Literature and the Politics of Identity in Orissa 1920-1960

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Abstract

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The aim of this study is to understand how literature reflects and contributes to the politics of identity. This study is not a history of Oriya literature, nor does it deal with the process of gradual crystallization of Oriya political identity. This research is based on the assumption that creative literature projects a collective identity of a people and sustains a dominant discourse on the society that it writes about. Further, it supports the assumption that a narrative, apart from performing the symbolic act of creating and reproducing social cohesion, is a specific mechanism through which the collective consciousness of a society often represses its historical contradictions. Since this work is based on literary sources, it discussed the processes through which creative writers make sense of the world around them and represent this world to their readership.

The evolution of the identity of a region is rarely a linear development, or the subject of a simple, homogeneous construction. Any invocation of identity is fraught with internal tensions and contestations. Different groups of people within the same region often question the validity of a particular construction of their identity, claiming that it represents only one aspect of reality and not others. But the theme of identity is constantly invoked in the context of a nation's formation, to emphasise national and cultural differences with other nations. In the context of a modern nation, this construction of identity is deeply involved in the interpretations of the nation's past.

The first chapter of this thesis discussed the political conditions under which the Oriya speaking tracts of the British empire demanded unification, leading to the emergence of Orissa as a separate province in 1936. This was the first time when the Oriya people felt the need to articulate an identity of a modern kind. This chapter is divided into three sections which discuss the coming of modernity to Orissa and the social transformations that followed. It also analyses the colonial missionary and Bengali discourses on the nature of Oriya society, and the first stages of the Oriya constructions of the self.

The second chapter discusses literary writing and articulation of Oriya by a group of writers closely associated with the national movement from 1920 onwards. They articulated new meanings that helped constitute a picture of Oriyaness. Their emphasis was on raising an all-India consciousness among the Oriyas but the symbols of mobilisation were strictly Oriya.

The third chapters discusses the slow disenchantment of Oriya writers with the coming of modernity, and the consequent rise of a discourse that was nostalgic about the Oriya past. Identity was closely linked to the questions of social morality in this phase. Matters and aspects of everyday lives – like the nature of the traditional social formation, social relations among different groups, the joint family, the image of women – were the given a new status as 'tradition' and presented as crucial to an Oriya identity. This chapter deals with the literary expression of the frustration that various social groups, rural Oriyas, tribal or women experienced with the coming of change. It discusses an identity crisis of Oriya society reflected in literature of the decades following the twenties.

The fourth chapter discusses the connection of Left writing with the problem of identity formation. What was described as 'quintessentially Oriya' was questioned and rejected by leftist intellectuals. Radical literature created a set of 'alternative' Oriya heroes, and provided an alternative reading of what was valuable in society and its historical past. Deeply critical of the earlier construction of Oriyaness, the leftwing writers questioned the validity of the elitist construction of the Oriya self.

In the cultural self-construction of Oriya identity, the figure of Jagannath, the deity of the temple at Puri, has always enjoyed a special place. The fifth chapter turns to a discussion of Jagannath as the 'national god' of Orissa and its centrality to any reading of Oriyaness. The chapter analyses the changing relations between modernity and religion. It seeks to show the historical process by which a traditional religious symbol retained its cultural significance in a modern definition of a society's identity.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis tries to understand the manner in which literature contributes to the making of identity and, once an identity has been formed, how literature facilitates the re-circulation and confirmation of this identity. The literary process of defining a community-self is a part of the wider aspect of cultural construction of the nation; the way culture contributes to the making up of national life, the historical specificities which prompt the production and the continuance of certain cultural characteristics. Literature forms a very important aspect of this cultural process especially in the making of an idea of Oriyaness and particularly the forms in which it reflects the shifts and contestations in Oriya identity. While this claim of literature reflecting identity is not a new assertion, nevertheless, this process of reflection has to be analysed in each specific context, because the contingent conditions that make up both literature and identity in each region are different. Two things motivated this work. First, the lack of literature in Orissa which attempted to relate the question of identity to everyday forms of life. Secondly, most academic interrogations on Oriya society and identity have been confined to the period from the mid-19th century till 1936, the year Orissa got its status as an independent province. The Oriya nation did not stop forming after 1936 nor did questions of identity stop bothering the Oriyas after the apparent settlement of its political identity. Rather the question of self-definition became more intense because they had to be sorted out on an everyday basis.

While some literary theorists represent literature as 'organised violence committed on ordinary language' and relegate the 'content' to a secondary status, others assert that even in its deviation from ordinary speech it helps us understand the complexity of our experiences. It helps to comprehend the totality of varied experiences by structuring and organising it in the form of stories. If we accept Lukacs's suggestion that novels are an allegory of class relations, we might extend it to suggest that social reality, values, social structure and its organising principles find expression in literature, which in turn is closely linked to the creation of cohesion and maintenance of group solidarities. Among other forms, literature is one of the ways in which communication among members of the community occurs. It is through this that implicit agreements on values etc. are recreated, re-circulated and brought to the level of explicit consciousness of the community.

It can be seen that wherever modernity appears, it quickens patterns of change or disturbs established patterns. Societies going through this process of transformation in their basic structures find ways of collective reflection on this process. In the history of the west, this process of historical reflection is done by social theory complemented by literature. In the Indian context, literature performs the act of reflecting on contemporary history and directing historical

analysis. It needs to be mentioned that in India traditionally there was no equivalent of modern social theory which would facilitate theoretical and historical reflection on the self. This work of self-reflection on the direction in which society was moving, came from literary sources which performed a function similar in some ways to modern social theory. In fact, the term 'upanyasa'(novel) means a statement properly presented or arranged in an orderly manner. In Telegu, the word even today does not mean a novel but refers to a discourse or a speech. While history selects significant events as its subject, literature supplements history by reflecting changes in the manner of everyday living. Unlike factual history, literature records informal and anonymous events that typify everyday life. This continual process of complementarity between history and literature runs through this work.

Certain texts make particularly forceful contributions to the construction of a community's identity and have the potential to be interpreted politically. Literary texts assign new meanings and different directions to the process of historical change, recreate meaning and represent it to the community again. Narratives perform the symbolic act of creating and reproducing cohesion. Narrative is also a specific mechanism through which the collective consciousness often represses historical contradictions. Literary narrative often moves along contradictory courses. The novel acts as a symbolic resolution of the real contradiction, to solve it at an imaginary level or repress a lived dilemma. In some senses the text is a socially symbolic act; it is an act in that it tries to do something to the world but symbolic in the sense that it leaves the world of social relations untouched.

An author cannot write in a manner which would not make sense to the reader. No text is conceivable except within some ordered and closed structure of discourse. Any study of literature must understand the relationship between the subject and the author. The cultural reproduction of the text implies a relationship with accumulated shared symbols representative of and significant within a particular community- a context dependent semiotic system. The texts usually make use of trait inventories of the community, stories, myths and legends that have had a traditional function of maintaining cohesion. They make use of cultural symbols, signs and codes which are clear to the insider and form a part of the community's unconscious. Writing about the self or any form of structured narrativisation helps in transmitting cultural values and this largely depends upon the evolving system of meaning. Since meanings vary according to situations, it is important to understand the meanings attached to events and cultural artefacts in a specific time.

There is no linear development of identity nor a single homogeneous construction of a community's self. Any invocation of identity is fraught with tensions and contestations. The process of identity formation is historical and it responds to historical transformations. Different groups of people within one region often question the validity of a particular construction of their

common collective identity, claiming that it merely articulates one aspect of reality at the expense of others. The meaning of identity is dialogic; the theme of identity is continuously invoked, especially when a nation first asserts itself politically, by trying to emphasise its difference from other dominant cultural groups. Identity gains central significance in the cultural and economic context of modernity which tends towards greater homogeneity and pulls society often in two directions: collective and individual. At times, the greater the individual assertion of the self, the more it stands in contradiction to demands of the collective identity.

Identity can be understood through contestations and persistence and elimination of certain cultural norms. In many common representations of identity in cultural discourse an 'other' emerges. Creative writers re-circulate certain norms as crucial to community existence or repudiate some as dangerous to the community's image. But literary 'others' can be external or internal. In the case of Orissa, the Bengali language could be distinguished easily as an adversary for the political preservation of the Oriya community, but the identification of the 'insider other' was done more subtly by the the implicit effects of works of literature. Since identity is always in the process of formation, there is continuous incorporation of new people and new sites of meaning. But different creative writers represent different norms as appropriate and valuable to society, as a result of which conflicting strands of literature appear in one society . Not only is a particular definition of self continuously questioned, there is a need to constantly re-organise identities. Within the limits of a community's boundaries, core groups are often found exploiting ethnic hinterlands or peripheral communities. In our discussion, we will come across the need to democratise the content of identity through the inclusion of traditionally neglected groups, like the peasants and tribals.

Collective identity is redefined when the sectional interests of sub-groups are co-ordinated under one banner, thereby evoking greater commitment to a single set of cultural symbols and configurations. Ernest Gellner asserts that the standardising effect of the colonial administrative system was the first impelling force to re-organise traditional identities. Benedict Anderson claims that the rise of the printed word was the most effective method through which a community's sense of immortality could be evoked and homogeneity could be effected with immediacy because anonymous individuals could be made to identify with each other simultaneously. If we think through Anderson's argument, the role of literature is not merely a reflection but a direct input in creating a particular identity . The cultural products of nationalism- poetry, prose, fiction, music and plastic arts not only inspire love for nations but also portray individuals as representatives of a community.

This study does not offer an exhaustive history of Oriya identity or Oriya literature. The central hypothesis of this study is that the whole project of modern Oriya literature was

dominated by Hindu upper strata because of which certain cultural aspects got prominence as core Oriya elements. These cultural biases could not be removed even when the coterie of left writers cautiously attempted to privilege excluded groups in their literary production.

Different chapters in the thesis will bring to the fore the literary contestations and tensions in projecting a single Oriya identity. In analysing Oriya literature, this study, tries to discern and disentangle different 'trends' of Oriyaness. The main thrust of this study is to understand the cultural character of Oriya society, the structures of signification, the particularities that individuate this culture. It also tries to understand how this regional culture reproduces and sustains itself over time and the exclusions that are made in the projection of this identity in each stage.

It is important to clarify the ways in which both the terms 'culture' and 'politics' will be used here. This study accepts the basic anthropological definition of culture as a way of life, a totality of changing conceptions concerning nature and society, self and others, past, present and future which all groups possess and live by. Raymond Williams, in his Keywords, suggests that the current uses of the term are likely to fall within one form or amalgam of the following:

a) a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development,

b) a particular way of life, whether of a group of people or period,

c) the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.

The last two meanings of this definition relate most closely to the concerns of this work. The processes through which a region asserts its identity and upon which social and regional solidarity is created is the political concern of the work. Identity relies in part on the various inter -subjective meanings through which a group of people perceive the self and the other. Culture provides the terms upon which group identity is anchored. It will also look into the processes through which power relations are maintained and the principles upon which political spaces are organised.

One major aspect of this thesis, unavoidably, is to understand how a traditional society transforms itself by the coming of modernity. The impact of modernity works out differently in different places in India. From the beginning Orissa, unlike Bengal, was never a major theatre of British operation. Both Oriyas and Bengalis had to deal with modernity but the nature and demands of modernity that they dealt with were different. Because modernity came to the two places at different times, the impact and response to modernity were distinct.

This thesis tries to describe and analyse the process which an Oriya 'we' was constructed, and the special contribution literary texts made to that process. A sense of identity does not produce a "we" that is entirely homogeneous. In case of Orissa, the initial form of this identity included 'others'- those of lower status or of uncertain relationship with the main body of Oriyas,

but it still remained exclusionary in subtle ways. This exclusion was not direct and crude, neither did it mean that there was no narrative mention of these marginal sections. It is the manner in which they were represented that makes it seem they are allocated an insignificant place. It included the tribal - but as natural inferiors. They spoke of the lower castes as an integral part of their community but as lower members. In various chapters this thesis tries to understand the logic of exclusion and inclusion in the making of Oriya identity - the specific narrative or descriptive operations through which this element of neglect or exclusion expressed itself.

The argument presented partly relies on the interconnected ideas of dominance and hegemony expounded by Gramsci, for whom culture is an important constituent of the processes through which forms of hegemonic control are established in social life. Since this work analyses the cultural life of the Oriya people and explores the relation of domination and subordination that exists in the social and cultural structure of the community, it implicitly makes use of some specifically Gramscian notions.

The representation of the 'collective self' in literary texts often assumes an apparently inclusive and democratic definition of the community it speaks for and portrays. Literature in a proto-nationalist context naturally tends to articulate an unproblematically single identity for the entire community. The texture of the writing is reflects the sociological background of the speakers who in these circumstances invariably belong to the dominant groups in society. While all constituent under-privileged groups find a place in the overarching 'self-definition', the value implicitly allocated to specific groups are different. Some groups experience relative exclusion in this collective representation of the self.

Gramsci's work highlights that the hegemony of the dominant class in any stable formation is not based on force or coercion alone. A significant part of this hegemony is *ideological*. He explores the notion of non-economic forms of exploitation and the curious participation of the subaltern groups in perpetuating dominance over their own selves.

Writing and receiving of literature are mediated by social class. Literary writers come from the wider group of the society's intellectual formations. Since literature is closely related to education, the process of literary production and reception contains exclusionary processes because people who are not print-literate are either entirely barred from it or have a different reception of literary texts. People who tend to represent collective identity through literary texts often unconsciously represent the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they belong. As Gramsci argues, dominance is based on organising consent among dominated people. Similarly, representative identity depicted in literary texts is done on the basis of 'soliciting and organising

consent among subaltern groups.'[1] Subaltern groups, under ordinary circumstances, 'assent' to a particular hegemonic construction of social reality. Hegemony is maintained through a plausible alliance and a convincing incorporation of the interests of the dominated class in the dominant image of the collective self. It is an 'order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused through-out society in all its institutional and private manifestations.'[2] This is particularly evidenced in our discussion on 'mainstream' writers and their success in consolidating certain archetypal social formations and characters as real and authentic. The Jagannath culture effectively uses similar means to maintain its brahminical dominance over underprivileged groups. Gramsci's hegemony is not only a conscious system of ideas but the 'whole lived social process as practically organised by specific dominant meanings and values.'[3] While a consensus is generated and disseminated among all subservient groups through 'tested social norms, indoctrination and by social controls established by agents of persuasion'[4], the dominant groups acquire a legitimacy to preserve their position of privilege in the social structure. They reinforce it through their daily exercise of 'moral and intellectual leadership'[5].

This hegemonic dominance of a brahmanical culture is called into question with the gradual historical restructuring of Oriya identity. With the growth of greater self-awareness, subaltern communities slowly come to question, challenge and reject the dominant images of the collective Oriya self, and try to re-negotiate their places afresh in the social structure and its ideological representation. Chapter-4 discusses the failed attempts of particular literary groups to question the 'authentic' construction of Oriyaness implicit in the dominant literary culture. By establishing certain roles and practices as 'traditional', dominant literature elicits acquiescence of the ordinary people. The common existence of religious and caste principles and sharing of certain cultural practices between the dominant and subaltern groups make it difficult for the subordinated constituents of Oriya society to assert their cultural autonomy.

Organisation of the Thesis

The first chapter discusses the conditions under which the Oriya-speaking tracts demanded political unification leading to the emergence of Orissa as a separate state in 1936. It discusses identity in relation to the early political aspirations of the Oriya community, to the

[1] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Gramsci and the State, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1975,155.
[2] Craig Calhoun, (ed) Habermas and the Public Sphere, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1984, 322.
[3] Raymond Williams cited in Craig Calhoun, op. cit., 322.
[4] Buci-Glucksmann, op. cit., 57

space that they called Orissa, which required, for its success, a reorganisation of its internal differences. This chapter briefly describes the coming of colonial rulers, an administrative system and a whole cultural paraphernalia totally new to the people- a modern educational system, modern political institutions, the establishment of the printing press, the rise of an intellectual class of a new type and most specifically a group of Bengali clerks who had established themselves as the middle class because of their close association with the colonial administrative system. In this colonial hierarchy, Oriyas had a 'low identity' both in relation to the colonial rulers and to the Bengalis. This identity was form in interaction with colonial power. This chapter discusses the concept and the idea of an 'Orissa' as diversely represented by the colonial officials, missionaries and the Bengalis. Oriya identity revolved through a process of marking themselves off from the Bengalis, assessing their numbers, determining its boundaries. The assertion of Oriya identity started with the Bengali claim that the Oriyas had no identity at all and if at all there was any, it could only gain by merging into the Bengali high culture. The literary elite during the imperial period, even those who wrote in the vernacular language, identified themselves with colonial description of their community and produced literature that was in tune with these dominant ideas. This chapter launches us into the argument by providing a political and literary background in the context of which modern Oriya identity emerged. An exhaustive discussion on literature is not offered because there is plenty of work on these creative writers and there is no point in merely repeating their main conclusions.

The second chapter deals with the 'nationalist' phase in Oriya literature. Oriya leaders in the first phase concentrated on disassociation from the Bengalis and the unification of Oriya speaking tracts. The constituents of Oriyaness needed to be re-assessed, and Orissa had to be situated within the nationalist movement gaining momentum all over India. Gopabandhu Das made the first suggestion that, 'we are first of all human beings, Indians then and Oriyas only at last". While there was a greater involvement with both the historical and mythical past of the Oriya community, Oriyaness could not remain unrelated to all-India nationalism.. The leaders of this time, Gopabandhu Das along with his colleagues, Nilakantha Das and Godabarisha Mishra did not think of the two identities, Oriya and Indian, as mutually exclusive and did not believe they were necessarily in opposition to each other. It was primarily in their writings that Oriyas and Oriyaness were seen historically and since most writers of this time were closely involved in the national movement, the situation-specific intention of their aesthetics was to create a consciousness among the readership, to sensitise them to the newer notions and definitions of what now constituted a nation and a community. History and 'things' historical were utilised

[5] A. Gramsci, Selections from Prison Notebooks,(Trans. Q. Hoare and G. Noel Smith), Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971,57.

differently. The *'bhasa andolan'*, language agitation, according to these leaders, did not successfully include the masses; it was primarily an upper class movement which had only the educated, urban and landowner class as its spokespersons.

Their literature was significant in retrieving aspects of the traditional past and presenting it to a community which felt immensely insecure. It was different from the earlier literature both in content and in the readership that they sought to address. They aimed to bring about social reconstruction through education through which apparent differences among groups in society would be reconciled, with every individual having equal access to cultural resources. Their literature was given the name of *jatiya sahitya* or national literature of Orissa. It was during this period that complex western social concepts such as equality, rights and 'freedom' entered the everyday vocabulary of the increasingly mobilised people.

In the third chapter we see that the notion of identity in the literature of post-30's moved from language and nation to aspects of everyday Oriya living - substantially revolving around habits and practices of everyday life. Major texts steered clear of symbols that the nationalist writers had portrayed. The primary difference was in the contingent conditions that they wrote in- the coming of modernity and democratic values that promised greater equality among people but dismantled the established norms of society. Clearly, the primary literary question revolved around what underlies the Oriya sense of dignity, what made life more meaningful and the evaluation of good and bad. Growth of cities, spread of education, break down of the joint family and awareness among people led to assertions of a kind which stood in surprising opposition to earlier articulations of self. The logic of modernity and the pluralist nature of modern society introduced two conflicting aspects into literary fictionalisation, a tension between individualised and collective constructions of identity. This chapter discusses the problems of assertion of individual rights and the difficulty in reconciling individual and collective interest.

What was indicated in most of the texts was a social crisis - a situation of anomie - the absence of dependable social norms. On the one hand, the Oriyas were an integral part of modern economic society, and thus had to accept the homogenisation that came with it and on the other, there was a threat to the cultural and social existence which made them distinctive. Expansion of markets leading to commodification and spread of western material culture, the educational system, elections, proclamations of equality, rights and the legal stress on egalitarianism, political participation on a limited scale were dismantling the traditional structure of power and social relations. Literary texts of this period not only articulated the subtle relationship of power and domination in work in the construction of identity but also tried to reconcile them at an imaginary level by providing solutions which invariably went in favour of the traditional configuration of relationships.

This growing sense of feeling 'lost' was continuously articulated primarily for two reasons. One is that 'in the historic evolution of society, the institutions and personality structures prevailing in the society acquire features which are mutually supportive - there is a fit between the demands that the institutions make upon the persons and the person's needs, inclinations and ambitions.' With the coming of modern institutions and concepts, people familiar with indigenous social forms and associated personality structures had to operate under completely different premises, leading to this growing sense of insecurity. Secondly, in a traditional society there was no strong distinction between the public and private spheres. Under modern conditions, these people could not restructure their lives on the basis of a sharp difference between the public and the private.

Creative literature presented a breakdown of the village community which reinforced a myth that the village was 'ideal' and 'perfect'. The social harmony of the village represented in literature was a mythic one and not an empirically credible historical picture. But all the tensions produced by modernity were symbolically solved in the existence of that 'ideal' village. Almost all writers accentuate the insubstantiality of modern life and 'body'. In most cases, the coming of modernity is seen to produce a situation which was not 'normal' and 'natural'. These abnormal situations created by modernity were indirectly depicted by highlighting the essence of the Oriya village, the distant tribal who lived a more fulfilling life undisturbed by the traumas of modern existence.

The fourth chapter is a discussion of the manner in which the leftist Oriya writers perceived and engaged with the notion of identity. Consistent with their ideological leanings the left writers contested the hegemonic discourse of the 'mainstream' writers and alleged that these writers suppressed, manipulated and marginalised the antagonistic class voices. The idea of social progress depicted in the mainstream writing remains substantially different from writers who ideologically adhere to the left. Some western ideas and values gained greater legitimacy in their writings. Issues of equality and freedom which in the second chapter were primarily seen as moral ones were given a political texture in their works. The demand for equality was not based on the idea that all people have the moral right to be treated equally by virtue of their being human beings; they needed to be treated equally because that was a political requirement for the effective functioning of society.

The left considered the modern condition as a stage in the history of progress and trusted that it would bring about real change in the lives of common people. Though there was no major change in the notion of identity, which continued to be represented through aspects of everyday life, the way they perceived it was significantly different from the former writers. The rise of left

movements gave rise to an identity which was more complicated, muddy and contested because what was represented earlier as 'quintessentially Oriya' was questioned.

The fifth chapter is a discussion on the relation between modernity and religion in the particular context of Orissa. The cultural self-perception of the Oriya nation is closely related to the iconic presence of Jagannath. This was one traditional symbol which all sections of Oriya society could identify with. It transcended all social inequalities and differences, at least as far as it was used as an icon for communitarian mobilisation. This chapter discusses the invisible repressions within that apparently inclusive ideology. Jagannath is normally referred to as the 'national god' or the *'rashtra devata'* of Orissa. Thus, a symbol which is very traditional is considered central to the construction of modern Oriya identity. This chapter analyses how this traditional symbol has changed and adapted itself to the complex ideological demands of a modern situation.

Orissa remains one of the most under-researched areas in India today. Though a lot is being written on explicitly political questions like the centre - state relations, modern research has not given sufficient attention to problems which might rise in the realm of the political but whose solutions lie in the sphere of culture or history. There is a large body of historical research done by both Oriya and non-Oriya scholars. I have not particularly engaged with that historical literature directly, except to keep a broad view of what was happening in Orissa after the coming of colonialism. The previous studies on Oriya identity have predominantly dealt with the assertion of the Oriya linguistic identity. Nivedita Mohanty in her *Oriya Nationalism: Quest For United Orissa,1982*, gives an over all view of the Oriya state after the coming of the British, the major institutions, the rise of a new kind of public etc. However, her book remains quite central as a source of historical information on Orissa. Pragati Mahapatra in *'The Making of a Cultural Identity: Language, Literature and Gender in Orissa, 1997,* investigates the role of language, standardisation and the coming of modern press in the related growth of a new identity. Bishnu Mahapatra in his '*Politics of Oriya Nationalism, 1991,* traces the beginning of the modern Oriya identity to the coming of the British and deals primarily with the phase when Oriya nationalism aligned itself with Indian national movement. By contrast, this work deals with identity more thematically and reacts against the standard contention that community identity needs to be articulated and asserted only at a time when the society is undergoing political, social or cultural distress, and that once the political recognition of a linguistic group is secured, the identity problem is effectively 'solved'.

Chapter 1

The Demand for a Modern Oriya Identity

This chapter explores the conditions under which the Oriya-speaking tracts demanded unification leading to the emergence of Orissa as a separate state in 1936. It briefly describes the coming of the colonial rulers and the effects of dominant colonial discourse on Oriya society. After mid-19th century entered a period of great flux with the first contact with colonial rule which marked the introduction of modern institutions, modern schools, the establishment of the printing press, the rise of an intellectual class of a new type, whose world view was shaped both by their traditional past and their exposure to intellectual traditions of the west. The continuity with the past was not totally broken and the society was caught between two world views, one informed by the traditional set of values and the other formed by the modern educational system. It is essential to understand the complexities of that period because it was under these conditions that the first demands for a modern Oriya identity were advanced.[1]

Orissa was taken over by the British from the Marathas in1803.[2] The absence of schools and education, the prevalence of inhuman practices like human sacrifice in the tribal areas, the excessive religiosity of the people immediately led to the portrayal of Orissa as one of the most backward places in India and the Oriyas as extremely resistant to change.

There was an historical consensus that the political and economic condition of Orissa had especially deteriorated during the period of Maratha rule.[3] Most Oriya historians trace the beginning of political and cultural decay from the time when the ruler of Orissa lost to the Afghans in 1568. There was also a widespread idea that that the culturally flourishing and 'martial' Oriya race suffered under the influence of the Bengali *Vaishnava* saint Chaitanya. R.D. Banarjee, in his *History of Orissa* writes,

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[1] There have been at least two other works which have preceded this one on Oriya identity. This work claims its difference by constructing the problematic of Oriya identity in a way distinct from theirs. Pragati Mahapatra,Ph.D. dissertation, SOAS, 1997 emphasises language and identity; Bishnu Mahapatra explores the politics of Oriya nationalism from 1900-1930. (Oxford, 1991.) The analysis offered in this thesis is different from theirs both in the historical periods covered, and the focus of discussion – the creation of identity through literary writing.

[2] The occupation of the Oriya speaking tracts was accomplished in phases. Ganjam came under British rule in 1799. Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, known as Orissa Proper, in 1803 and Sambalpur in 1821.

[3] Fakirmohan Senapati, father of modern Oriya literature, in '*Lacchama*', (1901) describes the atrocities of the Marathas on Oriya people. The last scene of the drama '*Utkala Durdasa*' depicts Oriya language personified as a character, about to commit suicide, when an Englishman makes his entry and says, 'From now on, this land of Utkal will have no sorrow to suffer and to moan for.' Chittaranjan Das, *A Glimpse into Oriya Literature*, Orissa Sahitya Academy, Bhubaneswar, 1982, 156.

> 'Suddenly from the beginning of the 16th century, a decline set in the power and prestige of Orissa with a corresponding decline in the military spirit of the people. The decline is intimately connected with the long residence of the Bengali Vaishnava saint Chaitanya in the country. If we accept one tenth of what the Bengali and the Sanskrit biographies of the saint state about his influence over Prataprudra and the people of the country, we must admit that Chaitanya was one of the principal causes of the political decline of the empire and the people of Orissa.'[4]

Among other Oriya writers, Mayadhar Mansingh was most critical of the influence of Chaitanya on Oriya social life, especially the *Radha Krishna* cult that was universalised by Chaitanya. Allegedly, it brought eternal harm to the nation's character, training and social morals. Popularly he is believed to have converted the martial Oriyas into a group of *'kirtanias'*.[5] 'Her ancient glory departed when her kings and nobles fell victims to intrigue, treachery and indolence.'[6]

Colonial opinion attributed the miserable condition of Orissa to its being a 'long conquered nation', from the middle of the 16thcentury continually oppressed by Afghans, Mughals and Marathas. One of the earliest colonial authors writes, 'the Maratha administration was fatal to the welfare of the people, the prosperity of the country and exhibits the picture of misrule, anarchy, weakness, rapacity and violence combine, which makes one wonder how society can be kept together under so calamitous a tyranny.'[7] The machinery of surplus extraction became more effective during the Maratha period, resulting in the decline of the economy. This was also one explanation for the decline in maritime activities of Orissa.[8] K.C.Jena in his *History of Orissa*, states that the administration during the rule of Akbar was more just and the attitudes between the two communities more tolerant ...the Marathas were much more exploitative.'[9]

However, after the colonial take over of Orissa, further economic deterioration of Orissa was attributed by Oriya historians to the administrative apathy of the rulers who had no interest in the place, excepting that it now provided the vital road link between the southern and northern portions of the British empire. The government took serious notice of the place only after the great famine of 1866, which is supposed to have wiped out one third of the Oriya population.[10] The famine was in a way the starting point of the

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[4] Prabhat Mukherjee, *History of the Chaitanya Faith in Orissa,* Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1979, 80.

[5] People who dance and sing ecstatic songs in praise of God, central to the practice of Chaitanya's Vaishnavism.

[6] Lal Mohan Pattnaik, *Resurrected Orissa*, Cuttack, 1941, 1.

[7] Andrew Sterling, L.S.S.O. Malley, *Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers*, Puri, 1929, 73.

[8] See, Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1993.

[9] K.C. Jena, *History of Orissa*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1985, 9.

[10] Commonly referred to as *'na-anka'* because it came in the ninth regnal year of the king of Puri, *na-anka* now generally means famine in Oriya popular perception.

transformation of Oriya society with the colonial government taking administrative interest in the region.

Context of the Demand: Social, Political and Economic

The Oriya speaking tracts were assimilated into three different provinces of the colonial empire for administrative convenience and consequently every unit formed an insignificant part of each division.[11] Bengal to the north of Orissa had already made considerable progress in the spheres of education. Their longer association and closer acquaintance with the British administrative system enabled Bengalis to get jobs in the public offices in Orissa. The lack of modern education and the complete ignorance of the Oriyas about the operation of the new colonial administrative system meant that Oriya speaking people were not technically equipped to occupy public office. As a result, jobs were given to the Bengalis in the coastal areas of Puri, Balasore and Cuttack, to Telegus in Ganjam and to Hindi speakers in the western tracts. This gave rise to obvious problems. The Bengalis in the north wanted the establishment of Bengali schools in coastal Orissa and declared that Oriya was a mere dialect of Bengali and therefore, there was no reason for the existence of Oriya as an independent language. Because of the closer association of the Bengalis with the colonial administrative system they were more successful in influencing the colonial way of thinking. Sociologically, they would have more influence with the colonial authorities. The Telegus in the south maintained that since there were equal number of Telegu speaking people in Ganjam, the government needed to establish Telegu schools instead of Oriya ones. In a letter to the editor of *Utkal Dipika*, the people of Ghumsar, a place in Ganjam wrote in 1870, 'that if the colonial government has agreed to conduct all its official proceedings in the Oriya language in the areas under Bengal Presidency and Central Provinces, then the same should happen in Ghumsar, Ganjam. The people of Ghumsar should, therefore, stress the colonial government for the circulation of Oriya language. The common people have not taken enough interest in joining the Oriya movement. This grievance should come to the notice of all people in Cuttack, Puri and Balasore and especially to the *Utkal Ullasini Sabha*.'[12] In Sambalpur and other surrounding areas the abolition of 82 primary schools in the year 1898-99 and the introduction of Hindi schools was a matter of great concern for local

[11] The districts of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri, the *Mughalbandi,* joined Bengal Presidency, Ganjam joined Madras Presidency. The western tracts of Sambalpur were attached to South West Frontier Agency. Between 1860-62 it was attached to Bengal and then made over to the Central Provinces. The small feudatory states, '*gadjats*', were under the direct supervision of the colonial government. P.K. Mishra, *The Political History of Orissa: 1900-1936,* Oriental Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1979.

[12] Quoted from *Utkal Dipika*, Sudhakar Pattnaik, *Sambad Patra Ru Odisa Ra Katha*, Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1972, 171.

Oriyas.[13] These conditions prompted the movement for the unification of the Oriya speaking tracts.[14]

In the economic sphere, the coming of foreign cloth, stop on salt manufacture and the salt monopoly law of 1804, led to the collapse of traditional industries like weaving and salt making in the mid-19th century. These had grave implications for the lives of people who made a living out of such professions.[15] An increasing number of people came to depend on agriculture and the pressure on land increased. With colonialism, the system of tax collection also changed. The system of levying and collection was beyond the comprehension of the ignorant peasants. The exploitative attitude of the landlords,appointed by the colonial government to serve as go-betweens frustrated the common people. There is evidence of landlords collecting tax for numerous illegitimate reasons, starting from the birth of a son, marriage of a daughter to the telegraph tax.[16] The administration levied a 'pilgrim' tax on people who came from neighbouring regions to visit the Puri temple. This affected the inflow of *tirtha jatris* and had negative repercussions on the income of the local priests.[17] Since people did not understand the reasons behind paying these new taxes, developmental work of any kind was seen with suspicion. They immediately recognised two kinds of exploiters: the traditional landlord as the internal and the colonial government as the external exploiter. The Oriya speaking people therefore encountered two situations which led to a combination of middle class and peasant grievances. One was the threat to the existence of their language. This was a major concern of the gradually forming educated middle class, though abolition of Oriya schools might not have immediately upset rural Oriya life. It was impossible for the Oriya peasant to grasp the danger of threat to language, first, because education was not very widespread in the rural areas, and second, the peasant class hardly went to school. The Oriya peasantry was totally disillusioned with the introduction of the new economic situation. The first need recognised by the educated Oriya was complete disengagement with the Bengalis to assert their linguistic separateness. The second was the demand for the unification of the Oriya speaking tracts. It was from the conjunction of these two demands that the story of modern Orissa began.

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[13] P.K. Mishra, op. cit., 31.

[14] The dates are not given in chronological order. It intends to give the reader an impression of the general state of and the context in which the intensification of the demand for unification took place.

[15] Fakirmohan Senapati, in *Cha Mana Atha Guntha* (1902) talks about the declining weaver community and the detrimental effects of stopping salt manufacture. 'Nearly half a century before salt became the symbol of human rights in the Indian war of freedom under Mahatma Gandhi, Fakirmohan had raised his lone voice.' Mayadhar Mansingh, *Makers of Indian Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1978, 9.

[16] Biswamoy Pati, op. cit., 24.

[17] See, Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 135.

The people of the *shikshita* or the educated category had access to education in modern schools and were trained in English language. They were either employed as clerks in the colonial government or as school teachers. Socially, they belonged to the high castes or had landed property. The spectrum of the *shikshita sampradaya*, educated community, spread from the new intellectuals to feudal lords. The egalitarian approach of the modern educational system sometimes included people who belonged to the relatively under privileged castes and class. Together, these groups constituted the Oriya *bhadralok*[18]. The educated Oriya *bhadralok* were the first to recognise the need to articulate and assert an exclusive identity for Orissa. Since the educated, urban Oriya had a greater chance to come into immediate contact with the 'outsider' Bengali, they took upon themselves the responsibility to clearly mark the difference between Bengalis and Oriyas. It was during this time that a conscious attempt was made by the Oriya intellectuals to recreate their past in order to justify their demands for unification of Oriya speaking tracts.

The territory of modern Orissa contained within itself four major geographical units: Toshali, Kongoda, Kalinga and Kosala. Traditionally, these units were ruled independently and were only occasionally united under powerful rulers. There were claims that the territorial boundaries of Orissa once extended from Ganga to Godavari.[19] These continuous political changes may have fostered the growth of a common language in Orissa. Since the boundaries in pre-modern Orissa were undergoing constant change due to small invasions and conquests, the Oriyas were alternately united and separated under different rulers. Boundaries in pre-modern states were not as politically and culturally binding as in the modern states. The notion that boundaries contain the thresholds of cultural meanings was absent in the traditional perception of national self; one region would shade off into the other, creating overlaps in language, cultural and social habits. The traditional political space of Orissa was not organised on the basis of maps or physical markers to strictly define the finish of one linguistic area from another. Further, in a traditional society there was a relatively lesser need to define oneself against the other and one did not betray one's nationalistic identity if one did not know the territorial limits of one's state. An Oriya would immediately recognise another person who did not speak in the same language, but he would not think that if he did not assert his linguistic and cultural difference from others, he was in danger of being dominated.

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[18] The closest meaning of the term in English would be 'cultivated person', the cultural element being its dominant factor. They usually belonged to the middle class.

[19] Satyanarayan Rajguru says the Ganga kings from the south attempted to unite Orissa in the 7th - 8th centuries. Satyanarayan Rajguru, *Odia Lipira Krama Bikasha*, Orissa Sahitya Akademi,

There was no developed theory about the 'other' and to that extent the earlier conceptions of community were fuzzy.[20]

However, this does not in any way imply that traditional societies had no basis for creating social solidarities. There was an identifiable spoken and written Oriya that formed the basis of communication, but people felt no political need to assert their linguistic identity. They took their language for granted and did not relate to any physically bounded space called Orissa. Within this space, there were multiple centres which they could relate to, from which they drew their sense of belongingness. Their sense of space seems to have been organised in terms of 'frontiers', more transitional in nature. Each language shaded off into the next and the languages spoken in the border areas would often be a mix of two main languages. Had an Oriya been asked to define the spatial constituents of his region then, he would most likely have included portions of Medinipur in Bengal, Patna in Bihar and Simanchalam in Andhra Pradesh. Sudipta Kaviraj argues that, with the coming of colonialism, there was a fundamental change effected in the domain of politics which undermined the earlier fuzzy sense of community identity and created a need to articulate it in an enumerated form. According to him, the concept of fuzziness enabled people in traditional societies to work with a wider variety of solidarities. In a modern context, there is a greater sense and need of communitarian discipline and adherence. The census, as Bernard Cohn writes, was one such tool through which the colonial government started making classifications and established the numerical and objective description of society. There was a concrete numerical establishment of castes and religious groups, and people started perceiving themselves on the basis of numbers. In fact, it was on this basis that Ganjam was later granted to Orissa and Midnapur to Bengal. The significance of the power of the modern state is evident in the statement of the Bengali historian Rajendralal Mitrain a discussion in the Royal Asiatic Society l on the 4th of April 1870, 'the language of people in the courts was Oriya in Midnapore and Bankura upto 1850. If within twenty years it could be suppressed then why can't the same be done in Cuttack, Puri and Balasore!'[21]

By the time colonialism was established in Orissa, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Bengali speaking people were already well formed as a group, culturally more advanced, having closer links with the colonial government and English education to their advantage. The Oriyas on the contrary, could not easily align to form a group because

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Bhubaneswar, 1960. K.C. Panigrahi, says that it was during the rule of the Somavamshi that the capital was shifted from Kosala in the west of Orissa to the coastal region.

[20] Based on Sudipta Kaviraj's argument in 'The Imaginary Institution of India', Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, (eds), *Subaltern Studies*, VII, OUP, Delhi, 1992, 20.

they were split into three administrative units. They did have an identifiable network of cultural signs but these symbols were not used for creating political solidarity.

The lack of modern schools and English education among Oriyas stopped them from getting jobs in the government, which in turn was responsible for the lack of a middle class, *madhyabitta shreni,* which had consolidated itself in neighbouring Bengal. The Bengali middle class clerks, doctors, lawyers, teachers, the first group of western educated professionals, had an all India presence. Administrative jobs in Orissa were monopolised by the educated Bengalis from Calcutta and this access made them economically more prosperous than the Oriyas. The neglected estates of the Oriya zamindars were auctioned in Calcutta and the purchasers were Calcutta based Bengali clerks who manoeuvred the sales and became absentee landlords. O'Malley, an English official, wrote, 'in the former times arrears of land revenue were held in Calcutta and purchasers were Calcutta Bengalis who were settled in Cuttack'.[22] The antagonism the Oriyas felt was against this Bengali salaried class who came with the British .Their economic prosperity made them natural enemies of the Oriya landowners, who most often lost their property to them. Oriya landowners realised that the colonial tax system was behind their economic displacementand encouraged them to support the movement against the Bengalis and against colonial rule. 'All educated people in Orissa had no alternative but to know Bengali. From the court to the educational institutions and hospitals, from top to the bottom, it was all manned by the Bengalis. The Oriya, if there was one, was like the drop of honey in the *pachan.*[23] There were a handful of Oriyas, a British official at the top and the rest were Bengalis. It was natural for the Bengalis, in a situation like this, to ask for the abolition of the Oriya language and replace it with their language.'[24]

Power in traditional society had not been associated with education. The colonial situation changed the constituents of 'status' which came to be associated with modern education and access to government jobs.. In Orissa, there were only a few Oriyas who could in true sense belong and relate to modern colonial culture. Colonial culture was primarily precipitated through the Bengalis. Two things disturbed the Oriyas; first, they lost their land holdings to the Bengalis, then even the existence of their language was threatened by Bengali domination.. Secondly, changes in the occupational sphere also disbalanced the equilibrium of the traditional society. The manner in which people moved

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21 Gopinath Mohanty, *Radhnath Ray:Makers of Indian Literature*, Sahitya Akdemi, New Delhi, 5. S.C.Patra, *Formation of the Province of Orissa*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1979, 27.

[22] L.S.S.O.Malley, *Bengal District Gazeteer*- Cuttack, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1906, 42.

[23] A traditional medicine made out of a number of ingredients with a drop of honey.

[24] Godabarisha Mishra, *Godabarisha Granthavali*, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1960, 15.

from one occupational sphere to another was in contrast to the traditional organisation of economic life..

The first attempts to abolish the Oriya language from schools was made by Kantilal Bhattacharya, a teacher in a Balasore school. In the late 1860's he wrote a book called '*Uriya Swtantra Bhasa Noy*'; Oriya is not an independent language.[25] Things worsened when Rajendralal Mitra, who was writing a book on the antiquities of Orissa, declared that the prosperity of Orissa depended upon the early abolition of the Oriya language.[26] According to these Bengali intellectuals, Oriya was a mere dialect of Bengali. They wanted Oriya to be abolished from schools because there were not enough text books in the language to be taught in schools. To them the lack of text books and an organised print medium automatically meant:that there was no standardised Oriya language which was common to all the Oriya speaking people, and consequently,

the Oriyas could not prove the existence of a common historical past.No assertion of independence on the basis of a common historical past meant the non-existence of a nationality.A 'nation' which could not adequately 'prove' a separate linguistic ancestry and identity had no right to exist. The Bengali language, because of its earlier standardisation, earlier establishment of schools, linguistic socialisation through these institutions, existence of a modern literature and middle class to support the institutions and the closer association with the alien government, had been raised to a status of a 'language of power'[27] as against Oriya.

This was the background in which an agitation for complete disengagement with the Bengalis began and the demand for unification of Oriya speaking units and a separate Oriya state ensued. A concept of the 'other' emerged forcefully from within the cultural discourse of Oriyaness in this period. The Oriya recognised two 'others'. The colonial ruler was the 'cultural other', the Bengali, the 'linguistic other'. 'The modern nation is a series of convergent facts. Sometimes unity is effected by dynasties, sometimes by the direct will of provinces, sometimes it has been the work of general consciousness'[28] The emergence of the modern Oriya narrative of the self started from a combination of some of these factors. The Bengalis advanced several reasons as to why Orissa should not have an independent existence. An article in an Oriya newspaper in 1870 said, 'the Bengalis are of the opinion that Bengal has been instrumental for all development in Orissa. The

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[25] Kanti Bhattacharya, Balasore school deputy inspector, Shivdas Bhattachrya, editor, *Utkal Hitaishini* (which ironically meant 'well-wishers of Orissa') Kalipada Bandhopadhyaya, Umacharan Haldar supported this view. Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 7.

[26]Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1936,* Manohar,Delhi,1982, 22.

[27] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, reprinted 1995, 42.

[27] Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, Routledge London, 1990, 1-4.

Ganga kings under whom Orissa prospered most were kings from Bengal. It was Kalapahad, the Bengali brahmin turned Muslim, the commander of Suleiman Karani who came and established his rule in Orissa. Chaitanya was the greatest influence on Oriya Vaishnavism...and even Sarala Das, the peasant poet and *adi-kabi* of Orissa was a devotee of Chaitanya.'[29] After all this, how would the Bengali not think of an Oriya as naturally subservient to him? *Utkal Dipika*, the pioneer of the Oriya language movement warned the Oriya readers that they should be aware of the evil intentions of the *Utkal Hiteishini*, a newspaper run by Bengalis.[30]

The late nineteenth century showed a radical change in the consciousness of educated Oriyas. They started to situate themselves in a well-defined geographical and social space. It was the responsibility of the people leading the Oriya movement to prove for Orissa an independent history, to seek the past glory of Orissa, to bring to light the literature of Orissa, the lineage of kings and dynasties, describe the religious and pious nature of the people, and celebrate its distinct temple architecture. They had to make sure that everything that was representative of Orissa was adequately highlighted to sustain their demand for an independent existence.[31]

When the Oriya nationalists first made a demand for a unified Orissa, they were trying to weave a nation out of various small feudal states and a few big ones. They were, therefore, trying to invent an unfragmented Oriya nation which did not exist earlier. However, as Benedict Anderson argued against Gellner, this 'invention' was not a fabrication: there was something in the earlier form of social organisation which had the possibility of growing into Orissa. The existence of the Oriya language and a distinct Oriya script was a major argument of distinctiveness to the people who were demanding a separate state on a linguistic basis. This study, therefore, works within the wider framework of Benedict Anderson's argument that otherwise unconnected people imagine themselves into a community because they live in the same historical time within a defined space. The capacity of this community to extend backwards in time and project into the future renders a nation into existence. The only way through which knowledge about the past of a nation and its historical trajectory could be acquired was through the production of its history, reading and writing about its common past.

Problems of the Oriya Movement

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[29] Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 133-134. The Oriya reaction to this claim is discussed in the following chapter.

[30] On 16.4.1870 in an article published in *Utkal Dipika*, Oriya readers are warned against fabricated articles that appeared in *Utkal Hitaishini*. Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 133-134

[31] Though there was a growth of a distinct nationalistic literature, it crystallised in the later *Satyabadi* phase.

Despite the common language, there were observable cultural differences among the Oriya speaking tracts. The leaders who spearheaded the movement for unification made a genuine attempt at bridging these internal differences to project a culturally and religiously homogeneous group. The successful presentation of a culturally homogeneous Oriya nation would reinforce their demand for political unification. This all-encompassing definition of Oriyaness would necessarily have to include various subgroups, like the tribals, the Muslims, the backward castes. Since it was impossible to make literacy universal, so that people could realise for themselves the need to project a cultural homogeneity, it was the educated and articulate class who took upon themselves the responsibility of projecting a distinct identity for Orissa and to them, this act of representation seemed entirely natural and unproblematic.

It is important to understand the social background of the people involved in the language agitation. It was predominantly an urban movement, primarily comprising landlords and the educated middle class. There are a number of instances when the educated middle class who formed clubs and associations which led the agitation made special requests to the *bhadralok* and *zamindars* to come and join these organisations and contribute to the political and cultural development of Oriya society.[32] All classes of people who had direct interest in the affairs of the colonial administration were involved the movement. Though the commitment of the dominant class to their mother-tongue was driven by a genuine emotion, the socially restricted nature of the movement led to the the first social exclusions in the making of the Oriya identity.

The responsibility of presenting a horizontal homogeneous community could only be tackled by people who had access to indigenous knowledge, folk practices of the various subgroups and a simultaneous exposure to western traditions which came at times sometimes via Bengali intellectuals. Though the constituent subgroups did not always relate to the self definition that was taking place, they did, to use Marc Auge's words, 'draw a clear frontier between the zone of relative identity and the external world of absolute aliens.'[33] The nationalists made an attempt to accommodate folk and tribal traditions, because the intention during this period of crisis was not to accentuate differences but to integrate the varied histories of different subgroups into an single unproblematic common story. Before the rise of nationalism, these groups would have routinely interacted with each other socially but would have never thought of themselves as a homogeneous group. Two things were highlighted in this process. All groups were encouraged to identify simultaneously with the same set of cultural resources and the sum

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[32] Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 97.

[33] Marc Auge, (trans. John Howe), *Non Places*, Verso, London, 1995, 50.

of these various subgroups was projected as a single group defined in relation to other linguistically distinct groups. While canvassing for the unification of Oriya speaking tracts in the western Orissa, Gopabandhu Das invoked Jagannath as the real ruler and urged all people to join the path of a united Orissa. At the end of a meeting in the western tracts he sang a couplet,

'Let us all join this path
which leads to the road of Orissa,
let us all take this path,
to see the beautiful black-faced God'[34]

The immediate agenda of the Oriya nationalists included three points:

a) Correction of inequality of power between the Bengali language and Oriya and raising the Oriya language to a position of dignity
b) Creation of a political roof over the Oriya speaking tracts and resurrection of the economy struck by a massive famine. For this it was important to attract the attention of the colonial rulers to the miserable economic condition of Orissa
c) Creation of modern public institutions, which the Oriya '*bhadralok*' could relate to and identify with. It was also necessary to convert this predominantly upper class grievance into a mass movement.

Generally, there is a direct connection of the spread of literacy to the making of a cultural public.. Mass education raises the general standard of literacy, involves more people in the process of education and creates a more homogeneous public. Over the long term, it tends to level cultural differences between different groups of people within a society. Secondly, in the Indian context, the spread of modern education would create a group of people with bilingual capacities, mastery over their mother tongue and a fair understanding and grasp of the English language, that would help them gain access to the western world view and then translate that into their own linguistic terms. These bi-lingual intellectuals could prepare their language to be a part of modern culture.[35] In the case of Orissa, there was a difference. Its modern elite came to be trilingual. They would have to know their own mother tongue and additionally understand both Bengali and English. Most educated Oriyas wanted to know Bengali because they wanted access to the economic opportunities in Bengal and wished to know how the Bengali society

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[34] '*chala ho! aei bate jiba,*
odia danda re miliba...' Nityananda Sathpathy, *He Saathi! He Saarathi!,* Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1989, 159.

[35] Partha Chatterjee argues that, in Bengal, there was a bilingual elite which took upon itself the cultural project to equip the Bengali language for modern culture. This was true of all linguistic societies in India during the spread of the colonial educational institutions. *The Nation and Its Fragments,* OUP, Delhi, 1994, 7.

(which came in contact with colonialism earlier than Oriya) coped with colonialism. It was definitely easier to replicate an experience than to invent entirely new ways of coping. Knowledge of English, apart from fetching them jobs in the colonial government, would also help them compete with and displace the Bengalis as an elite group. Language was the first site in the struggle for sovereignty.

As in most cases in India, the first Oriya printing press in Orissa was set up by the missionaries in 1837. The first printing press by the Oriya people was started in Cuttack in 1866. They brought out a newspaper called '*Utkala Dipika'*, edited by Gouri Shankar Ray. Fakir Mohan Senapati started '*Bodhadayini*' in Balasore in1868.[36] The start of vernacular newspapers by Oriya people was the first step through which anonymous and impersonal communication could be maintained and fostered among spatially unconnected Oriyas. Though newspapers, periodicals and novels were immediate outcomes of the introduction of print, all the three were recognised as new types of cultural artefacts which aimed at a different readership and had different functions and responsibilities towards them. The impact of the newspaper was 'daily' and 'immediate'. As Anderson writes, 'the development of print as commodity was the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity.'[37] There was a growth of a number of non- political associations which gave rise to a new civil life and prompted the growth of a modern public sphere. The operational success of these associations depended upon the spread of newspapers. Firstly, newspapers created a habitual readership and could establish a regular relation between far-flung Oriya speaking tracts. Collectively, they became a new symbol through which a nation could be imagined into existence. Newspapers created and moulded public opinion and briefly supplied information about all that was happening in these areas. By selecting news from a particular area, the newspaper could foster a sense of the identity of the region. It simultaneously turned public attention to particular 'causes' and as Tocqueville writes, 'nothing but a newspaper drops the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment'.[38] There was continuous exchange of news items between different newspapers of different Oriya regions.[39] The popularity of the newspaper was also because of its capacity to be

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[36] Sudhakar Patnaik, op.cit. 3. This book is a collection of all major newspaper articles published 1860 onwards up to early 1900. 'There is evidence of a newspaper of a 'kind' called *Kujib Patra,* started by an Oriya *sannyasi* called Sundar Das. Written on palm leaves or a special paper, '*Haritali*', it was distributed in the local markets. Ibid,6.

[37] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* Verso, London, reprinted, 1995, 37.

[38] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* edited and abridged, (trans) by Henry Reeve Washington Square Press, New York, 1964, 186.

[39] Sudhakar Patnaik lists 50 Oriya newspapers published between 1866-1920. The major ones were *Utkala Dipika* (Cuttack,1866), *Bodhadayini* (Balasore,1868) *Utkala Hiteishini*(Cuttack,1869) *Purushottam Chandrika* (Puri, 1874) *Sambalpur Hiteishini* (Bamra, 1889), *Utkal Prabha*

disseminated in a traditional manner. It was not imperative for all people to be print literate to be influenced by newspapers; the short pieces of news could be read out by one person to a whole group, like the way traditional religious texts were read and remembered. This process was more communal and it still remains a major way of passing on political and cultural ideas among people who are unable to read.

Reading the novel was a more private experience. A novel was longer and required all its readers to be print literate.[40] They created an aesthetic form to write in prose, influenced by Sanskrit, English and in the case of Oriyas, Bengali prose. Lal Mohan Patnaik writes, 'the earliest Oriya achievements are poetry....nations in infancy exhibit an extraordinary aptitude for poetry but in manhood they crave for sober expressions of prose.'[41] Clearly the introduction of these modern artefacts were seen as expressions of cultural maturity of the Oriya nation. In some senses the Oriya *jati* was now culturally capable of launching an independent national life.

The result was a creation of an institutional space for both artistic and non-artistic dissemination, which was modern in nature and 'national' in character. The other advantage of print was that it solved the problem of competing dialects at a formal level. For Orissa to acquire a regional-national character, it was necessary that its inhabitants accept one language as representative of all dialects, which could be used in this public space. This would be an impetus for the growth of regional consciousness.[42] By taking a particular set of linguistic practices as a normative model of corrective usage, the linguist produces the 'illusion of linguistic communism' and ignores the social-historical which have established a particular dialect as dominant.[43] That there were tensions in this process of standardisation is evident from Rath's, *Paschima Odisa Ra Kathita Odia Bhasa* which highlights the need to include vocabulary from the '*upabhasa*', the Sambalpuri Odia dialect. Rath argues, that there is no valid reason why formal Oriya language should not include both folk, regular words and expressions from the Sambalpuri dialect.[44] The language agitation which ultimately led to the creation of a

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(Balasore, 1891-1895). The two newspapers started by missionaries were *Jnanaruna* and *Prabodha Chandrika*(1855-1856).

[40] Written in verse form, the *puranic* texts had the advantage of being easily disseminated and could be sung. It was easier to attract people to listen to a religious discourse than a long secular personalised story.

[41] Lal Mohan Patnaik, *op. cit.*, 240.

[42] Gopabandhu Rath in *Pashchima Odisa Ra Kathita Odia Bhasa*, writes that Oriya language is enriched by the inclusion of folk vocabulary. *Pashchima Odisa Ra Kathita Odia Bhasa* Odisa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1988. Preface.

[43] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Polity Press, Oxford, 1991 5.

[44] Rath wrote a dictionary exclusively of Sambalpuri words, *Sambalpuri Odia Sabdakosha,* to enrich Oriya language. Nilamani Mishra, *Prachina Odia Lipi: Bhasa O Sahitya*, points out that there is a great literature existing in the *Sambalpuri* dialect.

separate Oriya state began in Sambalpur. But, Oriya used in the coastal districts was perceived as dominant because it gained the status of a literary language and the dialect used in Sambalpur was seen to be influenced by Hindi, Marathi and the tribal dialects and hence 'impure'. This policy of authorising Oriya spoken in the coastal districts as part of the policy of unification favoured those who already possessed a mastery of that language as a part of their everyday linguistic practice. Consequently, other dialects which had to alternately compete with and submit to its dominance were subordinated and devalued. This led to the first feeling of alienation between these two sub-regions which continues to remain to this day.[45]

Speakers of other local dialects 'collaborated in the destruction of their instruments of expression'.[46] This was especially true of the tribals and other dialect-speakers who were now imparted education in standardised Oriya. Even within coastal Orissa, there was a significant difference between linguistic practices of the upper and lower classes, which meant that the upper class had everything to gain from the policy of linguistic unification.

The historical development of Oriya social life shows the gradual emergence of what is generally described as the 'public sphere'. Jurgen Habermas's book *Structural Transformation of a Public Sphere* has had an enormous impact on contemporary discussions of the modern public culture. However Habermas's analysis has also drawn a lot of historical criticism.[47] The major point about Habermas's analysis of the notion is that it was done in the context of the west and recorded historical processes which were part of the western experience. Even though 'public spheres' might develop in the colonial context, their structure and evolution are likely to be different from the European model. While the discussion of public sphere does not form a central argument in the socio-historical analysis of Oriya culture presented in this work, it partly makes use of the idea while explaining the restrictive and exclusive nature of public life in Orissa.

According to Habermas, the public sphere emerged with the creation of a 'public sphere' strongly differentiated from the 'private sphere'. 'We call events and occasions 'public' when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs'.[48] It is a space where private individuals come together to rationally and critically debate matters of

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[45] Language is not the only source of alienation between the coastal and western Orissa districts. A person from Cuttack, regarded as an outsider in the highlands, is despised as a past master in the art of intrigues and exploitation. *Regionalism and State Politics in India*, R.N. Mishra, Ashish Publishing House, New-Delhi, 1984, 3. Coastal Orissa being the centre of administration became culturally and economically dominant.

[46] Bourdieu, op. cit., 7.

[47] Habermas's argument about the public sphere has been subjected to systematic criticism in Craig Calhoun's *Habermas and the Public Sphere*.

[48] Habermas, *Structural Transformation of a Public Sphere*, translated by Thomas Burger, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1989). 1.

public interest. This space first emerged as a literary public sphere, which provided for a forum in the form of associations and institutions, where writers could exchange their ideas. Subsequently, this sphere which initially constituted of a literary clientele was transformed into a political sphere. 'The public sphere exclusively assumed political functions in the tension-charged field of state-society relations'.[49] A new principle of anonymity was introduced where all discussions were open to the public for comment. Public opinion was the result of the interactions between individuals in this space. Public sphere means 'a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be transformed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens'.[50]

We do not find an exact replication of the western experience in the context of Orissa. However, there is an emergence of a 'public sphere' of a kind, which consisted of literary clubs and associations and it performed functions similar to those described by Habermas.

Literary writing led to an expanding reflection on the principle of subjectivity, the creation of a new kind of subjectivity produced by the interdependence of the concepts of the public and private spheres. The complex processes which induced transformations in family life, the emphasis on companionate marriage, an intimate sphere which centred around the conjugal family, contributed to the growth of a distinctively modern subjectivity in Habermas's account. The emergence of the novel opened up a space for reflections and facilitated a discussion of private experiences in the impersonalised public sphere. The relationships between the author, the work and his public changed. However, the critical essays in Craig Calhoun's book, point out that the literary public sphere thus created was extremely restrictive in nature and the publicity severely skewed in the favour of dominant groups. Given the cultural configuration in Orissa in the early 20th century, these limitations were even more severe. We notice the imbalances in the public sphere while discussing the underprivileged constituent groups as depicted in Oriya literature in chapter III & IV.

However, the greatest contribution of the literary public sphere to the political, lay in the development of the institutional basis of modern politics. 'The public sphere in the political realm evolved through the vehicle of public opinion which put the state in touch with needs of society'.[51] Though, remarkably, Habermas' treatment of the public sphere lacks a discussion on culture, identity and nationalism, G. Eley[52] provides an illuminating and reflective discussion on how a literary public sphere creates a demand

[49] Ibid, 29.
[50] Craig Calhoun , op. cit, 289.

[51] Habermas, op. cit, 30-31.

for nationalism. The Oriya experience with nationalism, the sociological conditions under which the demand for a distinct linguistic and political identity was made and the assertion for an independent Oriya culture occurred in a similar fashion. The coming of print, formation of literary associations and the emergence of a single identifiable literature, itself a product of standardisation of the Oriya script, produced a perceptibly homogeneous literary public sphere in which components from all parts of Orissa could now participate. Not surprisingly, this literary sphere was very restrictive and limited. It only included the literate, and literacy was the preserve of that section of the upper-caste that acquired western education. It did not recognise the possible existence of a parallel plebian public sphere. Obviously, the extent of universality and access that is implied in Habermas' treatment of the European public sphere is not found in the story of Orissa; this public sphere was even more severely restricted..

Modern Inequalities Replacing Old Ones

By this time not only the educated in the urban areas but also the peasants in rural areas and the tribal in hinterland Orissa were able to comprehend both the exploitative methods of the alien rulers and the extent of internal subordination. It is interesting to explore what exactly 'about' the alien rulers they perceived as exploitative and where they felt the new policies were intruding destructively into their way of life. The introduction of the excise tax system to make profits out of commodities like liquor, opium and '*bhang*' (a local intoxicant) was considered an intrusion into their lifestyle. The severity of the problem can be gauged when one understands the importance of liquor in tribal society. By prohibiting local manufacture of liquor and providing the it at a higher price the government was economically draining them.[53] Resentment also related to the suppression of cultural practices.

Felix Padel has analysed the structures of power and authority which colonialism imposed on tribal people. His book explores the difference in perception of tribals and the colonial officials on human sacrifice. The latter finding it gross, an epitome of barbarism and the tribal was surprised at all the steps that the government took to stop something so inherent to their culture.[54] The recognition of the colonial government as an enemy made it easier for the Oriya nationalists to accommodate the rural peasants and the tribal in their 'seamless' construction of identity. The incapacity of the tribal community to assert a distinct tribal past and their apparent pastlessness made the job of the Oriya nationalists a lot less difficult. The dominant Oriya groups replicated the logic the Bengalis had applied

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[52] See, Calhoun op. cit.

[53]The impact of modernity on tribal life will be dealt in Chapter-3.

54 Felix Padel, *The Sacrifice of a Human Being,: British Rule and the Kondhs in Orissa*, OUP, Delhi, 1995.

to the Oriyas by keeping other less privileged groups culturally subordinate. However, the connection of the tribal with that of the plains people in Orissa was through Jagannath in Puri. The origin of this 'national god' of Orissa was traced to tribal religions. Legends, myths, religious heads, local historians and the most important religious record of Orissa, the '*madala panji*' referred to Jagannath as an aboriginal god. With this relation the tribal was elevated from a place of distance to become the closest brethren of the Oriya people.

The advent of the foreigners ended the insulation of the tribals from the plains Oriya people. The growth of small towns and market areas, schools and missionary activities led to increased interaction between the previously isolated tribal and non-tribals. Since tribal language was very different from other Oriya dialects, their inclusion into Oriya identity was to greatly depend upon their relation with the Jagannath cult. This also led to the Hinduisation of the tribal people.[55]

Narratives perform an important role in the creation of solidarity. In Orissa, particularly, myths and legends around Jagannath have performed the traditional political function of maintaining and producing cohesion. The existence of an earlier common identity was greatly dependent upon the existence of Jagannath, which was crucial to the projection of homogeneity in Orissa. Religiosity in Orissa had a kind of federal structure, with Jagannath at the centre. The existence of this cult did not in any way hamper or displace the importance of the other local cults but it did occupy a privileged position as the national cult of Orissa. The capacity of the cult to lend itself to both high Hinduism and folk religion led to the emergence of Jagannath as the *'Rashtra Devata'*, literally the national god of Orissa. Myths and legends around this cult were employed by people to make sense of how their community came into being and were utilised in the manner in which Roland Barthes describes the function of myths, 'as a system of communication, a message'.[56] This message is in the form of cryptic codes signifying meaning to the insiders and expounding a certain self from which the outsider is strongly distinguished.

The relation between knowledge and literacy was not unknown in pre-modern India but people were literate at various removes. Basically there were three categories of people who could be considered knowledgeable: people who could both read and write religious texts and give interpretations of it; people who possibly remembered the texts and could, if required, give interpretations of them and people who could neither read or write the texts but were familiar with their philosophical expositions. There were clear

[55] Chapter 5 will deal with the processes through which tribals were incorporated and treated as an extension of the non-tribal population.

[56] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1972, 109. The details of the manner in which Jagannath is central to Oriya identity will be discussed in chapter -5.

ties of interdependence between all these groups. The first category needed the second and third to spread its knowledge and the latter needed the first to gain their knowledge.[57] The coming of modernity altered this definition of knowledge. People of the second and third category no longer constituted the literate world. Modern education emphasised a single system of correct knowledge, so either people are educated and have this knowledge or are illiterate and ignorant.[58] To be known as a person with '*jnana*' or knowledge required the awareness of certain texts, some local *puranas* and religious texts written in the local language. There was a direct relationship between '*jnana*' and *dharma.*

Formal education was the exclusive privilege of brahmins and particularly the *karana* caste in Orissa. Traditionally the dissemination of identity, communication and representation of self occurred through oral methods. It was enough for a few people to be able to read the Mahabharata to others in the village. The internal 'economy' of language was dependent on the '*shruti*' and '*smriti*' tradition, which is remembering of certain important texts through hearing. This dissemination of traditional texts used to take place in the '*Bhagabata Tungi*', a place for communal gatherings, where sacred books were kept and read in the evenings to all members of the village. O'Malley wrote, 'every village has its own *bhagabata ghara*, a place where sacred books are deposited and read at night.'[59] This *bhagabata ghara* was crucial to the village social organisation because participation in such gatherings was a reiteration of their belongingness to their community. The 'house of the *bhagabata*' was maintained by contributions from villagers and any stranger who happened to pass the village lived there and received hospitality from all the villagers.[60] In this communal gathering there was a traditional sensibility through which caste differences appeared to be dissolved. The habitual meeting of all castes to hear the *Bhagabata* every evening physically brought different castes together because the success of this gathering was dependent upon the presence of both categories of people - the ones who could read the text and those who wanted to understand and know the text.

With the coming of colonialism new institutions were set up with power and status now linked to proximity with colonial institutions. There was an interest to move out of the traditional villages and seek jobs in the upcoming towns. The traditional notion of *sikhsha,* education, and *vidya,* knowledge, underwent a fundamental change. Both

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[57] Knowledge was predominantly related to the knowing of religious texts.
[58] Emphasis on being print-literate was a consequence of the process of modernity.
[59] L.S.S.O'Malley, *Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers*, Puri, Patna, Superintendent Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa 1929, 72. Fakir Mohan, in his *Atmajibani* and Gopabandhu Das stress the importance of *Bhagabata* to the Oriya community.

sikhsha and *vidya* were now connected to modern schools. The most significant changes took place in the secondary schooling system. People traditionally associated with education like *brahmins* and *karanas* (the traditional record keeping upper caste in Orissa) took to modern education more easily than the underprivileged castes. The *karana* were most open minded and advanced as far as adapting to modern system of education and administration was concerned, and formed the predominant element of the Oriya middle class. The colonial system offered upward mobility to all who were open to change. While the traditional division of labour based on caste was being eroded, the new educational system provided avenues of upward mobility. Not all upper castes, however, took to modern education. Conservative Oriyas thought going to modern schools blasphemous and especially Christians schools. 'The people were so steeped in ignorance and superstition that government schools were thought to be infidel and English education obnoxious and hateful to God.'[61] In a lecture in Ravenshaw College, on educational matters, Krishna Govinda Gupta, Commissioner, Orissa Mission Press, said in 1901, 'I wish to address a few words to you on a matter which has of late received a considerable amount of attention, viz, the alleged godlessness of the education imparted in the public schools'[62] It is fairly evident that there was an apprehension about schools being patronised by the government or the missionary. Some people did not want to join modern schools for fear of loosing their traditional caste; others did for lack of financial means.[63]

Most people understood the advantages of being associated with colonial institutions but were yet unable to distance themselves from tradition. Therefore, in a traditional rural family of more than two boys, one would be encouraged to join schools and pursue higher studies in college, while the rest of the children would be expected to continue their traditional occupations in the village.[64] This created a peculiar situation wherein a person had deep emotional attachment with his rural roots, because he may have left back his parents and brothers in the village but could not abandon his re-rooting process in the growing towns where people sought better standards of living. The middle

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[60] In chapter 2, the use of *bhagabata ghara* by leaders for purposes of mobilisation will be discussed.

[61] W.W. Hunter, *Orissa, The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1872. Vol.I

[62] Krishna Govinda Gupta, *Addresses on Educational Matters*, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, 1901.

[63] In 1920, K.C. Panigrahi in his autobiography *Orissa of my Times,* writes that school and college were the exclusive privilege of the rich. *Mo Samaya Ra Odisa*, Kitab Mahal, Cuttack, 2nd ed.1990, 18.

[64] Fakir Mohan Senapati notes that English educated gentlemen feel embarrassed about speaking Oriya, yet, they are not able to drive out their national language from their homes because of their women. Fakir Mohan Senapati, J.V. Boulton (trans) *My Times And I*, Orissa Sahitya Akedemi, 1985, 8

[60] This will be dealt in detail in the third chapter.

class in Orissa, therefore, lived in towns with their hearts in the villages. This was possibly one major reason why the rural life style was always highlighted as crucial to Oriya social existence in Oriya literature.[65] The consequence was a horizontal split, alienating a few high castes who had the economic capacity to reap the benefits of modern education but were disinclined for religious reasons to immediately grasp the advantages associated with it, and a more severe vertical split, sharply distinguishing the disadvantaged castes who were traditionally not associated with education and further not inclined to join schools for social and economic reasons. Society was already divided socially on the basis of castes, religion and economic holdings. The introduction of schools created further divisions between sections of traditional high castes and between the high and low.

Setting up modern schools was linked to the standardisation of the Oriya script. Satyanarayan Rajguru states that 'the script used to write on palm leaf was different, the requirement now was to standardise a script which could be used on paper and written with pens. Moreover, earlier the scripts varied according to the caste that was writing it, *'jati anusarani brutipratha'*. Since the colonial government was not making recruitment on the basis of caste, it was imperative that the Oriyas had one script. The script chosen had to be uncomplicated, smooth and legible, something that could be easily adapted on paper. The modern Oriya script was standardised on the direction of the missionaries in their press.'[66] The standardisation of the script[67] exerted a simultaneous pressure towards a standardisation of the spoken language, the dialects had to be restructured and the use of certain dialects abandoned for public and official purposes of writing. Print provided a new institutional space for the development of a modern national language.

After the establishment of a considerable number of Oriya schools and after the official acknowledgement of the fact that Oriya was not a 'dialect' of Bengali, the pace of linguistic socialisation quickened through schools. But the selection of one dialect as the 'purest' and the standardisation of the language around it led to a position of superiority of the people who spoke this dialect. While the Sambalpur region took the leading role in the assertion of Oriya language and the Oriya movement for the making of a separate province, their dialect got a bad deal in the process of standardisation. Since the process of standardisation was done by an alien group of people, the missionaries, it was most

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[66] Satyanarayan Rajguru, op. cit., 32-34, mentions *karani* writing, which developed in 16th -17th century Orissa, and was predominantly used in Cuttack and Puri districts.

[67] The earliest centre of printing in Oriya language was the Serampore Press in Bengal. A disciple of Manohar Mistry called Adhar prepared the Oriya type of letters. The New Testament was translated into Oriya in 1808 perhaps with the help of an Oriya *pundit* Mrtyunjaya Vidyalankara. The first grammar book in Oriya was compiled by Amos Sutton in 1822. See Manjusri Dhall, *The British Rule: Missionary Activities in Orissa*, Har-Anand Publications, Delhi, 1997.

convenient for them to choose the dialect of the people with whom they interacted with most officially. Actually, the first strains in the homogeneous construction of Oriya identity can be traced to this, the creation of an 'inside other', where the western Orissa people were distanced from the coastal districts. The colonial infrastructure with its base in coastal Orissa ensured that greater prosperity was attained in this locality. This sense of difference and alienation was to deepen in the post independence period. Coastal Orissa people nurtured a patronising attitude towards others. The difference would not have been so apparent had there been a conscious attempt to include versions of that dialect during the process of standardisation. The problem did not take severe proportions then; it was only later that the animosity became more pronounced.[68]

The early homogeneous construction of Oriyaness was not devoid of problems. As will be explored in later chapters these differences between the '*gadjat*' and '*mughalbandi*' areas, western Orissa and coastal Orissa, tribal and non-tribal areas, the upper and lower castes, the rural and urban divide and the male dominated nature of the identity led to inconsistencies in the process of organising modern institutions. So, while there was accommodation of all groups in the initial image of the Oriya identity, the same process was responsible for the implicit creation of an internal other. Oriya society was being divided on lines that were never conceived in the pre-modern forms: urban-rural, educated-uneducated, tribal-non tribal, etc.

Construction of Oriyaness by External Others:

Colonial, Missionary and Bengali

The first people who started writing exhaustive accounts on Orissa were the colonial officials. One of the earliest writers, W.W.Hunter, mentions 'the insignificance of the place, the miserable condition of the people, the non-productivity of the land and the primitive people who were not in any fossil state but warm and breathing.'[69] The non-availability of any written historical material led Hunter to assume the 'pastlessness' of the community and the present degenerate condition which had come about due to the negligence and ignorance of the people. In a traditional society there was relatively lesser need to record events and even if there was any recording of events in the form of history it was distinct from the modern western methods of producing historical record. The colonial government justified its presence by asserting that it would help to rectify these

[68] There is one evidence of this dissatisfaction in an article in a local newspaper. As a reaction to the order of putting Sambalpur and the coastal districts together, a few people wrote a letter to the government emphasising closer linguistic and cultural links of Sambalpuri people to the Chottanagpur region. But the article said this was a handiwork of a few selfish individuals and re-emphasised the close linguistic and cultural links of the *Cuttackia* and *Sambalpuria*. Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 209-210.

[69] W.W.Hunter, op. cit., 4 –5.

flaws, to save the community from further degeneration and to imbue people with self awareness. The colonial opinion of Orissa can be summed up from the way Hunter starts his book on Orissa: 'to them the world stands indebted for not a single discovery which augments the comforts or mitigates the calamities of life. Even in literature the peculiar glory of the Indian race, they have won no conscious triumph. They have written no famous epic, they have struck out no separate school of philosophy; they have elaborated no new system of law'[70] The opinion of Hunter was significant because his narrative was considered historically most authentic and later colonial writings depended heavily upon this work. What troubled the colonial writers most was how could a community remain so backward in spite of being physically and administratively close to the civilised Bengali race! Compared to the kindred Bengalis the Oriyas appeared barbaric.

The backwardness of Orissa was attributed by the colonial writers to the excessively religious character of the people. There was a consensus that religion was central to the lives of the people. The rise and fall of Oriya dynasties were not because of any political assertion of the people but connected to religious reformations. Hunter, while stressing the religious aspect of Oriya life, says, 'religion is the key to the right understanding of the people.' The caste system which is an all India phenomenon was seen to be most rigidly practised here and the Oriyas were branded as a community extremely resistant to change in this regard. In emphasising the religious aspect, every official account had a chapter devoted to Jagannath, for they understood that each Oriya, whether religious or not, looked upon the temple as a source of national pride. Also, irrespective of caste and regional loyalties people paid unquestioned respect to the temple. The colonial rulers patronised the Jagannath temple because it was a major source of revenue to the government. Further, the colonial officials understood that one way of establishing a peaceful rule over Orissa was to preserve and keep safe its national God. Wellesley, after the occupation of Orissa, wrote to the local English officials, 'on your arrival at Jagannath, you will employ every possible precaution to preserve and respect due to the pagoda....'[71] This the colonial government did in spite of the criticism and objection of the missionaries that paradoxically the English administration was supporting idol worship.

The character of the Oriya, according to colonial orientalists, was the direct outcome of the climate: 'there is no doubt that the damp and enervating climate is largely

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[65] Ibid,3.

[71] P. Mukherjee, '*Policy of Lord Wellesley Towards the Jagannath Temple*' in *Shri Jagannath Smarika*, Vol II, 1971, 7.

[67] L.S.S. O Malley, *Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers*, 1929, 74.

responsible for love of ease and lack of ambition and capacity to take pains.'[72] The uncertainty of climatic conditions, droughts alternatively followed by floods, excesses of natural calamities gave rise to an oriental fatalism and the people showed little desire for progress.[73] A colonial official remarked that compared to the Bengali the Oriya was timid, full of awe for his past and completely indifferent to present change.[74] Conservative and resistant to change, Oriyas opposed even the government's attempt to spread education; government schools were treated as infidel inventions and even as late as 1860, a learned brahmin who was appointed as a Sanskrit teacher in a Puri school maintained by the government was expelled from his caste. The official perception of the Oriya was that he was primarily ignorant, superstitious, obsessed with caste prejudices and incapable of understanding his own rights. 'The most educated are as intelligent as in any part of the province...the ordinary cultivator is less industrious and slower to understand his own rights and interests than the Bihar peasant, but his home is neater...though as compared to the Bengali he is said to have less natural acuteness, less prone to litigiousness and deceit and evince more gratitude for kindness...Outside Orissa they have a good reputation for domestic servants...'[75] Another general impression of the Oriya community was the effeminacy of the whole race. This impression had been nurtured from the times when Abul Fazl in his *Ain-I-Akbari* described the Oriya as effeminate and extremely deficient in manly qualities.

Connected to this notion of religiosity, conservatism and lack of education was the kind of literature that was identified as representative of the Oriya society and character. O' Malley remarked that Oriya literature was constituted of 'a few songs and certain paraphrases of the Sanskrit *puranas* and the epics'.'[76] Since education was not widespread in Orissa, most colonial accounts were dismissive of any serious literature produced by the Oriyas. The little that they recognised was denoted as profane and indulgent, obscene and unintelligible. A few poets like Dinakrishna Das and Upendra Bhanja were mentioned but their poetry was regarded as mere jugglery of words. To the colonial observers the literature was as obscene as the architecture of the region.

Rajendralal Mitra quotes an Orientalist, Dr Wilhelm Lubke's view on Oriya sculpture and architecture. '...The conventionality of form which is so marked in them prevails to some extent everywhere in India. It resulted from indolence, combined with a desire to imitate art instead of nature. Generally speaking the forms of Orissan human

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[68] Ibid, 74.
[69] Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 211.

[75] L.S.S.O Malley, op. cit., 77.
[76] Ibid,77.
[72] Rajendralal Mitra, *Antiquities Of Orissa*, Vol I, Wyman and Co. Calcutta, 1875, 50-65.

figures are light and natural ...there is also manifest in them a knowledge of anatomy, a study of organic contexture of the body, ...a sense of laws of gravity and motion operating on the body... In some examples the poetical hyperboles of exceedingly slender waist and large hips are attempted to be represented in stone at a sad sacrifice of truth. The nude male figures at Bhuvanesvara, Puri and Konark are all rounded, soft, plump and in them is seen the portraiture of the Uriya to perfection...In describing Orissan arts I must not forget to notice the despicable taste which the artists have displayed by making some of their figures most disgustingly obscene'.[77]

Colonial officials like John Beames and T. Ravenshaw who were great patrons of the Oriya language mentioned the existence of a distinct indigenous literature even though they considered it obscene. Rev.J. Long wrote, 'that valuable as is the Oriya language, it is not likely to be much cultivated, the people of Orissa are too few to render it probable that expenses of creating a literature can be borne by the government.'[78] The simplest solution suggested was that the Oriya should acquire education in Bengali, a kindred language.

However, one must note that what the English considered as Orissa were the three coastal districts of Puri, Cuttack and Balasore attached to the Bengal Presidency. The other far flung Oriya speaking tracts were excluded from their analysis. Obviously, as compared to the Bengali population, Oriyas seemed very few. On this basis some colonial officials thought introduction of Bengali as the official language and as a medium of instruction in schools was feasible. This line of thinking might have been influenced by the Bengali clerks who formed a large part of the colonial administration. From the beginning, the colonial officials had identified Oriya and Assamese as likely to be absorbed into Bengali,.[79] The other reason forwarded for the introduction of Bengali was the absence of higher educational institutions in Orissa. Since all Oriyas interested in higher education were coming to Calcutta, some officials considered it better to abolish Oriya from the high schools and replace it with Bengali. In the same document Rev. Long wrote, 'I have said that Ooriya is the most inconvenient language for public proceedings. It occupies more writing space than Bengalee by about 25 percent. If any change were to be made I have said that I would introduce Hindoostanee and Persian characters.'[80] In another report published by the government, the collector of Puri said, 'had Hindoostanee been introduced, the Ooreahs would have partaken the advantages of rapidly rising

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[78] Rev.J. Long, *Notes and Queries Suggested By a Visit to Orissa In January*, Calcutta, 1859, 5-6.
[79] *Selections From the Records of the Bengal Government, submitted to the Govt by Rev.J. Long,* India Office Library, London, henceforward referred to as IOL.
[80] Ibid,70.

literature in that language. Their literature till within the few years consisted of fables and romances connected with their religion scratched on palm leaves.'[81]

The initial proposals to introduce Bengali officially were a great impetus to the Bengalis working in close collaboration with the colonial government in Orissa. Another argument for the introduction of Bengali as the medium of instruction was the absence of enough Bengali schools for the children of the Bengali officials appointed in the colonial administration. It was argued that since the text books and staff were to come from Bengal, it would be economically profitable for the government to abolish Oriya.

Not all colonial officials were in support of this proposal. Grierson in his account of the *Linguistic Survey of India,* supported the case for the Oriya language. 'More than 96 percent of the people of this region speak Oriya, sometimes called Odri or Utkali, it belongs to the eastern group of Indo-Aryan languages. Its grammatical construction closely resembles that of Bengali but it has one advantage over Bengali in the fact that it is pronounced as it spelt. In some aspects of grammar, it is said, Oriya is an older stage of grammatical development than even classical Sanskrit and among Indo-Aryan languages can only be compared to Sanskrit spoken in Vedic times.'[82] Apart from these statements, which were quoted profusely in the defence of Oriya language, the collector of Balasore, John Beames and the Commissioner T.E. Ravenshaw are remembered as great patrons of Oriya language. On receiving a petition from the aggrieved Oriyas, Beames, who was regarded as an authority on Indian languages, expressed his support for the language and sent it to the Commissioner who endorsed it. Beames' book on languages also gave Oriya its due space as a distinct language.[83] He severely criticised Kanti Bhattacharya's views as 'profoundly destitute of philological arguments.'[84]

Besides the colonial officials, the second group who wrote about Orissa extensively were the missionaries. Christian missionaries were the first people to make concerted efforts at removing illiteracy from Orissa. W.W.Hunter mentions the missionaries as the 'pioneers of popular education in Orissa as indeed everywhere in Bengal.'[85] In 1823, they established a school at Cuttack and later the government opened another at Puri. In the whole of Orissa, in 1858-59 there were only 30 schools.[86] The missionaries were also the first to set up a printing press in Orissa in 1837, though all that

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[81] Reports on the Districts of Pooree and Balasore, Henry Ricketts, 1853, Registrar Bengal Secretariat, Bengal Hurkaru Press, 1859. IOL. 94-96.
[82] O' Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Cuttack, Calcutta: the Bengal Secretariat book Depot, 1906, 41
[83] Fakir Mohan Senapati, (translated J.V. Boulton) *My Times and I, Atma Jiban Charita,* Orissa Sahitya Akedemi, First published 1985.140.
[84] S.C.Patra, op. cit.,104-105.
[85] W.W.Hunter, Orissa Vol II, 142.
[81] Nivedita Mohanty, op.cit. 12.

was printed there were official records, translations of the Christian holy books into Oriya and pamphlets against idol worship.

The missionary account of the Oriya was different in some significant respects from the colonial account. The fundamental objection of the missionaries was the favourable attitude of the colonial government towards the Hindu religion. Their focus was on the corrupting influence of Hinduism on the uneducated and naïve people of Orissa. In their account of Oriya Hinduism the main object of attack was the Jagannath cult, the institution that the government patronised most jealously as the largest source of revenue. As a missionary wrote, 'to know the Hindu idolatry a person has to wade through the filth of thirty two *puranas* and other popular books....Orissa may be compared to the huge cauldron which has been boiling for many hundred of years into which ignorance, stupidity and bigotry have cast so many poisonous ingredients...'[87] The reason for their superstition was the allegiance to Jagannath the 'notorious Hindu'. 'The people of Orissa were inconceivably averse to change... it is true of other large areas of India, but Orissa is the focus of Hindu orthodoxy'[88] The Hindu philosophy with its doctrines of *karma, nirvana, maya,* had eaten into the morals of society encouraging licentiousness and duplicity which had reproduced itself in the form of cruel, obscene, debasing and corrupting literature. The degenerate social practices of *sati*, burning of widows on the pyre of their husbands, and *meriah puja*, human sacrifice, had originated due to the influence of the *brahminical* system. Though the tribal society was organised on very different norms and the interaction between the tribal and non- tribal was minimal, the *meriah,* the person sacrificed was provided from within the Hindus of the plains by a caste which long acted as a via media between the tribal and non tribal population. The intolerable poverty of the people led to the existence of an un-enlightening religion. The intention of the missionaries was to try and convert the local population into Christians, which they carried out in spite of the displeasure of the British administration. Any attempt to establish missionary stations in places of religious importance to Hindus was foiled by the colonial government itself. A correspondent from South India writes, 'the invincible hostility of the British Government to the propagation of Christianity made it impossible to carry out this purpose...the main support of idolatry in India is Christian England.'[89] Even John Stuart Mill thought the missionary attitude

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[87] F.B. Laurie, *The Garden of Superstition and Idolatry,* Johnstone and Hunter, London, Edinburgh, 5.
[88] John Brown Meyers, (ed,) *Centenary of the Baptist Mission Press*, London, 1892, 246.
[89] Ibid,243.

was wrong and showed the 'very frequent infirmity of English minds, which makes them take a preposterous pleasure in the assertion of a bad principle.'[90]

To carry out their work on enlightening the impoverished people of Orissa, the missionary campaigns made extensive use of hurricane lanterns and the gramophone. A report of the Canadian Baptist Mission mentions, 'the magic lantern continues to attract and the preachers have seen little of the usefulness of the gramophone in the village...Next year perhaps we may add this to multiply the number of those who hear the gospel.[91]Gramophones and lanterns were used among ignorant villagers to amaze them with the magic of technology and convince them about the natural association of an easier and materially more comfortable life with a particular religion and poverty associated with the other. One religion was identified with progress and comfort, the other with backwardness.

The missionary activity was not very successful in the coastal areas or in places where the tribal people were in close contact with the Hindus. In Orissa the greatest number of conversions occurred in the tribal areas, places most distant from the direct influence of Hinduism. The conversion of the tribals alerted the Oriya leaders. On the one hand, with coming of 'census' and the numerical enumeration of communities, it was important to raise the number of Oriyas and on the other they had to acquire more geographical space, which depended upon the quick integration of tribal land into Orissa. Oriya leaders saw a clear need now to interact with the tribal more closely, to bring them into their educational, cultural, religious and linguistic folds.

The most immediate rival of the Oriya during the initial years of colonialism were the Bengali salaried class who worked for the colonial government in Orissa. As mentioned earlier, the attempt of Bengali clerks to abolish the Oriya language from official usage and as a medium of instruction in schools encouraged antagonism between the Oriyas and Bengalis. The conflict deepened with the Bengali intellectuals making derogatory comments in public discussions about the status of the Oriya language. Rajendralal Mitra, who was asked by the government to write a book on the '*Antiquities of Orissa'*, was a supporter of the Bengali claim that Oriya was a mere dialect of the

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[90] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1956, 38. While discussing missionary principles, he cites the heads of the Evangelical party who demanded that no schools be supported by public money in which the Bible is not taught and no employment given to any but real and pretended Christians. Ibid,38.

[91] Rev. V. Higgins, ed, *Report of the Canadian Mission*, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, 1917, 53.

Bengali language. This claim was at some points supported by some colonial officials, as we have seen.

The rise of Calcutta as a major commercial centre attracted people from satellite areas with the promise of a better living and the introduction of railways was a great impetus for the hearth-loving Oriya to move out in search of better opportunities. The obvious choice was Calcutta. The feeling of antagonism already existed among the Bengalis against the Oriya. Some people explain this antagonism by economic factors; the decline in job opportunities, growing unemployment and the presence of an outsider as a competitor in Calcutta; but it is more likely that the feeling was mainly a product of cultural prejudice. The image of the Oriya suffered greater impoverishment with uneducated Oriyas only getting the jobs of gardeners, domestic cooks and plumbers. The attitude towards the '*ude*' a derogatory name for every Oriya, was condescending. The presence of the Oriya cook, the '*ude thakur*' was said by some commentators to be a danger to domestic morals. In Nripendrakumar Basu's '*Nari Bipathe Jaye Kyano*', he mentions the poisonous presence of the Oriya cook who encourages women to go astray. The Oriya cook probably was the only male who had access to the secluded women quarters, the *andar mahal,* and was able to interact more closely with the women of the house. However, the Oriya presence in the Bengali household was not considered 'impure'. On the contrary, they were often valued as coming from the sacred land of Jagannath, and regarded as ritualistically purer than the Bengalis themselves. But this image fitted the Bengali stereotyping of the Oriyas as people who were meant to serve them. The Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra's shame is emphasised when he unbelievingly declares that 'even the Oriyas have their history, but the Bengali race does not have a history!'[92]

Construction of the Self

The rise of Oriya consciousness was partly an outcome of the social and political conditions that prevailed and partly a dialogue with these negative external discourses on Oriyaness. The colonial writers were the first to present an organised historical narrative of Oriya society which generated a consequent curiosity among the Oriyas about their own past. It also led to some amount of introspection about the Oriya self, and this, together with the emergence of history in the colonial discourse, could not but lead to the rise of an early Oriya nationalism. The growth of an institutional public sphere led to a conscious representation of the self, arising out of the continuous discussions and descriptions about Oriya society. There was a fast growing realisation of the importance of narrating a history of the self out of the fragmented past.

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[92] Quoted in Partha Chatterjee's *Nation and its Fragments*, OUP, 1994, 88.

The leadership naturally fell on the English educated Oriya community, who called themselves the '*sikhsita madhyabitta sampradya*', and took upon themselves the responsibility of giving an historical account of the Oriya people. Since people who belonged to this group largely came from a particular social background, they projected an Oriya self which they considered appropriate. The exclusions in this construct of a common identity might not have been intentional. The historical construction of a collective identity is a relational process, i.e., in the process of self definition the constituents that are exclusive to the self are brought out more sharply in distinguishing it from the 'others'. In the process of creating 'the other', the self is articulated.

While this articulation of the homogeneous Oriya self is done by a particular group of people, it also exerts pressure on the whole population to relate to the definition they gave to the collectivity as a whole. Paradoxically, the Oriya intellectuals' reflection about the self was greatly influenced by the colonial and Bengali interpretations of the Oriya character. The influence of the Bengali intellectuals was marked most in the sphere of literature and religion. While the Oriya leaders were critical of the Bengali domination, most educated Oriyas took to *Brahmo* religion because that discourse questioned age-long *brahminical* values and had a rationalistic, progressive attitude. In an article of the leading local newspaper in 1873, there was a discussion on how the Oriya felt about the Bengali. 'We Oriyas will never deny the help of the Bengali in developing our society. We agree that the Bengalis are a more advanced (*sabhya)* group. It is natural that when a less cultivated group, (*asabhya)*, comes in contact with the *sabhya* one, there is a flow of advantage from the higher group to the lower. The Bengalis who came to Orissa earlier (before the British occupation) had a feeling of *sadbhava* towards the Oriya but now it is much different. What use is this *sabhyata* if it is not used to any good consequence?'[93] Even while the agitation against the Bengalis was on, the ordinary educated Oriya was not necessarily antagonistic to this community. There was a lot that the Oriya would learn and replicate from the Bengali. Much after the making of Orissa as an independent province, in 1941, an Oriya author wrote, 'native language welcomes reinforcements to its stock of vocabulary, absorbs new thoughts and ideas...but does not allow dangerous devices to dethrone it or send it into exile.'[94]

The first priority of the Oriya was to emancipate the society from Bengali domination and then to reunite the Oriya speaking tracts. Lal Mohan Patnaik's book in 1941 said, 'it was not a mere fight for rights and privileges but an earnest struggle to save

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[93] Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 706.
[94] Lal Mohan Pattnaik, op. cit., 2.

or keep the race alive from disintegration and death'.[95] Clearly, to resist British domination was not the priority of Oriyas at the time. Rather, the leaders were aware that only the colonial government could help them achieve their goal of disassociating from the Bengalis, and that to antagonise them would be foolish for the Oriya cause. But, things became different with the creation of the Indian National Congress. The demand of the Oriya leaders, in its original form did not fit well with the strategy of the INC. The leaders of the Oriya movement had an apprehension that if Orissa showed greater inclination for the national movement, their demand for a separate Oriya state would become secondary. The Oriya leaders eventually got divided over this issue: Madhusudan Das and his followers thought unification of Orissa was a priority but Gopabandhu Das and his colleagues were of the opinion that the separation of Orissa would follow once India got independence.

The introduction of the press led to increased public communication and interaction. The first indigenous press was the Utkal Dipika at Cuttack in 1866 and then Fakirmohan Senapati's *Utkala* Press at Balasore in 1868. The choice of *Utkala* as the name of the press was itself a symbolic act for it aimed to regenerate in people and familiarise them with an ancient name and past solidarities. The establishment of the press, the publication of newspapers, novels, the eventual formation of a reading public, the introduction of schools and growth of literacy led to newer forms through which the space of Orissa was conceived. These forms provided the technical means for rendering a new nation into existence and re-presenting it. The standardisation of both Oriya script and conversational Oriya led to new forms of cohesion developing around language in the nineteenth century.

In tracing a dignified past for Orissa, Mritunjaya Rath, an Oriya literary critic, who wrote between 1882-1924, claimed for Orissa an Aryan past. The antiquity of Orissa was traced down to the *puranas*, the many references to the various names, *Kailinga, Odra, Utkala* mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The backwardness and the overly tribal identity of Orissa could be neutralised by this operation as *Puranic* references and mythical origins gave the nation a historical antiquity and dignity. '*Itihas* or history is not merely a recording of events and dates', writes Rath, and 'traditional Indian narrative structures did not record time in the western sense'.[96] The *Madala Panji*, the Jagannath temple chronicle, though not written in proper chronology, was quoted to trace the mythical origins of the nation. This chronicle traces the beginnings of Orissa to a time when the righteous king Yudhishthitra of Mahabharata was the king of Orissa. It was not essential for the '*Aryas*' involved in writing history to maintain insignificant records

[95] Ibid,6.

of births and deaths. They wrote of great individuals who led exemplary lives. They were commentaries on humanity and that is what should be understood as history.[97]

This construction of history, most writers agreed, was distinct from the western one. There was a constant attempt at displaying the 'essential' cultural difference between the western and Indian ways. K.C. Panigrahi wrote that the most authentic history of India, i.e. *Bharatvarsha,* are the *puranic* texts, and it is from these that we get a picture of past society. Intellectuals involved in writing history were in dialogue with the western historians, but their intention was to write a history which would be modern but at the same time essentially different from the western models.

Language, Literature and Identity

Since lack of text books and a modern literature was always an allegation against and a reason forwarded for the abolition of Oriya language, there was a need for a modern literature to sustain Oriya identity. Modern Oriya literature was started in the guise of creating text books. 'Modern Oriya literature was born out of a friction between traditional education and modern western education.'[98] Radhanatha Ray (1848-1908), Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912) and Gangadhar Meher (1862-1924) were the pioneers of modern Oriya literature. But, this process of creating a modern literature out of Oriya traditions was not easy. Medieval Oriya literature ,starting with Upendra Bhanja, was full of sexual allegories completely unacceptable to the people with modern 'refined' tastes. A campaign against the 'vulgar' works of Upendra Bhanja and against Radhanath Ray who openly declared his literary affiliations to the former, was carried on in a dispute between two journals known as the *Indradhanu and Bijuli Bibada.* (1893-94).[99]

Parallel to these literary efforts, attempts at writing modern positivist history were also going on. Sutton, a missionary activist, wrote a *History of Orissa* in 1831. Oriya scholars used this book as their model to write history. Babu Pyarimohan Acharya[100] wrote a *History of Orissa* after Sutton. Authorities of the School Division complained about the lack of books on Oriya history and had advertised that anybody who wrote a good historical account of Orissa would be awarded a sum of rupees two hundred. This book was published as a result of this announcement.[101] In the same article it was also mentioned that the *raja* and *zamindars* should read the book along with the masses so that

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[96] *Mrutyunjaya Granthavali,* Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1st edition, 1971.
[97] Ibid,193, *Sarala Charita.*
[98] Natabar Samantray, *Odia Sahitya Ra Itihasa,1803-1920,* Kalinga, Bhubaneswar, 1964.
[99] A detailed discussion has been recorded in N.Samantray, op. cit., 256-259.
[100] He edited a journal, *Utkal Putra,* which carried regular discussions on the social, cultural and educational possibilities that was awaited by the people of Orissa.
[101] Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., 664-665.

they become aware of the glorious past of Orissa and conduct their present affairs in an appropriate manner. Training in modern schools and exposure to western traditions changed the meaning of history. Later, Fakir Mohan wrote a history book in Oriya, called the *History of India*. This book was made the text-book for the scholarship examinations. He wrote *Utkal Bhramana*,[102](1891) a humorous poem, which had exhaustive details about Orissa, spatially and conceptually integrating the Oriya speaking tracts, describing the various people inhabiting them. Fakir Mohan admits that his employment as a teacher and later as a close associate of the British government was extremely advantageous for pursuing his interests of journalism and literature. In his autobiography he mentions the advantages of enjoying European favour. The British were protective and even respectful of Oriya language and literature of modern days.[103]

Both Radhanath[104]and Fakir Mohan worked for the colonial government which gave them the opportunity to tour Orissa and bring to public notice the ways in which Orissa could be imagined into one integrated nation. Radhanath was greatly influenced by the Western romantic poets and his poetry was a celebration of the physical qualities of Orissa with vivid descriptions of nature. He was the first to breathe life into the dreary expanse of Oriya topography as described by the colonial accounts. His first books *Meghadutam* and *Kabitavali* were accepted as text books. According to Natabar Samantray, after having made no success in Bengali, on the advice of Bhudev Mukhopadhaya, he started writing in Oriya. Most of the themes that he wrote of had Oriya names but were borrowed from Roman and Greek literature.[105] He is also alleged to have fabricated the Oriya myths most of which did not traditionally exist. Radhnath deserves credit for the successful union of western and Oriya poetry. The literature that he wrote was basically *rasa-sahitya*.[106]

Fakir Mohan has been universally accepted as the father of modern Oriya literature. He wrote in colloquial Oriya and popularised the style of using conversational language in literature. For being the first to introduce the distinct colloquial flavour to literature, he was known as '*Vyasa Kabi Fakir Mohan*.' Radhanath might not have been given the same status primarily because he was a Bengali settled in Orissa and he did not initially oppose Bengali domination. By contrast, Fakir Mohan's life trajectory went

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[102] Written during his travel from the east to south of Orissa, it is a satire on social interactions, full of deceit, lies, pretension and self -centredness. It describes various parts of Orissa with a keen eye of a historian as well.

[103] Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Atma Jivan Charita*, 26.

[104] Radhnath Ray, born in Balasore district, was a true representative of the Oriya *bhadralok* community. He was appointed Inspector of Schools by the Bengal Government and was posted in Orissa.

[105] *Kedar- Gouri*, an imitation of Pyramus and Thesbos, expressed the borrowed theme of sexual attraction between father and daughter.

through various obstacles that have it great value in Oriya eyes.[107]. Fakir Mohan's literature was considered crucial to the development of Oriya language and society because he was the first to notice the changes that were invading Oriya society after the start of modern education. He made a balanced critique of both the oppressive traditional past and the liberating modern. Fakir Mohan's first short story called '*Lacchamania*', which was brought out in a local magazine in 1868, was one of the earliest modern short stories in the whole of India.[108] His short story, *Rebati* describes a young girl's desires to be educated, her ambitions and helplessness. The growth of unethical practices which were closely associated with western education was a major theme in his novels. His *Cha Mana Atha Guntha* (1897-99) was the first novel to thematise oppression of peasants by the landlords and the slow proliferation of the immoral modern practices into rural life. In his understanding of evil, he was very fatalistic. His evil characters were hardly punished in their lifetimes; they were to be punished by the decree of Providence in the other world.

There were other ancillary events that gave a thrust to the growth of Oriya literature. Mrutinjaya Ratha, (1878-1923) a literary critic, will be remembered for his expositions on *Sarala Mahabharata*. His *Nari Darpana*, (Mirror of Women) is central to any discussion about character of women in Oriya literature. Apart from Sita, Savitri, he mentions two Oriya women, *Rani Sukadei* and *Sulakhsyana.*[109] Feeling the lack of text-books in Oriya, he compiled his essays on Oriya language, *Bhasa Rahasya* (Facets of Oriya Language), *Gramya Bhasa* (Rural Language) and *Odisa Bhasa Rs Mula* (Beginning of Oriya Language) in his book *Prabandha Patha*. Gopal Chandra Praharaj(1872-1945) compiled *Purna Chandra Bhasa Kosha*, a dictionary cum encyclopaedia in Oriya language between 1931-1940..

The Oriya nationalists realised the importance of mass involvement, creation of awareness among the youth, making them conscious about the backward condition of Orissa. This movement needed the apparent sanction of all categories of people. The only way for the message to infiltrate was to create a new reading public, for, most of the communication was already being done through print. Periodicals and newspapers regularly featured news of Orissa. There was an exchange of important news clips by Oriya newspapers in other Oriya speaking tracts. This led common people to comprehend

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[106] N. Samantray, op. cit., 261-318.
[107] Brought up by his uncle and aunt, he had to go through immense difficulty to complete his studies and begin his career in the colonial government.
[103] Chittaranjan Das, op. cit., 170.

[109] Sukadei, queen of Banki, fought against the Puri king after her husband was slain in war. Sulakhsyana, a famous poet in 1829, wrote *Parijatamala*. '*Nari Darpan*', *Mrutinjaya Granthavali*, 281-290.

the problems of Oriyas who did not form a part of the Bengal Presidency. The *Utkal Printing Press* of Balasore brought out two periodicals, *Samvad Vahika* and *Bodhadayini*. *The Utkal Dipika* set up in 1866 with Gauri Shankar Ray as the editor, made a pioneering effort to save the Oriya language from extinction. The *Sambalpur Hiteishini* which was brought out under the patronage of the chief of a western Orissa feudal province Bamra in1889 and the *Ganjam News* patronised by the king of Parlakhemundi were the leading newspapers fighting for a unified independent Oriya province. These periodicals were the primary means through which Oriyas of various regions kept in touch and continued to wage their movement for unification. Apart from periodicals, there were a number of associations, societies and clubs to mobilise support among educated Oriyas.

In all this however one thing that is immediately apparent is the background of the people who were involved in the language movement. It was largely patronised by the urban, rich, educated groups, the rajas and feudal chiefs who had a definite interest in collaborating with the colonial government. Their intention to save the Oriya language was not questionable, but the patronage that they got from the British government for not antagonising the administrative system is worth mentioning. The colonial officials made a case for the Oriya language and in return got the support of the Oriya middle class.[110]

The formation of associations and clubs marked the beginning of a new kind of public domain. This was distinct from the traditional communal gatherings, religious *mela*, festivals and *durbars* of the kings or the feudal lords. The public space was growing in size, more people were getting incorporated. The criteria for inclusion were no longer based on narrow notions of caste. There was the creation of two *Utkala Bhasa Unnati Bidhayini Sabha*, Society for Development of Oriya Language (1866) and the *Utkal Bhasa Uddipini Sabha*, Society for Improvement of Oriya Language.(1867) However, the public space that was being formed was elitist in nature; the Oriya *bhadralok*, being the most important constituent of this space.

After Fakir Mohan and Gouri Shankar Ray, the leadership of the Oriya movement in its second phase was taken over by Madhusudan Das(1848-1934)[111]. Madhusudan became the driving force for the formation of the Utkal Union Conference in 1903, the prime forum for expressing Oriya aspirations and responsible for inculcating the spirit of nationalism in Oriya intellectuals and students. Signature campaigns were regularly

[110] The Dhenkanal raja was highly honoured and given an award by the Commissioner, T.E. Ravenshaw. Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit., also Fakir Mohan Senapati *Atma Jivan Charita,*.

[111] Madhusudan Das was criticised for going to Calcutta, acquiring higher education and becoming a Christian by marriage. There was a satirical piece which said, to live a more enlightened life, people 'acquire' Christian women and along with them a job in the colonial government. Sudhakar Patnaik, op. cit.,9.

organised to assert the numerical strength of the movement. The *Utkal Dipika*, published a map of Orissa to affirm the territorial limits of the region. The members of the *Utkal Sammilani* decided they would wear a red/pink turban to assert their distinctiveness. They would wear it to all places, markets, fairs, college, etc.[112]

An anonymous book, *The Oriya Movement* described the difference between the Oriyas and other communities in a most interesting way. The book states that the basic difference between the Oriyas and Telegus was that the Oriya woman never married her maternal uncle and men would never drink liquor. As the Collector of Ganjam noted, the Oriya is law-abiding, not complaining and faithful in his domestic relations, and above all things, sober.[113]

While the Oriyas wanted to disengage from the Bengalis, Calcutta promised a better life. Oriyas moved in large numbers to Calcutta in search of jobs. With the Bengalis trying to suppress the independence of the Oriya language, these Oriyas did not assert his Oriya identity in Calcutta. Godabarisha Mishra wrote, 'if you ask an Oriya in Calcutta, he would talk back in a strange distorted Oriya mixed with Bengali'[114] It would not be wrong to say that Oriya speaking people in the border areas of Medinipur were reluctant to join Orissa. Before the creation of an independent Oriya province, when the Medinipur Oriyas were asked about their preference they replied, 'where in Orissa will we find Rabindranath, Jagdish Chandra Bose and Chittaranjan Das and will we ever find a Calcutta?'[115]

The Oriyas were long criticized as an effeminate race. Fakir Mohan tried hard to re-establish the lost martial glory of the Oriya *jati* and emphasised the maritime glory of Orissa,[116] and its connection with the South East Asian countries. The first war that they fought against the British in 1817, the '*Paika Bidroha,*'[117] was the epitome of Oriya bravery. Ramashankar Ray,(1858-1931) wrote the most popular play *Kanchi Kaberi*, (1880) a mythical story about the powerful king of Orissa who defeated the king of Kanchi with the divine help of Jagannath. Radhanath Ray, in his poem '*Mahajatra*' and '*Chilika*' described the glorious march of the Oriya *paika* to wage war against the Kanchi king. These historical romances, through the capacity of the literary writer to fuse the

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[112] *Godabarisha Granthavali*, 84.
[113] Anonymous, *The Oriya Movement*, by Two Bachelor of Arts, Published by H.H. Panda, Secy, Oriya Samaj, Ganjam, Aska, 1919, 114-118.
[114] Ibid,82.
[115] Ibid,82.
[116] Commemorating this connection there is an annual fair called *Bali Yatra*, Voyage to Bali. In the month of *Kartik*, Oriyas float paper boats, symbolically marking the beginning of the voyage of the '*sadhava*', the traditional merchant class in Orissa who sailed on that auspicious day to travel to the distant lands.

world outside and the one in the narrative, gave the reader an expanded sense of space and belongingness. Every distant place which was earlier unfamiliar was now brought into, what Marc Auge calls 'the universe of recognition'.[118]

One dominant opinion about Oriyas was their religiosity, supported by the distinct presence of temples. Religiosity, as the colonial writer said, formed the basis of the Oriya national character and this religiosity depended heavily upon the Jagannath cult. The authors of '*The Oriya Movement*'[119] accepted Hunters's notion that the Oriyas were 'constitutionally religious ... we must remember that his sole monuments of the past are edifices of his deities.[120] Orissa has all along been a '*punya bhumi*' of India and the Oriyas feel that the sacredness attached to their country was defiled by the administrative dissection that it suffered at the hands of the colonial rulers. Both colonial and internal accounts mention the legendary exclamation of Mansingh, the Moghul king Akbar's general: 'this country is not to be conquered, for conquest and schemes are mere human ambitions. It entirely belongs to God, and every inch is worth a pilgrimage'[121]

The religious symbolism of Puri was heightened through the description of the temple standing on the blue mountain, *neela saila*, blue being the divine colour. It is also depicted as the *sankha kshetra* because the spatial shape of Puri looks like the conch shell, conch being one of the symbols of Krishna. Apart from Puri, Chilika[122] occupied a very significant place in the literary life of Orissa. The symbolic importance of *Chilika* was that it was the life giver, a mother to the people who depended on it for a livelihood and a protector of the Oriya race. Places of historical, and cultural importance became the symbols of Oriya nationalism, invested with meaning in literature and popular belief. Their importance was confirmed through rituals and reiteration.[123]

The colonial accounts had emphasised the obscenity and the indulgent nature of Oriya literature. According to the colonial rulers, there were no original works and whatever little existed were local imitations of Mahabharata and Ramayana. Most importantly, since not many people were educated the infrastructure to sustain a national literature was absent.

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[117] The *Paika,* the Oriya peasant soldier, was allowed to hold land without paying rent. This was upset by the British taxation system. Oriya opinion holds that *Paika Rebellion* had the full support of all classes. Bira Surendra Sai incited another rebellion in western Orissa.
[118] Marc Auge, *Non Places*,(trans John Howe), 1995, 35-36.
[119] Anonymous, *The Oriya Movement* by Two Bachelor of Arts, Published by H.H. Panda, Secy, Oriya Samaj, Ganjam, Aska, 1919.
[120] Ibid,113.
[121] L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Cuttack, 44.
[122] The economy of the brackish water Chilika lake supports 150 villages. People make a living out of fishing and salt making.
[123] Marc, Auge op. cit., refers to these places as 'anthropological places', 52.

However, things changed with the Oriya intellectuals trying to retrieve their written past. This retrieval was taking place along with the production of a new kind of literary genre, a result of exposure to literary traditions from outside. This modern tradition, though thematically and stylistically different, drew from a traditional repertoire of myths and legends.[124] In poetry, the traditional '*dandibritta*' metre was abandoned to incorporate blank verse. The new style of writing was obtained from Bengal, because most contemporary intellectuals had an exposure to Bengali language. After the introduction of the press, there was an attempt to publish the works of Sarala Das, the15th century Oriya poet known as the '*adi-kabi*'. It is interesting that normally Ved Vyas, the poet who wrote *Mahabharata* is considered as the *adi kabi* in Indian literature, but the Oriyas make a significant departure when they refer to Sarala Das, the first poet to write in the Oriya language as their *adi kabi*. The works of *Upendra Bhanja* and *Dinakrishna Das*[125] were also published in spite of their incompatibility with the colonial sense of propriety. In spite of the dismissive attitude of the colonial accounts towards the quality of Oriya literature, the Oriya intellectual wanted to disseminate the whole genre of traditional literature in print.

While some people made an attempt to prove that there was a distinct literature in Oriya, there were others who encouraged the production of new literature compatible with the colonial sense of propriety. This new literature maintained a cautious distance from the themes of traditional literature and got its inspiration from western themes. It therefore had very limited readership and limited circulation. This had no grounding in the familiar cultural context and the themes were too new to be appreciated by the people. Texts like *Sarala Mahabharata*(16th century) had wider appeal because it was written in a rustic style and expounded in a plebeian voice. The contribution of Sarala Das, a peasant poet and soldier, lies in popularising the Indian epic in every Oriya family. As an Oriya writer commented, 'from there one retrieves the soul of Oriya nationalism. It was as if the brave soldier who fought the battle of *Mahabharata* was none other an Oriya warrior.' The other peculiarity of *Sarala Mahabharata* was that all places mentioned in the pan-Indian text were believed to be found in Orissa which gave geographical sanctity to a number of places in Orissa and sought to retrieve the impoverished masculinity of the Oriya race. Most importantly, the Oriyas started to make a claim that the Oriya identity was linked to an overall Indian identity.

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[124] Subsequent chapters will discuss the modes in which Oriya literature uses myths, rituals and folk tales as digressions, embellishments and illustrations.

[125] Both medieval poets flourished because of their ornamental style of writing. Das's *Rasakallola,* written in *chhanda* style, has every line of the poem beginning with the syllable *ka*. Bhanja's *Labnyabati* and *Kotibrahmandasundari* were culled from imaginary history.

There were two groups of writers, products of the same process of the creation of modern consciousness, with varied opinions on the status of traditional Oriya literature. One was in favour of the publication of the older literature of Orissa and introduction of that in the school syllabus. The other internalised the colonial opinion and thought of this literature as of no apparent use to the development of society. The *Utkal Prabha*, a newspaper patronised by the king of Mayurbhanj, came down heavily upon the traditional authors and *Utkal Dipika* published from Cuttack, by contrast, was in favour of them. There was a debate between the two Oriya newspapers about the relevance of older literature to modern life. The *Utkal Prabha*, observed, 'it will be no exaggeration to say that there is really speaking no literature in Oriya language. In the literature of Orissa can be counted about ten poems of Upendra Bhanja, Dinakrishna Das and the others, the *Bhagabata* of Jagannath Das, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* of Sarala Das, but is that the goal of the literature of the nation? Again the books named above, *Srimad Bhagabata* by Jagannath Das excepted, far from serving society are undermining its progress. Of course, it has to be admitted that Upendra Bhanja and Dinakrishna were poets of high order and their works do not lack the originality or high seriousness of thought. But the Bhanja poet has churned the ocean in his book and has raised the poison of erotic sentiment. Such can but serve to spoil the society. That is true literature by studying which the ordinary people are roused to their respective sense of duty, which helps everybody to proper conduct, character building and social behaviour. The Oriyas have no literature and the society of Utkal has no means of progress. To supply this want the Utkal Prabha has entered the field.'[126]

This discussion reveals the belief that literature has a social duty to fulfil if it has to be successful. It should be able to address problems of society and raise its moral standards. Any literature unable to do so is denied the status of literature. Vaishnava poetry, the Radha-Krishna theme and even the Mahabharata, is replete with erotic themes. This strand of thinking made an explicit appeal to discard this literature. The Bhagabata is given exceptional status for it was a vital way of establishing a relation with an all-Indian past. To discredit it would exclude Orissa from the mainstream Hindu philosophical tradition. The complaint against Oriya literature was that it was full of profane allegories, '*aslila barnana*', expounding only the '*adi rasa*' and was not fit to be read in the modern context by English educated people. Bhanja was blamed of resorting to '*sabda alankar*', rhetoric only. Western educated authors like Radhanath Ray and Madhusudan Das who wrote descriptive and clean poems like *Chilika* and *Dvavatarna* eventually became financially successful. Radhanath introduced blank verse into Oriya poetry. He was

[126] Priyaranjan Sen, *Modern Oriya Literature,* Gauranga Press, Calcutta, 1947, 50-51.

influenced by the Bengali poet, Michael Madhusudan Dutt. In spite of all criticism, Radhanath's literature 'built up a figure of Oriya nationhood by recreating the glorious past of Orissa as well as through innumerable details of Orissa's flora and fauna and its beautiful matchless nature...In the deepest level he was concerned with the moral health of the nation. He was concerned about the presence of evil in man's life and his poems provide a metaphorical structure in which evil is assessed and fought.'[127]

The early Oriya historical novels are remarkably secular. They depict the suffering of Oriya people caused both by Muslim and Hindu invasions and seek to project a period of crisis in the history of Orissa.[128] Fakir Mohan's colloquialism was a deliberate attempt to refrain from writing in 'high' language and to establish the uniqueness of Oriya. There was also an apprehension that writing in Sanskritic Oriya might make it sound more like Bengali. The literature based on '*shringara rasa*' and the *Radha Krishna* theme were more or less abandoned and the emphasis was shifted to either the martial past of the Oriya race or to the secular aspects of the great Indian epics. There was a distinct appeal to egalitarianism and equality among human beings. Degeneration of society was attributed to the rise of 'Brahmanism' and ritualism in daily life. Social themes were given precedence over religious ones.

Orissa in its modern form was created in phases. Unification of Sambalpur with the coastal areas came first. In 1936, Ganjam and Koraput were made a part of this unification. The princely states, the eighteen *gadjats*, supporters of the Oriya movement later wanted to maintain their independent existence from Orissa till 1947 when they were literally forced by the Indian Government to abandon their *zamindari* status and join Orissa. Mayurbhanj became a part of Orissa in 1948. Saraikella and Kharsuan of Singhbhum district joined Bihar. It was by the time of independence that the Orissa of the poetic imagination came to coincide with the boundaries of the recognised political space.

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[127] Jatindra Mohanty, *There Where Trees Flower*, Bookland International, Bhubaneswar, 1980, 3.
[128] Meenakshi Mukherji, *Twice Born Fiction*, Heinemann, Delhi, 1971, 61.

[126] Priyaranjan Sen, op. cit., 36.

Chapter 2

Literary Writing and Articulation of Oriya Identity: The Nationalist Phase, 1920-1940's

The coming of print and the accessibility of texts to a larger circle of readers significantly changed the way people perceived literature and its functions. By 1920's it was an accepted fact that literature made a significant contribution to the formation of an Oriya identity and represented people's consciousness about themselves. We will start our discussion of literature and identity from 1920's because a substantial amount of work exists on the earlier phase. The second phase of modern Oriya literature started with the *Satyabadi* group of writers like Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and Godabarisha Mishra who were inspired by contemporary Indian nationalist movement and wrote primarily on patriotic themes. The crucial difference between the *Satyabadi* writers and the earlier ones was their attitude in situating Oriyaness within the broad framework of an Indian identity. This period was marked by great influence of Gandhian politics on Oriya nationalists and the focus shifted from merely asserting a regional identity to finding a place in the national politics of India. Their understanding of Indianness, however, was clearly linked to their understanding of Oriyaness. The appeal was no longer merely associated with the Oriya *jati.* This familiar notion of *jati* as 'race', people or collectivity was extended to *jatiyata*, 'nationalism' at the national level.

With the official standardisation of the Oriya language, success of the language movement against the Bengalis and the partial success of the unification of Sambalpur with the coastal tracts, the focus on what was to constitute Oriyaness, began to change. Satyabadi literature was inspired by a more serious political purpose of integrating Orissa into the larger national movement. The Indian national movement was already moving in a different direction where the relation between patriotism for a region was intertwined with that of India. Naturally enough, their engagement with the process of identity-making also differed from writers of the Radhanath era.

Unlike earlier Oriya leaders who took colonial favours to save the Oriya language from extinction, the nationalists evinced a strong anti-colonial attitude. Writers of the Radhanath era wrote with an intention to 'create' and 'reflect' beauty. The Satyabadi writers were in search of 'truth'(*satya*) and their idea of truth was closely linked to the idea of freedom they propagated. They also realised that the language movement was confined to the upper caste/class and urban groups. To make their movement more legitimate they sought to include the larger rural masses. According to them, greater

accessibility to education was a pre-requisite for the development of Oriya national character. They began to introduce social and political notions of liberty and equality, but their conception was quite different from what western liberals thought about these principles. The nationalists had a clear perception of what they wanted to portray as 'history'. In their reverence for history, '*Itihasa upasana*' they looked at history both romantically and idealistically and emphasised the idea of '*atma-dan*', self sacrifice, in historical accounts. Patriotism, according to them was best invoked in a historical context.

The Satyabadi writers did not perceive the two identities, Oriya and Indian as mutually exclusive but as complementing each other. Gopabandhu and his colleagues accepted the 'historical necessity' to articulate an integrated Indian identity when the national struggle was gaining momentum all over India. After the success of the language movement, Madhusudan Das led the demand for the establishment of a separate Oriya state on a linguistic basis and viewed Oriya identity as standing in complete opposition to the Indian one. The leaders who demanded a separate state of Orissa put regional aspirations before national demands and avoided any involvement with the national movement for fear of enraging the colonial government which had the power to grant them the status of a separate state. In fact, at most times they preferred to work in close collaboration with the colonial power. Though the Congress broadly accepted the justice of a linguistic division of regions, Surendranath Banerjee, the Congress stalwart from Bengal was of opinion that the Oriya movement should not be mixed with the demand for independence. The disinterest of the Congress in the Oriya movement disappointed Oriya activists led by Madhusudan Das. After a discussion with Banerjee, Das decided that the Oriya movement should be kept in isolation from Congress politics.[1] The Oriya delegates to the forums of the Indian National Congress were broadly treated as representatives from Bengal, which further alienated the Oriya leadership.

The emergence of Gandhi on the national political scene substantially changed the character of the national movement. Some felt that the Oriya leadership must alter their relation to the Congress accordingly. The first protest against an excessively regional attitude of the Oriya leadership came from Gopabandhu Das at Chakradharpur in the 14th session of the Utkala Sammilani in 1920[2]. The two strands finally parted ways when Gopabandu stressed a new kind of identity, 'we are first of all human beings, then Indians and only last of all Oriyas.'[3] He declared that 'the aspirations of the Oriya movement

[1] Madhusudan's daughter Sailabala Das notes this conversation between her father and Surendranath Banerjee. Jyotsnamayee Mahanty, *Glimpses of Indian Women in the Freedom Struggle*, Discovery Publishing House, Delhi, 1996, 32.
[2] Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1982, 99-104.
[3] *Gopabandhu Rachanavali*, Part III, 16-17 or Chittaranjan Das, *A Glimpse Into Oriya Literature*, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1982, 193.

would henceforth not be different from that of the national movement.'[4] The movement launched by Madhusudan Das stood suspended in favour of the mass movement for 'Swaraj' under the leadership of Gopabandhu and the Satyabadi leaders. It was only after the Non Co-operation Movement was called off in 1922 that there was the resurgence of the demand for unification and a separate state.[5] Though the Oriya nationalists had equal interest in preserving the Oriya language against threats of outsiders, they organised this demand within the broad Congress movement. Gopabandhu worked in close collaboration with four of his friends who came to be known as *Pancha Sakha*, Five Friends. Amongst them, Nilakantha Das was engaged in popularising Oriya language in some areas of Sambalpur, Godabarisha Mishra was involved in the district of Singhbhum which by then was being claimed by Bihar. The Satyabadi school of thought rose to prominence primarily because they made Congress movement a great force in Orissa.

The Oriya nationalists realised that it was futile for the Oriyas to stand in 'isolation' if they wanted any national recognition. The complacent attitude of the language movement leaders that 'Orissa was once a very powerful state' had to come to terms with a new reality. As compared to other regional provinces, it was far behind in education and social development. Once the national movement gained all India momentum Orissa was continuously weighed against its powerful neighbour, Bengal, its prior rulers Marathas in Maharashtra and other states like Madras and United Provinces. The traditionally acclaimed powerful province of Utkal failed to acquire any comparable status in the modern period. The reasons and symbols for being 'powerful' in the traditional and modern times were fundamentally different.

As most writers of this period were closely involved in the national movement, the specific intention of their aesthetics was to create a nationalist consciousness among the readership, to sensitise them to newer notions and definitions of what now constituted a 'nation' and 'community'. For example it no longer sufficed to be a part of a particular 'caste-type' or 'religious group type' (either a Vaishnava or Shaiva) or to see oneself as a part of one 'village' or a sub-region. There was a need for individuals to see themselves as all of these, belong to a caste, a community, a religioussect, a sub-region, and being an Oriya as well as an Indian. The Oriya nationalists differed from their predecessors in their perception of what constituted national identity. It was not impossible for these writers to be both Indian and Oriya at the same time. You could only be an Indian by first asserting your individual self as part of the Oriya whole and then as an Oriya by being a part of

[4] Natabar Samantray, *Odia Sahitya Ra Itihasa*, Granthalaya, Bhubaneswar, 1964, 612.
[5] P.K.Mishra, *The Political History of Orissa*: 1900-1936, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi,1979, 123-130.

India. That Gopabandhu invited the Oriya masses to join the Indian national movement through invoking popular Oriya cultural symbols was itself an evidence of simultaneous belongingness to two identities. It was necessary for the individual to understand the significance of layered identity and to activate different identities at different times so that one did not clash with another and in particular situations the 'nobler' one should overcome the lesser ones.

Benedict Anderson says that through the institutional form of print anonymous people formed themselves into a nation. A people think of themselves as one only because they agree that they have gone through the same historical experiences which endow them with an individuality both in their own eyes and those of the outsiders. The Oriya nationalists had a specific sense of the past that they portrayed as unique to Orissa. Like everywhere else, they restored to Orissa its cultural identity through an immemorial past - heroes, temples and architecture, myths and kings. The difference was the specific effect that they created out of these symbols.

There were a few pre-requisites for claiming the historicity of a community. Historical construction can build on geographical contiguity and residential patterns which gave rise to ties of loyalty, folk myths and legends that had persisted over generations among all classes of people. The Oriya nationalists used them as motifs for their particular version of Oriyaness. Certain aspects of those myths were reiterated as crucial to the existence of the Oriya nation. These myths and their constituent symbols created a 'nostalgia' about the Oriya nation that was.[6] In the nationalist writings, Oriya religion, predominantly organised around Jagannath, received political expression. They successfully popularised the cult in western Orissa which had been traditionally relatively less influenced by it.

There was a specific reason as to why the literature of this era was called *jatiya sahitya*. The Oriya nationalists had a distinct notion of what they meant by nationalism and how national character could be developed. The coming of colonial administration and education had changed the social structure considerably. While the cohesiveness of traditional society disappeared and new divisions created, the coming of print and the integrated administrative machinery had created a cohesion among all people who were educated. This not only alienated illiterate people but simultaneously created a 'sphere' composed of that narrow segment of educated middle class and feudal lords. The discourse that was conducted was both exclusive and prejudicial to the interests of those excluded.[7] The elitist nature of the earlier movement was not reflected only in its class

[6] For the basis on which a pre-modern society claimed its nationhood, see, Anthony D.Smith, *Ethnic Origins of a Nation,* Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1986, 1993.
[7] Craig Calhoun,(ed) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1994, 3

compositions. It also produced a form of literature that was elitist and catered to the taste of this group. The Satyabadi leaders wanted to expand this sphere and include more people in the category of the educated. It was necessary to instil into every individual, educated, uneducated, urban and rural, a feeling for his or her nation. There was a need for single-minded devotion to the interest of the nation and individual interest had to be submerged in favour of national interest.

The nationalists recognised the existence of heterogeneous power centres which reproduced multiple forms of social domination. Power was organised around education, caste, professions and places of residence. These varied power centres needed to be diffused if the national movement was to become inclusive in nature. In Orissa, different caste groups like the '*karana sabha,*' the *brahmin samiti* organised themselves exclusively to assert their rights. These groups had to be integrated under the banner of Oriyaness and mobilised to participate in a single movement. Political mobilisation of the lower strata became a necessary element of the programme of the Oriya nationalists in tune with the Gandhian method at the Indian level. They launched their political act of nation-building through literature that aimed at establishing one set of values for all people. They emphasised the cultural principles of *karma, satya, dharma* and *seva* to which people from very diverse social backgrounds could relate to equally. They succeeded in presenting these cultural values as the historical heritage of the Oriya nation and in the narrartives, their literary 'heroes' justified these values. This specific engagement with history led to a particular historical consciousness and social imagination which dissolved divisions among constituent groups forming Oriya society. The Satyabadi writers were stylistically and thematically anti-Radhanath. Their main allegation against the writers of the Radhanath age[8] was that they imported 'foreign elements' both in 'form' and 'content' into Oriya literature.

Themes of the Satyabadi Movement

No Oriya leader before Gopabandhu Das(1977-1928) had caught the eyes of Indian national leaders. Born into a humble Brahmin family in the Puri district, Gopabandhu graduated in humanities from Ravenshaw College and studied law in Calcutta University. In 1919-20, he was a member of the Bihar-Orissa Legislative Assembly. He was the first Oriya to be jailed for participating in Gandhi's Non-Co-operation Movement. Gopabandhu started the '*Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya*' in 1909 at Sakhsigopal in the district of Puri and a newspaper called '*Samaja*' in 1919. This school

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[8] It should be emphasised that Fakirmohan stood independent of any such allegation. He was to be the model of all Oriya novelists eventually.

was started with the help of four of his other friends, Nilakantha Das, Godabarisha Mishra, Krupasindhu Mishra and Acharya Harihar. The five together came to be popularly known as the *Pancha Sakha,* Five Friends. Their main aim was to build the Oriya national character. Before deciding to start the school in Puri district, they looked for conducive localities to start a school in the interior '*gadjat'* areas of Kalahandi, Mayurbhanja, Sambalpur, Nilagiri, etc.[9] The school gained instant prominence because it was visited by national leaders like Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, Mahatma Gandhi and Thakar Bapa.[10] The visit of these leaders in the midst of the national movement gave it a new legitimacy. They started the *Satyabadi Sahitya Patrika* in 1915. The call for the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1921 was a major context in which the Satyabadi literary movement gained momentum.

Similar to other thinkers like Gandhi and Tagore, the Satyabadi school of thought advocated that education should be geared in the direction of nationalism. Education, in his view, should occur on lines of the Indian tradition and according to the rules of *sanatan dharma.* This was not to suggest that these writers were socially reactionary in their attitude; they simply valued the influence of religiosity on the moral development of the individual character. In fact, the school was burnt down by conservative brahmins because they considered it as excessively reformist in character.[11] The school was regarded as a 'man making factory'. It aimed to inculcate among the students a spirit of social work, social reform and a new national vigour. According to them, English education far from helping Oriyas realise their Indian identity, actually distanced them from it and moulded them in the lines of an alien culture. Instead of repentance for their loss, they rejoice in being enslaved.[12]

This school was modelled on the age-old *gurukul,* the residential school system prevalent in ancient India, and was intensely involved in political activism. According to Gopabandhu, '*siksha'* or education should inculcate ideals of simplicity, ability, moral principles, and a balanced character in a student. It should encourage *brahmacharya,* a life of sexual abstinence.[13] The school stressed the close communication and co-operation between the *guru* and *sishya,* the teacher and students. Further, the idyllic rural locale of the school, *shant,* peaceful, *snigdha,* refreshing surroundings, along with an atmosphere of truth and religion, would create a desire among students for knowledge and

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[9] Nilakantha Das, *Atmajibani,* Cuttack Students Store, New Edition, 1986, 81.
[10] Nrusingha Sarangi, Dharmapada, *Bhoomi Bhumika,* Friends Publishers, Cuttack, 1994, 3rd Ed. 1997, 47.
[11] Ibid,47.
[12] Srinibas Mishra , *Adhunika Odia Sahitya,* Vidyapuri, Cuttack, 1st pub 1978, 1995, 370.
[13] Ibid,366. According to the Hindus, student life should be exorcised of the evil influences of sex.

tatwa.[14] In the words of Nilakantha, discipline, *shrunkhala,* patience, *dhairya* and restraint, *sanyam* were three pillars of the school.[15] In the school all traditional Oriya festivals were celebrated, typical Oriya food was served and Oriya scriptures read. The intention was to produce 'ideal' human beings, and the teachers stood the test of these principles. Apart from the school at Sakhsigopal, Gopabandhu started a new movement for establishing similar schools in other interior parts of Orissa. This was done to popularise Oriya language and culture in the border areas of Orissa, where the language and culture were threatened with extinction.[16]

Gopabandhu was the leader of the Satyabadi group. He was associated with the Utkal Union Conference, the prime institution of the Oriyas which demanded unification. He was involved with the Indian National Congress and introduced its activities to the UUC. As an Oriya academic puts it, 'he who provided ways through which the condition of our villages could be upgraded, he who in the midst of youth could experience all about old age, he who asks the spring breeze about the well being of his beloved ones, he is a magician, the king of the Satyabadi writers, Gopabandhu.'[17]. Nilakantha came in close contact with Gopabandhu while studying at Ravenshaw College. He took over the responsibility of the Satyabadi school as the headmaster. Later, he worked in the western tracts of Sambalpur, mobilising public opinion in favour of the Oriya language and the freedom movement. Godabarisha went over to Singhbhum to lead the movement there.

Though Nilakantha and Godabarisha were atheists, the Satybadi leaders believed in the basic tenets of Hinduism as the basis of a moral life. Influenced by the ideals of Gopabandhu, they regarded social service and upliftment of the oppressed as direct service to God. The most important objective of this movement was to see that people were imbued with a historical consciousness. Nilakantha's well researched *Odia Sahitya Ra Krama Parinama* specially launched a hostile attack on Bengali society, where he attempted to prove the purity of Oriya society by special reference to Oriya poets like Achyutananda and others. Godabarisha derived his literary themes from historical figures, primarily regional rulers, to assert the martial quality of the Oriya people. Jagannath dharma and the principles of equality associated with it were elaborated by all these writers as crucial to Oriya identity. Their political thinking was greatly influenced by international events and espoused a new humanism that did not recognise differences between people.

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[14] Ibid,367.
[15] Nilakantha *Atmajibani,* op. cit., 91.
[16] This was done in the Orissa Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra borders at Singhbhum, Tikali, Phuljhar, Chandrapur, Mandasa, Tarala and even in Calcutta for the Oriyas residing there. Nrusingha Sarangi, op. cit., 49.
[17] Hara Prasad Das, *Adhunikata Ra Parampara* , Bharat Bharati, Cuttack, 1995, 224.

In the rest of this chapter, we will discuss in greater detail three writers associated with the Satyabadi school of thought.

Gopabandhu Das : Weaving Identity Around Religion

The trend of writing 'socially reformistic' literature began with Fakir Mohan and continued in novel writing even to the post independence period. Gopabandhu's reformism was consciously woven around the notion of nationalism which originated from his spiritual beliefs. He believed that the character of a community was dependent upon the nature of people who constituted it and hence prescribed a few rules for all individuals to abide by, in order to build a strong Oriya nation. Gopabandhu believed in '*dharma*'. *Dharma* did not merely mean religion. It was a practical ideal to live by in everyday life. The scope of *dharma* spread from religion and spirituality to '*seva*' service and '*nishtha*', firm principles. Gopabandhu recognised that religion was an apt symbol to mobilise all classes of people in a society which was predominantly religious. Satyabadi literature expounded *seva,* social service and *sangram,* fighting social evils as two basic principles of a good life. The notion of *seva* was an ideal that required complete submission of one's individual interest in the greater interest of society. It was intertwined with the act of 'sacrifice', *tyaga,* which helped human beings to make direct contact with god. The greatest form of *tyaga* was to subdue personal interest and fulfil all social duties and responsibilities selflessly. Only that individual who could successfully overcome his greed could perform real *seva.* Service to human kind, concern for the poor and oppressed were included as elements of *seva*, which were in effect service to god.

A contribution in the Satyabadi journal described India, 'as a country of sanyasis. Behind all social development there is the sacrifice of a great ascetic. Now we need people with similar convictions, who can give themselves up to service of the community. Only then can people be inspired into action.'[18] Gopabandhu himself was deeply impressed by the ideals of Hindu philosophy, especially the notion of '*bairagya*' or renunciation of worldly pleasures. He was himself regarded as a '*bairag*' deeply embedded in worldliness. According to him, intense involvement in the process of worldliness and yet not being affected by it was the real way to salvation. The *Karma-Marga*, way to salvation through action, enjoins performance of social responsibilities and fulfilment of worldly duties as a ritual to attain oneness with God. *Sanyas*, renouncing worldly pleasures, also indicated a state where all distinctions between castes dissolved. Though fighting social evils was of primary importance, in his thinking *sangram* also had a wider philosophical connotation about life being an eternal struggle. Only those who survive this situation of eternal struggle are real fighters.

[18] Natabar Samantray, op. cit., 610.

Identity in the writings of Gopabandhu was closely linked to the quality of social life; the formation of a conscentitious individual character was linked to the formation of a strong national character. The other significant theme was the concept of 'freedom', both individual and social. *Satyagraha* and *Swaraj* were the key words of the Satyabadi leaders. The ways to reach these goals of 'freedom' were through 'truth', humanism, social work, sacrifice and education. Influenced by Gandhian ideals, Gopabandhu and his colleagues were able to provide an ideological basis for the inclusion of all people within the Oriya political nation. The basic difference between the language movement and the national movement was the 'kind' of people involved in them. The former mainly had the support of the educated middle class with a strong elite bias. The later, apart from the educated upper caste elite, successfully integrated the masses. Secondly, the relationship of the Oriya movement leaders during the language agitation with the colonial officials was one of mutual 'appreciation'. But the nationalist leaders involved in the Congress movement were strongly critical of colonial rule. As Godabarisha writes, 'till the beginning of the Satyagraha movement, all that we had learnt from the English textbooks was that during the Moghul and Maratha administration, there was great political unrest and exploitation in the whole of India, the English were God-sent and saved the country from degeneration.'[19]

The collective work of these writers brought about substantial change in the dominant themes of Oriya literature. Though all these authors were *brahmins* from the Puri district, the bastion of Hindu conservatism, they recognised the need to dismantle the caste hierarchy and politically pledged to remove the prejudice that education was the privilege of the upper castes. The need for mass education was realised by leaders earlier than Gopabandhu but he was the first to stress the relation between education and national character or *jatiya charitra*. According to him, lack of education impoverishes the quality of national life, makes it ineffective and weakens it.[20]

Though they realised the importance of English, they stressed the spread of vernacular education and believed that maximum political inclusion could occur through spread of education in the mother tongue. Gopabandhu's main contention was that, 'education in a foreign language can never have a national spread. It will never be able to influence, move and positively dispose people of all categories and classes towards the advantages of education.'[21] The move to improve the mother tongue would result in involvement of all people in the process of nationalism and nurture among all a feeling of

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[19] *Godabarisha Granthavali*, Part I, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1960, 42.
[20] Srinibas Mishra, op. cit., 356.
[21] Ibid,359.

independent thought and self-respect. Language and literature became the primary vehicles for the development of modern nationalism. The advantages of having a national literature was that it created a *jatiya adarsha*, a national ideal which further influences and shapes national character and aspirations. Unlike writers of the previous era, who created a literature in favour of the growing educated middle class most of which were sophisticated adaptations of English or Greek texts placed unnaturally in the context of Orissa, the Satyabadi writers stressed that the real spine of the nation were its underprivileged sections and the common people. Natabar Samantray, noted Oriya literary critic, is particularly dismissive of Radhanath's literature as borrowed and sometimes as despicable as *Bhanja Sahitya.* 'He could present his literature as authentic because of the lack of education and access of common people to that literature.'[22]

By contrast, the success of literature for the Satyabadi authors lay in the successful adaptation of 'folk' stories which form a part of the popular imagination, reflect ordinary people's living conditions and cater to their literary needs.[23] These authors had a clear sense that, 'they had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation card written in a language they understood.'[24]

However, in order to do that literature must develop a strong historical sense; it should contain discussions of ancient texts, myths, legends and translations of texts from other languages. History and historical discussions brought to fore the particular traditions exclusive to the region. Satyabadi writers were of the opinion that lack of proper writing in Oriya language had led to the absence of a strong historical consciousness among Oriyas people. According to Gopabandhu, a particular kind of history needs to be stressed among students -'to enlighten, enliven and create a consciousness among the student community it is important to highlight the activities of great individuals, dead or alive, and all cultural and political events crucial to the life of the nation should be narrated.'[25] This would sensitised people to their own 'history'. History did not mean a mere recording of dates and events. Particularly in Gopabandhu we encounter a strong overlap between history and myth, often mythical characters are represented as historical ones. In one of his earliest editorials Gopabandhu wrote, 'we can trace a sub-current of a common Indian tradition in all the regional literatures of India. Only when all these regional texts

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[22] Natabar Samantray, op. cit.,275.

[23] The peasant who works in the fields, gardener, the boatman, carpenter, the weaver, the uneducated and half educated are the spinal cord of a *jati,* nation. They contribute to the making of the national character and have their own literary dispositions; it is therefore vital to understand their needs, satisfy them and make the other classes aware of them.' Srinibas Mishra, op. cit., 363.

[24] Tom Nairn, quoted in Benedict Anderson, op. cit., 80.

[25] Srinibas Mishra, op. cit., 368.

[27] Chittaranjan Das, *Odisa O Odia*, Chandan Publications, Bhubaneswar, 1988, 200.

are made to interact with each other will all provinces feel and understand the significance of one great Indian literature.'[26]

Since *brahmins* in ancient times were given supreme status because of their educational qualification, Gopabandhu wanted to make *brahmins* out of the whole Oriya society. *Brahmins* did not mean a group of people who enjoyed a status, *brahmanism* was represented as a whole way of life which should be adopted by all. The *brahmin was* respected in Hindu society because he was contemplative, remained calm in grief and happiness, undisturbed in danger, unmoved by sadness, reacted to injustice, tolerated all pain, sought knowledge, donated willingly, abided by truth, and led a principled life. This according to him was the only way to social salvation.[27] Gopabandhu in his patriotic mood maintained that certain elements of the Hindu tradition were important for national regeneration.

Dharmapada: The Ideal Oriya

The writings of Gopabandhu and Godabarisha consisted of sacred stories of great men and their ideals with which every modern Oriya could identify himself. They established the historicity of the characters and heroes that they presented. Gopabandhu represented his mythical poems as convincing historical narratives. By retrieving stories and characters from oral literature and popular myths, he provided them with permanence and textual fixity which itself gave them a semblance of historicity. While celebrating the examplariness of the characters of *Dharmapada* and *Nachiketa*, he emphasised that it was not impossible for an individual of this age to act in the same way..

In his poem '*Dharmapada*', he writes of the twelve-year son of Bisu Maharana, the leading sculptor and carpenter of the Konark temple. As the story goes, Dharmapada saves the lives of twelve hundred carpenters who could not position the main dome of the temple perfectly. After completing the task, the boy jumps into the sea; for if the king came to know that this nearly impossible job was done by a small boy, he would behead all the twelve hundred carpenters. What is important for Gopabandhu is not the historical certainty of the story but the relevance that it eventually came to have in a society which was suffering from low self-esteem, '*swabhiman*'. Dharmapada served the dual purpose of destroying the colonial perception of the Oriya as effeminate and on the other, inspired people of the subaltern classes to join the national movement. The emphasis on the folk-origins of the hero raised the legitimacy of the narrative especially among the lower strata.

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[27] Srinibas Mishra, op. cit., quoted from *Satyabadi*, 371.

Gopabandhu was strongly criticised by one of his closest colleagues, Nilakantha, for giving historical status to a mythical character. The tragic poem, Dharmapada, represents nationalism, *jatiyata*, national pride, *swabhiman* and expounds all virtues of humanism, idealism and sacrifice that the Satyabadi movement stood for. To give the character of Dharmapada a real face, Gopabandhu, in the preface of his book mentions of the former existence of characters like *Prahlad, Dhruba, Ekalabya, Suka, Abhimanyu, Nachiketa* all of whom were children, committed to religion and truth and believed in the ideal of sacrifice.

It was through the character of Dharmapada that Gopabandhu wanted to put forth the real nature of Oriya society. He represented him as the symbol of Oriya national pride, or *Utkal gauraba* and reinterprets his great sacrifice in the name of *'jati'* or nation, the ideals that human beings ought to live by, the exemplary duties that people have by virtue of being members of a particular community. Gopabandhu always wrote poems with idealistic young heroes because he wished to appeal emotionally to and inspire students, the builders of the future social order. During a time when the national movement was gaining momentum in Orissa, this poem highlighted the joy and satisfaction derived from sacrificing one's life for the nation. Dharmapada's sacrifice was to become a symbol of inspiration in the freedom movement. Moreover, this sacrifice did not require any 'violence' to prove its strength, instead it was suffering directed at one's own self and coincided with the principles of non-violence popularised by Gandhi and Gopabandhu.

In the first few lines of the poem, there is a justification of the 'act' of completing the temple. We are introduced to a child-genius. It stresses that Dharmapada sacrificed himself not only to maintain the honour of the Oriya nation, *'jati ra samman'* but also the honour and reputation of the artist community, *'silpi kula ra mahat'*. The reader immediately recognises that Dharmapada is very unlike boys of his age and is conscious of the need to belong to a community and to sacrifice personal interest at the altar of national interest. He belongs to a historical family of carpenters and traces his origins to the divine carpenter *Vishwakarma*. We are constantly reminded of the importance of knowing a family history. Dharmapada asks his mother about his family lineage;

'tell me O mother, do we really have a family lineage
who is my father? [28].

The poet expresses the need for all people to question and acquaint themselves with their roots and the history of their community. While the earlier era in Oriya literature was alleged to have borrowed themes basically from the Bengalis, a community they were ironically trying to politically disengage from, the Satyabadi writers

distinguished themselves by using 'symbols' which were exclusive to the Oriyas. This was a story that no other community could share or claim as their own. It was imperative that this symbol also had an acceptance among all classes of Oriya society. Though to the educated, the story of Dharmapada was merely a 'myth' fabricated,[29] the capacity of the poem to move its readership emotionally remained undeniable. The popularity of the poem was also because of its association with Konark, one of the most celebrated temples of Orissa. The undeniable tangibility of the temple made the whole story of 'Dharmapada' look real and believable. Narratives which are extremely popular in a community's social consciousness transcend the measurable boundaries of history and acquire a status of 'a classic ahistoricity'.

Gopabandhu emphasised the formation and cultivation of individual character but the principle of individuality celebrated by him was different from the autonomy of the individual discussed by modernist writers. Unlike the modern individual who gained satisfaction from asserting his distinction from his community, Gopabandhu's ideal individual acquired his greatness by being the strength of his society, and expressing its ideals in an exemplary fashion. The moral and social development of society were to come about by the aggregate greatness of each individual. His individual realised himself through sacrificing his needs, *atma-tyaga*, in favour of his community's needs. But this was to be transposed to the relation between Oriyas and the larger community of Indians. The Oriya people were to be convinced about their sacrificial duties towards the Indian nation. He writes, thus

> 'one has to be sacrificed for the continuation of the community
> one community has to be sacrificed for the continuation of the village
> one village has to be sacrificed for the continuation of the nation
> one nation has to be sacrificed for the world to continue '[30]

Gopabandhu's writings thought of Hindu ideals as a rational philosophy for the political and cultural life of the nation. Unlike the language movement, marked by the absence of the peasantry, the Oriya nationalist movement aimed at expanded participation and inclusion. Inclusion had two meanings, one was to numerically strengthen the movement; but its objective was not merely to attract greater number of people. There was a qualitative aspect to this inclusion as different social and regional constituents of the Oriya nation were now given greater importance. This strategy was both,

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[28] '*Kaha ma', sate ki achi ama kula...*'Gopabandhu Das, *Dharmapada*, Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 7th ed, 1990.
[29] Gopabandhu's colleague, Nilakantha Das complained of its unhistorical nature. Nrusingha Sarangi, op. cit., 69.
[31] '*grama hite kula barajanti...*' Ibid, 28

intellectually appealing to the educated middle class and morally and emotionally appealing to the peasantry. Gopabandhu especially emphasised on the moral attributes of society and stressed the spread of what he called 'social morality'[31].

Dharmapada's bravery is placed in contrast with inertness of the whole sculptor community. His example shows that there are certain activities which can be successfully completed by young people because they think and conceive things differently, are driven by a different motivation than adults and do not perceive the world in 'standard' ways. In some senses they have a natural tendency to move away from the norm. The fact that he decides to commit suicide to save the twelve hundred sculptors is not only considered an historic act of sacrifice, he is also shown to possess a cultivated mind. The child convinces his father regarding the necessity of his death; lest his father would be, for all future times, blamed for the extinction of the whole community of sculptors. The child puts his father in a moral dilemma when he asks him;

'Will you be able to take the responsibility of the death of twelve hundred sculptors?

Or will you bear the death of just 'one' son?[32]

'Who in this world, belongs to anybody
Who a son and who a father, when all are part of the divine illusion?
Only the life of that person is blessed,
Who lives for others.
Death overcomes all who are born.
What use is that death, that of a coward?
Life does not merely mean the uneventful passing of
moments, days, months and years.
Human beings live till eternity by their deeds.'[33]

Gopabandhu's poems were influenced by the philosophy of the *Bhagavata Gita*; particularly the philosophy of *'karma'*. In the life that he led, Gopabandhu was a believer in the doctrine of 'action' and 'deed' without being attached to the 'result' of the action. Dharmapada, was written with a clear intention to inspire people to work, to underline that no work is 'low' and that every individual has the potential to reach the heights of glory in any work done with commitment and sincerity. The overall development of

[31] We will notice that this social morality or the lack of it was the major concern of most Oriya novelists of the later period.
[32] '*Pua re dai ki...*' Ibid,27
[33] '*manaba jiban nuhai kebala...* ' Ibid,30

society occurs when all people in their respective capacities are inspired to work in the right direction:

'What pleasure will I derive from the death of all these sculptors
everything will be stained with the blood of twelve hundred sculptors
the respect, the name, fame and all the wealth
stained with the blood of my race
what greatness will then remain in me
when I wear the turban of success
and tread on the dead bodies of my fellow beings
In what colours will future history record this grand celebration of death?[34]

Let the artists of Utkala live the life of a hero
let there be no stains in the history of the Utkal artist community
in the name of your race and nation
give me up to death[35]

Trade the life of your family for the life of your race
Accept the most noble of sacrifices.
Let the temple of Konark, eternally
sing of your glorious sacrifice[36]

in your greed for the life of your son
pray! don't rebel against your race [37]

Several features of this exhortation point to the elaboration of an ideal Hindu way of life. Apart from declaring the individual self subservient to the nation, the hero emphasises on the transience of all material things, the philosophy of *maya*, illusion, the theory of impermanence of all experience excepting the two eternal truths, birth and death. If everything that happens in life is pre-destined and beyond the control of human beings, why should the father want to hold onto his son's life, when the only way both can become immortal is through his death. In Dharmapada's urging upon his father to let him die, there is another aspect of Hindu philosophy that is brought to the fore - the notion of *ahamkara*. It is the illusory ego of the individual that distinguishes between

[34] '*barasa badhei rakta ranjita...*' Ibid,31
[35] '*ki range chitriba bhabisyata itihasa...*'Ibid,32
[36] '*Bansa pache jau, jati brudhi pau...*' Ibid,35.

[37] '*teja mo mamata ... kara nahin jati droha*' Ibid,36.

'mine' and 'thine' when all in truth belong to God. Wouldn't the whole Oriya nation disgrace him for his selfishness and wouldn't this act of sacrificing twelve hundred of his fellowmen for one son go against humanity? The main theme of all Gopabandhu's literature was *jatiyata*, nationalism, *utkaliyata*, Oriyaness, *jana jagarana,* mass re-awakening *manibikata* humanism *and adhyatmikata* spirituality. He stressed his Oriyaness by declaring his belongingness to the human race and to the Indian race. In accordance with his moral beliefs, in his will, he left all his property for the development of Oriya society.[38]

Directly involved with the student community, Gopabandhu also carved a hero out of the young *upanishadic* character Nachiketa.[39] This poem extolls the determination of a young boy, his obedience to parental authority and desire for knowledge; all that Gopabandhu laid down as crucial for character building which ultimately enlightens society. His fear was that the basic tenets of Oriya society were fast dissolving with the coming of modern values. Two things were simultaneously articulated through this. The author feared that the youth would be enticed by the irrational and immoral ways of the modern. In his works, traditional characters were always represented as rational and moral. India's distinctness revolved around its spirituality and needed to be closely guarded. The western values were impositions from above and simply contributed to the disintegration of indigenous society. Moreover the parallel existence of western and Indian values created social divisions hitherto unknown in Oriya society: the educated middle class, peasants, rich feudal class, urban and the rural people all of whom were once guided by the same social and spiritual norms of Hinduism were now adopting divergent and conflicting styles of life.

The individualistic tendencies and growing indifference of people to their religious beliefs troubled Gopabandhu. He urged his readership about the transience of worldly desires and objects, the primary reason behind their present misery. The 'model' character that he prescribed was the 'ideal' Hindu '*purusha*', contemplative, self introspective and unmoved by happiness and sadness. He who accepts the difficult task of looking at one's own self critically sheds all excitement and divorces himself from happiness and pain.[40]

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[38] Nrusingha Sarangi, 50.

[39] Nachiketa, son of *rishi* Brajshraba. While his father was offering 'yagna', he pleaded with his father to tell him, who he has been offered to. His father in anger, says that he has offered him to '*Yama*', the God of death. Shocked that his father has offered him to death, he pledges to visit *Yama* in life and learn the secrets of 'fire oblation' and of 'life after death'. He coaxes Yama to teach him these secrets which he eventually spreads in the world. Gopabandhu Das, *Brahmatatwa ba Nachketa Upakhyana*, Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 7th ed 1990.

[40] *Nachiketa Upakhyana,* 13.

It was not necessary for the nationalist writers to grapple with the conflicting aspects of individual, group and community identity. Nationalistic literature often assumed this identity to be singular and in this single homogeneous construction of the nation, all contending groups were integrated and subsumed. This group of writers, especially Gopabandhu, had an unproblematic notion about solving the existing social conflicts. A violent revolution was not required to bring about this change. It was assumed that Hinduism provided tools required for achieving equality in social life. If all people were guided by notions of *satya*, *dharma* and *karma* and all instilled into one's self some sense of restraint, then conflicts in society would naturally dissolve, with each individual fulfilling his responsibility towards his community. The concept of *karma* was closely associated with the notions of justice in the social order. This emphasis on individual responsibility itself assumed that all people in society are endowed with equal and similar attributes and would react similarly under stress. His conception of the social configuration resembles Durkheimian 'mechanical solidarity', where all members of the community were held together by a strongly formed set of sentiments and beliefs and did not allow any differentiation between individuals...'[41] Further, by emphasising equality and freedom of all, they were preparing the nation for democracy. Gopabandhu's primary concern was the creation of a moral utopia. If all people had a specific peaceful notion of their place in the social order, then the question of 'power' in the brute sense of oppression and exploitation would dissolve.

Go-mahatmya, 'The Greatness of Cows', is Gopabandhu's most important propagandist pamphlet on the greatness of Hinduism. Strongly imbued by Hindu beliefs, '*arya chetana*', his nationalism had strong Hindu components and contributed to the making of a positive Hindu identity. He was influenced by the *Bhagavata Purana*, which espouses Krishna's life story, especially his younger days as a cowherd boy. The cow had a special significance for him. A possible immediate context for the text could be the failed Cow Protection Movement between 1880 and 1920 in Northern India which became one of the issues of Hindu nationalism. The need to organise a predominantly Hindu Oriya race, required a symbol to which all people cutting across caste and class boundaries could relate. In his opinion, the declining importance of religion in contemporary society is the reason for disintegrating moral beliefs. This poem deals with the growing unconcern of people for 'cows', which occupied a sacred status among the Hindus as *go-mata* or 'mother', as '*Lakshmi*' the goddess of wealth and the harbinger of prosperity. To mistreat the cow was to disregard prosperity. It troubled him that even rural people who got maximum benefit out of the cow had become increasingly

[41] Anthony Giddens, *Durkheim*, Fontana Press, Glasgow, 1986, 76.

indifferent to it and sold them off to the butchers[42] ('*kasain*') at low prices. The lack of *bhakti bhava* is a failure of human beings to put animals in a relation of immediate kinship with themselves.[43] Kindness to animals was an integral aspect of everyday life for a Vaishnava. Gopabandhu's writing , like Gandhi's, emphasised the functional purposes the cow serves and the crucial ritual performances that cannot occur without it.[44] 'Killing of cows would lead to social destruction. The two pre-conditions for national development are devotion to cows and doing good to these divine animals'.[45] Oriya nationalism during the popular Satyabadi period ,particularly Gopabandhu's version of it, operated within the Hindu discursive tradition. Clearly this political discourse was not secular, though there are instances when religious tolerance among communities is stressed. The readership, by implication, was tempted to perceive the Muslim as a dangerous foreign element.

It was under the leadership of Gopabandhu that Gandhi's message of non co-operation was popularised in Orissa. He was present at the Congress session at Nagpur. It was because of his anti colonial activities that he was put in jail for two years in 1922. Two of Gopabandhu's directly political writings are '*Kara Kabita*' ('Poems in Prison') and '*Bandi ra Atma Katha*' ('The Autobiography of a Prisoner'). *Karakabita* was written when Gopabandhu was in the Hazaribag prison, in 1923. All these poems were expositions of his love for his *jati,* (race), *rashtra,* (nation), both terms used interchangeably to mean both the Indian and Oriya nation. *Karakabita* is a combination of emotions of pathos, *karunya* and helplessness for the present condition of the nation. One of his poems '*Pitru Pakhya Tarpana*'[46] (Offerings to the Dead), is an extensive exposition of his love for Orissa and Oriya culture. The first few lines explain his helplessness on being imprisoned, his inability to fight for his rights, to be independent and free from foreign rule.

'I have not committed any murder, nor have I confiscated the wealth of others
I have not touched a woman , who is not mine
I have not hurt others

[42] Most of whom are Muslims in Orissa.
[43] See Heinrich von Stietencron, 'Religious Practice: Rite, Myth, and Mediation' in *Christianity and World Religions,* (ed)Hans Kung, Collins Fount, London, 1987,242.
[44] For functional and ritualistic importance of cows in Hinduism, Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, University of California Press, 1994, 86-94 or Gyanendra Pandey, *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, OUP, Delhi,1990.
[45] *Go-Mahatmya*, Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 6th ed 1990. Preface.
[46] It is a Hindu ritual of offering oblations of water to ancestors in the dark fortnight of the month of Ashwina, September-October.

I have not rebelled against my race, nation and revolted against my fellow men.'[47]

Gopabandhu was one of the first Oriya leaders to demand freedom, as a basic political condition for good life. His notion of freedom was closely connected to the internal emancipation of the individual which would come about with adherence to 'truth' or *satya.* In Gopabandhu we find the first assertion of the need for freedom from oppression and the idea that all people have a moral and political right to be free. There were two kinds of freedom: freedom from the oppression of external rulers but real freedom is achieved if all people strive for freedom from their internal desires and passions, to transcend the limitations of 'worldly pleasures' and understand the significance of 'other-worldliness'. Known as a '*karma-yogi*', his life style and literature reflected the tenets of the law of *karma*, which saw ignorance, self-centredness, sensual appetite and laziness as the worst enemies of men. If each individual could be free from within, it would result in the freedom of the whole people. The basic tenets were to be freedom from oppression, freedom of speech, freedom to form a gathering, to live without fear in a free state.[48] The sub-region of Orissa can hope to achieve fulfilment only if the greater nation of India gains freedom. He talks of the historical oppression and exploitation of the weaker communities by the powerful,[49] of the strong anti-colonial and anti-British feeling. He refers to *'ahimsa'*, non-violence as the '*brahma-astra*'[50] and *mahamantra* which inspires Indian people into action against colonial rulers. [51] He celebrates the potential 'hero' in every human being, all of whom are fighters in the war of freedom: to retreat in this war is an act of cowardice, *kapurusha pana.* The most important condition to fight a war of self -assertion is '*brahmacharya*', the strength to shed all ties of home and to practice the art of renunciation and sexual abstinence.[52] The most popular of Gopabandhu's poems which became and still remains the 'symbol' of freedom in Orissa, is

'let my body mingle with the soil of this land
let my country men tread on my back
let all the holes in the road to freedom

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[47] ' *nuhe narahanta ...dei nahi jati-dhrama-bidwesha bhasan...* ' Gopabandhu Das, *Karakabita*, Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 1990, 7.
[48] '*swadhinata manaba ra janma adhikara...* ' Ibid,8.
[49] *Eka jati anya jati chira padanata...* ' The more powerful always oppresses the other.
The reason for hunger in my country,
India, my mother is that she is a slave to another.
Ibid,9.
[50] *Brahma-astra*, the supreme weapon which never fails to perform when used against the enemy.
[51] *Karakabita*, op. cit., 10-12.

be filled with my flesh and bones.'[53]

However, what Gopabandhu sees of the real Orissa is found in a lesser known poem in the collection, *Karakabita*, called '*Bandi Ra Swadesha Chinta*' (The Prisoner's Thoughts of His Country). His obsessive representation of the idyllic and morally pure peasant in whom invariably the purest component of the Oriya *jati* lay was to become the backbone of Oriya literature in later years. It also formed a part of the broader Congress/ Gandhian tactic to emotionally involve the peasantry without disturbing the symmetry of society. His poems celebrate all those places which were crucial to the description of Orissa, Chilika Lake[54], Jagannath temple,[55] 'Krishna's temple at Sakhsigopal, the residential school called 'Debadutta'[56], the Shiva temple of Lingaraj at Bhubaneswar,[57] the Khandagiri[58] caves, the 'paraja' and the 'santhal'[59] tribes whom he considers as an integral part of beautiful Orissa, the Mahanadi river which weaves the two major parts of Orissa together, the western tracts of Sambalpur and the coastal tracts of Cuttack.[60] As Gopabandhu said, 'the Oriya race lives on because of its past glory. The soul of Orissa lives in the caves of Khandagiri and Dhauligiri, the pulse of the Oriya nation is in Nilachal and Bhubaneswar, Orissa's heart beats because of its past literature and language...we have to build our present on our past and both the past and the present will control the direction of the future'[61]

In his subtle way Gopabandhu rebelled against the conservative attitude, *'rakshanashilata'* of the Oriya society. Though a *brahmin*, he did not abide by the

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[52] Gopabandhu had lost his son and wife. He had apparently left to examine the flooded coastal areas when he heard of his son's death. His wife had died much before his death, but the greatest shock to him was the death of his brother, a few days before his own death.

[53] ' *Misu mora deha ye desha mati re...* ' Gopabandhu Das, *Bandira Atma Katha*, Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandira, Cuttack, 1990.

[54] *Chilika* is the largest brackish water natural lake in the whole of India. Home to the widest species of migratory birds, it is a prime tourist attraction in modern Orissa. It has legendary importance because it had been the hiding place of idols of *Jagannath*, on occasions when Orissa was invaded by outsiders.

[55] Bastion of Oriya *Vaishnavism*, houses Orissa's national God. The existence of the Jagannath cult was crucial to the projection of homogeneity in Orissa.

[56] The residential school started by Gopabandhu which acquired national importance because of political activities in pre- independent Orissa.

[57] The Lingaraj temple is the most important *Shaiva* monument in Orissa. Bhubaneswar, city of temples, modern capital of Orissa, along with Puri and Konark, forms a famous tourist triangle.

[58] These caves are the epitome of the past glory of Orissa. It was the fort of famous Oriya king Kharavela, under whose rule the Orissan empire stretched farthest.

[59] The tribes in Orissa, regarded as original inhabitants, occupy a significant political place in literary writing. They are declared as an integral part of Oriya cultural and political life. This thesis contests this claim.

[60] Sambalpur has a significant political record in modern Orissa. The movement for unification of Oriya speaking tracts started here. In recent times there has developed a strong feeling of dismissal by the people of the western tracts against the coastal areas. They have started a re-assertion through a call for secession under the banner of many organisations, like the Western Orissa Liberation Front, etc.

[61] Jagannath Jena, *Satyabadi Kabyadhara*, Orissa Book Store, Cuttack, 1994, iv.

ritualistic principles of a practising Brahmin. He would not perform the traditional '*chalu*', an offering made to the Hindu gods before having food. Regarding the conservative attitude of the Oriya, Godabarisha writes, 'whether traditionally caste affiliations existed among higher castes is not known but it became very evident in college. There were among students, brahmin-haters and karana-haters. Even educated people who had apparently abandoned caste by accepting the '*brahmo* religion' were deeply embedded in caste system.'[62]

The Satyabadi school soon gained popularity as an institution of progressive ideas, where traditional thoughts and *brahminical* practices were disregarded. The high castes, especially the brahmins were very critical of the practice of inter caste dining in the school residential premises. The conservative brahmin community rebelled against the experimental endeavour of the Satyabadi followers and burnt down the school in 1911-1912.[63] Since, this school marked the beginning of modern political and cultural idealism in Orissa, wealthy people readily contributed to rebuilding of the school. The students worked as volunteers in the flood and drought affected areas and in places where cholera was widespread, especially during the car- festival because the conservative Oriya was scared to die of diseases in places where there was a possibility of being picked up by the government appointed *mehentars* or sweepers.[64] Gopabandhu was not in favour of the development of associations like, '*brahmin samiti*', *karana samiti*', '*kayastha samiti*', etc.[65] According to him, these committees furthered sectional interests and could never gain the status of national institutions, '*jatiya anusthana*', because they lacked the attitude of equality. He had faith in Jagannath and believed that this unique cult expounds '*samya maitri*' -equality and friendship- among all people. This tradition of equality and egalitarianism that Orissa is proud of, will eventually spread beyond the provincial borders and become a '*mahajatiya*' movement. He appealed to the people of Orissa to join the national freedom movement because Orissa and Jagannath had something to teach the whole Indian community.[66] Gopabandhu stressed the cultural and social similarities between the *gadjat* and other regions of Orissa and believed that any movement which desired the development of the Oriya nation would have to include the inhabitants of these neglected areas.

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[62] He writes of Mahusudan Rao, a leading poet, who expressed his caste prejudices when his son decided to marry a brahmin's daughter. 'Marry a brahmin's daughter, you will get leprosy!' *Godabarisha Granthavali.*

[63] Ibid,62.

[64] Ibid,64.

[65] The first Brahmin Samiti was started in 1901 to discuss the deplorable condition of Orissa. Ibid,41- 66.

[66] Ibid,72.

According to him, it was the lack of mass education which led to creation of new inequalities in the Oriya society. Unequal spread of education has now given birth to two groups, the educated and uneducated.[67] As for other Gandhians, social reform was one of his major concerns. He said he had not written much about widow re-marriage because he did not think of it as a feasible solution in a conservative society. He supported widow re-marriage as a social reform but 'individually it was impossible for him to remarry' because if it was not possible for a woman to remarry in a society, then men should also be '*eka patni brata*'. He was extremely concerned about the well being of widowed women, often deserted and ill treated by family members. He was very disturbed that young widows were often tricked and sold off as prostitutes in places like Calcutta and Burma and started a '*Jagannath Bidhaba Ashram*' to take care of widows at Sakhshigopal.[68] Among the nationalist authors, Godabarisha was more straightforward about the condition of Oriya women. Extremely critical of the status of women in Oriya society, he said, 'though the women are demanding equal rights now, the success of this movement is nowhere in sight. All the responsibilities that 'God' has put on our women, if we stick to them, I do not see the woman going anywhere to the top. The noblest job for our women is the successful practising of the traditional responsibilities of child-rearing and maintaining the integrity of the family. The symbols of perfect womanhood are long laid down, *Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati.* They are offered '*puja*' as representing the power of women. The woman operates within these strict paradigms, constantly vigilant about her '*satitwa*', purity. What passes off as indulgence of young men, often become stigmas to the girl of the same age. The relationship between man and woman need reconsideration, it has become a social problem... what ideals should the family abide by?'[69]

Gopabandhu started a newspaper called 'Samaj' in 1919. Unlike earlier newspapers that started in the background of the language agitation, Samaj, published in the context of the national movement, had a distinct political function. Its success depended upon his capacity to understand the needs and sentiments of the rural people. Gopabandhu serially wrote against the existence of inhuman practices like *bethi,* bonded labour, the exploitation by Dhenkanal raja who hired thousands of people to build his palace.[70] He appealed to the people of Orissa to join the freedom movement not for political gains only but to stress the 'sacrificial nature' of the Oriya people. In his opinion,

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[67] Ibid,70.
[68] Ibid,89, 307-308, 334.

[69] *Godabarisha Granthavali.*, 19.
[70] We will deal with the rebellion in Chapter 4.

'a race which does not know sacrifice has no existence at all'.[71] He regarded the Muslims as an integral part of the Indian nation and felt that people get into disputes and controversies with only those people who they love most. So, we must not get upset about the differences between the Hindu and Muslim communities.[72]

Gopabandhu did not have a direct or developed theory of the West though the central theme of his literary exercise was struggling against the colonial experience which required a thorough critical scrutiny of the weakness and strengths of both Hindu and Western traditions. His main concern was in building a national character which would not replicate the materialist aspects of the Western civilisation. There is however, no exhaustive discussion on aspects that he sought to preserve and reject from the West.

The religion that Satyabadi writers followed was not narrow and superstitious. They intended to undo the conservative attitude of the society. Gopabandhu in all his poems has declared Jagannath as the real ruler of Orissa and literally echoed the famous idea of the Gita,

'Each time, the world suffers a loss of religion
God descends from heaven
To reinstate religion among the people of this world'[73].

Jagannath was the only God he invoked while stressing the need for Oriya unity. In praise of God who fought for the Oriya race against the Kanchi king, Gopabandhu writes,

'Orissa has the greatest of all warriors
who fought the national war
He is the one who lives on in his heavenly abode at Neelachal, Puri
Why should the Oriya nation feel orphaned then?
There is no need for a leader in Utkal
for Narayan himself is the leader here'[74]

In his '*Abakasha Chinta*', he appeals to Jagannath to help the Oriya people to become a part of the national freedom movement:

'let this order come from your divine mouth that with undying enthusiasm
the flow of Oriya nationalism should join the national wave.'[75]

Nilakantha Das: De-emphasising Religion.

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[71] *Godabarisha Granthabali*, 228.
[73] Ibid,282.

[73] *Bandira Atma Katha.*,10.
[74] *Bandira Atma Katha*, 9.
[75] Gopabandhu Das, *Abakash Chinta*, 3.

Nilakantha Das, (184-1967) a more prolific writer than Gopabandhu, wrote in favour of reforming the backward society bogged down by dead ideals and strange superstitions. Born into a staunch Brahmin family, Nilakantha was a brilliant student. After completing his M.A from Calcutta University, he joined Gopabandhu's school as a teacher. Actively involved in Gandhian politics, he became the President of the Pradesh Congress Committee in 1934. However, Nilakantha was better known as a social reformer, litteratuer and the greatest advocate of Oriya cultural identity.

Nilakantha did not dissuade people from believing in religion but warned them against 'false' religion like the corrupting '*tantric*' practices. In the garb of religion, *tantra* encouraged all that was irreligious: drinking alcohol, meat eating and easy morals. It was an easy method of appeasement of gods, the practice of which was morally questionable.[76] The only way to save this whole society which had sunk deep into superstitions was mass education. Along with Gopabandhu, he promised to sacrifice his own interests for that of Utkal.

In one of his essays, '*Achu O Hebu*' (What we are and What we will be), he mentions two basic principles of social order. A social order exists in a particular condition and aspires to change on encountering another social order better than itself. In a conservative society, the feeling of 'what we are' always overrules any change. But under conditions, either external or reactions from within, an appreciation of the wide range of possibilities in future arises the desire to change or 'to be'. But in this excessive zeal to change and transform, to shed the traditional and welcome the new, we must not give up the basic principles, *niti,* that has ruled our society. Such cautious change can only occur when there is education and mass awakening.

Satyabadi idealism believed that the capacity to withstand pain was the real strength of the human being. Nilakantha did not allow even the death of his two daughters come in the way of this service to his country (*'desha sadhana'*).[77]The Oriyaness that these writers expounded was clearly linked to local history and the celebration of local heroes. Nilakantha was vehemently critical of the influence of Chaitanya movement in Orissa because it dampened the military spirit of the Oriyas and forced effeminacy on the whole community. It was this society that they intended to mobilise and activate.

Service to the nation or *desha seva* also meant giving medical care to the Oriya people often struck by cholera, *haija.* Particularly during the car festival, *ratha yatra* at Puri, in 1922, Nilakantha took his students from the Satyabadi school to treat the ailing

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[76] Srinibas Mishra op. cit., 387.

[77] It is said that when he was in the midst of a public speech in Sambalpur Congress Sabha, he heard about his son's death, in 1921-23. Undistrubed, he continued with his speech. *Atmajibani,* Cuttack Students Store, New Edition, 1986, iii, preface.

cholera patients. He had also learnt to give homeopathic medicine. What was crucial to character building was the individual's 'will power' or '*sankalpa shakti*' and good conduct.[78]

Nilakantha's writings stressed the need to 'debate' and 'argue'. He was often critical of Gopabandhu for being too much in favour of '*bhagabata dharma*' whose moral actions were invariably guided by the social teaching of the Bhagavata Purana. Since Nilakantha levelled the most severe criticism against the influence of Chaitanya's *bhakti-marga* on Oriya social life, his criticism for Gopabandhu's affiliation to the Bhagavata could be related to that line of thinking. The most important feature of this *purana* was its emphasis on *bhakti*, a complete surrender of one's whole self in passionate devotion to the Lord. That person is the best Bhagavata who sees his affection for Bhagavan in all creatures and sees [all] creatures in Bhagavan himself.'[79] While Gopabandhu prescribed a social life deeply embedded in spiritualism and religiosity, Nilakantha failed to see how the inadequacies of the traditional society could be purged with the same elements that brought about this decay. He was also more circumspect than Gopabandhu in making public life depend on religious influences. He wanted his students to understand the differences and similarities between religions before they could be forced into following any one. It was with this motive that he had taken his students to the church once. The event created a lot of disquiet among his colleagues.[80]

Nilakantha made a virulent attack against Bengali society, labelling it as the source of all obnoxious social practices in Orissa. The '*bara pana pratha*' , the dowry system, had entered Oriya society along with the influence of the '*gaudiya baishnaba dharma*', the *phalita jyotishanka*, astrology, the traditional art of predicting the future - all imported from Bengal. The system of considering the daughter as a burden to the family was first accepted among the high caste Oriya '*karana*',[81] and later spread to the brahmins as well. Nilakantha de-emphasised the popularity of Chaitanya in Oriya religious life and instead highlighted the indigenous '*samya*' and '*maitree*' aspects in the *Jagannath dharma*. Chaitanya popularised the perverse '*radha-krushna prema lila*' '*parakiya prema*' encouraging illicit relationships, '*sahjiya prema riti*', a system of easy love and *tantric* practices.[82]

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[78] Nilakantha Das, *Atmajibani*,48.
[79] See, Thomas .J. Hopkins, 'The Social Teaching of the Bhagavata Purana' in Milton Singer (ed), *Krishna Myths, Rites and Rituals,* OUP, New Delhi 1972.
[80] Nilakantha Das, *Atmajibani* 54-55.
[81] Typical to the Oriya caste order, Karanas were the 'writing' class and occupied important positions in royal households. Its closest equivalent in other societies were 'kayasthas' or kshyatriyas.
[82] Nilakantha *Atmajibani*, 71-73.Nilakantha Das, *Odia Sahitya ra Krama Parinama.* Even, in later times Oriya historians and writers are critical of the influence of Chaitnya. This however, does not

Oriyas should try to discard their image of effeminacy that conformed to Chaitanya's notion that Krishna was the supreme *purusha* and all the rest were his female servitors. This religious belief harmed the social character of the Oriya nation. Further, rigidity in the caste order was regarded an influence of the Bengali society. Traditionally, in Nilakantha's view, Oriya society was more flexible, where mobility among castes was assured through marriage into high caste.

Nilakantha and Godabarisha devised a peculiar rebellion against the traditional brahminical order and the rigid caste attitudes of the people. They started the '*nisha andolan*', ' a moustache movement'.[83] The traditional Oriya brahmin would not sport either a moustache or a beard in accordance with the manner of representing the Hindu Gods, who are usually clean shaven. Godabarisha was socially ostracised in his village for having a moustache. Though not directly related to the process of social mobilisation, this created a sensation among conservative Oriya brahmins. The moustache became the symbol of social rebellion against traditional norms. Their school was the first to encourage inter caste dining. Traditionally, caste difference was marked in the way surnames were spelt. For the same surname, an Oriya brahmin would write 'Dash' while the karana would write 'Das'. Since this symbolised social differences Nilakantha spelt his surname as 'Das' instead of the brahmin spelling of 'Dash'.[84]

The students of this school were first to popularise the principles of 'democracy'. Though established on the principles of the '*gurukul*' system, it recognised the need to introduce some modern pedagogical principles. As Nilakantha mentions in his autobiography, the school was an innovation where new principles were put to the test. The students were advised to question the teachers and debate with them, and not blindly accept all that was said. Gopabandhu stressed that, since *seva* or service to humanity and *atitheyata*(hospitality) were the bases of Jagannath dharma and formed a crucial part of Oriya culture, the school should aim to imbibe these into its pupils.

Teachers at the Satyabadi school started the first move against *bethi*, the worst form of bonded labour in Orissa. Nilakantha, during a tour with his students, denied the hospitality of the princely state of Khandapada because the king practised *bethi*. However, the most notable form of revolt was against the state of Dhenkanal, whose prince built a new palace at Jatannagara with bonded labourers. The local Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee, led by the Satyabadi leaders, Gopabandhu, Nilakantha and

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deter them from making claims upon Jayadeva and his text '*Geeta Govinda*' as an important part of Oriya literary development, which is a prime text on the illicit love affair of Srikrishna and Radha.

[83] Nilakantha Das, *Atmajibani* 85

[84] Ibid,121.

Godabarisha, was the first to raise its voice against this grand palace.[85] The Congress supported the revolt of the people against the ruler of Dhenkanal.

Inspite of considering Gopabandhu as a philosopher guide and a literal 'Godfather', Nilakantha was critical about some of Gopabandhu's writings which, he said, were full of '*puranic*' lies, especially his most celebrated poem, Dharmapada. Unlike Gopabandhu, he was not in favour of celebrating one religion as better than another, and opposed the hierarchy of the caste system. He was apprehensive that religious fundamentalism would eventually control and direct the nature of politics.

At the time the national Congress was divided on the attitude to be taken toward the colonial institutions. One, led by C.R.Das which believed in entering the colonial institutions and changing them from within. The Satyabadi leaders were 'pro-changers' and belonged to this political group. While working in the far flung areas of Sambalpur, both for the purpose of bringing about the unification of the Oriya speaking states and to spread the message of '*swaraj*', Nilakantha composed a poem in a mixture of Oriya and Hindi.

'Swaraj will certainly come, stop being slaves to the British
Sons of Bharat, why tarnish your names, being slaves to the English
While going to government schools, courts and councils,
remember Bapuji
You are free in your hearts and enslaved in your hearts
Listen to the call of your heart and shed all that belongs to the rulers.'[86]

The literature of both phases, age of Oriya Rennaisance and Satyabadi era, were not antagonistic to each other. The former created a new writing on the lines of modern western literature and primarily engaged in saving the Oriya language from extinction. Since education was predominantly an urban and elite phenomenon that literature was was predominantly elitist in nature. The Satybadi writers did not want to keep literature confined within upper class boundaries. 'People form a vital part of our literary creation. We believe that there can be no national literature without mass literature. One is free to write in a high language, but writing in simple conversational language gives greater access to literature. Only that can be called national literature.[87] They did not believe in art for art's sake. Reality, *bastabikata,* instead of imagination, *kalpana,* was the basis of Satyabadi literature which distinguished it from earlier poets. Literature was written with an 'intention' to make people conscious of the political and social nature of their society,

[85] Ibid,101. Also Nityananda Sathpathy, *He! Saathi...* 222-223.
[86] '*Swaraj bhaya albat hoga...*' Ibid,188.

[87] Ibid,37.

of the changes that society undergoes, of mass exploitation and exclusion. The Satyabadi writers renewed faith in the Hindu philosophy as a reassertion of Oriya *dharma* while earlier writers had adopted Brahmoism under Bengali influence.

Though all the three writers of this age, Gopabandhu, Nilakantha and Godbarisha wrote different types of literature, their opinion on the construction of a new Oriya nation was more or less same. Social service, ability to be compassionate to others and respect for your own past were the basis for building a new society. It meant to propagate the need for *seva*, *tyaga* and *charitra gathana,* character building. Literary discussions, creation of libraries and spread of education would lead to the development of a new literature and a new consciousness.[88] Their literature created a new idealism and the emotion that was predominant was that of '*karuna*', compassion. An idealistic life style and a nation based on idealism were the primary concerns of these writers. Nilakantha writes,

'till one is alive, one will not allow you, *jabana*
to make Orissa your pleasure garden,
never will the cow cry in pain,
the women will never give up their purity
the devotees of *Jagannth* will never flow into the sea
Utkal, the queen, will never lose her dignity
gajapati, the king, will never lower his head
the Oriyas will never be under the rule of the *jabana*'[89]

It is significant to notice that a poet who wanted to eliminate religious influences from social life has predominantly declared Hindu religious elements as quintessentially Oriya.

The Satyabadi writers were involved in a variety of activities starting from creating cultural awareness to constructing a new society, introducing social reforms and political revolution. Their political intention was not to achieve narrow regionalism or provincialism by establishing the independent status of Orissa within India. They wanted to serve the political purpose of India in serving Orissa and in serving the people of India they would serve the people of the world. The Satyabadi leaders were the first to systematically spread the message of '*swaraj*' and self rule in Orissa. To Gopabandhu, 'poverty was a state of mind and poverty of the Oriya nation should not deter it from

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[88] *Gopabandhu Rachanavali*, Number 8, Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir , Cuttack, 46.

[89] '*ji thau chadiba nahi tumbhe jabana...*' Jena quotes this poem of Nilakantha as evidence of Oriya bravery and idealism. It shows that the Muslims, generally referred to as *jabana*, did not form a natural component of Oriya society. Jagannath Jena, op. cit., 55.

being a part of the '*maha jatiya yuddha*', the greater national struggle. The presence of Orissa contributes to the overall nature of the Indian freedom movement.'[90]

Freedom was the prime motive of all the three writers, but they produced a wide and complex conception of the principle. Freedom from superstitions and conservative social practices, and freedom for a new life based on the principles of discipline, service and humanism was their basic aim. It was not enough to acquire political freedom, freedom which was physical in nature; instead there was a need to 'realise' and understand 'freedom from within'. 'Union of the soul with that of the *paramatma*, the ultimate soul, *yoga*, introspection, *darshana,* to understand the true essence of knowledge, *tatwa* and devotion, *bhakti* were the ways to attain *mukti* or salvation, the ultimate freedom of human beings.'[91] They stressed the importance of a social revolution along with the ongoing political revolution. Political freedom was linked to social freedom and this freedom should penetrate all levels and classes of people.

In his discussion of the Satybadi writers Jena says, 'they wrote in a time when Orissa as a geographical area did not exist in the maps, all that marked the past glory of Orissa was extinct, the Oriya kingship, religion, independence, its mark as a martial race, its industries, art and craft, trade and culture and nationalism was at its lowest ebb- a exploitative foreign rule and there was no sign of revolt. A historical nation had died a historical death.[92]

Though Nilakantha argued against idol worship, the innumerable gods and goddesses, he believed in the '*maitri bhava*' of Jagannath dharma which emphasised equality among all men, of all religions and castes. He was critical of caste differences that was much emphasised in Oriya society, 'difference between human beings is our nationalism and hating people our Hinduism'. 'True Hinduism has come to mean the spread of hatred among brothers and emphasis on difference in castes.'[93] Their criticisms were reflected in their personal practice.It was because of this that Nilakantha, an upper caste brahmin, kept a moustache, wore his '*dhoti*' differently, wore leather shoes, and had his shirt on whilst having food. Godabarisha, also a Brahmin, had a moustache and brought the first brahmin girl from a village and put her in a girls hostel at Cuttack. He would not offer '*shraadh*' to his dead parents, burnt his horoscope, threw away his sacred thread and never visited any temple. Amongst the three, Gopabandhu believed in the 'rebirth, *punaha janma*', *atma* or the existence of the soul, *paramaatma*, existence of the

[90]Jagannath Jena, op. cit., 12.
[91]Ibid 17.
[92] Ibid,58.
[93] Ibid,62.

divine soul, and law of deeds, '*karma.*' Nilakantha was intolerant of these ideas and disrcarded them as a 'lie told with immense devotion' (*bhaktika mithya).*

For Nilakantha and Godabarisha Mishra, God did not exist in any particular form. The creation of so many gods had led to the creation of as many different sects resulting in greater belief in lifeless idols. Due to the malignant manifestations of this irreligion, imagination has run wild, creating 'Srikrishna's sixteen thousand lovers, *gopis* and perpetuating temple prostitution as the *mahari* system in the Jagannath temple. This is nothing but the manifestation of the degradation of our religiousness'.[94]

Nilakantha strategically aimed at building new cultural essences and authenticities to re-empower the powerless Oriya. The way he viewed Oriya belongingness to India was also different from that of Gopabandhu. He accepted that 'one needs to belong to a greater cultural whole, but every community has its own individuality and even if there is close cultural interaction between various people, they were still distinctive. The national unity that we displayed during the movement against the colonial rule was merely an artificial unity, *krutrima ekata,* which was a political requirement of that historical condition. Now it is difficult to continue with that unity.[95] He attempted to revise the presumption about the powerful Aryan connection to Oriya social life. In his opinion, tribal culture, language and literature were crucial to invocation of Oriya identity while claiming that 'in the Oriya public, *janata* and culture, *sabhyata,* there is a strong presence of the *sabara.*'[96] Any study of Oriya literature would remain incomplete without an adequate analysis of tribal literature and its influence.[97] His contention was 'that since the Oriyas fail to establish their distinct literature and culture from the Bengalis, any analysis of the history of Oriya literature remains difficult. It would be easy to do this, if one discerns the influence and interaction of Oriya literature with Arya literature.'[98] Two main themes distinguish Oriya literature from that of Bengali; the '*swakiya*'[99] woman and her purity or *suchimanta.* With this he unleashed the worst ever attack on the Bengali influence on Oriya life and the corrupting influence of the Aryan/Bengali literature which was filled with excessively sexual themes. He quotes from the 15th century Odia poet who writes,

> if you have a steady mind
> your soul, *brahma* never goes astray[100]

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[94] Quoted from *Nilakantha Granthavali,* 428, in Jagannath Jena, op. cit., 73.
[95] Nilakantha Das, *Odia Sahitya Ra Krama Parinama,* , New Students Store, Cuttack, 1977, 7-9.

[96] Ibid,12.
[97] Ibid,19.
[98] Ibid,119.
[99] *Swakiy*a is the man who is devoted to one woman or vice versa.
[100] '*manaku drudha kale tahin brahma kebe na talai'* Nilakantha Das, *Odia Sahitya...* 120

or he quotes from the Balaram Das who wrote the '*Birata Gita*'

one must always take the supreme name
'His' name fills the whole world
Keep this name closest to your heart
do not stray into the road of sex
for once you dive into those waters
you can never rise again.[101]

In his virulent attack on the Bengalis, he points out that polygamy was a part of the Bengali life-style. In their attempt to spread '*gaudiya vaishnavism*', the Vaishnavas cheated widows and helpless women into becoming 'mata'[102]. His book is a research work that dismantles the belief that Oriyas were an *aslila*, vulgar and corrupt society.

His construction of the image of Oriya women was in keeping with the image of goddesses, the epitome of purity and femininity. They are loving and caring, kind but brave. They are self-sacrificing, committed to their husbands and families, truthful and pure. They were an inspiration in the movement for freedom.[103] They are regarded as the '*Laxmi*' of the household, the harbinger of wealth and good fortune and contribute to a strong nation by holding the family together. In his *Odia Sahitya ra Krama Parinama*, Nilakantha quotes traditional sayings,

'he who disgraces women never gets to marry'

or

'gods prefer to live there where women are worshipped'.

To him these showed the status and life of Oriya women in the past.[104]

Nilakantha was a prose writer and had mostly written comparative prose on past and contemporary society. His '*Pratibha Puja O Pratima Puja*', 'Reverence of Genius and Reverence of Idols' (1911), *Achu O Hebu,* 'What We Are and What We Will Be'(1911), '*Amara Thila Karana Thai Pare*', 'For All That We Had There Must Be A Reason' were all expositions of what was happening in a society caught in the web of change. He started a periodical called '*Navabharat* , in 1933 which was published till 1946. Eventually, after the disintegration of the Satyabadi school, Nilakantha left to join the Congress movement and worked in Sambalpur, the western tracts. He started the *Swadhina Jana Sangha* in 1950.

Godabarisha Mishra: Historicising Oriyaness

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[101] '*namaku hrude kari drudha jauna marge na buda*' Ibid,123.
[102] Ibid,147
[103] In a discussion of involvement of the Oriya woman in The Non-Co-operation Movement, a local newspaper writes 'God help Oriya women with some good sense.' *Satya Samachar*, July 12th 1930 OSA.
[104] '*je prani strinku nindai...*' Nilakantha Das, *Odia Sahity a*... op. cit., 125.

Godabarisha Mishra(1886-1956) joined as a teacher in Gopabandhu's school after completing his M.A from Calcutta University. On Gopabandhu's advice he advocated for the Oriya language in the border districts of Singhbhum. He was elected as a Councillor of Bihar-Orissa Assembly in 1927 and 1930, and was the Education Minister between 1941-44.

Godabarisha Mishra's writings were straightforward expositions of principles of modern nationalism. He dramatised two of the most important historical episodes of Oriya kings. Godabarisha, too, joined the Congress and worked for the development and preservation of the Oriya language in the Singhbhum district, which eventually was granted to Bihar. He went on to hold office in the Congress government and organised the Democratic Association or *Ganatantra Parishad.* He rewrote Purushottam Deva and Mukunda Deva in the form of drama.[105]

To Gopabandhu, like the other writers of this school, love for the nation came through submission to the feeling of Indianness. Gopabandhu wrote, 'we must all remember that we are human beings first, Indians next, Oriyas only last. The independent character of Oriyaness would come to light only when it becomes an integral part of the all India movement.'[106] To raise the lost confidence of the Oriyas, Gopabandhu writes,

when the nation has fallen into the worst depths
when all Oriyas have lost their self-confidence
how will they ever believe and perceive the lost greatness?'

or in his famous poem, '*Rela Uparu Chilika Darshana'* , he writes,
'where is that good fortune
look how deformed is the state of
holy Orissa !'[107]

It was against this background that Godabarisha wrote directly of historical episodes which were free from the influence of myths and *puranas*. His collection of poems called '*Alekhika*' contained the fullest account of the glorious traditions of Oriya society. While working to popularise Oriya language, he opened a high school at Chakradharpur in Singhbhum where he was the headmaster. There he acquainted himself with the history of the region, which provided the contents of his poems. He was an atheist and his autobiography makes detailed mention of his anti-religious activities. He had burnt his '*jataka'*, horoscope, when he was eighteen years of age.[108] According to

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[105] The story of Purushottam Deva is discussed in Chapter 5.
[106] *Gopabandhu Rachanavali*, Part III, 16-17.
[107] '*hina bela ebe utkal santana... '*
'pabitra utkala aha ki bikruta...'Quoted from Jagannath Jena, op. cit., 83.
[108] *Godabarisha Granthavali,* Part I, Cuttack Student's Store, Cuttack, 1960, 2.

him he did not have any qualms telling a minor lie. As he writes, a lie came more naturally to him than truth.[109] But, he pledged 'truth' when he came under the influence of Gopabandhu and joined the 'Satyagraha' movement. This was a turning point in his life. He was popularly referred to as the 'Kalapahad'[110] of his village, for he did not believe in Hindu religious practices, especially idol-worship and had thrown away the '*paita*', sacred thread normally worn by brahmin men.

Among these writers, Godabarisha came closest to fully celebrating the principle of historicity. The basic difference between Gopabandhu and him was that the former sacrificed objectivity in favour of appealing to the emotions of the people, while Godabarisha strove to retain the historical authenticity of his narratives. To avoid the possible falsification of his heroes, he researched the histories of the characters he chose to write about. Each of his poems in '*Alekhika*' had a short account of the true story before it was adapted in a poetic form. Secondly, his poems de-emphasised the religious elements of Oriya life, instead the Oriya *jati* was continuously invoked as a martial race. His poems often had local Oriya feudal chiefs as heroes, valiant and daring. He wrote about the local history of the people, local kings and their relations with the tribal people of that area. All the characters of his poems were brave young boys who fought to protect Orissa from external aggression. *Abhiram Singh, Arjun Singh and Dukhidhana* are illustrations of the brave Oriya warrior. In his poem *Arjun Singh*, we are introduced to the tribal and the semi-tribal groups who lived in Singhbhum, their support to the local king's army and the gradual integration of the aboriginal groups with others. They are mostly stories that form a part of common people's consciousness.

The language that he used steered away from the 'high' and elite form of Oriya. He used the typical language of the villages, including particular words that form the special vocabulary of rural Oriya women. While the characters that he portrayed were carriers of a strong Oriya individuality, expounding the spirit of the Oriya warrior, the language was colloquial and had a rhythmic quality so that these could be sung as songs. For example, in his poem '*Abhiram Singh*', he makes constant use of the word 'lo' which forms a part of Oriya womens' vocabulary and is used to express a number of emotions, a very typical expression of endearment. Here it conveys *'batslaya'*, a mother's affection for her son. The mother in the poem is the 'queen' of Sareikella who is escaping with her little son after her husband is defeated in war. This poem implies that universal emotions do not recognise social hierarchies and contributes powerfully to the creation of political

[109] Ibid, 3.
[110] The Muslim general of the Bengal king Sulaiman Karrani, committed the greatest treachery to the whole Oriya community by dragging Jagannath with ropes made of cow-hide.

solidarity.[111] It goes on to describe how the brave child grows up into a worthwhile warrior and takes revenge of his father's death. Written for the people of Sareikella and Kharsuan[112] the poem tried to reinstate a feelings of Oriyaness among people who no longer geographically belonged to Orissa, but culturally and historically continued to remain Oriyas. In his poem on '*Dukhidhana*', the young hero misleads the invading enemy in disguise[113] while protecting the borders of Orissa from the south. He recounts the glorious days of the Oriya people in the glorious warriors they had.

'the state of my home, today
my heart breaks over it
it lies in four parts
almost overcome by death'
'would the kings of the past
bear to see all that is happening now
their sons rule to save their thrones
watch silently when the English exploit[114]

The major dissatisfaction of the poet is that people in a position to save the country from being enslaved support the exploiters for their own selfish interests. The rich have stopped being sympathetic to the poor, they buy cars with the tax money paid by their subjects, they no longer eat at home and have started eating food that was traditionally inedible. They have forgotten their religion and have stopped praying to their '*ishta devata*'. In his poem '*Padmabati*' and his play based on the same story '*Purushottam Deva*'[115] Godabarisha undermines the divine intervention of Jagannath in the battle and gives a secular and historical account of the conflict. This play speaks of the 'individual' king who represents the whole Oriya people. While presenting it in the form of a play, the writer recreates the conditions and the context in which the Oriya king (and people) waged a battle against the king of Kanchi. Closely influenced by the principles of non-violence and *manabikata* or humanism popularised by Gopabandhu and Gandhi, the writer stresses the need for war only when the 'rights' of people are violated. This poem reinforces the assertion that about Oriyas being a martial race. However, the most

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[111] *'jetiki chalanti age banastha lo disai adhika ghana'* However much we walk, little one the forest looks still denser
in Godabarisha Mishra's *Alekhika*, Granthmandir, Cuttack, 1963, 1986, 2.

[112] The Congress government in the post independent period gave it away to Bihar. This was a major source of dissatisfaction of the Oriya people against both the Congress and Chief Minister H.K.Mahtab.

[113] '*nija janma bhumi rakhi na parile* What use is one's living
If he fails to protect his motherland, *Alekhika*, 74.

[114] '*bada hinimana ama ghara dasa...*' Ibid,78-82.

interesting poem in this collection is 'Kalapahad'. While saying that the Muslim general Kalapahad, destroyed the beautiful Orissan temples,

'you would have noticed
the beautiful disfigured bodies of the statues
that adorn our temples,[116]

Godabarisha supports Kalapahad's disbelief in God and idol worship. In spite of being extremely respectful of Gopabandhu, Godabarisha was openly dismissive of religion.

'though he receives puja,
as the lord of the Universe
he is made by 'man'.[117]

He describes the character of Kalapahad as one who was born in the family of brahmins and converted to Islam only to marry a beautiful Muslim woman and obtain the favours of the Muslim king. He spoke a disgraceful, *acchaba,* low language. When Mukunda Deva, the king of Orissa was away offering prayers in the banks of river Ganga, Kalaphad with the help of a few traitors invaded Orissa. Mukund Deva's queen put up a valiant resistance. She protected the '*Barabati* fort' against being invaded and desecrated

'the powerful Kalaphad
broke the walls of the Barabati fort
as he drank in one gulp the whole water of Mahanadi
the Queen of Mukunda Deva
served him *heda* on a golden platter'[118]

This age in Oriya literature was accepted and celebrated as the age of nationalistic literature because the writers of this period did not merely hold political ideologies, which were totally alien, they tried to place it in the context the cultural systems that were prevalent in the society. Their ideologies were as much a product of the traditional Oriya cultural system as a reaction against it. While Gopabandhu felt the urgent need to define Oriya nationalism through religion which held the people together, Godabarisha and Nilakantha went against some of the beliefs and projected a different set of symbols through which Oriya identity could be defined.

This era in Oriya national life was significant because they imbued the Oriya/Indian with the need to be dedicated to 'work'. Godabarisha's overt concern over

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[115] It is based on the story of the King of Puri who defeats the king of Kanchi in the most humiliating battle and gets to marry his daughter. This story is analysed in detail in the chapter on Jagannath.

[116] '*dekhithiba bedha pratima kaya ru...*' *Alekhika,* 100.

[117] ' *puja pauchanti manisa sina lo...*' Ibid,100.

[118] ' *subarna thali re heda parasi le...*' Ibid,109. This is a famous couplet in the Oriya language. *Heda* means meat with bone. Beef in the common Oriya language is called *heda* and is often mentioned along with excreta.

the lack of work ethics among the Oriyas is illustrated by an article in a local newspaper. Work ethics is the only way through which a community attains 'strength' and 'salvation'. The Oriyas have had a history of 'hard work' during the rule of the Kesari and the Ganga kings. Now, this race is drowned in laziness.[119] 'The Oriyas today are recognised as 'coolies' and 'gardeners' by Bengalis, famous as cowards historically, whose ancestors have not left behind a glorious past... the brave Oriya is recognised this way!'[120] In another piece, he speaks of the lack of consciousness among Oriyas because of the lack of formation of public opinion. 'The people must be aware of the deficiencies of the nation, dissatisfactions of common people, the shortcomings of the administration ...This would not merely enlighten the Oriyas but also sensitise them to various issues and create an interest in them about the self.'[121]

The three writers discussed in this chapter tried to generate meanings about Oriya life at three levels. Gopabandhu sought to regenerate Oriya life through religion. Nilakantha invoked secular ethical principles and emphasised the need for society to be reorganised on them. Godabarisha invoked the principle of historicity as crucial to the constitution of identity. All the three writers succeeded in connecting these principles to the political aspirations of nationalism. However, their hegemonic influence over the Oriya literary imagination was to be challenged soon afterwards.

With individual autonomy becoming a major force of modernity, their simplistic notion of overcoming social divisions and the universal rules and principles that they prescribed to bridge the gaps between the social groups were all questioned by later generations of Oriya writers. Their construction of identity was homogeneous and singular and overlooked the possibility that different individuals and groups could assert their identities in totally unprecedented and unforeseen ways.

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[119] *Karma Maya Jiban* in *Nabeena* , 27 January, 1931,151.
[120] *Hasi Uthiba* in *Nabeena*, 17 February, 1931,163.
[121] *Desha Katha* , Feb 21 1930, Cuttack.

Chapter 3

Aesthetic Resolution to Real Contradictions: Oriya Stereotypes in Mainstream Literature

At one level, by the mid-thirties, the question of identity in Orissa seemed to be completely settled. However, what was settled, in fact, was predominantly the question of *political* identity. The two most important aspects directly concerning the existence of the Oriya community had been sorted out: Oriya was recognised as an independent language and the colonial rulers conceded the Oriyas a separate status on the basis of language in 1936. What followed historically demonstrated that there is no single homogenous construction of the community's self. The literature of this period (1930 onwards) reflects the historicity and the provisionality of the problem of identity. There was a continuous questioning of given definition of the self; showing that what is called the self of a community is always in the process of formation. Any attempt to provide a final narrative of the self was fraught, at least potentially, with internal contestations.

In the period that followed, the various literary strands on reflection of the self often move in contradictory directions. It is not surprising that in a situation of colonialism and internal threat, the common constituents of collective identity were emphasised. However, the economic and cultural conditions of modernity gave rise to assertion of individual rights. The more people started asserting their individual selves, the more difficult it became to assimilate them into one communitarian identity.

There are certain historical and social conditions in which people talk of individual assertion. Celebration of individuality was primarily an urban phenomenon.[1] Though the personal trajectory of each character in moving away from the stereotypical construction of the Oriya self was different, every breaking away from the condition of tradition made these characters alike in a certain way. The quality of difference between individual assertions was not important. What was significant was the distinct manner in which these characters were represented in Oriya literature. In becoming distinct from what was perceived as a stereotypical Oriya in literature these characters were declared as inauthentic.[2]

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[1] The self-oriented urban individual who stands in potential conflict to the cohesive character of the community is dealt with in the *Kalapurusha* text.

[2] Niranjan in *Andha Diganta*, Hari Mishra in *Matira Manisha*, Kshyanaprabha in *Jhanja* and Sarojini in *Danapani*. Unlike nationalist writers, mainstream writers carved heroes out of ordinary people.

The nationalist literary writings overlooked the fact that people who constituted Oriyas were internally diversified. It was not concerned with the conflictual possibilities of the self and did not reflect the internal hierarchies of the society. This literature failed to recognise that the simple, unproblematic, homogenous construction of self could be challenged at a later point of time in the name of identity. The homogenous Oriya identity had subsumed different subgroups. Even after the broad boundary of Oriyaness was settled, the relationship between these constituent groups was to be sorted out. Self and self-determination have two meanings in the modern world. The discussion will revolve around the tensions between constructions of individual identity and collective identity -- the tension that the overarching Oriya self definition undergoes when constituent groups, like tribals, peasants, women and the rural Oriyas start to assert and question the validity of the earlier image of the Oriya self.

The meaning of identity is dialogic[3], it depends upon the historical and social circumstances with which it interacts and in which it is invoked. The self is a cultural construct. 'We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity is defined by the way things have significance for me...'[4]. This definition of the self confirms our earlier understandings of what Oriyaness meant. It was an 'affirmation of ordinary life,[5] that centred on what underlies the Oriya sense of 'dignity', what made life meaningful and fulfilling. The assertion of these aspects in the context of modernity was intertwined with the principle of respect. This notion of respect was mixed with the notion of autonomy, which meant breaking free from traditional ties and implied the belief that every person is a rational agent and has the right to assert his difference.

Literature discussed Oriya identity as defined by certain moral commitments, life styles and personality types. It showed that 'all societies have normative conceptions of what are the specific characteristics that constitute a particular definition of the community's self...the way social relationships should be organised to achieve this.'[6] It was in this framework that they evaluated what was good, worthwhile, admirable or of value. If people were to lose these commitments or identification, it would be a serious threat to their identity. Oriya literature, especially after 1930, linked identity to a new significance of ordinary life. The novels discussed the conflicts and crisis of Oriya society and through narrative oppositions tried to convey to their readers what authentic

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[3] Dialogic implies that identity is a 'relation' and is discovered through expounding an 'otherness'. It is a dialogue that helps understanding the relationships between self and other. Michael Holoquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, Routledge, London, 1990 , 18-19.

[4] Charles Taylor cited in Roger T. Ames, (ed.) *Self as Person In Asian Theory and Practice*, State University Press, New York, 1994, 274.

[5] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1989, x.

[6] Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World*, OUP, Delhi, 1978, 6.

Oriyaness entailed. There was disenchantment among the Oriya creative writers with the project of modernity and a consequent rise of a discourse, which was nostalgic about the 'ideal' Oriya past. A group of writers tried to rediscover cultural purity by emphasising some cultural elements, which were 'polluted' by the coming of colonialism and simultaneous infiltration of western cultural values. There was an apprehension about the total collapse of the social order if corrective measures were not taken and the uncontrollable movement of the society towards further moral and spiritual degeneration was not stopped.

Oriya creative writers had to grapple with two aspects of identity. On the one hand, they wrote of the 'autonomy' of the community, which was often assumed to be singular in nationalistic literature. In this single homogenous community, all constituent groups were happily integrated and subsumed. But, mainstream writers could not remain indifferent to the fact that influence of modern institutions had given rise to demands of individual identity and sometimes of groups which stood in potential conflict with the community's demands. These writers analysed characters that did things, which were unprecedented and unconventional. If they granted that these character types could be found in Oriya society, it would create a crisis for the entirely homogenous definition of what it was to be Oriya. Unlike the Oriya nationalists, both in the phase of the language agitation and the national movement, who restored to Orissa its cultural identity from images of an immemorial past, heroes, temples, architecture, myths, the writers in this period 'historicised' everyday life. They established a 'culture of insubordination'[7] of the constituent groups, idealising a life style and emphasising precisely those aspects, which stood in opposition to modernity.

One central point of this chapter is to show how Oriya literature handled the dialectics of identity -- the conflict between collective identity and the autonomy of the individual. Till now, identity exclusively meant the need to belong to one community for which one had to fulfil the basic responsibility of speaking a common language, associate with that culture and history and support the community's demands for freedom from other sources of power. But with the introduction to modern western education and institutions, there developed a need to assert the rights of individuality. Modern thinking asserted that it was morally legitimate for an individual to express his difference from others, to liberate himself from tradition, to exercise a choice whether to belong to a particular collective and to perceive himself in a manner he deemed fit. The denial of these liberties would be a violation of individual personal rights. While collective identity made demands upon the individual to abide by common rules and moral values, the

individual had the freedom to assert that the source of moral authority did not lie outside his own self. The former were forms of morality given from external sources that the individual, by virtue of being morally autonomous, had full right to dismiss or accept. It remained his autonomous decision to behave or not to behave in a particular manner. However, this way of thinking contained the possibility of disruption of a 'common' way of life. The more people of different categories asserted their autonomy, the more they started to look different from their earlier selves, and the picture of the collective self that nationalist literature had constructed appeared increasingly problematic.

The creative writers of this period were more or less products of the same process of consciousness formation that guided the national movement. Like the nationalist writers, they had a particular imagination of what their society was like. Guided by the same reformist consciousness, they did not want the poor to remain poor, the peasant and the tribal to remain backward, the woman to remain subordinate. They wanted to do away with the inhuman oppression and exploitation that underprivileged groups were subjected to traditionally. Against these conditions, they enunciated an abstract principle of equality and had a superficial understanding of how inequalities could be removed. They wanted to establish an Oriya society organised on principles of egalitarianism without disturbing its symmetry.

Most writers found it difficult to successfully reconcile a picture based on the present community with the ideological needs of the middle class. To belong to an unproblematic Oriyaness, peasant consciousness had to be either transformed or appropriated. There was a need to transform the agrarian social set up, abolish pre-modern forms of social relations and traditional labour if the rural Oriya or tribal had to become like city-people. But, this was not possible because rural people still adhered to this life style and did not understand much beyond their right to subsistence. There is a consensus among all writers of this phase that authentic Oriyaness could be found in the simple peasant and the exotic tribal. It was as if, 'in his simplicity the peasant still keeps alive the mode of thinking and perception that was revealed to the sages of the Upanishads the vision that *Atman is Brahman*. Shouldn't we prefer the so called superstition of the peasant which helps him see organic connections between the animal world, human world and the nature surrounding him...western education has alienated us utterly from this peasant, who belongs to the category of seventy percent illiterate mass...If we don't understand the structure and mode of the peasant's thinking, we don't

[7] Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Culture of Representative Democracy',in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Wages of Freedom*: *Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State*, OUP, Delhi, 1998.

become true Indians.'[8] Secondly, there was a suggestion that orderliness of society depended upon a certain harmonious arrangement among these constituent groups.

The Oriya creative mind could not distance itself from the changes that were altering the life style of all categories of people. The ongoing argument reflects the tensions between what constituted and what ideally should constitute Oriyaness. In the social sphere there was already a suspicion that modernisation, instead of improving would actually harm the quality of social life. Literary writers were wary of the growing demands of modernisation and the compromises that people would consequently have to make. In their view people would have to trade their moral values and social happiness to survive in the competitive material and economic life of the modern.

More than defining themselves against 'others' the Oriyas now had to belong to the evolving Indian social and cultural life and negotiate a place within that broad Indian framework. For this, the Oriya writers had to recontextualise issues for the Oriya readership, rediscover the vernacular mind anew and also belong to the broad Indian trends of creative writing. They had to present Oriyas and Orissa nationally to an Indian audience and India locally to an Oriya audience. 'The Oriya creative mind is no longer Oriya in the sense it was before independence. It has acquired such range, depth and understanding that its newness is not only a matter of time but also one of attitude... to give a shape to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy in contemporary life. It is involved in a struggle to understand its own dialectic and an appreciation of this struggle is essential to understand its true shape and substance.'[9]

The major concern of the litteratuers was that the modern world, with its administrative, political and economic institutions was becoming more incomprehensible to the common individual, and the traditional knowledge system was unable to provide any consistent and convincing remedy to their problems. Individuals faced a liminal existence bordering on traditional and modern spheres. The 'internal' home was representative of the traditional and the 'external' the institutional and organisational spheres of modernity represented radically different principles. There was a struggle for survival between two essentially different kinds of values.

Political power was usurped by political parasites seen to be lacking in commitment to their work.[10] People were disillusioned with the self-oriented, selfish

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[8] U. R. Anantha Murthy, quotes this view of an Indian painter, 'Search for an Identity', in Sudhir Kakar (ed) *Identity and Adulthood,* OUP, Delhi, 1979, 110.

[9] Jatindra Mohan Mohanty *There Where Trees Flower*, Bookland International, Bhubaneswar, 1980. Preface.

[10] In Surendra Mohanty's *Andha Diganta,* we are introduced to the morally depraved Sudhodhana who has become the Chief Minister because of his lack of scruples, and the failure of democracy in a society not ready for it. *Andha Diganta*, Cuttack Student's Store, 1962. 26-27

political tactics and the acquisition-oriented politics of the leadership. This leadership was constantly compared to the conscientious political leadership of the national movement who put common interests ahead of individual interests.

Modern rationality and the making of urban centres attracted the village youth assuring them work and greater freedom from traditional structures. Continuation of traditional caste politics without the traditional system of sustenance led to stark inequalities between groups. Earlier, the extremes of economic inequality in a village society were mitigated not by legal measures as in the modern system but by religious sanctions. Unlike the traditional system each caste was now forced to look after its own exclusive interest.[11] Exploitation in the traditional system did not call for any serious resistance because it was regarded as less degrading than modern repression. For example, in a traditional agricultural context a labourer was often made an inclusive part of the family through the establishment of surrogate kinship links. The labourer, who invariably belonged to the lower caste, felt a sense of obligation having been accepted as a part of the family of the high caste traditional employer. For the peasant to revolt against people who took 'care' of them was equivalent to revolting against '*dharma*' or god.[12] The condition in the modern situation was radically different, with growing competition between two classes traditionally never in competition and greater assertion from both sides to make use of modern education and job opportunities. Growth of industrialisation, the modern network of communication, growth of the city, spread of education, print and the socialist intent of the state had given the hitherto disadvantaged people some hope to be upwardly mobile, both economically and socially.

While known values and standards were fast collapsing, there was no new value system, acknowledged and followed by all categories of people. Different groups, the middle and lower and upper class/caste, tribal and non-tribal were governed by different sets of rules and there was a constant reference in literature to this growing sense of feeling 'lost' because of two rationalities. Sociologically, 'in the historic evolution of society, the institutions and personality structures prevailing in the society acquire features that are mutually supportive -- there is a fit between the demands that the institutions make upon the persons and the person's needs, inclinations and ambitions.[13] With the coming of the modern institutions and concepts, people familiar with indigenous

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[11] N. K. Bose, *The Structure of Hindu Society*, Orient Longman, (trans), Andre Betteille, 1st pub 1975, 9 & 114.

[12] Kali Charan Patnaik's drama, *Bhata*, 1944, is a typical example, where Ananta, an educated poor man, points out the ways in which the rich legitimately continue their domination by establishing surrogate kinship relations. *Kabichandra Grnathavali*, Cuttack Student's Store, 1973,39.

[13] Satish Saberwal, *Roots of Crisis*, Sage, New Delhi, 1996, 38

social forms and associated personality structures had to operate under completely different premises. There was a sense of 'anomie' where people were uprooted from one system but not yet rooted in another.

It might be convenient for our argument to start with the binary oppositions suggested by Partha Chatterjee: the materialist outside and spiritual inside. 'The material is the domain of the 'outside', of economy, state-craft, of science and technology, a domain where the west had proved its superiority and the east had succumbed'[14] The reaction to the material outside was standard everywhere. It was one of acceptance because affairs of the public sphere could not be conducted in complete estrangement from modern state. The spiritual, inner domain around which the cultural essence of the community was organised needed protection from being contaminated since that contained the potential for a distinct articulation of the self.

With the expansion of modern institutions it was only natural that this spiritual domain was invaded due to regular interaction between the material outside and the spiritual inside. It was only when this interaction attempted to transform the inner sphere that the real confusion of transition started. There was a rejection of the westernised 'intruder' who was both emulated and condemned. Simultaneously there was selective rejection of the Oriya past, parts of which were seen as obstacles to progress. This coming of modernity also transformed the nature of social relationships.[15] There was a growing need to 'fashion a modern that was nevertheless not western.'[16] This transformation of the essential spiritual domain was perceived as a threat to the Oriya nation's cultural existence.

Modern Creative Literature - A New Direction

There was a remarkable rise in the number of writers in the early 20th century who wrote on modern themes and distinguished themselves from traditional writers known to celebrate the romantic escapades of kings and sensuous descriptions of the female body. There was a growing need for a literature, which had a social purpose. One of the very first debates on traditional literary themes was carried out in two leading Oriya newspapers in the colonial period, *Utkal Dipika* published from Cuttack and *Utkal Prabha* from Mayurbhanj.[17] In the later phase, the debate took a different turn with the complaint that modern poetry was devoid of any poetic sense and was imitative of western themes. Further, it was argued that the popularity of poetry had declined with the

[14] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, OUP, Delhi, 1994 , 6

[15] The processes of interaction between groups changed. *Mulia* and *Bhai Bhauja* show how the educated peasant is incorporated into the middle class and is perceived and treated differently. The change in perception reflected changes in inter-group and intra group relations.

[16] Chatterjee, op. cit., 6.

[17] This has been discussed in detail in the first chapter.

disappearance of lyrical value.[18] The author with this line of thought also stressed that *sahitya* has a function and a duty to *samaj*. Literature should be written and discussed in a context. Modern literature enables representation of popular themes, lives of common people, and is more relevant because it is written in a less pompous manner with a combination of high *sahityika* and conversational *chalita* language.[19] The more informal use of language not only gives greater accessibility to literature but also makes the literary sphere more inclusive, representing the worldview of a great majority of people. Thus it performed the important political function, though at a purely theoretical level, of raising the respectability of all individuals. This general belief is reflected in the social novels.

The site for celebration of authentic Oriyaness was the life of the peasant that was instantly idealised as central to Oriya identity. The broad ideological context in which modern Oriya literature was written, discussed and received assumed that '*sahitya* should serve the needs of the people, '*janasadharana*', otherwise the purpose of the Oriya *sahitya* fails and along with it the Oriya *jati*.[20] The realm of social reality had become varied and complex and it was impossible to articulate this complexity in the traditional *chhanda*. It was necessary to articulate and accommodate a medley of 'voices', 'for the prose artist the world is full of other people's words among which he must orient himself and whose speech characteristics he must be able to perceive with a keen ear.'[21]

Modernity and the Disoriented Middle Class

Kalapurusha[22] by Guru Prasad Mohanty, represents the unstoppable interaction between the external outside and the essential spiritual domain influencing the emergence of a modern 'other'. 'In acquiring knowledge of the non-self, since the counter entity is the self, knowledge of the counter-entity is presupposed in any knowledge of its negation.'[23] It introduces us to the disorientation that Oriya society was experiencing with the introduction of the modern.

Born in 1924 in Nagabali of Cuttack district, Guru Prasad Mohanty was a prominent Oriya poet of the post independence period. As a teacher of English Literature, he was deeply influenced by the major trends in English poetry[24]. Unlike most Oriya writers the village does not form an important aspect of his poetry.

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[18] Sachidanand Routray, 'Odisa re Sahityadrusya - eka drustipata', *Jhankara*, P.Press, Cuttack 1959. 931-943

[19] Ibid., 932

[20] Ibid., 932

[21] Bakhtin quoted in David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*, Routledge, London, 1990, 7.

[22] This poem poignantly describes all that the Oriya people had 'lost'.

[23] Bimal Krishna Matilal, 'Perception of Self in Indian Tradition' in Roger T. Ames, (ed.), *Self as a Person*, 281.

[24] *Kalapurusha* is sometimes referred to as an imitation of T.S. Eliot's 'Wasteland'.

Guru Mohanty wrote against the ever growing urban consciousness, the futility and fragmented personality of the modern man. Featured in a collection, '*Samudrasnana*', the rhythm of the poem conveys to us the 'breaking' down of something essential, the vision of loss and failure, innocence of the rural and the rise of the immoral city. Though the poet is under no theoretical compulsion to faithfully represent reality, he commits himself to a social stance especially when his work was raised to the height of a representative text, of enunciating a discourse on the social and cultural existence of a given community.

Kalapurusha,[25] warns of the destruction ahead on the path of blind imitation of western society. It describes a devastated modern world and a degenerate life of the present, a demobilised society, spiritual life on the verge of collapse out of fatigue, a consequence of excessive materialism. It reflects a feeling of complete destruction of an entire civilisation and tries to capture the moral and spiritual decay and the intellectual uncertainty of the period. There is a use of the 'mythical method'-- a wide use of religious myths and legends to appeal to a higher set of values which would give direction to the disoriented modern individual. The myths 'can be read as a kind of historical conscience, instructions from venerable ancestors on 'right' and 'wrong' that serve to bind the members of a group together and thus forge a collective identity'[26]. This poem reinvestigates the intellectual, emotional and spiritual traditions that an average individual had inherited. There was an attempt to locate the modern present in relation to the traditional past.

The poem opens in a tone of lament conveyed through the painful imagery of the rains:

> 'Season of the rains, harsh and cruel
> when all lay wounded in swoon, when all lacked enthusiasm
> there was no effort in the bones, strength in nerves and veins
> when there were no hopes, doubts, disgust or attraction for none
> the rains came that day, breaking, tearing, undisciplined, unrestrained, wave of clouds[27]

Our first impression is of the exhausted modern individual, who lacks the blithe energy to partake in the glorious rains. The feeling of elation and rejuvenation normally

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[25] The symbolic meaning of *Kalapurusha* could be 'transcendental man', he who transcends the dictates of time or *kala*. In conversational Oriya, *kala* also means death. Often people would say, his *kala* has come and the 'man' who brings this end is Kalapurusha. It warns us about western life, which experiences a constant apprehension of death and over-consciousness about death.

[26] Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World*, OUP, Delhi, 1978.

[27] *'Barsa ritu nisthura nirmama....murcha re ahata jebe thila sabu...'* Guruprasad Mohanty, *Kalapurusha, Kabita Samgraha*, Chaturanga Prakashini, Bhubaneswar, 1995, 54.

associated with the rains are deliberately avoided and instead it cruelly brings back memories of the beautiful past, which is lost.[28] In its uncontrollable form, rain is characterised as introducing indiscipline (*bishrunkhala)* into a society that is already in disorder.

The anguish of the modern individual's degenerate living is suggested in his indifference to nature: a resistance and irritation to the spontaneity of rains that arrive without warning. Cuttack, one of the first urban settlements was also the first to acquire symptoms of cultural chaos associated with modernity. Perceived to be a version of 'hell', it is characteristic of the deep ambiguities of city life. In the movement of the individual, we perceive a deep sense of 'loss' of something familiar and essential and its replacement with an alien culture. In the poet's excessive stress on the city of Cuttack, the readership is expected to perceive the breakdown of the togetherness of the rural social structure and the price that a modern individual pays in extreme loneliness. It describes the 'weird' flock of English people, 'pastless' and 'futureless' who came as 'locusts' in search of fresh pastures to destroy and left behind a pathetic modern society, bankrupt of moral values and sense of tradition. It is from a certain 'past' that we come into this 'present' and this present prepares us to move into the future. The West is perceived as a culture that disregards the past as 'something gone' and future as unknown and unpredictable. So, why should one waste a present thinking about a past 'past' and an unseen future? This perception of time goes against the *karma* philosophy, which accounts for good and evil actions and is associated with negative repercussions and salvation.

'Today, therefore holding on to a stagnant present
I am looking for stars and a moonlit night
heaps and piles of coal and at the end of the dark tunnel
the wicked affection of ice-cream and lemonade beckons.[29]

Modernity works on the principle of rationality and a constant struggle for greater efficiency through which people become estranged and alienated. The individual is represented as living a stagnant and partial, *khandita,* life within the claustrophobic confines of a tunnel, looking for fulfilment, thinking of new dreams woven of ice-cream and lemonade. This poem is also a partial reaction to the rise of existentialist literature. For it, nature of man is altered after the coming of excessive individualism, when individuals did not grow within society but within their restricted selves. This shell within which he grows is his 'persona' or mask, his personality.

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[28] Ibid., 54. This echoes Eliot's line 'April is the cruellest month' in its *barsa ritu nisthura ,nirmama...*

[29] '*Aji tenu gatihina chota eka bartman dhari...*
ice-cream lemonade jharana ra nirukta mamata' Ibid, 55.

In a bounded world, direction lost, where all above and beneath are lost
My tired body approaches unending distances of loose sand,[30] only sand and darkness. [31]

and

When this human who resembles half a woman
His left side deformed and his skin colour whitish,
to live with him or perform the same fasts
would mean, you will loose your sight, your body and your age.[32]

The culture of the West is not just seen with distrust. There is a strong notion of 'pure' and 'impure' associated with it. The further the advancement of western values, the further the penetration of impurity into life. The degenerate society reminds people of '*khadiratna*', the traditional bard who had foretold the arrival of destruction when the sky changes colour, probably referring to the unclear sky due to industrialisation, when people adopt the religion of the west and perform the same rituals. Living intimately *(sahabasa)* with the deformed *(bikruta),* individual who has an abnormal complexion *barna,* and light coloured eyes is comparable to bringing misfortune on one's self.

The changing 'body', the change in the form of clothes and appearance -- trousers, ties, coats and the silk saree, marking prosperity becomes the site for discussion. Beneath this facade lies a futile individual like an 'insect', for his life lacks human rhythm. All one can hear is the flutter of insects.[33] This life renders one totally 'formless', emphasising the insubstantiality of the body[34], because a human being becomes human not by possessing a body but by giving form to the 'values' he has inherited. The individual loses his individuality to become a part of the crowd; a crowd one does not relate or belong to, who in his relations to others becomes nothing more than an object. The poem wishes to resist the capitalist system, which does not merely change economic relations between people but also the manner in which people experience their world. They are fragments of an anonymous urban world, a world of routine and moral poverty where there is only a verbal commitment to ideologies like Marxism, Gandhism, etc. restricted to drawing-room discussions for mere intellectual satisfaction. The poet mourns the traditional past, which the modern intellectuals had slain at the altar of progress over which they had no control.

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[30] The loose sand on the sea beach does not retain marks of footsteps. It accentuates a feeling of losing sight of one's past. The individual is doomed to this life, losing the path that his ancestors had made for him.

[31] *Simita mo pruthibi digahaje, haji jai upara o tala... '* Ibid., 55.

[32] *'bama anga pangu tara barna ishat pingala..'* Ibid., 55.

[33] *' khali byartha byakta hina kita aau patanga sabda'*, Ibid., 57

[34]. *gotrahina gatrahina ....adbhuta pangapala goshthi* Ibid., 56

The growing economic appetite of the human being and excessive consumerism, seen in faceless reflections of people, photographs of models on coloured magazines, the coloured tins and glittering bottles which bear no name but trademarks, reflect the manner in which needs, wants and desires of all people are homogenised. Uncontrolled 'massification' and reification of modern life is the beginning of moral confusion, with the collapse of known values, a total loss of individual identity and an experience of rootlessness.[35] The poem compares the simple lives of the rural poor, living a more contended life because of lesser wants. By contrast, the city people are marked by ruthless consumerism. The rootless modern people are described as a parasitic creeper, *nirmuli*, a plant with no interaction with the soil.

The individual referred to in the first part of the poem is *Srikrishna* who resides in every modern helpless individual. Even powerful Krishna is bereft of his divinity, reduced to a mere human rendered helpless in front of time.[36] The world in the dark-age, *Kaliyug,* has reached a point of destruction where even the difference between humanity and divinity has collapsed.

Modernity simultaneously creates a situation of 'freedom'-- not spiritual but the mundane absence of surveillance that attracts people to the vicious world of immorality. While more people have access to this modern immoral space, the integrity of the family is threatened, the sacred institution of marriage becomes an instrument of convenience based on compromise and mutual manipulation of unfaithful partners. But the disappearance of the pure woman is socially calamitous; losing her chastity is a serious cultural loss. The poem makes a satirical comparison with Upendra Bhanja's '*Labanyabati.*'[37] Here the socialite ladies are frivolous, brashly vulgar and offensively sexual unlike the sober traditional woman with her restrained sexuality. There is a changing imagery of the woman. A random mention of names of women with no individual significance, suggesting that one can be substituted for another, a homogeneous immorality and beauty and the futile attempt of all modern women to cover their ugly faces with powder, rouge and lipstick. While we encounter the struggle of the middle class for survival, we are introduced to the heartlessness of the city,

> It was Bose babu, the city's industrialist
> who rode his car and left our single storied building far behind...
> my father was in the court, my mother went to ask for a loan

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[35] Ibid., 57

[36] Ibid., 55, the worthwhile warrior helplessly appeals to Akrura and Uddhava who abandon him on realising that ultimate destruction would now come to him.

'*he Akrura he udhaba, sakha mora prana ra dosara...* ' Ibid., 61.

[37] Upendra Bhanja was an acclaimed Oriya poet and *Labanyabati* is his most celebrated poem.

'*raja*'[38] was a few days away, my brother lay in the hospital

as the forest python[39], I stood still

I withstood all, all that my body and soul inflicted on me.[40]

The sense of social insecurity comes through the loss of family, companions, religion and decline in political values. The futility of gaining independence from imperial rule is reiterated with society slipping into further cultural enslavement. The city thrusts a ruthless segregation upon people, operates in the context of absolute rationalisation of socio-economic processes where only material inequalities are recognised. Capitalism survives on the compulsion of inequality and fails to account for conditions of natural inequalities. '...competitiveness in middle class lives also introduces a particularly cruel form of well-being, where the enjoyment of affluence lies precisely in the spectacle and the enjoyment of its denial to others'[41]

While modernisation endangers cultural norms, distorts individual relationships, frustrates and disorients the youth, creates pressures on middle class and its women, causes the breakdown of the traditional family system, the poet still nurses a hope to revive the lost values of the society. Even while the poet laments the degenerate condition of modern life, as we endlessly wait for the next elections to reinstate a new life, there is a possibility to restart this journey -- from darkness, from death. This can happen through the human will to 'act' -- to create life again.[42]

It is not difficult to see in the poem the imagination of excess that has gone into the representation and portrayal of characters. Imagination affects the readership by making them fearful. More than what has already happened; the poem is a warning against the possible situation that the Oriya community might reach if the excessive enchantment with modernity continues. What gave legitimacy to this discourse on a society that was only partially modernised after all, was the increasing belief among the readership that this representation of society was going to be realised. The readership primarily consisting of the educated middle class, who had come into the new cities in search of work, and found it difficult to cope with the demands of their new occupations and changed life styles, identified with the poem. The growth of literary trends and genres closely depend upon the interaction and the correlation of the reading public and the texts. It would be unfair to say that there are traces of revivalism in this poem but there is a call

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[38] *Raja,* festival for unmarried girls, mythically signifies a time when the earth goddess menstruates.

[39] *Aranya ra ajagar*, general referent to people who withstand a lot of pain and humiliation.

[40] '*bapa thile kacheri re bou gala dhar magi...*' Ibid., 62.

[41] S. Kaviraj, op. cit., in Partha Chatterjee (ed) *Wages of Freedom*, 1998, 163.

[42] The poem ends with '*asato ma sadgamaya...*'

to stretch the past forward and retain it. We encounter this trend not only in the works of Guruprasad but also in other contemporary poems.

Though urbanisation was not widespread in Orissa and industrial development was seen in pockets, poverty was rampant and illiteracy high. We can see a resistance to modern values being articulated in literary works even before they have come to dominate society. In a lesser-known poem called '*Sahara Ra Sakala*', 'A Morning in the City,'[43] we come across a simple yet intense rejection of urban life. The city also has an alternative class of people: poor, illiterate, lower middle class, manual labourers and slum dwellers who have a significant presence. They are despised but indispensable for the city to thrive. While the rich and the middle class seethe in their immoral opulence, the lives of the poor are depicted as less hypocritical. In some senses these people 'fill' the cities and live more successfully here. The city relieves them of the exploitation and repression of the rural social structure. While it liberates them, people who traditionally formed the dominant sphere are struggling for a better life. It is the middle class, who yearns for the idyllic rural, reject the meaninglessness of urban life, and experiences this immense sense of 'loss'. So, the city for them is *pranahina*, lifeless, *murmusu*, on the verge of death, *mamatahina*, affectionless and *swapnahina*, devoid of dreams. The lifeless sun rises on concrete buildings, the radio plays bizarre film songs that disrupts the religious serenity of the morning and overwhelms the sweet music of the birds. How can individuals attain salvation in a life, which is a continuous horse race, a tumultuous competition?

In describing the city as morbid there is a resistance against the homogenisation that city-life produces, where all categories of people are thrown into similar kinds of psychological and physical trauma. Especially in *Kalapurusha* there is a suggestion towards making tradition more contemporaneous and a warning against a society merely derivative of the West. The poet does not compare this degenerate condition with any past glorious age, neither does he make any suggestion about what past should be adopted or what principles to live by if one decides against living in the present.

The Oriya Peasant and the Oriya Self

Kalapurusha poignantly reminds the readership of all that the Oriya society had 'lost' in terms of its cultural values and social relations. It also urges one to look for an 'authentic' Oriyaness, and clearly implies that it is not to be found among the city-bred middle class. Because of the nature of their form, novelists had to grapple with a more varied and complex image of social reality. If we agree with Bakhtin that for the prose

[43]Brahmotri Mohanty, *Sahara Ra Sakala*, *Jhankara* Serial 5, 1959, Orissa State Archives, 688-89

artist the world is full of other people's words,[44] the novelist had to relocate himself among competing strands of Oriyaness.

The Oriya creative writer was under pressure to respond to opposing social realities. Colonial modernity brought about major changes, one of them being the social philosophy of 'freedom', which asserted that individuals have the right to live his life fully, espousing individualism as a virtue. This was inconsistent with the basic Oriya cultural worldview for it espoused 'selfish interest' more than communitarian values. Secondly, it brought along institutional structures that would secure these rights to the individual. Traditionally, the village was the basic unit of economic organisation surviving on an indigenous division of labour, which was disrupted by modernity bringing about fundamental changes in the way traditional cultural and social values were practised. Even with a seeming enhancement of the state structures to address varied problems and the social emphasis on modern education, there was a simultaneous rise of poverty among people who could not adapt to a system revolving around education. There was growing strain on the population because identity formation was to take place on a newer basis, through new forms and means of expressions of the self. The novelists were caught in this process of transition and their work reflected the growing tensions between individual autonomy and pressures to belong to a community.

While the urban areas were representative of the dismal breakdown of authentic Oriya society due to corrupting influence of modernity, literary thinking conveyed that rural areas needed to be shielded from urban influence for they had the capacity to articulate a distinct form of Oriyaness. Any change in the lives of rural or tribal Oriyas was 'fatal' because the soul of Orissa dwelled in her villages.

The most successful novels of this period were those, which attempted to provide an authentic representation of rural Orissa. Regarded as path breakers, vehicles of social and political protest, authors writing about the village enjoyed the attention of a larger readership. These novels had a strong rural rootedness: they had elaborate physical descriptions of the villages and the characters had popular rural names. Both the print-literate rural audience and the first-generation middle class who had been uprooted from rural lives to be thrown into the 'turmoil' of urban living, identified with the contents of these novels. After years of urban living, they continued to retain strong connections with their 'roots', 'the native place' a place they idealised. The success of these narratives lay in their capacity to evoke the 'peasant' and the 'rural idyll' as socially created symbols of true Oriyaness. The connection with the village was also the most important link with the cultural past.

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[44] David Lodge, op. cit., 7.

By placing rural Orissa and rural Oriyas at the centre of the definition of Oriya identity, the Oriya novelists temporarily reversed the actual process of domination of urban culture. In these works, experience of rural living was represented as more valuable. Economically and educationally the rural people might have been subordinate but they were represented as culturally superior and leading more meaningful lives. Unlike Calcutta in Bengal, there was no one city around which the whole Oriya culture was built. Rather, there were small towns that grew around religious centres. Life organised around these centres had not completely disengaged with rural life. These narratives stirred in educated Oriyas emotions of nostalgia and lament. There was a yearning to go back to the 'peace' of the village because they were conscious of being totally entangled in a life helplessly moving towards a change over which they had no control.

The basic problem was that state and society existed in two incommensurable realms. The public sphere -- the space where state and citizens interacted, constituted of people guided by two sets of norms, partly traditional and partly modern. In this sense the public sphere, the arena of people's action and interaction sometimes existed in antagonism with the state and sometimes independent of it. The modern state took upon itself only certain social responsibilities. There were dimensions of life, social, cultural as well as religious, which from the state perspective were the sphere of the 'private'. Contrary to the institutional beliefs of the state, values which it pushed to the sphere of the private were the ones which became part of the public when they were constantly invoked in creating identity alliances, forming group solidarities and used in the articulation of the self.

Against this background, we will analyse a few Oriya novels, which were torn between the ideological belief of individual autonomy and community responsibilities. These narratives have some common motifs: they

a. were set against the background of rural Orissa
b. expressed their grievance against the rigid Hindu social order
c. depicted inhuman atrocities and the callousness of the landlords
d. portrayed subhuman conditions of the untouchables and the lower castes
e. sketched an idealistic social hero who is not totally uprooted from his traditional set up and yet selectively makes use of the modern system
f. dealt with rural debts and unemployment
g. pitched cruelty of city-life against naïve and idyllic village romance

h. portrayed the morally superior villager who stood in opposition with the degenerate morality of towns-people, especially the middle class, in spite of his educational and social backwardness.

The greatest apprehension in all the novels was about modernity's effect on the family structure. The rise of modernity drew large numbers of youth from the villages into the towns, who now enjoyed considerable freedom from the surveillance of community members. Parental influence further declined when freedom was associated with romance, when the young village youth chose his own partner on the basis of love. This was linked to the changing role of educated women in society, where there was greater opportunity to meet men of their taste. This change in the status of the woman altered the domestic interior and the original power structure within the family. There was conversely a demand that the husbands must love and respect their wives. This constituted a significant change in the understanding of marital relations. The relation between man and woman changed from being a religious obligation to an ethical one. Modernity unleashed all these threats to traditional morals simultaneously and this growing sense of autonomy was a primary artistic concern for all writers. To understand why the new generation of writers emphasised the significance of rural Oriya life we will deal with Kalindi Panigrahi's *Mati ra Manisha*, the dramas of Kali Charan Pattnaik, *Bhata,*(Rice) *Raktamati,*(Blood Stained Earth) and Ramachandra Mishra's, *Mulia,* (The Labourer), *Ghara Sansara* (The Home and the World) and *Bhai Bhauja,*(The Brother and Sister-in-law).

All the texts propagated the ideology of saving the cultural purity of the Oriya people, (*jati*) through establishment of Oriya ideals, (*adarshsa)* by upholding their moral values (*naitika mulya bodha).* Most authors were influenced by the Gandhian ideology as interpreted by the Oriya nationalists. The success of these village-based novels rested on the unquestioned acceptance of Gandhi and Gopabandhu as ideal individuals.[45] Influenced by the social reformers of the nineteenth century, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Ram Mohun Roy, these writers intended to raise Oriya consciousness to an all-India level and to move Oriya youth from a state of dormancy. They were sometimes called 'revolutionary' but, it has been said, 'they had (*biplaba)* revolution only in their voices and not in their hearts.'[46] 'They had a design about society before them, they did not want

[45] The acceptance of Gandhi was divided in Bengal. This was probably because cultivated Bengali life centred on the city of Calcutta and educated Bengalis had little respect for this half-clad villager. The literal obsession of Oriyas with rural life and traditional wisdom made Gandhi more acceptable.

[46] Raghabananda Das, in Kunjabehari Dash, (ed), *Adhunika Odia Sahitya Ra Bhoomi O Bhoomika,* Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1962. 97-120.

to throw away the past but shunned the apotheosis of it...'[47] Their argument was that there is no need to sacralize the past because if it does contain some eternal truth, it can withstand change.[48] They were opposed to industrial modernity, emphasising the 'village' as the basic unit of India and religion as the essence of its civic and public life.

All these narratives represented some common aspects of Oriya life as the basis of cultural authenticity. They emphasised the need to save the joint family from disintegration in contrast to urban life, which survived on close-knit nuclear families. The destruction of the joint family, in their view, led to the growth of self-centredness and destroyed the natural human propensity to 'share'. A second aspect was their common propensity to perceive modern education as a necessary evil. They understood the significance of the spread of education among all but also recognised that education altered the personality of individual in a basic way. Some people acquired knowledge, *(vidya)* humility through education *(siksa)* but most became inconsiderate and arrogant. It was the latter category of people in whom we notice the 'loss' of values. We will observe that certain 'characters' were invested with what the authors saw as characteristics of authentic Oriyaness and their behaviour was raised to the level of norms. Thirdly, all writers discussed two crucial modern institutions, which impinged upon the lives of the common man: the police and the judicial system -- the two immediately recognizable sources of state power. In this transition from a predominantly agricultural set-up there was a growth of two classes of people: one, to whom only agriculture made sense, who made a living out of it and another who understood the importance of agriculture but preferred the non-agricultural sector, factories and governmental jobs. The latter group constituted the middle classes who accepted modern values, in search of a better life, who were upwardly mobile but hopelessly entangled in the mesh of decomposing modernity. The peasants, who simply had a small piece of land and existed on the margins of subsistence, were the repositories of true Oriya values. The maintenance and continuance of cultural order depended on them. They celebrated the festivals, reproduced the religious order so intrinsic to Oriya life and their collective life was an authentic but un-intellectual celebration of Oriyaness. The declining religiosity of the urban educated Oriya was another major concern. Religion did not mean mere rituals; it was the string that held life together. The first sign that Oriya society was moving towards destruction is indicated when intense faith in god does not fetch any returns, when god, rendered helpless stands as a mute observer in *'kali yuga'*, the dark age. The more the relation

[47] Chittaranjan Das, op. cit., 220-221.
[48] Ibid., 221. This resonates with Richard Lannoy's opinion that 'so long as social reconstruction is founded on the ideals of the open society, whatever is valuable in the past will survive and grow.' *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society*, OUP, London, 1971, xvii.

between god and people become loose, the more mechanical and result-oriented man's relation with god becomes and more the relations in the family unravel.

Kalindi Charan Panigrahi (b.1901) was a leading member of the *Sabuja* group in Orissa[49]. In the early part of his literary career he sought to bring back romance and life into Oriya literature, which was dominated by dreary nationalist writers. His recognition as a mature writer came after the publication of his *Mati ra Manisha* that was acclaimed as a 'real Oriya story'[50]. *Mati ra Manisha* (Man of the Soil), comparable to Fakirmohan Senapati's earlier *Cha Mana Atha Guntha,* was a saga of Oriya life. He produced a triology, which described man in three successive social structures, the village, the factory and in the condition of modern alienation.

In the first few pages of *Mati ra Manisha* we are introduced to two aspects of Oriya life – first of these is the village goddess, who is the protector, ultimate arbitrator and an integral part of the large village family. The communication with the village goddess is direct and informal. People resort to her for all things, from natural calamities to marriage ceremonies, run to her when they see a nightmare or offer her the first fruit in their garden. We are then introduced to the typical peasant, Sama Pradhan, the 'illiterate' farmer, kind and sacrificing in nature, well versed with the Oriya *Bhagavata.*[51] He considers the problems of the village as his own and puts the common cause before his individual interest. In him, we observe an individual, driven by a traditional sense of the community performing his duty but with no attachment to results. Both Sama Pradhan and his wife believe that a good action, *karma* always begets good.

The next thing that strikes the reader is the need to protect the joint family. While Sama Pradhan has taken up the responsibility to arbitrate all the village's problems, his wife does a similar job at home of arbitrating between her two daughter-in-laws. In different spheres both maintain an 'order' from breaking down. The two sons and their wives are the other members in this family. The elder son, true to his father's image, is sacrificing and gentle, works as an '*amin*', an official appointed by the government to measure land. The younger, in awe of his Calcutta-returned friends wants to go there to earn a living. The typical complacency of the rural peasant mentality (almost echoing the first colonial writings on the home-bound Oriya[52]) is shown when the father dissuades his

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[49] He belonged to the '*Sabuja*', the Green Era (1921-1935), group of writers and was inspired by the *Sabuja Patra* movement in Bengali literature. He was the associate editor of *Hans*, the progressive journal in Hindi edited by Premchand. Chittaranjan Das, *Glimpse of Oriya Literature*, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, 1982, 218-219. Kalindi Panigrahi's village based novels, idealising and romanticising the rural were great successes.

[50] Surendra Mohanty, *Oriya Sahitya ra Krama Bikash*, Agraduta, Cuttack, 1978, 349.

[51] The importance of *Bhagabata* to Oriya communitarian life was popularised by Gopabandhu.

[52] See the section on colonial writings in Chapter 1.

younger son from going to Calcutta and convinces the elder to discontinue his government job. More than liberating the soul from its temptations, the modern system induces desires into people. Sama Pradhan is extremely disturbed that his son should want to earn more money, be incapable of restraining his desires (*moha)* and illusion of happiness (*maya)*. While telling his sons about the futility of their expanding aspirations, he says, 'we are people of little needs, why should we desire for more than what we require? We have tilled the land for generations now, we will never attain the joys of heaven if we abandon our plough for the pen.'[53] The village being the basic unit of economic organisation, major upheavals in the traditional occupational structure would lead to a complete over-hauling of traditional society. Resistance to modernity is indicated in other instances, when he remarks, 'where do these government servants get their pay from? They live on the earnings of the poor people who toil endlessly in the fields and factories. Buildings and government offices are stained with our blood... the blood of the poor. It is only because we are wanting in good and noble qualities to rule and control ourselves that we need the officials to reprimand us about our duties. These institutions are nothing but the curse of our ill actions, *ku-karma,* fruits of our immorality. The more sins we commit the more we would require these institutions'.[54] In the discursive space that is created by the author through the reflections of his character, there is a total rejection of the institutional necessity of the state.

The elder son, Baraju is convinced by his father's argument in favour of the old over the new, that money can buy everything except 'virtue'. Being a part of this new institutional order would make the individual more inhuman, brutal and uncompassionate. He decides to leave his government job to come back to his origins -- to till the land. In contrast to Baraju and his father, we see the sly Brahmin, Hari Mishra, who persuades the innocent younger brother against Baraju to break the cohesion of the family. The immoral modern infiltrates into the 'peace' of the rural through deviant characters like him. His appointment as Panchayat president heightens the suspicion and distrust of the illiterate and innocent peasant that the new institutional order favours corrupt people who connive against the poor. The major component of modern life is lack of faith and trust and the

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[53] Kalindi Panigrahi, *Matira Manisha,* Cuttack Student's Store, 37th ed, 1994, 21. It was derived from Hindu philosophy, *kamana ra binasa re dukha ra binasa,* in destruction of desires is pain warded off.

[54] Ibid., 23 *Matira Manisha,* is a typical depiction of a peasant family resisting this massive transformation with young men wanting to desert their traditional occupations for new ones in the cities. It portrays the conflicting attitude of two brothers, Baraju who longs to protect the joint family from breaking up and Chhakadi who yearns for a comfortable life by starting a grocery shop in the village. He falls prey to the evil arrangements of his wife and village panchayat president who hates Baraju for his popularity.

absence of a moral code, *dharma*. 'The father does not trust the son and the man does not trust his wife.'[55]

In contrast to the restrained Baraju, we have Dharama, an untouchable of the *bauri* caste who has starkly different social and moral values from the hero. He is easily instigated to violence and he threatens to kill Hari Mishra. However, he resorts to violence for a noble cause. He is aware that this act might land him in jail. This indicates that the modern judiciary is blind to 'truth'. Baraju instils into the unthinking minds of the peasants the importance of their village community, the need to be together and to fight for it. He invokes the 'power' of the peasant, one who is able to grow food on the most inaccessible barren tracts. The Brahmin, Hari Mishra and the untouchable Dharama, it is implied, are not representatives of true Oriyaness. Nevertheless, Dharama possesses greater potential to become like Baraju because of his simplicity, innocence and love for truth. The two Oriya characters in 'wanting' are contrasted with Baraju to dramatically raise his status as a true Oriya. Baraju's leaving the village resembles Rama's leaving Ayodhya to go on exile to fulfil his father's promise. He abandons everything and leaves as a '*sannyasi*'. Through the eyes of onlookers, we perceive a sense of awe for the person who deliberately shuns a settled life for one of sacrifice. This accords with the awe that devoutly religious people, Hindu or Muslim feels for *sannyasis* and *fakirs*.

Ramachandra Mishra writes in *Bhai Bhauja*, 'our society (*samaj)* is so ancient that it is absolutely impossible to replace this whole social and cultural order with a new one. Our system is open to change (*paribartan)* but not to revolution. This is the quintessence of our society and our culture.'[56]

Modernity does not adopt a single strategy to permeate the peasant society and nor does the peasantry react to it in a single manner. In *Bhai Bhauja*, we are introduced to another typical peasant story, where the rich high caste landlord cheats the innocent peasant and confiscates his land. Incapable of tolerating this injustice, Mahi drags the landlord to the village goddess, a tussle in which the landlord loses his life. Mahi, convicted of murder, goes to jail and leaves his wife and son with his younger brother. This story depicts the intense adversities to which the peasant family is subjected and the sacrifice of the wife and brother to educate the son to become a lawyer.

In the dramas of both Ramachandra Mishra and Kalicharan Pattnaik we see powerful representations of a strong peasant body as opposed to the physically weak, educated '*babu*' from the city. This powerful portrayal of the peasant declares their insubordination to the rich and high caste who paradoxically depend upon the peasant to live their life of luxury. This body is not the brute representation of power only; it can

[55] Ibid., 32.

also entice and attract women.[57] This is noticed in the clear preference of the village belle for marrying the poor peasant rather than the rich landlord's son who endlessly tries to win her favour through soaps and perfumes.

The peasant woman has a place in society that balances the male; possessing the potential power of a '*devi*', she survives all adversities. In normal times she is the passive *Sita* but switches over to *Kali* or *Durga*, during distress, especially while taking revenge. The village goddess, interestingly, has more in common with Kali or Durga, who effects quicker punishments than the chaste *Sita* or *Laksmi*. Kali is more significant as she is the embodiment of the female power principle. She epitomises the destruction of the male principle and the phallic power.[58] We come across the self-sacrificing Sita image as opposed to the modern educated town girl, selfish and self-centred and continually behind all unpleasantness. The entry of the town girl warns the reader about the disintegration likely to affect the family.[59] The first danger to the breakdown of the traditional family comes from the intrusion of the educated 'other', often an insider who accepts the life style of the outsider. There is also a mention of corrupt morality in the garb of female emancipation.[60] We are thus introduced to the contradictions of the moral world. While the peasant woman is allowed self-assertion, this comes in the form of supporting her husband who in turn supports the community. This defies the equation of liberation with autonomy emphasised by modernity. Urban women who assert their independence to satisfy their personal selves are conceived as selfish.

Parallel to the town and country dichotomy runs an opposition between material and spiritual aspects. 'The spiritual which lies within, is our true self; it is that which is genuinely essential. It followed that as long as India took care to retain the spiritual distinctiveness of its culture, it could make all the compromises and adjustments necessary to the requirements of a modern material world without losing its true identity.'[61] The rural-inner contained some aspects that were significant by its absence from the outer-city.

Tyaga, sacrifice is the commonest characteristic of all novels and this *tyaga* is done with a clear intention of keeping the family intact. *Matira Manisha* centres on the manner in which the brahmin Hari Mishra tries to break up Baraju's family pitting the naïve younger brother against the pious elder one. Baraju is shown as the ideal 'male', contemplative and unmoved. The readers encounter dramatic situations where Baraju,

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[56] Preface, *Bhai Bhauja* Sathi Prakashan, Cuttack, 1949.
[57] Ramachandra Mishra, *Bhai Bhauja*, 5.
[58] Anita Desai in Michael Parker (ed) *Post-Colonial Literatures*, St. Martins Press, New York, 1995,159.
[59] Rama Mishra's *Mulia, Ghara Sansara* and Kali Pattnaik's *Bhata* and *Raktamati.*
[60] Rama Mishra, *Mulia*, Sathi Prakashan, Cuttack, 1950, 39.

like Gandhi, tames the violent villagers with his message of love. The turning point of the story comes when Baraju decides to leave all his property to his younger brother and move out of the village with his wife and children, rather than see his parents' dream of a happy joint family fall to pieces. It is through these characteristics that the hero acquires the authority of being the true Oriya. Within the narrative frame, he resembles Rama, the pious and sacrificing Hindu God.

In *Bhai Bhauja*, distraught Mahi after being convicted of murder of the landlord goes to jail. In this narrative we encounter *tyaga* in the younger brother who vows to remain unmarried to bring up his brother's son, toil his whole life to give this child good education, apart from being a surrogate father to him. He is portrayed as Laksmana, Rama's younger brother, who rejects all comforts of life as a prince and happiness of marriage when he decides to accompany Rama to exile. We also see the remarkable restraint that he applies in his relationship to his brother's wife, which brings us to Laksmana and Sita's relationship devoid of any sexual attraction.[62] This individual suffering that both, wife and brother accept, crucially circles around the notion of self-sacrifice and a deliberate decision to subordinate personal autonomy to the greater good of maintaining family order. We are also made aware of what possibly could have happened had a similar situation occurred in the city. Full of vices, with no sense of self-control and shame, we would have probably ended up with an illicit love affair between the younger brother and the wife, flouting all sacred rules of social life, for pure personal gratification. These novels picture communitarian living as normatively central to village life. There is an implicit suggestion that individual fulfilment; the central value of modernity can be interpreted differently from self-oriented behaviour of modern individualism.

Another recurrent significant theme is the social role of the individual, either as a brother in *Mulia* and *Ghara Sansara* or as a wife and a daughter-in-law in *Bhai Bhauja, Mulia* and *Matira Manisha*. By virtue of being a part of the family, each person has a responsibility in maintaining the symmetry of the whole. This social role is invested with traditional values and presented as a norm, which cannot be transgressed. In *Mulia*, the uneducated peasant elder brother, with his wife's unfaltering support realises the need for modern education and regardless of his poverty provides for his brother's education. Similarly, the rich educated daughter of the zamindar in *Ghara Sansara*, Sharada asserts that as a Hindu woman she regards her husband's home as her heaven. The audience is constantly reminded that the care, service and sacrifice of the Hindu woman makes home the equivalent of *swarga* or heaven. This idea acquires greater significance with an

[61] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*., 121.

educated woman making the assertion. She makes an autonomous choice to belong to this inner-world preferring to identify with the traditional feminine image, where she performs the primary duty of preserving culture, rejecting the world outside of which she has been a part.

In contrast to Sharada is Binod's urban educated wife, Anima. She comes with her modern paraphernalia to establish her superiority, a dressing table and a gramophone. Her narcissistic tendencies are displayed when she replaces her dead father-in-law's photograph with a painting of her own self. Only a few days after her marriage she misses her parties and friends. She feels her freedom is curtailed in marriage. That the entire family would have to be subservient to the urban woman is shown when she neglects her ill husband and goes to meet a male friend, alone. The bizarre moral world of modern women, her lack of trust and faith, is indicated when she suspects her husband of having an affair with his brother's wife, considered equal to a mother in the traditional moral structure. In a fit of anger Anima consumes poison. Saved by Sharada, she realises her mistake and asks for forgiveness. That Anima desires to become like Sharada is not only a way of declaring the 'triumph' of one woman's identity over another but also the victory of tradition over the modern. The intricate idea of the home being a 'world' in itself is reflected here. The maintenance of orderliness at home reinforces orderliness in society: the *sansara* outside is inextricably linked to the *sansara* inside.

Gopa Choudhury[63] in *Ghara Sansara* is the idealist modern educated social reformer who agrees to marry the rich zamindar's daughter in spite of their ideological differences. While the zamindar wants to continue his control over the lives of the villagers, Gopa wants to make them aware of their political and social rights. The idealist Gopa Choudhury agrees to marry the girl not for his personal satisfaction but to save her 'dignity'.

In all our texts, every 'act', from getting married to the landlord's daughter (*Ghara Sansara),* dragging the *sahukar* to the village goddess (*Bhai Bhauja)* or subjecting oneself to conditions of material misery, to get the younger brother educated (*Mulia)* or to get married to the abandoned and pregnant lover of a self-centred *satyagrahi* (*Andha Diganta)* is performed by an individual. The enormous effect of the act is socially produced. In most cases, these acts take place in the presence of a mute audience and the inability of any group member to react to this trial situation raises the protagonist to the status of the natural representative of the group. These acts are often expositions of ideal

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[62] A *bhauja,* elder brother's wife, is not necessarily a woman who is desired.

[63] *Ghara Sansara* is another example of an ideal rural society with an educated idealist protagonist. Gopa Choudhury's decision to return to the village is an indication that there is something valuable in the village that has to be preserved from desecration. His idealism is heightened when he agrees to marry Sharada, an example of genuine Oriya womanhood.

'norms' that the group needs to abide by for the maintenance of social order. The definition of a high-minded individuality comes through the protagonist's relation to members of his family, group or community.

In many cases, these novels reflect on the nature of justice. The village goddess is the highest court of appeal in the traditional system. When Mahi *(Bhai Bhauja)* drags the *sahukar,* who has cheated him through manipulating his thumb impression, to the feet of the village deity, he has full faith in getting justice. The utility of the modern judicial system is not taken into consideration and is regarded as the preserve of the 'manipulative' rich and educated classes to further oppress the poor. Moreover, fallible human beings render justice in the courts; god stands witness to the poor and gives the final judgement. When the goddess fails to dispense justice to Mahi, the failure is attributed to the evils of modern age where even gods are rendered powerless.

While the modern institutional sphere acts against the interests of the poor, there is the occasional sympathetic and philanthropic judge who discerns the exploitative designs of the rich but is unable to do anything because he forms a part of the structure that does not take into account the 'truth' but only the 'proof'. He is as helpless as the goddess who understands but is incapable to act in favour of the oppressed. These qualities raise the judge to the position of an ideal educated Oriya individual who understands the difference between the two worldviews but is constantly pulled in different directions. He sympathises with the traditional system essentially because of its innocence and simplicity and the modern system of which he is a part by virtue of his education. He strikes a balance by inculcating into his daughter both values, 'the ideal woman is a combination of Sita and Savitri and yet, who, unlike the common educated girl, does not depend on her husband to see her through times good and bad'.[64]

The other significant difference between the educated middle class and the uneducated poor is the negotiable honour *(izzat)* of the rich and the uncompromising values and morality of the rural poor.[65] The distrust in the city-people is heightened when in *Mulia,* the sacrificing elder brother comes to meet his younger brother, living in the judge's house, and is shooed away by the judge's wife for being uncouth and rustic. He is ashamed that he is the brother of an educated man.

Kalicharan Pattnaik (1897-1978) was the first acclaimed Oriya dramatist who moved away from the tradition of writing religious and historical drama and concentrated on social issues. He was also an eminent actor and director. For his distinguished command over Odissi music, he was honoured as 'Kabichandra' in 1926.

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[64] Ramachandra Mishra, *Bhai Bhauja,* 80

[65] "You *badalok,*" (used interchangeably for rich and educated) "In your eyes money is ultimate, to us our *izzat* is most important". Ibid., 78.

Pattnaik's drama *Bhata* (Rice), 1944, was staged for 108 evenings consecutively in Cuttack. In the preface he writes, 'there have been all kinds of people, from all regions, Jajpur, Kendrapada, the *Cuttack Majdoor Sangh* (Cuttack Labour Organisation) who have encouraged me and counted me as their comrades. I am poor, I am not able to treat you with any delicacy, but all I can lay for you is plain rice, life of so many millions'. Sarala Devi, a noted poet of Orissa, wrote in 1945, 'it is my belief that *Bhata* announces a new Orissa into being on the basis of new ideals. There is great power in his pen and with that he can resurrect the fallen destiny of the poor Oriyas, exploited by nature and human beings.' *Bhata* was sometimes criticised as an imitation of the Hindi play, '*Roti*'. Written against the colonial rulers, it was first staged in 1945 and was regarded as a revolutionary drama. It depicts the typical village situation: a peasant's story who works as a bonded labourer, his earnings appropriated by the landlord. Unable to pay off his debts he is taken to the court, the technicality of which is beyond his comprehension.

This narrative depicts a society in transition, the unworkable traditional social order on the verge of collapse and the apprehensions about the new social order centred on the changing administrative and political system. The distinctness of this story lies in its suggestion to completely dismantle the feudal order and build on its ruin a new order favourable to the poor peasant but without taking the recourse of revolution. Instead, there is an attempt to solve the problem through dialogue, by convincing members of the ruling class to take an interest in and to understand the problems of the poor. Jay, the landlord's educated son, introduced to liberal values realises that social discrimination is the basis of class antagonism and returns to the village with an intention to change the system. His poor but educated friend Ananta further sensitises him to the problems of the peasantry.

Disturbed by the irredeemable situation of the poor, compassionate Jay constantly persuades his haughty sister to empathise with the poor. She is portrayed as a typical rich girl, English educated, attracted to the frills of modern life, good clothes, cinema and theatre. On one occasion, while being persuaded by his sister to go for a play, Jay says 'I do not dislike theatre, I realise that it gives the nation, race and language a richness -- a life. But the Oriyas today are in need of food for basic sustenance of national life.'[66] There is a rejection of cultural attributes normally used in earlier Oriya literature to invoke a community's identity. This narrative places marginal people as central to cultural definition. The inclusion of the peasant, the voiceless, powerless and the hitherto history-less in the definition of the *jati* is not merely a political act; there is a need to include their experiences in the body of literature because their contribution to society is equal to that of the others. Class differences are first

[66] Kali Pattnaik, 'Bhata' , *Kabichandra Granthavali*, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1973, 14.

dissolved at an individual level when Jay makes a conscious decision to marry a peasant girl. However, once the romance between the rich boy and peasant girl becomes the central narrative issue, the author successfully distracts the attention of the reader from the real issues of class.

Both Kali Pattnaik's dramas *Bhata* and *Rakta Mati* are narratives about assertion of group autonomy. In earlier literature, the writers mainly concentrated on individual acts that ventilate the grievance of underprivileged groups. Though the protesting individual normally belongs to the oppressed section, this act comes in a non-representational form and has the potential to be interpreted in two ways. Either the reader perceives this 'act' as an individual act of protest or as an act on behalf of the whole group. Though the suggestion that the oppressed group has oppositional interests is clear, group autonomy is asserted through individual acts. These individual acts of protest often occur once in the narrative and do not explicitly declare group autonomy. They are not portrayed as political events but appeal to the reader on humanitarian grounds. In both, *Bhata* and *Raktamati*, by contrast, the manifestation of oppositional interest is pronounced through 'group acts' of disapproval. Such acts of resentment are 'recurrent' in the narrative, constantly stirring in the reader the need to recognise assertion of the group as a collective agent.

In another drama, *Raktamati* (Blood Stained Earth), 1947, Kali Pattnaik, enraged by the present state of politics and its indifference to the masses, tries to highlight individual dignity and self-respect of the oppressed groups through the idea of 'revolution'. *Raktamati* moves from the idyllic village situation to the town where a mill is being set up. The person who owns the mill is an 'outsider', and the resentment of the local people is immediately evident: 'as if the people of this place are incapable of any intellectual and economic endeavour and are cursed to do menial jobs all their life.'[67] The play utilises the medium of drama and performance to popularise the message of equality. The hero Bijay, has hired a female singer to attract the attention of the people and spread the message of equality among all. The rebel character Bijay is a deviation from the mainstream Oriya hero. Far from being guided by the notions *satya, dharma, karma*, he uses a woman to propagate his views. According to him, 'the success of any business, literature or *bidi*, depends upon the woman model who advertises for it.'[68] Though he recognises that he is possibly misusing the image of the woman as a pleasure object, he believes that spreading the message of revolution is politically very crucial.

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[67] Kali Patnaik, *Raktamati* op.cit.,1973, 141.

[68] Ibid., 148.

There is a movement away from the Gandhian philosophy when he says that since the people have degenerate morals one has to suit their tastes to initiate change. He is dismissed as a romantic charlatan by the middle-class aspirants -- as somebody indifferent to prosperity that industrialisation would bring to the peasants. He is unable to see the advantages of new money, the entrepreneurial riches and the good that they will do to the working class in the form of wages and the eventual change in their rights and status. Bijay is hopeful that the rich would have to answer for their exploitation some day.

A major aspect of the play is its discussion on the problems of being a Hindu. Only in this religion are people divided on the basis of castes, where a lower caste, treated as less than human, is forever doomed to the life of a servitor. There is also the establishment of vocational training centres that attract new and adventurous minds to help the underprivileged realise and assert their rights and autonomy. Lata, the untouchable girl who accompanies Bijay as a performer to collect money for the philanthropic cause leaves her father to remain with Bijay. Both of them leave the village, failing to bring about any change in the attitude of the people to the ill effects of modernisation.

The failure of Bijay's revolutionary movement established a particular image of the true Oriya. Had Kali Pattnaik granted success to Bijay, he would have created a 'deviant' or a parallel Oriya hero. Deviation in Bijay's character was allowed to the extent where there was no risk of Bijay replacing the authentic Oriya protagonist. Between his two dramas, *Bhata* was an outstanding success, probably because the representation of Jay's character was more in conformity to the Oriya stereotype than that of Bijay.

The modern democratic state was seen to protect the beliefs and values of its citizens and integrate their competing national and sub national identities.[69] It implicitly propagated a value system encouraging individual freedom that stood in potential opposition to the traditional social structure. By establishing one 'order', the modern state appeared as incapable of understanding the qualitative differences between the problems of various sections in society.

The immense popularity that these novels enjoyed also meant that values espoused in the narratives were seen as legitimate. Those novels, which addressed a public audience successfully, invoked the private world of values. This opened up a new discursive space, bringing about major changes in the public expression of cultural values and a new ideological meaning given to them. This literary sphere, essentially

public in nature, created an alternative to other public institutions because in symbolic terms it united all categories of people, the middle class, the town people and the rural peasants. This served the purpose of smoothening social ruptures and distracting the social mood from any kind of reformism. In Jameson's term, 'a symbolic act is affirmed as a genuine act, albeit at the symbolic level, while it is registered as an act which is merely symbolic, its resolutions which leave the real untouched...'[70] These texts diffused the confrontational possibility between social groups. There was an invocation of identity essentially woven around cultural values. The rhetoric was to organise Oriya society around the traditional. Through them, traditional values got a new lease of life in the post-colonial period.

In all the narratives discussed above there is a common strand declaring the peasant as insubordinate to the city *babu*, both in terms of cultural authenticity and moral values. Baraju (*Matira Manisha*) Mahi (*Bhai Bhauja*) the elder brother in (*Mulia*) Nidhi Das (*Andha Diganta*), belong to the peasant community. All are victimised by the 'cunning' of the city- people but are worthy of being heroes, because they possess those values which clearly demarcate them as authentic Oriyas who are capable of self-sacrifice, *tyaga*, responsible towards their families and community and able to submerge their individual interest in that of the larger whole. They exercise self-restraint till they are exploited beyond human toleration, when they are compelled to react in a manner, which is in conflict with their own selves. Their characters are contrasted with people who have abandoned their traditional moral values either for petty monetary gains or for a comfortable living. In giving up these basic values, the latter have not merely given up their individual dignity but have disgraced their whole community. By reposing this individual plus community dignity in the rural peasant, the authors univocally emphasise the cultural richness of peasant life.

In all the narratives, the protagonists fight for 'truth', *satya* and believe in *dharma,* qualities significantly absent in the lives of the city-people. City dwellers are swallowed by the dark values of modernism, live a life of deceit and contempt. The rural and peasant heroes emphasise karma that is closely associated with the concept of justice and maintenance of social order. In *Matira Manisha*, the hero's father says that these modern institutions are a result of our *ku-karma* or bad actions. Mahi (*Bhai Bahuja*) drags the exploitative zamindar to the feet of the village goddess, fully confident that she will

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[69] Sandria Freitag, 'Contesting in Public', in *Contesting the Nation*, (ed.) David Ludden, Philadelphia, 1996.

[70] Reflects the eternal problematic relationship between the text and reality, the symbolic and real. Federic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious ,Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Routledge, London, 1996, 81. William Dowling, '*An Introduction to Political Unconcious* , Methuen, London, 1984, 122

render justice to him by exposing the *ku-karma* of the exploitative zamindar and save other innocent peasants from falling into a similar situation. Nidhi Das, (*Andha Diganta*) accepts the abandoned and pregnant lover of Sudhodan thinking that this act of saving the woman from dishonour and humiliation is in conformation with his idealistic principles. These individual acts of assertion are not carried out for individual benefit but save the social order from collapsing.

However, the irony is that these noble principles are no longer effective in a world mostly inhabited by people of bad *karma*. In all the stories traditional values are put through deeply adverse conditions till they are reinstated at the end as permanent. Initially, seemingly, these noble principles fail. Baraju fails to protect his joint family from breaking up, Mahi goes to jail on charges of murder even without committing the act and the elder brother in *Mulia*, lives in abject penury to give his brother good education. In Andha *Diganta*, a truthful *satyagrahi* is betrayed by his fellow *satyagrahis* (who gained access to material benefits on the basis of sycophancy, especially Sudhodan who becomes the chief minister after committing the grossest of immoral acts) and for life carries the stigma of being a 'naxal'. The idealisation of suffering is pivotal to raising the moral status of the protagonist. But almost every narrative ends with the victory of *satya* over *asatya*, when the inauthentic Oriyas are made to see their value-less, meaningless lives.

But, there is another aspect to all the narratives. Not all educated people living in the cities are condemned. Clearly there are people who understand both worldviews adequately and sympathise with the authentic Oriya viewpoint. The judge in *Bhai Bhauja* knows that Mahi has been cheated and is yet unable to act in his favour because of lack of proof. He eventually brings the convict to his own house and gives him shelter. In *Andha Diganta*, we have the journalist, who is a lone crusader in ascertaining the generous and unselfish character of Nidhi Das. In *Bhata*, we have Jay, the philanthropic rich son of the landlord who is deeply disturbed by the poverty of the peasant but does not fail to notice their moral integrity. He fights against his own father for the rights of the poor and transgresses his social position by deciding to marry a poor peasant woman. These characters are perceived as authentic because they retain the basic Oriya characteristics even though they are, in terms of class, on the other side of the divide.

The single dominating feature of all the above-mentioned narratives can be put under what Bakhtin calls the 'the novel of ordeal'. All the texts are 'constructed as series of tests of the main heroes, tests of their fidelity, virtue, nobility, sanctity and so on...'[71]

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[71] M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*, (trans), Vern W. McGee, (ed) Caryl Emerson, Michael Holoquist, University of Texas Press, Austin 1994, 'The Bildungsroman and its Significance', 11

He is presented as complete and unchanging, emerges out the worst trial unscathed. The world simply tests the hero but is incapable of changing him. His character has an ideological content and unlike the hero of Bakhtin's 'novel of ordeal', does try to change the face of the world. In *Mulia*, as the novel progresses, the reader realises that it vindicates the innocence and virtue of the hero, 'the novel is transformed into the court of law for the hero'.[72] However, the crux of the rural novels is the 'heroization of the weak, the heroization of the little man.'[73] They were essentially treated as innocent and technically not equipped to compete with the cunning and manipulative skills of the educated towns people. But narratively, they and the values they embody triumph in the end. Though the rural population was not untouched by the impact of modernisation, the social and cultural institutions withstood the impact heroically.

The peasant's definition of autonomy is different from the individualist conceptions of the city people. He declares his autonomy by holding on to traditional values in the face of modernity. To him, autonomy as a principle of individual satisfaction central to modernity is irrelevant. To extend the argument of autonomy to women was problematic as these novels showed because even middle class Oriya women were unable to break away from traditional roles. The peasant woman was more self-assertive but her assertion was essentially in the form of supporting her husband. This 'autonomous' behaviour of self-assertion defies the autonomy project of modernity.

The Ideal Oriya Woman: *Sasti, Jhanja, Danapani*

There is a substantial amount of social science scholarship in India that analyses the location of women as a subordinate category in the cultural life of a community. Their analysis has focused on two aspects, 'the idea of simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality', and on the crucial role of the hegemonic state in circumscribing their daily lives and their survival struggles.[74]

Women's movements in India emerged in the context of anti-colonial nationalism and in relation to other struggles. Colonial institutions played a significant role in transforming indigenous patriarchies. Chandra Talapade argues that there is a complex 'relationality' that shapes the social and political lives of women. Relations of power cannot be merely reduced to the male oppressor and woman-oppressed; there are multiple structures of domination, which interact to locate women differently at particular historical conjunctures.

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[72] Ibid., 12
[73] Ibid., 14

[74] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, (ed) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1991, 10.

Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid in *Recasting Women* analyse the nature of the social and cultural processes, which determine the working of patriarchies in the daily lives of women.[75] Their work draws on Partha Chatterjee's argument, which discusses the creation of distinct private and public spheres in the lives of the Indian middle class, which was particularly instrumental in consolidating certain constructions of womanhood. Empowerment of women in the early twentieth century was closely linked to the womanhood propagated by the middle class and inextricably tied to national regeneration.

Issues of women and constructions of womanhood are inseparable from the issues of nationalism and remain central to any analysis on culture and politics of a community. The centrality of women has to do with women both as 'subjects' and 'agents' of social transformation. The general perception about the repression of women has led modern social scientists to raise the question of gender both as a political issue and category of analysis.[76] They figure as important signifiers of differences between groups. Nationalists, because of their relative isolation from public life, regard women as custodians of cultural identity. With the coming of western democratic principles of equality and freedom, it became difficult to confine the role of women only to the private domain. Greater social emancipation of women clearly needed a reconstitution of community identity and the reorientation of the relation of women to the community. Any attempt to assist women to overcome their subalternity must refer to the changes in spheres of marriage and sexuality. Since definitions of community identity emerge in particular historical contexts and change with changing social and material circumstances, the representation of women in literature is open to constant renegotiation and reformulation. Nationalist, mainstream and left writings represented Oriya women in distinct ways, which led in each case, to a reconfiguration of their relation to the community.

Under these circumstances any attempt to define community identity also involved a re-description of women. As everywhere else in India, it was the middle class, which undertook reforms on behalf of women in Orissa. The middle class in Orissa which was composed of the urban professional and trading classes, small landholders and village literati, developed the ideologies of Indian Hindu womanhood in contradistinction to

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[75] Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Women*: essays in Indian colonial history, 1990, OUP, Delhi.

[76] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan's edited essays on 'Gender in the Making: Indian Contexts' in *Thamyris* relates gender issues to the process of nation making; their role in the political process, their identity as citizen subjects, their legal entitlements etc. Sumathi Ramaswamy's essay in the same collection 'Virgin Mother, Beloved Other', envisages a nationalism that consolidates identity in linguistic terms where Tamil language was feminised as a new mother who would come to rule all Tamil-speaking homes: disciplined but compassionate, educated but modest and feminine, respectable, virtuous and chaste. 9-39 Also see Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language and Devotion in Tamil India*, Berkeley, 1997.

norms prevalent among other classes and in opposition to the images of the Westernised woman.

Apart from nationalist struggles and religious reform, the historical context in which the Indian feminist struggles arose was a situation where the middle class consolidated itself to take over as rulers.[77] The middle class ideology of pure womanhood came to dominate the culture of the nationalist movement. This had deep significance for the way both Oriya nationalist writers, who were devout followers of Gandhi, and mainstream writers represented women in their literary work. As Partha Chatterjee argues, 'in the entire phase of the national struggle, the crucial need was to protect, preserve and strengthen the inner core of the national culture, its spiritual essence'.[78] The family and the women were nurturers of these traditions. Further, the new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honour of a new responsibility, and by associating the task of female subordination with historical growth of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new yet entirely legitimate subordination.

Mainstream literature depicted women in very standard ways. Though it is a logical expectation that women novelists would represent a distinctive sensibility, primarily because their experience of social reality was different, women writers are victims of social ideologies about their own status.[79] Sangari and Vaid argue that patriarchy shapes womens' entry into the public sphere and their self-constitution, and women writers are equally caught up in these ideological visions of their male counter parts. It can be argued that Kuntala Kumari Sabat, the pioneer among Oriya women writers, was caught in a similar predicament. While her literary articulations gave women greater literary distinctiveness, she concentrated on standard themes like the Oriya nation, the brave Oriya peasant, the historical race on the verge of death. Her women characters could not break out of these archetypes.[80]

Literary writers see the first ill effect of modernism in the changes in attitudes of women and the consequences of their inclusion into public life. This section will discuss the women characters of Kanhu Charan Mohanty's[81] novels *Sasti* (1947) and *Jhanja*

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[77] Sangari and Vaid, 1990, op.cit.,Introduction.

[78] Partha Chatterjee, 1994, op. cit., Introduction.

[79] Susie Tharu, K.Lalitha, *Women's Writing in India*, Vol II, Harper and Collins, London, 1993, 38. They argue that at particular historical conjunctures women have responded to historical developments differently. I agree with them that though 'women writers may not be exempt from the ideologies that shape their worlds but it does not follow that women writings do not warrant separate attention.'

[80] For a more detailed account of Kuntala Kumari's writings, see, Pragati Mahapatra's chapter specifically devoted to this author. Pragati Mahapatra, *The Making of a Cultural Identity: Language Literature and Gender in Orissa*, SOAS, 1997.

[81] Kanhu Charan Mohanty (1907) was born in Nagabali village of Cuttack district. After completing his education in Cuttack, he joined as a clerk in a government department. He is one of the most prolific Oriya novelists and has produced more than fifty novels during his life. He was

(1950) and Gopinath Mohanty's *Danapani* (1955). Apart from exclusively focusing on these novels, we will try to decipher a general trend in the literary portrayal of women in Oriya literature. The characters of Dhobi in *Sasti*, Kshanaprabha in *Jhanja* and Sarojini in *Danapani* are partly representations and partly deviations from the ideal stereotype of the Oriya woman. They constitute both elements because they alternatively exhibit tendencies of conformism and deviation. In their social representations, these women characters not only assert their individual selves but also through these acts of individual assertion, carry forward the project of group autonomy. Though the personal trajectory of each character is different, they all belong to a type because they espouse a breaking away from tradition. They are represented as doing unconventional and unprecedented things and in their celebration of individuality; these characters not only deviate from the accepted norms of the society but also threaten the symmetry of contemporary social order. While women discussed in the section on peasants are authentic representations of Oriyaness, they are not placed in complex situations to undergo a test of authenticity. The opening of the educational opportunities to women gave them entry into a sphere, which was till then dominated by men. As Partha Chatterjee argues, 'The woman standing as a sign for the nation, the spiritual qualities of self sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity.... this spirituality facilitated her moving out of the physical confines of her house... in fact her image as a goddess or mother served her to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home'[82]

Sasti, a social novel, is set in the background of a famine. Apart from writing a novelistic history of the Oriya past, the author of the novel also sensitised the readers to the famine situation. Set in a remote background, this novel addressed major social issues, especially widow remarriage. Kanhucharan's novels have acquired high value because the portrayals of his female characters are particularly powerful and effective.[83] The social forces and exploitation that act upon the woman give her a deeper experience and there is an implicit reference to the woman as *adi-sakti*, the primordial power of nature.

Sasti starts with the hero's father, who belongs to a higher caste, refusing to give his son in marriage to Dhobi who comes from a more affluent family. Dhobi's father takes offence and does not help the hero's family during the famine and even usurps the little property that they have. Distraught, his whole family leaves the village. Dhobi is married into another landed family. The story begins with Sania, the hero, returning to his

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awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *Ka*. His novels were characteristic for having strong reformistic statements and powerful women as their central characters.

[82] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments,* 131

[83] Janaki Ballabh Mohanty, *Odia Upanyasa O Sasti*, Binod Behari, Cuttack, 1968. 26

village hoping to retrieve his land, finding all his family members dead, and Dhobi returning to her father's house, widowed.

Dhobi, the young widow, is the protagonist of the novel and stands the test of all adversities to retain her purity, conforming to the Oriya feminine stereotype. Juxtaposed to the character of Dhobi as a true representation of Oriyaness, there are transgressions of the other subordinate characters and even that of the hero, which serve to emphasise Dhobi's total commitment to the normative ideal. These sub-characters and their behaviour are aesthetic methods through which the author emphasises the heroine's value.

At the peripheral level, the author makes a lot of reformist moves. He gets the hero to marry a woman, who can give no account of her past, has no caste and is mentally deranged. This marriage is one of frustration, desperation, hurt and anger because of rejection. The hero abandons social prescriptions when he makes no qualms of residing with Christians and Muslims, starts a shelter home for the downtrodden, the outcast and those treated as pariah. We have numerous scenes when he is 'specifically' seen accepting food from them. But in spite of this, he keeps his *jati* intact by not sharing their food. The frustration and humiliation he experiences after being rejected for marriage 'liberates' him from social norms and only then does he begin eating with people of all castes and religions.[84] It is only after the rejection that the reader understands that Sania conformed to some social rules with the hope that Dhobi would agree to marry him one day.

The author teases the imagination of the readership but does not commit himself to anything significantly unacceptable. There is a continual idealisation of the situation of suffering because suffering and acute self-denial to the point of self-destruction have deep cultural significance. Suffering not only ennobles the character of Dhobi but also imparts to her a persuasive authenticity.

The character of Dhobi is a typical example of how the author attempts to reconcile individual and group autonomy. Dhobi does a number of unconventional things and in these acts she is a representative of the subordinate woman community, contesting the restrictions imposed upon women. In all such instances Dhobi stands in potential conflict with the ideal construction of the Oriya woman. A widow, she transcends all limits to help her childhood lover, Sania, to regain caste. Sania realises that he is not accepted in the village community because he had eaten in the communal dining system, *'chatar'* organised by the government, during the famine.[85] To help him regain his caste,

[84] I am liberated today, from the dictates of society...all these days I have just worn the mask that the society wanted me wear and I have danced to the tunes of people...128

[85] The government set up these communal eating-places and the cooks were believed to be socially and religiously impure.

which involved an expensive ritual process, she secretly offers him her jewellery[86]. She disregards social sanctions when she goes to meet Sania in intensely romantic situations.

Dhobi is not portrayed as a passive woman. She is capable of taking decisions. The author tries to articulate his social commitment to women's freedom through her decisions. Dhobi's place in the social/ public world is well secure; her potential sexuality is never highlighted. She enters into the 'world' so long occupied by men, does all that was done by her husband. There is a specific mention of her entry into the 'sitting room' from where her husband conducted his business affairs; she sits there dressed like a *sanyasin*, casting off her shame.[87] To the poor and landless, she is a *'devi'*. She understands and sympathises with their condition, returns land that her *zamindar* husband and father-in-law had kept as mortgage during their times of need.[88] She even perceives the complexity behind the maintenance of social hierarchy. Though all human beings are essentially equal and have the right to be treated equally, it is necessary to maintain these caste divisions in society. If all people were to be happy, if all were to be rich then there would be no concern for the difference between good and evil, religion and irreligion, pure and impure, people would eventually forget the necessity to do good. To maintain this social order and discipline in society it is necessary to have these differences among people.[89] Her individual autonomy in the story is heightened as her involvement with things public increases. Dhobi has built temples, opened shelter homes for the poor, feeds the hungry; she helps to build houses for people who have been declared social outcasts.[90]

The author liberates Dhobi in her thoughts; she 'thinks' her real feelings: the way a young woman would desire her lover. She is made to deviate from the social norm in a number of instances, especially when she comes to meet Sania alone because she nurtures feelings of intense love for him, a love she deliberately tries to keep unfulfilled. In her thoughts she lives a more liminal existence shuttling between two worlds of human desire and social denial.[91] The quality of the novel would have been substantially impoverished had these instances of denied-love not been represented. These situations provide power to the character of Dhobi. Her love for Sania is devoid of lowly physical passions, an ideal love in this ideological world. In shaping Dhobi's thoughts and actions, the author succeeds in setting the boundaries of 'immorality'. He allows deviation to the extent that it stops the character from committing the 'real act of transgression' of marrying Sania.

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[86] This offering of jewellery is a cultural symbol of sacrifice on part of women, normally made to the husband, while the family undergoes severe adversities. That Dhobi decides to part with it to save Sania is not an act of conformism.
[87] Kanhu Mohanty, *Sasti,* 96
[88] Ibid., 97.
[89] Ibid., 103
[90] Ibid., 109.
[91] Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*, OUP,Delhi,1995, 4.

The reader feels her self-assertion in situations where Dhobi questions the norms that she is subjected to because she is a woman. Through these instances the author questions the social order that keeps the woman subordinate. But these are feelings that she immediately regrets having, and are counterbalanced by the shame that she experiences, the torture she puts herself through to deny herself the pleasures of life[92] and her ultimate death. Had the author granted Dhobi the freedom to trespass these norms, it would have amounted to a challenge to nationalist cultural norms and its ideals of femininity.

The author allows his character to think more passionately than she acts. She thinks unconventionally but acts conventionally. He introduces to the readership the various possibilities of a relationship, the possible trajectories of social life but with no thought carried to its actual realisation.[93] So, Dhobi lets her defences down and admits her love for Sania, but this happens in the form of confession to god. This very admission of her feeling to god gives a dimension of 'purity', of feeling and of her self. Only in her thoughts do we notice her rebelliousness against her father's arbitrary decision for her marriage. In one scene, she is unable to decide to whom she owes her loyalty, the man she had loved or the man she had married under compulsion.[94] Such dilemmas at the level of thought give legitimacy to the novel as a narrative that has symptoms of reform but where the roots remained undisturbed.

Realistically, throughout the novel, Dhobi is seen as an innocent, conscientious and compassionate lover. Her compassion and practicality are the outcome of her difficult life. She moves in this shadow of pain, which makes the reader feel that the uncompassionate society has failed to understand her. Her dreams are destroyed in this heartless society. The peripheral women characters lack the elegance of Dhobi, which instantly disqualify them as true Oriya women. Contrarily Dhobi is represented as extremely restrained and goes through the ordeal with acts of 'heroism', emerging unchanged from the hardships of life. Dhobi does not acquire her idealness through self-assertions but by acts of conformity. Her true Oriyaness is reflected in the lifestyle of the widow that she so passionately holds on to; 'her *puja*, the fasts that she keeps, her

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[92] When emaciated Sania tells her that if at all he wants to live he wants to live for her, Dhobi feels *bhaya*, fear, *lajja*, shame and *ghrina* hate, for her own self. She hates the thought that somebody can desire her, a widow. Kanhu Mohanty, *Sasti*, Friends Publications, Cuttack, 14th ed, 1995, 30

[93] In this scene, the passage does not enact an independent event but simply illustrates the kind of thinking going on in her mind. This, as Seymour Chatman says, is the usual means of summarising in contemporary fiction by letting the characters do it themselves, either in their minds or through dialogue. But such passages are not summaries. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1978, 76

[94] *Sasti*, 124.

husband who continues to hold a supreme place in her mind, her relentless devotion to god, *ishwar nistha*, etc.'[95]

Apart from the novelist's own implicit acceptance of the traditional practices, academic discussions of the novel also celebrate the characteristics that the novel so successfully portrays. A lot of care is taken to highlight the 'purity' of Dhobi as a widow. Sania goes to meet her in her lonely house in the rain. It is an extremely tense moment both for the text and the reader. This is a narrative situation, which can force the narrative to move in one or two more possible paths. If she accepts Sania's proposal for marriage she fails to live up to the expectation of her readership and if she denies she furthers her pain but has the support of her audience. Moreover, 'unfulfilled love has higher value and mythic motif in India -- the perpetual '*viraha*' of Radha from Krishna.'[96] There is a continuous celebration of this 'heroic' trait in Dhobi, as selfless and calm. To end the story with Dhobi's death somehow declares the finality of the narrative, which leaves no possibilities for the readers' imagination. No end in reality is final the way it is in a novel or a film; it concludes a point of view, the author's point of view.[97]

Oriya critics regard Kanhucharan Mohanty as a novelist who believes in destiny (*bhagyabad)* and the power of the 'unseen' (*adrushtabad)*. Though his work deals with all the temporal and politically generative issues like inter-caste love and marriage, widow re-marriage, intermixing between various castes, toleration among religions, the main protagonist of his major novel retains her social purity and is eventually valued for that. The sympathetic treatment of a social problem stopped short of a drastic solution because he could not afford to shock the sensibility of his middle class readership. But we can also say that the author is 'torn between the urges of a sensitive artist and a moralist and ultimately tilts in favour of the moralist position rather than creating a social impact.'[98] To relieve himself from his guilt he gets Sania's younger sister married to an untouchable and the hero to a defiled woman but does not allow his central protagonist to commit 'the' act of deviation. Janaki Ballabh Mohanty writes, 'the novelist is extremely 'culture conscious'; to reform the society was his main aim because he has touched upon all issues that were bothering society. Humanism is his ideal.'[99]

The other Kanhu Mohanty novel, which has a powerful presence of a woman, is '*Jhanja*'. In this novel we move from the village girl to the educated girl of the town, Kshanaprabha. As in *Sasti,* we also find in it a dualism -- between the need for social

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[95] Janaki Ballabh Mohanty, op. cit., pp 53-55

[96] Meenakshi Mukherji, op. cit., 104 -105.
[97] Seymour Chatman, op. cit., 47
[98] Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present,* OUP, Delhi, 1994,.101,.
[99] Jhanja, 93.

conformism and assertion. Yet there is a significant difference in the way in which the two feminine types are perceived. Kshanaprabha, representing the ideal educated Oriya middle class woman, celebrates her individuality without deviating from the authentic Oriya woman. The circumstances under which she demonstrates her purity are different.

There is no single protagonist in this novel. There is the rich but benevolent Dushmant who has committed his life and wealth to the development of the poor. In his view, the development of the poor should be brought about through institutions and associations, by creation of educational facilities, shelter homes and old age homes. For this, he seeks the help of his friend, Tusharkanti and his wife, Kshanaprabha. Tusharkanti, an employee of the Orissa government, was forced to leave his job after being blinded by a bout of small pox and Kshyanaprabha had rejected Dushmant's love to marry his friend. Not only does Dushmant want their help in his work but offers them to shift into his house and stay with him and his mother.

We are introduced to Kshanaprabha's individuality when she makes a conscious choice to marry Tusharkanti, a mere government servant, who belongs to the modest and respectable middle class, accepting a life fraught with misery, continuous toil and relative poverty rather than marry rich Dushmant. Her relationship with her husband emphasises the modern companionate character of marital bonding that thrives on mutual respect and trust. It is only by making this choice that the character will undergo the real test of womanhood, of successfully complying with feminine ideals of *tyaga*. Yet again a conscious acceptance of suffering is idealised.

Compared to Dhobi, Kshanaprabha's consciousness has evolved through greater exposure to situations outside the home, by meeting people and a college education. But there is a latent conflict between her self, family and her socialisation process. She is portrayed as a self-conscious modern woman, with great self-respect, independent minded who, even under pressure, asserts her individuality. Conforming to the ideals of both a true Hindu woman and a modern educated one, she shares the burden of the household, decides to help her blind husband by finding herself a job. Even in her poverty what is evident was the 'pure woman', committed to her husband, her family and leading a life of self-respect.[100] Prabha is the first to object to Dushmant's invitation and does not want to trade the peace of her simple home with the complex life of the rich. She fears the loss of her social identity if she accepts his invitation. She understands the need to maintain the difference between the two classes, the affluent and the struggling middle class, the former associated with a frivolous lifestyle and the later with restraint and respectability.

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[100] Ibid., 86. She burnt the flame of 'purity' even in her poverty.

Social conformism in Prabha's character is not manifest because all its features appear in the form of acts of individual self-assertion. Though she lives a more public life than Dhobi, she does not experience liberation in the kind of job she does. Even while she dedicates her life to active social service, she is only granted responsibility that she can do successfully by virtue of being a woman. She is given the charge of an old age home and a school for orphans, work that a woman is instinctively endowed to do well. She executes the important task of fund raising for organisational work, because 'a woman is never refused monetary help,'[101] She finds it offensive to request rich people and convince them about their purpose, who often comply to her request because of her charm not for the cause. In the representation of Kshanaprabha we sense this poignant difficulty. She is forced to function in the world outside while her heart is in the confines of her home.[102]

The author's dilemma about how to reconcile individual freedom and the need to conform to communitarian values becomes explicit when he is unable to grant the character of Prabha any distinctive identity. While he cautiously introduces Kshanaprabha into the public domain through a very moderate social service job, he simultaneously introduces the possible consequences of this action. She is not saved from the humiliation of being romantically linked with Dushmant. That Prabha continuously frets and complains about her being pushed into this work implies that even educated women value the domestic sphere more than the freedom of the outside. 'For the sake of her husband's ideals she had to sacrifice her own. Since her mind has bowed down to this undue pressure she can never find the same purity again.'[103] We observe that Prabha's respect for her husband is gradually transforming into frustration. She blames him for giving his ideals a more important place than love for his wife. Often she thinks of abandoning the fraudulent idealism that everybody is enmeshed in.

The only socially inelegant act she does is to confess to her friend that she feels intellectually and mentally close to both her husband and Dushmant and regards them both as her closest friends. Prabha's strength of character, determination and courage is eventually marked in her decision to abandon the traditional bonds of marriage and return to her father's village and start afresh with her ideals alone. This act of assertion in which she questions the basic premise upon which society stands is remarkable because she completely overthrows her own ideals of true womanhood, as that of the society and frees herself from the mental oppression that she had subjected herself to in blindly obeying her

[101] Ibid., 109.
[102] Ibid, 207
[103] Ibid., 110.

husband. Through assertion of her distinct femininity she achieves her autonomy and self-respect.

The novel also reflects the mentality of the rich factory owners and industrialists, who are worried by the growing activism of the left that tried to instigate rebellion against the rich and encouraged boycotts and strikes. However, the sympathy of the author is not with the operational tactics of the left, which was unable to provide a working alternative to present problems.[104] The author's clear preference for the Gandhian ideals of truth (*satya)* and non-violence (*ahimsa)* over the rebellious and sometimes violent tactics of the left is evident throughout the novel.

Like his earlier novel, the author does not allow any space of movement and life to his characters. The reader is made to understand that modernity effects basic changes in the thinking and attitudes of people, but they need not abandon their traditional values to live in the modern world. So all his female characters are educated and 'thinking women', but do not give up their traditional images to survive in this world. In addressing his middle class readership, the author confirms to their ideas of what a modern woman should look like and never makes her extravagantly assertive of her individuality. His work, as a whole, makes a case for the continuance of certain traditional values, which support the whole social fabric. Education was not to be used as licence. It should sharpen the faculty of judgement, not reject everything traditional as irrelevant and induce women to behave with restraint and regard for tradition.

The greatest provocation to the ideal image of the Oriya woman was the character Sarojini in Gopinath Mohanty's *Danapani,* (Food and Water, symbolising survival). Written in the colonial context, it depicts the intense desire of Balidutta to be a part of the newly forming middle class, to get a clerical job with a British Company and his fascination with the notion of the English 'gentleman'. He comes from a poor rural family drowned in debt. A job in a Company brings him closer to his dream of becoming a '*bhadralok*'. This reveals his keenness to discard his subalternity. He is married to Sarojini, a girl from a well-to-do family. In getting her married to a clerk, Sarojini's father establishes his first connections with the prosperity of the urban world. He gives his son-in-law the best: a gold watch and a bicycle. This marriage takes place even though Balidutta and Sarojini do not match each other physically; Balidutta, slight in built and shorter than his wife.

We are introduced to the typical clerk's house. The woman wears a 'brooch' on her shoulder; a ring on her finger with her husband's initials carved on it and their

[104] Kanhu Charan Mohanty, *Jhanja*, Friends Publications, Binod Behari, Cuttack, 1st pub, 1949,10th ed; 30-31,47-48

bedroom with a photograph of Balidutta and Sarojini.[105] Though Balidutta seems to be 'taken in' by modern values, Sarojini's character contains the innocence of the rural girl, the restrained Oriya woman, whose world revolves around her husband and home. From the beginning we sense that Sarojini is not impressed with her husband. Though her imagined husband is different from her real one, she never lets these inadequacies and deficiencies affect her marital life. Whenever she compares the slender physique of her husband to the young student, handsome and well built, who lives opposite her house, she consoles herself, 'this home' and 'this man' that she is married to, belong to her; he is her whole wealth. She lives with the hope that her world would expand someday, her husband would reach the top, would earn a name for himself, God would shower upon them the happiness of the world. She does all that she can to keep her husband happy, loves him not merely as a wife but even as a sister. To this slender man she offers her whole life; she feels the joy of a mother when she dwells in his thoughts.[106]

Her husband is portrayed as the ambitious clerk who wants to reach the top and does anything to remain in the good books of his seniors.[107] He is compared to his colleagues, one Venkat Rao, portrayed as a 'neat' character satisfied with whatever little he has and Mahapatra, a lecherous man, who reached his present position through sycophancy. Then there is Ranjeet, the ideal boss, a rich gentleman, cultured and cultivated, a *bhadralok* in the true sense of the term, with a taste for class, having no complexes, friendly and understanding to his subordinates, with a pleasant temper.

Balidutta is unhappy with the conservative and traditional ways of his wife, her lack of English education, her simple and unsmart ways. He compares her with the wife of Venkat Rao, wondering why Oriya women spend half their lives in the kitchen and the scene they create walking in a procession, mouth stuffed with *paan,* ornaments jingling and the sari ends tied in knots. He believes that change in society can come only with the changing aspirations of the people, who make the character of the society, especially the middle class. He attributes the backwardness of Oriya society to the lack of 'tact' among Oriyas who do not know how to satisfy their senior officials. In comparison to the Bengalis, he says the Oriyas are not even full human beings because of their lack of public etiquette.[108] With his first promotion, he thinks it is absolutely necessary to train Saroj in English, to convince her that his reputation in his social circle depends a lot on how intelligently his wife strikes a conversation with his colleagues. He coaxes her to

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[105] Gopinath Mohanty, *Danapani*, 3rd ed, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1971 5.
[106] Ibid., 13.
[107] In the first scene we are presented with Balidutta escorting a man who carries pig-shit as manure for the garden of his senior officer.

[108] Ibid., 67

shed her inhibitions and move out of the confines of the home, the claustrophobic domain of the traditional. He explains the meaning of the concept of '*sahadharmini*'[109]and says that a wife's duty requires her to help her husband in realising his aspirations. 'He compares the wives of his colleagues who are 'forward', who go to the club, talk tactfully to senior officials and help their husbands get a promotion. Through this 'art' they help their husbands ride the wave of success. On his back weighs a heavy Oriya millstone.'[110]

Balidutta tries to convince Sarojini about the need to change. He tells her about the changing world – the movement of society towards greater complexity and homogeneity... the break down of the traditional '*jati pratha*', caste system, and the rise of a new '*jati*', on the basis of economic hierarchy, made up of a working class, a ruling class, a clerical class, an officer class. In public she belongs to the class that her husband belongs to but at home she just belongs to the '*nari jati*', woman class.[111] Balidutta convinces his wife that their successful life clearly depends upon her ability to 'hook' Ranjeet, his boss. This gives an inkling of the nature of relationship to develop between Ranjeet and Saroj. Sarojini's dilemma in pulling her individual self in different directions is portrayed as the real tension of the modern woman. Protagonists of a liberal social world want to raise women from their subalternity but once she comes out of this repression, the society is unable to 'contain' her assertions. While stressing on the new-woman in Sarojini, the author does not displace the notion of the ideal Oriya image in Sarojini, once the repository and custodian of the prized authentic Oriyaness.

Gradually Sarojini is transformed from her insignificant wife-image into a '*bhadramahila*'. She feels a new liberating desire only when she interacts with Ranjeet. In this process of modernising she moves away from her husband and develops a taste that is more akin to that of the aristocratic Ranjeet than her petty middle class husband. She goes through phases of change, first in her dress sense, then in her name; (her friends call her Rose for her name Saroj sounds like 'sorrows') her attitude in public, her interest in tennis and finally her attitude towards her husband. Deep within herself, she detests this man she is married to. They do not even share dreams.[112] The novel ends with Balidutta realising the futility of this 'show of belonging to the '*bhadralok* class' for ultimately his family life is ruined.

Danapani is often regarded as the '*adhunika bhagavata*' a reflection of the changing society and a presentation of a stylised biography of the emerging middle class. It represents the functioning of modernity breaking into the innocence of Oriya society.

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[109] Literally, it means the one who professes the same religion, the wedded wife who assists her husband in living a life of principles and fulfilling his social duties successfully.
[110] Danapani, op.cit., 66.
[111] Ibid., 162.
[112] Ibid., 235.

The novel emphasises the excessive engagement with the individual self, which drives Sarojini into a repressive private space. There are innumerable instances when she yearns for her free village life. It is this repression and continuous tussle with her inner-self that forces her to the path of promiscuity. This, in the view of the author is an inevitable result of the individualistic autonomy of modernity. It is possible to agree with Bakhtin that 'all movements in the novel, all escapades depicted in it, shift the hero in space, up and down the rungs of social ladder. This is the novel of human emergence.'[113] It does not depict the emergence of one individual but the emergence of a social class as a result of the changing totality of life, circumstances, events, activity and work, and it emerges from one social moment to another social existence. We trace the character of the petty clerk from his village to the sources that lead him to defend the values, alien to his community. Once the hero submits to the new set-up he realises that he will never be able to identify totally with his lost values and moves away from being an integral part of this community.

Sarojini's course of action is justified in the book. The author grants the character of Sarojini the freedom to perceive her independent self differently but it is clear that the character-type of Sarojini should not become a norm. The autonomy given to her stands in potential conflict with the image of the ideal Oriya woman. The authorial attitude is complex: the author stands by her, as an individual but ridicules the degenerate values of the modern middle class. The heroine's deviance from the dominant ideal of femininity is permissible as long as it is accounted for and motivated by incidents or characters that deeply influence or affect her. Instead of despising her deviant attitude the reader is made to sympathise with her because an obsessed and over-ambitious husband forces transformation upon her. She is portrayed as a victim of modern values rather than as a figure whose life is really liberated by them.

Saroj's character is unconventional because her extra-marital relationship with Ranjeet instead of being indecent is portrayed as sophisticated. It is a typical representation of modern morality because it emphasises the ideal companionate character of man-woman relationship founded on mutual respect and *taste*, which was traditionally not the model for married life. This socially unsanctified relationship has an immensely romantic dimension, which was lacking in her relationship with her husband. Usually the woman could move into the public sphere only if her sexuality was restrained. Any attempt to go beyond this point would amount to moral depravity. What was crucial in all discussions was 'that formal education became not only acceptable but a requirement for the new *bhadramahila* (respectable woman) when it was demonstrated

[113] Bakhtin, 'Bildungsroman', op. cit., 21-23.

that it was possible for a woman to acquire the cultural requirements afforded by modern education without jeopardizing her place at home.'[114] It was through education that the new woman was to achieve her autonomy but using this against the symmetry of her home was an act of transgression. Kshanaprabha and Sarojini committed acts of social and cultural transgression by self-assertion: the former by abandoning her husband to pursue her ideals and the latter by entering an unsanctified relationship for her personal satisfaction. Both underwent situations of idealised 'suffering', in trying to keep the family together but relinquished their claustrophobic lives to seek new happiness.

Integrating the Tribal

To extend the argument of autonomy to the tribal is very tricky; for the tribal is perceived as already living an unfettered life and asserting himself more powerfully than the non-tribal. However, this form of freedom cannot be treated as 'autonomous' by modern standards. Their integration into mainstream life was troublesome because literary treatments generally emphasised their isolation from mainstream life and the unlimited freedom they enjoyed in comparison to the suffocating and meaningless lives of the non-tribals.

Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, a novel located in the tribal community of Koraput, is one of the most acclaimed works on the lives of indigenous peoples of Orissa.[115] It is widely regarded as an authentic and sensitive representation of the aboriginal life style of *adivasis*. Along with *Paraja*, he has written *Amruta Ra Santana* and *Dadi Budha*, which trace the development of tribal social time and of tribal encounters with the devastating effect of urbanisation and industrialisation. Before the publication of *Paraja*, there was one major work on the neglected conditions of the '*bhuinyas*' of Keonjhar written by Gopal Ballav Das called *Bhima Bhuinyan*. Later, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi wrote a short story called '*Shikar*' (1936) which brought to light the innocence and simplicity of the '*adivasi*'.

All creative literature on tribals portrayed an uncomplicated social structure, the distinctness of their social life from non-tribals and the need to preserve this cultural ethos. These narratives do not merely glorify the tribal life-style, juxtaposing it with the non-tribal but in the unfolding of the text, the reader is made conscious of the author's preference for tribal honesty, uprightness and simplicity. While it was a political and sociological necessity to integrate the tribal into mainstream Oriya society, these narratives by declaring tribal life as valuable in itself, in some senses resisted the political

[114] Partha Chatterjee, op. cit.,1994, 129.

[115] He has extensively written on the life of the tribal in all is his novels, with great anthropological detail. *Paraja* has been widely translated into many Indian languages. *Paraja* will be discussed for the purpose of this work, though there will be some references to other works on tribal life.

forces of integration. This resistance was naturally in part directed against those Oriyas who had accepted and advocated the forces of modernity.

The complexity of the narrative in *Paraja* lies in the way the author adroitly presents the tribal world and makes it accessible to the non-tribal community. Apart from this, the plots and the subplots are handled with great artistic skill, and the narrative successfully accommodates a wide variety of 'voices'. Novels which idealised tribal life presented an alternative organisation of social life, representing primitive-communism as the ideal standard with which the heartless competition, fragmentation and alienation of modernity was to be compared. The tribal may have been inferior in terms of education but these novels reject the criteria by which middle class urban people usually look upon tribals as inferior, and reverse the principles of judgement.

The author was brought up in interior tribal areas and through his years of government service was sensitised to the problems of the tribal people. His novels are not merely commentaries on tribal life from an 'outsider' but also from an active participant who writes from 'within'. The landowners of Koraput once wrote a petition to Jawaharlal Nehru against Gopinath Mohanty, saying, 'to our great calamity and disaster Shri Mohanty is posted here as the special assistant agent at Rayagada. He is always fond of hillmen and behaves like hillmen himself. He very little respects other classes of people before them. He behaves as if he is only born for *adivasis*.'[116] The sense of authenticity of the novel also comes from the spontaneous use of the tribal language and placing it in the centre stage of literary craft.

The colonial government discovered the tribal tracts in Orissa afresh. Their attempts at development of tribal economy and society created a new interest among the non-tribal population. By bringing them under the administration of the colonial government, colonialism opened these isolated communities for interaction with the non-tribal Oriyas. The missionary activities amongst tribals, establishment of educational institutions and successful conversion of tribals to Christianity also meant that there was a possibility of integrating tribals into the folds of Hinduism. Though they spoke different dialects, the integration of tribal groups into Oriya society was done through the spread of education. While this forceful imposition of Oriya language was detrimental to the cohesiveness of their social and cultural life, the political situation recognised their inclusion as an institutional necessity. In such a situation there was a need to redefine relations between the non-tribal and tribal communities, to foster new ties and to alter the existing definition of Oriya society. Increasing interaction between the two groups not only bridged gaps, superficially nonetheless, but also helped the recognition of the tribal

[116] Jatindra Mohanty, op. cit., 66.

as the 'original' Oriyas, 'the first inhabitants of the Oriya land'. These processes prepared the ground for literary interest in tribal life.

Gopinath Mohanty's decision to write about tribals was itself a political act, because literary writing about subservient groups was crucial to an alternative imagination of Oriyaness. On the one hand, in presenting his narrative to the print-literate Oriya audience, he introduced them to the problems of the tribal and in the process fostered a feeling that the tribal belonged to the Oriya community, making them a part of modern Oriya cultural consciousness. On the other, he emphasised the essential difference between tribal and non-tribal life by contrasting the pretensions and meaninglessness of modern life to simple tribal existence. While the middle class perceived tribal life as immoral and promiscuous,[117] Mohanty reverses the judgement by advocating it as meaningful and unpretentious. The author addresses the audience almost as a literary agent of the tribals.

Paraja (1948) revolves around two main themes: first, the exploitation of Sukrujani and his family, which consists of two sons and two daughters, and the second, his daughter Jhili's unrequited love. In the first few pages, we are introduced to Sukrujani who pays a bribe of two rupees to the forest guard to allow him to cut down the jungle and cultivate the cleared land. Later, the forest guard chances upon Sukrujani's daughter for he misunderstands the tribal girl's coquettish openness to be her consent and sends for her. The father refuses to comply with the demand of the guard who takes his revenge by penalising the tribal for violating government rules. The poor tribal, unable to pay the fine decided by the magistrate, borrows the money from a local '*sahukar*' and to repay the debt agrees to become the *sahukar*'s '*goti*' (bonded labour). To relieve his father and brother from *goti*, the other son cooks and sells liquor (prohibited by the government) and gets caught. He is again asked to pay a hefty fine and borrows money from the same *sahukar*, as a result of which all three become '*goti*' and mortgage their land to the *sahukar*. While the father and the brothers are away, the two daughters go in search of work and end up as 'coolies' (labourers) in a road construction job. In the meanwhile Jhili's lover deserts her for her friend, which was the primary reason for her to leave the village and look for work. The father is pained at this for 'paraja' girls are not expected to do this for a living. When the father and one of the brothers are released the girls come back. The younger sister gets married which further frustrates Jhili and she willingly accepts to be the 'kept woman' of the *sahukar*. In the meanwhile, cooking and selling liquor on the sly the elder son gathers enough money to pay off all the debts to the

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[117] He mentions *dhangda basa,* house where unmarried tribal girls and boys met and spent time together, singing and dancing. It was a tribal social custom.

sahukar. The moneylender cheats them and says that they have written away their land to him for years to come. They decide to appeal in the court for the redressal of their grievance. There too the system favours the moneylender. They cannot read what is written on the court notice, ask the clerk, who has already been bribed by the moneylender, and quotes them a wrong date to appear in court. Appearing on the said day, they realise that the date for appearance in the court has already lapsed and the decision has been taken in favour of the *sahukar* because of the absence of the opposing petitioners. This enrages the tribals and the three of them end up hacking the *sahukar* to death.

Paraja has a certain resemblace to Bhagabati Panigrahi's short story 'Shikar' (1940), as both show the innocent tribal killing the exploitative and cunning *sahukar*. The narrative techniques of the two writers however place their work on distinctly different planes. The fact that *Shikar* was a short story itself limited the possibility of the narrative; the author could comprehensively highlight only one aspect of tribal life. The act of murdering the *sahukar* is not a consequence of any consciousness while the murder in *Paraja* is informed with historical consciousness and can be perceived more as an 'event' of community assertion. It is a political event of rejection while the act in the other story can only be perceived as an emotional outburst of the primitive. 'Shikar' narrates the simplicity of the tribal but does not project modernisation as the corroding evil, which breaks into the peace of tribal life. *Paraja* is a modern novel where the characters are tribal but the analysis is modern. It is a narrative that is very 'local', confined to the problems and behaviour of a particular people. In '*Shikar*' when Ghinua beheads the *sahukar*, (for ill-treating his wife) and presents the head of the notorious man-eater[118] to the British official, he thinks he would get a reward as in other times. He is in no dilemma at all and is unaware that he is going to be hanged. Eventually he does not even react to his order of execution. In *Paraja*, the innocence and simplicity of tribal is changed by its encounter with modern complexity. When the father and two sons kill the *sahukar* (who has kept their Jhili as a kept), there is a quality of deliberateness in that action; the intention is to murder, and they are aware of the consequence of this action.

The tribal is normally represented in literary works as simple and honest but never as a coward. Cowardice is a cultural trait necessarily associated with sly and cunning modern people, who resort to manipulation and opt for compromise as a form of settling disputes. One aspect of modernity, distinctly absent in all narrative depictions of tribal life, is the 'incapacity to negotiate'. At a very broad level, the author questions the validity of democracy, which pre-supposes a particular code of conduct for all its citizens.

[118] In the eyes of Ghinua, any one who does harm to human beings is equivalent to a man-eater.

The scene of murder displays all the traits that make the tribal distinct and more morally worthy than a non-tribal in the writer's eyes. In all the literary texts discussed in this chapter, no character, even in the midst of extreme exploitation, asserts himself like the tribal. He kills – not accidentally, but with an intention to kill, and is ready to face the repercussions of his action. Another feature that distinguishes them from Hindu society is that they make no pretence of sacrifice *(tyaga)* and associated forms of misery and suffering so celebrated in non-tribal ethics, because the moral order informing their actions is distinct from that of the Hindu one. It is only when they realise that their simplicity has become a liability do they go in favour of absorption into wider society.[119]

At one level, the goal of integrating the tribal cannot be realised by imposing a homogeneous developmental process on them, without taking into consideration their cultural and attitudinal distinctiveness. The first displacement occurs when the tribal is stopped from using forest resources which forms the most crucial aspect of his existence. There is now a forest guard to protect the forest from being misused by the tribal, the forest that, in the conception of the tribal, belongs to him. To graze cattle in the forest he pays a tax, to cultivate land (*podu chasa*; an indigenous form of cultivation where a patch of the forest is cleared to allow cultivation, basically rice.) he pays a tax and if he was caught doing what he had been doing for ages as a right, he pays a fine. The sudden imposition of these rules from somewhere above disrupted his life, for his economy was to undergo a complete change and he had to adapt to ways beyond his comprehension.

In this novel, unlike *Shikar*, the tribal understands that there is a process of change which originates from somewhere above and he has to change himself for the sheer need of survival. His interaction with this system is not on an equal or a voluntary basis. The system dominates and intimidates him and tribal interaction with the system is limited to its lowly representatives, like the forest guard or the clerk in the magistrate office. While offering a bribe to the forest guard Sukrujani addresses him as 'Mahaprabhu'[120] or God. The perception of the government is that 'the more the *hukum*, orders and *julum*, oppression, the more powerful he is as an officer.'[121] The confusion starts when his existing knowledge system does not provide a method to handle this change. The tribal interaction with the modern institutional system is therefore limited to giving bribes to the guards, and this, for him, is the only possible way for using the system in his favour. The next attempt to use the court leads to a disastrous consequence.

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[119] N.K. Bose in his *Structure of Hindu Society*, gives a sociological explanation of the tribal need to integrate with non-tribal society Orient Longman, Delhi,1975.
[120] Gopinath Mohanty, op. cit., 7
[121] Ibid., 23. *Jahara jete hukum jari, julum bhari se sete bada adhikari.*

Sukrujani, the god-fearing, superstitious *adivasi* is portrayed as the epitome of *paraja* life. The main aspect of tribal life that implicitly runs through the narrative is the absence of doubt, *shanka* and mistrust. Though they realise that modern institutions and laws of the state are set up to their advantage, they are convinced that laws work more against them because people who represent the institutional system are exploiters. The tribals understand that to survive within this system they have to keep this 'agent' satisfied. These officials impoverish the collective life of the tribals by ushering in the fragmentation of the modern world. Therefore, despite his reluctance he adopts the practices that are not his own to appease the government official.[122] All the tribal characters in the novel use the modern system in the same way, through bribing and cheating. Only when they fail to break out of the conspiracy of government agents they react out of frustration. Sukrujani loses faith in the fairness of the system. His son Mandiajani is portrayed as an extremely optimistic character. He believes that he would, with the power of his 'young body', alter any adverse situation to his favour. He is portrayed as one who is not whimsical, who does not break under social and emotional pressure. We do not approach the murder scene dramatically, it seems as if the tribals will appeal to the *sahukar* but things change spontaneously at the end. The restrained nature of this young man (which in some senses negates the principle of youth) breaks into the worst action.

Yet there is no 'regret' in the life of the tribal. The novel portrays the murder as a result of tribal rationality. They do not live dual lives and for them there is no difference between a 'lived' life and a 'desired' life. Apart from a faithful portrayal of the tribal life, the author offers a comparison of two communities -- the tribal and non-tribal. The romanticised tribal lives an idealised life of freedom without fetters of meaningless Hindu morality. This is contrasted to the degenerate life of the non-tribal who has accepted the rules and practices of modernity almost irrationally.

Particularly in the description of the marriage system, a more liberal relation between the sexes, the author tries to question the practices of so-called 'civilised' society. Paradoxically, even in its simplicity, the tribal social formation displays great maturity in practice of the values of equality and liberty. To emphasise tribal sophistication, the author refers to tribal marriage that occurs with mutual choice of the partners and with an absence of 'dowry'. The Hindu system by comparison treats women as inferior. In fact, the tribal boy gives an amount (*jhola*) to the girl's father before

[122] Sukrujani pays two rupees to the forest guard to allow him to clear the forest for cultivation 7. Again, he is explaining that the higher the official the greater the exploitation [23]. Much later, when he decides to place a petition against the sahukar, they carry gifts for the official because it is not proper to go to the official without any gift, 399.

marriage, which symbolically underlines the value of women. The tribal husband and wife have a romantic type of courtship that is desired but commonly absent in middle-class life. The author never reacts negatively to the permissiveness of tribal society. By contrast there is a celebration of the 'noble savage'. The author makes a political inclusion of the tribal by writing about their life and society and thereby bringing them into the artistic gaze of the non-tribal. He advocates a protectionist attitude towards the tribal, warding off encroachment of modernity and negotiating with it on their behalf: patronising, idealising, romanticising and portraying them as mystic and mysterious beings. This standard depiction of the tribal is not just confined to creative writers. The image of tribal as alien, exotic, sensual and as the one prone to violence was popularised amongst a non-tribal audience. Since the logic of modernity forces upon them a homogeneity that not only demands integration but also a degree of detribalisation, the author nervously alternates either between integrating them or detribalising them. Integration implied detribalisation and detribalisation meant surrendering their historical identity to all-encompassing homogeneity.

Though at a real and political level, the articulation of the cultural ideals of Oriyaness was limited to the life and aspirations of the modern educated Oriya middle class, creative writers made a conscientious effort at providing an inclusive definition of the Oriya self. They accepted various levels that made up Oriya society instead of making a claim for a homogenous and undifferentiated Oriya identity. More than anybody, they recognised that people who did not speak the Oriya language were also Oriyas and were to be accepted as such. Like other Oriya writers who idealised rural Orissa and peasant society, these writers also wanted to preserve the essential characteristics of tribal society and shield it from the complexities and associated tensions of modern society.

The 'other' in this period was mostly the 'cultural inner other', having more in common with the 'real other in absentia', the western individual. On the other hand, though the self now was more inclusive, the tribal saw the non tribal as the other, the rural peasant saw the urban educated as the other and urban people after accepting that true Oriyaness was probably present in the rural Oriya considered them as the other.

Even when the writer is involved in the act of writing, he interprets what he writes, and this construction and interpretation occurs in the broad framework of a 'cultural unconscious'.[123] There is a tacit, assured and unspoken ground which conditions any cultural production that both the reader and author share, and communication occurs on this sharing of a common and specific cultural and social past. In what he intends to write the author makes a conscious choice and while writing invests it with some implicit

or explicit ideological meaning. The novel as Bakhtin says is the product of a 'dialogic' process. What the author writes is already invested with prior meaning and signifies something to people who relate to this meaning. In a dialogic discourse the author does not refer to objects in the world but simultaneously contests and replies to it. The author and the reader exist in a relational world, a context within which an utterance is given meaning. This context involves a relation between the speaker, addressee and the object of reference. 'Every literary discourse senses its own listeners, readers, critics and reflects in itself their anticipated objections, evaluations and points of view.'[124] The author does not therefore write into a void; he has an idea of his reading public when he is writing.

The mainstream literature, through recording changes in society, was in effect involved in the project of reconstructing a new definition of how society should look like. There was a need to talk of modernity, the changing village peasant, the changing woman, the disoriented attitudes of the youth, and the changing innocence of the tribal under the pressure of the modern. Literature was the 'site' where this turmoil of encountering modernity was first depicted. It implicitly prescribed limits of modernisation through intimate discussions of private life, world-views and social practices. Though it might be possible that the author's interest in a subject might be purely aesthetic without any declared political intention the work might make an unintentional political impact. Broadly, literary texts of the period grasped with great sensitivity the deep inequalities in Oriya society. They portrayed the 'others' who lived inside or on the margins of middle class Oriya life. Some of the most remarkable literary texts analysed these contradictions with sensitivity and sympathy, and social conflicts were often brought to ideal literary resolutions.

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[123] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Polity Press, Oxford, 1991and Chris Jenks (ed) *Cultural Reproduction*, Routledge, London, 1993.
[124] David Lodge, op. cit., 86.

Chapter 4

Left Trends in Oriya Creative Writing: Seeking an Alternative Oriyaness.

While there is apparent agreement among scholars about the provisional nature of identity, there is nevertheless a continuous attempt by writers to provide a final narrative of the community's self and to consider aspects of that self as its irreplaceable core. Writers associated with left politics often explore aspects of identity, which stand in surprising contradiction to other conceptions of the self. They contest the symbols that are usually associated with the invocation of a nationalist self and often consciously propagate an alternative selfhood.[1] The primary difference between the left construction of self and others is that the former avoid making claims on the basis of historical authenticity of their characters. Left writers wrote about unprecedented and unconventional characters as typical products of the cultural conditions of modernity and did not evaluate them in simple moral terms.[2]

It must be said at the outset that though from the forties there was a rise of left politics in Orissa, especially in the form of political parties and organisations, it failed to make a wider impact on the cultural lives of people and changed the lifestyles of fewer still. After the colonial occupation of Orissa, the middle class Oriya intellectual looked upon their Bengali counterparts as an inspiration especially in the literary sphere. However, the two states adhered to different kinds of politics primarily because the nature of political history in the two was quite different. It would not be an exaggeration to say that left ideology initially triggered off a few successful movements in Orissa but failed, especially after independence, as leftists were unable to mobilise wide support on the basis of their ideology. In the sphere of literature, however, left writers were extremely popular among educated Oriyas.

In the previous chapter, we discussed the attitude of mainstream writers towards what constituted collective identity and the economic and cultural conditions of modernity that gave rise to the assertion of individual rights. They recognised the need for self-determination of groups like tribals, peasants and women and implicitly

[1] In general, in leftist writing, all character-types, moral commitments, life styles represented as authentically Oriya were forsaken and replaced with characters which broke away from the stereotypes that mainstream writers created.

[2] The characters of Pratima Nayak and Alaka Sanyal will be compared with that of Dhobi, Sharada.

questioned the validity of the homogeneous nationalistic definition of the self. The mainstream discussion always revolved around the tensions between individual and collective identity. In some senses, they were nervous about totally breaking away from tradition and re-structuring life on a completely new basis. The left writers, more straightforward with their dismissal of tradition, believed that circumstances under conditions of modernity had altered so greatly that it would be difficult to successfully retain things of the past. Unlike mainstream writers who looked upon processes of modernity with suspicion, the left writers trusted modernity to bring 'real' changes in the lives of lower groups. 'Modernity created secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order, they opened up new vistas for people exploited and oppressed within the traditional order; it provided the first step towards a more just and equal world.'[3]

The left writers accepted identity as a cultural construct and acknowledged Oriyaness as a combination of social attributes that had come about historically. However, they argued against the peculiar notion of 'authenticity' and the attempt to increasingly turn this into a 'norm'. They went against the doubtful historicity of concepts and ideas made popular by mainstream writers. It was against their political commitment to 'freeze' the history of people at one historical conjuncture and advocate a form of life tied to a region. Their literature showed an openness and curiosity about modernity and the urban, while mainstream writers represented the rural and the peasant as essential carriers of Oriyaness. The Oriya left writer was in that sense 'inauthentic'.

Celebration of the individual was at the crux of both mainstream and left writing, as both wanted to liberate the individual and end his subordination to the collective but each had a distinct manner of approaching the issue of autonomy. The nationalist writers attempted to create a homogeneous nation by prescribing a few characteristics, which if adopted by all constituent groups, would lead to an end of group antagonisms. The mainstream writers of the next generation questioned this assumption but could not completely break away from traditional notions of identity. In their attempt to lead the community out of the confusion brought about by modernity, their solution went in favour of a social configuration composed of elements drawn from both new and old. The nationalist and mainstream writers dwelled on the 'timelessness' of certain characters. The left assertion of individual identity was also in the direction of submerging individual interest in the people/proletariat but in an arrangement in which every social group would exist on terms of equal dignity. In all three kinds of writing,

[3] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self Under Colonialism*. OUP, Delhi, 1983, xii.

individual interest was subsumed in group interest, but the left writers wanted to create a situation where there would be no difference between individual and group interest. The individual did not have to 'sacrifice' his interest to maintain the hierarchical order. The content of mainstream writing revolved around the tensions rising out of incompatibility of individual and group interests, especially under modern political and cultural conditions which valued individual autonomy. The homogeneous nation that left-wing writers wanted had greater similarities with the agenda of the nationalists. Both types of writers went against the acquisitive nature of the individual. The nationalist Gopabandhu would bring this about by kindling a religious/cultural sense of obligation in every individual. The left writers aimed to raise the consciousness of all people about the need for communism, where individuals would finally be autonomous and in full control over their actions. But the nature of social harmony envisaged was different; the social structure would continue to be hierarchical in the thinking of the nationalists while the intention of the leftists was complete abolition of class differences.

The left writers dwelled on the notion of both individual and group autonomy. However, they accepted the ideals of modern individualism, the right of the individual to define his own self as completely different from others. It was an affirmation of this that made life more meaningful and fulfilling for him.[4] Left writing attacked the stereotypes that mainstream writers had created about Oriya society, alleging that the 'rhetoric of progress' that mainstream writers used, their excessive emphasis on adulteration of cultural values, was essentially a strategy to justify the 'internal colonialism' which used this idea of external threat to legitimise and perpetuate itself.[5] Left writers alleged mainstream writing of repressing historical contradictions between classes by directing the readership's attention to love stories that straddled class difference. They tried to de-emphasise what earlier writers had regarded as core Oriya elements and stressed that excessive adherence to group commitments and cultural identifications went against individual self-respect.

Unlike mainstream writers, the left accepted the coming of modernity as a revolution. This change was a 'stage' in the ongoing movement of history, which could not be reversed. Some changes were inevitable as society moved from one stage to another and each stage produced a new kind of society. It was within these changing

[4] The left perception stood in opposition to Charles Taylor's opinion that every understanding of our self depends upon the earlier understanding of our community identity. They asserted their difference by reacting against the stereotypical notions and meanings of Oriyaness. See footnote 2, Chapter 3.

[5] The essence of this argument is derived from Ashis Nandy, op. cit., xii.

circumstances that adjustments were to be made and the quality of social life improved. Their writings reflected the futility of holding on to fast dissolving traditions and emphasised raising the life-standard of marginalized sections with the changing conditions of modernity. They reflected a greater confidence in encountering the modern as compared to the 'we have lost everything' attitude of mainstream writers. Naturally, the process of cultural reproduction of the nation was different in left literature.

The literary texts of the left brought to the fore a history of oppression that they thought was suppressed in other writings. It was crucial to the left historical imagination to emphasise the social aspect of equality. Contrary to pulling down the 'urbanised educated middle class', they stressed the need to pull up the deprived. In trying to do this, they propagated an alternative self-definition. But the relative failure of the left was attributed to the greater clarity of mainstream writers in identifying, however naively, two opposing forces in modern and traditional values. The direct preference for the traditional over the other made them more acceptable to a disoriented readership that was already anxious about its own incapacity to deal with modernity.

The left writers wanted to alter the hierarchical structure of relations that existed in society by destroying the general assumption that 'freedom' was a 'social relation'[6], i.e. some individuals enjoy more liberty by virtue of greater access to cultural and material resources. There are some men that make the kind of society in which other people live and act, some who set norms and some others who follow them.[7] Though the nationalist and mainstream writers introduced the notion of freedom into their writing, the conflict between 'real' and 'apparent' freedom remained. The freedom and autonomy that earlier writers propagated seemed partial to the left writers because they manoeuvred the social behaviour of characters to fit established norms and portrayed that as the only logical way of acting. There was a need to propagate an alternative identity because 'authentic Oriya culture' of the mainstream writers worked through institutional structures in which the oppressed class perpetuated their own oppression by accepting the values of the higher class and castes as universal values. According to left-wing writing, these moral and religious injunctions of tradition substantially curtailed individual and social freedom. 'A hegemonic discourse, in fact has just this character: historically speaking we hear only one voice because a hegemonic ideology suppresses or marginalizes all antagonistic class voices, and yet the hegemonic discourse remains locked into a dialogue with the discourse it suppressed.'[8] Left writing tried to create a

[6] Zygmunt Bauman, *Freedom*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1988.
[7] Ibid., 23.
[8] William. C. Dowling, *Jameson, Althusser Marx*, Methuen, Great Britain, 1984, 131.

historical rupture by suggesting that every individual is rational who has the right and capacity to alter his existential status because it is through the agency of the individual that the world is rendered into its present state.

Unlike activists, writers and poets make their protest in the form of 'ideas'. These ideas are expressed in the form of characters and in creating unprecedented characters; left writers began a debate with the institutionalised literary character-types. Ideas which gained acceptability among the dominant sections eventually took the appearance of general truths or common sense [9] and these ideas and norms had to be contested if the nature of Oriya self-definition had to be made more inclusive. Certain characters, like ideas, become 'historical' because collective imagination has made them a part of people's historical consciousness over a period of time.[10] The left writers articulated group and individual autonomy through a new structure of ideas, which went against the established common sense. However, their deviance from ordinary common-sense, creating characters which did not exist in the social imagination of the reading public, unable to communicate a sense of the shared world, immediately set them apart as authors whose writings were unfamiliar and strange.[11]

Background of the Left Movement in Orissa

Left literature was the product of a particular experience, especially the broader radical consciousness formed by left politics. In that sense, the literature they produced was explicitly political in nature in contrast to the subdued political references of mainstream writing. In order to acquire a fuller understanding of the alternative literary movement initiated by the left, we will briefly discuss the rise of left politics, contribution of left intellectuals' to left politics and the important movements mobilised by them.

In the early thirties, a group of young socialists felt the need to create a front for articulation and redressal of peasant grievances. Unable to accept the conciliatory attitude of Gandhian politics, people like Nabakrushna Choudhury, Surendranath Dwivedy, Bhagabati Panigrahi and Prananath Patnaik formed the Utkal Congress Samyavadi Karmi Sangha, (Utkal Congress Socialist Workers League) in 1933.[12] This

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[9] Raymond Williams, 'Dickens and Social Ideas' in *Sociology of Literature and Drama*, Tom Burns (ed), Penguin Books, 1973.

[10] Based on Sudipta Kaviraj's thesis in 'The Myth of Praxis',Ch 3, *The Unhappy Consciousness*, OUP, Delhi, 1995, 72.

[11]The last section will discuss the failure of the left literary movement and their inability to convince the readership. Donald Pease, 'Author' for the author- readership relation, pp 105 –116 in Frank Lentricchia (ed.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, University of Chicago Press, 1995.

[12]Surendranath Dwivedy, *Quest For Socialism*, Radiant Publishers, Delhi, 1984, 29.

organisation was formed prior to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party at the all-India level, which opened its branch in Orissa in 1934.[13] The Oriya socialists decided that in order to win the confidence of the masses their own living habits and activities should reflect great simplicity and that members of the league would not own private property.[14] They started a weekly journal called '*Sarathi*', the first issue of which carried the famous left slogan 'Workers of the World Unite'.[15] Though the Congress recognised and reflected the position that the 'peasant was India' there remained an essential ambivalence in the Congress attitude to political mobilisation of the peasantry. The socialists suspected the Congress as a 'ruling class or aspirant ruling class in modern times which sought to speak on behalf of the nation'.[16] Gandhian Congressmen who believed that propagating class struggle was opposed to ideals of non-violence and served to weaken the nationalist movement disliked socialist activities. While disagreements between Congress socialists and Gandhians were becoming sharper, leaders like Prananath Patnaik appealed to people to rally around the socialist banner in February 1937.[17] Congress supporters amongst the public argued that since the whole nation was on the verge of disintegration, it would be politically unrewarding to encourage sectional battles. Moreover, people who organised farmers and labour associations did not belong to marginalised sections themselves and had never experienced poverty[18].

The *Kisan Sangha*, established in 1935, worked in collaboration with the Congress and it was at their insistence that the Provincial Congress Committee included abolition of the *zamindari* system in their election manifesto. The tussle between the left and right wings of the Kishan Sabha actually led to the birth of the Communist Party in Orissa.[19] While the elected Congress government in Orissa in 1937 clearly preferred the anti-imperialist stance and supported the Gandhian principles of making space for *harijans*, *khadi* and village reconstruction programmes as of prime importance, the left wing Kishan Sabha wanted concrete changes at two levels. The first was compatibility with the Congress demand to end colonialism, the other abolition of the feudal system

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[13] K.S.Padhy, P.K. Panigrahy, *Socialist Movement in India*, Kanishka Publishing House, Delhi, 1992, 74. Surendra Dwivedy, op. cit., 30

[14] Surendra Dwivedy, op. cit., 30

[15] Ibid., 31

[16] Gyanendra Pandey, 'Congress and the Nation: 1917-1947' in Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert (ed.), *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, OUP, Delhi, 1988, 121-133.

[17] *Desha Katha*, (henceforth DK) Nov 15th 1937, 17-18, Orissa State Archives (henceforth OSA)

[18] Sushil Chandra De, 'The Committee for Compilation of Who's Who in the Freedom Movement', *Diary Of Political Events*, Cuttack, 1964. OSA. Further, 'after the Raja of Kanika has become a member of the government his exploitation seems to have increased.' DK, May 25 1931.

and exploitation by the internal bourgeoisie. The Kishan Sabha popularised the importance of contesting for their own rights among the peasants and tribals.

The most important movement mobilised by the left writers was in the Princely States, the *Gadjat*[20] areas regarded as dark zones in Orissa -- the bastions of feudalism. The British passed the Princes' Protection Act making it a punishable offence if people criticised the administration of feudatory states.[21] With the popularity of the KS, the Socialist Party and the Congress ministry in the 1937 elections, attention was shifted to these perennially exploited areas. The relation between the Congress and the *Gadjat* feudal lords was not simple. The Congress needed their political and financial support for the success of both the national movement and the language movement in Orissa.[22] Godabarisha Mishra, a Congress leader, supported the cause of the Ruling Chiefs for which he gained great unpopularity.[23] It was the dissatisfaction with the working of the Congress that led to the formation of the Utkal Communist Party in 1938 by Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi who separated its activities from those of the Congress Socialist Party.[24]

The most significant movement mobilised by the left front in Orissa was the '*Prajamandal*'. Formed in 1938 in Anugul it spread its messages to other states of Niligiri, Talcher Dhenkanal and Ranpur and quickened the pace of change in the feudal pockets. The first militant struggle occurred at Niligiri, a feudal establishment near Balasore where peasants were encouraged to fight against zamindars in December 1937.[25] At the same time, the left circulated a 'Get United' leaflet among all feudatory states in Orissa.[26] In January 1938, there was an attempt by zamindars to suppress the peasant uprising.[27] The ruler of Ranpur took the help of the Political Agent and the armed

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[19], Biswamoy Pati, Resisting *Domination*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1993, 86-131.

[20] A letter in a newspaper mentions the condition of the Gadjat people. 'If we start to give an account of all the exploitation we are subjected to, it will run into pages. Starting from marriages in the king's palace, to births and deaths, from his foul moods to happy times, we are the victims of his oppression.' DK, Feb 10 1931. Orissa State Archives.(henceforth OSA) Further, 'after the Raja of Kanika has become a member of the government his exploitation seems to have increased.' DK, May 25 1931.

[21] K.S.Padhy, op. cit., 93.

[22] A local newspaper mentions about the inauspicious nexus between the Congress and the *Zamindars*. Nilakantha Das collected money from *Gadjat* rulers to set up a press. DK, Nov 21, 1933, 77, OSA.

[23] Sushil De, op. cit., 22-23

[24] Nityananda Sathpathy, *Adhunik Odia Sahitya*, Bidyapuri, Cuttack, 1977, 108

[25] Sushil De, op. cit., 15

[26] Biswamoy Pati, op. cit., 110

[27] Sushil De, op. cit., 16

[28] K.S.Padhy, op. cit., 104

forces to suppress the uprising. On 5th January 1939, when an agitated mob was demanding the release of their leaders, the Political Agent, Major Bazelgette opened fire to disperse the crowd killing one person. The mob turned violent at this and stoned him to death.[28] Sarangdhar Das, Secretary, Orissa State People's Conference along with Surendra Dwivedy and Harekrushna Mahtab led this movement with the support of communist leaders like Bhagabati Panigrahi and Baidyanath Rath. Though ruthlessly suppressed in the period between 1937-47[29], the *Prajamandal* movement succeeded in abolishing inhuman practices like *bethi*[30] (bonded labour), *magan* (forced contributions), monopoly over commodities like *pana* (betel leaf) and the restructuring of forest and tenancy laws. The Orissa Tenancy Amendment Act of 1938 granted the land holding *raiyats* in *zamindari* areas the right to transfer of occupancy holdings.[31] By 1938, there was a fusion between the peasant movement in British Orissa and the popular movement in the princely states.

It was in the background of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles that the Oriya left literary movement was launched. Bhagabati Panigrahi, a leading member of the Communist Party in Orissa started the Naba Yuga Sahitya Sansad'[32] (The New Age Literary Society) in 1935 and the Pragatishila Lekhaka Sangha, (Association Of Progressive Writers). As a discussion in Naba Yuga Sahitya Sansad, in January 1935-36 put it, 'in our excessive enthusiasm and love for our past, (*atita priti)* we have neglected the progressive movement of human civilisation. We have bound ourselves to small families, lack of independent thinking and compassion. It is the basic intention of this organisation to spread the tenets of this new cultural movement among all.'[33] This movement inspired a new genre of Oriya poetry led by Sachidanand Routray, Ananta Patnaik and Manmohan Mishra, (1936-1946) with 'realism' (*bastabavadita)* as its main theme. Their poetry expressed a clear preference for radical change, establishment of a classless society and revolt against religion and superstition. This not only helped the rise

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[29] S.N.Rath, *The Development of Welfare State in Orissa*, S.Chand and Co Ltd, Delhi, 1977.
[30] It was reported in the DK, that people from all over Dhenkanal district came to water the plants in the garden of the Dhenkanal raja. Desha Katha, June 16, 1930, 58.
[31] S.N. Rath, op. cit., 37.
[32] Nityananda Sathpathy, op. cit., 104

[33] An All - India Writers Sangha was established at Lucknow on, 10.4.1936. The manifesto mentioned about the need for the growth of a new consciousness that would eventually bring about the establishment of a new society. Ibid., 106.
[34] Basudeb Sahoo, 'Odia Kabya Sahityare Samajbadi Chintadhara: 1940-50',*Sahitya O Samajbad*, Gananetra Publications, Cuttack, 1988, 75.

of a distinct intellectual movement but also a new social consciousness among the Oriya readership.

Prananath Patnaik, a leading Oriya communist leader, in his *Asanta Kali Ra Sahitya*, (The Literature of Tomorrow) mentions that, unlike Bengali revolutionary writers who wrote with an intention to ideologically influence future generations, Oriya revolutionary writers have failed to produce literature which would ideologically move people towards a particular goal.[34] According to him, the left writers wrote emotionally moving, technically and artistically good poetry, with a lot of *bhava*, but their poetry did not adequately reflect their political convictions and eventually could not make any ideological impact on the readership. Ananta Patnaik (1913- 1987)[35] and Sachidanand Routray (1915)[36] were the most celebrated socialist poets. Raghunath Das (1919-1984)[37] was less celebrated but more vocal with his socialist views.[38] The popularity of Marxism among the Bengali writers created the first socialist stirrings in the minds of young Oriya poets. S.N. Dwivedy writes that apart from Gandhian ideals, his socialism was influenced by Russian literature. 'Maxim Gorky's *Mother* sowed the seeds of socialism in me'[39]

The left factions and their leadership led the popular mind in two directions simultaneously. Apart from creating feelings of deep distrust against colonial rule they instilled into people's minds empathy for the underprivileged, marginalized and historically deprived sections of society. They rejected any collaboration with the rich and landed sections, which the Congress was trying to conciliate. Surendranath Dwivedy left the Congress on 11th March 1946 and formed a wing of the Socialist Party in Orissa. They also brought out a magazine called *Krishak* (Farmer). Later, the youth with socialist leanings formed the Jana Sanskriti Sangha to give a further impetus to the left movement in Orissa.

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[35] Born in a village near Bhubaneswar, Ananta Patnaik hailed from a family that was deeply embedded in socialist values. His paternal uncle, a revolutionary poet, introduced him to socialist ideas. He began his career as a progressive poet after his matriculation. Between 1931-33, he joined the Congress Socialist Party and started to write for all major Oriya left journals.

[36] Born in Khurdha, Sachi Routray joined active politics while studying in Ravenshaw College Cuttack . He was the editor of a progressive journal called *Diganta.* He was actively involved in the Gadjat Movement in 1930s and produced his most revolutionary poems from 1935 to late 1940s. Subsequently, the ideological fervour of his poems underwent immense transformation. Routray was awarded the Padmashree in 1962 and Bharatiya Gyanapitha in 1982 for his valuable contribution to Oriya poetry

[37] Raghunath Das started his literary career in 1938 and wrote his most acclaimed revolutionary poems between 1940-1953, after which the doyen amongst Oriya left writers abruptly fell silent.

[38] In the limited space it is the aim of the study to include only a few representative writers of the left genre.

[39] S.N. Dwivedy, op. cit., 23.

The most distinguished literary reflections of the left were articulated primarily in poetry. For the first time ideology and political inclinations were so openly articulated in literature. Though realist novels had long expressed the depressing condition of exploited peasants and workers, exploitative landlords, cultural displacement due to modernity and the changing contours of traditional society, no clear political method was suggested to the peasants as a means to overcome their state of misery. Left poetry was radically different in this respect, never afraid to announce its political affiliation. In his poem 'Raja-Jema' (1947), Sachi Routray writes,

I am Sachi Routra'
Not any Tagore or Shelley
My work is not merely to draw pictures
On paper.[40]

While declaring his independence from influences, he also dismisses the purpose of their poetry-a poetry that merely created artistic impressions. The implied voice in the poem warns us about a revolution in the offing. Left poetry in Orissa reacted against the themes of '*sabuja*'[41] poets who wanted to rejuvenate the youth and wrote of romance and love. Ananta Patnaik wrote in the poem 'Kinchita', (1940)

My heart no longer needs playful moments of love
To keep myself veiled in dreams'.

Only a poet with new political beliefs would ask for '*jeevan rasa* in lieu of *hridaya rasa*, who would get satisfaction not from lips but the earth'.[42] In suffering, exploitation and oppression the peasant needs real food and not dreams to live on.

The necessity to bring about this violent change in society became the central theme for all left poets. Sachi Routray in his *Abhijan (*1937-38), *Raktasikha*, (1939) *Pallishree*, (1941) and *Baji Rout (*1943) expressed similar ideological commitment. In his *Shramika Kabi,* (Worker-Poet) he warns:

'says the poet of the workers, look around with your eyes open,
the pain of humankind, we no longer need the lazy nights and the false
dreams that it spins
our houses are on fire, we do not need the soft breeze that would make
the fire more intense.'[43]

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[40] '*mu sachiroutra nuhe tagore ba shelly...*'Sachidanand Routray, Raja-Jema, *Pandulipi*, Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1962.

[41] *Sabuja* writers, the Green era, brought new enthusiasm in young minds but their expressions were excessively romantic and idealistic. We discussed the *sabuja* novelist Kalindi Panigrahi in Chapter 3.

The reader is immediately alerted to a few things: the poet is the poet of workers; he abandons his relation with the class of his actual social origin, and explicitly addresses an audience, which is not the middle class. The poet, appeals to the agency of the peasant for it is only the peasants who have the ability to alter their situation. Symbols associated with romance, lazy windy nights, dreams, soft breeze, are all deliberately forsaken. In another poem *Sarbahara* (The Dispossessed) the peasant is called upon to get rid of his complacent attitude and 'act' to save himself from further destruction. Since the social order is dependent upon the peasant, he can bring all progress to a halt and should fear nobody for he has the shield of the generous wide sky above and the powerful earth.[44]

Baji Rout and Konark: Alternative Symbolism

The most revolutionary of Routray's poems is *Baji Rout*,[45] for it aimed at instilling into Oriya readers a new sense of nationalism and rebelliousness. In his manner of presentation, the poet made a spectacle out of Baji Rout's death. The young boy transcends age when the poet raises him to a mythical status. Though in one opinion, in Baji Rout we must not look for the seeds of class struggle because his death is a symbol of revolution appealing to people cutting across class boundaries,[46] it is clear that the poet portrays him as a representative of a particular class who fights and gives up life against oppression in general. He stands in contrast to the middle classes who are free-riders in the non-violent *satyagraha* movement while the poor and exploited fight the real battle. There is enough internal evidence to suggest that the poet intends to make him a symbol of class struggle. As in

'the lecherous society at a distance only yawns'[47]

or when he warns future poets against the representative poets of the bourgeois class who live by dreams because they can afford to,

'O you Escapists,

Where will you hide... where, O Cowards will you take refuge?'[48]

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[42] Haraprasad Das, *Adhunikata Ra Parampara*, Bharat Bharati, Cuttack, 1995, 268.
[43] '*kahe shramika kabi, dekha dui akhi meli...*' Basudeb Sahoo, op. cit., 71.
[44] Ibid., 72.
[45] Baji Rout was a boy of twelve years who died in the *Gadajat Andolan*. On 11th October 1938, during the movement in the Princely states, the English soldiers reached a village situated in the bank of river Brahmani to cross over to Dhenkanal. On reaching the bank, they saw there was no boat, excepting the one that Baji Rout was on. He denied to oblige them and was shot dead in an encounter in which at least three other people died. His body was later taken to Cuttack and in a grand procession finally burnt at Khannagar.
[46] Haraprasad Das, *op.cit.*, Bharat Bharati, Cuttack, 1995, 285.
[47] ' *lampat samaj dure ujagare mare khali hai..*' Baji Rout in *Sachi Routray Granthavali*, Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1962, 604.
[48] ' *aare palayanpanthi...kahin bhiru nebu ashraya...*' Ibid., 599.

The construction of self in left-wing creative writing was closely related to the re-evaluation of meaningfulness and what was good and bad in society.[49] The death of Baji Rout was interpretable in terms of the political worlds of both the middle class and the peasantry. The death of the boy was not only a resistance against alien rule but was symbolically perceived as a revolt against all forms of exploitation:

'His death is not that which burns out like a flame,
It is eternal...
He donated his life to create a new history
a flower he was whose fragrance never dies'[50]

In death, the little boy actually transcends death. He is not merely an individual but an 'institution'. Baji Rout's grave is declared a new place of pilgrimage for people who value freedom from exploitation. He is '*aliva mukti ra salita,*' a wick that burns forever. While the whole nation is encompassed in darkness and exploitation, Baji Rout is the sole guiding light, '*sesha dipayana*', and *satabdi ra sesha phula,* the century's last fragrant flower, *kranti ra sarathi,* the charioteer of revolution. Like Bhagirath who brought life on earth by getting the divine Ganga from heaven, *srujan ra nua bhagirathi,* Baji Rout is the creator of a new life. More violent than the storm and darker than the darkest clouds, he is the symbol of a new beginning.[51] In emphasising '*sesha*' or 'last', the poet makes Baji Rout the 'final' hero of Oriya freedom.

Baji Rout propagated an alternative doctrine of heroism, in contrast to *Dharmapada,* the young protagonist of the nationalist Gopabandhu Das[52]. *Dharmapada* is the character-type representative of the brave Oriya. The story of *Dharmapada,* widely used by the *Satyabadi* writers, uses the symbolic significance for the *Konark* temple.[53] This myth was recreated and retold during the national movement to reassure the Oriyas of their martial past and to erase the effeminate portrayal of Oriyas. Against twelve-year-old *Dharmapada,* now stood a twelve-year-old *Baji Rout,* who gave up his life for a supposedly nobler cause in his aborted attempt to save the Oriya nation from the hands of the exploiters. There was a clear contrast between a mythical hero and a historical hero. While the nationalist's historical narration of a community was intertwined with myths, it was crucial for left imagination to appeal to events of history. The evaluation of the 'brave' acts of the two boys is the most interesting factor in the creation of the two icons.

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[49] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass,1989, Preface.
[50] ' *Ye sikha deichi aji itihase hata teki dana...*'*Sachi Routray Granthavali,* op. cit., 1976, 577
[51] Baji Rout in *Sachi Routray Garnthavali* op. cit., 577-583.
[52] This poem has been discussed as the major icon of Oriya nationalism.
[53] The details of the narrative have been discussed earlier.

There are certain advantages in using a mythical character. It is able to perform actions which normal human beings with their limitations cannot. Gopabandhu's representation of the twelve year Dharmapada invested the character with a consciousness of the significance of his community and history that is improbable for a boy of that age. While mythic quality of Dharmapada was an advantage, the death of Baji Rout was a more recent historical event. In 'Modern Review', published from Calcutta, Pranakrushna Parija wrote 'Baji Rout has finally emerged as an emblem of true sacrificial grandeur on the canvas of unskilled futurity. Our poet has created an immortal hero out of this young boy to serve as an undying example of inspiration for countless generations to come'.[54]

Routray's poems strikingly deviated from *sabuja* literature that was primarily descriptive and laden with 'base' emotions of love. On a number of occasions he admits that his poetry was written with a 'purpose' as against the purposeless indulgent writing of the traditional poets. In his poem '*Konark*[55]', he writes,

> ' All you have seen in its stone sculptures is the poetic celebration of love
> I have, instead, seen a million skeletons, a 'shrine' of the emaciated
> poor, their
> hunger behind the facade of this celebration'[56]

'Konark''s significance lay in arousing a new sensibility, in providing a plebeian reading, an alternative reaction to Orissa's most celebrated architectural masterpiece. Routray's reading of 'Konark' stands in contrast with the assumption of nationalist writings that accept the myth that all categories of people relate to its beautiful architecture with equal awe and glory. The left writers tried to break the attachment of the people to a common body of symbols. Though nationalist and left writers shared the same symbols, they invested them with different meanings, the difference being established in their varied assessments of the 'past'. In left writing, the symbols traditionally regarded as representative of the glorious Oriya past were transformed into symbols of oppression. The past glory of a community is generally measured by the achievements of the rulers in history. Since literate people largely created community history, it ignored and often failed to uncover the contribution of workers in the process of history making. In creating these divisions in perceptions, reflecting contrasting interests in society, the left writers dismantled the singular perception of 'one' people

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[54] Basudeb Sahoo, op cit.,73.

[55] Konark is central to Oriya identity because it has innumerable myths woven around it, *Dharmapada* being the most popular. It symbolises a powerful political past of the Oriya nation and its '*Natya Mandap*' is proof of the independent dance form of Orissa weaving its cultural past with its political legacy.

[56] '*tume ta dekhicha shilare tahara...*' Sachidananda Routray, *Pandulipi*, op. cit., 33

who constituted the nation. They demanded a new historical 'gaze' from the reading public. In the course of the poem Routray accepts that his *'rasik'* (a person who has a taste for beauty) tendencies gave way to utter pain while witnessing the spectacle of *Konark* through the eyes of a 'worker' as he saw the workers gradually transform into animals to realise the whims of the king. What Konark in the nationalist writing fails to convey is the 'story of the man', the man who traded his life to create this poetry in stone. In his effort to celebrate the 'little man', in giving voice to the historically voiceless marginal sections, Routray points out the failure of the whole nation to appreciate the real efforts of the creator.

'The workers have carried the stones on their backs, like donkeys
Their spines deformed under the pressure...
While priests hail it as the only 'introduction' to our nation...
Has anybody ever tried to uncover the history of the man?
Has anybody ever asked how many workers' lives have been sacrificed?
Oh! this sentimental race
looks up to the grave of thousands
and beats its own chest in praise.[57]

In his attempt to write history from below Sachi Routray belittles all that the Satyabadi writers celebrated as the basis of the glorious Oriya past. Nilakantha Das's poem '*Konarke*' is described as a 'rapturous flight in imagination, a flight into the past, into the glory that was Orissa.'[58] While applauding the artistic and poetic sensibility of Routray, Humayun Kabir wrote 'it is a measure of his artistic maturity that in his best poems he has not succumbed to the temptation of cheap applause. Their origin may be in the political struggle but he has distilled the passion into an experience of universal appeal'.[59]

The Oriya Peasant in Left Writing

Ananta Patnaik, the other celebrated socialist poet, was the editor of the magazine '*Adhunik*'[60]. Along with Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, he was one of the first left writers in Orissa. *Adhunik* was brought out by '*Naba Yuga Sahitya Sansad*', (The New Age Literary Society) established in 1935. What the term modern entailed was the essential point of departure of the writers who wrote with a socialist intent. As Rama

[57] ' *kete majdoor gadarbha pari...*' Ibid., 35.
[58] Chittaranjan Das, *A Glimpse into Oriya Literature,* Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1982.
[59] Basudeb Sahoo, op. cit., 73

Prasad Singh notes in his essay, Bartaman Sahitya Re Nutan Bhava Dhara Ra Abahan (The Call for New Thinking in Present Day Literature) '...if mankind (or a community) has to attain salvation, it has to create for itself a new literature, which would have nothing to do with God or the divine order and treated problems of humankind not as preordained and predestined, devised by the plans of God on the basis of the law of *Karma*, but as originating from the complex situations that man creates for himself.'[61] Apart from overcoming excessive religiosity, to be modern, therefore, implied minimum contact with ideas and beliefs originating from religion. It also meant to reject all that generally formed the content of Oriya poetry. 'Oriya literature as it stands now is weak (*durbala)* cowardly *(bheeru)* afflicted (*klishtha)* and filled with fantasy *(kalpanamaya)'.*[62] Left writing in Orissa for the first time made a conscious effort to thematically move away from the tradition of celebrating the religious and to direct its attention towards concrete issues. Its non-religiosity was its basis for being regarded as realistic, 'scientific' and socialistic.

Left writing valued the peasant and the urban in different ways. While Sachi Routray created his most successful poems from the descriptions of urban ugliness, Ananta Patnaik dwelled on the rural peasant. But this, unlike the romanticised and idealised rural of the mainstream writer, was a picture of suffering and severe exploitation. It did not accentuate the mythical sense in the reader of the village being 'ideal' and 'perfect'. This was a significant departure in the left perception of Oriyaness.

Ananta Patnaik in his poem 'Mu Eai Kabita', writes that the time is not far when this province of *Nilachal*, the great land of *Jagannath*, will produce a band of fiery soldiers carrying the message of the communists. Poetically reiterating the left slogan that the impoverished life of the poor is the outcome of imbalances in the economic structure where the rich have historically appropriated the surplus, he writes in the poem 'Kabita Ra Cocktail Party Re', (In the Cocktail Party of Poetry),

> 'our villages today are strewn with skeletons of the poor
> while people loot the poor with their golden false smiles
> we continue to regard the dacoits as our saviours'[63]

The mainstream writers not only romanticised the condition of the peasantry, but also idealised suffering and poverty as having deep moral connotations. The peasant was

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[60] The philosophy behind the publishing of *Adhunik* was to instil into the Oriya readership the zeal of the progressive movement, and to destroy the influence of bad literature or *apa-sahitya.* Nityananda Sathpathy, op. cit., 108.

[61] Cited in Basudeb Sahoo, op. cit., 74

[62] Nityananda Sathpathy, op. cit., 107-108.

[63] '*aji ta gaonre kankalasata...* ' Basudeb Sahoo, op. cit, 74.

regarded as a hero for his ability to maintain cultural principles and uphold righteousness and peace even in the most adverse situations. The urban middle class was portrayed as yearning to return to the village idyll. In contradistinction, left writers considered this as a part of the hegemonising project of the intellectual middle class. In yet another poem, Patnaik ridicules the celebration of the glorious past of Orissa, as seen and described by earlier poets, essentially a middle class *'bhadralok'* assessment of the poor,

'we measure our greatness with a handful of puffed rice
our pretence to intelligence while discussing issues over a cup of tea
I am the destitute, the poor,
I possess the bad character and lack in discipline
I am the breaker of all your rules'[64]

A typical example of left writing; this accuses the middle class of characterising the poor as criminals and law-breakers. This notion became predominant with the growth of cities, which attracted both the educated and the illiterate in search of a better life. With the growing influx of the lower class into cities, their frustrations over unemployment, uprooted from their traditional living, the growing slums these groups were seen as threats to the propriety of middle class life.[65] Moreover, the lower caste was traditionally represented as possessing unrestrained emotions and passions; the ones easily instigated into violence.

Unlike Sachi Routray who primarily concentrated on urban life fraught with problems, Ananta Patnaik wrote of 'change' that 'ought' to come among the rural poor. Most of his poems, *Mukti Sangita* (The Song of Freedom) *Age Chal* (Move Ahead) *Sarbahara* (Dispossessed) directly resonated the 'workers of the world unite' slogan with that contextual difference. They urge the peasant and workers to demand their rights and fight against people who have deprived them of a fulfilling life. The attitude of sympathy towards peasants and workers in mainstream writing is transformed into an assertion of rights in Ananta Patnaik's poems. The peasant was not merely represented as a passive carrier of authentic cultural values. The left reposed greater responsibility in them by granting them a more definite and purposive political role. Mainstream writing tried to impress upon the modernising educated middle class about the value of peasant life. There was a comparative evaluation of the two life styles in which invariably the

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[64] ' *mudhi posaka re atmakalana...*' Ibid., 75.

[65] In *Sahara re Sakala*, discussed earlier, we were introduced to the unruly and licentious behaviour of the slum-dwellers who become an embarrassment in the neighbourhood. Brahmotri Mohanty, *Sahara Re Sakala,* Jhankara, Vol 6, P.Press, Cuttack, 1959, Serial 5, Orissa State Archives, 688-89.

peasants, the tribal, the uneducated and people with traditional values were seen as triumphing over others. In their writing, there was a definite but restricted 'inclusion' of the marginalised sections through 'celebrating' their life, their allegiance to traditional values and presenting a hero who emerged successful and unscathed by all adverse situations.

By contrast, the representation of the under-privileged in left writing was more 'meaningful' in political terms. The middle class 'other' was not to be imitated but opposed politically. Both types of writing believed in the 'real' worth of the peasants over 'the other'. The mainstream highlighted the values while the left emphasised the 'economic' aspect of life. Both hinted at the collapse of a society, which devalued peasants and workers, and recognised the 'disadvantage' of marginal sections. One glorified this disadvantage as blissful, fraught with poverty but endowed with a moral abundance, while the other saw the need to change their existential problems by negotiating for them a position of greater power. This change was to come about by a political assertion and not by emotional appeal. There was thus a clear difference in strategy between the two groups of writers: one directly influenced by left ideals, the other by liberal humanism. Ananta Patnaik in his poem *Mukti Sangita* (1939) writes,

'the peasant is the master of the country [mulk]
labourers, the starving, wave your flag today
after all, the colour of the flag comes from your blood...
Clench your fists and take an oath
people who have looted and exploited you
you will fight them ...'[66]

Note the distinct revolutionary imagery used in the poem: the worker protagonist, the red flag, the clenched fists, the oath and the final fight. It places before the reader a 'spectacular march' of the poor against exploitation. The peasant 'rises' into consciousness from dormancy. He does not plead for a decent life but 'snatches' it back. This reflects the Marxist concern for overt forms of class struggle. All these poems suggest a direct confrontation between two classes, where the peasant realises the significance of fighting an organised battle. They directly reactivate memories of revolution in Russia and China. In 'Age Chal':

'the dispossessed, (*sarbahara)* today will march forward
singing the song of communism (*samyabad)*
for the flag is red and your shield is red

...your countrymen are similar to the foreigners

both use the same tactics and exploit you equally.'[67]

or in 'Sarbahara'

'in the age when man has conquered the heights of the skies and depths of

the sea,

we cry for that one morsel of rice. Oh! Food

we accept all as the dictate of fate, we bang our heads on the gates of the temple

we fail to carry the weight of our hands, fail to light our face with smiles,

but no more,

for we will snatch our rights back, we the working class(*jati*)'[68]

or in Ame Mulia ra Jati Jagibu [69]

'under the point of their knife

the state sucks our blood and nurtures zamindars

we will no longer plead with them

we will destroy them all'[70]

At the beginning of their careers, both Ananta Patnaik and Sachi Routray believed in ushering in a revolution to completely overhaul the existing system. But over time their association with progressive writing declined. Ananta Patnaik moved in the direction of Gandhi, as we see in his collection '*Tarpana Kare Aji*' (I Make this Offering Today). His commitment to the 'voiceless' sections and the poor did not weaken but the strategy had changed. '*Bapu*' the messiah became the focus of his later poems; there was complete trust in one individual who had the strength to alter the 'fate' of the poor. Patnaik's poems written after the death of Gandhi lament the political void that his absence created. The possible uplift of the poor that seemed probable during the life of Gandhi was again pushed into oblivion, with people without commitment taking over the reins of leadership. The whole '*jati*' had retreated backwards, there was a complaint that freedom was essentially a 'ploy' to keep the poor dominated, for it was a freedom not of the whole country but of a few sections in society. The dreams of emancipation that the poor had seen, the relief that both independence and Gandhi had promised were destroyed.

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[66] ' *mulk jakara malik chasi...*' Ananta Patnaik, *Rachana Samgraha*, Part I, Arya Prakashan, Cuttack, 1996, 3-4

[67] '*sarbahara mukti age agei chala...*' Ibid, 5-6

[68] '*je juge manaba udei akase...*'Ibid, 7

[69] All these poems were published in a compilation called *Raktashikha* and written between 1937-1939.

[70] *sangina muna re ei sarkar...*', *Rachana Samgraha*, op.cit., 8.

Though the concern for the depressed sections remained in Patnaik's work, it now started to resemble the mainstream writers; the only difference was the lack of faith in 'religion and fate'. In his collection of poems, ' *Shanti Sikha'*, (The Flame of Peace, 1953), he regrets the absence of peace, though in his poem *Asichi Mu Asichi* (I Have Come), there is a ring of confidence

'Who is it that stands in the way of the plough-the stone
Who is it that destroys the beautiful green pastures-- the locusts
Who strangles the purity of the conscience-- the murderer.'[71]

The disbelief in freedom is also due to the institutions that independence brought about. In his poem *Ahe Mahaganaka*, (The Seer 1953)', he suspects the intentions of people who framed the Indian Constitution. The failure of democracy, which continues to suit the need of the privileged few, creates distance between people and breeds class difference.[72] In fact democracy was a method to suspend the class struggle with the promise of representation and equal rights. True to its principles, democracy would only succeed in breeding yet another elite who would continue exploitation in the name of the masses that they claimed to represent. It just meant revamping the structures of inequality. Both his poems, *Ahe Mahaganaka* and *Sahid Nuhe* are extremely critical of the exploiting class consisting of bureaucrats, created and patronised by the state, which should ideally act on behalf of the state to protect the weak. These poems portray a shift from the crude violent repression of classes to more sophisticated repressive methods through a system of ideas and discourses:

'They are here, the kings with no family lineage
With them the fate of the nation rises
Look who is in charge to get food for the hungry millions!
In the attire of your leader is none other than '*Yama*'

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[71] '*langala pathe rodha kara kiye...*' Ibid., 59-61.

[72] '*Dhanikara Banikara Tume Ganatantri...*'You have created the rich, you democrats
and created these strange posts,
Defence minister!
who seized the nation with continuous war
But the people have always revolted and thrown out
Despots.. they will
'Nuhe Nuhe Swadhinata Pakaiba Bandha' You have mortgaged your freedom
to western powers
Freedom is not to be beaten by police
Peace is not to be found in the romantic city of Delhi
In the expensive clubs, in the playful state of
drunkenness
Under the crushing shoes of the bureaucrat... Ibid., 66-81.

Do not mistake him for a friend...'[73]

But Ananta Patnaik was different from other left poets. While he declines to base life upon the futility of dreams there is an implicit suggestion that every individual should have a dream as the driving force of his life. His poems have a flavour of optimism unlike that of the dreary, painfully realistic poems of others.

Like his poems, Patnaik's short stories, '*Ravana*' and '*Pheri Aaa*'[74], (Come Back), were sceptical of the promise of independence. In *Ravana*, he prophesies that the forthcoming *Ram-rajya* will be as a bad as the Lanka ruled by Ravana. The state will only be successful in perpetuating degeneration, and the older order with its aberrations and perversions will continue to prevail. In *Pheri Aaa* we are introduced to the representative character who during the recent freedom struggle, influenced by Gandhi was ready to take all hardship to sustain the '*satyagraha*', but in independent India forgets his commitment, in the struggle of living and does odd jobs, from being an insurance agent to a salesman. Two things that are evident in this story are the frustration of people, the sheer incapacity to carry forward the ideals under pressure of modern existence and the changing and uncommitted attitude of people who once formed a part of a struggle but now consider it profitable to dispose of their ideals in favour of practical living. Ananta Patnaik started with romantic ideals of the left writing in the late 1930s but concluded with the non-violence of Gandhi.

In 1948, Durga Charan Samanta, in 'Jatan Nagara ra Bidrupa'[75] exposed the futility of Oriya socialist poetry. He alleged that the left literary movement failed to make an impact on people due to its own lack of commitment. Exactly as the ruler of Dhenkanal built his palace through '*bethi*' (bonded labourers), modern administration made similar use of people. According to the poem, if the left writers did not have the moral courage to expose the loopholes of modern administration, they should not consider themselves as socialist poets. All discussions on left poetry charted the peculiar behaviour of the Oriya left poets, their commitment which falters through time. Samant alleged that Oriya left-wing writers had blindly followed communist ideology without relevantly contextualising it. They were unable to make any progress with the readership because they had no idea what would replace the old order once it fell. They had alternate strategies and protagonists, but no alternate vision and failed to see the impossibility of the 'magic revolution', which would arrive and replace all. They did not invent new ways to talk of exploitation and oppression and did not understand that the

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[73] ' *asile yehi manche niswa kulara raj....'Rachana Samagraha,* 135-137.
[74] Ananta Patnaik, *Ananta Bichitra*, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1991.

modern class situation was a much more complex one than merely the two categories of 'exploited' and 'exploiter', the 'bourgeois' and the 'proletariat'

That left literary movement had partial influence is indicated in the writing of an Oriya literary critic, '...it is an irony and perhaps a mockery of the poet's earlier creations that he got all the official awards for what he produced during his later phase, which looms large and sits heavy upon the corpse of what he had professed himself to be capable earlier.'[76] The decision of the government to give an award to Sachi Routray for his non-left writing was itself an evidence of its political stance. There were poets like Sitakanta Mahapatra who attributed the apparent failure of left literature to 'the lack of thematic and stylistic variety'.[77]

Less celebrated amongst the Oriya left poets was Raghunath Das who is considered to have brought the real flavour of Marxist writing into Oriya literature. In 1938, he wrote in his poem '*Mrityu Go Tume Setebele Kiyan Asani'*, (O Death! Why Don't You Overcome me Then):

'when the poor farmer bursts into a joyous song while reaping the crop
for the landlord, forgetting in that instance the real and difficult trudge
of life,
death! Why don't you just overcome him then.'[78]

In his suspicion that independence will not in any way change the fate of the poor he writes in his poem, 'The 15th of August',

'beware all,
this is not the last dream that you shall see'[79]

Just within a year of gaining Independence, disappointed by freedom which he saw as fake, he confirmed that just as a human child, once born, does not live on forever, there is no reason to celebrate this partial freedom, for it was likely to be short lived. After being an active member of the Communist Party for a long time, Das led the SUCI (Socialist Unity Centre) in Orissa and edited the journal *Sarbahara,* (Dispossessed). He continued to be extremely suspicious about the intentions of the ruling Congress government and accused it of collaborating with the upper class and marginalising the interests of the poor and neglected sections of the society.

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[75] Durga Charan Samanta, 'Jatan Nagara Ra Bidrupa', *Jhankara,* Serial No 3, 9th Year, 1st issue, 1953.
[76] Chittaranjan Das, op. cit., while discussing Sachi Routray's declining interest in progressive writing, 245.
[77] Sitakanta Mahapatra, *Curve of Meaning*, Image Publications, Balasore, 1978, 3.
[78] '*dhana katu katu gai die pade...*' Rabi Singh, *Odia Sahitya Re Marxbadi Chetana, Jhankara,* Vol 10,1973, P.Press, Cuttack, 1022. OSA.
[79] '*jatri sabadhan! Tora ei jatrapathe nuhe je antima swapna'* Ibid., 1026.

'O! Kings, landlords and capitalists-- the country belongs to you!
The throne, estates, money, everything is assured to you
sala! [80]Coolie, *you*! peasants, produce more for us
Then die, abiding by the rules of non-violence and peace'[81]

At the beginning, all left literary writers were almost translating the socialist manifesto into poetry. Increasingly renowned Oriya left poets got disillusioned with the working of left parties and consciously disassociated from writing propagandist literature. Subsequently, Sachi Routray and Ananta Patnaik wrote poetry that was aesthetically mature and nuanced but seemed less politically committed. On the other hand, poets like Raghunath Das and later Rabi Singh were politically motivated, seemingly more committed to the cause of socialism, and remained closely associated with the working of the left parties in Orissa. But the excessively propagandistic nature of their literature led to their condemnation as 'vulgar Marxists'.

Unlike former poets, Das categorically targeted the coercive structure of the state in his poetry. Not only did he evoke strong passions amongst his committed readers against the unacceptable hegemony of the Indian state but also represented the Congress party as the dominant mechanism for exploitation. Interestingly, he makes use of the epic idiom to drive his point home. In his most popular poem 15th of August (August Pandar), he refers to the ruling party as Kamsa, the tyrannical demon king and he hopes that there will be another Krishna who is going to put an end to this dictatorial order. Krishna and Kamsa are not portrayed as individuals but symbolise different sections of society.

The commitment of the left writers to change was not suspect but their actual success in inducing change is doubtful. The social background of the Oriya readership, which predominantly consisted of the middle class, with an upper class/caste bias, did not object to writings that raised their consciousness about the condition of the poor. But they had problems with the demand that required sacrifice of their privileges. Left writing marginally touched and influenced lives of people who formed the content of their literature. The Oriya poor was uneducated and had little access to this writing. To the urban middle class it was more convenient to be able to relate to the past, without actually living in it themselves, to see their past 'living on' in the life of the poor farmer, the villager who is untouched by the so called vagaries of the fast modernising world. The literature created for the exploited was received and discussed only by the elite.

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[80] *Sala* and *abe* are the commonest abuses used in the language. A wife's brother is called '*sala*'. Referring to anyone with this necessarily is an abuse to his wife.
[81] '*Maharaja, zamindar, punjipati - ye desha tumara...*' Rabi Singh, op. cit., 1026.

While the intent of left literature was to create an impact among the educated middle class that largely belonged to the traditionally privileged groups, it succeeded more in threatening than in persuading them. Though left norms were written in favour of the masses, the conservative mass felt alienated from the language it was written in. Not only was it unfamiliar in its content but also, as Jameson points out, there is a possibility of the text being read if it expressed common linguistic and cultural codes. Society comprises different social formations and has a heterogeneous system of mutually antagonistic cultural levels with different intelligibilities. The lower class was unable to grasp the complexity of left writing because that material did not form a part of their historical consciousness, while the people to whom it was intelligible were not ready for change.[82] Death and destruction fitted the romantic and the philosophical agenda of the left writers but the excessive fascination for violence and the urge for radical changes in social relations made the reading public weary.

Rabindranath Singh and Brajanath Rath are two contemporary Marxist Oriya poets. Their primary concern has been a protest against the inconsequential romantic poetry, which lacked 'purpose' and had no direct social utility. The content of their poetry was different from the philosophical expositions and existential themes of their contemporary poets. They dealt with temporal problems of unemployment and the continuing exploitation in an independent and democratic country. One main theme of these poets was the treatment of the disoriented youth, partially uprooted from their traditional life style and unable to cope with modernity. The youth was treated with sympathy, their confusions not merely attributed to their own callousness and irresponsibility but to the political and social conditions which failed to give them any direction. In his poem '*Desha Ta Jauchi Kahin Re* (Where Is the Country Headed To?), Singh writes of the frustration of the youth over joblessness, their determination to get over these difficult times, to light the fire of destruction.

According to Chittaranjan Das some of the progressive writers who had initially raised their voices against the rulers and their misutilisation of power now sided with them. His main contention was that the truly committed writer could never side with the establishment '...he is always on the side of man and the future and truth...' 'The courage of the writer has been the worst victim as far as writing in post-independence Orissa is concerned'.[83] Extremely critical of the lack of commitment among modern writers, he compared contemporary poetry with the '*reeti*' period of the 17th and 18th centuries when the poets 'overdid the structure of poetry to conceal that they had nothing

[82] W.C. Dowling, op. cit., 137-141.

important to say'. The modern left poets did not perceive the real issues and continued to write on themes which lacked intensity and commitment and failed to have any impact on the reading public.

Especially disappointed with Sachi Routray's later creations, Das writes that Routray was hailed as the poet of the people because of his earlier poems, his commitment and sincerity to the cause he upheld. '....it is really depressing, once you have fallen in love with the earlier Routray, to see him behaving as if he was now bent upon unmaking the real image of the poet he once had been.'[84] The explanation that he himself put forward for this change from a revolutionary self to a more liberal one is the unavoidable change that comes over all with the changing value system and the changing trends in world literature. As an Oriya poet writes, the essence of Oriyaness is contained in the religious poetry of Orissa instead of the dry and celebrative (sic) poetry of Radhanath, the patriotic poetry of the twenties and the Marxism inspired poetry of the thirties.[85]

The Real: The Rural in Orissa

It was not unusual that left litterateurs wrote about the idyllic rural, though the idyllic nature of the rural in their poetry did not possess the quality of timelessness. In the preface to one of his earliest poem collections '*Pallishree*' Sachi Routray writes that 'it celebrates the beauty and individuality of Orissa's villages'. The poem '*Chotta Mora Gaon Ti*' (My Little Village) written in 1941 reflects the fundamental contribution of the village in later stages of an individual's life. It provides the first condition on the basis of which a self-definition takes place.

The first stanza of the poem makes us conscious of the two most 'real' phases in human life, childhood and old age. Youth and middle age are conspicuously absent possibly because these phases are associated with 'greed' and acquisitive instincts. The reader is bound to get a feeling that the village is more 'real', has a capacity to withstand change, to remain unmoved and emerge heroically after every life-shattering encounter with natural calamities. The village is characterised as the contemplative 'soul'. In contrast life in city is described as 'unreal' where there is unnerving movement, illusory pleasures to which an individual is irresistibly attracted, till he realises the futility of it all. The village and the urban stand in stark opposition not because of their quality of life but because the 'promises' they make are so different.

'My obscure village...a speck

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[83] Chittaranjan Das, op. cit., 243.
[84] Ibid., 244.
[85] Sitakanta Mahapatra, op. cit., 3

You will not find a trace of it in the geographical maps...
Its streams flow in me as my blood
And its air sustains my life...
The disarming beauty of which
Made a poet out of a stone....
Obscure she might be, but in her lap
have been raised great men ....
The village, deserted, turned into lifeless walls
the once green fields was now a playground for foxes
peasants have deserted the village in search of new pastures...
to Assam... the exploitation of the landlords unbearable for them.'[86]

While the poet accepts the indispensability of the village as a life-sustaining element, by the end of the poem we sense the inevitable death of the village. Although it confirms our earlier view about the first-generation Oriya middle class being deeply distressed on being uprooted from their village-life and thrown into the turmoil of city-living, left creative writing portrays this structural change in terms of inevitability, while the mainstream writers expressed it as an experience of complete disillusionment. Mainstream writers continue to idealise the village in spite of its suffering, exploitation and poverty, which are raised to the status of cultural experiences. Left writing not only differs in its perception but also acknowledges the incapacity of the village to provide a good life. In their eyes, by availing the urban option, the individual does not commit a cultural offence. Routray's poem unfolds the different trajectories of the individual and the village, one in search of a better life and the other's confrontation with decline. The passive voice in this poem tells us of the stagnation that has overcome the village.

Another poem in the same collection contains an 'appeal' to Jagannath. While describing the greatness associated with Jagannath, the description internally questions his existence and systematically annihilates the power of the highest authority in the religious lives of Oriyas. Rationalistic in a way characteristic of progressive writers, the poem first glorifies and later addresses the futility of believing in god, and his inability to act in times of human distress. Routray's helpless God is different from the helpless village goddess[87] who stands as a shocked spectator while the world sinks into greater evil. Her authority is never questioned, her existence never doubted, her power, in suspension, would come back. But Routray questions the very existence of this powerful

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[86] '*tahari jala rakta hoi sirare bahe jesan nai...* ' Sachi Routray, *Pallishree*, Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1941, 1-2

[87] We have dealt with the centrality of the village goddess in the previous chapter.

God, his relevance in the changing conditions, as the protector of the poor and helpless, his traditional characterisation as *patitapabana.* He questions the egalitarianism that his religion flaunts, the seeming fraternity where the Muslim Salabega and Vaishnava Chaitanya sing their *bhajans*. For if either God or religion was real then they would react to the breaking down of the earth'.[88] To question the magnanimity of god was not a novel idea, but the difference lay in the questions raised by the non-believer. The poem is an address of an atheist poet to an audience, which is predominantly religious. A believer questions the existence of God in the form of *abhimana*[89] while Routray does it with rationalist disillusion. In negatively addressing a symbol quintessentially Oriya he disputes the relevance of the symbol, does not explicitly offend the sensibility of the believer but urges a reconsideration:

'The earth whines in pain,
to your ears the cries never reach
Where is the power, *chakra*, eternal wheel, *langala* the plough,
sankha, the celestial conch
The wheels of your chariots run over the necks of your devotees
they do not ever harm the enemies of humankind
he lives and grows, destroys under your godly patronage...
When will you act....speak...
when will you put an end to this fire of hatred.'[90]

Death and Destruction

To the left writer, death and destruction seemed to hold a special appeal. Their idea was to rebuild on the debris of tradition, for new life could come into being on death and new creation on destruction. Gyanendra Barma in his poem 'Bamapatha' (The Left Path) writes,

'In this war, I have chosen my path
I have led my chariot to the left
For the right belongs to the bloodsuckers
Them I challenge to a war...their call of death'[91]

Godabarisha Mahapatra writes in the poem *Biplaba Pathe*, (On Way to Revolution):

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[88] Jagannath (eka Janana), *Pallishree*, op. cit., 65.
[89] This emotion has no equivalent word in English. It is a combination of anger and complaint normally expressed to somebody one deeply loves.
[90] '*rodai dharani hoi kain-kain ratna bedire ta ki baje nahi...*' Ibid., 67-68.
[91] '*sangrame aji bari neichi patha...*' in Swadhinata Parabarti, in Basudeb Sahoo, *Jhankara*, Vol 3 January 1957, Cuttack, 85.

'Dance o humiliated lot, the dance of destruction

Wake up to the tune of the celestial conch.'[92]

Or Sachi Routray in his poem '*Jhada'*, (The Storm), says

'look and revere the ensuing storm

in the face of which powerful nature stands in humility...

open your windows... for once,

O! Cowards do not shut your doors

along with the promise of destruction

it assures creation again'[93]

Though their attitude towards modernity is considerably complex, all left authors welcome the 'new', which promises change. We are introduced to this change through the imagery of the storm, the sheer brute power of which along with the '*mantra*' of destruction brings hope of new creation. The explicit suggestion is to break the continuity with the past, to conquer the emotional attachment to tradition, to accept 'the winds of change which have overcome defeat'. There is no special reference to one class of people; it is an open appeal to all who are distressed and agitated with the present state of affairs. The first part of Sachi Routray's '*Pandulipi*' consists of poems in which change is a constant theme. Apart from '*Jhada'*, '*Sankranti*' also celebrates the '*dhwani*', suggestion of the '*anagata*', that which has not yet arrived. *Sankranti* is more direct in the condemnation of the traditional past: 'my chariot triumphs and runs over the corpse of the past'. The left confidence to build a more meaningful structure of life on the ruins of tradition is contrary to mainstream opinion that, 'our society is so ancient that it is absolutely impossible to replace this social order with a completely new one. It is open to change but not to revolution.'[94] The left writers want to introduce changes in the trajectory of history, to create and rewrite a new history.

'I have deserted the path of tradition

When I look in the direction of the past, I am shocked,

at the foot marks that exploitation has left on the sands of time

the path is drenched with human blood

The past fails to obstruct my progress, spreading its net of illusions

I move forward..for 'onward move' is the only truth...the call of my road.'[95]

In making 'destruction' central to their discourse, unabashed association with '*dhwansa*' and apparent intolerance to 'the beauty of creation' '*shrushti*', left writers

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[92] '*nacha lanchita jaga banchita...*' Ibid., 85

[93] '*eije asuchi jhada kara sakhi tare namaskar...' Pandulipi*, op. cit., 1.

[94] Ramachandra Mishra, *Bhai Bhauja*, Sathi Prakashan, Cuttack, 1949 Preface.

went significantly against cultural and religious norms of continuity. It made irrelevant the whole theory of *karma* and along with it practices of *tyaga* and *dharma,* the basic organisational principles upon which Oriya society, at least its conventional literary image, was structured.

Sachi Routray's *Pashu* (Animal) is a deliberate attempt to present the 'gory' aspect of life, discrediting things traditionally considered as objects of literary or artistic praise and negating traditional aesthetics. An allegory of Marx's theory of alienation, *Pashu* depicts the complete devaluation of man and increasing value of the world of things. Though it does not directly address the theme of capitalism, there is a definite suggestion, not merely of economic individualism but its political counterpart in corrupt democracy, which encourages estrangement among human beings by forcing them to abandon human qualities and nurse their latent animal instincts. The bizarre consequence is that modern individuals fail to realise human functions but obtain 'pleasure' in animal activities.[96] Man lives like an animal without consciousness, without the power to discriminate between good and evil, beautiful and ugly. But there is a subtle difference between human alienation that we encounter in Guruprasad Mohanty's *Kalaprusha*[97] and Sachi Routray's *Pashu* and *Rakshasha.* Guruprasad's individual dwells in thought, realises the process that irresistibly draws him into animalism and also suffers 'regret'. Routray's individual does not entertain even these vestigial human emotions. While both poets condemn the modern situation as a liberation of desires leading to frustration, they suggest distinctly different modes of overcoming this crisis. Guruprasad is unable to clearly advance an alternative though we can discern summons to retrieve tradition. Routray faithful to his political stand, trusts the ensuing stormy revolution to bring about communism:

'when all celebrate the sweet singing of the cuckoo in the spring...
he rejoices in crushing the little body of the bird with his foot
when the lotus blooms in the chill of the autumn
how good does it feel to tear its petals with your teeth...
When the dawn breaks into the dark spread of the sky
the animal within me seethes for blood...

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[95] ' *parampara ra sarani hudichi...*' *Pandulipi* op. cit., 25.
[96] Jon Elster (ed), *Karl Marx, A Reader*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, for the discussion on Alienation.
[97] Guruprasad Mohanty, 'Kalapurusha', *Kabita Samagraha*, Chaturanga Prakashini, Bhubaneswar, 1995. Refer Chapter 3.

The human within me is dead, you killed it, what remains is the animal.'[98]

It is in the allegation of the protagonist 'you killed it' that we briefly encounter a human who alerts the reader to the historical process that brought about this degeneration.

Though both kinds of writing made similar observations about exploitation and oppression the mainstream writer failed in directing his aesthetic displeasure at the immediate source of appropriation. To the leftists it appeared that they tended to make compromises with the appropriators.[99] The protagonists of left poems and novels have a greater sense of 'experience'; the character acquires added dimensions as the narrative moves, whereas in mainstream writing the power of the character is revealed to the reader from the beginning. The crucial zone of 'autonomy' is treated differently as left writing gives the character greater autonomy/right to choose a particular characteristic of his/her own personality.

The passivity and fatalistic acceptance of the social order was what the left rejected.[100] Left writing readily associated itself with what was traditionally presented as 'evil' in their readiness to contest traditional notions of morality. In both mainstream and left literature what constituted 'good' or 'moral' was a certain ideal mode of social relations and behaviour, but mainstream literature emphasised that the definition of the Oriya self especially depended upon one's sense of 'restraint', a personality trait considered crucial to a Hindu definition of the perfect human being. We have noticed that nationalist and mainstream writers have stressed the need to exercise restraint upon one's passions even in adverse situations as extremely important. Lack of restraint over one's thought and actions is generally associated with *asuras* (demons). The capacity to retain composure under conditions of immense suffering was a test of 'character'. The difference in perception over the *karma* philosophy led the mainstream protagonists to believe that conditions of suffering were natural and inevitable. Left heroes by contrast turn situations of suffering into occasions of defiance.

In the poem *'Rakshasa'* (Demon), Routray writes of the dormant and fatigued demon that withstood all exploitation in the name of religion, discipline and society, and has returned in the incarnation of Satan. The difficulty for a discourse of this sort in making an impression upon popular consciousness was that it did not fit popular imagery

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[98] '*chaitra ushare gaye jebe pika ...*' Ibid, 26-27.

[99] The confrontation between the exploited and the rich gets substantially dissolved because either the rich hero is a protagonist of the poor or there is a peasant boy who, after education, has become a part of the dominant class and realises that this class is not that bad after all.

and could not persuade an audience with fixed notions and images of good and evil. Placed in the wider context, these writings were read and produced in relation and in reaction to other texts and discourses. The left reversal of images defied the traditional Hindu mythic logic of war between 'gods' and 'demons' and eventual victory of the gods. Clearly an inverted logic operated when gods were conquered and the promise and liberation came through the rule of the demon. It contrasted with mainstream writing, which appealed to the good within human beings, advocating humility and non-violence. In left writing we often come across brute power, an advocacy of ruthlessness with which people found it hard to identify.

In a discussion on Routray's poems, Mathurananda Hota writes that true to the revolutionary spirit, the poet accepts and welcomes the life of the '*jajabar*', eternal wanderer. A *jajabar* life is associated with adventure and romance but is not free from uncertainty and fickleness. The wanderer lacks the strength and inner resolve of the traditional man of character. To create characters of wanderers was essentially a dangerous proposition for a society not merely in transition but bewildered with the coming of modernity. His revolutionary '*prema bhava'* had no binding rules to abide by, no ideals to believe in. The poet viewed it as the requirement of modern life, demanding and strenuous. From the death of the village to the inevitable movement into the agitated life of the city, Routray's journey from *Pallishree* to *Pandulipi* can be regarded as representing an inevitable historical movement. *Pandulipi* describes the breakdown of the village and its social formation, over which an over-crowded city is raised marked by the changing social and economic relations among people. He is attracted to the sleepy, gentle and tension free life of the village, but that is a distant and irretrievable option. In his '*Batayane*', 'Window', he talks of the modest and true desires of a modern human being.

'Just give me this much, this much of space for love
As the tiresome day comes to an end
a companion to talk to and
the gentle touch of fingers'[101]

Women in Left Writing: Contesting Virtues

Shringara,[102] [beauty and love] was a central theme of both traditional and mainstream modern Oriya literature. There was an accepted notion of beauty and love,

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[100] In *Sasti,* the social divisions along caste and class lines are considered necessary. p. 103. Kanhu Mohanty, *Sasti*, Friends, Cuttack, 14th Ed 1995. Simultaneous rise of left politics in Orissa led to regular discussions on the viability of socialism. *Desha Katha,* July 10th 1934, OSA.
[101] *'khali mate dia tike-ete tike-khsina prema-kana... ' Pandulipi*, op.cit., 83.

which left writing rejected. The left writers declared their difference from the earlier aesthetic tradition by creating poetry from things and issues that would appear both 'ugly' and 'scandalous' to the conventional reader. While this brought out the poet's consciousness of changing times, bringing literature closer to reality, it also brought in themes which were traditionally neglected as sites for literary production. This was their way of aesthetically encountering modernity, and making it an inextricable part of their literary project. What seemed of foremost importance to them was that poetry should reflect the 'truth' of real life rather than create 'imaginary' situations of happiness. The unconventional description of beauty and love in left creative writing contradicted the spirit of the '*sabuja*' poets[103], who wanted to rejuvenate themes of '*yauvana*', 'youthful love' in Oriya poetry.

In his poem '*Asamapika*', Sachi Routray asserts that 'life is greater than love', clearly reversing the traditional belief that 'giving and sharing love is crucial to leading a good life.' In the poem, '*Pratima Nayak'* he deviates from the beautiful and sensuous description of the woman. She is described as 'ugly' (her face full of pimples, with an unattractive dry smile). In her, the poet creates a 'new woman'; ugly may be but 'respected'.

'Her sickly body, digested, unclean pimpled face
Like paper-flowers, her body dusty with age
That is where dreams meet reality.'[104]

Moreover, there was a traditional pre-requisite for creating beautiful descriptions in poetry. A traditional Oriya saying observes, 'only a heart that is happy sings a song of beauty', when the nation is at peace and its people not suffering from hunger (*udar jwala*), that a poet of the nation produces beautiful poetry.[105] An Oriya critic pointed out the poet could not create a beautiful face in *Pratima Nayak* when the world was experiencing the painful aftermath of the Second World War. While both type of writers politicized the personal spaces of women, Sachi Routray did not fail to describe the exterior surroundings, which influence the making of these women.[106] The left poets' poems are reflections of their inner turbulence. They are truthful in trying to locate and sensitise themselves to the existence of the beautiful in the ugly manifestations of life. There was a conscious attempt to 'create a different woman' from the stereotypical

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[102] 'Soundaryabodha Ra Paridhi Re Pandulipi', Mathurananda Hota, *Istahar*, No36, October 1986, 184.
[103] The Sabuja Poets were their immediate predecessors and a few, their contemporaries as well.
[104] '*tanu tara roga-jirna brane tara mlan-muhe...*'Sachi Routray, 'Pratima Nayak', *Pandulipi* 128.
[105] Jagabandhu Singh, *Prachina Utkala*, Odisa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1964, 78.
[106] 'Far off, in the factory the chimney leaves its mean impressions.' 'Pratima Nayak'.

descriptions of medieval women and women described in the poems of the Radhanath era and mainstream writers. 'Authentic' Oriya femininity, as we have seen, was considered dependent upon the subordination of the woman's individual needs to the interests of the family. Self-assertion was a mark of selfishness and independent decision-making perceived as disobedience. But Routray's creation of women characters portrays self-assertion and individuality as indispensable parts of a good life.

Not only did the left create women protagonists who were ugly but those who were often 'older'. In both *Pratima Nayak* and Miss Choudhury (*Mukti)* the poet does not deprive these characters of their sexuality. They did not glorify 'youth' and went against traditional aesthetic techniques of having younger woman protagonists with restrained sexuality by portraying the manifest sexuality of femininity.

'Yesterday, I met Miss Choudhury...
she stood in front of the mirror with hair let down,
her hair whitened at the parting
and she, angrily plucking them.'[107]

Sachi Routray's poems avoided the general themes of love, flowers, moon, the soft breeze of the spring, etc. and even when he makes use of the theme of love, it has been primarily 'physical' (*daihika)*. It discussed crude physical and sexual gratification instead of the traditionally celebrated emotional aspect. As a critic pointed out, 'this celebration of physical love and the body had a message, it was a departure from the binding past, it sings the praise of freedom, it is real'.[108] The common emotion of '*viraha*', the pain of separation from one's beloved, is not seen to wreck the life of the individual, as it should by the principles of conventional aesthetics. On the contrary, even more excruciating than the 'pain of separation' is the pain of 'real life'. His poems, *Sarira Sangita*, (The Song of the Body), *Pashu* (Animal) and *Rakhsasa* (Demon), elaborate the real desires of human beings.[109] He uses similes like the fragrance-less flower of the *neem* tree, the fading moon which looks like soap lather.

The left writer's attempt was to 'democratise' the notion of beauty, to make it accessible to all. This marks a general development of literary movement, which began

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[107] *kali miss choudhryanka sange dekha hela...*' Sachi Routray portrays the character of Miss Choudhury in 'Mukti', *Pandulipi.*

[108] Mathurananda Hota, 'Sachidananda anka Pandulipire Bastabadi Premachetana', *Ishtahar*, Puja Special, 47/48, 1990, 49-64.

[109] In Pashu, he writes, '*pashutwa chada kichi nahi aau...*' 'What else do I have in me,
Excepting my bestiality, *Pandulip*i, 56.
In Rakshsasa, ' *duihata teki danabare binaye pranama...*'
'I salute the demon-ness in humans
That which is physical.
For only what is touchable is real. *Pandulipi*, 61.

with the Russian radical writers and spread to the western cosmopolitan Marxists. The classical conception of beauty was symmetrical, proportionate and perfect, which reflects the Hegelian notion that 'that being is beautiful in which the idea of this being is fully expressed...which is excellent of its kind, that of which nothing better can be imagined'.[110] But a continuous portrayal of this kind of beauty not only made it uninteresting, it also over-looked individuality.[111] Routray did not make any classifications of beauty; his description of beauty is derived from all classes of people. To write and describe one rigid standard of beauty was essentially to appeal to a particular group of people and to alienate others who did not identify with that notion. Beauty was not exclusively linked to the physical attributes of the individual.[112] By fixing the definition of beauty to either physical characteristics or nature, previous writers had made the concept of beauty static and had established a hierarchy. Therefore women who were not beautiful or perfect to that degree were aesthetically disregarded. This itself was associated with a certain notion of privilege, though it did not mean repression or exclusion. An unconventional portrayal of women attempted to displace earlier notions of authentic womanhood and effectively changed the way people perceived the true Oriya woman.[113] By allowing transgressions in characters, the left writers dissolved the structure of this hierarchy. The aim of left poetry was not to describe either the beautiful woman or the beautiful disposition in woman. It served the purpose of communicating to the audience the frustrations and disappointments in women's lives.

Routray's *Pratima Nayak* was educated, intelligent, a person who functioned within the male domain effortlessly. Her inability to love unselfishly and her emphasis on unrestrained sexuality made her stand in stark contrast with the 'ideal' woman of literary tradition. The poet made no immediate attempts at morally judging the character. In the construction of *Pratima Nayak*, *Alaka Sanyal*[114] and *Ms. Choudhary*, (Mukti) he tried to resist the idea that there could be a single ideal construction of womanhood. Far from

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[110] N.G. Chernyshevsky, 'The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality' in *Selected Philosophical Essays*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953, 284.
[111] A directly parallel philosophical argument is found in Chernyshevsky. Ibid.

[112] The women characters discussed earlier were representatives of authentic Oriya womanhood because of their specific mentalities.
[113] The woman's authenticity is also dependent upon the way she relates to other people in social relations. Therefore, the pre-condition is always a good wife, mother, good sister-in -law or daughter-in-law.
[114] There are two poems by the same name. The first written by Sachi Routray (1947) is said to be an imitation of the Bengali poem *Banalata Sen* of Jibanananda Das. Routray traces the strength and spirituality associated with the Indian women. The woman lives as a prisoner in some distant island. Guruprasad Mohanty's '*Alaka Sanyal* is a reaction to Sachi Routray's poem. She lacks in love and beauty, *soundarya bisarjita*; she is fatigued, undisciplined and open. Shatrughan Pandaba, '*Adhunika Odia Kabita Ra Paricharcha*', Friends, Cuttack, 1998.

conforming to the constructed notion of Oriya woman, the distinctly different representations of femininity produced a poetic confrontation of two kinds of women, the simple rural girl and her modern counterpart.[115]

With her transgressions, *Pratima Nayak* seems to be the natural product of modern conditions. The difference between him and mainstream writers is that his urban women characters are not 'made' to change and look like rural women. These are parallel lifestyles that have to be led, there is no attempt at peacefully uniting the two, and both types of women in their individual capacities lead genuine lives. However, the incapacity of the reading public to align with the poet's point of view was due to the poet's own suspicion of established social institutions, especially marriage. While rejecting the traditional conception of love as unreal, he says, 'it is impossible to make a difference between true love and a 'look alike' of love as long as repressive institutions like marriage exist. People in marriage are often required to act as if they were in love. Women have to do this more often because they are dependent upon their husbands for a livelihood. Only when both partners are economically independent that we come to know which is 'love for a livelihood' and which is true love.'[116]

Miss Choudhury (Mukti) is free from this 'impostor love' nurtured in marriage. She is a spinster and in spite of being ugly she does not want to let go of her youth. She is obsessed with herself and with everything that makes her look young and beautiful. In questioning the institution of marriage, Routray wanted to empower women with greater autonomy. Routray's women are different from the emotional heroines of other Oriya poets who are 'prisoners of tradition', trapped in the confines of stagnant love. His women are conscious of time; they progress with it and possess the durable beauty of a Dravida woman, a *Lakhsmi* incarnate, *(dravida ra rakhsanashila shri)* and a glowing face of the Bengali girl (shymala *bangala ra arunima).*[117] A middle class Oriya woman with a received structure of thought could not either align herself with an educated but immoral Pratima Nayak or with Miss Choudhary who, obsessed with her youth, rejects all the traditional aspects of Oriya womanhood like marriage and motherhood. General readers

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[115] There was an established notion about what constitutes the 'ideal' woman, though she is fast becoming a myth. There is a discussion in *Nabeena* about the companionship of the 'pure' woman: 'She who truly loves you and inspires you to become a creative magician.' *Nabeena*, 10th June 1930, 21. On 28th July 1936, it wrote; 'we want true womanhood' ...instead of educated women who threaten the peace and integrity of marital life. She is devoid of both *bhaya* (fear) and bhakti (devotion).' But later in the discussion the writer accepts that all these uncultured habits that the new woman has come to acquire are from her husband. p. 3. One Jahnavi Devi mentions 'that it is high time for the Indian woman to militate against the man. We require one who combines both Eastern and Western virtues; we do not want knowledge that does not enhance culture or defiant self-reliance that produces a race of spinsters...' Nabeena, 1 June, 1937, 222. OSA.

[116] Sachi Routray 'Prema O Panya', (Love and Marketability), *Granthavali, Vol 2*, 527,1976.

saw the balance of the '*dravida shri*' and the '*bangala arunima*' as impositions from outside.

Though every novel discussed in our earlier section on women portrays a general mood of rebellion and every rebellion represented a different stage, the reader at the end does not feel that the woman has emancipated herself from an institutionalised inferior status. Ideal womanhood still remains the driving force of all those narratives while characters portrayed in left writing declare their independence from this socially constructed notion of 'idealness' from the start. Immediately, the left construction of the feminine strikes the reader as more 'powerful', however unacceptable it may be by common social standards.

The portrayal of female characters in left writing suggested something like a sexual rebellion. In representing their women as capable of doing things traditionally preserved for men, they reversed the process of sexual subordination. The readership was familiar with sexual transgressions committed by men, but female protagonists of left writing committed these acts with relative ease and lack of moral regret. Progressive definitions of female autonomy inverted the notion of restrained sexuality in bourgeois femininity.[118] In fact, they symbolically threatened the structured hierarchies by making their middle-class 'respected' women behave like lower-caste/class women, who usually in mainstream literature were represented as free and sexually uninhibited. This was part of an ideological strategy to destroy class differences in society. The writers who themselves belonged to the middle class urged their middle class readership to carry forward the message of the radical and autonomous woman. They dismantled the process of building feminine identity through this hierarchy of qualities, like beauty, reason and restraint. Singing the glory of the body,[119] making everything crudely 'manifest' they opposed traditional aesthetics.

Since modern literature itself existed on the basis of support from a private readership, left writing did not appeal to the private audience, though it formed an important aspect of public discussion. The absence and condemnation of religion in their poetry made it unacceptable to the ordinary Oriya readership. On the other hand, there was a growing frustration among people against religion for its failure to provide respite from modern problems. After the initial euphoria about building a new society subsided, there was a hope that literature would rely on 'humanism' and depict a revival of 'hope'

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[117] 'Smarana', published in 1943 in a Bengali Magazine, later in *Pandulipi*, op. cit., 224.
[118] For a detailed discussion on conflicting representations on femininity, see, Cora Kaplan, 'Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism', Francis Mulhern (ed), *Contemporary Marxist Literary Criticism,* Longman, London, 1992, 71-98.
[119] Sachi Routray, *Sarira Sangita* op. cit., 64

and 'optimism'. To the disappointment of a readership struggling with historical transition, modern poetry re-presented a dismal reality, a reality they almost hoped to escape. Left-wing writing was produced by determinate social conditions and reflected its contradictions but failed to provide for resolutions of real social contradictions.

Godabarisha Mahapatra: (1898 - 1956) A Voice of the Confused Community

There is an underlying problem in the political characterisation of Godabarisha Mahapatra.[120] To an extent he succeeded in reviving left writing by addressing peculiar problems that were brought about by modernity and independence. His poems did not separate social groups into class categories, like the exploited poor and rich bourgeois. His poems, short stories and novels are drawn, as he claims, from real life incidents and characters.[121] He came into public notice with the publication of his journal *Niankhunta* (The Fire Ball) in 1938 from Berhampur, which eventually moved to Cuttack. This journal carried lively discussions on issues starting from decline in social life to corruption in political circles. He was a people's favourite primarily because of his powerful satire on contemporary social and public life. He has been described as *durniti ra dhumaketu*, comet against corruption, *jana swartha ra jagrat prahari*, protector of the interests of common people and the 'havoc of Orissa'.[122] His poems drew their content from public problems, which were not attended to by the government, addressed situations, which were ridiculously 'common'.

Compared to leftist writers already discussed, Godabarisha lacked their poetic finesse but his popularity lay precisely in this 'crude satire'. His poems were more direct and unpretentious, lacked the influences from the western intellectual tradition and were often grounded in the queer problems of Oriya middle class. His real appeal lay in his style of representation, which did not antagonise either the middle class or the rural people. He humorously inverted situations of immense seriousness. The basic difference between left writers and Godabarisha was that the literary form that Godabarisha chose was 'friendlier' and aimed to evoke 'laughter' among its readership. It required great technique from the author but demanded less effort from the reader. The most trivial social and political episode got a literary rendering. He dealt with subjects that ranged from lack of proper road facilities and drinking water in the rural areas, famines and

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[120] Born in Banpur in Puri district,Godabarisha Mahapatra is considered the last in the line of Satyabadi writers. He studied in the Satyabadi School started by Gopabandhu Das. Though he never had any political affiliation to left philosophy, both his content and stylisation have more in common with the left writers. He has received the Orissa Sahitya Akademi award in 1959 and 1962 and the National Sahitya Akademi award in 1963.

[121] Mo Kahani Ra Kahani, *Godabarisha Rachanavali*, Granthamandir, Binod Behari, Cuttack, 1997, 84.

[122] Preface of *Godabarisha Rachnavali* written by Gourishankar Brahma.

floods, personal problems of famous social and political personalities, student strikes to political unrest. His readership was not limited to a closed group of educated, intellectually inclined urban-based middle-class *bhadralok*. As Brahma writes 'he was essentially an editor and a journalist. He would receive the news, descriptions, and discussions from all sources. To make it worthy of being published in *Niankhuntha* and to give it real form was Godabarisha's job.'[123]

Written in simple colloquial Oriya, his poems were not merely the subject of intellectual drawing room discussions, which was the primary allegation against left writers who expounded an excessively sophisticated philosophical doctrine. The sheer variety of issues discussed by Godabarisha made him the spokesperson for almost all categories of people. This gave him the added advantage of not being branded in common terms as either a 'Marxist' or a reactionary writer. 'He was the real representative of the Oriya *'jati'*. He sought to make it more vigilant, to wipe out their feeling of inferiority, to instil in them confidence, to retrieve their pride...'[124] The content, the crude and explicit style, his down-to-earth sensibility, non-commitment to any particular ideology and the immediacy of the medium of the journal made him more popular, both in terms of appeal and the backing, to a wide readership. Chittaranjan Das says that 'the poems of *Niankhuntha* were the best in terms of structure; they served more the interests of propaganda than of literature. When you are unable to act and yet feel the fury which should have driven you into real action, there is a mighty temptation to expend your entire wrath through the printed medium'.[125] Further, Das writes 'he could never come along to the mainstream, stood out and jeered at the incapacity of other people... he remained at the mere mud slinging level.'[126] However, mockery forms a legitimate part of humour and its directness is particularly relevant to a readership, which is not uniformly educated.

Society, in Godabarisha's portrayal, was governed by contradictory pressures; the expansion of personal rights, individual autonomy and property rights, acquisitive inclinations of people, the pressure of democracy promising greater social equality through representative governments. The institution of bureaucracy grew with the responsibility of maintaining neutrality and order in society. Bureaucrats as a rule came from higher echelons of society. The predominantly unrepresentative character of this institution made them indifferent to rural problems. They worked in close collaboration

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[123] Ibid., 20.
[124] Ibid., 21.
[125] Chittaranjan Das, op. cit., 215.
[126] Ibid., 217. He is said to have developed a new form and metre in poetry which was straight and simple and reminded one of Nazrul Islam in Bengal.

with the political representatives of the people who were the butt of social criticism for their lack of commitment.[127] It was in the background of this growing indifference of the bureaucrats and the political leaders to the flood affected victims that Godabarisha writes,

'put your feet into the water, let them get wet
take off your suit and boots
for in the flood
culture (*sabhyata)* and respect (*samman*) is all drowned.
Rise and look at the bazaar of death
the skeletons of children, of the old and the youth
don't they touch your conscience...'[128]

On his death, Rabi Singh one of Orissa's celebrated revolutionary writers, said 'Godabarisha has taken away the pen that wrote the articles in *Niankhuntha* when he died. Where will the Oriya *jati* get another of the same make?'[129]

While education and city life assured the dissolution of caste hierarchies, it could not find substitutes for the social and emotional security that traditional society guaranteed. There was a growing discrepancy between the emotional requirements of people and the alienating urban life style. In his *'Mu Jane Kirani'* [130] (I am a Clerk), Godabarisha poignantly described the monotonous life of a clerk, the drudgery of work and the frustration due to unfulfilled aspirations of the educated who dream of a high life style but invariably end up in small jobs. The person who has participated in the freedom struggle when he was young, been a party to the promises that independence made, got educated with the hope that free India would offer him better opportunities, feels betrayed. He agrees that his ideals have faded away with time and this is a time when both progressive and conservative share the same beliefs.

Godabarisha was distinct from the left writers in the principles that he used in the construction of his feminine characters. Unlike the mainstream writers who can be accused of advocating subservient women characters in the garb of granting them autonomy, or the left writers who created fearsomely independent women and propagated a kind of femininity which looked totally unfeasible in Oriya society, the protagonists of

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[127] For a more details on democracy, see, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986. S. Kaviraj, 'The Culture of Representative Democracy', in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Wages of Freedom*, OUP, Delhi, 1998 and Partha Chatterjee (ed.) *State and Politics in India*, OUP, Delhi, 1997. Introduction.
[128] '*pada odakara...*' Godabarisha Mahapatra, *Godabarisha Rachanavali*, Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1996, 21.
[129] Ibid., 23.
[130] Ibid., 119-122.

his novel '*Bidroha*' (Rebellion) and short story *Nila Mastrani* (1959) symbolised the revolt of a woman in a male-dominated society. Unable to accept either of these extreme models of femininity, Godabarisha turned modern women into a subject of humour. Humour has a more open structure and allows space for greater possibilities than real life. The world is portrayed in a completely inverted manner and humorous writing resorts to excess to make an insignificant point. There is a tendency to treat the question of women light-heartedly though the rural woman continues to be in the centre of 'ideal' womanhood. Godabarisha's women turned the whole society powerless against themselves. The world of patriarchy stood helpless as the modern frivolous woman continued to live her meaningless life. The literary existence of women characters in left writing threatened the 'mapping and whole architecture of the social world,[131] Godabarisha with his satirical creations succeeded in resisting the extreme qualities of ideal construction of the woman in progressive writing – making his characters more credible.

His collection of poems '*Handisala re Biplaba*' (Rebellion in the Kitchen, 1951), reflects that changing social conditions do not always produce a single stereotypical woman either in the image of Dhobi or Pratima Nayak. While his poem 'Miss Odisa-1948', is a satire of the pretentious life-style of the rich who remain unmoved, untouched by the problems that dictate the life of common people, in '*Bohu Mananka Satyagraha*', (The Satyagraha of the Daughter-in-laws), in the '*prachina*' section of '*Amari Gaon Ra Bohu*' and muffosil section in '*Sahara o Mafsala*', we are introduced to the 'real' problems facing rural Oriya women in traditional households. The first poem ridicules the female emancipation programme, the demands for equal rights, the fair sharing of household chores by the husband, married women's struggle to free themselves from the undue demands of the mother-in-law and unmarried sisters-in-law. While sympathising with the fate of the rural girl who is more adaptable than the urban girl, he writes of the plight and confusion of the urban educated girl, who under pressure of becoming a modern woman, fails in her household duties.

'Some say she does not know cooking,
She cannot draw water from the well,
She refers to the cookbook to add the spices
She does not sit down without the chair
She does not have the strength to hold the grinding stone'[132]

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[131] Sudipta Kaviraj, op. cit., 6.
[132] *ke kahe rosai na kare jani...*' *Amari Gaon ra Bohu*, Godabarisha Granthavali, 47-48.

In choosing to write about the problems that formed a part of daily Oriya living, Godabarisha satirically wrote of Oriya life, which helped the readership to form a perspective about the inadequacies of Oriya national life. In his *'Chanda'* (Donation) we are introduced to the growing menace of collecting donations from common people especially in the urban areas in the name of the public good.[133] The complexity of modernity was not merely reflected in the disoriented youth, the immoral educated woman, the urban-rural divide, it was also reflected in the unfamiliar problems that it created. People readily identified with his prosaic expression of real life situations, the economic crunch of an urban family, the continuing debt and shoestring budget. In that small 'one man salary' were spun all dreams of a lower middle class family, education of children, donations and a 'prestigious' living. While at one end there was disillusionment over price rises, decentralisation of education, the power of the political chair, the nylon saree and the decline of cottage industries, on the other there was the growing obsession among all people with governmental jobs (to become a clerk), the rise of unemployment, growing demand for bridegrooms working as clerks, the marriage market controlled by people who could afford a dowry of 'a watch, a cycle and a radio',[134] the exodus of the rural poor to the urban centres in search of a better life. While Godabarisha intellectually rejected the social order, he declined the responsibility of suggesting an alternative to it.

The left writers did not address the problem of identity as directly as the mainstream writers did. Their perception of society and suggestion of an alternative Oriyaness are to be discerned in their reactions to the cultural forms and characters that the mainstream writers expounded. Evidently, left writers were not torn between the growing autonomy of the individual and the need to belong to a community. Individual and group assertions were not perceived with apprehension unlike mainstream writing.

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[133] ' *banya re bhasila desa...*' 'the country is flooded, donate
In the name of the conscious peasant, donate.
Donate say the followers, for the construction of a temple
to relieve the poor, donate,
donate in the name of women's liberation.., Granthavali, 32-33.

[134] In his poem '*bhagaban tame etiki dia khanji...*'*Janana.* He says the modern individual's prayer has a different content
God, all I need is
A pair of slippers on my feet and a few files in my hands'
Or as in *Radio Bibaha*, (Radio Marriage), we see the harassed father
'*tanka chadi nua cycle te...* ' ' apart from cash a new watch and a cycle'
See Godabarisha Mahapatra's *Banka O Sidha*, Das Brothers, Cuttack, 1964. 48-49, 83-86.

[135] Cora Kaplan, op. cit., 83.

But the Marxist author and the text 'spoke from within an ideology'[135] and therefore what seemed of greater importance was the need to retain their ideological conviction. Their conception of a society was in opposition to the relations of dependence through which Oriya social life was held together. In fact, Godabarisha's literature, however bland it was in aesthetic terms, came closest to depicting the contest about identities in contemporary Oriya society.

Failure of the Left

Though this study is not about the political history of left movement in Orissa, it is necessary to understand the direction of this movement to draw any conclusions about Oriya left literary movement. The failure of left activism has to be analysed because it is linked to the limitedness of left literature.

Initially, the left movement had significant political successes, especially the successful Prajamandal Movement in the Princely States and the Orissa Tenancy Amendment. With progressive decisions of the Congress government after independence, the major issues the left had raised seemed completely settled. If not in practice, in philosophy, these amendments declared to uplift peasant status and led to the left party's 'withdrawal of attention from society as such, its institutions, values and particular modes of articulation as direct targets of revolutionary focus.'[136] All issues that seemed to be exclusive to left politics were systematically appropriated into the Congress agenda. The notion of autonomy of civil society was at no point explicitly rejected nor questioned, rather the Congress set about assimilating the society into the state.[137]

It is doubtful whether the agenda of the socialist parties in Orissa was considered any different from the Congress. Since the left and Congress appeared to work in close collaboration, it is possible to argue that the peasant was probably motivated in the name Gandhi rather than left ideology. The peasantry never acquired a socialist consciousness. There might have been instances when people acted contrary to Congress strategy, which brought them closer to left tactics, but these spurts of revolutionary activism should not be confused with a general acceptance of left ideology. This merely created a 'revolutionary illusion'.[138] The confusion intensified with the declaration of socialist inclinations of the Congress in the post-independent era.

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[136] Javeed Alam, 'Communist Politics In Search of Hegemony', in Partha Chatterjee, 1998, 180.
[137] Ibid., 194.

[138] Ibid., 184.
[139] This was the Communist Party's agenda to bring about socialism creating preconditions for a democratic state. Ibid., 182.

The initial euphoria of Oriya left writers subsided with Ananta Patnaik finding solace in Gandhism and Sachidanand Routray overtly disassociating himself from left ideals. Among left writers, Raghunath Das and Rabi Singh continued to express their dissatisfaction against continuing forms of oppression, directed their criticism against the 'bourgeois state' and the 'fraudulent' independence. But the incapacity of these writers to translate their revolutionary agenda in terms comprehensible to peasants and tribals eventually led to their dismissal as 'vulgar' Marxists. To the middle class, the socialist inclination of the Congress state made the left redundant. The left wanted an end to peasant misery, which, in middle class perception, was accomplished by the Congress. Unable to grasp their philosophical conviction, the middle class audience grew more suspicious about left intentions and felt more threatened by them. The left, on the other hand, failed to expose the national bourgeois leadership and accelerated the process of disillusionment of thousands.[139]

With the decline of left activism in Orissa, most left litteratuers lost their initial enthusiasm. Moreover, the possibility of an alternate movement led by left writers dissolved with increasing interest of mainstream writers in similar themes of exploitation and peasant oppression. The mainstream writers' ideology seemed to have a more human face, able to provide solutions to irresolvable social contradictions, though in the imaginary aesthetic realm. The left writer's uncompromising ideological commitment put them in a position of disadvantage. Godabarisha retained his popularity among left writers/activists[140] and readers because his literature highlighted topical issues that concerned people of all social categories. He did not alienate or divide the readership on the basis of ideology, and created fewer furores about the revolution or transforming the revolutionary consciousness of peasants and middle class.

To revert to an argument already made, left literature failed to create an impact because it failed to communicate a sense of the shared world. The general readership of Oriya literature found its thematic content and manner of expression unfamiliar. Literary texts are either interpreted through sediments of previous interpretations or through conventionalised reading habits and categories inherited from historical traditions of interpretation.[141] These processes of production and reception make the acts of producing and reading literature socially symbolic acts. Since the act of 'reading relies too much on

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[140] Rabi Singh remarked that Godabarisha took the pen that spilled poems against exploitation when he died. *Godabarisha Granathavali*, 23.

[141] This is the one of the first claims Jameson makes in his *Political Unconscious*. F. Jameson, op. cit., Preface.

the values and habits of mind',[142] the protagonists of left literature went violently against accepted norms.

The initial, limited success of left literature with the middle class intellectuals can be attributed to the 'function' of literature. Left creative writing remained at the level of intellectual discussions, everything that was assumed and happened, happened in the imagined world of fiction.[143] In fact, its sophisticated philosophy, technique and manner of representation satisfied intellectual appetite and the taste of educated Oriyas, but remained limited to them.

Closely related to this point of success was the failure of the left literary movement to make any sustainable impact on the wider readership. Not only did the left alienate and divide its readership; it also created great apprehension among readers. The middle class did not object to literature that raised their conscience against exploitation and oppression; however, they were not prepared to lose their positions of advantage to other social groups, which required concrete sacrifices on their part. Intellectually and ideologically, the reformist rhetoric of the left writers was not resisted. It was not difficult for the middle class to make them a part of their discursive structure. Resistance was offered at the level of practice.

The government's attempt to assure political rights and social equality to the underprivileged groups was directly reflected in the 'insecurity' of the middle class. This consisted of a wide variety of people: the bureaucrats, managerial elite, agricultural elite, intellectuals, traditional dominant castes and other competing castes and classes which had made use of the modern educational system to enter into this terrain and establish a monopoly over its privileges. In this situation of insecurity it is interesting to observe the description of an atypical leftist by the intellectual middle class. 'An unkempt beard to cover the triangle of the chin which made the face look so unnatural, some wearing of a cloth which substituted for trousers and a long loose kurta (shirt) that almost reached his knees, the thick lenses of his spectacles that reflected the light of the electric pole...he looked so strange. In his opinion literature should perform the function of carrying forward the class struggle...'[144] While left writers failed to convince the readership about the need for a socialist revolution, mainstream writers with their humanist appeal made a greater impact on the reading public. Their goal seemed more achievable with less 'risk' of change involved. The sensitive reader was torn between the two tendencies, sympathising with and appreciating the project of socially empowering the

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[142] Newton-de-Molina, 'On Literary Intention' in Frank Lentricchia (ed), op. cit., 7.
[143] For a detailed discussion, see, J.Hillis Miller, 'Narrative' in Frank Lentricchia, op. cit., 66-79.
[144] Surendra Mohanty, *Andha Diganta*, Cuttack Student' s Store, Cuttack, 1964, 15-16.

underprivileged but at the same time realising that it meant a certain sacrifice of his interests.

While the left desired to usher in communism, the subaltern image of change was often incompatible with theirs. Underprivileged groups wanted to emulate the comfortable life-style and values of the middle class. The success of mainstream writers was in their ability to pose the real problems and to even offer imaginary solutions to them.[145] In these texts subalternity was celebrated and the audience sympathised and identified with the characters. Either the subaltern hero accepts elite mannerisms and fights a class battle in elite terms or the elite hero accepts subaltern values declaring its worthiness over the defunct urban elite values. What is evident in these narratives is the traffic and the interaction between the two alienated groups, a possibility of gaining access into each other's life, denied in left texts, which wanted the absolute destabilisation of the elite.

Left writers declared their distinctiveness by means of their substantive themes and a highly inflammatory style. They aligned with a particular political practice and method. Their method included coercion and punishing people spectacularly. The lack of moderation in the leftist stance ultimately led the middle class to feel alienated from their tactics. It failed to appeal to the romantic sensibility of the audience. Their literature was distant from practices that formed a part of everyday living of the middle class who were the actual recipients of that literature. The major fallacy of the left was their insistence on the 'magic' revolution, especially in the writings of Rabi Singh. Their impact weakened with the resurgence of metaphysical poetry written by poets like Sitakanta Mahapatra and Ramakanta Rath who tried to return Oriya literature to its spiritual roots.

[145] M.S.S Pandian 'Culture and Subaltern Consciousness: An Aspect of the MGR phenomenon', Partha Chatterji (ed), *Wages of Freedom*, 1997. 367-389.

Chapter 5

Jagannath: The Symbol of Oriya Culture

The subject of this thesis is the way culture contributes to the making of a national life. It is specifically concerned with the inter-penetration of culture and politics and the generation of meanings specific to particular contexts. The literary process of identity formation, which is the object of primary analysis in the bulk of this thesis, is a part of the wider process of the cultural construction of the nation. One of the peculiar features of Oriya culture is the centrality of the figure of Jagannath. Cultural self-perception of the Oriya nation is closely related to this icon. The changes that occur in Oriya society with the coming of modernity are not very different from the rise of nationalism in Bengal or the Hindi region. However, the centrality of the figure of Jagannath made Oriya culture significantly different from the Bengali.

There are two reasons for including a chapter on Jagannath in this thesis. Firstly, it is almost impossible to engage in an analysis of Oriya identity without making any reference to a cultural structure so central to its definition. Secondly, Jagannath is not only a protagonist of religious literature in Orissa but is also an important aspect of literary discussions and representation in modern Oriya. The most significant use of Jagannath as a literary character is noticed in Oriya nationalist writers. They have used the icon as the political and cultural representative of the Oriya nation.

Though Durga Puja is central to Bengali religiosity, Bengali life celebrates it more as a cultural festival. The Kalighat temple does not enjoy the same status in Bengali cultural life as Jagannath does in Orissa. There are certain comparable religious icons in South India, which have particular significance in the religious life of a specific region. 'Almost every village of any importance in Southern India has its temple, around which centres in a very large measure the corporate and civic life of a community which lives in it.'[1] The Minakshi temple in Tamil Nadu is one of the most popular religious structures. But, C.J. Fuller argues in the *Servants of the Goddess*, 'Minakshi's appeal has hardly spread through the rest of Tamil Nadu or India, except when carried there by immigrants

[1] H. Krishna Sastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, Bharatiya Publishing House, Varanasi, 1974, 1.

from the region.'[2] David Shulman argues that 'Minakshi is firmly rooted in the Tamil tradition of Madurai.'[3]

However, there are at least three elements that are common to all temples in India. Firstly, some of the local cultural traits always survive in the temple that ultimately claims a regional status. Secondly, a major contribution is made by the brahmins who finally become the custodians of the shrines. Local shrines acquire legitimacy through this process of brahmanisation. Thirdly, there are myths that give meaning and interpretation to divine power. But there is one basic difference between South Indian temples and the Jagannath temple. 'The South Indian temple is both an intensified but bounded expression of the violent power manifest in the whole world as a whole, and a symbol of total independence and detachment, of eternity as opposed to degenerative time.'[4] The Jagannath temple on the contrary stresses assimilation and regeneration.

Organisationally and structurally, the Suchindram temple situated in Trivandrum district of Travancore, Kerala is similar to the Jagannath temple in Orissa.[5] As in the Jagannath temple, temple activities in Sunchindram are not exclusively dominated by brahmins. Different castes are involved in the daily rituals of the deity and render particular services assigned to them. Similar to the *Muktimandap* in Puri, a body of Yogakkar is present who exercise supreme civil and criminal authority.[6] Both temples are patrons of culture and their deities perceived as landlords but most importantly both have a distinctive notion about the poor which was completely different from the manner in which other temples visualised and characterised the poor.[7] The Suchindram temple exercised immense influence on the social life of the people. Like the Puri temple, it was not only a source of religious inspiration but discharged several secular functions and was rightly described as 'a fortress, treasury, court-houses, parks, fairs, exhibition sheds, halls of learning and pleasure all in one'[8]. But it has to be emphasised that the activities of god is nowhere so closely connected to the lives of common people as in Puri where a new *dharma* has come into existence centring on one deity.

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[2] C.J.Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, Cambridge University Press, 1984, 6. Fuller's book gives an illuminating description on the influences of modernity among the devotees of Minakshi, particularly the priests employed in conducting the daily rituals of the goddess. Also see, Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
[3] David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, Princeton University Press, 1980, 6-7.
[4] Ibid., 193.
[5] The Suchindram temple might be lesser known but the manner in which the temple interacts with the society is significantly similar to that of Jagannath. For a detailed discussion, see K.K.Pillay, *The Suchindram Temple*, Kalakshetra Publications, Madras, 1953.
[6] Ibid., 260.
[7] Ibid., 267-292. The *patitapaban* image of Jagannath has strong similarities with the deity of Suchindram visualised as the saviour of the downtrodden.
[8] Ibid., 298.

Interestingly, Jagannath *dharma* has acquired greater relevance in conditions of modernity especially because of its claims to social and political equality, principles central to modern life. However, it is important to realise that Jagannath in Orissa is not associated with raising passionate feelings of religious allegiance among the Hindus and creating animosity against others. Oriyas share a more general, common relationship with the symbol. The Oriyas do not look upon the symbol merely as a source of religious piety. Jagannath culture provides the structures of signification that are essential to understand Oriya social reality. Jagannath, as a national symbol, is not an abrupt creation of a political party like the recent invocation of Rama by the BJP in north India. This claim does not rule out the possibility that Jagannath can be used for communal mobilisation, but the naturalness with which an Oriya relates to the symbol has been produced by political processes over a long period of time starting from its inception through the colonial era to the present.

This chapter intends to highlight the centrality of the figure of Jagannath in the formation and articulation of Oriya cultural identity over time. It will discuss the portrayal of Jagannath in the social, political and literary spheres and the manners in which the religious figure has been recreated in successive epochs. In particular, we will analyse how relations of domination and subordination are reflected and confrontational conflicts contained within this religious culture. This does not imply that we should ignore the existence of other major local traditions of the region, like the *Sammalai* cult in Sambalpur or *Mangala* in Kakatpur. It is important to understand that the encounter between local and regional tradition is not always in the form of a collision. Rather, there exists a degree of permeability, which helps in the maintenance of both. This study seeks to critically explore the notion of Jagannath as the 'National God' or the '*Rashtriya Devata*' of Orissa. Each historical period in a locality destroys and recreates its cultural images. Jagannath has likewise been constructed and reconstructed over time, treated both historically and mythically to establish its primacy in the whole of the Orissa region. In trying to understand the reasons for raising the status of Jagannath to that of a '*Rashtriya Devata*', we will discuss the essential connections between popular ways of life and the 'life' of the deity.

Religious people organise their world on the basis of a different order of reality and experience based on the distinction between the sacred and the profane. All societies have notions of the sacred, which are naturally considered superior in dignity and power to the profane. 'The thing in which it chooses to discover its principal aspirations, it sets apart and deifies, be they men, objects or ideas. If an idea is unanimously shared by

people, it can't be negated or disputed.'[9] The Jagannath temple, situated in Puri is the epitome of Oriya sacredness and all aspects associated with it are raised to the status of the sacred. Even geographically, Puri has a symbolic significance because it is believed to have the shape of the divine conch, *Sankha Kshetra.* The road that leads to the temple is *bada-danda*, great road; the temple is called *bada-deula*, great temple, and Jagannath, *bada-thakur* the greatest of all gods. The reiteration of the term *bada,* great, helps to establish the undeniable authority of this God/cult over all other regional gods and cults in a hierarchy of sacredness. Expounding the greatness of everything associated with Jagannath is a technique by which religious people articulate the non-homogeneity of space. An Oriya invests the space of Puri, the temple, and the sea with greater sacredness than other spaces. 'For it is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation.'[10] Jagannath is represented as the central axis of Oriya religiosity. Eliade in his analysis of sacred and profane writes about a 'pole' that represents a cosmic axis around which a society comes to exist. 'For the pole to be broken denotes catastrophe, it is like the end of the world, a reversion to chaos.'[11] Oriyas relate to Jagannath as the source of their sustenance, as the cosmic axis of their religious universe. All representations of their social relations and existence can be traced back to this source. The location of the temple on the blue-mountain, *Neelasaila,* can be regarded as the cosmic-mountain and hence it constitutes in the Oriya religious cosmology the 'pre-eminent link between earth and heaven.'[12]

The continuation of sacred centres as the foci of community identity even in modern conditions throws some doubt into the arguments of both Gellner and Anderson about the beginning of modern nationalism. Gellner regards nationalism as a modern phenomenon that is heralded by the development of a modern industrial society, which depends upon economic and cognitive structures rather than primordial affiliations like religion. The growth of the state and educational system, which instils a standardised literacy, produces a homogeneous secular culture. Secularism announces the arrival of modernity; for Gellner only a traditional society lives by religion. According to Anderson, nationalism appeared when two large cultural systems that preceded it, the religious community and the dynastic realm, disappeared. 'Nationalism has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which and against which, it came into being.'[13] Both of

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[9] Mircea Eliade, 'Durkheim: Sacred and Profane', *Encyclopaedia of Religions*, 519.
[10] Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, (trans), Williard Trask, HBJ, London, 1957, 21.
[11] Ibid., 33.
[12] Ibid., 38.
[13] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1983, 1995, p12. See 12-22.

them slip into the European experience as the only valid explanation of modern nationhood. Their argument represents religion as predominantly a traditional experience.[14] However, it can be questioned whether this picture was completely true of the West either. In this perception modernity and religion are not only opposed to each other but belong to two different worlds.

In the west, industrialisation and secularisation were powerful contestants of religion. The intensity of both movements was far weaker in modern India. To completely dismantle its religious culture would mean to bulldoze the whole system and build on its debris a new culture devoid of religion. 'To other people religion is only a part of life, there are things religious and secular. To the Hindu, his whole way of life was religion. Life to him was religion and religion never received a name from him because it had from him an existence from all that had received a name.'[15]

Partha Chatterjee argues that when pre-modern societies embark upon modernising themselves, they create distinct domains of the inside and the outside. In India national imagination continues mostly on the basis of religion, or the spiritual domain, which is its sovereign territory, a crucial mark of its cultural identity.[16] By declaring their difference on the basis of cultural religiosity and spirituality, societies resist processes of secular cultural homogenisation. Durkheim argues that elements of older types of social structure persist within contemporary modes of social organisation and culture. He specifically refers to the continuation of the caste system in India that effectively adapted itself to modern conditions. 'Modernity creates a logic of self-determination but it creates a new kind of identity and helps in retaining their earlier identities in a different way.'[17] The way Jagannath was used in pre-modern Orissa for purposes of rallying Oriya people together is different from the way it is done now. What is significant is that it still retains the ability to forge togetherness among a people who do not in other respects form a homogeneous community. Ashis Nandy in his book *At the Edge of Psychology:Essays in Politics and Culture* says that since the average Hindu identifies religion with his whole way of life, according to, his 'faith' remains intact even under adverse conditions of modernity.

Simply speaking, the popularity of Jagannath comes from the belief that it shapes and informs the life patterns of both the rich and poor in Orissa. One of the peculiarities of the cult is its ability to be a part of high Hinduism and popular culture and to connect the two. The cult acquires its legitimacy from the making of this successful link. All

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[14] Peter Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, University of California Press, 1994, Introduction.
[15] Bankim Chandra cited in T.N.Madan, *Religion in India*, OUP, Delhi, 1991, Introduction.
[16] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments,* OUP, 1994, Chapter One.
[17] Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Religion, Politics and Modernity', in Bhikhu Parekh, Upendra Baxi (ed) *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India*, Sage, Delhi, 1994.

writers have ascribed the popularity of Jagannath to the syncretic nature of the cult. It has syncretised the three most contradictory strands of Hinduism: the Vaishnava, Shaiva and Sakta. All marginal social groups like lower castes, women and tribals, suffering exclusions in Oriya society, had an association with this temple. Jagannath establishes a structure of artistic form, thought, feeling and sentiments on the basis of which the Oriya conducts his everyday practices. While alien rulers built the temple to legitimise their rule over the Oriyas, its recognition and absorption of local needs gave it an exclusive regional character. Jagannath helps in the 'ritual construction of the self that not only integrates the believers but also places a symbolic boundary between them and the outsiders.'[18]

Unlike Orissa, Bengal lacks a central religious figure to which all Bengalis could relate; whereas given a certain interpretation, all sections of Oriya society can and often do relate to Jagannath as the centre of their cultural life. Oriya literature and musicality are specific forms related to the Jagannath cult that helped in the cultural construction of a regional identity. Various other religious forms have been subordinated and repressed with the expanding interpretation of Jagannath.

The aim of this chapter is not to define religion but to go beyond the prevailing definitions of religion centred around God and spirits, to understand the ways through which the 'religious' gives rise to a popular world view and the way this world view pervades the 'community unconscious'. This icon as it stands today is a symbol through which patterns of behaviour are socially acquired and transmitted. As Clifford Geertz writes, 'sacred symbols function to synthesise a people's ethos -- the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood and their world view -- the picture they have of the ways in sheer actuality are their most comprehensive ideas of order'.[19] This chapter will discuss the way this symbol is treated in literature and how cultural acts are constructed and symbolic forms utilised to inform social events.

In the pre-colonial period, the Jagannath temple had already developed into a major place of pilgrimage. As Romila Thapar suggests, 'the genesis of the temple appears to have been a small shrine room housing an image as the nucleus of the cult...With the conversion of the cult into a sect and the patronage of the local political authority thrown in, the small shrine evolved into a complex structure as determined by architects, builders and craftsmen -- it is initially an architectural form built to identify a place of worship. But from the moment of expansion it takes on the qualities of a social symbol.'[20] The temple is more than a place of religious identity. For some it houses their deity while others regard it as the centre of the music and dance tradition. The '*matha*' attached to it,

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[18] Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism.*, 11.
[19] Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, Fontana Press, New York, 1973, 89.
[20] Romila Thapar, *Cultural Transactions in Early India*, Delhi, 1987, 33.

to train the priests; eventually developed into a centre of formal education and the inscriptions on the walls are regarded as legal documents recording property rights and the administrative functioning of the temple. The kings of Khurdha refer to themselves as the '*rauta*' of Jagannath. The daily ritual of the temple was replicated in the royal household, as Jagannath was the king of kings. The temple was the 'exemplary centre'[21]; a model for social action, an 'ideal' towards which life outside was to strive. The images which are made of wood and not clay or metal, signify the tribal presence in the cult, which is further emphasised by the existence of a special class of priests called the '*daitapatis*' who consider themselves the 'blood relatives', *rakta samparka* of the deity.[22]

The most important aspect of this tribal assimilation into a non-tribal religious structure was to highlight that the outcome of conflict between non-Aryan and Aryan was not a complete assimilation of one into the other but rather an inevitable accommodation of two conflicting elements of belief. The deity connects itself to the 'original' inhabitants of the Oriya state and indicates the impact that tribal culture has and has had in the historical formation of local Hindu traditions. This mode of worship unites people of divergent theological inclinations under a common platform emphasising that the tribal population of Orissa has an equal claim over the temple as any other Oriya.

The ideology of Jagannath is based on the principle of inclusion, which does not merely allocate a place to all sections of the people but assigns a 'valued' place to the underprivileged categories, tribals, lower-caste, Muslims, and women. This chapter evaluates the claims of inclusion and locates it as the centre of the belief system of the cult. In some senses, our analysis rejects this claim. All categories of people found a place in this religion, but certainly not one of equality and dignity.

Political Patronage and the Status of Jagannath.

Jagannath gained the status of 'national god' through a historical process of transformation of this 'local shrine' into a symbol of the whole Oriya community where he becomes crucial to the self-respect of a collectivity that is portrayed as a homogeneous whole.

The status of Jagannath was directly related to the close connections that Orissa's royal family had with the temple. The very fact that the Saiva king, Chodagangadeva decided to dedicate the temple to Vishnu in 1135 was itself a politically motivated act.

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[21] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Yale University Press, London, 1968, 36.

[22] The wooden figures look like rectangular stumps roughly divided into two halves, the upper half has some resemblance to a human face with distinct eyes and the lower that makes the body. Stumps that look like hands project out at right angles. These figures closely resemble tribal deities often carved out from tree trunks.

[23] Herman Kulke (ed), *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition in Orissa*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1986, 182.

The selection of the cult in Puri for royal patronage had political reasons.[23] Chodagangadeva being an outsider had to legitimise his rule among his subject people who were religiously inclined towards the Vaishnava movement made popular by Ramanuja. Secondly, he had to match the imperial Cholas in the South against whom he had fought a futile war. The cult that could satisfy the necessity of both vertical and horizontal legitimation required two qualities. Horizontal legitimation was best achieved by its strong autochthonous elements, which complied with the need of territoriality and integration. However, for the needs of vertical legitimation a strong degree of Brahmanisation was required. Only a deity known and accepted to high Hinduism was could be recognised. 'The Jagannath cult satisfied both pre-requisites -- it retained strong aboriginal elements and was a Hindu cult which had been historically brahmanised.'[24] Later Chodaganga's son, Anangabhimadeva III ritually dedicated the whole empire of Orissa to Jagannath. Another significant development took place during his rule. 'Since Anangabhimadeva's time the central Hindu rulers of Orissa were inconceivable without a direct relationship with Jagannath temple at Puri and only the ruler who could claim to control Puri and its cult was acknowledged as the legitimate ruler of Orissa.'[25] The cultural significance of the temple was raised with the attempt to combine the three competing strands of Hinduism into a sibling relationship. Kulke writes that, 'it was under Anagabhimadeva III (1211-1238) the decisive interpretation took place which attempted to integrate the major deities of Orissa into the Jagannath cult. Eknamsa was interpreted as Durga or Subhadra and Balarama or Balabhadra as Shiva.'[26] From then on any king who would usurp power required the special legitimation from the priests of the temple.

In the 15th century, the first Gajapati, Kapilendra declared himself the 'first servitor', *adisebaka* of Jagannath. His son Purushottamdeva started the ritual of *chera-panhara*, royal sweeping of the chariots during the *Ratha-Jatra*. The innumerable stories of the Muslim armies seeking to crush the self-respect of the Oriya kings by desecrating the Jagannath temple are further evidence that Jagannath was linked to Oriya rulers who epitomised Oriya dignity. Control of Puri was a decisive factor of political authority in Orissa.[27] There was a constant struggle over Puri by the Hindu kings of Khurda and the

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[24] Ibid., 183.
[25] Hermann Kulke, 'Jagannath --The State Deity of Orissa', *Sri Sri Jaganath- the Symbol of Syncretic Indian Culture*, Sri Jagannath Central Library, Puri, 21.
[26] Hermann Kulke, 'Anangabhimadeva the Veritable Founder of the Jagannath Trinity at Puri', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, No-1, 1981, 131.
[27] Akbar allowed a local zamindar of Khurda to gain control over Jagannath to save his rule from threats from the South. Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of the temple but the Subahdar who was more interested in the financial gains from the temple actually made a mock destruction and

Muslim Subahdars of Cuttack because that would help them maintain their dominance over smaller kings of Orissa. Smaller privileges were given to other feudatory chiefs whose relation with the temple gave them positions of prestige. As Hermann Kulke writes, 'kingship became a part of the cult and the cult became a part of the Orissan kingship and its main source of legitimation...the new relation between the Jagannath cult and the kingship in Orissa finding their lasting manifestation in the construction of the present monumental Jagannath temple.'[28]

Even when the Muslims conquered Orissa, their intention was never to destroy the temple because they realised that it was a vital source of revenue. When the Marathas took over Orissa, they too realised that their successful rule depended on their control over the temple. The importance of the temple and the deity was further increased with the colonial patronage to the temple. This temple had certain advantages for immediate political patronage: it was a gigantic architectural piece enjoying traditional social and political importance; the coast line on which it was situated was very important; it was an important economic centre, the livelihood of all people in the surrounding villages depended upon it. The temple kitchen fed numerous people employed within the temple and the many devotees who visited the temple everyday. The other religious centres in Orissa were also unsuitable for administrative patronage primarily because of their inaccessibility.

With the British take-over of Orissa in 1803, the colonial rulers guarded the Jagannath temple jealously, aware that it was a repository of common Oriya sentiment. Wellesley, on occupation of Orissa, wrote to the local English officials, 'on your arrival at Jagannath, you will employ every possible precaution to preserve respect due to the pagoda...'[29]

The excessive obsession of a Christian government with a shrine of idolatry came under severe criticism from missionaries who began a powerful campaign against the administration. James Pegg wrote, 'how dishonourable to imperial Britain in the nineteenth century thus to degrade her sons by connection with shrines of gods of wood and stone! Where is the Alexander of the East who will have the wisdom and courage to draw his sword and cut in a minute the Gordian knot that binds Britain (sic) to be dragged after Jaggernauth's car? Oh my country and my talented countrymen in India, my spirit feels indignant that you should affront high Heaven!'[30] The excessive attention in these

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forwarded a fake image of Jagannath to the court. Hermann Kulke, 'Ksetra and Ksatra', Hans Bakker (ed), *The Sacred Centre as the Focus of Political Interest*, Groningen, 1992, 131-142.

[28] Kulke (ed), op. cit., 139.

[29] P.Mukherjee, 'Policy of Lord Wellesley towards the Jagannath Temple', *Sri Jagannttha Smarika*, Vol II, Puri, 7.

[30] Appendix, *Orissa, the Garden of Superstition and Idolatry*, William. F. B. Laurie, London.

colonial debates around the temple raised its political importance. In 'History of the Baptist Mission in Orissa', Pegg wrote, 'on the contrary our struggle against Juggernaut led to the further importance of the cult.'[31]

However, with intense political interaction and attention through history, Jagannath became a potent mobilising factor for the people of Orissa. While the temple received political patronage primarily for economic purposes, Jagannath became a symbol for the nationalists. Gopabandhu made extensive use of the symbol in the non-integrated Oriya speaking tracts of Sambalpur, where he sang a couplet saying 'all Oriyas should join the road that takes them to the beautiful black-faced God.'[32] The nationalists realised that the success of the national movement depended upon the participation of all castes and that Jagannath was the most viable symbol because it of its claims to egalitarianism, significantly absent in other Hindu orders. Gopabandhu Das in his '*Bandi ra Atma Katha*', (Autobiography of a Prisoner) wrote, 'if the world were a tank and India a lotus in it, then the filament of the lotus would be *Nilachala*, Puri.'[33]

Within Oriya literature there are differences in the perception of the *maitri-bhava* associated with Jagannath. Nilakantha Das and Godabarisha Mishra, known for being critical of Gopabandhu for his excessive religiosity, accepted the '*maitri-dharma*' of Jagannath as a part of a general Oriya cultural consciousness. They accepted the political ideology of equality that the culture sought to establish by de-emphasising its religious aspects. For Gopabandhu, the Jagannath culture he was propagating was a representation of the egalitarian religiosity. In his book, *Odia Sahitya Ra Krama Parinama*, Nilakantha explains Jagannath's place in the religious texts and popular imagination, especially differentiating Oriya Vaishnavism that revolved around Jagannath as different from *Gaudiya dharma* popularised by Chaitanya.[34] In his perception, the Oriya variant of Vaishnavism lacked the obnoxious eroticism of the Bengali one and could be effortlessly traced to the sibling relationship emphasised in the Jagannath triad.

Most Oriya writers represented Jagannath as the basis of Oriya egalitarianism. However, this thesis would argue that Jagannath as an ideology was crucial to both high caste domination and lower caste resistance. In fact more than resistance, the oppressed were made to recognise that their real interest lay in supporting these cultural forms.

Sometimes, the importance of Jagannath as a cultural symbol overrides its religious significance. 'Politics tends out of necessity to find bases in society and proceeds through taking into aspects which are culturally specific.'[35] The decision of

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[31] Kulke, 'Jagannath – the state deity of Orissa'., 25.
[32] See, Nityananda Sathpathy, *He! Saathi He! Saarathi,* Granthmandir, Cuttack, 1989, 159-164.
[33] Eschman in Hermann Kulke (ed) op. cit., 373
[34] We have a discussion on Nilakantha's variant of Oriya Vaishnavism in the 2nd chapter.
[35] Charles Taylor, *Social Theory As Practice*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, 32.

Gandhi to start his '*padayatra*' from Puri in 1921 was one of the many occasions when a conscious decision was made to start a political march from the temple doors, though Gandhi himself declined to enter the temple because it did not allow entry to untouchables. In 1971, the *Pragativadi Dal* fought elections with the symbol of the plough and a wheel which was identified by some as the symbol of agricultural advancement but was interpreted by the founder of the party as the symbols of Jagannath and Balarama, the '*hala*' the plough being the weapon of Balarama and '*chakra*' the sacred wheel, the symbol of Jagannath/Vishnu. The party invoked them as the presiding deities. After being elected, Raja Krishnachandra Gajapati, the first Prime Minister of Orissa in colonial India visited the temple to get the blessings of the God. This is a practice that is retained to the present day.

Though it might have been true that common people in western Orissa did not relate to Jagannath closely, Gangadhar Meher, the celebrated writer of the region has been instrumental in making the educated and upper caste/class in the region aware of the political significance of Jagannath. In recent years there has been a strong objection to the equation of Oriya religiosity with Puri, but the presence of 931 temples dedicated to Jagannath (where worship is conducted in correspondence with the main temple) is evidence of the growing identification of people of all categories and all regions with the deity. This itself vindicates the claim of Jagannath as the '*rashtriya devata*' in modern Orissa.

***Neelasaila*: The Blue Mountain**

Medieval religious poetry in Orissa predominantly used Jagannath as a literary character. Though central to the articulation of modern Oriya identity, Jagannath does not form a major theme of modern creative writing. This significant difference can be ascribed to the relative secularisation of Oriya public life, especially of educated people who constituted the modern reading public. Secondly, the modern requirement of literature demanded that it should be purposive and realistic. Surendra Mohanty's[36] *Neelasaila* (1968), 'Blue Mountain', is an acclaimed modern historical novel, which explores the relations between a Muslim devotee king and Jagannath. Meenakshi Mukherji observes that intimations of cultural crisis give rise to historical novels along with the coming of secularism and the growth of a historical consciousness.[37] This applies to the case of this specific novel.

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[36] Surendra Mohanty, (b.1922) has written around 14 novels of which *Neelasaila* (1968) is the most popular. He received the National Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel in 1969. Mohanty has written social, historical, romantic and political novels. We have partially dealt with his political novel Andha-Diganta in Chapter 3.

[37] Meenakshi Mukherji, *Realism and Reality*, OUP, Delhi, 1985. 39.

Both historical events and the novel confirm that in 1731 King Ramachandra Deva was defeated and imprisoned by Subahdar Taqi Khan who occupied Khurda. During the king's imprisonment, Taqi Khan forced him to marry his sister, a Muslim princess, following which Ramachandra lost his Hindu status. His sons revolted against him and freed Khurda till Taqi Khan won it back and re-installed Ramachandra Deva as the king. But far from acting as his pawn, Ramachadra Deva took the wooden images to a hideout in the south of Orissa.

In the preface, the author writes, 'in Jagannath consciousness '*bhakti*', devotion is insignificant compared to *shraddha*, affection. Every Oriya has a personal relation with Jagannath and has a 'right' on him as his own'.[38] The Muslim king Ramachandra alias Hafiz Kadar Baig, who in the midst of personal humiliation and political revolts saves Jagannath from being captured by Muslims, proves that Jagannath is an inspiration to Oriya nationalism. As he was barred from entering the temple and performing the rituals, a special idol of Jagannath named, *patitapaban*[39] was placed at such a convenient place inside the temple that he could easily have a *darshan* from outside. The novel emphasises that the soul of Orissa remains unconquered till Jagannath is captured and even an Oriya Muslim ruler fights a war of ideals with the Muslim invaders. [40]

Historical events are represented as subsidiary to the relation of Hafiz Baig and Jagannath. But clearly important events of contemporary history are linked with the fortunes of the characters.[41] The narrative is closely linked to the continuing debate about Jagannath having Muslim devotees. Since historically the relations between the two communities were perceived to be hostile, every success in wresting a devotee from the other camp was the triumph of one religion over the other. This is far from suggesting that the novel was written with an intention to incite communal feelings. It only sought to establish the idea that Jagannath's divinity was irresistible. That Muslim Hafiz Baig, a great devotee of Jagannath was in fact not an implausible suggestion because he was converted to Islam by force: 'how could Ramachandra explain to others, that he had accepted his fallenness, (*patita)* just to save Jagannath from hands of Taqi Khan'.[42] His assenting to a marry Muslim princess is not illogical. Jaba, the princess, is a daughter of a Hindu woman who has been brought up with Hindu values and the greatest aim in her life is to get a glimpse of Jagannath.[43] Ideally, in marrying the woman who was Hindu at heart

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[38] Surendra Mohanty, *Neelasaila,* Cuttack Students Store, 7th ed, Cuttack, 1991.
[39] *Patitapaban,* literally means the one who purifies the fallen.
[40] *Neelasaila,* 8-9
[41] Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel,* Penguin Books, London, (1962), 1981, 16.
[42] *Neelasaila,* 81.
[43] Ibid., 96-99.

and who considered Jagannath as her god, the convert king had not committed a severe act of transgression nor entered a relation that was unsanctified by his conscience.

Interestingly, the novel seeks to create a sense of historical authenticity by regular use of a language which is neither purely Oriya nor Urdu but a mix of both, usually spoken by the Oriya Muslims. A historical novel, apart from making readers historically conscious, also functions to reinforce historical prejudices. Literary expression of historical time and space give an opportunity to the reader to experience, albeit indirectly, the movement of their community through historical time. 'Partly it is reawakening of the past national greatness which gives strength to hopes of national re-birth.'[44] Throughout the narrative one encounters long passages on what has led to the decline of the Oriya state. 'Continuous wars and invasions in the last two centuries, the bid to save her self-respect, her blood, the hopeless wars which lead to loss of lives, has bereft the spirit of Orissa. From the Afghan Raktabahu to now, no invader's thirst is quenched till he has humiliated Jagannath...'[45]

In fact, the heroic nature of the king is reduced to mediocrity when he is compared to the character of 'Sara Dei', the plebeian heroine. Sara Dei's complete commitment to her ruler and Jagannath is expressed in a number of narrative episodes. The success of the novel partially lies in letting the history of the nation revolve around a non-historical character and making her artistically imposing. Sara owns a roadside inn and provides shelter to travellers. She risks her life to prevent the Muslims to take over Orissa. An imbecile character, Jaguni, who helps Ramachandradeva to take the idols of Jagannath to a safe place inside the Chilika Lake, assists her. To save the country from invasion is the duty of the king and he has his political interest in it. But Sara is a patriot par excellence. She remains ignorant of the purpose of history and anonymous to a historian's knowledge. In the revelation of Sara's character, the novel vindicates the idea that every Oriya actually retains a personal relationship with Jagannath and has responsibility to protect him.

Power in culture does not necessarily mean brute force. The capacity of the cultural system to widen its space for both protest and resolution of ensuing conflicts enables the system to have a legitimate existence. The Jagannath culture allows a system of domination to exist without instigating a counter-hegemonic culture and even when some parallel cultural forces emerged in the form of resistance, it subsumed them.

The God of the Original Oriyas

[44] Lukacs, op. cit., 19.
[45] Surendra Mohanty, op. cit., 81.

There is a consensus among researchers that the deities in the Jagannath temple are of tribal origin. Their peculiar is shape attributed to tribal gods not because such figures are typical of tribal deities but because they are typical products of the process of Hinduisation. The fact that emphasises the tribal origins of the deities is their non-compliance with the general visual grammar of beauty associated with Indian gods. All three deities have a curious shape -- flat on the head, enormous round eyes, wooden stubs as hands. Corroborating this view L.S.S.O Malley wrote, 'the elasticity of Hinduism is clearly marked in Puri. At one end of the scale is the Oriya Brahman with his scrupulous observance about ceremonial purity and at the other end are semi-Hinduized aboriginals who still cling in part at least to the animistic cult of their forefathers.'[46]

Both for political and social purposes the alienated tribal was to be included and integrated into mainstream Oriya life in modern times. Politically, the numerical strength of the tribal population was crucial to the making of the Oriya nation seeking independence from another dominant cultural group and to satisfy this political necessity they had to be culturally and religiously integrated with the Oriya population. The tribal had to be convinced that he was a part of a society from which he long stood alienated and the common Oriya had to accept the tribal as a part of his cultural and religious history. It was a two-way interaction. While it was economically beneficial for the tribals to associate themselves with the brahminical society because of its superior technical efficiency it was culturally enriching experience for the non-tribal. The political act of integration could be successfully accomplished by highlighting Jagannath's connection with the tribals.

The connection between tribals and the highest God of Oriya society is often established through myths. The major reason that provides for the efficacy of myths is their ahistorical character, something that goes beyond time and allows traditions to be invented.[47] In our analysis we will use the most popular myth associated with the origin of relation between the Oriya and the tribal.

It was revealed to Indradyumna the king of Malwa in his dream that the tribal chief Vishwavasu was worshipping Vishnu. The king sent his brahmin minister Vidyapati to locate the exact place where Nila-Madhava was worshipped. With his tact and cunning, Vidyapati managed to locate Vishwavasu's secret hideout where he worshipped Vishnu. He even married the tribal's daughter, Lalita, to win his confidence. After discovering the secret place of worship, he sent word to the king to take the God away.[48] While the story

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[46] Cited in Manoranjan Mishra, 'Bharati', Vol 1, No. 10, July 1972, *Utkal Journal*, Bhubaneswar, 81.

[47] A.P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction Of a Community*, Manchester University Press, 1982, 100.

[48] Ganeswar Mishra has interpreted this myth differently in his article 'Role of Jagannath-Dharma in National Integration': 'Once the king of the coastal region thought that a prosperous society

takes other complicated turns, two things become clear. In binding representatives of two people in a relationship of marriage, a continuation of lineage is assured. This kinship between the two communities could not be forever established if Vidyapati simply befriended the tribal chief. Secondly, absence of confrontation welded them in a relationship of peaceful coexistence, for force would have created enemies and made the case for integration difficult. The offsprings of Vidyapati and Lalita are the special class of non-brahmin priests called '*daitapati*' and the '*suara*' who claim tribal lineage. The former offer prayers during the important ritual of *ratha-jatra* and the latter act as cooks in the temple.

The most important aspect of this narrative was the integration of the tribals who lived in relative isolation from the national life of the Oriyas. Once Jagannath's tribal affiliations were ascertained, it was crucial to invest him with Hindu qualities. He could legitimately be accepted as the national god only after a substantial elitisation of the tribal elements. He had to be a part of the 'sophisticated' and 'systematised' *brahmanical* and *sanskritic* tradition. This interesting combination – retention of the iconic representation from the tribal-origin myth, and investing complicated Hindu rituals for worship -- created two streams of worshippers: a first group who invoked him through Sanskrit *mantras* and the other through the vernacular. But either way a single common-sense attitude of religiosity was spun around this figure. Further, to establish Jagannath's connection with Krishna as an incarnation of Vishnu, the story emphasises the indestructible soul of Krishna that could not be burnt along with his body and was worshipped by the tribals. It was with the spread of print that the first attempts were made to record and widely disseminate the oral myths and folklore around Jagannath. This dissemination did not merely serve religious purposes, it brought to the fore the links and connections that mainstream Oriya society had with the marginal sections.

Gurucharan Patnaik's[49] book *Jagata Darshana Re Jagannath* examines the popularity of Jagannath with a different emphasis. Explicitly engaging with the notion of historicity of Jagannath, he claims that Jagannath forms a vital link between the past and present in Orissa. In his view, the deity not only forms a part of the historical past of Oriya society, but also directs the community's present and future. Jagannath is not just a

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could not be built unless hill tribes living in the dense forest are integrated.' In this interpretation the writer has made the king think like a nationalist leader of the 19th century. The king does not rely on the uncertainty of a dream as in other myths. The element of Jagannath is overshadowed in the name of political need of having a homogeneous prosperous society. Daitari Panda (ed) *The Cult and Culture of Lord Jagannath*, Rashtra Bhasa Samavaya Prakashan, Cuttack, 1984.

[49] Gurucharan Patnaik, a social and political activist, admits in the preface that his book merely tries to answer queries about the Jagannath cult. This recent book created a furore amongst Oriyas for criticising their god. Modern analysis of the Jagannath cult would remain incomplete without mention of this book.

part of individual beliefs of people; he is to the Oriyas, a communal experience[50]. Patnaik differentiates between two important aspects of Jagannath: *Jagannath dharma* and *Jagannath bhava.*[51] *Jagannath dharma* only highlights the mundane aspects of religion, the daily rituals and the practices associated with it, but *Jagannath bhava* suggests a deeper significance of the symbol. This feeling, (*bhava)* is a consciousness that weaves people with different orientations into a single humanity.[52] 'It is necessary to realise that what is generally called the Jagannath cult is not a cult in the narrow and united sense of a school of thought or a system of rituals and liturgies ...it is like Hinduism, more of a cultural matrix than a systematic school of philosophy and religion.'[53]

Patnaik writes that Jagannath, unlike other deities, Jagannath is not the result of human imagination. He is an invention of human endeavour. His existence is not limited to any one generation, any temporal period or to the confines of *shastras* and *puranas.* 'To confine Jagannath to a religious figure is to go against the basic spirit of Jagannathism. Religious forms are invoked to maintain orderliness in a society that is fraught with differences and threats of disintegration.'[54]

Nilakantha Das traced the existence of Jagannath to the mention of the word Purushottam in Rg Veda. He is emphatic that, even before the mention of Purushottama in the Gita, he was worshipped in Orissa. Nilakantha had a political intention in tracing the origin of Jagannath to the Vedas. He aimed to associate Jagannath with the proud 'Aryan' past, emphasise his antiquity and to de-emphasise his tribal connections. His analysis is not antagonistic to the tribal myths but emphasised the mythical integration of the tribal population and Jagannath's dominantly Vedic and Hindu characteristics. This was necessary to make Jagannath a part of the high brahminical tradition. Instead of relying either on *Madala Panji,* the temple chronicle, which was dismissed as being filled with mythical stories and incidents by most scholars, or the writings of colonial officials, which most later historians relied on, Nilakantha claimed greater historicity for his analysis by drawing on medieval religious literature.

Among all aspects of Jagannath, Nilakantha emphasised the *'samya maitri bhava'*, the idea that all people are equal in front of God. Since some interpretations describe Jagannath as the incarnation of Buddha, Nilakantha's claim about equality in Jagannath cult was partially based on the Buddhist principles of looking upon every human being as equal. Within Oriya literature we encounter different ways in which this

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[50] Gurucharan Patnaik, *Jagata Darshana Re Jagannath*, Ananta Aloka, Cuttack, 1992, iii.
[51] Ibid., iv.
[52] Ibid., 3
[53] Sitakanta Mahapatra, 'Ecstasy of Love and Communitas', *Smarika*, 1979, 34.
[54] Ibid., 2 -4

maitri-bhava is described. To further substantiate his claim, he quotes Achyutananda, a medieval poet:

'whenever on earth there is a shower of rain
it falls equally on places.
If your religion is like the impartial rains, my fellow beings,
know that only then you will be the true believer in *purnabrahma.*'[55]

He relates this *maitri-bhava* to the *Upanishadic* teaching that every individual soul, *atman,* draws its life force from the universal consciousness, *brahman*, the primordial absolute one. Every individual has equal rights and capacity to realise and overcome this division between *atman* and *brahman* and attain salvation. It is important to note that by investing every individual with equal spiritual capacities, we relegate the material and social inequalities to the results of individual actions, *karma.*

While the tribal myths around Jagannath were recognised by all writers, there is always a simultaneous attempt to prove his affiliation to the Hindu-Aryan pantheon. The physical incompleteness of the idols is regarded as the symbolic manifestation of the inconceivable Brahma. One scholar even asserts that it is absurd to think that Jagannath in this form was a *sabara* (tribal) deity,[56] because there was a deep philosophical intent behind this physical incompleteness, the sophistication of which was inaccessible to tribal perception. Jagannath is *purusha* of the Upanishads who can move without feet and hear without ears. It is because of this that he is known as the *Purusha-uttama*, and the *Advaita*. Apart from the triad being the three categories of *prakriti*, primal matter, *satwa, rajah* and *tamah*; it symbolises *sat*, pure being or existence, *cit*, unlimited consciousness, *ananda* or bliss. Further, these images represent the peaceful coexistence of three contesting strands of Hinduism, *Shaiva, Sakta* and *Vaishnava*. The *Purushottam Mahatmya*, the book which describes the greatness of Jagannath, regards him as Vishnu and on that basis places Balabhadra as Balaram, Krishna's elder brother and Subhadra as their sister. It however, makes no mention of Radha because the four-armed Vishnu was more popular in Orissa. Later when Radha gains popularity, 'it is suggested that Radha merges with Srikrishna while staying in *Nilachala*, and the combination of the two forces transforms into the figure of Jagannath.[57]

While critiquing the basic theses of Anncharlott Eschmann[58] that Jagannath was a tribal deity Hinduised over time, Patnaik says that her theses missed out the basic

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[55] *Ye brahmande jala jebe huai barsana*
samasta sthane padai hoina samana...', Nilakantha Das, *Odia Sahitya Ra Krama Parinama*, New Students Store,1977, 198.
[56] Gopinath Mahapatra, *Land of Vishnu*, Orissa Sahitya akademi, Bhubaneswar, 49.
[57] Ibid., 55.
[58] Herman Kulke, (ed) op. cit.

essence of Jagannath. They have transformed and put him alongside a number other Hindu gods and goddesses, as lifeless and purposeless as a mere object of reverence to be worshipped meaninglessly'.[59] According to Patnaik, the basic difference in Jagannath is that he is not been conceived and propagated within the confines of the *shastras* and the *puranas*. He is a god of 'history'.[60] Like history he reflects the change within human society and even adapts to these changes. Unlike the other deities who suffer from stagnation, his character changes with time. 'Jagannath was conceived within history and was born out of historical necessity.'[61]

While the intellectual struggle between the two conceptions of Jagannath -- Purushottama of the Vedas or the Nila-Madhava of tribal Vishwabasu continues, the common people have a simple way of perceiving their god. Jagannath was once worshipped by the tribals and later 'desired' to be worshipped in Puri. This deliberate mixing of history and myth gives rise to the commonality of belief that Jagannath is as much a part of tribal religious repertoire as of elite Hinduism and gives rise to a particular context within which social communication between the two communities takes place. Though the myths regarding Jagannath were of pre-modern origin, the utilisation of the myths for the purpose of integration of tribal and Hindu religious life was a modern phenomenon. It served the political purpose of producing symbolic resolutions of real and lived contradictions between the life of an Oriya tribal (a tribal residing within the boundaries of Orissa after the creation of the province) and the mainstream Oriya life. While saying that Jagannath was born out of historical necessity, Patnaik realises that it was impossible to keep two communities living side by side in absolute estrangement to each other. To overcome this cultural distance, it was imperative to create a symbol with which both communities identified. In Jagannath, this relation was successfully created and retained. Further, he says 'God does not live either in heaven or in the hearts of people, he lives within real conditions of society (*samaj ra bastaba abasta bhitare).* However much we might try to reduce the relevance of God to the lives of people through law, argument and science, as long as people realise and accept the relevance of God in their lives, he lives on.'[62]

Writers like Gopinath Mohanty have written extensively on tribal life and made it more accessible to the non-tribal community. However, in his writings, he has not overcome the problem of representing the tribal as eternally aestheticised, portraying them as mystical and mysterious beings. This excessive obsession with the simplicity of

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[59] Gurucharan Patnaik, op. cit.,22
[60] Ibid., 22.
[61] Ibid., 22-23 *'Itihasa ra abasyakta bhitaru jagannathanka janma'.*
[62] Ibid., 27.

tribal lifestyle may itself be a backlash against urban life. As is mentioned earlier, the author writing about tribal lifestyles is faced with a constant dilemma. He oscillates between the danger of either representing them as 'exotic' and 'sensual' or to 'detribalise' them through integration.

Any discussion on Jagannath remains incomplete without adequate reference to its *maitri-dharma* or its syncretic trends. However, these claims of egalitarianism and syncretism are exaggerated and its exclusions often unnoticed. Undoubtedly, Jagannath has tribal origins, but at the entrance of the temple a sign is displayed which bars entry of all other communities except Hindus. The advocates of the cult however stress the annual *ratha-jatra* in Puri as an occasion that gives unlimited access to people of all castes and religions to 'touch' and 'embrace' the deities. According to them, this in itself establishes the universality of the cult. The existence of the *Ananda Bazar*, 'Market of Bliss' is, to them, evidence that there is no caste discrimination. It is a place for communal eating and the 'holy food' is sold here after it is offered to the deity. However, this entirely benevolent picture is seriously flawed. Since only upper caste Hindus were allowed into the temple till recently, the argument of the castelessness of the *Ananda Bazar* is immediately rendered questionable. A group of lower-caste people involved in the ritual structure was allowed into the precincts of the temple; but this non-discriminatory attitude was restricted to them. It is doubtful whether the people of the same caste not involved in the rituals would have been allowed into the temple at all. As Gurucharan Patnaik writes, 'to the caste-ridden Hindu society this permission of access to lower castes was extraordinary.'[63] Though Patnaik makes references to the inconsistencies prevalent in the Jagannath culture, in trying to rescue it from mere parochialism and vesting it with greater universality, he exaggerates the elements of syncretism and egalitarianism.

Social Significance of the Jagannath Triad

It is commonly believed that the three deities in the Jagannath triad, are the result of the act of bringing together three competing strands of Hinduism, *Vaishnavism*, *Shaivaism* and *Saktism* on one platform and placing them in a symbolic sibling relationship -- to stress their coexistence instead of competition. With Ramanuja, the great south Indian philosopher and reformer (1056-1136) a new wave of *Pancaratra* system emphasised Krishna's relations to his sister Ekanamsa and his brother Balarama. The influence of Ramanuja can be further seen in the subdued representation of eroticism,[64]

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[63] Gurucharan Patnaik, op. cit., 29.

[64] Eroticism is subdued in the temple ritual, but it is an important aspect of Orissan temples. The presence of erotic images outside the Jagannath temple and other contemporary temples in Konark and Bhubaneswar can be traced to the presence of the *Pasupata* and *Kapalika* sects of Saivaism. The sexual rites that play a significant role in tantric practices were responsible for sexual representation on the temples. The *Vastu-Sastra* text mentions erotic imagery as lila of gods and

the unique feature of the temple being the emphasis on sibling worship rather than conjugality. At various points of development the couple existing in Puri, prior to the Jagannath triad, *Shiva Bhairava* and his *Sakta* counterpart, could have been re-identified as Krishna and Radha. According to Kulke, the concept of Radha as a beloved of Krishna and not his legal wife was not a popular belief in Orissa and moreover, since Ramanuja himself was opposed to the erotic elements of the Krishna cult, his influence determined why development of the Puri theology moved away from the concept of the couple. The idea of the divine couple was thereby repressed and Subhadra was reinterpreted as his sister.

While the structures of signification associated with esoteric Hindu tradition satisfied the religious needs of the intellectuals, its meaningfulness was attributed to the simple human ways in which the deity existed. The objects chosen for religious veneration were practices of daily life elevated to a symbolic value. This ritualisation of daily life and manners in which God experienced the same emotions as common people resulted in the humanisation of the Gods. 'In a way, the gods, too, are only human. They have similar joys and similar adventures. That is what makes them accessible to humans with troubles and wishes.'[65] The popular elements in Jagannath culture actually undermine the attitude of the scholars who attempt to restrict it to the formalist esoteric Hindu philosophy. The simple, unmediated, transparent explanation provided to all activities of Jagannath allows greater access to common people and decisively influences people's way of thinking, perceiving and categorising experience.

As the king's court, its activities, style and organisation provides an ideal towards which life outside the court strives,[66] the temple culture is an 'exemplary centre', a model of social action, an ideal towards which life in general must strive. Attributing human habits to god is nowhere more evidenced than in this culture. The temple is organised in the pattern of a household, where Jagannath lives like a temporal being, as in a joint family (so crucial to the Oriya now torn by the logic of modernity), with a wife, a brother and sister. To model human society on the archetype of Gods is to establish a communion with the sacred.[67] The moral order is established by the way these various characters perform their 'divine social roles', and put to test in times of adversity. Their mistakes and successes influence Oriya life.

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sages and the virtual deification of the royal figures. It is not surprising that they were elevated to motifs for decoration. Thomas Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden: Orissa*, BR Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987, 284-318.

[65] Heinrich von Stietencron, 'World and Deity: Conceptions of the Hindus', Hans Kung (ed) *Christianity and World Religions*, Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1987, 183.

[66] Geertz, *Islam Observed*, op. cit., 36.

[67] Mircea Eliade, op. cit., 14.

Bhavas not only define the various aspects of gods and goddesses, but also enable the devotees to cultivate a corresponding feelings and attitudes within themselves through which they can realise their essential unity with their deities.[68] The episodes, which link everyday emotions to rituals, establish both the universality of the emotions and the universality of the culture. The stories of *Siri Chandaluni* and *Hera Panchami* express claims of this kind.

Every year, on all the Thursdays in the month of *Margasira,* (November-December) Oriya women worship the Goddess of Prosperity, Laksmi for happiness and wealth. According to the *puranas,* Laksmi is believed to personally visit the houses of all her worshippers. She was disappointed that no woman did the offering according to proper principles. As she passed by the *chandal* colony, she heard Siri, the lower-caste woman sing,

I pray to you, Mahalaksmi Narayani
Born into a low family, a Chandaluni,
I do not know the principles to worship you...[69]

Pleased with her intense devotion Laksmi blessed her. Balabhadra, Jagannath's elder brother, comes to know of Laksmi having accepted the offering of a low-caste devotee and persuades Jagannath to bar her from entering and desecrating the temple. Jagannath tries to reason with his brother and tells him 'if we drive out a wife like Laksmi, where will we get another like her. If she has made a mistake unknowingly, we must forgive her this time.' To this Balabhadra replies

'if your only concern is your wife, Kanhai
you must build a new house in the chandal colony'[70]

On the insistence of his brother, Jagannath drives Laksmi out of the temple. Distressed and offended by their behaviour, she curses the two brothers to poverty for ill-treating a woman, discards her jewellery and goes to live near her father, *Varuna.*[71] She summons *Nidravati*, the goddess of sleep, to put the two brothers to sleep, and orders the attendants of the temple to empty it of food. Hungry and emaciated Jagannath and Balabhadra are reduced to beggars and beg for food till they reach a mansion near the sea and get to eat there. Jagannath recognises the familiar taste of the food and immediately realises that Laksmi has cooked the food. They beg for forgiveness and accept that she is indispensable for running the house and take her back to the temple.

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[68] Pradip Kumar Datta, 'VHP's Ram: The Hindutva Movement In Ayodhya' in Gyanendra Pandey,(ed), *Hindus and Others*, Viking, Delhi, 1993, 46-73.
[69] *'nicha kula janma mora, ate chandalun..', In Mahalakhsmi Purana*, Dharmagrantha Store, Alisha Bazar, Cuttack, 104.
[70] ' *bharijara karjya jebe achire kanhai...*'Ibid., 105

It is interesting that the same story is used to endorse conflicting social values and norms. As some Oriya writers perceive it, this Purana deals with real problems in society.[72] Laksmi is very central to the construction of womanhood in Orissa. The text is full of rules and observances upon which Oriya femininity is constructed.[73] It is the woman who has the capacity to either make or unmake the family and since the family extends into a society, it is crucial that 'good' women constitute it. Social evils would ultimately disappear with the 'power' of the woman to change and modify the family structure. Social prosperity depends upon the 'presence' or 'absence' of the Laksmi-like woman.

Varying interpretations of the *Laksmi Purana* illustrate the general Oriya attitudes towards the place of women in society. In his interpretation, Mishra perceives the Jagannath temple as a feudal institution 'straightened' out by a strong woman. Balabhadra is the tyrannical aristocrat rolling in luxury with no sense of right or wrong. Jagannath is the 'headman' of the society, who understands that social condition deteriorates with the growing tyranny of aristocracy but is a mute observer, unable to take any corrective action. Laksmi, the levelheaded, 'good' and 'pious' housewife of an aristocratic family, 'is sympathetic towards the servants and labourers and helps them in the time of distress. The dependants and family members address her as Maa or Laksmi Maa (holy Mother) and put forth all their difficulties before her without the knowledge of the housemasters which either the landlords or the headmen do not prefer.'[74] It is in this ideal image of the 'rich' 'aristocratic' 'good' and 'pious' woman, that a normal Oriya housewife is perceived. These characteristics cut across caste and class lines; women are expected to adhere to this characterisation. Laksmi 'advised the womenfolk to bring their family members to the correct path by the way of good behaviour, simplicity and cleanliness, in spite of their tyranny towards them...so that all of the members would automatically be forced to be guided by her methodical principles ...while telling about *Mahalaksmi Puja* she has advised not to worship idols in the temple, but to convert one's own cottage into a temple by way of cleaning, decorating and purifying it by her own labour and then to

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[71] There is a Laksmi Temple at Chakratirtha on the shores of the sea because she is considered to be the daughter of the sea.

[72] Dibakar Mishra, 'Jagannath and the Mahalaksmi Purana', *Orissa Review*, July 1997. 60-62.

[73] '*jeun nari gurubare khaiba ainsa...*''The woman who eats non-vegetarian food on Thursdays
who does not wash her hair on that day
she who laughs too much while speaking
she who combs her hair after sunset
fans herself with the end of the saree that she is wearing
Laksmi never stays with her',

Laksmi Purana, op. cit., 102.

[74] Ibid., 60.

[75] D. Mishra, op cit., 61.

worship the foodgrains, obtained from the fields, which is according to her, Goddess Mahalaksmi herself.'[75]

The *Laksmi Purana* gives direct insight into how the daily life of women is ritualised. Merely having a good character does not make an 'ideal woman'. She is raised to this status even by her habits of cleanliness, especially by maintaining a clean home. The 'shabby' and unclean environment is generally associated with her sister, the opposite of 'Laksmi' called 'Alaksmi', which literally means the absence of Laksmi. In all senses the Purana is considered to be the 'guide' to the making of a perfect woman. The construction of an ideal woman however contains certain contradictions within itself. The woman is expected to be both 'subdued' and 'powerful', usually to 'obey', but she should have the capacity to 'disobey' her husband. What is interesting however, is the need to 'construct' every woman in the image of an aristocratic woman, emulating the life style of the upper caste and upper class. While on one hand, the Purana does not apparently make any caste distinctions (for Laksmi goes to the lower caste Siri Chandaluni's house), it does show that people who belong to different castes and classes lead qualitatively different lives, the quality of which deteriorates as we go down the social ladder. It clearly regards certain castes as being ritually unclean. The narrative success of the myth comes when it first introduces certain castes as 'unclean' and then with an 'exemplary' Siri, creates the possibility of raising this ritually unclean status into a clean one. It does show us the existing differences and contradictions in a society and solves it by generating the possibility of an ideal undifferentiated one.

In more recent times, this myth has been invoked to reinforce attacks on caste discrimination, discrimination against women in the Jagannath temple and the Oriya society as a whole. It has a potential to be interpreted in favour of women, the power of the women to control, create and destroy the whole social fabric. The apology of Jagannath and Balabhadra is not merely seen as an apology to the Goddess, it is interpreted as the apology of the Gods/men to the whole of 'womankind'. Laksmi agreed to forget her anger only if there is no further discrimination against lower castes and women.

During the *Ratha-Jatra* when the three deities go out on a holiday to their summer palace, Laksmi is arbitrarily left behind. This part of the ritual portrays divine *abhimana*. On the 5th day after her husband's departure she yearns to see him and goes to the Gundicha temple. On her way back from the Gundicha temple, seething in jealousy, anger and humiliation, she asks her attendants to break the wheel of Jagannath's chariot. On the scheduled day of return, after seeing the approaching cars form the *chahani*

mandap, the viewing pavilion, she leaves the temple. The King on hearing that Laksmi is leaving persuades her to come back. After Balabhadra and Subhadra enter the temple, the doors are slammed in Jagannath's face. A lively fight ensues with the devadasis singing on behalf of Laksmi and the priests on behalf of Jagannath. This is called the *Laksmi-Narayan Bheta*, Meeting of Laksmi and Narayan.

Women occupy an ambiguous place in the whole structure of Jagannath dharma. On the one hand, the protagonists of the Jagannath culture often cite these stories highlighting the significance of Laksmi against allegations of structural inequalities. But, central to its religious structure is a practice that dishonours and devalues women. These same myths of women power are invoked to de-emphasise the '*devadasi* culture'; dancers and singers dedicated to God. The *devadasi,* known as *mahari*[76] in Orissa, is married to the God in a ritual of *Saree-bandhana* or tying of the saree. Married to God, they remain eternally wedded and never acquire the dreaded fate of a widow. Frederique Marglin has provided an excellent anthropological study on the institution of devadasis in Jagannath temple, and my argument against the claimed egalitarianism of the cult takes off from there.[77]

Dhirendranath Patnaik observes that 'the devadasis were originally meant for the temple but due to continuous Muslim invasion and weak political authority there must have been a moral degeneration on the *part of the maharis*...'[78] Even if we agree that they were initially recruited with proper artistic and religious intentions, Marglin establishes that they often sexually gratified all categories of *sevaks*, though, 'ideally the sexual relations of the *devadasi* ought to be restricted to the king and brahmin priest.'[79]While castelessness was one claim of the religious structure, the *devadasis* had to be from a caste that was *panisprusya,* a caste who can give water to the brahmin. This brings us to two conclusions. In spite of being called *patitapabana*, the redeemer of the fallen, *dinabandhu,* a friend to the poor, who allows a *dhulia-darshan*, to be seen with dusty feet, Jagannath could not accept the services of low caste women. This was a pre-requisite because men who acquired the services of the *devadasis* were from the high caste and royalty. Even in their socially unsanctified relations they were aware of losing caste, which returns us to the initial point that women were hired into the temple for particular purposes, for a God who entertained male servitors from tribals and other lower castes could have accepted low caste women servitors as well. Secondly, Dhiren Pattnaik's remark that the *devadasi* system suffered because of the moral degeneration of the women

[76] Means a woman deeply in love with God.
[77] Frederique Marglin, *Wives of God-Kings*, OUP, Delhi 1985.
[78] Ibid., 11
[79] Ibid., 90.

does not even entertain the possibility that the degeneration could have come about because of the dominant male structure taking advantage of them. However, the system of institutionalising the dedication of young, beautiful girls with a disposition to sing and dance to God was from the beginning a method of creating a class of courtesan/prostitutes who were inaccessible to the general public. In a ritual, before the marriage, the girl who was to become a devadasi, picks in her folded hands a fistful of sand and says, '*jetiki bali kona mora setiki swami heu'*, 'let me have as many husbands as sand grains in my hands.'[80] This institution not only perpetuated a system against women, it vicariously maintained the caste hierarchy in Oriya society.

In common perception, the daily rituals in the temple are of great significance. The rituals in the temple are known as *niti*, rites that form a part of the everyday routine rather than being considered as *puja*. The day begins with replacing the beds and other accessories placed the night earlier, after which is the *abakasha,* the tooth-brushing rite where gods use a particular tooth-stick called the *kumbhatua-dantakathi* -- a twig found in the jungles. After the *bala-bhoga* the doors are kept open for *darshan* till noon when *mahaprasad* is served. The food in the temple is prepared in clay utensils *kudua* and as Mansingh wrote, 'he teaches us a lesson in patriotism too. In his most hospitable kitchen sugar and potatoes are still not used'[81]. The doors open at forenoon and are kept open till the Gods are put to sleep to melodious tunes of the *Gita-Govinda.*

The human characteristics of the three deities are emphasised when in summer, unable to bear the heat, the gods are given a sandalwood bath and taken for a boat ride every evening. This is *Chandan Jatra*, which commences with the Hindu New Year in mid-April. The *Jagannath Panji,* the calendar according to which every religious Oriya invariably conducts his life, comes to the markets around this time. The *Snana-Purnima*, the bathing festival, starts with the first rains, where the gods take a ritual bath. This afflicts the gods with cold and fever and they go into '*anasara*', when they are treated for their illness. None excepting the blood-relatives of the gods, the *daitapatis* are able to see and tend them at the time. They are kept on a diet of fruits. For offering *prasad,* the tribal way of first tasting the fruit and then giving it to the god is followed. During this time in June the figures are repainted before they make their grand appearance on the *Ratha-Jatra* day.

The chariots are by then ready because their construction starts on *Akshaya Trutiya,* the folk agricultural festival when the farmers start to sow the seeds for the new

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[80] Ibid., 74 -75.
[81] Apart from these, cauliflower and tomatoes are not used because these too are not indigenous products. Mayadhara Mansingh, 'Jagannath the Splendid Synthesis', *Smarika*, December 1969, 21.
[82] Surendra Mohanty, *Lord Jagannath*, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1982.

crop. The *Ratha-Jatra* in June symbolises the youthful sprouting of seeds, which now require the rains to sustain them. Anthropological work has established that the car festival is related to the early fertility cult of the tribal people.[82] Once the yearly adventure of *Ratha-Jatra* is over, the *sayana-jatra,* sleeping ceremony, begins during which all auspicious ceremonies remain suspended till *Devotthana,* the rising ceremony.

The queerest of all events in the divine life of Jagannath is the 'death' of the God every twelve years. This is called the *Nava-Kalebara,* assuming a new body. It involves a long technical process through which the soul of God is re-implanted into the new idols. The old ones are buried in the *koili-baikuntha*[83]. The relative-*daitapatis* perform the funeral obsequies. Marking the death of God emphasises the impermanence of life and declares the existence of two eternal truths, birth and death. But, this system of passing over of the soul from one body into another represents the philosophy of re-birth and the relevance of *karma.*

The complex legitimacy of the cult comes from the various caste-types that are involved in the service of the god. There are at least thirty-six sub-castes involved in the daily ritual of the deity and as in any other temple it provides a great source of employment, where people are paid both in cash and kind. Their rights and duties are codified in a palm leaf document called *karmani.* Apart from the brahmin Pandas (priests), the most important servitors are the *daitapati* and *suara,* priests of tribal origin, *muduli,* in charge of the temple utensils, *darji,* who stitch clothes, *mukhapalaka,* who make tooth sticks, *hadapanayaka,* who give betel to the deities. As W.W.Hunter wrote, 'as long as his towers rise upon the sands of Puri, so long there will be in India a perpetual and visible protest of equality of man before God...the poorest caste learns that there is a city on the far eastern shore in which the high and the low eat together.'[84] The earthy nature of the God is specified through a group of bawdy singers called *dahuka* who are appointed to ritually sing crude and vulgar local songs during the *Ratha-Jatra.* Jagannath forms a part of Oriya daily life in strange ways. The *'mahaprasad'* offered to Jagannath is carried by untouchables. Friends call each other by the name of '*abhada*' (the rice offering to Jagannath) by feeding each other a handful of that rice. This exchange of *prasad* signifying eternal friendship became a symbol during the political struggle for unification of Oriya speaking tracts.[85]

Ratha Jatra: Commemorating the Past Glory of Oriyas

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[83] A place specifically allotted within temple precincts for the burial of old idols. Baikuntha is the abode of Vishnu.

[84] W.W.Hunter, 'The Shrine of Jagannath', *Smarika,* 1984, 2.

[85] P. K. Mishra, *The Political History of Orissa,* Oriental Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1979, 20.

In the context of North India, Gyanendra Pandey has argued, 'myths, folk tales, proverbs, geneologies, history of caste, region, nation -- a whole plethora of historical statements was thrown up to underlie the temporal axis, the heritage, the popular consciousness of common traditions by which the local community defined its own identity and projected its image to others.'[86] Further, 'the attempts to capture history by authors and writers, their renewed interest in history through these writings fictional and non fictional helped local groups to establish their identity, obtaining a public recognition of their genealogies, their traditions and their rights in their given territories.'[87] Exactly similar processes helped in rejuvenating the historical memory and accounts of communities in Orissa.

Both as a narrative and a ritual during Jagannath's *Ratha Jatra*, the legend of Kanchi Kaberi is central to the narrative self-definition of Oriyas. First written by Purushottam Das, it has been continuously used over time to retrieve the lost memory of the powerful past of the Oriya race. In 1880, Ramashankar Ray introduced the legend into popular literature, reconstructing an Oriya past that emphasised physical courage and martial organisation and opposed the widespread belief that Oriyas were weak and effeminate, unable to protect themselves during times of distress. What is crucial in this legend is the direct relation between the Kanchi expedition *(Kanchi Abhijan)* of Jagannath and the honour (*swabhiman*) of the Oriya people. The decaying sense of honour of the Oriya race had to be resurrected against the invading Muslims, the British rulers, the Bengali language and the Bengali '*babu*'. Apart from the preoccupation with heroism, one of its projects, as we see it, was to consolidate a hegemonic Hindu identity in Orissa. The ritual of '*chera-panhanra'* during *Ratha-Jatra,* which forms an integral part of the narrative, is perceived as an instrument that successfully unites various categories of Hindus. This legend also assists an understanding of caste relations in traditional society.

As the legend goes, Shri Purushottam Deva, Gajapati of Orissa, had seen and fallen in love with Padmavati, the daughter of Salwa Narasingha, the king of Kanchi. The king of Kanchi had agreed to the proposal for marriage till he came to Puri during the *Ratha Jatra* to see his future son-in-law performing '*chera panhara'*, the royal ritual of sweeping the three *rathas* of the deities. Extremely annoyed that a person of royal blood was performing the work of a '*chandal*', sweeper, Salwa Narasingha declined to give his daughter in marriage to the king. Enraged and offended by refusal, Purushottam decided to take revenge, for this was not merely an offence to the Gajapati but to the state deity of Orissa. He decided to wage war against Kanchi with the help of the courageous '*paika*',

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[86] Gyanendra Pandey, *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India,* O.U.P., Delhi, 1990, 111.
[87] Ibid., 111-115.

peasant-soldiers of Orissa. In the first attempt the Oriya king is defeated. The reason for the defeat was that he had forgotten to ask the permission of Jagannath before going to battle. The Oriyas would never win the war against the Kanchi with Kanchi's state deity, Mahaganapati, fighting on their side. Ashamed of his folly, Purushottam approaches Lord Jagannath, asks for forgiveness, and begs him to accompany him to Kanchi. Pleased with his devotion, Jagannath agrees to accompany him to war.

In his second attempt, not only the *paika*, but also young men who did not belong to warrior classes joined the Oriya army. A war led by Jagannath and Balabhadra was the war of the whole of Orissa. To lose and die in this battle would take one to heaven and to win would give great honour. Before leaving for war, the king of Puri came to the temple to ask permission of god and left him a diamond ring as a gift. Even before the king leaves for the battle, Jagannath is on his way to Kanchi. A poor milkmaid, Manika, who makes a living out of selling curd and milk, finds the evidence of this. On his way, a woman, asking him to pay for two men who had bought curd from her stops the king. Instead of the traditional 'cowrie', Jagannath had left a diamond ring as evidence. The king recognises the ring as the same one that he had given to Jagannath. The king names a village after the name of Manika as Manikapatna.

The battle is essentially a fight between Mahaganapati and Jagannath. The arrangement is that who ever wins shall take away the losers' '*devata*' to his capital city. Purushottam wins the battle, captures Salwa Narasingh and his daughter and keeps them as hostages. He orders his minister to get Padmavati married to a '*chandal*'. The minister waits till the next *Ratha-Jatra* and presents Padmavati to Purushottama during the sweeping ceremony.[88]

This act of royal sweeping conveys two ideas. By performing something that is unusual to the king's status, the act establishes that society is divided and organised on the basis of contradictions and inequalities; it simultaneously denies these contradictions by the symbolic resolution of subjecting the highest member of society to the lowest act. It exploits potential symbols of the society, maximises the value of the act of sweeping and wins the favour of the gathered mass. Like the inversion rituals of other cultures, an annual ritual demonstration helps the relations of domination to acquire legitimacy. In publicly assuming the role of a sweeper and through the dramatic public demeaning of the highest authority, a cultural message is disseminated -- that no act is lowly in the eyes of God. The power conflict between caste categories is displaced and legitimised and provides for a symbolic balance. It gives a valid reason for the maintenance of the caste system and the structural necessity of each caste to hold society together. The rhetoric that

Jagannath's self-respect is closely connected to that of the Oriya community and vice-versa is reiterated. It speaks nostalgically of the power of the Oriya '*paika*', the strength of the Oriya nation and re- establishes the lost glory of Oriya masculinity. This ritual was one of the vital ways through which the 'masses were invited into history,'[89] which helped in creating a culturally inclusive history of the nation. It also declared the triumph of the regional over the local.

Apart from the fact that this legend was widely used by dramatists, it was a major part of Radhanath Ray's poem 'Chilika'. While the poem describes the march of the Oriya army to the south, it weaves into the people a consciousness about their landscape, the territorial features that made up the Oriya space and influences collective perceptions of 'meanings of particular stretches of territory.'[90]

The idea of God going to war against the enemies of the state was in itself a political statement because it portrays god not as mere witness but as actively involved with the political happenings of the state. The constant companionship of the deity was a moral boost to the soldiers, a way of instilling confidence into the popular mind. As an Oriya historian observes, 'the great yearning for Jagannath is to some extent the outcome of centuries of companionship in suffering between the people and their god. In every disaster of Orissa, Jagannath has borne his share and in every fight before an invading power, he has been their comrade.'[91]

Different writers have perceived the legend of Kanchi-Kaveri differently. Under the secular influence of modernity, Godabarisha Mishra's drama *Purushottam Deva*, has completely de-emphasised the relevance of Jagannath. Contrary to the general perception about the war of the brave Oriyas it emphasises the historical truth of the episode. There is hardly any mention of the God, except for the scene when the king of Kanchi says, 'the king of Orissa lacks self-respect, *atma-gauraba*, for he performs the job of a *chandal* during the *Ratha-Jatra*.'[92] As opposed to the brave king who is raring to go to war, Godabarisha's drama portrays a conscientious king disturbed by continuous warfare. This does not reduce his credibility as a warrior; the king of Kanchi in fact acknowledges his bravery. But keeping in tune with his times, the author makes his hero concerned with the loss of innumerable lives in war. In one instance the King says, 'for petty gains of small kingdoms, I hate to go into war with my brothers and kin.'[93] More than the war with

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[88] Though there might be various versions of this story, I have chosen the simple adaptation in Rajkishore Sahu's, *Bhakta Batsala Jagannath*, Cuttack Students Store, 1993, 29-41.
[89] A.D. Smith, *Ethnic Origins Of Nations*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1986, 1993,137.
[90] Ibid., 183.
[91] N. K Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Sushil Gupta Ltd. Calcutta, 1956, 5
[92] Godabarisha Mishra, 'Purusottam Deva', *Godabarisha Granathavali*, Cuttack Students Store, 1960, 519.
[93] Ibid., 503.

Kanchi, the play highlights internal revolts within Orissa to win the kingdom of Puri. The Oriya *paika* however continues to occupy a significant place as a brave warrior and ever ready to sacrifice his life for his king and kingdom and is full of the spirit of '*tyaga*' or sacrifice.[94]

The annual dramatisation of this specific narrative raises it to the status of a national ritual. For a ritual to gain national significance, it has to be performed by an appropriate person in accordance with a conventional procedure. The visual rhetoric associated with the ritual makes it effective among people who watch and participate in it. It is inseparable from the existence of the institution that defines the place, the mood and the agent. The Puri Raja's status as the *rauta*, royal servitor and the *chalanti pratima*, the living God, gives him certain legitimacy. The people of Orissa nurture a special relationship with this king because of his unique relationship with Jagannath. The capacity of the Puri Raja to act with the right to divine kingship and as a mere low-caste *chandal* authorises him with social and cultural power, an authority given to him by the national God and the people of Orissa. The spectacle attached to the act of sweeping, the dress, the way the king arrives in a *tamjan*, an ornamented chair carried by men, among jubilant shouts of the assembled mass of people, is not an irrelevant distraction but a part of the symbolic device to make the whole ritualistic performance more effective. The retention and continuation of conventional procedures during modern times, even in the form of festivals has strong implications for the way social relations are organised and maintained and how the whole community perceives, relates and engages with its past.

The Kanchi-legend and the act of *chera-panhara* have different implications for different classes of people. To the middle class, it vindicated the martial character of the Oriya community and dispelled the colonial picture of Oriyas as effeminate. It instilled renewed nationalistic aspirations among the newly educated that formed the middle class and suggested the structural interdependence and indispensability of each caste. Especially, it manages the appropriation of the Muslims by a reference to *Salabeg*, the Muslim worshipper of Jagannath, who with his supreme devotion, made the Gods wait on the chariots till he arrived. For a Hindu the Salabeg episode was a symbolic triumph over Islam because it could successfully create a follower out of a Muslim. It should be remembered that only the Hindus articulate this act of inclusion. The Muslims in Orissa do not consider Salabeg to be a Muslim because once initiated into idol-worship; he was considered a *kafir* in Islam.

Ratha-Jatra is a national Oriya event because it is replicated in various parts of Orissa. Smaller *ratha jatras* that happen all over Orissa is a manner through which poorer

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[94] Ibid., 516.

people, unable to be at the centre of celebrations in Puri, get access to it. These smaller gatherings, apart from spreading the spirit of festivity, spread the fundamental principle behind the *ratha jatra*. National festivals of this kind help shape strong communitarian links in two ways: people recognise and perceive the whole that they belong to, 'see' who forms a part of them and 'show' and reconfirm their belongingness to this whole.

Ratha Jatra is a festival of renewal that ushers in the monsoon in June-July.[95] This festival rejuvenates the deities, thereby renewing the kingship, people and the land. It entails reversing the normal direction of time in which living beings grow older and not younger. Time, like space is not homogeneous and continuous to a religious person. Festivals interrupt ordinary time, where religious people start to live in contemporaneity with the gods.[96] They reverse the movement of time and provide people with the opportunity to begin life all over again. Festivals like this, which physically and emotionally involve the whole people, do not just symbolise community identity and victory. They are repeated each year because they are often associated with a basic principle that 'each year the world must be created anew'[97]. This gives it a quality of the sacred.

The '*Ratha Jatra*' is the most spectacular religious-cultural event, which in modern times has survived the processes of secularisation. The manner in which the popular press constructs it, the radio commentary and recently, the national telecast of the festival, are ways through which religious institutions become a part of the responsibility of the modern state. The broadcast of popular politicians, the security arrangements, the presence of the police, do not merely induce a sense of religious excitement but register other larger, secular social obligations. Techniques of mass reproduction, like printing, have a tremendous impact on creation and reproduction of religious material and have led to the homogenisation of the Jagannath icon within Orissa.

Political inclusion of distant tracts was done through delegating certain privileges of serving the Lord to feudatory chiefs of specific areas. The *parakha seba,* the body guard service was delegated to the Raja of Banpur, *churi-khanda seva*, sword and dagger service, to the Raja of Ranpur and Baramba. Iron comes from the king of Dhenkanal and Talcher and timber from the chief of Daspalla.[98] It was economically beneficial to solicit the obligation of the '*gadjat*' areas, the interior areas of Orissa. The wood that the deities

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[95] Frederique Marglin, *Time Renewed: Ratha Jatra In Puri* in T.N.Madan (ed), *Religion in India*, OUP, Delhi, 1991, 1994, 199-211.
[96] Mircea Eliade, *Sacred Time and Myths*, op.cit., 68-95.
[97] Ibid., 49.
[98] Kulke, 'Ksetra and Ksatra', 136.

are made of normally comes from these areas and is regarded as 'tributes' from the *gadjat* people.

Traditionally, people from all over India manned the five hundred odd traditional centres of learning called '*maths*', around the temple. This confirmed Puri as an important constituent of mainstream Hinduism. It is recognised as one of the four *tirtha-dhams*, major centres of pilgrimage for HIndus. Puri was also the residence of a Sankaracharya. Initially, the notion of *rashtriya-devata* was more or less forced upon people of the western tracts.[99] Once Jagannath was exalted to the status of Krishnahood and more so in the post-Chaitnya era, the Western Orissa tracts became still more alienated because of their predominantly Shaiva and Sakta inclinations. With the rise of Jagannath as the '*Rashtriya Devata*' of Orissa, the Shiva and Sakta shrines have become subservient to Jagannath in coastal Orissa.

Manoranjan Mohanty argues that the upper caste domination in Orissa is not only reflected in the political and economic processes but also in a cultural hegemony, which has effectively contained all alternative movements.[100] This dominance of the upper caste is evident in the continuance of the institutional arrangement of the *Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha,*[101] which consists of learned orthodox brahmins and tries to protect the Sanskritic traditions. As Gurucharan Patnaik writes, 'in the modern times a group of illiterate brahmins, without any firm knowledge about the *shastras* occupy the esteemed seat in the *mandap* and decide the direction of Oriya religious life'.[102] Godabarisha Mishra lamented the decadence of cultural and religious knowledge of the brahmins who continue the tradition,

'what to say of the sad plight
of the *mukti mandap*
what it was, what has become of it...
it is doubtful if the brahmins know how to spell their names
but all claim the status of being learned;
how they terrorise people'[103]

In the post-independence period was a rise of sects and religious organisations popularised and headed by people like Ramakrishna, Nigamananda, Aurobindo and

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[99] I was made aware of this during a detailed discussion with R. K. Mishra.
[100] Manoranjan Mohanty, 'Caste, Class and Dominance in Orissa', Francine Frankel (ed), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India,* OUP, Delhi, 1989.
[101] A similar body called *Yogakkar* that exercised supreme civil and criminal authority is found in Suchindram temple, Kerala.
[102] Guruchran Patnaik, op. cit., 25.
[103] '*hele martye aji bada hina eka...*' Godabarisha Mishra, in *Galamadhaba, Alekhika,* Granthmandir, Cuttack, 1963.

Thakur Ankul Chandra. But the effect of these sects has been marginal in Orissa. People who accepted and promoted these new guru-led traditions often belonged to the high echelons, educated, high-ranking officials, politicians and the wealthy. These new forms of religion, with less emphasis on the rigidity of Hinduism, made an attempt to provide intellectual explanations for the rising crisis among the urban city-bred educated people. It was not necessary for busy office-goers to relate to God directly, he could do it via the cult head, who literally took the responsibility of gaining salvation for him. However, the common mass including the forming middle class in Orissa continued to regard Jagannath as the supreme God-head primarily because Jagannath culture itself did not require too much of rigidity.[104]

Most scholars in recent years refrain from referring to Jagannath as a 'cult' and have reached a consensus that it is a 'religious consciousness', because of the vertical and horizontal spread of the philosophy. This phrase was most popularised by the German scholars, Arnolt Eschmann and Hermann Kulke. These scholars argue that it is a whole encompassing consciousness because there is no one religious preceptor, guru or cult-head who heads and directs the cult. [105]

The method of choosing the most suitable tree for making the idols is also interesting. This is revealed to the head priest in a ritualistic dream. It is strange that the priests always dream of a tree from a particular area in Orissa and fail to locate a tree from any other part, especially in the western tracts. Since the ritual of the dream is so deliberate, a tree chosen from the distant western tracts would serve to raise the level of involvement of those people in an activity so basic to Oriya identity.

However, there is more than mere contrivance in this whole affair. There is a rigid time framework in which the business has to be conducted, the logs supposed to be used cannot be brought in trucks or bus, and they have to be carried by human beings or bullock carts. It is not feasible to drag heavy logs from a very distant place to Puri. Secondly, the Prachi riverbed in the coastal tract, in which the neem tree is normally located, has a particular kind of soil conducive for trees without hollow trunks. Once the tree is demarcated there is no reversal of the decision because the age-old belief system is suspended on this very crucial 'dream'. It is believed that a chosen group of *sevaks,* agents specially associated with the rituals of *Naba-kalebar*, possibly make a complete survey of the trees and even select it well in advance. This whole sequence is a well - organised, intelligently manipulated system based on years of experience and traditional

[104] It is not unusual to see a person park his bicycle on the side of the road and fold his hands or go down on his knees, in the middle of the road, wherever he could spot the temple spire.
[105] In the interview with Dr. R K. Mishra, editor of *Orissa Review*, the monthly magazine issued by Orissa Government.

knowledge. The public regard for the whole *sevak* community is maintained through the maintenance of such secrets. The spread of education among the younger generation of priests has led to the possible admission of such trade secrets.

The affluent people in the western tracts who can afford to visit Puri relate to Jagannath at a very personal level and often do not question his status, but local people without adequate access to Puri, do not emotionally relate to the temple like the coastal people. But stories about Muslim invasion and the western tracts being a convenient place for hiding the idols are constantly reiterated to integrate those areas into the religion's collective memory. Historical confirmation about relics of Jagannath hiding in Sonepur, Ranpur, Boudh, etc. when he was coerced and thrown out during foreign invasion have significantly contributed to the all-Orissa spread of the Jagannath influence. But, these shrines are apparently not 'revered' by the local people. Progressively, people in the western tracts are becoming less attached to Jagannath, their folk literature 'disgracefully silent' about him. 'Conscious' people who want to establish the primacy of Jagannath over all of Orissa highlight these places and their apparent importance.[106]

Ritualistically, however, nothing has changed in the temple compared to the pre-modern times. The way oral tradition is handed down to posterity, the literature of the temple ritual, however crude, still remains inviolable. Jagannath, it is believed is offered prayers in '*tantric*' rituals. The dance of the *devadasi* during the offering of food to the deities is considered to be the last 'ma', *maithuna* of the tantric offering.[107] Though the educated have over the years disassociated themselves from tantric rituals, rural Oriyas continue to be inclined towards quasi-tantricism. *Tantra* as a form of worship was popular in the '*shakta*' shrines, especially in places like, Banpur, Kakatpur, Banki, Jajpur, Sarala, Samaleswari, Hirapur famous for the 64 Yogini, and the Boitala-pitha in Bhubaneswar. The continuation of tantric practices in the Jagannath temple is attributed to the temple originally being a *shaiva-shakta pitha*. There are a few strands of thought that also believe that the association of Jagannath with *tantra* is also because of the tribal origins of the deity.

Rebel Movements against Jagannath

The success and popularity of Jagannath is often traced to the capacity of this religion to integrate 'rebel' movements within itself. One such movement against excessive brahmanisation of the cult was the '*mahima dharma*', a protest religious movement from below, which Sidhartha Das has called a 'social resistance movement of

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[106] Interview with R.K. Mishra.
[107] Marglin, op. cit. The others being, *mamsa, matsya, madya, mudra*.

early 19th century.'[108] It staged a rebellion against the brahmanical tradition of exploitation and championed the cult of the 'void' or '*sunyavad*'. It revolted against idolatry and the only perceptible god of its followers was 'Surya', the sun god. They sang the glory of the absolute, god without attributes or qualities. As a policy, *mahima* followers would not dine with the higher castes like the brahmins and the karana. It was almost a reversal of the hierarchical caste system where the high caste refused to have meals in the company of lower castes.

Mahima dharma gathered a strong following among the intelligentsia[109] and is often referred to as a counter-move both to the Brahmo movement, which was invading Orissa from Bengal and the spread of Christian missionary activities. The growing popularity of the missionaries among the lower castes and the tribal population, their success in convincing the people regarding the 'exclusions' and 'discrimination' in the brahmanical religion and ability to attract people for conversion could be one reason for the growth of an indigenous movement from within.

This religious movement immediately and directly affected the lives of the rural and neglected people. The *mahima* followers were more acceptable in western Orissa than in the coastal regions because of the greater influence of sanskritic Hinduism in these areas. Some of the *mahima* followers believed in *tantric* practices and kept in high esteem the guru-tradition that was not very prevalent within brahmanical religion. Their tantricism attracted common people who believed in the '*alaukika*', the power of the unseen. Mahima dharma was most closely associated with Bhima Bhoi, a tribal guru, who in later times has been accepted as the most devout follower of Jagannath. His *bhajans*, religious songs in praise of God, have become the most popular in the Jagannath tradition.

Though on the one hand there was a rise of these dissent movements to establish an egalitarian social order against the hegemony of the dominant classes and castes, on the other, there was a concerted effort to absorb these movements within the dominant system. While philosophically Mahima Dharma was contradictory to the fundamental principles of the Jagannath cult, the successful accommodation of the contradictory consciousness of the rebel movement into its fold by declaring its cult-head as the greatest devotee of Jagannath proclaimed the egalitarianism of the Jagannath culture. Das presents 'the elements of contradictory consciousness in Mahima philosophy and argues that there is an attempt to organise and evolve a lower caste identity through the concept of a

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[108] Sidhartha Das, *Mahima Dharma: A Cultural Dissent,* Arya Prakashan, Cuttack, 1997. Eschmann refers to it as a sect, which emerged as a challenge against the dominant cult. However, it retained major traditional religious rituals.

Superior God.'[110] However in trying to absorb the sect within the Jagannath culture, the attempt to establish and maintain an alternative movement was foiled.

The myths around Mahima Dharma hold that the first devotee of Mahima Swami was god Jagannath himself.[111] As Das says 'of all these religious elements which Mahima tries to unite under the spiritual fold, the most important target was the Jagannath cult ...By devaluing the importance of the Jagannath temple and the deity himself, as he becomes the disciple of Mahima Swami, Dharma tries to establish its spiritual supremacy.'[112] The Jagannath culture does exactly the same to the sect. It appropriates it by depicting it as arising from within itself and turned the most famous Mahima follower into the staunchest devotee of Jagannath. The stronger the need to create an alternative identity of the lower caste, the greater was the need of the Jagannath culture to declare it as a part of itself. In fact the rise of the sect did not bring about large-scale conversions among people. Rather the basic tenets were reinterpreted and reproduced differently in various social contexts.

In more recent times, Gandhi and Vinobha Bhave declined to enter the temple in protest against the fact that untouchables were not allowed in. Mohan Nayak, a Congress dalit leader who ventured into the temple was beaten and thrown out by the brahmins in 1948. There were press releases in June 1987 in which it was suggested that the government were to erect a viewing tower near the temple so that non-Hindus, foreign tourists and *dalits* can have a glimpse of the temple complex.

As in traditional complexes this one had its share of strong system of rules which discriminated against women. The women employed in the temple were mostly engaged as 'dancing girls', *devadasi* or *maharis* and practised temple prostitution. Temple servitors and priests mostly exploited them. They were even made to believe that having such relations with temple priests was auspicious for them. This was a crude system of exploitation that continued till 1955. The *mahari* system degenerated into divine prostitution with these women becoming religious and traditional victims.

The temple has a characteristic way of transforming its vices into virtues. Any allegation against the excessive brahmanisation of the culture is encountered with legends of Dasia Bauri, the low caste devotee who on being debarred from entering the temple prayed so relentlessly that the deity himself came to the temple door to meet him and accept his offerings. This was a principal way of appeasing the lower caste. The same was

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[109] The coming of the modern education system and the free access of all castes to education led to a few lower castes to acquire education. They were to lead the alternative movements against the existing social discriminations.
[110] Siddhartha Das, op. cit. ix
[111] Ibid., 33
[112] Ibid., 33

the case with the Muslim poet, Salabeg, regarded as the most popular devotee of Jagannath. It was through this that the temple maintained its ideological hegemony by making the oppressed believe that their best interests lay in supporting the system, rather than opposing it. In the cultural structure of Jagannath, there is a symbolic resolution of the real contradictions that form a part of lived reality

Jagannath -- A Cultural Symbol for Non-Religious Oriyas.

With the expansion of modern institutions in Orissa, we can expect a secularisation of social life. In some cases, some classes of people become secular in their consciousness but retain their attachment to religious symbols by transforming Jagannath from a religious icon to a cultural one. The relevance of Jagannath in modern Orissa therefore transcends the world of religious believers. What is central to the belief of the non-religious person is that there is no model of perfection outside the human condition, the human being is the sole subject and agent of history.[113] But as Eliade argues, it is difficult for the non-religious person to escape a vestigial form of religiosity, for usually his formation begins with situations assumed by his ancestors, and even in the process of emptying himself of religious influences he preserves some relics of religious behaviour. The commonest is to believe in the system of social morality, which is often initiated by religious people. 'Do what he will, he is an inheritor.'[114] Sacred centres in India are often architectural sites that form a part of the community's historical memory. Secular people often have to accept that what they look upon as historical is inextricably linked to the religion of the region. In historical societies, the secular and religious have always coexisted and the degree of secularisation in a predominantly religious society like India is relative. Secular people often transfer religious activity to the register of aesthetics. The process is especially marked in the transfer of artistic patronage from religious institutions to the modern state. The ritualistic performance of the Odissi dance in the Jagannath temple is one such activity which has undergone a process of secularisation and was eventually declared as a form of Indian classical dance in the late 1950's.

Odissi dance forms a major referent of cultural Oriya identity within and outside Orissa in modern times. At the beginning, the Oriya middle class was suspicious of a ritual traditionally associated with temple prostitutes. Daughters of 'respectable' families were not encouraged to learn Odissi dance and even when they did, they were not favourably looked upon in their social circles. Once it established itself as an 'art form', however, middle class attitude rapidly changed. But this transformation of the Oriya middle class came only after this dance form disassociated itself from the *devadasi* system. There was greater emphasis after the 50's to prove the antiquity of the dance form

[113] Eliade, op. cit., 203.

and to trace its origin to the classical theory of aesthetics. In fact there was a social need to de-emphasise its association with the *devadasis* and emphasise the greater involvement of the middle class. After it acquired state patronage, there was a conscious attempt to sever all relations with people traditionally associated with the dance form.[115] Sanskrit songs generally accompanied a dance performance to stress its classical association. This was later criticised by people who wanted to highlight its relevance to Oriya identity and language. Priyambada Hejmadi says, 'Oriya lyrics are hardly used in an Odissi repertoire. Preference is given to Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda.*' According to her, this denies any distinctiveness of the dance form.[116]

Jagannath culture has a presence at all levels of Oriya social life. It is a living religious idea. People who are modern perceive in it a secularised cultural identity, which is supplemented by producing artefacts of religion that successfully circulate in the cultural economy in an altered form. Jagannath culture provides meaning and purpose for people to construct their reality and sustains within it norms upon which the integration of Oriya society depends. It has a strong ideological hegemonic structure that reproduces a system of relations of domination and subordination. But its real achievement is in its amazing adaptation to modern conditions. Although a central part of traditional culture, It has remained a major axis of the cultural identity of the Oriya people.

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[114] Ibid., 204.

[115] After the legal ban on continuance of temple prostitution, the *devadasis* made an appeal to the Orissa Government for grants to establish a school of dance and music, in order to continue training younger girls. They were denied state patronage. Any discussion on the *devadasi* was significantly absent from Dhirendranath Patnaik's book on Odissi dance. Also see, Dhirendranath Patnaik, 'Dance Tradition in Orissa', H.C.Das, (ed.) *Cultural Heritage of Orissa*, The Printoverse, Cuttack, 303- 322.

[116] Priyambada Hejmadi, 'Odissi Dance in a Historical Perspective', Ibid., 297-302.

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade the attention of academic research in India has moved over from a narrowly conceived chronological history of politics to interrogations of the processes of identity formation. Efforts have been made in the present work to establish that nationalism is not merely a political issue that exclusively concerns itself with the achievement of an independent state. Additionally, it has deep roots in the cultural formation of a community and aims at the construction of distinctive identities. The political issues of nationalism, in a large measure, depend on the cultural achievement of a distinctive community.

CONTEXT OF THE ARGUMENT

The major theories of nationalism propounded by writers like Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobswam and Benedict Anderson in the 1980s emphasised different aspects of identity and rejected the notion that nations were primordial entities with distinct cultural characteristics. According to them, nationalism is a product of modernity. As Gellner argued, growth of industrial societies as well as a high degree of economic integration required for their successful functioning commonness among the people. Anderson's seminal work on nationalism propounds the notion that the nation is an 'imagined community'. The central thesis in his persuasive argument is that people imagine themselves into existence 'as a nation' through the development of cultural processes associated with print-culture. The coming of a new genre of newspapers and novels brought unconnected groups of people into an imaginative relationship as members of a single community. Self-representation and cultural practices underwent vital changes with print- capitalism. Decline of religiosity and the development of a new rationalist political vision of humanity contributed to the growth of a unified national consciousness. Theoretically, the major challenge to these scholars came from John Armstrong and Anthony D.Smith.[1] They too rejected crude primordialism but accepted that nations came into being through their ethnic origins. In his book, 'The Ethnic Origins of the Nation', Smith emphasises the 'myths of origin', a shared feeling of common history, way of life and physical space which provide people with a sense of identity. While the debate over identity and nationalism continues, all these theories converge on the point that culture is constitutive of nationalism. The coming of print and the rise of a new literary

[1] John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism,* Fontana Press, London, 1994.

genre of modern novels facilitated a recording of cultural transformation and self-representation.

While these theories of nationalism have widely influenced all thinking on the subject, they have also been subjected to serious criticism on the ground that they exclusively reflect the historical experience of nationalism in the West. Partha Chatterjee's central objection to Anderson's thesis is that his theory assumes too readily that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, Russia and America had provided all subsequent nationalisms with a modular form. If nationalism outside the West has already been supplied with a form then what is left for them to imagine? According to him anti-colonial nationalisms have exhibited substantial difference from the historical experiences of the West. As an answer to the claim that historical development of nationalism in the West has provided a model for all others, Chatterjee offers his oft-quoted binary domains -- the material and the spiritual. The 'spiritual' is seen by Indian nationalism as the inner domain, the essential centre of a cultural identity. It is the spiritual domain upon which a community declares its sovereignty. Contrary to the suggestions of Anderson and Gellner, national imagination in India continues to be based on religion.

It is true in the Indian context too that the rise of print provided a new institutional space for the development of national languages and literatures. The immediate products of print culture were most effective in recording these cultural changes in the inner domain. The body of modern literature that grows as a result of the creation of a literary public sphere determines and reflects the imaginative process through which a community is brought into existence. This thesis tries to critically analyse the process of imagining an Oriya people. The relevant texts and the general discourse that often represent this community as being homogeneous, united powerfully around some core values. This thesis seeks to show that although the authors and the discourse in general genuinely believe in this ideology of unity, this community is internally unequal and heterogeneous. When these neglected or marginal elements assert themselves, the imagination of the community has to be reconstituted.

There is a substantial literature now on the cultural constitution of nationalism in India but a large part of these academic discourses concentrate exclusively on Bengal. A study of Orissa can neither ignore the Bengali experience nor follow it unquestioningly. While in some senses the Oriyas treat the Bengali nation as a model, they also consider Bengali nationalism as their main adversary. Modern Oriya identity reflects a greater consciousness of its cultural boundaries as regards Bengal and emphasises that sociologically Bengali and Oriya society were significantly different. The operation of the caste structure in the two societies was different, as the dominance of the brahminical orthodoxy was less powerful in Bengal. The conditions of intellectual production and its dissemination were also

different. Modern influences on women's lives were far more restricted in Orissa and consequently women's social status was quite different from that of Bengal.

As Francesca Orisini[2] has shown in her thesis, although the historical processes are similar between the Bengali and the Hindi linguistic regions, the consequences of these processes are determined by the specificities of local conditions. There is a need to emphasise the specificities in case of each linguistic community because the impact of nationalism modelled on Western nationalism is mediated by the culture of the vernacular. The social conflicts, which are the subjects of literary representation, are significantly different in each, and so are the readers of each region. It is difficult to merge all these into a 'general' theory of Indian cultural nationalism. This work emphasises the historical and cultural specificities in the making of a modern Oriya identity.

Identity is a historical phenomenon that unifies unconnected people through a commonality of experience and consciousness. This work shows that the identity of a community can be realised through culturally re-imagining the historical relationship between groups. A group is said to be conscious of its identity when its members align themselves on the basis of common experience, either inherited or shared, and articulate their 'selfhood' as distinct from that of others. Identity depends on how these experiences are contextualised in cultural terms, embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms. Identity is a social and cultural formation that comes into being through the working of historical processes.

These so-called common feelings and experiences, relationships which form the basis of identity, need to be given a political articulation when the community is experiencing periods of crisis. These common cultural attributes need to be 'sustained' and circulated at other times. In both times, literature has an important role to perform in the everyday imagining of identity.

This work suggests that social actors who engage in projecting a collective identity and the discourse that is generated consequently constitute a dominant cultural ideology. Over the 2nd, 3rd and 4th chapters, this thesis explores how the author places his work in relation to the dominant system of ideas in society and in relation to other available texts which make up the ideological context. It explores the contexts in which constituents of collective 'selfhood' are identified and formed. This work seeks to situate literary texts in their ideological context, to study the general trends and shifts in Oriya identity as articulated in Oriya literature. It has attempted to analyse, as Quentin Skinner put it, 'how far authors

[2] Francesca Orisini, 'The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40', Ph. D. Thesis submitted to SOAS, University of London, 1996.

were accepting and endorsing, or questioning and repudiating prevailing assumptions'[3], and establishing certain social and cultural conventions as 'authentic'. In analysing certain texts it tries to see the text as an ideological manoeuvre.

There is one aspect of the author-readership relation that this thesis has addressed with particular emphasis. It claims that authors do not write in a vacuum and while communicating their intention, rely on terms that are intersubjectively normative, which not only describe social facts but also, subtly evaluate them in the process of literary description. In addition, this thesis suggests that Oriya identity as represented in the literary texts contains subtle and implicit processes of exclusion. It idealises a Hindu upper-caste and middle class way of life. Underprivileged groups are not completely ignored in the process of identity construction but are given a place of relative insignificance. Secondly, the description and narrative construction of identities are deeply contested. Different groups of people often question the validity of one construction claiming that it articulates a single perception of social reality and tries to suppress other equally legitimate ones.

This work rejects the standard contention that community identity needs to be articulated and asserted only at a time when the society is undergoing social, cultural and political crisis. It also differs from other historical research conducted on Oriya identity that has concentrated mostly on the events around the language agitation and the first phase of Oriya nationalism. Starting from Nivedita Mohanty's '*Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa*'[4] through Pragati Mohapatra's 'The Making of a Cultural Identity'[5] and Bishnu Mohapatra's 'The Politics of Oriya Nationalism',[6] preceding academic inquiries concentrated on events between 1860s to 1930s. In opposition to the concept of exclusive attention to construction of identity in times of crisis, this work believes that identity formation is an ongoing process and needs to be successfully articulated during times of social stability also. Ordinary events of everyday life, which happen in the context of routine social exchanges, which are implicit and often go unnoticed, significantly influence the evolution of conception of the self. This work, therefore, recognises the existence of the everyday forms of identity formation.

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[3] James Tully, (ed.) *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988. Introduction.
[4] Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalim: Quest for a United Orissa*, Manohar, Delhi, 1982.
[5] Pragati Mahapatra, *The Making of a Cultural Identity: Language Literature and Gender in Orissa*, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to SOAS, University of London, 1997.

The division and presentation of the chapters is thematic rather than simply chronological. A standard chronological representation could not have successfully interpreted a complex interplay of voices that occurred at a particular period of literary political history. The intention was not to present a full history of modern Oriya literature.

The first chapter dealt with the historic events, which led to the first demand for a modern Oriya identity. It also analysed the specific processes of modernity that unleashed new inequalities into the social order and set in motion a reconfiguration of power relationships between different constituent groups in Oriya society. It outlined the historical context in which Oriya identity and major Oriya literary trends are to be analysed.

We began with a simple assumption that Oriya identity instead of being fixed and internally homogeneous is layered and contested. These layers and contestations were reflected and refracted in the Oriya literary sensibilities, but the historical process of identity formation even in literature continued to contain an upper caste and class bias. The thesis attempts an interpretation through dialogue -- trying to place the authors historically, in terms of the content of their works and understanding the work in relation to the total picture of the cultural formation of the age. It is suggested that the values and meanings that the artist puts forth are often actively interpreted by the reader and this active process of interaction leads to the formation of literary genres and particular types of audiences.

The second chapter discussed the rise of the Oriya nationalists and a literature that was called the *'jatiya sahitya.'* Their specific interest was to maximise participation in the anti-colonial struggle. This 'nationalist' literature reflected a simplistic, homogeneous and singular Oriya identity. Their discourse iconised historically accepted Hindu principles like *tyaga, nistha, dharma, seva* as the basis of the identity of Oriyas. The Hindu nature of Oriya identity was strongly crystallised in their writings. Not only did they assume the undifferentiated nature of the Oriya nation, typical of a nationalist strategy, they successfully deflected and recast the grievances of the marginalised people into the national movement. The politics of Oriya nationalists in this phase has been dealt with in detail with in Bishnu Mahapatra's thesis.[7]

Sociologically, in that specific historical context literature wholly depended on middle class patronage. Genres are generated and sustained by a middle class as authors and readers and therefore this modern literature as a whole often represent their social and cultural values. The middle class, both actual and potential, constituted the basis of cultural formations. Chapter 3 analyses a tumultuous phase in the formation of Oriya identity. The

[6] Bishnu Mahapatra, 'Politics of Oriya Nationalism: 1900-1930', Ph. D. Thesis submitted to University of Oxford, 1991.
[7] Ibid., Chapters 2 and 3.

coming of modernity and democratic values promised greater equality among people but dismantled the traditional norms. The logic of modernity and the pluralist nature of society introduced two conflicting aspects of identity formation: individual and collective construction of identity. Unable to withstand the pressure of heterogeneity, writers often offered aesthetic resolutions to historical contradictions that went in favour of the traditional configuration of social values. The idyllic villages, the traditional Hindu woman, the life of the rustic tribal, was portrayed as virtuous and were established as the true indicators of Oriyaness.

Left literary writing, discussed in the fourth chapter questioned the hegemonic discourse of the mainstream writers by overthrowing what conventional literature considered as 'authentic' Oriya characters, denouncing them as false stereotypes. They conceived a revolutionary plan of social change but lacked the support of a revolutionary middle class, and did not succeed in reconciling the contradictory interests of the classes. In spite of constituting an inherently attractive modern social ideology, they lacked the pragmatism and commonsensical approach of the mainstream writers. Unlike the relative successes of the left literary movement in Bengal, Kerala and parts of the Hindi region, major Oriya writers eventually became disillusioned and declared their disassociation with the left. What remained of their movement was politically rejected and condemned as vulgar Marxism.

There were two reasons for including a chapter on Jagannath in the thesis. Firstly, it is almost impossible to engage in an analysis of Oriya identity without making any reference to the iconic structure central to the definition of Oriyaness. Secondly, Jagannath is not only a protagonist in the religious literature of Orissa, but also a significant figure in literary discussions and representations in modern Oriya language. Although the Jagannath culture is not primarily a literary phenomenon, no discussion of Oriya cultural identity can be complete without an engagement with its central place in the self-representation of the Oriya nation.

There are some areas that remain untouched in this research. It is not because they were considered unimportant, but because it was impossible to do justice to them within the space of this work. I am aware that women's writing in Orissa is one such aspect. As mentioned earlier, women authors did not present characters and events that were significantly different from the male writers discussed in this thesis. In fact, as everywhere else in India, a women's movement and a distinct women's literature developed in Orissa after the 1960's, and therefore falls outside the historical limits of this thesis. Major women writers like Pratibha Ray and Pratibha Satpathy who addressed women's issues independently made their appearance in the 1970's.

Clearly, this study does not provide an exhaustive literary history of Orissa for the historical period covered. The writers discussed in this thesis are generally acknowledged as the most powerful representatives of Oriya literature in the time period that this research explores. I have deliberately chosen to write about certain types of writers, and within their writings only about those texts that contain a directly political message on questions like nationalism or produce a picture of Oriya social life which have politically significant conclusions.

To conclude, Oriya literature in the period after the 60's mainly witnessed two tendencies. Poetic expression showed the resurgence of metaphysical themes in the works of poets like Ramakanta Rath and Sitakanta Mohapatra. Novelists and dramatists continued to retain their curiosity about the social, predominantly reorganising the same themes: the mythic Oriya village, the moralistic Oriya peasant and the Sita-like Oriya woman. There were others who were deeply influenced by existentialism and their literature moved far away from reflecting common Oriya sensibility. Subsequent Oriya literary production was greatly influenced by contemporary literary movements at the national and international level. Thus writings of the seventies constitute a historical stage distinctly different from the configuration analysed in this thesis.

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