Chapter Two

Contextualising Sub-Regionalism in Orissa

Regionalism in India is essentially a product of her diversity. India is a big federal state with vast size and a great deal of cultural and ideological diversity. It is difficult to call India a culturally integrated country; strictly speaking it is a loosely fastened community of many sub-cultures. The people of different parts of the country speak different languages, have different ways of life, observe different social customs and, above all, in different stages of social and economic development. The historical division of the country into British Indian provinces and princely states before independence led to the disparities in the levels of politico-national consciousness and modernization between the units of the two categories. The areas of the princely states remained mostly backward and under-developed in socio-economic-political field compared to the areas under the direct British administration. This fact of social backwardness coupled with that of economic deprivation inculcated in the minds of these people a sense of struggle in the post-independence period for the cause of their own region.

Though political reorganization of the country on linguistic ground further aided cultural integration in linguistic states, it rekindled the traditional rivalries that had existed when these linguistic states were independent in ancient times. People in one linguistic state developed a sense of separateness from those living in another part of the country. The emergence of this type of nationality oriented regionalism threatened the national integration. But the parochial chauvinism within a state produced separateness resulting in sub-nationalism and perpetuation of political instability in certain states. The sub-national contrasts inflamed the sub-regionalism within the state, which accounted for the growth of political movements and agitations. Thus regionalism, one of the banes of free

India, has been since the beginning, a regular feature of its political system. This development is peculiar to the under-developed states. While regionalism, in general, is essentially product of India’s diversity, sub-regionalism, in particular, is the result of historical and geographical factor in it. The term ‘Sub-region’ refers to a smaller area within a region or ‘Nation’ which for economic, geographic, historical and social reasons is aware of possessing a distinct identity. Historical and economic factors produced sub-regional problems and encourage the growth of compelling political sub-cultures which not only do not correspond but conflict with the larger units of language, culture and caste represented by the linguistic states. Sub-regional conflicts have often been found to take the shape of movements claiming their separate identity either in the formation of separate state or in the formation of regional political parties on the basis of the localized support of the depressed region.

2.0 Background of Oriya Nationalism in Colonial India

The rise of Oriya nationalism was one of the leading examples of regional nationalism in colonial India. Oriya nationalism emerged to protect Oriya identity in a provincial Space in India. In pre-Colonial era, the Oriya people enjoyed a distinct political and cultural identity within a definite territory under successive regimes. But under British colonial rule, the Oriya homeland was systematically divided into British Orissa and princely Orissa. British Orissa was apportioned to different provincial administrations: the southern part was kept under Madras presidency, the coastal and the adjoining areas in the Bengal Presidency and the western part was placed in the Central Province. On the other hand Princely Orissa was Comprising 26 feudatory states which was ruled by native rulers under British paramount power. The apportionment of British Orissa turned the Oriyas into insignificant cultural minority vis-à-vis the dominant people in every administrative unit. In the Orissa division of the Bengal presidency, the Bengali migrants

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3 Myron Weiner and J.O. Field (1975) (Eds.) Electoral politics in the Indian states, party System and cleavages, Vol.IV, Manohar, Delhi, P.XIII.
5 Ibid.p.5.
and intermediaries predominated in all important positions in administration, law, teaching and clerical services. Similarly, in the Madras Presidency and in Central provinces the Oriyas were economically dominated by the Telugu and Hindi-speakers respectively. But gradually, the ‘outsiders’ posed serious threats to Oriya language and culture.

For example, the Bengal chauvinists vociferously tried to suppress Oriya language and culture and absorb the Oriya people into the Bengali fold. They made frantic efforts to dub Oriya language as a corrupt dialect of Bengali. This was followed by the replacement of Oriya by Hindi language in the Oriya-speaking region of Central Province. Attempts were also made to replace Oriya by Telugu in Madras Presidency. The loss of language and culture meant loss of identity for the Oriya people in multicultural India. Hence the Oriya reacted by asserting their identity in distinct regional nationalistic terms. The first signs of nationalistic unity among the Oriyas appeared during the language agitation which was launched to save Oriya language and culture from extinction. This incipient unity soon crystallized into a well articulated regional national movement under the aegis of the Oriya national organization, the Utkal Union Conference. Initially, the Utkal Union Conference pressed for unification of Oriya areas under a single administration but when the perceived danger in maintaining distinct identity vis-à-vis any ‘alien’ nationality in a common provincial administration was realized, it clamored for the formation of a separate Oriya province in British India. Finally, on linguistic basis a separate Orissa province comprising six British-administered districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur, Ganjam and Koraput was formed in 1936 in colonial India.

The formation of Orissa province partly fulfilled the nationalistic aspiration of the Oriya people. Princely Orissa did not form a part of this Orissa province. Hence the struggle for Oriya unity continued till princely Orissa was integrated with Orissa province. The

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integration resulted due to the rise of massive popular unrest in princely Orissa. Unlike British Orissa, there was no apparent external threat to Oriya language and culture in princely Orissa. Here, popular nationalistic struggle emerged in response to the unprecedented feudal oppression and undemocratic rule of the native Oriya princes. Princely Orissa, popularly known as Garhjats (dark land was marred by illegal taxation, excessive land revenue and cruel feudal claims and practices of Bethi (forced labour), Beggary (unpaid labour), Rasad (free ration) and Bheti (tributes)\(^9\).

The oppressive feudal rule in princely Orissa ultimately resulted in violent popular movements demanding responsible government, civil liberties and finally the unification of Oriya princely areas with the province of Orissa. From 1938 to 1947 popular movement were launched under the banner of Orissa State People’s Conference. Prajamandals (People’s Association) were formed to mobilize popular support for establishment of democratic government and integration of Oriya areas. However, the ruling Oriya princes strongly opposed the move for integration. But after India’s independence, the widespread popular agitation in princely Orissa finally paved way for its merger with Orissa province.

H.K. Mahatab, noted Congress leader and the then premier of Orissa, left no stone unturned to unite both parts of Orissa under one provincial unit. Finally on the basis of linguistic unity, cultural affinity and geographical contiguity twenty-four Oriya princely states joined Orissa province with efforts from 1 January 1948\(^{10}\). With the integration of the two parts of Orissa the provincial political boundary of Orissa state became nearly coterminous with the cultural boundary of Oriya nationality and with that Orissa as a linguistically homogeneous state emerged in independent India. Following integration the number of districts in Orissa rose from six to thirteen. The districts were carved out of the integrated Oriya princely states.

\(^9\) S. Pradhan, (1986), Agrarian and political movements: state of Orissa (1931-1949), Inter India, Delhi.
\(^{10}\) H.K.Mahatab, (1972), Beginning of the End, Friends Publisher, Cuttack.
2.1 Contextualizing Sub-regionalism in Orissa

The rise of Oriya nationalism led to the establishment of Orissa state in India. The Oriya language served as a unifying factor at the time of both formation of Orissa province in 1936 and integration of Orissa princely states in 1948-49. But soon after Orissa was constituted into a separate province in 1936, language ceased to be a unifying factor. Instead, the Oriya people get divided on the basis of regional identities which in turn constituted to dominate politics and society in Orissa ever since independence of India. Not only that, the rise of regional particularism has begun to undermine the spirit of Oriya nationalism.

Following the merger of Oriya princely states with the erstwhile Orissa province two distinct regional units, namely, the western region and coastal belt have been formed in the state of Orissa. Originally, the coastal belt comprises the four advanced districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Ganjam and Puri and the western regions consists of the five backward districts of Bolangir, Kalahandi, Phulbani, Sambalpur and Sundargarh. But with the reorganization of districts in Orissa in 1993 the numbers of districts have gone up to eleven in each region. The new districts have resulted from the division of the erstwhile districts. Except for the district of Sundargarh, the remaining districts in the Coastal and Western region have been divided to give rise to the new districts. In the Coastal region the erstwhile district of Balasore has been divided into two new districts of Balasore and Bhadrak; former Cuttack district has been divided into four districts of Cuttack, Jagatsingpur, Jaipur and Kendrapara, the districts of Ganjam has been divided into two districts of Ganjam and Gajapati and the district of Puri has been divided into three districts of Puri, Khurda and Nayagarh.

Likewise, in the western region the district of Bolangir has been divided into two new districts of Bolangir and Sonepur; Kalahandi district has been divided to constitute two districts of Kalahandi and Nuapada, Phulbani has been divided into districts of Kandhamal and Boudh and finally the Sambalpur district has been divided into four new districts of Sambalpur, bargarh, Deogarh and Jharsuguda. But in the present work the original framework of the erstwhile undivided district has been followed for the purpose
of contextualizing the rise and growth of regionalism in Orissa state. These two regions of Orissa state differ in terms of geographical features, historical backgrounds, Cultural practices, Speech/dialectal variation, levels of Socio-economic development and politico-administrative power and Control. Given these regional cleavages and disparities, the people of relatively backward region rose against the more developed Coastal region.

**Genesis of regionalism**

Various factors may be accounted for the growth of regionalism and separate Koshali identity in western Orissa. The anti-merger resistance in Patna Sonepur and Kalahandi, anti Hirakud dam agitation, agitation of the displaced people of Rourkela Steel Plant, emergence of Gantantra Parishad and above all the attitudinal conflicts had contributed to the growth of regionalism and regional politics in western Orissa. Besides that, this regional identity is strongly grounded on a distinct historical cultural and linguistic root. Accumulated effects of all these historical, cultural and linguistic cleavages carried forward by the regional socio-economic disparities have given birth to a separatist trend and demand for the bifurcation of Orissa.

**Merger of Princely States**

The articulation of regional consciousness in Western Orissa originated since the times of merger of princely Orissa\(^{11}\). On the eve of merger, the rulers of Patna, Kalahandi and Sonepur launched counter-mobilization to resist merger and to form a separate political identity of their own. It may be recalled that the Cabinet Mission observed with regard to Indian States that, “all rights surrendered by the states to the paramount power would go back to them”\(^{12}\).

\(^{11}\) Some people even trace the origins to 1905 when the Sambalpur district was merged with Orissa division of Bengal presidency. It may be noted that, the merger of Orissa princely states in 1948 led to the unification of two conspicuous regions (i.e. British Orissa and princely Orissa) with differential stages of Socio-economic and political development.

\(^{12}\) See Menon V.P (1968), *Transfer of power in India*, Orient Longman, Delhi, and p.266.
Encouraged by this, R.N. Singh Deo, the ruler of Patna, motivated other Oriya rulers to join the proposed Eastern states federation and thwart the merger plan\textsuperscript{13}. In his letter to the then Viceroy of India, R.N. Singh Deo pointed out:

\begin{quote}
The States federating the Eastern States union are smaller in size, resources, history, tradition and the administrative system with no danger of encroachment from or absorption or exploitation by any predominantly large unit in the group; on the other hand the dangers of grouping with Orissa provinces are: (a) danger of large unit like Orissa, encroaching upon the rights of smaller states unit; (b) dangers of political exploitation of states people by the more politically conscious people of Orissa province. (c) danger of economic exploitation of the state by the province\textsuperscript{14}.
\end{quote}

However, the idea of creating a separate province did not find favour with the Congress leadership. H.K. Mahatab, the then premier of Orissa made frantic political efforts to amalgamate the states on linguistic basis. Opposing Mahatab’s move the Patna ruler claimed that the linguistic basis of forming provincial units was not always feasible or justifiable. He argued that the linguistic principle was not observed in the formation of Hindi Speaking states in India. Taking clue from this, he rejected the question of common language as the basis for amalgamation of Orissa states\textsuperscript{15}.

Meanwhile the Kalahandi Sate legislative Assembly in its first sitting on 12 August 1946 passed a resolution disapproving the idea of amalgamation of Orissa states\textsuperscript{16}. The Patna ruler also pointed out that the natural division of Orissa into highlands (the area of the states) and coastal plains (the area of Orissa province) favoured the formation of two

\textsuperscript{13} The Eastern states Union Came into being on 1\textsuperscript{st} August 1947. It comprised 26 Oriya speaking states and 14 Chhattisgarh states.
\textsuperscript{16} See, Orissa Records, 15 August 1946.
distinct Oriya blocks. According to him, the coastal plains corresponding to the old Kalinga-Utkal Empire formed one compact Oriya block with different cultural tradition, historical experience and outlook. Similarly, the highlands covering states formed another Oriya block with separate tradition, experience and dialectal affinity. Hence at the merger conference on 14 December 1947 the Patna ruler pressed for joining of Orissa states with Eastern States union. The Government of India, however strongly opted for merging Oriya speaking states with Orissa. As a last resort then, the rulers of Patna, Kalahandi and Sonepur insisted on some form of local autonomy.

They alleged that in the absence of local autonomy, power would be totally concentrated in the politically more advanced coastal people, i.e., the ‘Katakias’ and the Sambalpur states would be completely deprived. But as these demands were not entertained, these rulers of Sambalpur states spearheaded the Mahakoshal movement. It was claimed that Sambalpur district along with Sambalpur group of states constituted the erstwhile ‘Koshal’ or ‘Hirakhand’ kingdom of ancient and medieval time.

Further, the historical background and the Socio- Cultural affinities, in general, and the Sambalpuri speech, in particular, bound the people of the Sambalpur- Koshal tract together in a common bond and set them apart from the coastal tract of Orissa. Hence, the rulers maintained that a separate Koshal province should be formed for the Oriyas of Koshal-Sambalpur territory on the grounds of common culture and history. Later, Angul and Kandhamals were added to demand a Mahakoshal (i.e. greater Koshal) province.

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18 The people of Sambalpur area (i.e. present-day western Orissa) referred to the Coastal Oriyas as ‘Katakias’ (i.e. the people belonging to the Cuttack area). The province of Orissa was then identified as the Cuttack region.
20 Ibid. p.27.
It may be noted here that the idea of Koshal province at this stage was based on Oriya regional identity and not on Separate linguistic identity. It also follows that the demand for Koshal was aimed at two things:

a) to block the process of merger and

b) to establish the leadership of Sambalpur people in Koshal region.

However, with the merger of Orissa states the hopes for Koshal province were buried. Immediately, anti merger agitation broke out in some key Samabalpur states such as Patna, Kalahandi and Bonai. The agitators distributed leaflets favouring the Eastern states union and condemning the act of merger. Pro-union and anti congress slogans were raised at the behest of the ruling chiefs. Even, newspapers like ‘Patna Dipika’ and ‘Hirakhand Samachar’ supported anti- merger move and stresses on regional particularism\(^{21}\). The Government of Orissa took precautionary measures to prevent any untoward happening\(^22\).

It follows that the anti- merger resistance marked beginning of regionalism in Orissa. The pro-merger lobby was identified with Coastal region and anti- merger was identified with Western region. The anti- merger groups opted for bifurcation of Orissa. They favoured the formation of two Oriya- Speaking provincial units on the basis of regional geography, history, Common Culture and common perception.

**The Case of the Construction of the Hirakud Dam**

The Hirakud dam, the longest earthen dam in the world, was built in Sambalpur district Odisha. Hirakud dam in Sambalpur district was built with an objective to primarily control the flood water of the river Mahanadi in Cuttack district. In the initial years the issue of Hirakud dam became a contentious issue between the people of Western Orissa and the Government of Orissa. The construction of the dam: the subsequent human sufferings of the dam oustees and the affected population have accentuated the long


\(^{22}\) Orissa Records, Kalahandi Papers, Acc.No.335, Kal.
standing cultural differences between the coastal and western region. Again, the local chiefs and land owning class of the Western region played a pivotal role in this agitation.

**The rationale for the selection of the spot**

The present dam site was selected after a lot of deliberations. The advantages of the site were: it contains 67% of the drainage area responsible for the floods in the delta; the submerged area of the reservoir was exclusively in Orissa; the availability of unlimited quantities of limestone and coal within a radius of 30 miles for the manufacture of cement, an important component; the nearness of Sambalpur railway station and district headquarters, availability of service roads, presence of mineral deposits like iron ore, manganese, bauxite and limestone in the vicinity of the future establishment of Ferro alloy, aluminum, cement and other factories, the soundness of the foundation rock and absence of complex geological features availability of aggregates, sand, suitable earth and granite stones within the river. The small width of the river Mahanadi at this point and the presence of two hills on either side – Lum Dungri in the left and Chandli Dungri on the right leading to lower cost was also a very important consideration. Further the 43 affected villages on the right side were hill and forest clad and the rest of the villages on the left side, though fertile, were poorly developed in terms of minerals and roads and content no railway bridge, major structures and hence the loss was accessed to be minimal due to submergence.

**Hirakud Dam and people’s resistance**

When the people of Sambalpur district came to know about the laying down of the foundation stone of multipurpose Mahanadi river valley by the then Governor of Orissa at Hirakud in Sambalpur district in March 1946, there was substantial mass agitation and ‘anti-katki’ propaganda spread throughout the region. The people of this region were instigated and made to believe that thousands of them would have to lose their lands in

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order to protect the people of Cuttack district from flood\textsuperscript{24}. Anti-Hirakud dam campaign was launched since it was expected to submerge 108 full and 141 part revenue villages of Sambalpur district and also 3 full and 33 part villages of Pusar and Saraipali station of Madhya Pradesh respectively. Also the most fertile track of Sambalpur district was to submerge. People protested as they thought that the terrain of Sambalpur district would not be suitable for laying out canals, there would be huge loss of cultivable land, uprooting and dislocation of people, destruction of community life and general dispossession\textsuperscript{25}. They thought that it would be a positive gain for the coastal district and deprive the inland districts such as Sambalpur. The main issue was why people of Sambalpur district should sacrifice so much for Cuttack district that are considered the long term exploiters. There were several demonstrations, the largest being attended by 30,000 people and the ultimate demand was the separation of Sambalpur district from the rest of Orissa.

It was also considered an anti-developmental activity led by the feudal rulers who were likely to lose most of their land. The movement fizzled out because of the imposing image of the Congress at that time, the arrest of important leaders leading to closure of communication channel, the casual participation of the people especially of the submergible area, the sheer disbelief of the people that the rivers like Mahanadi and Ib can be dammed, the withdrawal of the local congress leaders, the betrayal of some leaders and the projection of the dam not merely as an anti-flood measure but as a major developmental project in Orissa in general and in Sambalpur in particular\textsuperscript{26}.

The policy recommended in the project report was that “The government should give as compensation, as far as possible, land in exchange of land and house in exchange of house and that too well ahead of the date of actual submergence. The compensation in

kind or cash should be on terms which are equitable and if anything generous. The
government should assist the people in rehabilitation and strive to create conditions in the
colonies which should be a definite improvement on the existing ones\(^{27}\). Model villages
with the essential amenities of life i.e. drinking water, sanitation, schools, community
centers, electricity etc were suggested. Availability of raw materials nearby, cheap
labour, lack of long term resistance from people and the strong zeal during initial post
independence years enabled the construction of the dam in 8 years time and with a total
expense of about 100 crore rupees. It has a dyke of 30 miles, the main dam is about 3
miles and the maximum height is 195 feet. This is the longest earthen dam in the world
and the reservoir is the largest artificial lake in Asia. The construction of the dam has
affected 249 villages 22144 families, 18432 houses and 112038.59 acres of cultivated
land which were submerged in the Hirakud reservoir\(^{28}\).

The acquisition of lands generated bitter resentment in peasants even though they were
paid compensation on liberal terms. In most cases land was their only source of income,
and the peasants were deeply attached to their lands. In fact, the loss of land was like
“psychological disaster” for them, however attractive the amount of compensation and
the future benefits might be.

On the whole, the Hirakud Dam project was viewed as a symbol of modernization and
industrialization for the western region in particular and Orissa in general. But the people
of Western region perceived the construction of the Dam as a part of a larger scheme
intended to prevent the coastal Orissa districts from the misery of recurring floods\(^{29}\).

True, the advantages of the supply of electricity and that of the irrigation facilities would
help the people of Sambalpur and the neighboring districts as also the coastal districts of
Cuttack, Puri and Balasore in developing industries and agricultural operations. The

\(^{29}\) Certainly, the Mahanadi Valley project was taken up to control flood situation in Orissa. But the project
was also aimed at power generation, navigation, irrigation, Soil conservation etc.
control of floods, which posed the greatest annual threat to the coastal districts, would be the extra benefit for them though, as the affected parties at Sambalpur held, the coastal people made no sacrifice in the construction of the Hirakud Dam. They shared the advantages only at the cost of the people of western Orissa. The tension between the hill districts and the coastal districts already created by the merger of the princely states in January 1948 had an enormous increase owing to violent opposition of the vast majority of people who are required to make sacrifices for the construction of the Hirakud Dam

To the poor villagers the project meant disaster and disappointment as they had to leave their ancestral lands. The prospects of rehabilitation and resettlement seemed to them a very poor compensation in lieu of what they lost. The affected people thus launched a strong agitation against the dam project. The discontented ruling chiefs, local land owning Castes (the Gountias) some disgruntled local congressmen and retired Government servants joined the agitation.

They used the regional card to motivate and mobilize the people. In order to discuss the issue and to remove popular misunderstanding, H.K. Mahatab moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly on 5th September 1946. Laxminarayan Mishra, a prominent Congress leader of Sambalpur, states in the Orissa Legislative Assembly that:

I can say that the project for the Dam was chalked out in darkness and through darkness people have sought to push it through. In the teeth of opposition of the people who are going to be landless and homeless, the project is going to be pursued. I should point out here that, it would be height of folly, the height of cruelty and the height of undemocratic misdemeanor to sanction that a flourishing tract of 300 villages, rather to be much more in number, should be

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31 The people were told that the project would be advantageous to the people of Cuttack and Puri districts in coastal Orissa. The rulers of Patna even used the anti-Dam plank to mobilize the people in favor of Eastern States Union.
Bodhram Dubey, another Congress member was equally critical of the project. He organized the people in their fight against the proposed Dam. The state government reacted sharply and orders were issued to Bodhram Dubey to abstain from mobilization activities.

The agitators maintained that construction of the Dam against the interest of the people of the region. They insisted that instead of displacing the people from the proposed dam site, the people in the flood affected areas of coastal region should be displaced. A series of meetings were organized following the inauguration of the dam. The affected people carried out procession and offered resistance when notification for acquisition of land was served in September 1946. An Anti-Dam Committee also passed resolution to oppose the construction and take steps to separate Sambalpur from Orissa.

It also attacked the congress leaders of the plains for their intrigues and favoured the union of the Kosal tract. The Patna Dipika lent support to the anti- Hirakud agitation. Hartal and protest meetings were organized in different places usually under the chairmanship of Gountias and Zamindars protest were made not only against the construction of the Dam but the agitators also demanded separation of Sambalpur from Orissa. A very large District conference was held at Sambalpur on 31st July, 1946. People in the rural areas were also mobilized to fight for separation of the district from the province of Orissa.

A meeting of about 500 people “consisting mainly of village headmen, tenants, and labourers of the villages of Badatangi, Saplahara, Baghara, and Satangi. Rampaluga and Dungripali” was held at Saplahara village in Sambalpur sadar police station on 14th

August 1946. Paid workers especially teachers were deputed to different parts of the region to mould the people in favour of formation of a new Kosal Union. Popular songs were composed and folk dances organized looking upon congress activities as a mockery and expressing contempt for the Katki\(^34\). It is alleged that R.N. Singh Deo, The “Patna Maharaja” was directly associated with such activities and extended all support to the agitators. It is further alleged that he could successfully win the support of some prominent citizens of Sambalpur by assuring them key–posts in his administration in the event of the information of the Kosal States Union.

As regards the Mahanadi valley Hirakud Dam project the government of Orissa was given the responsibility of payment of compensation, evacuation and rehabilitation. The policy of government in respect of compensation was to give land in exchange of land and that too well ahead of actual submergence. The compensation in kind or cash, was supposed to be on equitable and generous terms\(^35\). But the people felt utterly disappointed regarding compensation and rehabilitation. The Hirakud Dam displacement and rehabilitation problems thus provided a crucial ground for the origins of regionalism in Orissa.

**Emergence of the Gantantra Parishad**

Another significant factor for origins of regionalism was the emergence of the political party called *Gantantra Parishad*. After the merger of princely states the ex-rulers faced a new political equation. The integration of States reduced them to a status of commoners devoid of real political powers and privilege. The loss of power motivated them to launch a regional political party. A few congress dissidents and disgruntled Prajamandal activist of the region joined hands with the rulers. Through their collective efforts a new political party called the ‘*Koshalotkala Praja Parishad*’ was born in 1948 under the leadership of R.N. Singh Deo with headquarters at Bolangir\(^36\). In 1950, it was renamed as the


\(^{35}\) S.Supkar.(1988), *Itihasara Parihas* (Oriya), Sambalpur, p.4.

Ganatantra Parishad spread throughout the ex-states areas. But its leadership largely fell in the hands of R.N. Singh Deo and P.K. Deo, the ex-rulers of Patna, and Kalahandi respectively\(^{37}\).

Justifying the creation of the party and his entry to politics R.N. Singhdeo said:

> For the sake of the people, to champion their cause and render positive service to the toiling masses with a spirit of dedication, I entered into politics with a views to channelizing the popular discontent against the congress misrule on healthy and democratic lines whereby the evils of one party rule could be checked and a real democracy could be established in the country. With that end in view I founded the Ganatantra Parishad in 1950\(^{38}\).

The rise of Ganatantra Parishad accentuated regional animosity further. Following the merger the people of ex states suffered serious socio-economic hardships. In addition, the new bureaucratic administration in place of the personal ruler of the native princes created practical inconveniences to the affected people\(^{39}\). The Ganatantra Parishad articulated some of these grievances and it fought with the government for their redress.

Within a short period it had not only consolidated its position in the hill districts of the western Orissa and the erstwhile feudatory states, but made inroads into the congress in the coastal districts. The Congress dismal performance and failure to penetrate into the hill districts was due to lack of emotional integration between the hill and the coast. Since the electorate was almost equally divided between the congress and the Ganatantra Parishad, neither party was in a position to provide a stable Government. This division gave further weightage to the concept of Western Orissa as politically, economically and


socially a separate region in the province. During the election campaign party propaganda highlighted the grave injustice done to the people of western Orissa by exploiting their natural resources for the benefit of the coastal region. Regional economic imbalance, absence of University, Engineering and Medical colleges were some of the issues on which the Parishad leaders harped again and again to gain the electorate’s support and their campaign succeeded beyond expectations. It emphasized the growing regional disparities in the state and pointed out that different regions developed a sort of intense narrow consciousness, sense of inflicted injustice and a spirit of hostility even in trifle which endangered the integration of the nation. The party criticized the Congress for taking a step-motherly attitude towards backward areas of the Western Orissa and promised to take immediate steps for the development of the long neglected areas of the state\textsuperscript{40}.

As regards Hirakud Dam, the Ganatantra parishad accused the state Government of making half-hearted effort in payment of compensation\textsuperscript{41}. On the whole the Ganatantra parishad viewed the Hirakud Dam construction as a ploy by the then Congress leadership of Orissa State to protect the interests of the people of the coastal region at the cost of the interests of the people of the Western region. Going by this logic, the Ganatantra parishad justified the anti-Hirakud Dam agitation by the affected people of the western region.

**Displacement of Rourkela Steel Plant**

Displacement of people at the time of Rourkela steel plant construction also contributed to the rise of regionalism in the Western Orissa region. The problem of the rehabilitation of the people displaced by the construction of the Rourkela Steel plant was another issue that caused tremendous resentment among the people of western Orissa and contributed to the growth of regionalism. In 1954 the Govt. of India decided to set up a giant public sector steel plant at Rourkela in the Sundergarh district. Acquisition of private own land


\textsuperscript{41} S.Supakar, (1956), *Sambalpur Budi Anchalara lokankara Durdasha* (The Suffering of the people of Submerged Area of Sambalpur), Pamphlet released by Ganatantra Parishad, Cuttack, pp.2-4.
for this plant uprooted 2465 households from 33 villages. 70% of these displaced people were tribals\(^\text{42}\).

But out of 16,000 persons only 4,000 were resettled. Lands given for resettlement at distance forests of Bonai bordering Deogarh and Kuchinda sub-division of the undivided Sambalpur district were inferior and unsuitable for cultivation. Thus assurance like ‘land for land and house for house and adequate compensation for all land, trees and buildings’ were not fulfilled. Ganatantra Parishad, the main opposition party at that time too staged hunger strike outside the Assembly to protest against the ill treatment of the displaced persons. The party too put several adjournment motions to discuss the Rourkela problem and the government invited R.N.Singh Deo the opposition leader to attend the inquiry\(^\text{43}\). Even after five decades the displaced people still complain about the injustice done to them. This injustice too contributed to the growth of regionalism in western Orissa. Apart from the above, some other miscellaneous factors were also responsible for the rise of regionalism. The immediate post-merger situation in the princely areas of the Western region disappointed the people in a number of ways. The administrative system which they had, was very simple and that is unlike the bureaucratic system of the new administration. The Government was situated near the people and power was not vested in the hands of a large number of Civil servants but was concentrated in a few hands which facilitated quick action. Under that system it was possible to administer justice quickly and cheaply. The direct and simple administrative machinery made the day-to-day life of the people much easier. But in the post-merger period, the bureaucratic machinery was installed in the ex-state areas, which could be moved to action through a number of cumbersome procedures and which lacked the promptness and vigour of the former administration. In time of natural calamities such as drought, flood, or fire it was impossible on the part of the aggrieved people to run after administration to get their work done. The differences between the two systems of administration have been


summed up as follows by a Raja who had the advantage of becoming a minister in the new set up.

If a boy came to me for help to pay his college fees, and I liked the application, then my finance officer was in the next room and the boy could be going back to Cuttack with the money that same night. Now application of that kind goes through a series of secretaries, assistant, deputy, additional and so on and if each one of them keeps the file only for a week and the clerks and assistant kept it only for a month, see how the time mounts up. And as for the finance, at the time I was a minister, the finance was not in the next room. It was in Ranchi, in the next states.  

Secondly, the Western Orissa people experienced certain economic hardships as a consequence of the merger. One of such hardship was the rise in the price of rice. The princely states were closed economy. They used to consume what they produced but soon after the merger, rice from this zone was transported to the plains. It is said that up to 31st December, 1947 rice was selling at 8 seers (approximately six kilos) a rupee on the next day it was two seers a rupee, due to control price and fair price shops throughout Orissa. Medical facilities which the people enjoyed free of cost were withdrawn after the merger. They also resented over the restriction of the new administration on forest and Kendu leaves, two important sources of income to the state Government from the region. So far as this issue was concerned both the political organization viz., a Krushak Dal and the Praja Mandal joined hands and made efforts to waive the restriction in the erstwhile station of Sonepur and Patna. Police excesses are complained in respect of the sale and purchase of Kendu leaves.

Thirdly, after the merger, the Government of Orissa deputed their own administrators to the ex-state areas who in most of the cases behaved rudely to the people. Their attitude

towards the people was one of contempt and dishonour. Since most of the Government servants who were posted in the merged areas came from the coastal districts and manned the administration which was distasteful to the masses, naturally the people of the ex-states developed a dislike towards them who were branded as Kataki and exploiters. The administrators, who were sent by the provincial Government, descended in the Western region like conquerors and each one of them seemed to feel that he was a little ‘Maharaja’. Thus, in the perception of the people of the western Orissa region, the administrators from coastal area appeared as exploiters and oppressors and the provincial government as perpetrators of exploitation and oppression.

In the social life, the people of Western Orissa region came in increasing contact with the people of the coastal area soon after the state administration was extended to these areas. Since education had spread earlier in coastal Orissa, the inhabitants of this region were found fit for government jobs in large numbers. The level of literacy and education being low in the Western districts, such a trend in recruitment to government jobs was not experienced by this region. Moreover communication between the two regions was grossly inadequate as a result of which political changes at the top failed to impart a sense of belongingness at the bottom. While a large number of Government officers belonging to the plains stayed in this region, with the “mentality of a conqueror”, it was natural on the part of people of the highlands to suppose that integration of the states was effected only in the interest of the Katakis, and that an “unequal combination is always burdensome to the weaker partner”. The people of the western region thus began to hate them as exploiters. Every person hailing from coastal Orissa was nick-named as ‘katkias’ with all the contempt attached to the world, although the term literally means to dweller of Cuttack district.

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Regionalist sentiments came to such a pass that they blamed them for almost all the difficulties they had to face beginning from economic hardship to all trivial matters. When the price of essential commodities mounted up, it was natural on their part to blame the people of the plains. The regionalist condemned everything that came from the plains. They used to praise the simple nature of their own people and regarded the people of the plains as “outsiders” with an inscrutable conduct trying to grab the rich possessions of their region.

The attitude of the Orissa government to suppress the cultural and literacy activities of region also hurt the sentiment of the people and particularly of the middle class of the western region. The people failed to appreciate the steps taken by the Government in respect of the institutions such as the *Brajamohan Sahitya Samity* of Kalahandi and the *Kosal Kala Mandal* of Bolangir. In justifying the government action for shifting the Kalinga *Historical Research Society* from Bolangir to the Capital, it was pointed out that the society was “started under the patronage of Maharajas of Patna and Kalahandi in order to promote historical research and publish the historical journal” but when it was observed that the “function of the society was confined to local research in Patna and Kalahandi”, it was shifted to the capital.

Such a step on the part of the ruling party naturally tarnished its image in the region. Further, soon after the merger the Government abolished some municipalities in the ex-state areas and constituted NACs in their place on the allegation that these local bodies were not working properly because some local people did not let them work smoothly. This attempts on the part of the Government to discourage local initiative on such allegation evoked resentment in the ex-state areas.

The leaders of the western region criticized the new administration for corruption on its part and for strangling the voice of opposition. It was also blamed for not taking any step for amelioration of the grievances of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes people. As allotment of rupees 30,000 by the Maharaja of Kalahandi was mis-utilized in the interest of the people of the coast and denial of developmental benefits to the highland
region soon after the integration of the states made the people of the ex-states very much disappointed.

Further, the attitude of the congress towards the leaders of the Western Orissa region was not liked by the people. The congress blamed the ex-rulers for their medieval system of administration and their anti-progressive views. Due to some socio-economic practices followed by the people of the highland, they were regarded as a people belonging to an inferior culture. Thus a new administrative system seated in the plains and working under the behest of the people was believed to have been built up in the interest of the people of the plains. In short, economic backwardness of the region, political and social dominance of the coastal people having a sense of superiority, a feeling of discrimination, poorly developed agriculture, lack of adequate means of transport and communication and low levels of income constituted the main grievances of the people.\(^{49}\)

The conflict between the two regions, in a sense may be regarded as the erstwhile Oriya nationalism which was directed against the Government of India and more particularly against the Government of Bengal and the Central provinces. When the people of the highland complain against the Government of Orissa for being deprived of their due share of developmental benefits, they are simply echoing the voice of the Oriya patriots who had similar grievances against the government of Bengal and the central provinces.

Like the Oriya patriots who used to maintain that the misfortune of the Oriya lay in being at the tail end of administration, the leaders of the highland take a substantially similar stand as far as distribution of development benefits are concerned. The people of the highland have a similar suspicion towards the people of the coastal plains in the same manner the Oriya nationalists expressed their resentment over the dominance of the outsiders in the past.

2.2 Factors Accounting for the Growth of Regionalism

It is clear from the above analysis that anti-merger resistance, Hirakud agitation, emergence of Ganatantra Parishad, Rourkela agitation have contributed to the origins of regionalism in Orissa. Here some of the core factors which accounted for the growth of this regional tension have been focused.

Major Regional cleavages

Post-merger Orissa reveals striking regional cleavages. The two principal regions; i.e., Western Orissa and Coastal Orissa exhibit natural differences in terms of history, cultural and linguistic/dialectal affiliation.

Historical cleavages

Historically, coastal Orissa is associated with the Utkal Kalinga empires and Western Orissa is identified with the Koshal kingdom. The historical record which these empires/kingdoms left behind and the sentiment they create in recent times contributed to the growth of sharp regional divided between these conspicuous regions of Orissa State. The political history of western Orissa underwent many changes since time immemorial. In ancient time western Orissa was known as Koshal which was a distinct Party ‘Dakishin Koshal’ References to the location and antiquity of Koshal country has been found in various writings and inscriptions. For example, the Valmiki Ramayana, mentioned about two countries namely, ‘Uttar’ (north) and ‘Dakishin’ (south) Koshal.

Mention of south Koshal is also found in the Allahabad inscriptions of Samudragupta. Mazumdar noted that, ‘Sambalpur with its feudatory states formed in ancient times a part of Dakishin Koshal and the hilly country lying between Kalinga and Dakshin Koshal was the Oreland, while the Utkal as a separate country lies to the north of odra. During the regions of Emperor Kharavela, Koshal formed a part of his empire which extended over

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50 See the Koshal, Tract,(1946) KoshalSangh, Bolangir, pp.1-44.
51 Mazumdar also said that Ptolemy in his work referred to Sambalpur as ‘Sambalka’ and river Mahanadi as ‘Manada’ which was famous for its diamonds. See Mazumdar (1925) Orissa in the Making, Calcutta p.25.
the whole Oriya land. After Kharvela, Koshal country was ruled by the somavanshi Gupta's till 11\textsuperscript{th} century.

The inscriptions of the somavanshi kings show that Sambalpur tract was included in the Koshal Desh in 9\textsuperscript{th} century and was not considered then in any way connected with either Kalinga or odra or Utkal Desh\textsuperscript{52}. In 7\textsuperscript{th} Century the Somavanshis shifted their capital from sonepur (now in western Orissa) to puri. After the somavanshis, the koshal land disintegrated into smaller states. The imperial Ganga dynasty of Kalinga extended their suzerainty over these states for quite some time. The reunion of Koshal states occurred during the chauhan rule. The Koshal kingdom of the Chauhan dynasty (1355 AD 1821AD) comprised a group of 18 smaller states popularly known as ‘Atharagarh (eighteen forts) confederacy’\textsuperscript{53}. These States were first held in subordination to the most powerful Chauhan ruler, the Maharaja of Patna, who afterwards yielded to supremacy of the Maharaja of Sambalpur\textsuperscript{54}. Under the imperial Gajapati kings of Orissa these Chauhan rulers of Koshal States enjoyed Semi-independent status. After the fall of the last Gajapati, King Mukund Dev in 1568, these states became fully independent\textsuperscript{55}.

The core of Koshal, i.e., Patna state once consisted of eight forts known as Athmalik. Ramai Deo, the exemplary Chauhan ruler united these eight forts and founded the powerful Patna state. In 16\textsuperscript{th} century Sambalpur emerged as the most powerful among Koshal states. The ruler of Sambalpur belonged to Patna-Chauhan family. The koshal unity under Patna-Sambalpur supremacy was broken when the ‘Atharagarh’ koshal Confederacy fell into the British hands in 1818 following the third Anglo- Maratha war\textsuperscript{56}. Thus through the vicissitudes of times the Koshal tract was disintegrated and reunited several times over.

\textsuperscript{52} The \textit{Koshal Tract, Op. cit}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{53} See the notes on the ‘garjat’ states of Patna in N. Senapati and N.K. Sahu (1968) (ed). \textit{Gazetteers Orissa}, Bolangir, Cuttack pp. 63-65; These 18 principalities were; Patna Sambalpur, Sonepur, Bamra, Rairakhol, Bonai, Phulijihar, Gangpur, Raigarh, Sakti, Baud, Athamalik, Sarangarh, Chandrapur, Khariar, Bindra-Nawagarh and Borasambar.
\textsuperscript{56} Ramsay L.E.B Colden (1925) \textit{Feudatory States of Oriissa}, Calcutta, pp.26-27.
After Kharavela, dynasties like Sailodbhavas, Bhaumakaras, Somovanshis, Gangas and Gajapati ruled the Kalinga Empire. The famous Ganga ruler Chodaganga Dev united Kalinga, Utkal and Koshal to form one Oriya country. The Great Gajapati King Kapilendra Dev held sway over the Kalinga Utkal and Koshal Kingdoms for a pretty long time. The famous Orissa Empire of the Gajapati disintegrated in the 16th century.

The historical cleavages between the two regions become more pronounced during the Mughal, Maratha and finally the British rule over Orissa. Under the Mughals, the Koshal states of Western Orissa remained in the ‘Garhjat division’, while the coastal parts of Orissa comprised the ‘Mughalbandi’ division. The Marathas treated the eighteen Koshal states as tributaries and placed them in the Chhattisgarh province of the Bhonsla of Nagpur. The political map of Koshal went through many changes during the British rule. The British first took possession of the Koshal confederacy in 1804, but returned it to the Marathas as a Conciliatory gesture. But following the third Maratha war in 1818 all the Koshal states including Sambalpur came under British paramount power. The British took over Coastal Orissa in 1803 and placed it under their direct administration. The Orissa princely States including the Koshal-Sambalpur group were ruled separately in the ‘Garhjat’ division under the British paramount power. The British broke Koshal Confederacy and treated these smaller states as separate entities. These smaller states were first placed in the newly created South West frontier Agency, and then they were placed under the Chhotanagpur division. In 1849 Sambalpur was annexed and it was ruled as a British administered district. The district of Sambalpur along with other Smaller Koshal states was placed in the Central province in 1862.

In 1905, Sambalpur district and seven Koshal States were transferred to Orissa division of Bengal presidency. Finally in 1936 Sambalpur became a part of Orissa province and

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58 These territories were finally ceded to the British in 1826. See S.P. Das (1969) *Sambalpur Itihasa* (Oriya), Vishwabharti, Sambalpur pp. 304-8.
the Koshal States were merged with Orissa province in 1948. The above analysis shows that both Coastal and Western Orissa have long historical traditions and an account of their placement under different regimes and administrative units the two regions acquired distinct historical personality.

2.3 Cultural cleavages

The culture of western Orissa differs significantly from that of the Coastal Orissa districts. Popularly, Western Orissa culture is known as the ‘Sambalpuri’ Culture; while the culture of Coastal Orissa is dubbed as ‘Oriya’ or ‘Katak’ Culture. For one thing, the cultural diversity in Orissa resulted to a large extent from her vivisection especially under the Mughals, the Marathas and the British regimes. The geographical proximity of Western Orissa to the Chhattisgarh region and the placement of Sambalpur area under the Central Provinces in British time produced indelible effect on Western Orissa Culture. This was another distinguishing factor which caused cultural diversity in Orissa in the presence of a sizeable tribal population. Out of the 62 tribes living in Orissa, quite a large number is found in Western Orissa. Indigenous tribes like Gond, Khond, Kol, Oraon, Ho, Munda, Kissan, Binjhal, Bhuiyan, Bariha, Bhumji, etc., constitute important segments of Western Orissa Population. Their cultural practices heavily influenced the speech pattern, food habits, beliefs, custom, tradition, dance, drama, song, music, fairs and festivals of Western Orissa.

In contrast the coastal districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam have a sparse tribal population which is less than 6% of the population of the state\(^{60}\). In fact, the Western Orissa or ‘Sambalpuri’ culture has grown out of the fusion of Aryan elements with tribal cultural practices, which occurred in the periods of state formation under different dynasties especially the Chauhan dynasty\(^{61}\). Basically this culture contains folk elements

which are drawn from both tribal and Caste-Hindu cultural matrices\textsuperscript{62}. The twin process of sanskritisation and tribalisation mainly contributed to the evolution of this culture. Many folk songs like entertainment songs, play songs, ritual songs, work songs and customary songs are notices in the western region. Entertainment songs like ‘Rasarkeli’, ‘Sajani’ ‘Jaiphula’, ‘Nialimali, and ‘Dalkhai’ are quite famous in the region\textsuperscript{63}. These Songs rendered a typical ambience to the western Orissa ‘Sambalpuri’ culture. The folk musical instruments like ‘Muhuri’ ‘Dhol’ ‘Nishan’ and ‘Ghumura’ accompany these folk songs and dances. Conversely, the ‘Odissi’ dance a famous classical dance of Orissa, originated from the coastal Orissa region.

The ‘Odissi’ dance songs, the devotional songs like ‘Janana’ and the traditional Songs like the ‘chhanda’ and ‘chautisa’ are associated with the Coastal Orissa people to a great extent. As far as festivals are concerned, some typical festival like ‘Nuakhai; ‘puspuni; ‘karamasani’, ‘puajitia’ and ‘bhaijita’ are exclusively observed in Western Orissa and with which the Coastal people are not at all acquainted. In western Orissa the ‘Nuakhai’ is observed as a harvest festival when the new grains of the paddy crop are cooked and offered to the deities. In coastal Orissa region this festival is observed as ‘Navarna; but it is observed with different religious fervor and is confined to few individual families. The ‘puspuni’ festival in western Orissa symbolizes the day of termination of old contracts and beginning of fresh contracts with share croppers. ‘Bhaijita’ is a festival that women observe for the prosperity of their brothers. The two famous regional festivals, ‘Nuakhai’ and ‘puspuni; are observed in western Orissa on a mass scale to assent ‘Sambalpuri’ cultural identity. Recently, Some Cultural associations and temple committees have endorsed the idea of celebrating the ‘Nuakhai’ festival as a common regional festival throughout western Orissa. Another famous regional festival depicting the wedding

\textsuperscript{62} See N. Senapati and B. Mohanty (1971) (eds) Orissa District Gazetteers Sambalpur, Cuttack. The folk tradition is handed down orally from one generation to another. Recently efforts are made to standardize and popularize the Western Orissa folk culture.

ceremony of lord Shiva with Goddess parvati is the ‘Sitalsasthi’ festival of western Orissa. The typical festivals of coastal Orissa like ‘Raja; ‘Prathama Astami’, ‘Kumar Purnima’, ‘Boita Bandana’ ‘Khudarkuni Osha; etc. are not observed by the people of western region of Orissa. ‘Raja; a typical Oriya festival, is associated with worshipping the mother earth before tilling the soil for cultivation. ‘Boita Bandana’ is celebrated in remembrance of the in maritime glory of ancient Kalinga Empire. Even the world famous Car Festival (Rath yatra) of lord Jagannath, which is celebrated mainly in Puri town and all over coastal Orissa, is observed in a very limited scale in the Western Orissa region. In fact, a majority of festivals of the coastal Orissa are associated with lord Jagannath, e.g. Rath Yatra, Chandan Yatra, Snana Yatra, Jhulan Yatra, Nava Kalebar, etc, yet another difference between the two regions exists in the form of worship. While ‘Sakti’ worship (worship of feminine power) and ‘tantra’ tradition predominate in western region, the coastal people are more acquainted with different forms of Jagannath worship. That is, vaishnavism and Saivism dominate the religious life in coastal Orissa. Among the temples of ‘sakti’ worship, the temple of Samaleshwari (a regional manifestation of Hindu Goddess Durga occupies a central place in the hearts of the people of western region. Other manifestations of ‘sakti’ like Patneswari, Manikeswari and Sureswari are worshipped in different parts of Western Orissa. It may also be noted that some caste groups and surnames commonly found in Western Orissa are alien to the coastal Orissa districts. For example, castes like Gauntias, Agarias, and surnames like Bohidar, Supakar, and Pujari etc. are not found in the coastal belt. Among the Brahmins in Orissa, the ‘Jhadua’ (Aranyaka) Brahmins are found mostly in the western region. Apart from the above, both regions have some cultural specialties. For examples, coastal Orissa is famous for its filigree, appliqué works and ‘Khadi’ prints. Similarly, western Orissa is

66 B. Baboo for instance, attributes environmental factors to the growth of two different religious systems: Coastal plains adhere to Jagannath worship and western highlands regions follows Sakti worship- See B. Baboo (1979) Geography of Sakti; Cult in the Sambalpur District of Orissa; folklore, vol. 20 (9) , pp. 191-200.
widely known for its unique ‘Sambalpuri sari tie and dye weaving and floral motifs. But to the common perception of the coastal Orissa people the western Orissa Sambalpuri culture basically contains folk elements and therefore it is not a standard culture.

2.4 Linguistic Cleavages

Although, Oriya language served as the basis of formation of Orissa state, yet the form of Oriya spoken in Western Orissa differs from the standard Oriya spoken by the coastal Orissa people. The people of Western Orissa speak ‘sambalpuri’ as their mother tongue. ‘sambalpuri’ speech is usually regarded as a regional or colloquial variation of Oriya language. Nevertheless, Sambalpuri- Oriya speech is distinct in its own right, and it is easily distinguishable from coastal Oriya speech. The differences are noticed at the Lexical and Phonological levels. There are a number of ‘Sambalpuri’ words which are not intelligible to the coastal Oriya people. Interestingly, an average coastal Orissa person cannot speak ‘Sambalpur’ speech; and an uneducated person from western Orissa cannot speak or understand the standard coastal Oriya speech. Besides, ‘sambalpuri’ speech was heavily influenced by Chhattisgarhi form of Hindi and a host of tribal dialects spoken in western Orissa. Notably, tribal dialects like Bhatri, Kissan and Kui affected ‘sambalpuri’ speech to a great extent. Scholars on Oriya language generally treat ‘sambalpuri’ speech as a dialect of Oriya language. They argue that ‘Sambalpuri’ speech has no autonomous structure and is akin to Oriya structurally. Some Oriya scholars even reject a distinct language status for ‘sambalpuri’ speech because it does not have a script of its own. The linguistic cleavage is reflected in the perception of the common people in both the regions. The Oriya language spoken by the coastal Orissa people is referred to as ‘Kataki speech’ by the western Orissa people. On the other hand, average coastal Orissa people regards the ‘Sambalpuri’ Speech as an ‘adivasi’ (tribal) language, and even some consider it as a dialect of Oriya language. Be it as it may, ‘Sambalpuri’ Speech provides

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a sense of solidarity to the people of Western Orissa and defines a line of separation from the coastal Oriya’s.

In the conclusion, it may be argued that certain objective conditions like compact geographical area, distinct history, common culture and a separate mother-tongue largely helped to create a strong sense of regional identity among the people of western Orissa notwithstanding the formation of an integrated and united Orissa state in independent India. In addition to this, their relatively backward socio-economic position in comparison to the people of coastal Orissa created a sense of material deprivation among them.