village :

The earliest history of the village is not known. The people of the village trace the origin of the present village settlement upto 50 years. About 300 years ago, the original village was settled closer to the river on the bank of a narrow tributary which flows from the mountain and joins the river. It is believed that present settlement of the village which is quite closer to the hillock was a result of the constant and quick floods caused by the river as well as the tributary. The older people say that during the Rainy season when the water flows down the mountain the houses, bullocks, carts as well as the people



were flown by the speedy water and thus the inconvenience forced the people to shift to the present settlement.

The physical setting of the village and the housing patterns provide a marked distinction from other neighbouring villages. The type and position of the village provide an insight into the planned settlement of the villagers. The houses of the village seem to nucleate into a single cluster located along a single street. The oldest surviving member of the village remembers the planning of the present village and says that the whole plan was drawn by a single man of the village, ... the bhoomipujan was done communally and the thread used in chalking out the plan was single one. The road in between the two lines of houses was a wide one which distinguishes the village from other villages. Besides the main settlement, there is another small settlement, a small street of the Sabaras.¹ In the middle of the village, there is a small community hall, a well and three chauparis. The space for the community hall was provided during the plan. There is a small temple of Lord Radhakrishna at the south end of the village. The houses are built in such a manner

1. Originally an wandering forest tribe but are settled now.

that one can notice a barber cutting the hair of a man on the veranda of the house in one and from the veranda of the other end. Most of the houses have mud walls with thatched roof of the same height. Of course, now a days some people have started building pucca houses in between the lines.

Socio-economic Characteristics :

Population : Kangeilo is one of the medium sized villages with an area of 690 acres and 111 occupied residential units. According to an unofficial census taken in January 1987, the population of the village is 1215 out of which the Sabaras are 165 in number. It is a multicasite village in which people of all castes are staying in the same street except the Sabaras who have a different settlement because of their low status. Among the other castes are the Khandayats, Gauras (Milkman), Telis (Oilmen), Bhandaris (Barbers), Gurias (Sweet-makers), Tantis (Weavers) and Kamar (Black Smith) families. These are the common castes in the state of Orissa and are found in almost every village.

Ammenities : The village has five ponds which are used for bathing, watering cattles and fishing. The river Ramiala is also used for this purpose.

For drinking water, most of the families have wells behind their houses. There are also two wells which are owned communally by the people. The Sabaras have their own well and a tube well dug by the government. In the village most of the people have dug wells in midst of their crop fields which are financed by the agricultural branch of the State Bank of India. There are 40 or more such wells in the village. The village is electrified as a result of which some pumps are their for irrigation purpose. People also use the ponds and other resources for irrigation purpose.

The village of Kangeilo comes under the Dhenkanal educational district and has an Upper Primary School, a Middle English School and a High School which is newly constructed. The medium of instruction in these schools is Oriya. The people of the village repair the school walls and the roof every year. Besides, the village youth have a club and a community hall of their own. Some governmental facilities are also available in the village. For advising and assisting on agricultural matters a 'Gram Sevak' is appointed for the village. An electrician is also stationed in the village and two health workers (a nurse and a village health worker) are appointed for the village. Some farmers are the members of the 'Pallisrota Mandal' and prize winners by the district Agricultural Office. Bank Officers, Agricultural Officers, Project Officers,

Health Officers and the Administrative Officers like the Block Development Officer, Sub-Divisional Officer and Panchayat Officers are the frequent visitors to the village.

Recently the village has been the point of attraction of the Governmental authorities because of a lot of developments in the village. Firstly, there has been a lot of development in the field of agriculture in the village. Being financed by the banks, the farmers of the village have used hybrid seeds, manures and pesticides, dug many wells, set pumps and as a result of which the production of paddy, sugar-cane and cash crops have been doubled. Some of the farmers of the village have been given prizes at the district level for their outstanding produce. Thus the district agriculture office has declared the village as the Adersa Gram². Secondly, since long the villagers have preserved a patch of jungle with valuable woods. Regularly, the jungle is being guarded and the people who destroy the jungle are being challenged by the villagers. This shows the sense of awareness of the people for afforestation.

Thirdly, the working of the village organization as the organ of administration in the village has lessened

2. Model Village.

the occurrence of crimes in the Thana or Court. No sort of crime, theft or quarrel is reported from the village. Fourthly, the village is also declared as one of the Savings Villages³ in Orissa. Fifthly, the display of community sentiment, communal harmony in work has attracted the officials attention to the village. The villager's own attempt to dig a pond and to build a dam to avoid drought for long days has drawn the attention of District Collector to the village who granted monetary help in recognition of their work.

Salient Features of the Village :

Importance of Agriculture :

Agriculture is the primary source of income and means of livelihood for the people of the village. The year is divided into two sowing seasons. During the rainy season between July and September paddy, maize, millets, pulses and in winter months, vegetables, gram and peas are grown. Sugarcane, the main commercial crop, is sown in the months of April and May. The land is very fertile and the climatic conditions are favourable for the production of a variety of crops like groundnuts, mustard, oilseeds and vegetables. The staple food of the people are rice, vegetables and dal.

3. The Village which shows some fixed amount of postal deposits is declared to be a Savings Village.

The value of land in an agricultural economy should be fully appreciated to understand correctly the nature of intergroup relations and communal harmony in Kangeilo. Though 90% of the land is owned by a single caste called Khandayats, no doubt, agriculture is a major source of livelihood for the majority of the villagers. It is a symbol of material security and well-being. The purchase of land is a matter of prestige while selling of it is a sign of poverty.

Since most of the rainfall comes in less than five months, the need for agricultural activity in the dry months becomes a serious problem for the people. Water from wells and ponds filled during the rainy months is used for irrigation. A great deal of the villager's time, effort and money is spent and consumed by these activities. Thus nearly everyone in Kangeilo is engaged in agricultural activities, whether directly as landowner or as wage earner, artisan who supply tools to the agriculturists or daily workers. The whole village is seen in action during the working season. Even those who do not have land or who do not cultivate land such as the domestic servant, the daily wage earners and landless labourers, generally depend for their existence upon the village produce. Payment for services is usually made in kind and occasionally

in cash. Such receipts are spent upon the commodities grown or made in the village.

Power Structure :

The behaviour, constitution, function and dynamics of power in the village is intimately related to the distribution of land. Usually, "village contains within itself many power groups which are not inter-connected but display an amazing degree of fluidity"⁴ Characteristically organised around the group leader, a power group often in turn serves as a nucleus for larger groups. But these ^{sub groups} within the larger groups have an identity of their own. These groups are in fact the caste groups having their own identity. No significant action can be effected at the village level without the sanction of one or more of the power groups in the village. Kangeilo has a number of such groups based on caste although no single group is in a position to dominate the process of decision-making, except the central authority which is in the hands of village council. The village council which is newly constituted since 8 years is the most important organ of the village.

Before it was constituted after Independence, the village council was dominated by a single man who

4. K.K.Singh, 1967. Patterns of Caste Tension, Asia Publishing House, Bombay. (pp.14).

was appointed by the district authorities. He was the wealthiest man of the village and the village administration was patronised by him and his family. The other caste people had no say in the village affairs. But with the growing socio-economic and political conditions of the villagers due to education, legislation and awakening, the administrative power of the village has no longer remained in the hands of the traditional authority, it has passed into the hands of the village council in 1979. The council is successfully utilising the authority bestowed on it.

Social Structure:

Kangeilo is a multi-caste village with Hinduism as the only religion. Together the caste-groups form an agricultural community. The different caste people are living in the same village in a smooth and harmonious way. There is mutual cooperation as well as smooth inter-caste relation. The social structure of the village of Kangeilo is such that it represents itself as a well knit social organization of the different heterogenous caste groups.

Peculiarities of the Village :

Before going into the details of the village affairs, we must keep in mind some of the interesting

characteristics of the village Kangeilo which are not usually found in any other village of the state. They are peculiar in their own way and interesting and unique in style of the village. They have drawn our attention during the field study and are peculiar in observation.

The most interesting characteristics is the deep sense of the unity in the village. There is interesting harmony among different caste groups. The varieties of caste people interact with each other quite smoothly and in the history of the village, hardly any incident of caste war or caste conflict involving two or more castes have taken place. The villagers have respected each others rituals and participated in each others happiness and sorrows. They have cherished sense of oneness among themselves. They consider any problem in the village as a common concern and try to solve it. This sense of unity is expressed in the participation of the people in large numbers to provide either/physical or mental support in the activities and the meeting of the village. Several instances of digging of ponds, constructing dam or building a High School and contributing to the village funds with much interest are noteworthy.

Another interesting fact of such a kind is the interdependence of the villagers upon each other. The landless people and the landowning people depend upon

status of higher and lower kind. This is unique in its kind in the village and helps the villagers in carrying out the problematic affairs very smoothly.

Kangeilo has a village constitution which was drawn by some educated people of the village and is a written one. All sorts of procedural matters, jurisdictions, tenure and membership of the village authorities are mentioned. The constitution was drawn in 1979 and is an expression of the people of the village as stated in the Proceeding book I of the village.⁶ This constitution of the village has enabled the smooth working by providing a village council called 'Gaon Desha' constituted of three committees. This is certainly unique feature of the village which is not found in any other village.

Physical isolation of the village during the rainy season of the year from the outer world has created another interesting thing in the life of the villagers. During the rainy season the whole village is blocked from all sides except a muddy metalled road to Kamakshyanagar the nearest commercial centre. As a result of which the vegetables, curd, ghee, milk and other perishable items market is closed and the sellers heavily depend upon the villagers for the disposal of

6. The Constitution of the Gaon Desha has been given in Appendix - II.

each other to a great extent. Where as the landless people depend upon the landowning people for their daily bread, the landowningⁿ people exclusively depend upon the other villagers for their necessary and valuable help in performing the agricultural works. Thus the villagers produce the entire production of the village for themselves and are paid in terms of cash and kind as wage, loan etc. The poor people heavily or exclusively depend upon the villagers for their sustenance upon the village in natural and occasional calamities. They live on the village work as well as on the village produce.

The typical village culture of Kangeilo is represented in the relationship which is flourishing in the village. The institutions of 'Bhagachasi', 'Surya Bandhu', 'Maitra'⁵ and landlords-tenant relationships are noticed in the village. These are some peculiar relationships which are present in the village and has virtually bound the villagers into a chain or bond of relationship with each other. This relationship has cut across the difference of caste, wealth and

5. Bhagachasi is partnership in agriculture.

Surya Bandhu is the relationship in which one establishes a relationship of dharam-bap, dharam-maa or dharam-bhai. Here one accepts the other as his father or mother even though his own father is alive and so on irrespective of caste.

Maitra is a much intimate relationship between two men and some times with their family.

their items. The seller has to go house-to-house and to solicit buyers. In such a situation in some cases the villagers buy the items on the basis of moral and mutual relationship. This is because of the peculiar relationship of the landowning and landless villagers of Kangeilo.

Last, but not the least of the peculiarity of the village is really a peculiarity in its real sense. Though it may look absurd and unscientific to the reader, it has some truth on the villagers life, that is the tremendous faith on God of the villagers. The villagers are the Hindus. That is why, they speak of the 'Jianta Thakura' or the 'living God'. Some typical incidents⁷ have spread in the minds of the villagers. They hardly tell a lie in the presence of the statue of Lord Radha-Krishna or by touching the statue. The

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7. In one of the theft incidents Nath Barik a herdsman fetched the mil ch cow of another. When he was asked to swear in the name of village God Radhkrishana he swore even though he had fetched the milk from other's cow. It is said that after swearing, he died on that very day. In another incident a man likewise got his house ravedged by fire by telling lie. Lambodhar Khuntia who put fire into others roof confessed his guilty when he was asked to touch the statue. The villagers hesitate to lie only in case of the village interest because before the formation of the Gaon Desh, they have sworn in the name of the God. However, they might be speaking lie in other activities of their life.

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villagers oath in the name of God keep up the village unity at any cost and rarely allows them to breach the village constitution. To them to breach the law means to be a traitor against the God and mankind.

Major Caste Groups :

Caste covers the entire gamut of Indian social organization. There is hardly any aspect of Indian society which is not influenced by caste. Therefore it would perhaps not be an exaggeration if we say of caste in India what Kingsley Davis called the "folkways in all societies".⁸ It has a long history. Historians, Indologists and other social scientists are not agreed on its origin. However they agree that, caste in one or other form is associated with Indian society. The relation between the caste and Indian society has been so long or so intimate that scholars like M.N. Srinivas⁹ have wondered whether it would be possible to visualise Indian society without caste. Andra Beteille¹⁰ is also of the opinion that the division of the village into a

8. Kingsley, Davis, 1959, "The Nature of Human Society", New York pp.58.

9. M.N. Srinivas, 1962, Caste in Modern India, and other Essays. Asia Publishing House, Bombay, p. 3.

10. A. Beteille, 1962, Caste Class and Power, California University Press, California, p. 48.

number of castes constitutes one of the most fundamental features of its social structure. According to him in Hindu society caste divisions play both in actual social interactions and in the ideal scheme of values. Members of the different castes are upto a point expected to behave differently and to have different values and ideals".

The term caste itself needs some discussion. It has been used to mean different through by different people in a variety of situations. Sometimes by caste people mean a small or more or less localised group, at other times the same word is used to refer to a collection of such groups.

The English word 'Caste' corresponds more or less closely to what is locally called as 'Jati'. Besides this, many of the people are familiar with the concept of 'Varna' also. Normally the two terms are quite different but the distinction is not consistently maintained. Usually, Varna refer to the four main categories into which the whole Hindu society is traditionally divided, like Brahmana, Kshatrya, Vaisya and Shudra. But on the other hand Jati is referred as a much smaller group as Srinivas says "The use of Jati is synonymous with the word caste." ¹¹

Definition of Caste : To begin with some definitions of caste, Srinivas writes that "caste is a hereditary, endoga-

11. M.N. Srinivas, Ibid. p. 62-69.

mous, usually localised group having an association with a hereditary occupation, and particularly in the local hierarchy of castes".¹² Beteille also defines it as a " a small and named group of persons, characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which some times includes pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierachies system".¹³ His definition is somewhat similar to that of M.N. Srinivas. Another celebrated writer Louis Dumont says that the caste system divides the whole society into a large number of hereditary groups, distinguished from one another and connected together by three characteristics : Separation in the matters of marriage and conduct and contact whether direct or indirect (food); division of labour, each group having been, in theory or tradition a profession from which their members can depart only within certain units, and finally hierarchy, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another."¹⁴ Thus if we analyse these definitions, it indicates that the caste system gives to Hindu society a segmentary character.

12. Ibid. p. 63-69.

13. A. Beteille, Op. Cit. p. 46.

14. L. Dumont, 1966, Homo Hierarchies, Paris, pp.

"a caste group can not be considered as a self-contained whole → as a society in itself but only as a segmentary, or structural group in the entire system".¹⁵

In terms of these definitions, we see that the entire population of the village Kangeilo is divided into 8 large number of castes or locally called Jati's, each having a certain measure of autonomy. These are Khandayats, Gauras (Milkmen), Telis (Oilmen), Gurias (Sweet makers), Sabaras, Bhanaries, Talties and Kamaras. The hierarchical gradation of these castes is fast changing and modified. Numerically, the castes in the village can be graded as Khandayats, Gauras, Sabaras. These are the three influential caste groups which reside in the village. The other caste people are less in number and are merged on the village politics. They support or oppose the three major caste groups in case of the village politics but their influence is negligible. Before going into the details of the village politics, let me discuss the major caste groups' occupation, rituals and living style in the village.

Khandayats : Numerically the Khandayats are the largest single caste in the village. The total population of the Khandayats in the village is 654. There are nearly 80 families. This number is more than half of the total popula-

15. C.F. Dumont quoted in Beteille, Op. Cit. p. 46-47.

tion of the village and three times to that of the Gauras and four times to that of the Sabaras. Infact the village is called as a Khandayat village in the sourrounding area because they are the oldest inhabitants and much more in number in comparison to the other castes in the village.¹⁶

Politically the Khandayats are the most important and are in important leadership position in the village in political, cultural and other spheres. Many decades ago, the village had a committee.¹⁶ Most of its members were Khandayats. Their influence in the traditional village committee was decisive. They own nearly 4/5th of the total land of the village. Almost all Khandayat family owns a piece of land. Some of the Khandayat families are the big landlords. Youngmen from these families are well educated and hold government jobs with good connections with government officers in nearby Kamakhyanagar sub-division. There are two Khandayat families whose social status is claimed to be high because they have large estate of land and their sons are educated with governmental jobs. They have pucca buildings and a large number of cattle heads, pump-sets and servants who work in their fields. The members of these families discuss the affairs of the village and their voices command respect.

16. The members of this committee were the influential people of the village nominated by the sub-divisional authorities. One of them was called the Chairman of the school who use to grant leave to the school teachers. All programmes in the school were recommended by him.

The Khandayats in the village have a traditional 'caste council' which is connected with the 'caste association'¹⁷ of the region. Whenever there is a problem relating to the Khandayats, the case is considered by this caste council like the marriage procedure, feast and other inter-caste problems. Usually the older members of this caste are the members of the caste council who decide all problems relating to their caste. They also decide any problem regarding the inter-caste marriage and any occupation adopted by any of their member which lowers their caste status in the village. Besides this, some time the lower caste families bring issues to the council of the Khandayats, if they are not satisfied by their own leaders. This practice in the village is called "Bhadra Lok" or calling the gentlemen, for solving the problem.

The leaders and members of this caste are respected by other caste people in the village. They have developed leadership qualities which help in solving many difficult problems in the village. It is said by other village people that, Durjyodhan Khuntia, Brajabandhu Khuntia, Nrusingha Swain, Prahallad Samal, Vinod Samal, Prasanna Samal have great skill in settling the disputes in the village among the families as well as of the village. They have tremendous art of mobilising and convincing the people in

17. The association is called Khandayat Mahasabha or Khandayat Jati Sabha.

peaceful manners. In 1981 they took great pains to understand the disputes that involved the whole village community. They were able to bring about a fruitful solution which resulted in a new type of political organisation in the village. It is said that since this initiative for the village welfare, not a single dispute of any kind has been taken out of the village and no law suit has been filed in any court.

Gauras :

The second major caste group in the village is that of the Gauras. The total number of the Gaura families is 35 and the population is 225. They all live in big kuchha houses and have no big land estates. Some of the families hold small plots of lands of one acre or two. Most of the Gauras live on livestock. They have cows and buffalows as their property. Others who do not have anything, work as 'Kothias'¹⁸ or casual labourers for other castes. One of the important sources of ^{income of} most of the Gaura families is their traditional occupation of herding the cattle of other people along with their own. This contract is made annually for which they are paid in kind or often in cash.

18. Kothias are the domestic servants.

As far as their traditional occupation goes, they do cattle herding and diarying. Few of them have bullocks and cart but they do not have a piece of land to cultivate as a result of which they work with other people as partners in agriculture those who have excess land. These days some Gaura young men are going out of the village to work in the nearby National Aluminium Corporation Plant and commercial towns of Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Talcher and work as daily labourers in godowns, mills etc. The number of such workers are few as compared to their vast population. The most important source of their livelihood is diarying.

They live alongwith other caste people the village occupying the south end in both the lines except a few Khandayat, Tanti and Barber houses in between. The Gauras have a Kotha Ghar a place where the God resides, in which they assemble for discussion on the caste rituals and many more problems relating to their caste. This is the place where they use to learn dance and art of stick-fighting which they perform every year during the Dola days. This festival is in relation to Lord Krishna, which is traditionally associated with their occupation. As compared to the Khandayats, the Gauras have little influence in the village political affairs. The leader

Jagabandhu Barik was educated in Chatsali¹⁹ and had little voice in the village in those days. He was basically their caste-leader performing the rituals of caste like settling disputes among fellow caste-men, marriage and securing livelihood for the old who are without any support.

These are some of the factors that have hampered their aspiration to have a large share in the village affairs. Firstly, in terms of landholding, they have not much of land at their disposal. Secondly, in matters of education the Gauras are backward. Thirdly, in terms of caste hierarchy, they come next to the Khandayats in the village. And lastly, perhaps it is their traditional relationship with the "cattle and stick"²⁰, that has branded them as backward and has become an obstacle.

But, these days the Gaura families have become conscious of their own power and position. Some Gaura youngmen have raised their family status in the village. They have improved their economic condition by earning money. They are now more united and are trying to be a single group with much physical force. They are

19. Chatsali is the stage of pre-schooling.

20. Since they herd cattle they usually carry a stick with them.

trying to get recognition in the village politics.

Sabaras :

The third major population in the village is that of the Sabaras. They are very common in the state of Orissa and one finds them in large numbers in the district of Ganjam, Dhenkanal and Koraput. Originally the Sabaras are a forest tribe whose main occupation was hunting and food gathering. They were wanderers in the forests, collecting fruits and roots for their day today life. Their habit of carrying an axe has named them Sabaras.

In the part IX of the Schedule to the scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes lists (modification) order 1956 relation to the state of Orissa, entry 59 of the list relating to Scheduled Tribes mentions the name of this tribe as "Sabara, Soora Savar or Sabar".²¹ Thus it appears, this tribe is called differently by people of different regions with slightly different names. Different degrees of acculturation habit of this tribe, also have accounted partly for the name with regional variation.

21. ^oQuoted in B. Singh: The Saora Highlanders-Leadership and development, p.5. Somaya Publication Pvt. Ltd., Bombay 1984.

Elwin²² one of the leading authors on this tribe speaks of two types of Sabaras, the Sabaras of hills and the Sabaras in plains. The former lives in tall trees and basically live on forest produce like fruits, roots, honey. Some of them do shifting cultivation alongwith terrace cultivation. But the Sabaras in the plain build small units with wooden walls and hay roof. Gradually, they have become settled cultivators with small pieces of land and have adopted the style of other high caste people.

The Sabaras in the village of Kangelio are a settled tribe with small neat huts. They do not wander like their traditional ancestor who came and settled in the village long back. Their chief who was called the Dehury came to the village some 200 years back and settled in the village with the permission of the other high caste people. The men of this tribe provided their labour and served the village.

One of the interesting points in this society of the Sabaras is that, the female is dominant in the family. The female does every household work and also most of the time works as daily labourer. Besides, the female also

collect many jungle produce like Sal seed, Kendu leaf and many other items and sell them. They also prepare mats. The women are the important spokesmen, not the male. The young Sabar woman prefers a groom who is usually much younger and keeps her father's title after marriage. Perhaps because of this reason the woman seems to be dominant in the family.

The Sabaras in the village do not live in the same street. They live in a different street which is just 250 Meters away from the main settlement. They have a community hall called the Ghumura Ghar²³ in which old as well as the youngmen and women assemble in the evening and learn dance, sing and play music. They spend most of their evening time in merry making and forget the whole day's hard labour. The chief of their tribe is called Dehury. He is the tribal chief as well as the leader and the spokesman. He administers the rules, regulations and taboos regarding their rituals, as observed in marriage, death, birth and other cultural festivals.

The Sabaras are the poor people in the village having not a single piece of land to cultivate. Only one family has got some landed property which is less

23. It is the place where the Sabaras keep their typical musical instrument called 'Ghumura'.

than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. They mostly live on wages. Most of the men work as the Kothias on yearly contract basis and are paid in kind and rarely in cash. Their women and children work as labourers and earn. During festive occasions, they get loan from the village people which is paid back gradually.

So far as the politics in the village was concerned, they are the most silent people. But after the reorganization of the traditional village council and the revival of the democratic procedure with the introduction of a written constitution-like today in the village, the young educated people felt the role as well as the necessity of the Sabaras participation in the affair of the village. Gradually, their participation in the village council gave them a chance to express their hopes, aspirations and ideas without any fear or favour. Soon, they became organised and exerted a powerful force in the politics and administration of the village.

Gurias :

Traditionally the Gurias are the people who prepare and sell many kinds of sweets. The word Guria has come from the Oriya word 'Gura' which means Molases. They are the fourth largest caste group in the village

having a population of 57 with 6 households. They also prepare Chura, Murhi and other rice products. This was their exclusive occupation in old days. In the village almost all the Guria families are still in possession of their traditional occupation. They sell their products in the village as well as in the nearby weekly markets called the Hats.

Very few family of the Gurias have land which roughly amounts to less than 2 acres for the whole population. One of the Guria families has a readymade garment shop. They are staying in the same village with the Khandyat Households in between in the main village settlement. Not a single Guria family member has passed 7th class, but the older people know to sign their names. Patei Sahu is their caste lader who is respected by the village people because he is one of the oldest surviving members of the village community with knowledge of land settlement and his art of mesmerism.

Politically, the Gurias had no say in the village affair. Their leader Patel Sahu was an important member in the village whose voice was heard with respect in the old council. But in the new reviwed council, they do not seem to take much interest in the village affair. They are the people with mild nature and are busy always in attending

the markets and selling their products.

Telis :

The Telis or the oilmen are the 5th largest caste group in the village with 4 households and total population of 58. They are staying in the main settlement of the village with other caste people. Their traditional occupation was pressing the oil seeds. But it is interesting that none of the Teli families has any oilmill in the village. The Telis have good landed property. They have much property in comparison to other lower caste people than the Khandyats. Besides this, almost every Teli family is busy in business of small kinds in cash crop and oil seeds. They are known in the village for their hardwork and greedyness and are called the Mahajans or the business caste.

Their economic condition is quite good and status in the village is high. The young men of the Teli family are educated. Two of the Teli youngmen have received college education and 4 of them have passed matriculation. All elder members of the Telis know signatures and the basic knowledge of counting, etc. Two families have two Grocery shops in the village.

Their influence in the village affairs is recognizable. They are known for their honesty and as right people in the village. So some of the elder members are in many official posts of the village, such as Cashiers. They are very influential in the village because they provide loan to the poor people. For their politics, they either support or oppose a cause according to their own interest. But as a caste, they do not have much influence."

The Telis have a caste Panchayat in the village which is otherwise related to the wider caste Panchayat. This caste is quite prominent in the state of Orissa and their influence in the politics of the state counts to a great extent as F.G. Baily²⁴ narrates in his "politics and social change" in which he speaks of the All Orissa Oilmen Vaishyas Association".

Bhandaris :

The Bhandaris or the Barbers constitute two families in the village with a population of 35. Barbers have little land to cultivate or earn their livelihood. They live on their traditional occupation by serving

24. For details see F.G. Baily, (1963), The Politics and Social Change: Orissa, Berkely University Press, California.

the villagers in birth, death, marriage and in many other festive occasions. A few members of their family are working as daily wagers in Cuttack, NALCO nagar and other industrial town who send money to their families. Otherwise majority of their people live on traditional occupation. They have distributed the whole village population into groups as to who will serve whom. They are paid yearly for their serving in kind, but in festive and other occasions they are paid in cash.

Their economic condition is not that bad. Their influence in the village is not recognizable because their number is less. But they regularly participate in the deliberations of village affairs and take part in the discussion. They support any caste they reel beneficial for them. Some time they appeal to the villagers for better payment. They have strong caste Panchayat in the surrounding area.

Besides other caste groups, there are two caste groups with small population in the village that of the Tanti (weaver) and the Kamar or Blacksmith. The weavers have two families with two households and 14 members and the Blacksmith with one household and 8 members. They all are the servants of the all village people who serve the villagers as per their traditional occupation.

Kamars and Tantis: The Kamar family has a piece of land called the Kamarhata which was provided to the Kamar by the villagers during the first land settlement in the village. They live by doing all kinds of works that caters to the needs of the village. They also supply different instruments used in agriculture by the cultivators and fulfil their needs. They are paid on permanent contract basis. Since this is a single family in the village they have hardly any voice in the village affairs. They either support or oppose the policy decision of the village irrespective of any fear or favour as they like. But in most of the vital cases, they have remained neutral and have not supported any caste group. When asked, one of them said that, "I am the servant of the whole village; villagers have kindly allowed me to serve them. All are my masters, which people should I support and why?".

The weavers are traditionally engaged in weaving clothes and supplying them to the villagers. But now a days due to the availability of textile products, people of the village do not rely upon them. So their occupation has come to an end. But these two families are working as daily wagers in the village and reared some goats, supplied to them by the SBI Branch. Occasionally they prepare 'MATHA' and 'CHADAR'²⁵ on demand. Now they have

25. These are handwoven clothes.

revived their occupation being financed by the Block authorities.

Their economic condition is improving gradually. Since they are numerically very negligible, their voice do not carry much command. Like other small caste groups, they either support or oppose any issue in the village as they like.

However, the whole relationship of service of one caste to other based on grain payment is what Scott calls 'Patron-Client' relationship. The patron-client relationship may be defined as a special case of dynamic ties (two persons or more) involving in a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher economic status (Patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefit or both for a person of lower status for his part reciprocates by offering general support and assistance including personal services to the patron.²⁶ Let us see this whole relationship that exists among the castes in the village.

Intercaste relations

The informal social organization of the villages are usually loosely structured. But inspite of the

26. James C. Scott (1966). "Patron-Client Politics and Political change in South East Asia" in American Political Science Review, p.66 (91-115).

looseness of its structure, it functions quite efficiently. Arensberg and Niekoff²⁷ while discussing the human social relation, state that there are atleast three major institutions through which men everywhere organize their social relationships, though there are varying degrees one emphasises on these three institutions in accordance with the level of technological advancement of a given culture. These three institutions are based on the principle of

- (i) kinship,
- (ii) common geographical boundaries
- (iii) special interest groups

Our discussion of Orissa social organization and relationship will be discussed in terms of these three relationships.

Firstly, the principle of caste and kinship is the general basis of social organization in almost all developing societies. On the contrary, the more developed societies have the weakest kinship relationship since there is no caste system in any form as in India. Likewise the Orissa villages, being in the developing state of India with dominant

27. Quoted in S.M. Hafeez Zidi, (1970). The Village culture in Transition: A Study of East Pakistan Rural Society. East West Centre Press Pb. Honolulu. p.60

agricultural dependency, have strong kinship and caste affiliations as the primary basis of socio-cultural relationships. Kinship groupings, both in terms of spatial proximity and in terms of emotional closeness, bind closely related families or fellow caste groups in the village into an integrated primary group, who stand together through thick and thin. They help each other in quarrels and disputes with other village families and castemen or with the outsiders. They are the first in ceremonies and other important occasions. The larger the caste the stronger its leaders in the village power structure. They are often in the same side of the village faction. Each member of the caste group is very much aware of his and caste's joint responsibilities towards relatives. Thus the pattern of right and responsibilities and the significance of each member of the caste are strong forces in the village.

The second basis for the social organization in the village is the contiguity in the location of the number of families and caste people within a geographical boundaries. It is a community of people who live together for many generations. Contiguous living within the geographical location has given rise to different social relationships among the villagers.

"F.G. Bailey in his study of Bisipara writes that the four fields of activity - the names, occupation, residence and customary distinctions - are an everyday reminder of difference, but they are not the fundamental source of segregation; this is kinship. A man is born into a caste.....A caste is a group of actual or potential kinsmen". He further adds that "A man has a place in two systems. He belongs to his own caste, which is a kinship system extending to other villagers besides his own; secondly, he has relationship with the people of other castes, mainly in his own village; and these can not be the ties of kinship".²⁸

Another type of relation is that in each village, there are certain families with landed properties and other poor families with little or no land. These poor families depend for their sustenance on casual labour on the land of other families or on more permanent jobs in or outside the village. The two classes of people depend on each other's help. Thus there exists the relationship of the employer and the employee and the rich and the poor. In both capacities, the families have a permanent relationship of mutual trust and dependence in times of need. The poor families get help from their more prosperous neighbours in

28. F.G. Bailey - Op.Cit, p.123

time of need; the richer families employ the services of the poor or even borrow their services in times of festive or sad occasions.²⁹ Thus, inter-dependence relationship may be conceived of one type of relationship, which though loose, is quite important. This system has some relevance to the Jajmani system about which D. Thorner (1962), Wiser (1936), Dumont (1966), Olper and Singh (1948), Gough (1960), Orenstein (1962), Pocock (1962) etc. have written a lot.

There is other pattern of social relationship that is between the less informed or informed villagers. In most of the villagers, there are people who have contacts with the town and outside world. The school teachers, the village Gram Sevak in the Bank Officers are the better informed than the farmers in the village. These people have better sources of information regarding the village. And by virtue of their better information and socio-political contact they would certain influence in the village and establish an interesting relationship in the village.

As we saw, a person in a multi-caste village with neighbours of their own Castes who participate with them

29. S.M. Hafeez Zidi, Op.Cit. p.61.

is bound to develop social relationships. In societies where economic interaction, commercial relations and ritual observations happen to be influenced by the unequally ascribed status of the caste, inter-relations among members different castes depict a marked degree. Leach has given thought to the problem and concentrated attention on " the really crucial fact that caste is a system in inter-relationships and that every caste in a caste system has its special privileges."³⁰.

Thus, let us describe the inter-caste relations in terms of the above discussion and traditional hierarchy, economic interdependence, common geographical boundary and in terms of respective roles of various castes play in rituals in the village of Kangeilo.

Kangeilo represents an unique and special characteristic for the intercaste relationship. It hardly provides sufficient scope for the Varna Model to operate in its relationship. There is no Brahmin settlement, the Khandayats are the important group and the rest of the castes can be said to belong to the lowest varna. It seems

30. Quoted in B.R. Chauhan, (1967), A Rajasthan Village, Vir Publication House, New Delhi, p.10.

that the absence of the Brahmins in the village has resulted in the Khandayats occupying the high status. The Gauras come next and the Gurias, Telis and Barbers followed by the weavers. The Sabaras being a tribe come at the lowest rung of the village caste hierarchy. There is hardly any traditional caste hierarchy relationship among the people in the village. What is most important is the socio-economic relationship and the respective roles which the castes play.

Other castes of the village are dependent socially and economically upon the Khandayats. The relationship with each other can be categorized on the basis of master-servant, creditor-debtor, employer-employee, customer-seller, giver-receiver of ritual services, supplier-consumer relationships, etc. Some of these relationships have legal and quasi-legal sanctions. But in practice these are regulated and run by the traditional norms, usages, values, customs and, to a great extent, on moral grounds.

In the master-servant relationship, the whole population of the village are divided into two classes, that is the land-owning rich people and the poor with little or no land. On this basis, the rich in the village are the Khandayats and to some extent the Telis, who employ the Sabaras in their agricultural fields. They employ the Sabaras on permanent basis as servants on contract and their women on

daily wage basis in harvesting seasons. The Sabaras almost supply the manpower needed by them. The women of the Sabara come to the house of the masters and perform other household works like cleaning cow-dung, fetching water from the well and other works like husking, etc. The male servants are called 'Halya' and the females called 'Halyani'. The male as well as the females get cooked food at their master's residence while working. The master in local term is called the 'Saukar'. The saukar gives concessions to the worker on festive days. The servant get some amount of paddy, and cloth in certain ceremonies which is extra and in addition to this wage in time of needs. Thus the two classes of people while working under the social system are bound together into enduring relationship instead of their wide separation in the caste hierarchy.

The service of Sabara 'Halya' or the agricultural labourer can be called as contractual service to differentiate it from domestic service. In the village Kangeilo the number of this type of servants is more than domestic servants. Children and women are usually employed as domestic servants. Whereas men are employed as agricultural labourers. There are 57 cases of contractual labourers and 40 cases of domestic servants in the village. In most of the cases the servants make contract to the rich landowner for one or more than one year. The contracts are not executed in written form but in verbally compromise with one or more two villagers as witness.

In some cases the Halyas are usually given a piece of land of his own choice in which he raises crops and harvests as his extra income. The piece of land which is given to him and leased for the said period is called 'Halya bhui'. This is provided to attract the good labourers and to give them ample opportunity to make him feel that they are not the servant of the family rather a member of the employers' family.

Usually, the payment to the servant is recorded by the master not by the Halya. The advances on festive occasions are made to the guardian of the family of the Halya. Their women collect the payments from the house of the Saukar. In case of advance payments no interest is charged unless the Halya breaks the contract.

The number of contractual service of different cases are 57 as in the year 1984-85 with 40 cases of servant-ships. The number is relatively small with respect to the landless families in the village, of them 49 came from the Savaras, 3 from Gauras, 2 from Tantis and the next belongs to the Harijans of the nearby village³¹. There are a number of masters which ranges upto 100 from the Khandayats, 6 from Telis and one from the Gauras. These masters are the sizeable landowners of the village. Thus, we feel there is a network

31. Loan Record, State Bank of India, Kamakshyanagar

of economic relationship which overflows the caste barrier and develops into an intense social relationship.

The relationship between the Saukar and the Halyas is most of the time intimate and some times conflicting. In conflicting relations the only bond which brings the servant into duty is the advance he draws before appointment. This forges the master and the servant into provider and providee relationship but this in turn liquidates the sentimental attachment to each other. The servants are always at the command of their masters. Some times the criticism is the potent force to keep the servant at work in conflicting relationship. The unrest and interchange of hot temperaments between the abusive master and obstinate servant are the constant sources of bitterness among them. The master in some instances dismisses the servants owing to bad conduct, misbehaviour and unexcusable mistakes. In case of such problems which becomes impossible on both the parts of the Saukar and the servant, either of them take the case before the village council and the decision of the council is binding on both. Compromise on verbal assurance is common.

The other type of interesting intercaste relationship which exists in the social system of the village is the landowner-tenant relationship or called Bhaga-Chasi relationship in the village. This relationship also cuts

across caste barriers in its function in the village. The tenants are the main components of the absentee landowners. The system prevalent in the village is a system in which the richlandowner and the landless people (or in some cases people with less land) enter into a verbal agreement to cultivate the surplus or excess land of the landowner, which the landowner cannot cultivate due ^{to} a number of reasons. In such an agreement the land owner gets the share of land and the tenants towards the expense of their manpower and other resources. The land owner's land and the resources of the tenant are applied to that land. In such cases, the tenants work in the land as their own land and try to bring out maximum output so that their share will be as good as they expect.

This sort of relationship cannot be regarded as a landowner-tenant relationship in the strict sense of the term, because here the relationship between the owner and the cultivator is the relationship of the partners in the cultivation. The tenants in the Bhaga Chasi system are treated as friends or partners who usually get social and economic help from the owner and are given the status of a good friend. Even exchange of goodwill, presentations and many valuable help are marked in their relationship. They even exchange cake, rice, vegetables in festive or sad

occasions. There are instances also in which the poor Savar who belong to the Scheduled tribe prepares cakes, food or buys them from the touchable homes and sends to the house of the owner. The owner and tenants respect each others' status as partners irrespective of their higher or lower status in the hierarchy of caste or status in the society. The owner as well as the tenant in the local terminology are called Bhaguaris. Eventhough the Bhaguaris belongs to a lower caste of Harijan, is equally respected with due respect like a family guest.

The number of Bhagachasi relationship in the village is around 63 in which 126 families are tied in a relationship. This relationship has developed because of many reasons. In some cases, the rich landowner use to allot some portion of his land to the other man because he feels that he cannot properly cultivate the land which is beyond his resources. In other cases some landowners allot their distant land to the nearby people because of the inconvenience of distance. To put the case in other way suppose X has some land in a village which is some 10 km away from his village and X feels that he cannot cultivate that land. So he allots that land to Y who has the manpower but no land as a result of which Y cultivates that land and gets his share and the relationship of Bhagachasi is thus established. This type of relationship is quite common in the village of Kangeilo. In all these 126 families involved in such a relationship shows some uneven combinations of castes which cuts the social hierarchy.

In some cases the Khandayats--Gaura, Khandayat-Savara (one case only), Khandayat-Tanti (one case), Teli-Guria, Teli-Gaura, Teli-Bhandari, Khandayat-Bhandari and 2 cases of Khandayat-Harijan have entered into such relationships. In all these cases we have observed that the tenant has rendered many valuable voluntary services to the landowners.

One of the advantages of such a system is that in case of the servants or Halyas they need constant supervision, directions and watching while they are at work. But the Bhaguaris do not need such type of vigilance except in the harvesting days. Usually the system is that unless the land owner comes into the field personally and supervises the harvesting, the harvest would not take place. The Bhaguaris are known for their trust. Only conflicting relationship prevails when the tenants try to deceive the landowners from the actual share of the landowner or try to extract much which they do not deserve. There are very rare cases of such kind. During 1985-86 only one such case was reported in which the tenant was trying to hide some crops and was caught later on.

The other kind of relationship is the creditor-debtor relationship noticed in the village. This relationship brings many persons as well as families under obligation

to one another across caste. The loan made in this relationship is of two kinds, the governmental loans and the private loans. The governmental loan is made in terms of money while private loan is made in terms of grains, rice and money also. The interest laid on the governmental loans are of medium range while in the private loan it is too high. The private loan is made by the rich landowner to the poor in the village. Since the Khandayats are the rich land owners in the village, they are the sole providers of all kinds of small loans for short terms on high interest to the other castes people in the village. In some cases they also provide loans to their villagers to the Sabaras, Gauras, Gurias and other poor people. The loan is made during the months of March to July in vast amounts because most of the Oriya festivals are celebrated during this period. Besides, these are the dry seasons during which the workers specially the daily wage earners do not get scope for work due to off time for agriculture. The loans which are advanced mostly in terms of grains are advanced by the Khandayats to other caste people on the condition that they will work in the field in rainy season. In such loans no interest is paid or levied. As a result of this, the Khandayats get the advantage of the landowners in a little less price than the rate. In Rainy season also they get the manpower easily.

On the other hand, the governmental loans are raised from the nearby Gramya Bank, State Bank of India, Cooperative Bank and LDB. To avail such loans the illiterate

people without any knowledge of the procedure, terms and banking conditions, seek the help of the educated people who have contact. Besides this, the most important thing is that all banks need a guarantor before advancing any loan. So the educated people and the rich people of the village act as the mediator as well as guarantors against the loans provided to the loanee and thus they entered into a type of relationship which is based on mutual trust, belief and help. Twentynine loans for wells, 6 for Jersey Cow, one for fishing pond, 10 for buying bullock cart, 3 for grocery shop and one for cycle repairing shop were advanced during the period of 1984-86 to the villages³¹. In such a system of mutual help nearly 100 families are well knit into a kind of relationship which is most convenient for a healthy social relationship and interaction. In all these cases the bank officer, 6 teachers, 3 clerks and some brokers and agents have played prominent role. These people are the informers to the villagers to avail the kind of scheme and loans as provided by the banks.

The lending of grains is the most common kind of loan from private sources in the village. While providing such loans to the villagers, the rich Khandayats hardly look into the past record, capacity and capability of the

31. Loan Record, State Bank of India, Kamakshyanagar

loanee which on the other hand is a prior requisite and basic condition for the other villagers. They charge minor interest rate for villagers and in case of scarcity, the villagers are provided loan on first priority as compared to people of other villages.

Thus the economic dependency of the poor on the rich in the day-to-day life of the village has resulted in a cordial relationship. The debtor obliges the creditor on moral grounds that Saukar or Mahajan has helped him in distress or need and this is remembered for life. Once we noticed an interesting incident in which a Sabar was praying for loan to a Khandayat rich man for his daughter's marriage in the following words that, 'Saukar; My forefathers have met their life and death in this village. They have come to your door in time of need, sorrows and happiness. It was you and your family who have saved and will be saving me. I was born in this village and shall die in this village. Is not my daughter your daughter? Lend me, if not you, then, who else will save my daughter's life and where shall I go?'³²

This shows the sort of relationship which the people in the village have cherished since time immemorial.

Another type of relationship which prevails in the village is that of the customer-supplier relationship.

32. One of the villagers remarks.

There are the Weavers, Barbars, Smiths and Gurias in the village. They are still traditionally associated with their occupation and this has been a source of their livelihood. The smith sharpens and fits up the plough of the farmers and supplies other agricultural instruments and is paid annually. He sells plough and other iron instruments needed by the village farmers. Similarly, the Gauras sell milk, Cheese, Ghee and other diary products in the village. The Gurias prepare sweets, cakes and rice products which they sell in the village and other neighbouring villages. The Savar women sell their forest collections like mats, leaf² and fire wood. People from different castes who are traditionally associated with their occupations produce many items and look towards the village as their potential market. Since the village is a big one with multi caste people with multiple needs, it provides a good customer market to them. They get mostly in terms of grain and cash for their services and produces which they sell. The villagers are thus divided into two broad groups, one as the suppliers and the other as the customers. This supplier-customer relationship in the long run has forged the different castes into an exchange-social relationship and obliged each other.

THE VILLAGE : Inter-Dependance of the three major castes

Let us see in detail the inter dependance of the three major castes, the Khandayats, Gauras and the Sabaras. Since Kangeilo is an agricultural village the inter-dependance of the three castes becomes intense due to the uneven distribution of land, geography and many other reasons.

To start with, the SABAR-KHANDAYAT relationship is a dependency of the Khandayats on the labour of the Sabars and the Sabars for their employment. In the labour employment of agricultural activities, the Savars, and their women, play a very important role. The demand for labour fluctuates from one month to the other and agricultural season. At Kangeilo, the demand reaches to the maximum during ploughing, clearing the sugarcane and harvesting. Most labour is demanded during the Rainy season for the cultivation, cleaning and cropping the paddy plants. The fluctuations in the demand for labour helps in forging of the inter-personal ties and liquidating the caste barrier. The duration of transplanting and harvesting of paddy is quite short. As a result, the farmers are in a hurry at such operations in which more hands are required. So the crucial factor is both the time and labour. At these operations almost all the available labour forces of the village are engaged in the field. If there is no supply of labour, the crops will be destroyed. The Sabarmen and women equally contribute their

labour. Although the total labour force constitutes of heterogeneous caste groups, the majority of which are the Sabars.

Khandayat-Gauras: The Gauras, or the Herdsmen, are the second largest caste group in the village. Their traditional occupation is cattle herding and dairying. They also herd cattle of other caste people especially the Khandayats, Telis and some few heads of the Sabaras. They sell their dairy products and cowdung, compost to the villagers. Village is their most important market to sell their products. In return, they get money, grains and straw for repairing their thatched roofs, from the farmers. This sort of dependency becomes most acute during the Rainy season, because in the Rainy season the village remains isolated from the outer world of semi-urban areas and the way to weekly markets becomes blocked. The village is situated in such a position that it becomes difficult on their part to go in search of other market. When the river gets filled with rain water, it becomes impossible for the Gaura women to reach the main road. As a result of this problem, the Gauras turn to the village as their only market. The only communication to the daily as well as weekly market is a distance of 20 K.M. of which has to be covered on foot; as a result, the Gaura women are to some extent compelled to sell their products in the village.

The other problem which the Gauras face in the village in Rainy season is the maintenance of the cattle. Usually, most of their cows become milch in this season and their diary products became more. But on the other hand, it became difficult on their part to maintain the milch cows or buffaloes due to the nonavailability and shortage of grazing land. Almost all the fertile and not so fertile land come under cultivation during this season and are closed from all sides with erection of fences.

Thus, the Gauras in the village became more and more dependant on the Khandayats for their economic sustenance. Even a number of instances are there that the Gaura women sell their diary products at much less prices to the villagers and go from house-to-house. They even exchange their products against any kind of vegetables, Moong, wood, chilly and 'Sag'. Their economic system becomes a barter system in which they exchange their product in exchange of any thing, since all their products are perishable ones.

Though the Gauras have been dependant upon the Khandayats, the nature of their dependance is of a different kind from that of the Sabras. "Deftness with the lathi, together with a carefree life and outlook which might to an extent be a legacy of traditionally nomadic occupation

have rendered them difficult^{N33} to control or dominate. Only in recent years, with the reorganization and the democratization of the political process in the village they have began to weild influence in their politics which is somewhat with their strength in other respect.

Gaura-Sabar: The Sabaras are considered as the low status group in the village. They are a tribe included in the Schedules of the constitution. They have nothing special as far as their traditional occupation goes and they exclusively live upon their labour which they sell in the village. Only the women-folk depend on the village market for the mats, Jungle seeds and other Jungle collections. Ninety percent of the Sabaras work in the field of other caste people as agricultural labour. So far as the relationship of the Sabar and Gaura is concerned, the Gauras herd some few cattle-heads of the Sabaras. The Sabaras in return pay them in terms of kind like egg, hen, jungle collections and mats etc. Gauras also sell their diary products to the Sabaras and in return get wood, vegetable, mat and most of the time fruits like Mango, jackfruit, banana, pumpkin etc.

The Sabaras have domestic animals like goat, hen, and duck which they sell and sometime pay in cash to the Gauras.

The relationships based on occupational dependency and payment in terms of grain is called Jajmani system. This system in course of time has resulted in a relationship of many kinds & occupational people into a common bond. The advantages of such a relationship are the unity, mutual help, cooperation. However, the other side of this patron-client relationship as emphasized by many writers³⁴ has exploitation in which the patron exploits the client inhumanly. But from our observation of the village, it is seen that the political system organised after the evolution of the traditional village council is such that it hardly leaves any scope for exploitation. The patrons who have exploited the service of the client without the payment of grain have been brought to the council and in all these cases the client has been paid as desired. In other cases where the client in turn has cheated the patron by taking advance grain payment and later on has not rendered services has been asked either to serve or to return the amount received.

Such a situation which exists in the village³⁵ thus, hardly leaves any scope of exploitations.

34. For details see Orenstein, (1965) Bedielman, (1959) and Rowle (1960)

35. To cite out one example. Barber Tupusi Barik was denied payment by one of his patrons. Tupusi complained the matter in the council, which directed the patron and he was paid his due. There are another 9 cases of such kind decided by the council till the end of 1986.

Thus, the multiple relationships and obligations of the poor to the rich and the rich to the poor, one caste to the other in the village, reveals the inter-dependence. However, the relationships are the central force round which the villagers have weaved a network of hopes and aspirations. They have forgotten the dismal past and become friendly. Although all the relationships of the caste and the communities in the village are typical of the village, their relationship may or may not end in happiness. Any way, there are the ties of living together of the unequals in the village. This relationship which is very much typical has a great bearing in the political system of the village and the aspect of bearing on the village life is being dealt in the next chapter.

CHAPTER - IIITHE VILLAGE: POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Introduction: A prominent characteristic feature of the ancient political bodies in India is that they were not uniformly composed and constituted. The principle of association was not always the same. On closer analysis, it was found that there were two types of political formations:

(a) Territorial: Where the principle of association was that of neighbourhood the bond of physical connection promoting associated life among the members of the village,

(b) Communal, where group formation is not determined by physical but moral or economic factors. It is not the relation to the place but the community, its interests and interdependence that leads to the groupings on the basis of which the fundamental administrative unit was organised. Thus the villages developed their fundamental unit of administrative system organised on the basis of group activities in the village .

A common feature of the Indian village community is the village Panchayat. This is popularly known as 'Gaon Desha' in KANGEILO. The Gaon Desh is the council of elders which decides the disputes between the villagers

and discuss matters of common interest. This is the most important organ of the village government and is passing through many evolutionary stages. Some scholars argue that the peculiar evolutions of Indian society on the basis of caste and sub-caste has made it impossible for any wider extra caste political bodies to thrive in the village.

DECISION-MAKING BODY -- THE GAON DESH

The 'Gaon Desha' has its origin since the Vedic period when the elders of the village assembled to discuss and deliberate over the question of public interest. The leader of the village was called 'Gramin' who was holding meetings in Sabha Halls and places of entertainment, talks and debates. The villagers used to gather and discuss matters of public interest. Subsequently the 'Gaon Desh' lost its importance due to fighting between the castes for supremacy. As a result of which the village administration came under the rule of central authority for the first time during the Maurya period, which attempted to revive and encourage village administrative institutions. During this period the village councils developed regular councils with elders as its members. The Gaon Desha, being the council of village elders, superintended all the affairs during the ancient, medieval and modern periods of Indian history.

Dr. Majumdar and Mr. Altekar have pointed out that the village council discharges almost all the functions of the government. It worked after the village defence, settled disputes, organised works of public utility, acted as a trustee of the minors and collected the revenues and paid to the central treasury".¹

However, in India, the presence of these independent bodies in the villages made it possible for the rise of democracy. The well-knit and organised village communities, have their bodies like the village council which decides the policies of the village. Before the arrival of democracy in the village, the share in the authority of the village was determined by one's social and economic position. The political structure of the village community was autocratic in which the political participation was confined to the landlords in one's position and status in the society. The people's voice had no place in it. The decisional activities in the villages were person-oriented rather than problem oriented and the relationship was what Scott calls 'Patron-Client' relationship.

But after independence the political set up of rural community underwent a complete change. With the

1. Quoted in A.E. Punit () Social Systems in Rural India

implementation of democratic procedures, constituting political authority, a principle of majority rule was introduced which was unconnected with the economic and social position. Such a procedure is operated in a society in which, in actual practice, not the individual but the group to which he belonged constituted the basic unit. Thus instead of individuals constituting the basic unit, majority minority group under its impact, the existing social groups like caste developed and assimilated political functions and their other functions for their politics. The majority minority mechanism on the basis of caste dictated the politics and became the vehicle of social group politics.

How it all happen

After independence, the Indian Constitution provided for a democratic republic which aims at securing justice-social economic and political alongwith equality, fraternity and liberty. The introduction of adult suffrage gave equal opportunity to all the people to participate in the formation of government without any distinction of caste, colour, sex and religion. Thus the introduction of domestic procedures and institutions induced rapid changes in the

village communities. Myron Weiner² lists five major areas of governmental actions which have produced profound socio-economic changes in India. They are, universal adult suffrage integrated system of local government, emphasis on education and land-system of local government, emphasis on education and land-reforms and economic plannings.

Some of these interesting studies on rural India which have examined the interaction between traditional society and newly introduced democratic principles and change in economic system are the following, Sivertsen (1963) on changes in the system, Beteille (1963) on the growing autonomy of caste, political and to some extent economic system from a subsisting traditional system, and Bailey (1963) on the role of brokers touters and other intermediaries who enable democratic institutions and procedures to function in traditional societies, Somjee (1971) on interaction between traditional social system and newly introduced democratic procedures, institutions, political relationship, leadership, decision-making, political attitudes and authority in rural

2. Myron Weiner, (1967). Party Building in a New Nation, The Chicago University Press, Chicago pp- 24-27

politics, Chakravorty (1975) on the distribution of power in the village and other such studies.

In order to examine the interaction between the newly introduced democratic institutions and procedures, economic development and the indigenous system in the village community of Kangeilo, We have selected five specific areas of political life of the village. They are political relationship, political leadership, approaches to realization of political goals, attitude to authority and Decision-making process. Out of all these, we shall extensively discuss the decision-making process in the community and has been selected for detailed analysis. They are vital to the understanding of political life of the village, and through them the nature and the extent of political change in the community, could be meaningfully examined. These areas constitute the various dimensions of the study and specially the decision-making process.

The Pre-democratic political relationship was, by and large, a reflection of the realities of social and economic life. It was based on the importance of the caste and economic conditions. What the introduction of universal adult suffrage substituted in its place was the principle of numerical strength. Faced with the force of education economic development and universal adult suffrage the caste-political cohesiveness yielded to clan-political cohesiveness.

/ Search for numerical support forced village politicians and

and leaders to utilise and unite caste cohesiveness. When that proved inadequate, they built shifting political coalitions which in certain cases cut across caste and clan.

After the arrival of democracy, the traditional political relationships were in a process of continuous readjustment.

The need for numerical support for capturing power induced formation of political coalitions across caste lines. The changes induced by democracy, particularly in the field of political leadership is most identifiable. They occurred^F both at the caste level and village level. In the latter among those castes which were directly involved in the struggle for power.

In the village, the pre-democratic leadership was centered around three important persons under the Pradhanship system. The system was based on certain families of the village who were called the village Pradhans. They were holding power because of their wealth and social position in the society. Later, after Independence when the movements for decentralization started, the leaders were to be elected. But the district authority in actual practice nominated practically all its members on the basis of caste.

family status, economic background, influence, age etc. Some of them were also the chairman of the village school. Likewise Sadananda Samal, Jagabandhu Barik and Patei Sahu were the leaders of the village. Sadananda Samal was the chairman of the village school for a long time. Others were the caste leaders of the older generation.

One of the interesting changes which occurred in the village leadership was its bifurcation. The social and political leadership of politically active castes came to be divided between the two sets of leaders. The conservative or the age old leaders faced challenges from the younger generation who were educated and were conscious of their rights. They created problems for the old leaders and forced the elders to pass on political leadership to the younger generation. This was particularly true in the case of Khandayats. But in case of Gauras and Sabar, the case was different. People of these two castes were educated in a different way. Being forced by the economic scarcity and work scope, they started going to the industrial towns to work as labourers. They worked there, stayed for months together and as a result their outlook for village politics widened.

Thus not only the leadership was bifurcated because of education and participation in the

elections, but there was a significant change in the age-structure of the leaders. Youngmen from 18 years age upto the 45 years took much more interest in the village politics. They established the 'Radha Madhav Yuvak Sangha' and took interest for the village welfare as a whole. As a result in 1981 some educated youngmen came out with a general proposal and a constitution writing people of all castes in the village. Most of them later became influential leaders in the village.

Particularly in its post-democratisation period the members took ~~the~~ initiative and gave a lead solution of problems which the village faced. The common problem of road communication, tank and street light, which the authorities did not provide to the village, agitated the villagers and they started acting in their own capacity. Thus in order to achieve desired political results, beneficial to the people, the leaders as well as the non members of the village adopted the method of directly approaching the higher authorities for favourable decisions. This happened because of a group of educated and employed men of the village ^{who} inspired the people, ^{ed} approach_{ed} the higher authorities and convinced the villagers about their share in the democracy. As a result the villagers in groups approached the authorities for the village problems which resulted in favourable decisions, e.g. the opening of a Cooperative Grocery Shop, proper

distribution of government supplied rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene oil and striving of a village nurse to look after the health of the people etc. By means of pressurising the higher authorities on the basis of their number, the villagers achieved their common goal and became politically educated.

These developments in the village have the decision-making process increasingly broad-based and complex. This happened not only at the village level but also at the caste and locality levels. This also resulted in the gradual weakening of the traditional position of power of the dominant caste, namely the Khandyats and the leaders but their techniques and the development of a general view that every public decision was everybody's business. This made the decision-making process in the village more dispersed. The involvement of various castes in democratic politics of the village also had an impact on their own decision-making process. Within each major caste one could notice greater and greater participation of an increasing number of people.

The three politically participant castes, namely, the Khandyats, the Gauras and the Sabaras, are at different levels of their political maturity. Moreover, each of them is different.

The attitude of the villagers to the village administrative machinery in general has undergone a significant change. In the pre-democratic period the Panchayat

was considered to be a preserve of the socially higher and economically better off. Democracy transformed it into a matter of numerical support. Various castes interpreted this phenomenon differently. Their attitudes ranged from old authority on caste and economic position to an institution of the community institution.

So far as the administrative machinery was concerned the village had a three member institution who were economically better off and were nominated by the then authorities of the district. It now faced criticisms of consumption, maladministration and feudalism in village affairs. The people tirelessly complained against them. Behind this attitude of the people there lay a search for an authority and administrative machinery that would really serve the people.

The bulk of the people in the village being illiterate, they did not understand the value of democracy. Being persuaded and inspired by the young educated people, they felt that it would be dangerous if they would not be given a chance to govern themselves. Finally, they came out with a proposal for a new villager administrative machinery with a constitution council of the village whose authority was based on their consent.

The Village Council

A common feature of the village community in some parts of India is the village Panchayat or Council of elders which decides the disputes between villagers and discusses matters of common interest. Historians, working on modern Indian history are apt to speak of these councils or assemblies, usually referred to as the Gaon Desh in the present village. This 'Gaon Desh' is the most popular organ of the village administration. So far as the history of the village administration. So far as the history of the village is concerned, it goes back to the assembly of the village Pradhan and other wealthy people's assemblies. But latter on when shortly after Independence, the district authorities nominated three members to the Gram Panchayat, the members acted blatantly and autocratically as the sole decision-makers of the villager politics. The village unity scattered into pieces during the 50s into the caste and kinship groups. Even their own caste did not support them because of their corrupt nature.

But after a long gap of nearly 30 years, a group of enthusiastic educated youngmen of the village attempted to revive the common feeling of the urgency of the organization at that juncture. They felt along with the other villagers that the village unity is in jeopardy and there is chaos and confusion with prevailing insecurity of life and wealth.

Most of the youngmen who are farmers felt the necessity of a council with defined terms and conditions so that there may not be any such repetition of the old days, the misuse of power and position. They called their First General body meeting of the village elders at the Radhakrishna Temple complex on October 21, 1980 which discussed the various problems faced by them. They realized their difficulties and disadvantages of not having a village administrative body. In that meeting most of the members pointed out the problems facing agriculture, security, health, communication and many such problems by them in day today life in the village. They also felt that, the problems can be solved. The most important result of these meetings was that of the revival of the old council in a new form. Members present in that meeting felt the necessity of a written code for the village called the 'Nyamabalis'. The members of the village Youth Club came out with a proposal in which it had drawn up a village code called the "Grama Niyamabalis" and placed it before the General Body. Everybody in that meeting became happy and consented to the "Niyamabalis" without any hesitation. A resolution was passed and from that meeting the proceeding of the village came to be maintained regularly. The compositions, function and nomination procedures of all the organs were read in detail and discussions took place.

Then they decided that these Niyamabalis should be followed strictly as well as regularly, so that there would be no problem in future. Then they decided that they must take an oath to keep up the Niyamabalis for their own betterment as well as that of the village. They decided to take the oath the next day and closed the meeting with a notice to meet at 9 in the morning. Jagabandhu Barik, the oldest living member of two villages was the President in its first session, and in the subsequent sessions also.

The next day all the adult members of the village assembled in the Radhakrishna Temple complex at the stipulated time and took an oath individually to uphold the unity of the village in the following words.

"In front of Lord Radhakrishna by holding flower, Tulsi, Copper and Cow dung I say that today is 21.10.80 around 12 noon, I swear in the name of village Lord Sri Radhakrishna that as a citizen of the village I shall support the path of justice and the development of the village irrespective of caste, colour and creed, forgetting the higher and lower attitude, I shall be committed to the communal development. If I do anything unparallel I shall be a traitor against God and Lord Radhakrishna."³

Thus by taking the oath the village council was formed with the consent of the all its members with a vow to tackle the different socio-economic problems of the village. The body also felt the security of certain other committees and distributed the portfolios to look after the problems in the village. Then according to the Gramya Niyamabalis, three committees were formed. These were the

- (i) Acting Committee
- (ii) Advisory Committee and
- (iii) Assisting Committee

which were respectively called 'Karyakari', Kamiti, Upadesta Kamiti and 'Karyanirbahi Kamiti'.

Composition of the Committees

These committees were formed according to the statutes of the village code or the 'Gramya Niyamabalis'. According to the statutes, the most important organs in the council is the Karyakarini Kamiti or the Acting Committee. This Committee was formed with 16 members whose age varied from 40 to 80 years and all of whom were male members. The Acting Committee has the exclusive power of making rules with

the advice and assistance from other committees. All rules passed by the Acting Committee shall be brought before the General Body Meeting of the village and must get its consent. This committee is once again powerful in the sense that all sorts of complaints are entertained by this committee in written with a payment of Rs.2/-. It has all the power to decide all sorts of disputes and is the final body to pass punishments for offences. For discharging all its functions, it may take the help of Assisting Committee or the advice of the Advisory-Committee whenever it feels necessary. All the members in this Committee were the members with a little education or no education. They are selected keeping in view the caste and the locality factor. This is an important consideration in the selection of the members as stipulated by the President. This Committee must represent all caste groups in the village and the locality must be taken into consideration. Let us see the composition, functions and deliberations of the Committees in detail.

The other Committee is called the Advisory Committee in which there are 5 members. The important feature of this committee is that all its members are the grand old men of the village and are respected by the people. This Committee is a permanent one with its members as the permanent members. They provide all sor

the other committees. They have vast sources of experience and knowledge in the village affairs, the land and the people. The members of the advisory committee usually preside over the General Body meetings and give proposals whenever asked.

The acting committee has the largest number of members who are 14 in number. They are selected from people of all castes, Keeping in the locality factor in mind. The members with little or no education are selected according to their ability and willingness to work for the betterment of the village. They must have a good number of supporters from their own caste and must have the capacity to persuade their own people and must satisfy certain other criterians as fixed by the people from time to time. One of the members of this committee becomes the PRESIDENT of the village and another as Secretary. The Secretary with the advice of the president summons all sorts of meetings and serves the notices to other members. All sorts of records are kept with the Secretary and he acts as the link between all other committees. All sorts of financial expenditures and receipts are made with the signature of the President, Secretary and Cashier.

The Secretary is the man who coordinates all functions of the village. He, with the advice and knowledge of other members, serves notices for public or committee meetings. The village barber serves the notice from house to

house and collects the signatures. Then before one hour of the meeting the Barbar blows the trumpet which signifies the call of the meeting and within that time the village adults use to gather at the Community hall (under construction) or the temple place. Before the proceedings of the meeting starts the attendance of the families is taken in order to ascertain the presence of the village adults. As the rule goes, all adult members (at least one from each family) are supposed to come to the meeting if not, they are fined upto Rs.0.50 which is collected in the subsequent meeting. However, in unavoidable circumstances the absentee may inform the Secretary/president through his children or friends his inability and cause of his absence for which he is exempted from the payment of fine. All guests of the village and the government officials who visit the village are received and entertained by the secretary and President with other members' cooperation.

The third committee which assists in the smooth functioning of the village administration is the Assisting Committee. One of the striking features of this committee is that it is composed of all the educated employed and young members of the village. All the members of this committee are the members of the newly constituted and registered Radha Madhav Yuvak Sangh (Youth club). The duty of these members and committee

is to look after developmental works of the village like the village health, security and sources of finance to meet the expenditure on communication and other developmental work. They look after the sources of finance for the village fund and the source from which they can get, how they can get and other facilities provided by the government for the benefit of the village and the farmers. One of the most important functions of this committee is that it looks after the legality of the actions of the village council and other official matters and procedure of law for the village. They work as legal advisers of the village and experts in which law of the statutory panchayat Block authority etc. which covers the village administration. The members of this club are quite influential in the village and their words carry weight in case of deadlocks. All villagers pay respect to them and take advice sincerely. Among the 28 members of the committee are some government officials, teachers, bank employees and young and dynamic agriculturists, who are quite influential in the village. They do not interfere in the deliberations of the council, but advise the members of the council in case of deadlocks and clarify the legality of the rules and regulations, sanctions behind them. They also advise the council when the latter seeks.

Tenure

The membership of the Acting Committee is for two years. They can be impeached at any time. The President, members and the Secretary of the village Acting Committee hold their office during the pleasure of the villagers. Any proposal for no confidence can be brought by any villager or any member of any committee at any time and if it is accepted with 2/3rd members present in voting, it is accepted. The President, Secretary and members can be impeached in the same manner with the charge of corruption, treachery, selfishness and support for other villager undermining the interest of their own village. Besides, if any member is found to be a traitor, he may be impeached by the same motion. The members are eligible for reelection.

The members of the Advisory Committee are the grand oldmen of the village and their membership is for an unlimited period. By this way they may resign voluntarily if unable to discharge any duty. One of the members of the Advisory Committee was Cashier of this village who voluntarily resigned because of his ill health. The third Committee called the Assisting Committee is a permanent one. However, any member can resign or withdraw his membership at any time. Since its formation one of its members was forced to resign by the Youth Club who was caught redhanded while stealing some sugar from the supply store of the village.

Powers of the Committees

Among the three committees the Acting Committee is the most powerful. This Committee has the power of law-making as well as the power to implement. The Committee has the exclusive power to propose and pass law relating to agriculture, jungle, cultural function, discipline, development etc. The members of this committee are the most influential people in the village. The whole administrative factors of the village are usually distributed among them and different people hold different portfolios. In the first meeting of every year while selecting the members in the general body meeting, the President used to distribute the portfolios to the different people. The portfolios which are allotted to its members are Agriculture, Forest, Education, Finance, Cultural, Developmental, fire and general administration. For general administration, the President and the Secretary are responsible. Any legislation and rule relating to ones problem will be intimated by the concerned member and shall be discussed thoroughly, and the solution will be worked out. Thus if there will be any problem relating to jungle, the concerned member will propose legislation relating to that and if in agriculture the agricultural member will do the same.

But, so far as the administration and disciplinary action is concerned the committee as a whole takes

the decision. All major decisions are taken by the committee with the advice of the Advisory Committee. In case of deadlock or unusual position, 2/3 voting will be taken and accordingly the problem will be solved (added with subsequent modifications to the previous rules of the village council). This committee has also the power to levy and collect the fine for cultural purpose. In short this committee has all sorts of power for the village administration.

The other two committees have no power as such other than advisory. The only thing that it can do is to advise the acting committee regarding the validity, feasibility and legality of the rule regulations and action taken by them. Some times, the Assisting Committee helps in the deliberations of the acting committee in carrying out its orders and sorting out the problems.

As was seen in the previous chapter, after independence the interesting process developed in rural India is the emergence of a new kind of leadership which individually changed the pattern of the poor in the village. The new leaders to be politically able and to change one's position, mobilised their own groups and threatened one's socio-economic position. After the introduction of democracy within the village, the old and venerated leaders of higher castes bound themselves in

uneven situations because the conditions created by democracy did not allow them to have political power. Thus, to work for the position of power they modified their caste's groups and fellow caste men for their position and policies in the village. It now involved an increasing number of people in the form of different caste groups who opened, protested for or against those who are directly involved in the decision making and executing, which was the sole and arbitrary function of the so called leaders. This now democratised the conditions of village politics and changed the structure of Decision-making in particular. Let us see how the structure, as well as the function has undergone a change in rural India. For our convenience, let us discuss the term Decision-making and the process in theory and then we will be able to test it in this community level under study.

To start with the model, we know that, we must choose what to do. After we make choices in the absence of certain knowledge and their consequences. However, an abundance of relevant as well as irrelevant choices are available at the time of an important choice and on the effectiveness of which the information is processed may control the

appropriations of the resulting decisions.⁴ Thus, "the axioms of national action forms the basic starting assumption for the most formal theories of decision-making which states that All persons choose in accordance with preference ordering, that alternative which maximise the balance overcost."⁵

Thus the decision is a certain kind of human choice which is processed through human information available. It is organised over four parameters. The Axiom identifies the four parameters which bound any choice, namely, alternatives, benefits, costs and preference ordering. Benefits and costs are concepts which denote positive and negative preferences. It is mainly organised on two concepts the utility or the subjective value of amount cone and probability, or how likely it seems to the decision-maker that a particular outcome will occur if we make a particular choice or decision. One of the principles of maximizing expected utility, in essence asserts that we should choose the action that on the average will leave us the best . . .

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4. Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1972 Ed) Vol. 3 & 4. The Macmillan Company, The Free Press, New York. Collins MacMillan Pub. London (pp 34-36)
 5. S.M. Hale, 1984. Decision Process in Rural Development India, Ethnographic Folk custom society (P.1)

The application of decision models to choices explicitly formulated by groups rather than individuals is significantly important. The simplest approach has been to conceptualize such groups as analogous to an individual, and to impute to it a single set of interests and preference ordering for alternatives. Business organizations in particular lend themselves to such formulations. Other formulations which attempt to apply concepts of rational choice and maximization to group decision explicitly incorporate multiple individuals with different preferences. Maximization is stated in terms of an "optimal social welfare function" and defined as the aggregate of the utilities of all constituent individuals. Operationalization of such a concept is acknowledged to be problematic. Logically it would require the interpersonal comparison of cardinal utilities of different individuals, expressed in terms of common dimension. Thus, we have discussed in brief the decision-making and the decision making process as a model used in this literature of Public Political Science.

Thus, we have defined decision as a kind of human choice which is processed through the human information available and it is organized around the concepts of utility and probability.⁶ And the decision-making as a social process in which we select a problem for decision (choice) and produce a limited number of alternatives from among which a particular alternative is selected for implementation and execution.

off.⁶ Laboratory studies of human choices and certain kind of human information processing with the above two principles proves that men do remarkably well at conforming institutively to ideal rules, except for a consistent inefficiency in information processing. This is the decision, thus, decision-making is a social process that selects a problem for decision (i.e. choice) and produces a limited number of alternatives from among which a particular alternative is selected for implementation and execution. Some writers use this term synonymously with policy-making although others distinguish the two, reserving decision making for choices that involves conscious action are subject to sanctions and policy making as an identity of intersecting decisions that has no choice-making unit in a position to decide for all parties involved. Decision-making is also distinguished from problem solving, which may refer to (1) other tasks in which both problem for solutions and alternative solutions are given or (2) to more abstract higher mental processes of thinking and information processing. Political decision-making, however, is conceived of as involving the search for both problems and alternatives. This theory of decision-making in social science is often called as the theory of choice behaviour.⁷

6. Encyclopedia of The Social Sciences (1972 Ed) Vol. 3&4
The MacMillan Company, The Free Press, New York,
Collier MacMillan Pub. London (pp 34-66)

7. Ibid.

Now-a-days it has been a favourite topic for the Mathematicians, Economists, Psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and most importantly for the political scientists. New kinds of sciences have been developed such as the 'policy science' or the science of management which has put the topic in the centre of its discussion. Man has been redefined as a decision-making animal and many brilliant and complicated theories have been developed and worked out "what and how this strange animal decides."⁸ Most of the scholars in political science, prefer talking about policy to talking about politics which is mainly concerned with the process of decision-making. Before going into details of the study of some decisions, let us in brief discuss some of the methods available in decision-making.

A leading scholar in the field of decision-making, Paul Diesing⁹ talks of two most important methods of decisions, called the socio-economic decisions. In his words, "All decisions dealing with the activities of a single group

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8. The meaning of 'Political' in political decision by Brunoleoni in W.J. Gore and J.W. Dyson (Ed). The Making of Decisions, The Free Press of Glenocoe Collier Macmillan Ltd. London, pp.93-95 1964.
9. Paul Diesing, "Socio Economic Decisions" Ibid Pp 64-68

or single person are called selfish", decision which are either economic, social or the combination of the two. Again to him 'economic' decisions attempt to maximise the achievement of the given (goals, desires and interests) through the careful use of available means, in a situation when not all ends can be used in a number of ways with alternatives and in such a case decision consists of a selection of one of these alternatives. Usually such decisions in the mind of Paul Diesing are reached by (i) estimating the possible effort on the ends of such alternatives, (ii) estimating the degree of each effort; (iii) estimating and comparing the value of such effort on a single scale, either with money or utility or preference indifferences and (iv) choosing the alternative which has the greatest probability of providing greatest value. This type of decisions are called the maximizing decisions since it consists of a search for the action alternative which has maximum value or minimum loss on same scale.

On the other hand, according to same author, the 'social' decisions attempt to change personalities and social relations in the direction of greater fundamental harmony and stability and such a decision is reached by

- (1) defining a relatively independent problematic situation and uncovering the conflicts that exists in it as well as the factors maintaining them;

- (2) estimating the changes that are possible in each problematic factor together with the degree of strain the change would bring;
- (3) discovering that of what strain reducing support is available for each change; and
- (4) predicting the future conflicts, strains and stresses likely to accompany each direction of change; or likely to occur in any case; and
- (5) working for a change at the manageable level of strain that will reduce conflict or increase flexibility or prepare for future stresses". This type of decisions are called "integrative" decisions since it frequently leads to integration of something similar. As in case of maximizing decisions, many variations occur in different circumstances also.

Integrative and maximizing decisions are opposite in many ways. A maximizing decision process begins with given ends, which it accepts unquestionably and attempts to achieve; an integrative process treats given ends as clues and symptoms of hidden beliefs, values, fears, strains etc. which are not necessarily to be satisfied at all. In some problems the combined method can also be applied, like the cases which contained some factors requiring an integrative method and some factors requiring a maximizing treatment. Such

cases contain both socio-economic aspects and can be applicable to a combined socio-economic method, the most appropriate of which can be complex practical problems which need such combined methods and the application of this combined method may not be, technically truly systematic.

For example, the problems of the small rural community of KANGEILO require a combined method of socio-economic approach for their analysis of policy-making. While making decisions on the policies of this village, the council of the village (Decision-makers) to some extent adopts the combined method. This may be unsystematic in its nature of application, but their decisions can be analysed in the light of the methods discussed above. Where such a combined method is not applicable, the people have adopted adhoc methods for solving their own problems.

Decision Making at the local level, caste level and community level

Communities of rural India provide an ideal context for testing the process of decision-making or choice behaviour. Their explicit objective is to promote a wide range of innovations which require multiple choices on proposals which affect the community as a whole. The ideology of the programmes is to promote the interests of the community.

The Decision-making process of the communities in rural India are quite interesting especially the community under study. Before the introduction of democratic procedures, the making of all decisions in the rural communities in India were the exclusive monopoly of the autocratic leaders. They were taking all sorts of decisions of the village in their own way without consulting anybody in the village because of their social and economic position. There was nobody to challenge their authority. But when, after independence the people become politically conscious with the introduction of universal education and adult-suffrage, with development of means of communication and mass media, a new kind of leadership emerged. These new enthusiastic leaders brought about changes in the village power structure and became active in modernising the mechanisms of village politics. In specific, they democratized the procedure in the village decision making. Side by side, structure of Decision-Making in the caste, locality and community level also changed. Let us see and examine the decision making process of the major three castes in the village as a result of which the process will be noticed.

It is nearly impossible to recapture and describe in full the actual decision-making process as it exists even in a small community of Kançillo. There is always much more that comes to the eye. But what we have done is therefrom an attempt to identify the forces which determine the political decision-making of the village. These have been observed upon specific instances and their antecedents.

As mentioned above there are different levels at which decisions affecting the village politics are made. These are family, locality, caste etc. They all affected the making of decisions at the village level. Now, let us first analyse the peculiarities of decision-making process at the level of the major four caste groups, namely the Khandyats, Gauras and Sabaras. In our treatment we shall go on to describe the process of decision-making within them, as well as among them particularly at the village level at the village council. By way of the latter we shall mainly concentrate on the peculiarities of decision-making at the Gaon Desha. Finally we shall attempt to analyse some of the decisions already taken by the Gaon Desha.

Decision Making Process of the Khandyats

Among the Khandyats, the nature of decision-making process changed considerably after the arrival of democracy in the village particularly after passing away of the old generation of caste leaders. The old caste leaders who were the members of these caste Panchayat (which exists outside the village) were usually influential in the village among the Khandyats. They were the Zamindars with economic position and the sole dictators of the caste people. They were very much feared by the rest of the Khandyats and nobody was questioning their authority. As long as they were alive even their own

people never agreed to question their authority. They were the patriarch of social and ritual administration of the Khandayats.

With the passage of time and passing away of the conservative leaders, the middle aged people of this caste became active in the caste politics. These leaders having little education took different approach. Now, they became more active in the village and took all sorts of decisions and actions relating to their own caste. In the village, among the Khandayats, the middle aged as well as the young members with employment and educational status were now influential. They are getting much more obedience than the old leaders in marriage, customs and other works of Khandayats. The Khandayats in the village have 3 to 4 kinship groups with different family background. Among them the influential leaders who have much obedience from the bulk of the Khandayats are the school teachers, ^{the} Government employees and ^{the} young educated people. These people are now determining the aim and objective of their caste, like to which candidate they should support, to which argument they should stick to, etc. in the village. Most of the political decisions of the Khandayats are made by the kin's leaders.

The Khandayats of the village Kangeilic have three kinship groups, they are the Khundia's, the Samals, and the Swains. All these kin groups have their own place when they

assemble in the evening or day time to listen to Ramayan, Maha-Bharat and other epics. This place is called Geeta Char and 'Thakura Ghar' where they worship their family Gods and Goddess. There they also play dice and other games. Formally the family elders assemble here for any political decision. In these get-togethers, the educated or employed people use to take decisions with the formal support of the other caste people. This caste is highly individualistic who only assemble at extraordinary situations to take decisions.

Gaura Decision-Making

The Gauras of the village have a different decision-making structure. Before some time back the leader of the Gauras called the 'Behera', who is the caste head of the village, was the sole decision maker of this caste. But with the passing of time, the Gauras who are mostly landless live on cattle herding, went out of the village in search of livelihood. Most of them worked in nearby individual estates at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, etc. and earned their livelihood. With increasing interactions with other communities, they became more conscious. When they came to the village in different occasions to celebrate different festive occasions, they raised voices against their chief called the Behera. Others also who got cash and worked as suppliers of milk and cheese to the nearby hotels, became somewhat developed, in their outlook in their caste politics.

These new leaders voiced against the old caste Chief called Behera and the Behera family lost its influence in their community. Now in the village, these people are the decision-makers of their caste. Usually the Gauras have a community Hall called Dola Ghar when they assemble at the time of their festival and other occasions for other purposes. In their important political decisions, as well as caste ritual decisions, all elders of family heads assemble and simply support the decisions already taken. The Gauras in the village seem to be militant and exert physical force.

Sabara Decision-Making

The Sabaras as mentioned in the first chapter live in a separate street which is 150 meters away from the village settlement. The Sabaras are totally landless except one family who live by rendering work to the village. So far as their activity was concerned they did not have any influence in the affairs of the village politics. Their politics was mainly concentrated among themselves in the street owing to their caste. The Chief of the Sabaras was called the Dehury in the street who was their caste chief and exerted all sorts of power. He was the administrative as well as ritual chief of the street governing other people as the tribal chief. Any sort of decision was taken alone by himself.

But after the reorganization of the village groups by a group of enthusiastic young people, they played a vital role in village politics. Previously they were neither consulted nor invited to the village decision-making body. In 1980, onwards, the organizers felt it necessary and invited the Sabaras to participate in the deliberations of the village. This all happened because of the strategic importance of the Sabara population and the dependence of the land owning Khandayats upon the Sabaras' manual work. Thus how^{ever}, the Sabaras are well organised in the street under the leadership of some of the members who are invited as the representatives to the village council. Now it is learnt that, it is not the Dehury (their traditional caste chief) but people of the younger generations who are influential in the street. The young people with muscle-power and having good reputations in the area as able and skilled worker are influential in the street. Any decision or view to be communicated to the village council is no longer taken by the Dehury. It is the young people who are putting forth their stand on their own way on different issues. The Sabaras organise their different cultural and festive occasions like the Ghumura nacha, etc. and have a big room for that in the middle of the street. This club type room for the youngs in the village is the place for gossiping and playing different items.

One of the striking features of the Sabara decision-making in their street is the participation of the females. Most of the families have their male members as workers who come at late night, and hence female members participate in different issues of the street. This is due to the fact that this Sabar society is some what matrilineal in character. The females usually fix the dates for the leave of the males that is on which date their male would stay at home. It is very interesting to know that when the Sahukar comes asking the absence of the worker, their female members come out of their room and give reasons why her husband or brother or father cannot go to work. Thus, the Sabaras have a unique character of decision-making in which the females participate and sort out the solutions of different issues. This is all about the decision-making of the major caste groups in the village. So far as the other caste groups like the Barbar, Gurias and Telis are concerned, they do not have anything special, and are not influential in the village due to their small population. But they respond to different problems and issues of the village owing to the nature and type of the decision to be taken. For example if there is a question relating to the digging of a tube-well in the village and the place for the same, etc. they usually assimilate with other caste groups for their politics. In such cases, the different caste and kins groups support or object even to their own caste or kins group keeping their own interests.

Locality Factor

Another interesting example will make clear the locality factor in decision making. During Durga puja, Luxmi puja and Dola Jatra the villagers organize a number of operas to be staged in the village. In such festive occasions the people of the north of the village demand that the opera should be staged at the northern end, whereas the people of Southern end of the village ^{demand the same.} In some situations it is very interesting to know that the Khandayats who are settled in South part are supported by some of the Telies, Gurias and Kamaras because they settle, in the South part, whereas the people of North part which is dominated with Gaura population and also supported by some Khandayats, Gurias, Telies, etc.

In such cases when the decision in the village council is to be taken, the two parties come there and ask for the staging of the Opera for which they had finally taken the decision. There the different castes and kins groups support or object their own caste and kins group. In these situations, the village council takes decisions which must suit both the parties. Accordingly, in one instance, the council took a decision that there will be two opera parties out of which one will stage at the South end and the other at the North end in the next day. If there is a single opera to be staged like in 1980, that was staged in the middle of the village. This ^{is} how the locality factor plays an important role

in the making of the decisions in which the different caste and kinship groups to some extent undermine their caste affiliation. The Sabaras however, remain neutral in such issues because they live in a different street. But now there is a proposal in the council which may affect their interest with the other caste groups, thus only others take interest.

Role of Village Council in Decision-Making

The important decisions relating to the problems and policies of the village is taken by the village council. The village council as we know has three organizations which take part in the making of the decision .. the Village Acting Committee, the Village Advisory Committee and the Assisting Committee. These organizations take decisions in different ways. However, the Acting Committee is the most important which takes all decisions at different levels i.e. committee level and village level in the village. Let us describe how it takes the decisions at the village level and the committee level.

At the Village Level:

According to the rules of the village council, the Acting Committee is the sole authority regarding the decision-making of the village. It may consult the Advisory

as well as ^{the} Assisting Committee whenever it feels necessary. It also takes decisions and decides any sort of dispute in the village. Usually if the nature and type of the decision is important which needs the greater participation and involvement of the village elders, Gram-Sabha meeting is called. The Grama-Sabha is the largest body for the making of decision in the village. The day before the decision is to be taken, the Secretary of the village council notifies the matter with prior consultation with the members of the other committees. Then the barber goes from door to door for collection of signatures in the notice books and conveys the purpose, time and venue of the meeting. Thus, the next day, once again the barbar blows the Birakahali (the long trumpet) before one hour. Then the villagers know that it is time for them to be assembled at the said place. If the problem to be discussed involves caste or group interest, then the castes or groups in the village come to the meeting after prior decision at their own caste level and convey their own leaders that he must stick to his point or argument. This is primarily taken the day the notice is being served or before the Grama Sabha meets. For example, suppose there is a plan to dig a well in the village, the people of the north or south side may take decision at their own convenience and instruct their leaders that who should argue from their side and what should be his argument.

Hearing the sound of the trumpet, the village elders and youngsters assemble at the meeting place hurriedly. At the proper time, the Secretary of the village council starts calling the name of the village elders and marks the attendance as per the rules. After the attendance is taken, the fines are collected, (if some defaulter was there in the last meeting). Then the Secretary stands up and requests the members present to maintain discipline and then the concerned member of the committee brings the proposal about their respective portfolios which they hold. If the proposal is related to jungle, education or agriculture, the concerned member speaks in brief the nature and type of the problems, what sort of measure to be taken etc. Decision in such meetings are merely the public articulation and passive endorsement of what had already been taken by the Committee members which the proposer puts forward before the villagers. Thus, the President of the meeting formally declares the need of the individual viewpoints. It is at this juncture and time, that the different caste groups use to think of the proposal, calculate its merits and demerits from the point of view of their own Caste or group interest.

As soon as the president of the Council declares the problem or proposal which is open for discussion, the caste or group leaders forward their argument as already taken by them. In such situations the views expressed at such meetings reflects the anxiety of the leaders to protect their

own caste or group interest. They put forward their arguments, and speak much about their village but at the bottom of it they are keen on protecting their own interest. To cite the example of the well, the leader of the north side group of the village argues how it will be economic, providing drinking water to a large number of people who have no well etc. Likewise the leader of the Southern side will argue from their points of view.

At this moment, the President, Secretary and other committee members note down the main points of the arguments put forward by the villagers, the caste leaders and influential people. They count the points of difference and disagreements and analyse them in detail. After the scanning of individual view points, the members of the Committees of the village come out with different attentive proposals keeping in view the interest, unity and integrity of village and alternative proposals assembling the mutual interests of the castes or groups. Thus the people are advised to choose the alternative which is accepted by majority of the villagers. Those who disagree are convinced and persuaded by the influential members on important matters and thus the agreement is reached. Then the Secretary writes down the outcome of the meeting and the decision unanimously taken is accepted. Finally, the secretary notes down the proceedings in the proceeding book of the village and asks the people to put their signature or

thumb impression. Thus the meeting is finally declared over by the President with a vote of thanks to the participants.

One of the most important points is noticed in such Grama Sabha meetings is that, in case of disagreement or deadlock among the many conflicting groups, the influential members come into the rescue of the committee. Most important among them are the Oldest member of the village, the founding fathers of the new village-council, some school teachers and a bank employee of the village. These people because of their influence and contact with the public officials of the sub-division head quarter like to the SDO, BDO, Tahasildar, Supply Officer, Bank Manager play an important role in the deliberations of the village decision-making. These people persuade others who do not agree with the decision accepted by the majority. In 99% of the cases decided, these people have been successful in persuading the people in the village. Even there are certain cases in which the meetings of the council are dissolved without any outcome with deliberations throughout the days or nights and are finally decided with the interference of the influential leaders. The villagers wait and invite these people to come on their official holidays (because of almost all of them are government servants) In these cases the disagreement of the Grama-Sabha was over because of the oldest member in the village. He was called upon to the meeting and his proposal

was accepted with respect because he is the oldest survivor and father like of the village.

One might apprehend that in such conflicting-situations where the interests of one caste or group clashes with the other, there may be conflict between different groups, or group clashes. But in the village there is not at all any big cl_ash between the groups involved. The deliberations and the routine procedures of the village is such that it do not permit any group to clash with the other which in other words is that the rule of muscles is not permitted. The business of the meeting is such that the President will preside over the meeting, the Secretary will call the attendance, the members will propose and then the President will ask for individual views etc. one by one by calling their names all of which are conducted in a disciplined manner. Besides, the Secretary and the President constantly request the people to remain silent without making any noise in the meeting. Since the individual member participates are requested and allowed to put forth their view points without any fear or favour in a disciplined manner hinting at any member because of his personal difference etc. have no place in the council rules. Even it has been interestingly, noted down in the rules of the proceeding took that while in the meeting, nobody will be allowed to have private business talk and thereby disturb the deliberations of the village council. Besides there are also restrictions

Besides there are also restrictions on the members to be over talkative, quarrelsome, indisciplined or misbehaviour to the respected ones or seniors (See appendix) such types of indisciplined actions are backed by severe restrictions in the form of sanctions like social boycott, fine which must be paid by that time and other punishments as decided by the people present there. The president and secretary's constant reminders that the more you create indiscipline and talk more irrelevant things, the more time will be consumed in the process, reminds the people to come to the point. Thus this sort of restrictions with a good mechanism hardly leaves any scope for the people for any conflict in the village. Ofcourse, some times angry members argue with others and exchange hot words for which they are either fined which will be collected on the spot or one expelled from the meeting immediately for further meetings. In case the matter is serious, they are socially boycotted for an indefinite period and are admitted only with written apology and the fine imposed on them when paid.

In the village, there is no such major incident in which groups of one caste has fought a battle with physical force with the other. In such situations the villagers or important members pursue the angrymen and convince them.

Thus, there is hardly any conflict in the deliberations of the village council. We do not say that the village is a picture of a perfect and an utopian idea in which there is no conflict at all. Every thing in the village is ideal and there is complete harmony between the people, in that respect it is called an ideal village like that of Gandhi's Ram Rajya which can hardly be possible in the present day. But what we intend to say is that, conflicts occur, but they are of mild nature. By conflict we mean exchange of blames, group clashes etc. All that has happened in the village are minor in character and intensity which at each and every point of its time is undermined and solved amicably by the council. Hardly, there is any major conflict which has rocked the council in its working since 1980 to 1985. At each and every point it has been tackled properly by the villagers themselves.

Another important point which we would like to mention is the decision by majority to be accepted by the others. As per the rules the decision to be accepted by the majority is accepted by others. In such a situation while taking decisions in the village council, one may ask how is the decision accepted by the majority is at the same time accepted by the community as a whole. In other words there may come a position in which the different caste groups involved and the caste which is numerically stronger

may force the other caste groups to their own decisions". This is not at all possible in the village council because of the composition of the Acting Committee which is the final authority has to take decisions. The Acting Committee is composed of keeping in mind the equal representation of caste and locality features in mind. Besides this, a large number of regulations as laid down by the council for the proper understanding of the harmony in the village and therewith to keep up the unity of the village at any cost hardly supports any of such comment.

In other words, the present study of the village power structure of Kangeilo offers a slight contrast to Rampura (Srinivas 1955) where the settlement of disputes brings out the importance of single caste group which is locally dominant because of its largest numerical strength and economic sufficiency". According to Srinivas "A caste is dominant when it is numerically the strongest in the village or local area, and economically and politically exercises a prepondering influence." So far as the village Kangeilo is concerned, the Khandayat caste which is numerically as well as economically strongest in the village is supposed to exert prepondering influence in the decision-making of the village. But in fact, the Khandayats do not exert any power

like that of the dominant caste. Because of the democratized as well as well written restrictions on the decision makers and the representative character of the deciding body, there seems to be a balance in the decision making consensus which is well described by Bailey. Bailey ¹⁰ in his paper on "Decisions by consensus in councils and committees" says that, "there is likely to be a premium on consensus procedure in councils in communities where relationships tend to be multiplex, because in such committees disagreements can not easily be isolated within one realm of social action and tend to cause total paralysis". Thus the consensus in the village decision making is not only due to the written constitution's restrictions, social existence and group experience but also their eagerness to maintain the social solidarity for the common good. The other varieties of features which contribute to the community's consensus are the geography, the security, some economic condition, their social intervention, inter-dependability and after all the willingness to maintain the unity at all cost. This is primarily due to the previous bad experience which the village experienced when there was no consensus in the village. In general, we can say the authority

10. Quoted in A.H. Sanyal (1971), Democracy and Political Change in Village India, Orient Longman, New Delhi P.85

structure of the village is collective in nature and which functions objectively for the common good of the whole village of Kangeilo.

Authority

The working of such a process in a community in the mind of the readers may very often question the authority of the council's decisions. In other words one may question the Authority of the village council which can be explained as follows:

The working of such an institution in the village under study, as we saw grew out of the socio-economic and political conditions of the village. The experience in the village without such an institution was a horrible one. The security of one's property (mostly agriculture) was not at all there. There was no proper understanding among the people in case of any dispute. The authority to such disputes in the village was the SDO, Tehsildar or the judicial courts of the sub-division in which the villagers valuable money, time and energy was spoiled. Virtually, there was indiscipline and chaos in the village. In simple words there was no law and order in the village. Thus socio-economic and political experience led to the organised life in the form of a village council is the source of the authority in the village. Largely the authority is drawn from the village

community itself. The authority of the village council is drawn from the social and moral forces that are operating in the village community. Besides this, the most interesting force is their promise, sworn in the name of God to keep up the village unity. The villagers peculiar religious nature is also a strong source of the authority. Their tremendous faith on God are peculiar incidents, which to some extent forces the villagers to obey the decisions of the council. Why do the villagers obey the decisions of the Gaon Dash has its interesting characteristics. A question was asked to 100 elders of the village. "Why do you obey the decision of the Council"? The responses are given belows

Grounds of Obeying the Council's Decisions

i Moral ground.	ii Religious God feastings	iii Security of wealth agriculture & old age	iv Village unity	v Social boycott & punishment	vi inter- dependen- dence	Social Relation- ship
56	75	90	92	59	60	50

Notes: This was a multi-response question.

We see that out of the responses to the grounds of obeying the decisions of the council, nearly 92 people responded that, they obey the decisions of the Gaon Desh because of the many advantages for which they want to remain united. Perhaps, they have understood the real meaning of unity. They believe in, "united we stand, divided we fall".

Sanctions

The sanctions behind the decisions of the council are religious, social and economic. Some times physical force also plays a role. To a great extent the council exercises its influence through moral pressure and sometimes through economic sanctions. The most important economic sanction, is the fines imposed upon the earning members, law breakers are realised by the council. When the earning members do not obey the decisions of the council, they are fined which are of two types. Some times the fine imposed upon the law breaker has to be realized on the spot (within one hour or so when the council is in session) and other in the next session of the council.

Those who do not deposit the fines imposed by the council deliberately have to pay double the amount. If they still do not deposit in time, they have to suffer social boycott. In such a situation the villagers are intimidated

not to have any relations with the law breaker (even talking to his family is prohibited) unless the person deposits the amount fined with a written conditional apology. Those boycotted socially are not helped by any villager in any way.

If some one disobeys the instructions of the council's restrictions and continues the relations with the law breaker called 'dosi', he is fined. Thus, social boycott as a sanction plays a very important role and serves as the most important sanction of the council.

The other kind of sanction is the moral sanction which implies that, the people of the village should obey the decisions and commands of the Council as just and right. When the council pronounces any judgement or takes any decisions, that is accepted as law. For people of the village say that 'it is taken by the Desh' (by the village country). For any one who do not accept the council's verdict is ridiculed by the people. Besides, since they respect their own family needs and it is these people who are involved in the decision-making, the verdict of the council is accepted unconditionally. Sometimes the Kith and Kins brought about a lot of moral pressure on him to accept the verdict of the council.

The religious, sanctions behind the council's verdict and decision in the village is quite peculiar

in character. This is due to the tremendous faith on the village Deity which the villagers have developed in the course of time. As per the occasions in which they come united and swear in the name of the village Deity to obey the decisions or verdict of the village council and keep up the unity of the village, they do not hesitate to disobey the council. It is the interesting as well as peculiar religious nature of the villagers, is a major source of obedience.

Above all, the most important source of the obedience of the village council is the very nature of it. Its structure and function order both normal and extraordinary situations hardly give way to any other levels of power in the village. As a result, the authority was obeyed and held in awe and respect by all segments of Kanglelio community. It did not pay to disobey it, because the collective authority structure was so powerful and had the commensurate clout to enforce its decisions. The inhabitants of the village, thus hesitate to commit deviant acts which would invite the intention of the collective authority expressed through the village council. Thus the commission of deviant acts was kept in check.

Cohesion in the Village

Cohesion on daily contacts in residence, work and meetings cut across caste lines and special to find people

otherwise unrelated. (Mayer 1960, 132.) That is what we have observed in the village. Their mutual participation in each other's festivals, marriage ceremonies and other occasions bind them together to a common village feeling. Some occasions like the 'Gaon Lakshmi Puja, Dola Jatra, Holi and Ghumura Nacha, People, irrespective of their caste affiliation participate. The Lakshmi puja is the Puja of the Khandayats, the Dola of the Gauras, the Ghumura is that of the Sabaras. In all these occasions, all caste people both higher and lower are invited by each other and all rituals are performed. On 'Lakshmi puja' the unclean tribe of Sabaras are invited on the seven days of puja, and the employers grant leave to their workers to celebrate the occasion in merry-making. Their religio-festive life is the main source of cohesion in the village.

Achievements of the 'Goan Desh'

The achievements of the Gaon Desha are tremendous. The most important achievements are that of the village unity, security of life, agricultural crop and the protection of a patch of jungle. There is perpetual law and order in the village with minimum of crime. Not a single dispute in the last four years was taken out of the village to the thana or courts. A lot of old land disputes, family quarrels have been solved amicably. When asked, one of the members of the Gaon Desh said "Kangzilo is a self-contained village, disputes and

conflicts among us are though unavoidable, but these do not go out of the limit, the solutions and compromises are easily sought by the 'Desha' within a very short time".

The other aspects of achievement is that of the people's attitude towards authority has changed. People have become politically conscious by participating daily in the deliberations of the Desha. They have become good citizens who are now demanding more and more facilities for the village against the authority of Gram Panchayat, B.D.O. and S.D.O. One of the interesting evidence is the increased participation in election. In recent years, there is a greater increase in election participating which was almost 90% in the last assembly and general election. Besides, while putting the source agent S. Khuntia of Congress I in the book of the village, grievances to the public authority and hearing them, the number of participants is nearly 80% more than the previous occasions. The demonstration of such a larger number of people was in case of the demonstration to the civil supply office. The villagers in larger numbers went to the civil supply office and complained against the allotment of supply to one individual. They became successful in charging the supply in the name of the Desha and the President of the Council was made incharge.

The sub divisional authorities have recognised the fact of the importance of the 'Desha'. Even there are 4 instances in which, the thana and the SDO office refused to entertain the cases of the village. The Thana Officer in 3 cases returned the complaint to return to the village and obey the decision of the 'Desha'.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to make an empirical study of the nature of politics and society at the grass-root level in rural India. Special emphasis has been given in the change of decision-making at the community level and the democratization of the process of the rural political system. The real value of such study does not lie in the degree of validity of its conclusions for a wider area. It is rather valid and applicable only for the small universe under investigation and therefore the problems and conclusions may or may not be valid for other villages.

The specific nature of the study is about one particular village which has been investigated and the materials have been collected through personal observational method, interview and personal contacts. Each chapter has been treated with different aspects of the village community life. Special attention had been paid to decision-making at the village level, the nature of collective authority expressed through the village council and the changes in the social structure, inter-caste relation and inter-caste dependency and an overall picture of decision with the analysis of certain decisions already taken affecting the community.

Rural society in India is typical in its social, political and economic life. It has unique characteristics of kinship, greater rigidity of social structure and also greater homogeneity than the highly advanced societies. Besides, the nature and function of the rural society even though have been changed, are still conventional in nature. The characteristic features are

undergoing change as a result of several political, economic and social forces. Education, industrialisation, urbanization and above all democratic forces have favoured transformation of rural society in India. Several measures and developmental programmes of the government are also responsible, to a great extent for these changes.

So far as the study of caste structure is concerned, Kangeilo is a multicasite village. Each caste or tribe is an endogamous group and thus is separated from each other by their rule of endogamy and commensality. The village, thus, is a vertical entity of several horizontal layers, each of which is either a caste or tribe. But there is only one tribe namely the Sabaras.

The study first reveals the setting and the major caste groups in the village, their vertical and horizontal ties run in across the village. It also emphasises as the nature of relationship in the village which overflows caste barrier and bind together several caste groups and tribe of unequal hierarchy in the village. This fact is owing to the nature of the peculiarities of the village's physical isolation, morality of the people, unity in the village, interdependence of the castes and a sort of socio-economic change of livelihood of the villagers. The livelihood of the villagers is primarily based on agriculture and the non-agricultural castes (Castes without land) are employed by the landowning castes.

Occupational specialization, as evidenced in the village reinforces interdependence among castes and tribes and this is observed in the annual grain payment to the artisans and servicing castes. The occupational specialization not only creates divisiveness among the castes but also as a whole reinforces solidarity among the castes. In K angello, thus, there are two forces which act simultaneously : (i) through Occupational specialization and economic interdependence in the village, different castes come closer to one another to establish the vertical ties in one hand and on the other hand enhance solidarity in the same caste; (ii) again occupational specialization also creates cleav^aages in the same caste and enhances solidarity through caste interest. In sum, the occupational specialisation as observed in the village is forging force at the expense of many other bonds. The villagers as a multi-ethnic unit have to reciprocate and cooperate with various castes and communities in the community.

The sizable landowners who do not participate directly in the cultivation employ labourers. Annual, seasonal and casual labourers are employed both from the village irrespective of caste and class affiliation. For these all labourers get grain payment mostly. The provision of fooding for the annual labourer is a conventional practice in the village. The demand for labourers are made by the appointment of 'halya' of heterogeneous castes which constitute predominantly the Sabaras tribe.

On the otherhand, there is the vertical relationship which brings many castes closer to one another. These are the Halya,

Surjyabandhu, Bhagachasi etc. Besides, there are institutions such as ritual friendship, celebration of occasions and family partnerships in the village.

So far as the study of caste structure and group dynamics are concerned, there is considerable exaggeration that caste functions as the age old institution. But it is seen in the village that due to urban influence, contact of the people with government officials and the noticeable changes in the village due to new scope for employment, economic growth by bank finance and educational facilities; the way of the life of the villagers has changed. As a result, caste no longer functions as an old institution, rather it has become secularised and now turns into an instrument for effectively articulating group interest which is secular in nature. No doubt it's force played conventional role at the beginning but gradually its importance became less and less.

One of the marked changes in the rural India is seen in the political life of the village especially in the field of decision-making. There is a perceptible change noticed in the process of decision-making at the community level. The traditional village headman who hold power due to his socio-economic status and was the sole decision-maker for the community did not last long. The multi-dimensional changes in the village life, the democratization process of the institution, introduction of democracy, its institutions and ideals developed

a tendency in the minds of the people in the village. The educated and employed youth no longer beared this and differed to the traditional authority. They aroused community's sentiment towards the common problem and shakend^e the traditional authority of the village. They brought as is evident in the study, great changes in the lives of rural India. The most interesting as well as magnificent change is perhaps the decision-making and the evolution of collective authority.

The new leadership was provided by the youths in the village who organized the people and constituted a new village council as 'Gaon Desh'. They gave the village a new constitution and organized the people politically. The authority now rested with the village council and no more became the monopoly of the Pradhan. The Council consisted of three committees known as the Acting Advisory and Working Committees. The council chalked out the entire socio-economic and political code of the village extending its authority^t to the entire village. It took decisions, solved disputes, formed policies and executed the policies in favour of the whole village community as a whole and not in favour of any caste. As a result of policy formation and decision, the decision-making process became more and more democratic. Multi-caste dominance became the hallmark and

the nature of village authority became collective.

The changes and the interaction of democratic procedure for decision-making and the elective principle compelled the aspirants to master support by encouraging their castes, kin or affiliated groups. Thus the enjoyment of political authority became more and more matters of skill in making enduring political coalitions, of accommodating diverse demands, of creating a climate of equal importance to the all^{the} groups. In doing so all these one could not exploit one's socio-economic advantage, but bowed down before the collective authority. Decision-making and policy influence became increasingly important at different levels in the village like the decision-making at the caste level, locality level and village level. Over the years, the villagers developed a notion that public policy decisions can be influenced and it is no more the business of any one who cares. Now not only could one discuss and participate in making them, they now felt, but one could even influence them. Such a conviction involved more and more villagers in the discussions in the village council.

The villagers, on the other hand, on various occasions discussed and deliberated on the different points

of view expressed by them in heated manner. But in most of the cases, even after heated discussions and mild exchange of words. They have resumed their normal interaction and solidarity. Differences of arguments have in some cases disrupted their normal life less and less as time went by. Thus, they ~~knew~~ to make a distinction between points of views expressed and their normal social relationships.

In the long run, the village has developed into an integrated whole with several cast^es and tribes of unequal hierarchy. The changes in the various areas of their political life have given a better understanding of the mechanism of political authority in the village and their attitude towards village collective authority had significantly been altered. They have now become the demanding customers and grumblers in the village democracy. They have also developed a greater sense of feeling for their village which has been reflected on many crucial occasions and their response in demonstration of unity against the attack on the village crop, jungle or village wealth or th^eives. The equal position to the lower caste people over the unclean tribe in the festive as well as on all other occasions of the village discussions and

their approach to governmental officials at times of putting the demands has been tremendously expressed. The absence of major conflict during the last two years really proves the sense of unity among the villagers. Not a single case has been registered by any villager of Kangeilo in any court, Thana or administration. This certainly reflects the sense of unity which the villagers have cherished.

Conclusions

The conclusions and generalizations are to the best of our knowledge drawn from our own observation of the particular community of Kangeilo and thus are valid to that small world which has been investigated. These may or may not be applicable to the other villages and the validity of data is exclusively to that village only.

Firstly, from our study we came to know that the geographical situation and surrounding of the village has resulted in an interesting relationship among the villagers. It has shaped the socio-economic and political relationship of the people, especially on the political life of the inhabitants. Thus the geography has a bearing on the politics which is distinctively observable.

Secondly, so far as the study of caste, inter-caste relation and inter-caste dependency are concerned, the village in particular marks a difference to other village studies on the point of the claim of dominant caste.[†] The group dynamics as studied shows that there is considerable exaggeration in the claims that caste in a village is said to be dominant because it preponderates influence in a community because of its numerical strength, wealth and social status. Evidence based on empirical study in the village decision-making shows that of the alleged political dominance of a caste is lacking, atleast in this village investigated. Particularly in the field of decision-making at the community level - the dominance of any caste is absent. It may be in the other aspects of the village life, no doubt, but in the five decisions studied and given in the appendix shows that caste plays its part only as one of the innumerable forces. There are other forces like economic interests, caste interests, residential loyalties, physical surrounding, situation of the village, morality of the people and the inter-personal dependency as well as relationships which also contribute to decision-making.

[†] M.N. Srinivas, 1959. "Dominant Caste in Rampura", American Anthropologist Vol.XI (pp. 1-16),

Thirdly, there is considerable evidence that whenever caste enters the political areas, it no longer functions as the old institution of that name. It has become secularised and turns into an instrument for effectively articulating group interests which are secular in the nature. Emphasizing the secular aspect of caste the Rudolphs have adopted a very useful model of fission, fusion and decompression, in explaining the response of castes to the appearance of new forces in Indian Society and Politics². The changes that caste has and is undergoing are carrying it beyond traditional ascriptive definitions. The changes include internal differentiation (fission) and operation of integrative institutions upon it; federation of castes (fusion) into larger associations that expresses interests, symbols, and norms; and decompression of caste's village home". Further "caste is losing the functions, norms and structure once associated with it and acquiring new ones. It is serving the ritual and occupational goals of traditional society less, the mobility and participation goals of modern society more. In doing so it helps to substitute in the lives of ordinary Indian's choice for birth, equality for hierarchy and opportunity for fate". (p.103)

2 Rudolphs Lloyd & Susanne ⁽¹⁹⁶⁷⁾ The Tradition of Modernity
Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, ~~1967~~ pp.88-103

Fourthly, it seems clear that caste politics is not incompatible with democracy. When caste operates as a traditional tie with no secular aims, caste can not be said to be undemocratic. Democracy, after all should at the minimum: reflect the real behaviour of the people. If their behaviour is governed by the caste, it is arguable that may be undemocratic not to allow caste behaviour its role in the political process. But caste operates in a duality, traditional as well as modern.

Fifthly, the working of Such a democratic system in a village becomes a training ground for the people for political participation in the wider political system of state. Their participation in the discussion, deliberation and decision on various problems really broaden their political outlook.

Lastly, the operation on functioning of such a democratic system (Village Council) with jurisdiction over the entire village to solve the disputes of governmental machinery for arbitration. If with proper organization and recognition of such councils are encouraged with power delegated to solve their own problems arising out of the village will be given, certainly that will lessen the workload on the governmental machinery and the democracy can really function effectively.

However, we do not suggest the village as an Utopia of perfect integration. It is a village what Bailey says "an axiom that the poor are helpless against the rich"³. Till today all the rich and the poor, the high caste and the lower unclean caste or tribe and the majority of the population of Kangeilo are tied into a village bond. But some men who have little interest in and over the village have defied the codes of the village. Some leaders have been in the course of time tied over personal benefits and personal gains and become corrupt with party affiliations. But this does not mean that they who defied the codes of this community are without community consciousness, but they have their own interests outside the village and are less dependent upon the village. But when the questions of the village prestige comes, they are among the others to defend.

³ F.G. Bailey (1955) "An Oriya Hill Village-I" in M.N. Srinivas (ed) "India's Villages" (Asia Publishing House, Bombay

APPENDIX - ICASE - 1

For example, the village council of Kangello takes decision regarding the fixation of wages for the agricultural labourers every year or once in two years. They fix the wage for both men and women as to how much money or in kind should be paid to the labourers and the duration of working hours. In the discussion of the wage of this kind, the Sabaras who are the exclusive workers in line on the wages, play a very important role in the decision-making. In the meeting, they demand for more wage while the employers of these agricultural labourers argue for less wage. Say in the last year's discussion, the Sabaras demanded Rs.8/- for male and Rs.6/- for female labourer. But the Khandayats alongwith the Telis in this discussion argued for Rs.5.50 for male and Rs.4 for the females.

This discussion for the fixation of the wage took some 6 hours to be finalised on that day but could not be solved. The next day the workers did not go for work and requested their fellow workers from the nearby villages

For the council's decision proceeding See Appendix II case (6) as recorded in the proceeding book 1, Session 1957, 1958.

not to work in the field of the village people. In consultation with their leaders they all stopped working. As a result of which the villagers called another meeting after 6 days and settled the matter at the rate of Rs.6.50 for the male and Rs.5 for the female. That only could happen after persuading Sabaras to a great extent because of a host of factors in which the geography of the village, the season, their interdependence and intercaste relation are important. Since it was rainy season and the prime time for the paddy came and cash crop cultivation, delay in the work process would result in a great loss in agriculture, the Khandayats and Telis (the land owning people of the village) hurriedly negotiated with the Sabaras. This is, we would like to say that now the Sabaras being very few in number as compared to the Khandayats and Telis and very poor as regards to the land ownership and other income, played a very important role. This is an exclusive case in which the Sabaras became victorious and the Khandayats had to negotiate with them.

CASE 2

Another case will help us to understand the caste dynamics in a better way. That is the case of the construction of a dam over the river Ramial during the drought period. On 6th of October the villagers in their council meeting discussed the problem of scarcity of water. They felt that without the necessary steps, atleast 80% of the standing paddy crop will be destroyed if irrigation work will not be taken. In this meeting they saw the possibility of diverting the water of the river through a strenuous plan in which a lot of labour is required. Besides, the Khandayats felt it impossible without the help of the people of other castes. This work would atleast take for 15 days with the help of all villagers.

As a result on 10th of October the Khandayats and Telis spokesmen proposed the proposal in the council meeting for the construction of dam and the cooperation of all villagers. In this meeting, the other caste people except the Khandayats and the Telis, vehemently opposed the idea because they know that they are not going to be benefited from the dam since they do not own a piece of land which can be irrigated. After long period of deliberations the Khandayats

tried to convince others but failed. When they failed to convince them, the Khandayats evoked the question of dependency and said that they are not going to help them in their distress if they are not helping them now. It was a fact that if the paddy will not be saved, the Khandayats and Telis would not be able to finance them in the sorrows and happiness of the latter. This was the question of clear interdependence as a result of which the non-Khandayat-Teli people participated in the construction of the dam for a long period in which they were successful in their mission.

Since, for their sustenance, the people of this village other than the Khandayats and Sabaras live: by lending, forming and working as labours and selling their traditional occupational produce in the village. They felt it necessary to save the standing paddy crop as a result of which an unavoidable circumstance was avoided. This case shows how the Khandayats and Telis influenced the decision-making on the problem of dam construction in this village. On the otherhand the non-Khandayat-Teli people without a single piece of land worked for long days in the dam construction.

CASE - 3

We would like to cite another case in which the Gauras (Herdmen) as a caste influenced in the decision-making of the village. During the rainy season, in one of the meetings of the village council, the Khandayats proposed for the restriction of the movement of cattle and grass cutting from and near the paddy fields. While cutting grass, the people usually cut the paddy plants was the complaint of the Khandayats. Besides this, the Gauras graze their large herds of cattles near the field frequently as a result of which the crops field was being destroyed.

To see the other side of the case, the Gauras are the people with large herds of cattle in the village for whom it becomes impossible for the maintenance of the cattles because all the fertile as well as infertile lands came under cultivation in rainy season and are blocked by the wooden fence. As a result of this the grazing land comes under severe restriction which creates problem for the Gauras maintaining the cattle. Besides this most of the cows of Gauras go milch during this season also.

So in this case, the Gauras were sufferers, if the proposal would be accepted. Thus while taking the decisions for grass-cutting totally and the movement of cattles, the Gauras counted the danger for the problem and argued for relaxation in the rules. Finally the Khandayat and Telis succumbed to the demand of the Gauras and relaxed the regulation to a great extent. The decision ended with a provision that

- i) The Gauras and all other people will be allowed to cut the grass twice in a week in the presence of the village Crop guard ;
- ii) The Crop guard will inspect the grass cutting and anybody found cutting the crop-plants shall be reported to the Council and shall be fined upto Rs.50/-;
- iii) Everybody will be allowed to graze their cattles atleast keeping a distance of atleast 10 to 15 feet from the crop field and if any cattle destroys substantially the crop of any one, he will be fined and that money will go to the concerned man as compensation and lastly;
- iv) People will go to the grassfield after hearing the sound of the trumpet.

This decision was taken in the 48th session of the Council on 6.9.82.

This case of the reconsideration of the rules was considered keeping in view the position of the Gauras and thus shows an instance of the respect for mutual cooperation

and mutual claims. Once again, this decision also stipulates that the fine levied upon the party which destroys the crop shall not be relaxed in any case.

Case . 4

While building a high school, all the villagers decided in the 69th session of the Village Council meeting that along with the villagers of Pippla, Koriaopal, Kanchhia and Jagannathpur, they shall help in the building of the school. Everybody will contribute to the school fund in terms of cash as well as in kind. Thus while the discussion was going on some of the people who have no school going children and do not expect that their children will not go to school in the next 5 years, opposed the idea on the ground that they are not going to be benefitted. Besides the donation of Rs.50/- per family towards the school fund was a big amount for them.

Finally, keeping in view all the problems of the people who cannot afford the money, the Council decided that, those people who cannot afford to pay the money, may pay in kind like contributing the stone, working physically in the construction of the school building, by providing wood for the roof and so on. But the condition was that everybody who have school going children as well as the people without school going children must contribute to the building of the school. This case of the decision in the Council shows the kind of

working of the system very cooperatively and smoothly. Thus, the poor people who can not afford to see their children even in the coming decade because of their acute poverty could not resist the idea of the school because primarily they are dependant upon them for their life and death-upon the villagers. They obeyed the decision because the Council took it for the betterment of the community as a whole.

Another supplementary case of this kind is that of the repairing the roof of the Middle English school and Upper Primary school of the village. The villagers every year repair and reconstruct the hay roofs of the schools. In these occasions all people in the village either whose children are reading or not come and participate in the work. There are instances in which some people have been fined for not coming to that work who are not even fathers and can not send their children in the coming 5 years-

Case - 5

The most interesting case of the caste dynamics in the village decision-making was that of the conflict between the Sabaras and the prominent member of the village council Mr. Hrusikesha Somal. Hrusikesha somal is one of the richmen in the village whose permanent agricultural labourer was Satrughana Dehury. On 28th February, Satrughana came to the field of Hrusikesha after 3 days of absence. It was the prime time for the cultivation of rabi crops and a delay would result in loss.

By the time Hrusikesha was ploughing in his field, Satrughana came and wanted to join him. Being very much angry for the long absence of Satrughana, his saukar Hrusikesha suddenly came out of the field and started hitting him. Then Satrughana shouted loudly for help. Seeing the scene and hearing the noise of Satrughana the other Sabar agricultural labourers who were working nearby with their saukars left their work and rushed to the place. Almost all Sabaras and their women assembled at the place and gheared Hrusikesha and demanded a decision on the spot. What interestingly happened by that time was that some other saukars who are Khandayats supported the act of Hrusikesha.

Then being annoyed by the problem the Sabaras left the work of all their saukars and went to their street to discuss the matter and course of action in detail. Then they decided to put forward the case in the village council on that very day.

In the evening the trumpet blew and people assembled in large number, women as well as children also gathered. In this session Hrusikesha Samal who was a member of the Council was not allowed to sit with other members and the deliberations lasted for as long as 10 (ten) hours. After discussing the problem vividly by the help of the advisers and the prominent members of the Assisting Committee the members decided to fine Hrusikesha for his act. They unanimously condemned the aggressive act of Hrusikesha and fined him Rs.150/- They also fined the prominent members of the Sabar community for rushing to the place in aggressive mood and scolding in filthy language. The sabaras were fined Rs.1/- each. All the people who were fined deposited the money on the spot out of which from the humanitarian point of view the Council gave Rs.100/- to Satrughana Dehury. The Sabaras became very happy when they successfully influenced the council to impose restriction upon the behaviour of a prominent member of the council as well as a richman who employs lot of labourers in agriculture and who belongs to the high caste in the caste hierarchy.

present at the Radhakrishna temple complex was notified. The next day oath taking ceremony in the name of village god took place and people bowed to keep unity at any cost in the village.

After oath taking ceremony was over the following committees were constituted as per the "Niyamabalis" accepted by the villagers.

The Committees were as follows

- 1) Acting Committee
- 2) Advisory Committee
- 3) Assisting Committee

The members were selected from among the villagers on the spot.

Niyamabalis

1. The village barbar will henceforth blow the trumpet and the people should be assembled at the venue within half an hour. Anybody who will be absent they will have to pay Rs.1/- as fine. However in case of any problem in home, the concerned member should inform the committee the cause of his absence which will be considered without fine.
2. Anybody who will be caught stealing any agricultural crop or will be proved stealing something with the help of

APPENDIX - IINIYAMABALIS (RULES & REGULATIONS)

The first village meeting was convened at the above mentioned place. Almost all the villagers were present. As per the proposal made by Durjyodhan Khuntia and seconded by Brjabandhu Khuntia, the eldest surviving member of the village Shri. Jagabandhu Barik presided over the meeting. The following were discussed and decisions were taken:

1. The president requested all the members present in the meetings to keep silence and putforth their views individually and make success the meeting.
2. The president reminded the people ~~that~~ the pride of the village has gone down and chaos and confusion ~~are~~ prevailing in the village when the village is moving towards downfall. Then he requested the people to bring back the glory and pride of the village with disciplined life. By unity every impossible thing can be made possible was the call of the President and he cited the examples of unity in other villages.

The president first proposed the question of unity among the villagers, which almost all the people accepted individually. Lastly the three word members Hrusikesha Samal, Hrudananda Barik and Govinda Chandra Samal's view was asked by the people who welcomed the unity among the villagers heartily. Therefore the resolutions was accepted unanniously. Tomorrow all to be

others shall be punished. The council will enquire the case in detail. The application for such cases shall be accepted by the Secretary with a fee of Rs.2/-.

3. The village's reserved forest will be guarded by the people of the village. Anybody found destroying or cutting woods illegally shall be fined. The minimum fine for such case is Rs.40/- which cannot be relaxable.

4. If any quarrel both familial and property related comes up in the village, the members of the working committee will decide and such problems will be entertained only in a written application, addressed to the Secretary with Rs.2/- as fees. Members will hold impartial judgement with proper inquiry and if any suggestion needed may consult the Advisory Council for details. The Council would fine the culprit suitably.

No case will be allowed to go out of the village council to any Thana or court without the knowledge of the Gaon Dosh. This rule should be strictly followed.

5. All developmental works of the village will be carried out by the Acting Committee with the help of the Assisting Committee. Both these committees may accept the advice of the Advisory Committee or may decide alone.

6. While the deliberations in the council are in progress, if someone disobeys or insults (physically or by scolding) he shall be punished and such acts shall be condemned.

7. All sorts of cultural ceremonies will be performed at one place.

8. Everybody should help each other against the attack of any outsider keeping in mind as they are brothers.

9. If any act besides these above mentioned comes up and the Council decides it as a fault, the man will be punished. The power is hereby given to the council by all of us.

If someone disobeys all the above rules from 1-9, he will be punished as proposed.

Additional Rules - I

1) From the coming session, the head of the family should compulsorily attend the council meetings. If he has any problem his adult son may represent him. But the council can enquire the problem of the head member of the family.

2. All members shall remain present from the beginning to the end of the session and shall participate in the deliberations.

3. While the session of the council is in progress, nobody will be allowed to talk private problems or matters.

- 4) The Secretary and the President shall make clear the agenda and the discussions adopted in detail at the beginning and end of the session.
- 5) If any member of the working committee shall be not be present in 3 consecutive meetings of the council, his membership will be automatically cancelled. He will be considered impeached.
- 6) With 2/3rd vote of the working committee, any impeachment motion or no-confidence motion can be brought against the President, Secretary and such other members of the Working Committee. If passed they will be removed.
- 7) If anybody intentionally does any thing against the interest of the Gaon Desha as well as against any member of the Committees he will be considered as a traitor and ditcher.
- 8) From today, the matter which will be accepted with majority votes, it will be declared passed. Others have to accept it.
- 9) If any member of the working committee indulges in backbiting against his fellow member, he shall be considered as a conspirator and traitor against the Gaon Desh.
- 10) If any one talks against the Desha and accepts against the Desha, the Desha will take action against the members.

11) Nobody will be allowed to talk against his will or against any member in the meetings. If some one has any complaint against the decisions, he can freely express it in the meetings.

The above additional rules shall be effective with effect from the next session.

Note: These Niyambalás are the trans~~tion~~tion of the Gaon Desh recorded in Proceeding Book I and II. They are collected randomly.

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