CHAPTER - VIII

SRI BISWANATH DAS IN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA (1971-72)
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Role is a normative concept or related to some standard of behaviour. However, the study of role performance is empirical one combining the normative concept of role-set as well as the empirical notion of role - performance.

Thus, while discussing the role of Sri Biswanath Das as the Chief Minister in the Coalitional Government of 1971-72, the following questions may arise. What is the nature of coalitional politics ? What are the circumstances which lead to a coalitional government ? What is the expected role of a Chief Minister in a coalitional government ?

Nature of Coalitional Politics :

Periodic elections are held in democratic systems to elect governments to power. All elections are not decisive in forming a government with majority party men. When no political party secures absolute majority, coalition among political parties is a kind of solution to the problem of the formation of a government after the election. The same situation is also created when a political party fails to maintain majority in the legislature due to political defection or split in the
political parties. This situation often arises in a multi-party system, which sometimes lead to the formation of coalition government until the expiry of the tenure of the legislature.

'Coalitional politics', thus "is a reflex of living and continuous interaction between a party's natural and hence ultimate quest to come to power by itself, and the expedient and perhaps essentially transitional inter party collaboration to capture the rains of power."\(^1\) Hence, coalitional government is a transitional affair and always works with an apprehension of its fall at any time. "Coalitions thus being transitional in the ambition of a party, have been bargaining counters rather than partnership concerns. Each of the participants tries to excel and take the maximum credit for the achievements of the coalition, and also at the same time, exposes the weakness and contradictions of the other partner in order that its ranks may be swelled up by a subsequent electoral verdict."\(^2\) Thus if one participant gains in terms of popularity, and pays off, the other participants lose and the gain of one may be the losses of the other. Riker calls it zero sum condition.\(^3\) The stability of a coalition depends upon the nature of parties, that are uniting. Coalitions are constructed to be effective methods of uniting the strength

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2. *Ibid*,
of like minded parties, so long they are having a common mind to
think and work. It is true that such united strength has a very powerful
appeal.

In a coalition, parties do not merge. They retain their identity.
They simply agree to some common proposal and share powers among
themselves. Usually in a coalition government small parties cluster
around a big party having sizeable number of members elected as
legislators. This is a stable coalition.

In a multi-party system, we come across two types of coalition
of political parties in forming the government: Pre-election coalition
and Post-election coalition. Coalition government may be the product
of pre-election alliance between or among political parties, which win
the election and on the basis of the majority support form government.
If coalitions are formed and cemented before the elections, they are
unlikely to fall in very short period after the election. These coalitions
are formed on the basis of sound understanding of one another's
compulsions and requirements. The electorate recognises the sense of
unity and objectives of parties serving the nation in such type of
coalition. The coalition partners chalk out a common programme of
actions, which they are to take up after Cabinet formation.
In Orissa in 1967, pre-electoral alliances were made by some parties on some minimum common programmes of action. After an electoral victory, such electoral alliances were turned into governmental alliances known as coalition government. That was the first coaltional government in Orissa.

Post-election coalitions are based on political pragmatism of the leaders. In this coalition, otherwise termed as an unprincipled coalition, the electoral verdict becomes undecisive. If none of the political parties secure absolute majority, alliances are formed to form government. This arrangement is made to share power or prevent opponents to form government. Such type of coalitions may create disaster, as partners in the government have different visions which cause inconsistencies in administration or may cause unsatisfactory compromises. In most of such cases a common programme is chalked out among the alliance partners to present as the national objectives of action, but after the election becomes over.

The success of such types of coalition, infact, depends upon sense of accommodation among the coalition partners. The opponents of coalition government are usually in search of cracks or misunderstanding in the coalition. Such type of coalition becomes short-lived, as its partners have less common objectives for compromise and survival in government.
According to William H. Riker, there are broadly two theories of coalition: One is power maximization theory and the other is policy based theory of coalition formation and behaviour. Power maximization theory stresses maximisation of pay-offs, that is, power and derivatives as the key factor in coalition formation ignoring ideological and policy affinities as factors. Policy based theories, on the other hand, consider policy affinities as the key to the formation of coalitions.

When a party lacks necessary majority and forms a government with the support of some other parties, which do not share offices, this type is a case of 'Implied coalition'. The Mahatab Government (1957-59), the Nandini Satpathy Government (1974-76) in Orissa, and Mr. Prafulla Ghosh Government of West Bengal in 1967 illustrate the point. Here coalitional parties support a particular party to form a government, exercise and enjoy all powers and owe no responsibility. They basically act as pressure groups and influence the governmental decisions and at the same time, criticise the government as and when occasion arises. The CPI and the Independent members of the Orissa Legislative Assembly who supported the Satpathy Government of 1974, enjoyed

all the privileges but they owed no responsibility. This is dangerous because the implied partners enjoy powers without responsibility of making the government function and stable.6

On the other hand, the tacit coalition is one where all parties supporting the government, share power as well as responsibilities. The Charan Singh Government of U.P. and Mr. R. N. Singh Deo Government (1967) and Sri Biswanath Das Government in Orissa (1972) are examples to the point. This structure may be termed as formally structured coalition.7

The nature of coalition can also be differentiate as 'Ideological coalition' and 'Personality-oriented coalition'. Ideological coalitions are possible only among like minded parties or actors who give top priority to ideologies and principles to form a coalition government.8 Such coalitions may be Leftist coalitions or Rightist coalitions or we can term it as 'progressive coalitions' or 'conservative coalitions'.

Personality oriented coalitions, on the other hand, are those that aim at blocking some particular actors from reaching the seat of power. Ideology takes a secondary position in such a coalitional arrangement. The classic example of such type is the Coalition Government of Orissa

7. S. Nanda, op.cit, p-21.
of 1971, which was headed by Sri Biswanath Das. This Government was particularly designed to prevent Dr. Mahatab from power and wanted to take follow up action on Mudholkar Report. In the first place, it was a post election type of coalition, where parties start negotiations with the other possible interested parties for a common programme of action and leadership to form a government. By such an action the other intention is to block a particular individual or party's entry or exit in the concern of such a coalition. Ideologies as enshrined in the election manifestoes are unhesitatingly compromised in case of such a coalition.\(^9\)

Coalition may also be simple-balance coalition or multi-balance coalition. In case of simple balance coalition, the leader has to adjust his balance with only one outsider. But when the number of actors is more than two, the leader has to adjust and accommodate several interests and attitudes. Such type of coalition is multi balance coalition.\(^10\) In fact coalitions, for its success, depend upon the sense of accommodation among the coalition partners.

Finally, coalition may be an invisible one, when individual

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9. The Utkal Congress Party Election Manifesto contained items to abolish the tax on bus passenger fare, nationalise the Kendu-Leaves trade and abolish privy purse without compensation, but it agreed to compromise with the Swatantra Party that championed continuance of Bus Passengers Tax and Privy Purse.

legislators or parties for their pragmatic reasons or ideological similarities change their original positions and merge in a different party and form a government. The post-1969 developments in Indian politics is full of such cases. Normally, such coalitions are shortlived and they are more pragmatic than ideological. The government formed by Mrs. Nandini Satpathy on 14th June, 1972, is an example of this type of invisible coalition. Though it was apparently a government backed by legislators believing in Congress (R) ideology and leadership, it was a coalition of the members of Congress (R), Praja Socialist Party, and defectors from Utkal Congress, Swatantra, and Congress (O) parties.

In India, seventyfour minority or coalition governments were formed during 1975-1995. Only thirty one of such cases were the result of indecisive electoral preferences after elections held in those states. The rest forty three cases were product of bad politics. Surprisingly only eleven such coalitions were able to complete their assigned tenure. Of course, eight coalition Ministries represented the strong Left Front Governments in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura.

Sri Biswanath Das in Coalition Government of Orissa:

In 1971, the third coalition government was formed in Orissa and Sri Biswanath Das was chosen as the Chief Minister of the state. The second Coalition Government headed by Sri Singh Deo fall down
on 9th January, 1971. Presidents Rule was declared and elections to the Orissa Assembly were synchronised with those of Lok Sabha held in March 1971. In the poll, Congress (R) secured 49 seats, Utkal Congress 33 seats, Swatantra 36 seats, Communists 6 seats and Socialists 4 seats. Thus, the verdict did not clearly go in favour of any particular party. In this situation, the best possible coalition was expected out of the combination of the Swatantra and Congress (R) party, and the strength of the coalition would have been 85 (i.e. 49+36) in a House of 147. But the obvious problem was that, both the major partners of the coalition government namely, the Swatantra Party and the Utkal Congress Party, tried to secure the post of Chief Ministership of the prospective government formed with their coalition. Mr. Singh Deo, being the leader of the greatest partner (the Swatantra party) claimed the Chief Ministership. In this matter he was also guided by another consideration. If he did not assert his position, Mr. Biju Pattanaik, the Leader of Utkal Congress despite his defeat in the election, would then become the Chief Minister, and after projecting an attractive image of himself would try to establish his personal equation with the Congress (R) invincible by joining it sometime later. On the other hand, Mr. Pattanaik never regarded Singh Deo as a great leader, and he would not permit him to be the Chief Minister, for the simple reason
that once Mr. Singh Deo becomes the Chief Minister, Pattanaik would have no scope to replace him on any reasonable ground under the political realities. He therefore, opposed to Singh Deo's leadership of the coalition.

In such situation, Sri Biswanath Das, former Congress Prime Minister of pre-independent of Orissa, who on his retirement from the Governorship of Uttar Pradesh was leading a retired life was approached by both Mr. Biju Pattanaik and Mr. Singh Deo to head the Government. Although Mr. Biswanath Das had declared his political retirement from active politics, when persuaded, he was tempted to accept the offer as it gave him the chance to avenge his defeat at the hands of Dr. H. K. Mahatab, who had twice snatched Mr. Das's Chief Ministership once in 1946 and then in 1950. It was probably on the basis of this reasoning that Sri Das said to the Press that he would continue as Chief Minister, till the partners found their own leader. He made it clear that he would not stick to power like a leech and would be happy to be out one day. In practice, he remained as the Chief Minister of the coalition government only for fifteen months during 1971-1972. This coalition was criticised from various quarters, for instance, 'Prajantra', the Oriya daily described all these developments

11. The Samaj, dt. 18.9.1971, (editorial)
12. S. Nanda, op.cit, p-89.
saying that this coalition government had no ideological commitment. However, this coalition was described as one of political opportunism.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus, the Swatantra and Utkal Congress formed a Coalition Government with the help of Jharkhand Party, which had won 4 seats in the Orissa Assembly in 1971. When the question of Chief Ministership case came, Biju Pattanaik was not prepared to accept Mr. Singh Deo and he himself could stake his claim as he could not be elected from anyone of the four constituencies he contested. In this case, a practice, though constitutional, has developed in India, where an outsider can be chosen by members of the state Assembly as their leader. And in this manner, the clean political image of Sri Biswanath Das was accepted by all members and he became the Chief Minister of Orissa on 5th April, 1971, with the portfolios of Finance, Planning and Co-ordination. Six Members from the Swatantra and six Members from Utkal Congress, one from Jharkhand formed the Coalition Government under the Chief Ministership of Sri Biswanath Das. So far as the functioning of the Ministry was concerned, it was the understanding between the coalition partners that no party would interfere in the portfolios of the members belonging to the other party. So the departments of the government were distributed among two major partners of the coalition, namely, the Swatantra and the Utkal Congres.

\textsuperscript{14} The Prajatantra, dt. 18th May, 1972.
This coalition government, formed under the leadership of Shri Biswanath Das, lacked ideological cohesion in as much as the election manifestos of the Swatantra, and the Utkal Congress contained contradictory promises. Utkal Congress Party professed to be a socialist party and Swatantra an undisputed conservative party and the third coalitional partner, the Jharkhand being ideologically non-committal; The coalition was therefore a coalition of 'Rightists' with Jharkhand, 'Centrist', with Utkal Congress and 'Leftist' with Swatantra Party as partners in the coalition. Such type of coalition, formed as a post-electional basis, can be termed as frauds on electorate in as much as the leaders of such coalitions took the decision of forming a coalition government by themselves not endorsed by their 'sovereign masters' the electorate. The Swatantra, Utkal Congress and the Jharkhand legislators who formed the coalition were not authorised by the electorate to effect any change in their ideology. In order to form the coalition, these three parties made several compromises and formulated a 17-point programme to please their electorate. This common programme of action, termed as 17-point programme by the coalition charted out the following actions for their government.

1. Establishment of second steel plant and port at Gopalpur and Chandbali.
2. Rural electrification programme.
3. Expansion of Irrigation system.
4. Immediate implementation of Land Reforms.
7. Safeguarding the interests of lower income groups who work in government and semi-government organisations.
8. Scholarship to be awarded to the poor and meritorious student.
9. Upgrading the system of education and safeguarding the interests of teachers.
10. Creating more employment facilities.
11. Provision of drinking water, road and communication and medical facilities in rural areas.
12. Youth and students welfare programmes.
14. Strengthening the grassroot of democracy by encouraging panchayati and co-operative system in rural areas.
15. Encouraging rapid industrialisation.
16. Increase in agricultural production-encouraging peasants by setting up of more agro-based industries like Jute, cotton, sugar, and leather industries. Establishment for more fertilizer and insecticide plants in the state.
17. Reduction of regional disparity.

The Ministry made several compromises in order to maintain the coalition stable, but as scholars view that, despite the show of their concern for the uplift of the people, the government made a positive
betrayal of electorate. So it would not be unfair to say that it lacked the required political legitimacy.\textsuperscript{15}

The leader of such Coalition Ministry, Sri Biswanath Das, who championed value-based politics throughout his life, is still a mystery. He was not a Member of any of the coalitional parties. He was neutral to all party affiliations and made his position clear by saying, "I am a Congressman, I remain as a Congressman, and I propose to die as a Congressman. I belong to that Congress, not Congress 'O', Congress 'R' or Utkal Congress. I belong to that undivided Congress of Gandhiji, that participated in the freedom struggle and made our country independent... I would strive to bring self reliance of Gandhiji, not in a communist way bit in a democratic way."\textsuperscript{16}

Whatever may be the circumstances which tempted Sri Das to accept the challenge of becoming the Chief Minister of such a coalitional Ministry, but ultimately with his long political experience and legislative prudence he could steer the Ministry to give so many noteworthy achievements for the state at the controversial phase. The Budget Speech that he had delivered only after four months of his Chief Ministership reflects the major concern as well as plan of actions of his Ministry.

\textsuperscript{15} S. Nanda, \textit{op.cit.}, pp-86-87.
\textsuperscript{16} Orissa Legislative Assembly \textit{Debates}. Vol. II. p-23, pp-52-53.
While presenting the annual financial statement of the Government of Orissa for the year 1971-72, Sri Das expressed his concern for over five millions of refugees of Bangladesh to our country, who had migrated and settled in India due to tyranny and unparalleled massacre in East Bengal. He urged UNO to take up this issue on humanitarian ground and take charge of the refugees as it had done in cases of refugees influx in Europe and Arab countries. Thus Sri Das started his Budget Speech with the impeding national refugee settlement problem.

In his speech, in the capacity of being Minister in change of Finance, Sri Das talked about the economic condition of the country, which was passing through a period of stagnation from 1965 to 1967 and had shown signs of advance in the year 1970-71. With the help of Union Economy Survey Reports, he stated that Indian exports had reached all time high as also our Foreign Exchange Reserves comfortable.

He further said that in Orissa agricultural production had shown increase during 1970-71. He stated that the per capita income of Orissa was about 61 percent of the national per capita income. So he suggested that this gap could only be bridged or at least substantially reduced, only if economy of Orissa could grow at a faster pace than the rest of
the country. Thus, he called for a major effort, not only by the Central and State government but also by the people of Orissa. In fact, Sri Biswanath Das sought for the involvement of people for the development of economy of the State. The slow growth of production, he stated, in the manufacturing sector had resulted in the spiral rise of prices during 1969-70 and 1970-71.

In the State Legislative Assembly, Sri Das spoke on a number of issues like economic backwardness, industrialization, development particularly tribal development, social welfare etc. in Orissa. In the discussion on the problem of economic backwardness of the State, Sri Das pointed out the regional disparity between states. For this, he was critical of the role played by the Planning Commission. According to him, "Our plan, finance and programme are fully controlled and directed by the Planning Commission, leaving little initiative in the State's hands." He described it by saying "...While accepting Five Year Plan, Planning Commission and the Government of India, introduced a system of Central assistance to States in some sectors known as matching grants." Thus, where the state was able to provide one rupee, the Government of India contributed another rupee towards its development. This enabled the more advanced states to take full advantage of the planned finances getting more and greater allocations.

Added to this, allocation of income tax and Union Excise Duties to various states were a cause for concern and hindrance to the developing States. As a result of such action of the Union Government, imbalance between one state and another has today become wider and unbridgible unless special steps are taken in the matter of allocations of national resources for the underdeveloped states. He was very much in favour of regional development, but he tried to achieve it under the authority of Central supervisor. He was never opposed to a strong government on vital issues of national interests. This is evident from his Budget Speech, where he said that "while some states call for autonomy, including judicial autonomy, which is bound to weaken the powers and even reduce jurisdiction of the Union Government and the Supreme Court, ours is only a call for a strong centre, and also to ensure a fair allocation and just distribution of Indian National resources so as to enable the developing states to reach the level of progress towards health and prosperity of the Indian Union wiping off the imbalances created even after independence." Thus, Sri Das was a strong nationalist leader who meticulously sought to safeguard the regional development with mutual understanding between Union and State government.

Sri Das stated that, "we can act only within the framework of the federal financial structure of which we are a part and parcel." Thus
whatever he wanted to do for his state, he tried to achieve the objective as per the constitutional guidelines of which every member of our Indian Union is a part and parcel. So in the Budget Speech while showing the state's financial position as well as the proposed plan and non-plan revenue receipt estimate of 1971-72, he showed his concern for the deficits, that had become a chronic feature of the State Government. Accordingly he tried to formulate the budget in a way, whereby the state could attain economic development by utilising the personnel in a most effective and purposeful manner. He also wanted a review of allocation of revenue to states whereby attention should be paid on reducing regional disparity as per the states actual need.

So he stated, "It is essential not only for our future welfare but also for our very survival that we should accelerate the pace of development of the State... The Government has been making earnest efforts to increase their own resources as well as to obtain from the Central Government greater Central assistance. Government of India has agreed to allow, in addition to the State Plan, the State's share of Centre's additional resources. The borrowing programmes of the State enterprises has also been increased. Government has also intensified its effort for additional resource mobilisation... Continuous efforts have to be made to further increase the rate of investment in Orissa through various agencies."\[18\]

From this Budget speech it can be inferred that Sri Biswanath Das was a nationalist, and a federalist as well as a champion of

development of regional units. Sri Das also raised the issue of Non-
Plan Revenue Deficit, which had became a chronic feature of Orissa.
The estimate, which he showed was about 44 crores were paid by
way of pay allowances to the employees and pensions, Rs. 29 crores
were required for interest payments and appropriations, Rs. 19 crores
were required for grants-in-aid for educational institutions and local
bodies etc. and stipends and scholarships, Rs. 10 crores were for
maintenance of roads, buildings, canal, embankments, and transfer to
famine relief, Zamindari abolition and other Funds claim about Rs. 4
crores, the rest Rs.13 crores were for contingent expenditure for
hospitals, transport services, and other departments. The corresponding
non-plan revenue receipt figures was only about Rs. 107 crores. This
was nothing except revenue deficit. During the last ten years the
accumulated revenue deficit had increased by 60 crores, which was
fulfilled by further borrowings, which caused further strain.19 Thus
after showing the current economic condition of the State, Sri Das
tried to save the state's economic burden by only effective utilisation
of personnel. In other way, we can say that Sri Das was in favour of
maximum utilisation of the existing human resources to maintain the
state's economic prosperity. He also wanted for a review of Centre-
State financial arrangement, whereby the allocation of revenues to States

19. Orissa Legislative Assembly Debates, op.cit., p-VI.
and its distribution among States were to be looked again, which can only reduce the problem of regional economic disparities.

As a good administrator, Sri Das, in his budget speech first analysed the economic backdrop of Orissa. In the budget estimate, which Sri Das presented before the House for the period 1971-72, he agreed with the Planning Commission that 'resources for financing the State Plan Schemes in 1971-72 would comprise of Central Assistance of Rs. 32 crores with the negotiated loans of Rs. 6.90 crores. The final State's share in the central additional resources made a total of Rs. 48.33 crores against State's required Plan outlay of at least Rs. 53.56 crores. The rest gap was to be bridged through Centre's levies, and borrowings from Centre to State Electricity Board, Rural Works Programmes and Industrial Development Corporation, Orissa Mining Corporation etc.  

With this background, Sri Das discussed some of the programmes of development proposed during the year 1971-72. This also reflected the promises of his Ministry, which was stated under a 17-point programme package by his Ministry to the people of Orissa. The development programmes advocated by Sri Das as Chief Minister of the State were as follows:

(a) Agriculture:

Sri Biswanath Das believed that since ours is an agriculture based country, so no programme of development can start without the proper understanding of our agriculture section. No doubt, the agricultural background of Sri Das must have helped him in understanding the problems of this sector in a better way. The budget that was tabled in the session, proposed to step up the Agriculture Production programme to 3.02 crores. Preparations were afoot to increase the existing irrigation potential connecting the existing irrigation tank with nearby canals, rivulets, and rivers so as to keep them full throughout the rainy seasons ensuring enlarging water supply of all such thousands of irrigation tanks in Orissa. The progress under agriculture was further sought to be achieved by encouraging cultivation methods in selected areas, development of commercial crops, provision of essential inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, improved seeds and education of farmers. With the advent of new farming technology and special schemes directed towards economic uplift of small farmers, rural artisans and petty tradesmen dealing with agriculture inputs, greater emphasis was laid and arrangements were made for easy flow of finance from the co-operative credit institutions as well as commercial banks.

Green Revolution and irrigation projects were also launched
during the time of Sri Biswanath Das as the Chief Minister of Orissa. Sri Das himself told in the Assembly "We are not only increasing the irrigation potential of the existing tanks but also increasing the sue and utilisation of flow irrigation as also to extend the benefits of lift irrigation and tube wells to the agriculturists." Similarly, to make the Green Revolution success, during his period, instructions were issued to take plantation on a vast scale on the avenues of canal bunds, road sides, and on Government lands and on all Bungalow sites in planned manner.

(b) Land Reforms:

After agriculture the other noteworthy feature of the programme of development proposed in the budget by Sri Biswanath Das was Land Reforms. Here he first discussed about the provisions of Chapter IV of Orissa Land Reforms Act dealing with ceiling and disposal of surplus land, which had not then been enforced in the State as the matter was still subjudiced in the Supreme Court. In this respect the State government had filed a petition in the Court with regard to the implementation of this Chapter, which would enable the rayats and tenants of backward castes to obtain credit from co-operatives and other Schedule Banks by mortgaging their lands as security. For their purpose, he had amended Section 22 of Orissa Land Reforms Act,
1960. During his period of governance, a Bill was also introduced to implement schemes for land consolidation to prevent further fragmentation. "For land reform and Green Revolution Sri Das and his government had taken immediate steps to move to the Supreme Court to lift the injunction on the Government of Orissa, and also to take up the few pending cases without delay. During his period, machinery for Land Reforms was geared up to implement the Land Reforms Act in the State."

(c) Afforestation:

During 1971-72 budget, emphasis was placed on afforestation, tree plantation and development of road avenues. It was also proposed to start a programme of settlement of Podu cultivations and employment of tribals in cottage and village industries which was an ambitious programme to get them accustomed to cottage industries and assure them certain amount of daily wages as an employment benefit. Thus, Sri Das believed that not only agriculture sector, but also forest sector could cater the employment problem of the state to a large extent.

(d) Fisheries:

Active steps were also taken by the government of Sri Biswanath Das for development of inland and deep-sea fishing operations. A
training institute at Praradeep was also proposed to train young fisherman in actual operation work.

(e) Electricity:

Noteworthy progress was made in the field of electricity. In the Budget Speech Sri Das spoke about the completion of the Balimela power project. The Upper Indravati and Upper Kolab hydroelectric projects were also discussed. The Super Thermal Station of 1000 megawatts at Talcher was being investigated. With all these, the power generation in the state was expected to rise to meet the demands of the time. Rural Electrification programme was also proposed to spread over about 3500 villages.

(f) Industrial and Mineral Development:

In the budget, Sri Das also proposed establishment of steel plant, a Nickel smelter plant near Sukinda. The work of Talcher Fertiliser Plant had already commenced through the Industrial Development Corporation. Sri Das also proposed the development of the corresponding infrastructure facilities like roads etc. under the Rural Engineering Organisations.
Sri Das also proposed other welfare programmes like tribal welfare, education facilities, public health, drinking water supply, draught relief, employment schemes in the budget. Relating to tribal development, Sri Das spoke:

"We are taking a very important step to wage a meaningful war against Podu cultivation planning to rehabilitate and divert energies of the Advasi population to fruitful avocations, ensuring the definite ways of providing them with training and gainful occupation and living. This is a huge programme which in the ultimate is bound to cost annually about Rs 2 crores, till this investment nurtures and yields fruits, enabling the Adivasis to earn not only their ranges but also living wages. Srikant Committee highly appreciated and applauded the scheme promising their support. This step is also in accordance with the Directive principles of State policy in our Constitution. I appeal to all of you to see that no other state has so far attempted this. Attempts are also made to rehabilitate a section of them in villages, constructing model and simple houses, providing economic facilities of live and living."

Along with this the budget provided extension of Ashram Schools and enhanced stipends for Adivasi students in higher education.

Government decided to start a Tribal Development Corporation with a view to bringing the existing departmental purchase, sale and
fair price shop schemes and the Forest Marketing Cooperative Societies under the proposed TDC. Whenever, there would be system of compulsory sale of agricultural and forest produce by the Adibasis to the cooperatives, basic price for such commodities was fixed by the Government. There was also the arrangement for annual distribution of dividends by the cooperative societies among the tribals.

Sri Das, in his budget proposal, also proposed a scheme of special development of certain areas of Ganjam and Koraput district, which had been inhabited by the most backward category of tribes. The fields of proposed development were, agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, co-operation and communication etc. An amount of Rs 15 crores was sanctioned as central assistance to this purpose. In this effort of tribal and backward class development, Sri Das thus sought a very wholesome approach towards uplift of these areas.

(h) Health

Good health status of the people is the pillar for any successful development programme of the country. Considering this factor, Sri Biswanath Das took active steps to devise long and short term schemes to improve health and sanitation condition of town, areas saving people from mosquito bites. Apart from allopathic system, steps were also planned to be taken for encouraging Ayurvedic and Homeopathic
treatment for the diseases of the people during the year 1971-72.

No health programme would be complete without adequate provision of supply of drinking water facilities in the area under consideration. So in the budget Sri Biswanath Das attached much importance to it. An amount of Rs. 170.50 lakhs was earmarked in this budget against an amount of Rs 94 lakhs of the previous year for water supply schemes both in the urban and rural areas.

Provision was made for a sum of Rs 46 lakhs more over and above the normal grants for medical supply to hospital to enable flow of adequate supply of medicines and specially in underdeveloped areas, where private medicine shops were hardly available. All these have been done including the abolition of the system of paying beds, along with a number of steps to strengthen health and medical relief within the state. As a health measure, a large rural drinking water supply was provided in the budget costing Rs. 15 lakhs. In the Assembly also Sri Das argued for a special nutrition programme for children in tribal and slum areas.

(i) Planning and Development:

Finally, Sri Das tried to see, that his Government had taken up steps to meet the appalling unemployment problem of the
"To solve the unparalleled unemployment problem of the state, both among technologists, educated young men, half-educated and uneducated incumbents, it is our desire, to plan a big way and make a serious attempt to face this reality. With this end in view, we are constituting a Planning Board, very soon with the talents available to us. It is our idea to nationalise Kendu-leaf trade. Similarly, do we propose to embark on a huge programme of agricultural expansion and land reclamation as also inland and deep-sea fishing in a big way. If is our move to utilise our immense potential of mineral wealth and forest and water resources to help the progress of the State so as to wipe off its backwardness. Thus, planning in its details with possibilities of implementation under the circumstances becomes a very important item of our programme. Accordingly, it is proposed to constitute a dynamic Planning body to meet the challenges."

Thus, Sri Das advocated the constitution of Planning Board of the State in Orissa. He tried to push the economic growth of the state, and combat the backwardness with a proper planning and with much desired determination, efficiency and cooperation of the public as well as the members of the Assembly.

Committees of the Assembly by Sri Biswanath Das during 1971-72 shows that within a very short period of his time, his Ministry tried to fulfill most of the demands of the people successfully. For the good
administration of the programmes the Government also constituted a number of Committees to review the functions, which were adopted by the Legislature through a number of proceedings—namely, Public Accounts Committee, Estimates Committee, Board of Scientific and Industrial Research, Committee on Public Undertakings etc.\(^{21}\)

Apart from these Committees, Sri Biswanath Das, as the Chief Minister, also established various other Committees in the Assembly for the smooth conduct of the House. These are:

a. Business Advisory Committee  
(Speaker and 8 other members)
b. Committee on Subordinate Legislation  
(Speaker and 5 other members)
c. Committee on Petition  
(Mangovinda Samal and five other members)
d. Committee on Government Assurances  
(Naresh Pradhan and 5 other members)
e. House Committee  
(Deputy Speaker and 5 other members)
f. Committee to advise the speaker  
(Speaker and 10 other members).\(^{22}\)

-This pattern of administration by Sri Biswanath Das through so many Boards and Committees gives us the impression that, he

was a legislator, who believed that for smooth administration in the State, there was the need for decentralisation and delegation of authority. This would ensure a team spirit among the whole Council of Ministers and ensure greater involvement and commitment of Ministers in a particular sphere. The reason behind such an administrative set up was that Sri Biswanath Das tried to satisfy all the members of the Coalition Government and to motivate them to work with a team spirit and involvement.

The second budget presentation in the Assembly by Sri Biswanath Das for the year 1972-73 also reflects the correct understanding of Sri Das about the economic condition of the State, on the basis of which the Budget was prepared. While presenting the Budget for the state of Orissa he highlighted the precipitation of war situation in India by Pakistan and the birth of free independent Bangladesh. Added to this national crisis, he also highlighted the state crisis, like the natural calamities, which happened in Orissa in the last six months. The floods in the river Brahmani and Baitarani came and lasted for a considerable longer duration. This wiped off all the repairs made to river banks. Closely following the floods, came the cyclone of October 29th and 30th. This took a heavy toll of life and inflicted untold miseries on the people of the areas affected. In the light of above crisis, he said before the House. "I would, however, like to take
this opportunity to state that we should not allow these set backs to reduce our determination towards greater economic development and prosperity." He also presented in the House the Report of Bureau of Statistics and Economics, which pointed out that Orissa's State income was increased for Rs.532 crores in 1969-70 to Rs. 547 crores in 1971, resulting an increase of about 2.8 percent. But the target production of 60 lakhs tonnes was not achieved due to natural calamities on account of floods and cyclone. So he stated that as soon as possible, steps were to be taken to gauge the dimensions of damage caused by the cyclone and realised the necessity of taking up schemes which would instill confidence among the affected people and revive their economic condition. Several projects had already been launched for provision of water. In the cyclone affected areas, a massive programme of dug-wells and shallow tube-wells was undertaken. In addition, there was an effort to mobilize fertilizer from various sources and distribute them to the interior places. Thus Sri Das informed to the House about the immediate follow-up actions by the government to lift up the economic condition of the State, after the great disasters like flood and cyclone, that occurred in Orissa during the period of his Chief Ministership.

Sri Das before presenting the Budget for the financial year 1971-72 discussed the noteworthy achievements of his governments in the fields of controlling price, which in spite of the heavy burdens of
maintenance of refugees, increased to a negligible index of only 3.9 per cent. He also gladly announced to the House that the State's Fourth Five Year Plan outlay which was earlier estimated to be of the order of a little less than Rs. 223 crores was expected to exceed Rs. 260 crores in this current budget. This was achieved without resorting to unauthorised overdrafts from the Reserve Bank, but by mobilising State's own resources. Sri Das was optimistic about the government's achievements in next years to make greater efforts to further increase the rate of investment directly and through state agencies.

With this background, Sri Das presented an outline of some of the features of Accounts 1970-71 and the Revised Estimate for 1971-72, before presenting the Budget Estimate for 1972-73. The Accounts for the year 1970-71, closed with a credit balance of Rs. 7.44 crores. The closing balance was mainly on account of special accommodation received from Government of India and some surplus of financial resources on the State Plan account. The excess accommodation received from the Government of India had subsequently been adjusted in the special loan accommodation for 1971-72 and the surplus resources in the Plan account have been added, to the State's Annual Plan for 1971-72. With the existing balance, and the Plan revenues for
the period 1971-72, Sri Das presented his budget estimates of 1971-72, on 2nd March 1972. He discussed about Plan and Non-Plan Capital Account, and the deficit in detail in his budget discussion. The major liability of his government was repayment to Government of India, of loans obtained for floods and cyclone relief operation during the current year. As per his Government’s own resource mobilisation, he revealed to the House about a number of measures taken in the areas of revision of stamp duty, increase in Electricity duty, increase in irrigation rates, revision of the rates, increase in some of the rates of mining royalty, revision of the rates of salami for leasing Government lands, extension of entertainment tax, tax on passenger fares, toll on Expressway, rationalisation of Kendu leaves trade enhancement of rate of tax on sale of motor spirit and the nationalisation of the procedure for agricultural Income-Tax.

He expected that on the basis of these measures taken by his Government, the Government would exceed the target of additional resources mobilisation set for it. He also proposed to take up some fresh measures which would help to enlarge Governments programme of development. These could include a tax on agricultural land on a graduated scale, basic water rate scheme as per Orissa Irrigation Act and Rules.

For the year 1972-73, the expected annual plan expenditure was tentatively fixed at Rs.57.42 crores. The State sector Plan outlay in different heads were fixed, where agriculture, like the previous budget got the prime importance. The other key expenditure areas were Cooperation and Community Development, Irrigation and Power Sector, Industries and Mining, Transport and Communication and Social Services, like general education, technical programme, water supply, health, housing, urban development, social welfare and development of backward classes.

Similarly under minor irrigation, in addition to 91 spill over projects of Third Plan, execution of 52 new projects had been taken up in different districts. Besides, execution of Lift Irrigation Schemes in the private sector had not been very encouraging in the current year. So Sri Das in his budget proposal discussed about government's decision to execute more projects departmentally out of state funds.25

In the budget, Sri Das reoriented the Co-operative Credit Structure and their financing policies to provide a greater flow of production oriented credit, that would serve the small farmers and weaker sections of agricultural community.26

27. Ibid, p-23.
Biswanath Das Government had taken up special responsibility for uplift of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. So in the Budget proposal, Sri Das charted some new items apart from the traditional schemes of improving living conditions of the members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Consequently, a State Tribals Development Cooperative Society was set up to take charge of storage marketing and processing of the agricultural and minor forest produce procured by the tribals and also to take up measures for promotion of agriculture mainly through suitable affiliated primary societies. In order to accelerate the rural electrification programme, Sri Das proposed to take up required expansion of transmission and distribution system.

For the growth of industries in the State, the Budget proposed for setting up of the Second Steel Plant in Orissa. Besides the Government had already announced a new Industrial Policy for the development of industries.

Besides, in the budget Sri Das touched upon other welfare programmes like improvement of village artisans, where the government had proposed to take up a programme to train them in modern techniques and provide them with improved tools and raw-materials. As per Charakha Programme, steps had been taken up for the introduction of spinning and weaving on a large scale in Orissa as a
measure to deal with rural unemployment and under employment. In this respect the State Khadi and Village Industries Board was constituted and implemented a scheme for starting a Training cum Production Centre for Khadi to train up persons in improved methods of spinning.

For expansion of literacy in the state, extension of educational development programmes, was proposed in the budget. Course to train teachers, setting up of new Universities and taking up of work oriented education programmes and development of research institutes were the proposals finding place in the Budget presented by Sri Das. Emphasis on Sanskrit education in the State had also got importance in the budget planned by Sri Das. The other welfare concerns like (Health, Drinking Water supply, Crime Control in the State, Unemployment) also were highlighted in the Budget. The continuing unemployment problem, which was causing concern to the state Government was to be tackled through various measures like Charakha Programme, Village Artisans Rehabilitation Programme, etc. Various industrial projects were taken up by the state, which could absorb a large number of educated unemployed youths of the state.

The budgets as was presented by Sri Das invited a number of criticisms from various quarters on various aspects of the budget. In this chapter we intend to analyse the political economy philosophy of
Sri Das and the evaluation of his method of tackling the economic and political crisis of the State during that period. In the first budget this crisis was the settlement of refugee problem in the border of State from Bangladesh and in the second budget it was the flood situation of 1972 and the condition of external aggression from neighbouring countries. In the backdrop of all these negative factors, Sri Das attempted to reverse the downward trend of economic growth of the state during his period of his Chief Ministership. Sri Das in his status as Finance Minister of the state tried to uplift the agricultural growth on a priority basis in both the financial years. The credit goes to his account, when in spite of the adverse circumstances, according to the Economic Report of the Bureau of Statistics, the state income was increased from Rs 532 crores in 1969-70 to Rs 547 crores in 1970-71.

The poverty alleviation and rural development programmes were also designed with some more new schemes with the existing ones to stimulate the demands for industrial goods, encourage rural artisans, set up small scale entrepreneurship, making village self reliant by encouraging Khadi and Village produce through subsidy schemes in both the budgets. The Co-operative credit structures were intended to increase the purchasing power of the poor and rural population.

The noteworthy achievement of his government in the area of
expansion of industry in both the financial years shows his
determination to make our economy self-reliant and increase the State's
economic growth to a desired height. The establishment of a Nickel Smelter Plant near Sukinda, the work on Talcher Fertiliser Plant, Auto Cycle factory at Koraput district, were already commenced during his first budget year and Government was also actively pursuing plans for expansion of Ferro-Chrome Plant, setting up of a Ferro Vanadium Plant, Sponge Iron Plant, a factory for manufacture of tyres and tubes. B.H.C. and Nylon Fillament Yarn etc. During the second year of budget presentation he also prepared ground for industrial growth to a further height by disclosing government's proposal for a Solvent Extraction Plant at Rairangpur, a paper plant at Jaypore, a Silicon Carbide Plant at Talcher, Calcium Carbide Plant and Graphite Crucible Plant at Sunki.

Sri Das in both his budget gave a judicious approach to the welfare programmes, like education, health, drinking water facility, tribal welfare measures, and infrastructure facilities like roads, and bridges in required areas. During 1971-72 Sri Das as Chief Minister also moved certain resolutions in the House for the improvement of environment, preservation of forests, and improvement of the tourist place at Mahendra Giri.28

Though Sri Biswanath Das as a legislator had a very pragmatic approach towards the development of Orissa, he could not succeed in achieving the goal.

It has been pointed out in the preceding paragraphs that, the coalition was ideologically incohesive and incompatible. It became manifested on several occasions and issues like the issues of Privy-Purse Abolition, Kendu Leave Trade and Bus Passenger's Tax etc. Of the three above mentioned issues, the issue of abolition of Privy Purse was an important one and needs to be emphasised. It dragged Sri Biswanath Das as the Chief Minister to controversy. Congress Party under leadership of Mrs. Gandhi was bent on abolishing the privy purse. For this purpose, it brought 24th Amendment Bill in the Parliament. It was sent to the Orissa Legislative Assembly for ratification. The Swatantra Party, true to its conservative spirit and feudal base had opposed the Bill in the Parliament. In Orissa, the Swatantra Party expectedly opposed the Bill. Utkal Congress which professed to champion the cause of socialism and which in its Election Manifesto had pledged to support the abolition of Privy Purse without any compensation supported the Bill.

Biswanath Das, who belonged to none of the constituent parties, supported the Bill. He gave the press statement that his government
would support the constitution amendment bill. But this statement was criticized by the Leader of the Swatantra Party. Their contention was that Sri Das should have remained silent in the matter. They charged that Sri Das's statement was irresponsible as they knew the attitude of Swatantra Party towards the measure. However, it is because of his conviction and straightforwardness, he took such a step. Even, Sri Das during his first term as the Prime Minister of Orissa in 1936, adopted several measures seeking to help peasants. He was a leader who started his career as a leader of Kissan Movement in 1917, and was a strong supporter of Praja Mandal Movement against oppressive rulers. He always supported the issue of the poor even at the cost of the rich. So he did not sacrifice his personal conviction and values for the stability of government.

The second controversy that emerged during his tenure was regarding The Kendu Leaf Policy of the government. This was against the avowed declaration of the Utkal Congress. But as it was under the Forest Minister Ainthoo Sahu, who belonged to the Swatantra Party, the Utkal Congress members had to accept it similar to the stand taken by the Government on the privy purse. They contended that it was against the interests of Swatantra Party, which flourished under the aegis of the erstwhile rules. But Swatantra Party had to maintain silence over the issue.

29. S. Nanda, *op. cit.* Sterlings; New Delhi, 1979, pp 87-93.
Orissa politics took a new turn with by-election to the Orissa Assembly on 22nd September 1971, in which Biju Pattanaik was elected from Rajnagar, and Biswanath Das from Rourkela. Just after getting elected as a member of the Assembly, Biju wanted to be Chief Minister. But Sri Das, a matured and honest politician, with a sterling character never gave in. So Biju Pattanaik engineered the usual tactics of defection of Utkal Congress members. Biswanath Das tried to throttle this move by inducting 12 more Members to the Cabinet on 21st January 1972.

The game of politics as it unfolded in Orissa took a turn on May 18, 1972, when a joint meeting of the three coalition partners was to take place to elect Biju Pattanaik as their leader. The unfortunate part of the development was that Sri Das was kept in dark about the meeting. But when Sri Das gave a press statement that he had resigned. Sanity seemed to prevail on the coalition partners. Sri Biju Pattanaik realised that the United Front's acceptance of his leadership would not make him automatically the Chief Minister. Both Singh Deo and Pattanaik then rushed to Sri Das and requested him to continue as the Chief Minister. Sri Das finally accepted their offer. But this was a temporary crisis management arrangement. The large scale defection from both Swatantra and Utkal Congress to Congress (R) with the final fall of Nilamani Routray, the Lieutenant of Biju Pattanaik, who left with his
followers to join Congress, made the Ministry collapse on 9th June 1972.

Through out this brief period, that had a span of hardly fifteen months of Sri Das's Chief Ministership, he had acted in a manner true to his conviction. Biswanath Das, as Chief Minister was not the leader of any legislative party, as he was neither the leader of Utkal Congress, nor the leader of the Swatantra Party. Through out this period, he tried to discharge his duty of a coordinator of policies between two ideologically different parties. The value based politics, to which he adhered to was opposed to the power game based on manipulation and lust of power. Although a political realist would always say that the Chief Minister's concern in coalitional government would see the Ministry's stability and the coalitional partners do not fall out and no cracks develop in the coalition, But as political idealist, Sri Biswanath Das steeped in tradition and culture, he was quite strong in expressing his views. His deep-rooted ideals of Purans, Mahabharats and Srimad Bhagavat Gita made him strong in the values and conviction. He was perhaps not the fittest person to head a coalition government, which was "opportunistic". As a votary of values, he found political expediency to be suffocating. Sri Das used to believe that in order to be true to his conscience, a Minister should carry the letter of resignation.
in his pocket. While assuming office as a Chief Minister of the coalition, he clearly pointed out that he could not stick to power like a leach and would be happy to be out any day.  

In Orissa, there has always been struggle for power among political actors. The lust for power of any idealism, gives rise to opportunism. Sri Biswanath Das was an exception, but he was a victim of the game of power. He was requested to become the Chief Minister, because of his ability to maintain power balance then prevailing in Orissa and he had to resign due to the thirst for power of some over ambitious politicians.

Summary:

This chapter deals with an analysis of legislative role of Sri Biswanath Das in Orissa Legislative Assembly. In pre-independence period, Sri Das hold the position of the first premiership in Orissa Legislative Assembly and his role and performance in the Assembly during this period had been discussed in chapter IV. In post-independence period, Sri Das was elected to the Orissa Legislative Assembly only once in 1972 but he was the Chief Minister of the state during 1971-72. His election followed to his position of Chief

Ministership.

However, Sri Das was persuaded and compelled to hold the position of Chief Ministership of a coalition government which lasted only for a brief period of fifteen months. Sri Das had a unique personality for which even if he was not a member of a party which joined the coalition government, he was accepted by his party as well as by other parties forming the government.

Just after holding the position, Sri Das became a prey to the power game and nasty politics. In such adverse situation, he was not prepared to compromise with his ideology commitment and conviction, for which he had to lose his post and there was the fall of coalition government. It is true that as a legislator, he was less careful to the stability of the government. But he was more prudent and practical in the formation of his cabinet. His legislative performance shows that he was out and out a nationalist as well as a federalist. He was a champion of people's cause and he could state the demands of the people in right manner on the floor of the Assembly. He was a great supporter of the poor and he tried to alleviate the conditions of the poor, Dalits and Adivasis of Orissa as far as possible. He was an equalizer as he supported the abolition of Privy Purse. He had a great concern for the allround development of the state, as he forcefully
placed the developmental issues of the state like agriculture, industrialization, communication, education, health, employment etc. His socialization inculcated in him the ideal, for which he gave top priority to agriculture in the developmental scenario of Orissa, as the state was primarily an agrarian and rural one. Hence, we can conclude that Sri Das was not an ambitious man for power, but once he came to power, he tried to perform his legislative function as the spokesman of the people for the development of the state at par with other states of the country.