Chapter Four

Methods and Social Base of Mobilisation: The Case of Koshal Movement in Orissa

The processes of articulation are many and varied. All the statehood movement may not experience similar process of articulation. They express themselves in a manner in which they operate. In some movements for statehood the issue of language could dominate whereas in other movement the issue of economic backwardness could dominate. In other cases it could be the political under representation of region could provide fuel to the movement. There can also be cases where multiple factors cause and influence the movement. In such cases some issues can play dominant role whereas others can play marginal role. The statehood movement may not be due to economic backwardness and it could be due to political deprivation of the concerned region. It is true that class and caste combine influence the political configuration of the state. Some political elites, some specific groups traditionally dominant caste groups and former ruling families could monopolise politics of the state and they tend to associate themselves to a region. Over a period of time they represent region raising the question of political under representation of the other region.

If we analyse empirically into the Koshal movement in Odisha, one would find many things which may not confirm to the earlier process of articulation for statehood. It is also true that politics is also geographically construed where region may get politicized. At the sub-national level also region expresses themselves politically and that reveal their powerfulness or powerlessness. The powerful regions are the ones where most of the dominant political leaders originate, dominate and monopolize the political power of the state. The political leaders represent the political significance of the region. The political domination is geographically embedded with the issue of class, caste and language. It is in this context discussed above, we attempt to study the case of Koshal movement. Because this uncovers the gradual politicization of region and it would be unjustifiable to disregard this aspect while studying the process of articulation.
4.0 Process of Articulation: Means and Methods

United Orissa contains two geographically distinct regional units, namely, coastal region and western region, which different in respect of history, cultural practices, and speech forms. In addition, there exists wide range of socio-economic disparities between the two regions. Given this regional imbalance, the relatively backward western region developed strong undercurrents of regional discontent. The growth of regional parties, the struggle for power and the incidence of political inequality and under-representation of western Orissa leadership in successive ministries accentuated regional consciousness and motivated the people of western Orissa to rise against their Coastal Counterpart. However, this dissentment is neither cultural nor political. Many issues are at work simultaneously.

The regional mobilization in Western Orissa has given birth to two broad trends, i.e. autonomist and separatism. The autonomist trend has emphasized in more development schemes and equal development like Western Orissa Development Council, alleviation of poverty and extension of facilities available to Coastal Orissa and establishment of a bench of Orissa high court etc. They strongly advocate that the distinct regional identity of Western Orissa should be recognized by the state government and the people of Coastal Orissa. On the other hand, the separatist’s trend has been demanding for a separate Koshal state comprising Western Orissa districts.

4.1 Aspirations of Movement: The Regional Autonomy

Major Grievances

The autonomists raised different kinds of regional demands from time to time particularly the Ganatantra Parishad/Swatantra party played a significant role in articulating regional demands in the 1950s and 1960s. Apart from taking up issues like Hirakud Dam and Rourkela rehabilitation, the Ganatantra parishad/Swatantra also fought for greater developmental benefits to western Orissa. For example, P.K. Deo, the notable Ganatantra parishad leader, introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha seeking amendment to the Article
371(2) of the Indian constitution. The proposed amendment called for proportionate distribution of developmental expenditure educational and employment opportunities in different regions of Orissa. It also demanded the Constitution of developmental Councils of efficient utilization of resources.

But towards the mid-seventies the influence of Ganatantra parishad/Swatantra had declined and finally in 1977 it merged with Janata Party. In the meantime, another organization called ‘Paschim Odissa Gana Samukshya’ (Western Orissa people’s front) vigorously campaigned against regional injustice. It came into existence in 1973 and started a vigorous campaign against the governmental leadership perpetuating backwardness in the region by all possible means. In order to make the front broad based and its voice effective efforts were made to associate the people of the region right from the panchayat level to give a mass character to their agitations. The front operated in the districts of Sambalpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi and Sundergarh. The western Orissa front emerged following a clash between two groups of students of V.S.S Medical College at Burla in Sambalpur district. The front pledged to work for the removal of regional imbalance. In a representation to the Governor of Orissa, the front argued in favor of reservation of seats for the students of Western Orissa in the Medical and Engineering College at Burla, Sambalpur. It also demanded for appointment of local selection committee for the recruitment of 3rd and 4th grade employees. Demands were also placed for opening up branches of key offices, a separate board of Secondary Education, different course curriculum for primary and secondary levels based on local conditions, appointment of Judges to Orissa High Court from Western Orissa.

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1 See, The Samaj (Oriya Daily), 30 September. It may be recalled that clause (2) was inserted to Article 371 of Constitution of India for removing regional disparities in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.
2 Sunit Ghosh, (1973), ‘Regional Demands in Orissa’, The Hindustan Standard, October 5, The immediate cause centered round the transfer of a Professor of the Medical College. Following disturbances between the two groups of students the college was closed with effect from 17.8.73 and the Principal transferred. The students were asked to vacate the hostel within 24 hours and about 200 students were sent elsewhere in Government vehicles. Police and Military Police were engaged to take care of the situation. The incident generated tension at Sambalpur and in the neighbouring places.
3 Ibid.
4 The Samaj (Oriya Daily), 2 October 1973. The Sambalpur Bar Association in a meeting in September 1973 adopted a resolution seeking preference for students of Sambalpur University for admission in medical and technical colleges located in the region.
The agitators formulated Charter of demands relating to the development of the region and submitted them to the Governor of the state and to the Prime Minister. They urged the central government to declare the districts of Bolangir, Kalahandi and Baud Phulbani as “Scheduled Area”. Since the nature of the problem faced by all these districts is similar to a great extent. They also demanded constitution of an advisory council for need based development as the region is continuously neglected by the Government of Orissa since the merger times. Since agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people inhabiting the region, it was argued that extension of irrigation facilities was badly necessary to improve the economic conditions of the people. The front criticized strongly the land ceiling imposed by the Orissa Land Ceiling Act. It stated that the Orissa Land Reform Act is unconstitutional. It was pointed out that in view of the fact that the cultivable land of coastal Orissa is much more fertile and has higher productivity than that of the western region. Therefore, the imposition of ceiling on land should be raised to three times more than that of the plains.

The western Orissa United youths Front raised a few more regional demands which included: holding periodicals sessions of Orissa legislative Assembly and Orissa state Public Service Commission at Sambalpur, establishment of another steel plant at Bonai; reservation of 75 per cent seats in Medical, Engineering and Government Training Colleges for the local students. The joint Convenor of Western Orissa people’s front in his representation to the Governor of Orissa pointed out that after the merger the people of Sambalpur region are treated as Second class citizens in Orissa. He further noted that most of the posts including the 4th grade are occupied by the Coastal people. To check the growing neglect of the region he therefore pleaded for the introduction of ‘Mulki rule’ in Western region. During the Janata rule from 1977 to 1980, regional aspirations were articulated at the intra-party level. Leaders representing regional interests were divided over the Land Reforms Act of 1977 which imposed ceiling on land holdings. To protest

5 Koshala (Oriya Weekly) 21st September 1973.
7 See the leaflet issued by the Western Orissa united youths front, 26 March 1973.
8 M.B. Bohidar, (1973) Our Sorrow is our Plight, Sambalpur.
against this decision, the ruling party MLAs and MPs of the region held a conference at Bargarh in 1978 and urged the government to review the decision as the cultivable land in the Coastal belt is more fertile compared to the western region. The following resolutions were passed in the conference:

a) For the purpose of implementation of land reforms the term family should be redefined to treat every grown up son as a unit of the family.
b) To pay compensation at a market rate to the cultivators losing their land.
c) classification of lands in terms of productivity.
d) special protection should be given to illiterate backward cultivators of the region to promote social justice.
e) to give priority to the region in matters relating to minor irrigation, health electrification, sanitation and communication.
f) expansion of educational institution in the region.
g) fifty per cent reservation of medical seats for the local students of the region.
h) preference of western people in the matter of employment at the state secretariat.
i) to reserve the class III and IV jobs in western Orissa for the local people of the 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. The steel plant in Rourkela was conceived during country’s second five year plan to increase iron and steel production for development of basic economic infrastructure and heavy industries for accelerated economic growth. Besides this public sector steel plant was expected to play catalytic role in transformation of the mineral rich backward tribal regions of Orissa and to bridge the developmental disparities. In December 1953 the Government of India signed an agreement with Krupp-Demag of Germany for establishing a half million tonne steel plant in the public sector. The present site, Rourkela in the Chotanagpur plateau region of Sundargarh district, Orissa was selected due to its techno-economic advantage. The construction of the steel plant was started in 1955 and the first blast furnace of the plant was inaugurated by the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 3rd February 1959.

When the survey work of the steel plant was done in the region, people were completely indifferent and they showed little interests. However, when they became aware of the survey and acquisition of their land and houses for the steel plant, the village people began to show resentment. In the last part of 1951 the village headman of several villages in a public meeting passed a resolution that the people of the locality did not want steel plant by sacrificing their home and hearth. To pacify them the government of Orissa issued a Press Note taking responsibility for the rehabilitation of the displaced people. Notwithstanding this, the locals had started organizing themselves from around 1953 and an organization called “Steel Plant Site People’s Federation” was formed to protect the interests of oustees. Within a short time, the agitation of the locals increased in magnitude and the leadership passed into the hands of politicians.

However, in 1953 the then Chief Minister of Orissa, Shri Nabakrushna Chaudhary in a meeting held at Vedavyas, near Rourkela assured the displaced people that their interests would be looked after as far as land and employment was concerned. This to some extent calmed down the situation and thereby removing opposition of the local people. Nevertheless, the discontentment and the opposition of the locals especially the tribal’s against the steel project remained. The tribal’s demanded that in the matter of rehabilitation they should receive special consideration; otherwise they would be lagging behind the other communities because of their inherent weakness. For this they got the support of Catholic Church. The state authority in Orissa was, however, very keen and enthusiastic for the project. The construction work of the plant continued by acceding to the various demands of the locals raised from time to time. The company that was called HSL (Hindustan Steel Limited) at that time paid compensation money to the displaced people according to the standardized gradation of their land and houses. It also promised to employ at least one member in the steel plant from each displaced household. The government of Orissa took the responsibility of rehabilitation of displaced people. Under the rehabilitation scheme the government set up three resettlement colonies near Rourkela at Jalda, Jhirpani and Bandomunda and allotted 2400 sq feet housing plots to all the displaced families. Besides 15 reclamation sites were demarcated within a radius of 100 km of Rourkela by clearing forest land. In these sites the displaced persons were
allotted wasteland for agricultural purpose and they were given RS.100 as subsidy per acre for the reclamation of the land. However, this did not helped much for the tribal household as many of them did not have proper records of rights over the land occupied by them. In the past the region did not have a proper land revenue system and many immigrants tribal’s of Ranchi and Singhbhum of Chotnagour region had been verbally allowed land by the King of Gangpur state to settle in the region. As a result they failed to get any rehabilitation benefits. On the other hand the village headmen who were recognized officials owners of the village land took away the maximum amount of the compensation money taking advantage of tribal’s ignorance and illiteracy.  

It was found from the latest record about displaced people available at the office of the Additional District Magistrate (ADM), Rourkela that altogether land in 33 villages were acquired for the steel plant and its township in Rourkela. The total land acquired for this purpose was 19,722.69 acre (7,984.89 Ha), out of which 14,824.18 (17.16%) acres were private land and the rest 4,898.51 acres were government land. The total numbers of families displaced were 2,901, out of which 1974 (68.05%) were Scheduled Tribes (STs), 279 (9.62%) were Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the rest were others (22.34%) were general category households. Apart from that the plant was responsible for the acquisition of land in another 31 villages for the construction of a water reservoir at Mandira in river Sankh located at a distance of 30 km from Rourkela. According to the Government record the reservoir submerged 11,964 acres (4,843.72 Ha) and the number of families displaced due to Mandira dam was 1,193. Although the detailed caste and ethnic picture of the Mandira dam oustees families are not available, it is quite possible that amongst the oustees the tribal families must have been around 70 percent as predominantly it is a tribal area. Even during 1961 census the home district Sundargarh has registered 58.1 percent tribal population, notwithstanding large scale exodus of caste Hindu population from the plains and other states of India in the wake of functioning of the steel plant at Rourkela. Precisely, thus the setting up of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) caused direct displacement of 4,094 families out of which around 70 percent were tribals and another

10 percent were Scheduled Caste households. The total livelihood sustaining land lost for the project was 31,687 acres (12,829 Ha), or say at the rate of 7.74 acres per displaced families\(^\text{11}\).

As many as 16,000 persons belonging to 3,300 families were displaced from their home and hearth. The assurances like ‘land for land’ and ‘house for house’ and adequate compensation for all land, trees and buildings were not fulfilled. The employable persons among the displaced were not given gainful employment. Out of the 16,000 persons only 4,000 were resettled. But lands for resettlements were given at distant forests which were not economically self-sufficient. As regards compensation, very negligible sum was paid and Contrary to the assurance the displaced were not given sites for setting up business at Rourkela.\(^\text{12}\) The Displaced Persons Welfare Committee led by the local M.P., Harihar patel, submitted a memorandum to the president of India when he visited Rourkela to inaugurate the first blast furnace in 1959. Emphasising the misery and hardship of the people the memorandum highlighted that construction of the steel plant led to acquisition of their land and villages for which no adequate compensation was provided to them.\(^\text{13}\) And the land given to those for resettlement at distance forests were inferior and unsuitable for cultivation.

Many displaced families were not given any job in the steel plant as was assured earlier. According to Ramachandra Sahoo, President of Rourkela Steel Plant Displaced Person’s Association(RSPDPA), 3,500 tribal families and another 500 other caste families among the oustees of Rourkela have not been given any job by the RSP, although it was decided in principle to provide at least one job to an adult member of each of the displaced families. The total numbers of un-rehabilitated families of RSP at present is 8006 including Mandira Dam oustees. The displaced people of Rourkela have many grievances

\(^\text{12}\) *Memorandum of Rourkela displaced persons welfare Committee* to the president of India, 3 February 1959.
\(^\text{13}\) See, the *Revenue Department Notification*, Cuttack, 22 February 1954. It states that for the establishment of Steel Plant and allied and ancillary factories at Rourkela, an area measuring 78 sq. miles covering 92 villages was acquired. See also the *Orissa Extraordinary Gazette Notification*, 22 February 1954.
that have been left unresolved since 1950s. Even no step was taken by the authorities to make proper demarcation of the land given to oustees. No step has been taken for the conversion of the forest land into agricultural and homestead land\textsuperscript{14}. Even after three decades the persons displaced from Rourkela still complain about the injustice regarding compensation, rehabilitation, and absorption of suitable displaced persons in various commensurate jobs in the steel plant protesting against the inattention the \textit{displaced persons welfare committee} launched in 1992 and placed a charter of demands before the State government and the plant authorities. The demands include: (a) absorption of the dependents of displaced persons including non-matriculates and female candidates in Rourkela steel plant; (b) issue of certificate to displaced persons; (c) infrastructural development for all resettlement colonies and villages in and around Rourkela; (d) regularisation of unauthorized construction by displaced persons in the government land; (e) reservation of seats in technical institutions for displaced persons and local people; and (f) 75 percent reservation for local inhabitants in local employment.\textsuperscript{15} The \textit{Nagra Mukti Samukshya}, a Rourkela-based welfare organization of the displaced people alleged that lands in excess were acquired and the surplus lands were sold off to different individuals and parties at higher costs.\textsuperscript{16} The Adivasi and Harijan youth welfare Association of Rourkela in its memorandum to Orissa Chief Minister demanded for cent percent reservation for ST and SC students in all the educational institutions in Sundargarh district, setting up of an Adivasi and Harijan Boy’s Hostel in Rourkela; establishment of an Adivasi and Harijan College at Rourkela and above all appointment of displaced persons in Rourkela steel plant.\textsuperscript{17} Calling for appropriate government action, the \textit{Hirakhand Nagarika parishad} of Sambalpur in its memorandum to the Orissa Governor highlighted some of the major problems facing the Sambalpur town in particular and western region in general. The memorandum contained the following demands such as (a) modernization of the Hirakud Canal System; (b) autonomous status for V.S.S. Medical College of Sambalpur; (c) expansion of Sambalpur district

\textsuperscript{16} See the representation of Nagara Mukti Sangathan to Orissa Chief Minister 25 May 1982.
\textsuperscript{17} Memorandum submitted by Adivasi and Harijan youth welfare Association of Rourkela to Chief Minister Orissa dated 21 September 1992.
headquarters hospital and the medical facilities; (d) establishment of TV studio at Sambalpur; and (e) improvement of infrastructural facilities of G.M. College and University College of Engineering.  

Another issue which caught sufficient public attention and aroused tremendous regional discontent was the demand for the establishment of the programme production centre at the Television Centre in Sambalpur. It may be remembered that under the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, television broadcasting in Orissa started at Sambalpur, Bolangir and Dhenkanal in 1978. Later a studio for production of television programme was created at Cuttack and the relay transmitter installed at Sambalpur telecast the programmes produced at Cuttack studio. Unfortunately, the programmes produced at Cuttack studios did not reflect the Culture, Custom, and Tradition, educational and agricultural requirements of the western region. It created a contradiction in that the Sambalpur TV centre did not have its own production facilities.

In 1982 the Cuttack TV centre was established and with that the possibility of having a programme production centre at Sambalpur was closed down for ever. The Cuttack TV centre dominated television broadcasting and telecast in Orissa, while the Sambalpur centre was reduced to a relay centre. Because of the favourable treatment of the state government to the Coastal region, the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry paid no attention to the just demand of the people of western region. In the absence of a programme production studio, the aspiring artists of the region could not find a suitable medium to expose their rich cultural tradition. The regional network service telecast from the Cuttack centre mostly reflect the language, literature, culture, tradition, fairs, festivals and cropping pattern of the Coastal region.

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18 Memorandum of Hirakud Nagarik parishad, Sambalpur, submitted to Governor or Orissa dated Sambalpur the 7th January 1992.
In order to have an independent programme production centre at Sambalpur some activists therefore launched an agitation. For instance, on 4 September 1991, a group of activists of the Sambalpur Artists Forum led by Bhagabat Prasad Nanda, Suresh Pujari, Ashok Mishra, Benibhuj Sahu and Jadunanda Panda intruded into the office of the Assistant Station Engineer of Sambalpur TV centre and submitted a memorandum demanding a full-fledged programme production centre at Sambalpur. Soon after that the agitators indulged in demonstration and picketing. They also burnt down the effigy of Ajit K. Panja, the then Union I& B minister and attempted road blockade on national highway. The protestors prevented the members of the Sambalpur Kala parishad from participating in the cultural programme held at Cuttack.

The Demand for a High Court Bench in Western Orissa

There have been strong acts of protests and demonstrations demanding for establishment of a circuit court of Orissa High Court in western Orissa. The demand for the Circuit sitting of the High Court is aimed at decentralization of the judicial machinery. As the seats of Orissa High Court is located in the Cuttack city in Coastal Orissa, the poor people of Western region face enormous problems of securing legal justice and easy disposal of cases. The people of western region are harassed in the hands of the people of Coastal Orissa as they do not get administrative justice at all. The demand for Circuit Court dates back to 1959. The Orissa High Court in its letter to the Government of Orissa observed:

> Although the law Commission is not in favour of the idea of setting up Benches at different centers of a state, the court feels that in Orissa there is a case for having at least one circuit court preferably at Bolangir-Patna. This is very necessary for the purpose of enabling poor litigants of the merged areas especially of Bolangir, Kalahandi, Sonepur, and Boudh and nearby areas to fight out their litigation.

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21 Ibid.
In 1961, the High Court again recommended the Government of India to start the circuit Court on experimental basis for two years at Bolangir. Later in 1965 the people of Sambalpur strongly protested in favour of having the Circuit Court at Sambalpur town. As regard the Conflict over the question of location, the Orissa High Court made the following remark to the government of India:

*The Court examined the question in connection with the proposal for the establishment of a Bench at Sambalpur and the Court’s letter No. 5042 dated the 6th October 1965 the Special reasons for recommending the circuit sitting of the High Court at Bolangir prior to the merger and they have been deprived of this facility after the merger of these states.*

Thereafter, the Bar Association of Sambalpur intensified its struggle to have the sitting of High Court at Sambalpur and not Bolangir. In their effort, the lawyers of Sambalpur received tremendous support from leaders of various political parties, members of parliament, and the state legislature, representatives of social and welfare organizations, students unions, trade unions and above all the All Orissa lawyers Association and the majority of the Bar Associations of the districts of Western Orissa. Even the Congress and the Janta Dal in their election manifesto in 1985 and 1990 respectively, promised the establishment of Circuit Court in the Western region. As leader of the opposition, Biju Patnaik assured the president of the Sambalpur Bar Association for opening the Circuit Court. To fulfill the commitment, Biju Patnaik after becoming chief minister in 1990 wrote to the Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court for setting up of Circuit Court at Sambalpur. The Chief Minister’s action came in response to the representation submitted by a group of 26 MLAs from the western region. The Chief Justice of Orissa High Court, however, refused to accede to the recommendation of Orissa government in this matter. The vested interests at Cuttack Bar Association strongly opposed the idea of opening

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24 The Bolangir Bar Association did not join the Campaign launched by Sambalpur Bar Association because the latter wanted to have the circuit Sitting of the High Court at Sambalpur. See the *Memorandum* of the Action Committee, Sambalpur Bar Association to the Prime Minister of India dated 18 December 1991.
Circuit Court at Sambalpur. In protest against the decision Orissa High Court, the lawyers boycotted the courts at Sambalpur. Under strong pressure from different Bar Association of the Western region, the Government of Orissa wrote to the Registrar, Orissa High Court, for establishment of Circuit Court as soon as possible. The government stated that the demand was justified as the places in western region are distant from the principal seat of Orissa High Court situated in Cuttack in Coastal Orissa. Further the demand was justified in accordance with the provision of Article 39(A) of the constitution of India and the recommendations of the Jaswant Singh Commission pertaining to setting up of Circuit Court or Benches at places other than the principal seat of a state High Court.25

Aspirations of Movement: Sambalpuri Language and Culture

The people of Sambalpur vehemently opposed the introduction of Hindi in Sambalpur area in the 1890s. They not only strongly favoured the restoration of Oriya but also wholeheartedly supported the inclusion of Sambalpur region with Orissa division of erstwhile Bengal presidency. It was on the basis of Oriya language, the district of Sambalpur in 1936 and rest of the Sambalpur area in 1948 were made part of Orissa state. But the form of Oriya spoken in Sambalpur area bears a distinct regional identity of its own. They strongly reject the terminology of the ‘Oriya’ identity.

The people of Bolangir, Sambalpur, Kalahandi and Sundargarh speak a dialect called “Sambalpuri” which is a dialectal variant of Oriya language though the latter is used by them in reading and writing. In the absence of authentic information it is difficult to say how old the dialect is. Attempts have been made in the past by local writers to popularize the dialect through Oriya script. Moreover some notable Oriya poets and writers of this region have consciously tried to assimilate some Sambalpuri words into their literary works. Though no important literary work have been produced in the dialect, Sambalpur songs are widely popular and have their distinctive qualities. A review written on an anthology of Sambalpuri songs focuses attention on the regional dimensions of the songs broadcasted through the Sambalpur branch of the All Indian Radio. In this article written

by a writer belonging to a Coastal district, the dialect has been viewed as the mixture of Oriya and the tribal dialects which represent the fusion of two distinct cultural heritages. Though the artistic aspect has received the appreciation of the reviewer he condemns the regionalism practiced through the songs by some of the lyricists.

Due to lack of adequate written literature in the past in Sambalpuri language, a bulk of folk-literature emerged and developed in course of history to satisfy the literary and artistic hunger of illiterate or semi-educated people. These include songs, ballads, tales, proverbs, riddles, legends etc. And the local colour of the region is reflected in these pieces through word order. Besides revealing a beautiful aesthetic sense, they sometime provide historical, geographical and cultural information. Besides the Sambalpuri language serves as the link language for a number of tribal languages such as Kissan, Kui, Mundari, Kharia, Oram etc prevalent in Sambalpur region. As this form of Oriya is spoken in the Sambalpur belt (i.e. western Orissa); it is popularly called Sambalpuri speech of Oriya language or the Sambalpuri-Oriya dialect. But the general feeling in Sambalpur area is that the Government of Orissa has done nothing or very little to protect, preserve and promote the Sambalpuri speech. It is being alleged that, both at the official and elite level Sambalpuri speech has been undermined even though the people of western region use it as their mother tongue. Under the pre-eminent and predominant position of standard Oriya, the Sambalpuri speech by the large remains as a spoken dialect and till recently no serious written work prepared in this speech.

The Sambalpuri people attribute this failure to the lack of official patronage and inattention. For instance, in the census reports Sambalpuri is recorded as Oriya and not as a separate mother tongue. The census enumerates Oriya as the principal languages of Oriya. The people alleged that while languages with less than 10,000 speakers and having no script are listed as a mother tongue, let alone as a distinct language. Besides, Sambalpuri is spoken in an area which remained under feudal rule for centuries. The rulers for their vested interests patronized Oriya language and not Sambalpuri though the

latter was spoken as a mother-tongue. The British also patronized the dominant Oriya language on account of administrative convenience and political expediency. The lack of official support and legitimization thus led to the marginalization of Sambalpuri speech. Not only that, the Sambalpuri culture comprising folksongs, folk music, folk dance etc. face the fear of extinction due to the favourable treatment shown towards the dominant Oriya language and culture. To recall the evocative phrase of Oommen, this marginalization of language and culture to be termed as ‘Culturocide’.  

There have also been associational interest groups which very often influence the decision of the government. These groups unlike the front discussed earlier do not articulate regional demands directly in public. They usually confine their programs to socio-cultural activities. All these societies and associations which identify themselves with a particular region and concentrates on its socio-cultural activities indicate the cleavages that exist beyond the formal political battle and give us an idea of the undercurrent in the politics of the state. For instance in the 1970s and 1980s associations like Orissa Sanskrutika Parishad, Sambalapuri Lekhak Sangh, Koshali Bhasa Sahitya Parishad and Sambalpuri Bhasa Surakshya Committee were deliberately formed to protect and promote Sambalpuri speech. Cultural organizations like Koshal Sahitya Samaj and the Paschim Orissa Sanskrutika Parishad were formed to work for Sambalpuri dance and music. The Paschim Orissa Sanskrutika Parishad was very active cultural association with the objective to promote and encourage the study of the culture, history, literature, dialects and societies of western Orissa. These organizations mainly conducted seminars, conferences and symposia for creating cultural consciousness among the western people.

Poets, scholars, landlords and cultural activists gave the needed thrust to arouse consciousness among the people of western Orissa about the richness of their regional culture, language and literature. Attempts were made to publish newspapers, journals,  

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29 Ibid.
periodicals, books and dictionary in Sambalpuri language. Some writers like Manglu Charan Biswal, Murari Prasad Mishra, Mitrabhanu Gauntia and linguists like Satyanarayan Bohidar and Prayag Dutta Joshi inspired the people to follow their examples to write in Koshali language. There were stray attempts at producing literature in Koshali. These include journals like Koshal Shree, Dhol, Bhandarkun, Drustikon etc. Short stories, plays, songs and novels were published in significant numbers. Attempts were made to popularize and generalize festivals like Nuakhai by fixing a single date of observation throughout western Orissa on the day following Ganesh Puja. The Sambalpuri Lekhak Sangh too played a role in glorifying Sambalpuri dance, drama and other cultural outfits like Rasarkeli, Dalkhai, Bondibotal. Sambalpuri plays like Bhuka of Manglu Charan Biswal which gained tremendous recognition was later on picturised. The role of the lyricist in spreading the sweetness and identity of Sambalpuri-Koshali, through the All India Radio Sambalpur is noteworthy. Among them are Sri Bidhu Bhushan Guru, the first lyricist and artist in AIR Cuttack in 1948, Mitrabhanu Gauntia, Prabhakar Panigrahi, Lal Ratnakar Singh, Gokul Naik, Binod Kumar Pasayat and others. They inspired the next generation of writers by awakening them to the literary potentiality of their own language. AIR Sambalpur played an important role by broadcasting songs, dramas and features in the regional languages. The new cultural policy of the government for the preservation of folk culture has also helped Sambalpuri culture of western Orissa. But a closer analysis indicates that the state government has done very little to develop the language and culture of western Orissa. The three Academies, viz Orissa Lalit Kala Academy, Orissa Sahitya Academy and Orissa Sangeet Natak Academy were established primarily to promote cultural traditions, dance, drama, music, language and literature of Orissa state.

The state government has paid scant attention to the promotion of Sambalpuri language and culture. The Orissa Sahitya Academy responsible for promoting Oriya language and literature has habitually favoured the coastal dialect by various promotional schemes like providing financing, publishing and instituting literary awards. The samiti’s bias against


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the Sambalpuri language can be seen from the fact that not a single book written in Sambalpuri dialect has been financed by it. The growth of the Sambalpuri literature like Sambalpuri Ramayana, Mahabharata, drama, fictions and story books has been completely left to the few dedicated Sambalpuri literaturist who without any support from the state government published these books with local publishers. Except the Sambalpur branch of the AIR station, which provides prorammes in Sambalpuri language covering Sambalpuri poems recitation, state support has been marginal in the promotion of Sambalpuri language and literature. However, in the year 1989-90 the government decided to open district cultural centers in each district headquarters to provide incentive to cultural activities\(^{31}\).

It is also alleged that the poets and writers of great merit are deprived of their due place in Oriya literature. The people regret the lack of interest among the people of coastal Orissa in the life and works of Gangadhar Meher who has not only left the stamp of his own individuality but also the imprints of his region in his widely acclaimed monumental works. He was not only a great poet but has also made a significant contribution to the cause of Oriya nationalism. Gangadhar Meher is not given due recognition compared to the litterateurs from coastal Orissa\(^{32}\).

The state government has also systematically discriminated against Sambalpuri writers. Only two persons from western Orissa have received the Orissa Sahitya Academy so far. In the year 1987, The Orissa Sahitya Academy awarded Prayag Dutta Joshi for his contribution to Sambalpuri language and culture. Under its aegis, the Sambalpuri dictionary compiled by P.K.Tripathi and the study report *Paschim Odissara Kathitha Bhasa* by Gopabandhu Rath was published in 1987\(^{33}\).

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\(^{31}\) *Annual Plan Report 1989-90*, Government of Orissa, Planning and Coordination Department, Bhubaneswar.


Likewise in the promotion of Koshali arts and artists, the state support has been minimal. In the case of dance, while Orissa government is continuously promoting Odishi dance in Orissa as well as outside the state, the Sambalpuri dance received the least focus of the government. The Konark dance festival was also launched to popularize Odishi dance but no significant step were taken to propagate the regional culture of Sambalpur.

Demands for programme production centers at AIR and TV stations at Sambalpur have been made from time to time. As the production centre is located in Cuttack, even the programmes produced for Sambalpur region basically benefit the Coastal people. The Radio and TV artists from Sambalpur area feel that their art forms have been neglected in comparison to the Coastal Orissa. The demands for news bulletin in Sambalpuri speech, adequate regional cultural programmes on Sambalpuri songs, dance and music were constantly made. Besides, demand was also made to translate many national TV and AIR programmes into Sambalpuri language.

In sum, the culture movement in Western Orissa can be termed as an autonomist and not a separatist one. The movement basically aimed at the following things:

(a) Recognition of the distinct status of Sambalpuri language;
(b) Government aid and patronage to development of indigenous Sambalpuri literature.
(c) Promotion and spread of Sambalpuri cultural tradition, art forms, dance, drama and music;
(d) More TV and video programmes in Sambalpuri language;
(e) Non-interference of outsiders in sambalpuri language and culture.

**Demands for Development Council**

In the mean time the demand for a Development Council for the Western region gathered momentum. The demand was seen as a part of the larger scheme of the autonomist perspective for the western region. The advocates of the council maintained that the elected representatives of western Orissa have been denied proportionate representation in the Successive ministries of Orissa. This has resulted in their exclusion from the decision making process at the apex political level. Further, the economic and political
domination of the culturally and educationally advanced coastal people frustrated the developmental aspirations of the western people.

Hence the objective of the Council is to secure regional autonomy within the constitutional framework for the economic, political, Social and cultural development of the western region. As regards Regional Developmental Council, Ashok Panda, Senior Advocate in Supreme Court suggested that efforts should be made to create development Council under the constitution in terms of Article 371 with necessary modification to ensure democratic and autonomous functioning. He maintained that Article 371 of the Constitution provides for special provision for combating regional imbalance in the state of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. Under Article 371(2) the Governor of these states is empowered to establish separate development boards for Vidarbha and Marathawada in Maharashtra; Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat with the provision that a report on the working of each of the Board be placed before the state Legislative Assembly.34 In the case of Andhra Pradesh, Article 371-D (1) specifies provision for giving special consideration to local residents of the different parts of the state in the matter of public employment and education. It is argued that the provisions under Article 371 are relevant to Orissa as widespread regional imbalances exist between the coastal and western Orissa districts. Also development in the traditional sense has not benefited the people of western region.35 Binod Kumar Pati another political activist led emphasis on the autonomous character of this council36.

The demand for autonomous council according to this section aims at decentralization of political, administrative, legislative and financial powers and ensuring regional financial autonomy and decision-making authority. The establishment of such a council would reasonably fulfill the need of the people of western region within the framework of Orissa state. The regional council would give power to the people and bring the western districts

35 Ibid.
36 Binod Kumar Pati, Autonomous Development Council for Western Orissa, Privately Circulated, Pamphlet, Sambalpur.
on an equal footing with the coastal districts. The Ghadei Commission set up by the then Chief Minister Shri Biju Patnaik submitted its report in 1995 which rejected the proposal for setting such a council\(^{37}\). The draft constitution of the proposed council, however, provides that it shall have directly elected members for a period of five years and the nominated members should not exceed 5 percent of the total strength of the council. Election to the regional council can be conducted along with state assembly.

The western Orissa Autonomous Development Council will have as its members all MLAs and MPs and all Chairman of the Zilla parishad of the western region. It will have a 15 – member executive committee with chairman and vice-chairman elected from amongst the members. The chairman of the council shall have the status of a Cabinet Minister,\(^{38}\) and its headquarters shall be located at Bolangir. The council shall come into existence by an Act of Orissa legislative Assembly and it shall be competent to frame rules and by laws for its smooth and effective functioning. As regards finance, it is maintained that 80 percent of the income derived from western region under non-plan head shall be spent by the council. For this purpose separate allocation should be made in the state budget. So far as the plan expenditure is concerned the council shall have the power to supervise the implementation of all central and state – sponsored schemes and projects. It shall also have the power to sponsor new development projects to be executed with assistance of central and state governments.\(^{39}\) Further, the council shall have the controlling power over the officials posted in western region and the chairman shall have the power to make entries in the character rolls of these officials. All class III and IV employees shall be recruited by the council from among the local inhabitants. The executive committee shall have the right to nominate an eminent person of western region to the Orissa Public Service Commission, all Selection Boards and selection committees for the appointment to various important bodies and departments.\(^{40}\) For proper administrative decentralization a separate secretariat with recruits from the local


\(^{38}\) See the Draft Constitution of the *western Orissa Autonomous Development Council*, prepared by Prafulla Kumar pati, dated Sambalpur the 3\(^{rd}\) April 1995.

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*
region should be established. The secretariat should be vested with power of appointment, posting, transfer etc. some leading persons also demanded for a separate planning, board with separate plan allocation in the union budget. On the whole the autonomists claim that the Regional Council would empower the people to have a say in matters concerning their own affairs, participate in the process of development and progress and have a share in economic prosperity. They rejected the demand for separate state, but emphasized that distinct regional identity of western Orissa be well recognized by the state leadership as well as by the mainstream coastal people. Finally the western Orissa Development Council was established in Bolangir in 2000. The establishment of this regional council satisfied the aspirations of certain sections of people in western Orissa.

4.2 Statehood Demand for Koshal Region

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the regional movement in western Orissa took a significant turn as the demands for a separate Koshal state comprising the five districts of western Orissa were vigorously made by some separatist groups. The demand for a separate state for western Orissa was made on earlier occasions also. For example, during the anti-Hirakud dam agitation in 1948 some leaders of Sambalpur manifestly advocated for constituting Sambalpur and its adjoining areas into a separate state. The echoes for a separate state were also heard during the 1970s. Some Swatnatra party leaders demanded to constitute the coastal districts into a Union Territory and the rest of Orissa into a separate province. Even some Swatantra MLAs from western Orissa made a strong plea for bifurcation of the state into Utkal and Koshal provinces. They favoured a separate state for western Orissa on geographical, historical and socio-cultural grounds.

The continuous neglect of western Orissa and the domination of coastal belt under successive governments were attributed as the main reasons for the separate state

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41 Ibid.
42 *The Samaj* (Oriya daily), 14 October 1972.
However, the tone and the tenor of these earlier demands differ from the demand made in the recent times. The earlier demands for separate state were based on regional identity and material deprivation. But the recent demand is based on cultural deprivation and is rooted in the concept of ‘Koshali nationalism’. In other words, the new demand is based on the assertion of separate identity in terms of Koshali identity and not just another regional Oriya identity. It aims at constitution of a separate Koshal state based on Koshali language and culture.

**Assertion of Koshali Identity**

The assertion of Koshali identity dates back to the times of anti-merger struggle. The notion of Koshali identity, which paved the way for Koshal separatism, was first mooted by R.N. Singh Deo, the ruler of ex-state of Patna. The anti-merger group led by R.N. Singh Deo clamoured for a separate state for the Oriya-speaking princely states of the highland region in which Koshal tract comprising the district of Sambalpur and the ex-states of Patna, Kalahandi, Bamra, Sonepur, Rairakhhol, Gangpur and Bonai formed the core area. Western Orissa was formerly known as Koshal or Hirakhand Kingdom in ancient and medieval times. The British broke this Koshal Confederacy in 1818 when Marathas ceded the western part of Orissa to the British. Subsequently, Sambalpur was annexed by British under the ‘doctrine of lapse’. Along with Koshal states Sambalpur district was transferred to the Orissa division of Bengal presidency in 1905. In 1946 R.N. Singh Deo with some other chiefs spearheaded the Eastern States Union Movement with a view to reviving Koshal unity within the framework of Eastern states union.

A closer examination indicates that the concept of Koshali separatism which Singh Deo engineered was based on distinct regional identity involving a segment of Oriya population in the ex-states of Sambalpur area. It was not based on a separate linguistic identity. According to this argument the notion of ‘Koshali’ identity emanated from the

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44 See Muralidhar Panda, (1972) *Orissa Mantrimandal 'O' purbatana Garjat* (Oriya), Bolangir; also see his booklet, *Abahelitara patha Kā'an?* (Oriya), Patnagarh, 1977. Complaining against the parochial attitude of the state leadership, panda in his booklet advocated for bifurcation of the state into two Oriya speaking states on the basis of regional affiliation. It further stated that linguistic unity and uniformity should not be the only principle in Carving States in India. States can be created on the basis of regional identity and for development of a backward region.
natural regional division of Oriya homeland into coastal plans and western highlands corresponding to the erstwhile kingdoms of Utkal-kalinga and Koshal respectively. These two compact Oriya blocks differ historically, geographically and culturally. In addition, the Oriya of the western part speaks a tongue called Sambalpuri which can be distinguished from the speech of coastal Oriyas. To put it differently, Singh Deo’s concept of ‘Koshali Separatism’ was based on the regional differences which originated due to the divergence in political history, geographical distinctiveness and cultural differences between two Oriya blocks. Hence he favoured the idea of formation of two states, i.e., Eastern states union and the Orissa Province. In his scheme the Koshal states formed the nucleus of Eastern states union. Even the ‘Koshal’ or ‘Mahakoshal’ movements launched during the anti-Hirakud and the anti-merger agitators were grounded in the concept of Koshali separatism defined in terms of regional identity. The protagonists of these movements maintained that two Oriya-speaking provinces based on specific regional affiliation be created. Thus it is clear that the notion of Koshali separatism at this stage was based primarily on regional particularism and not on any separate linguistic identity different from mainstream Oriya identity. Singh Deo’s concept of Koshali identity was certainly based on geographical compactness, distinct historical experiences and separate cultural practices under the broad rubric of one Oriya linguistic identity.

Shifts in Koshal Statehood Movement: Two Nationalities Theory

In recent times, the demand for Koshal state is based on Koshali identity which is conceived of as different from Oriya nationality. The leading role in articulating this notion of separate Koshali nationality has been played by P.R.Dubey and his Koshal party. Premram Dubey, a Supreme Court advocate and son of late Bodhram Dubey the first education minister of Orissa during 1937-39 advocated the “two nationalities theory” on the basis of language, history, culture and regional identity. He declared that the

46 See the pamphlet formation of Hirakhand or Koshal province, Bolangir, 1933, pp. 11-13; also see the pamphlet, Koshal Sangh, Koshal Tract, Bolangir, 1946. It was pleaded at that time that it all areas with the same language. should be brought under one administration, then all Hindi-speaking regions in India should be joined together to form one provincial unit.
Sambalpuris belong to the Koshali identity and the rest of Oriya’s (Kataki’s) belonged to Utkal Kalinga identity. In response to his call a number of separatist organizations like *Koshal Sangram Parishad, Koshal Sammilani, Koshal Liberation Front* and *Western Orissa Liberation Front* came up. A joint meeting of all these organizations was convened on 10th November 1990. In this meeting, the map of the proposed Koshal state covering an area of 73,480 sq kms which included the districts of Bolangir, Kalahandi, Phulbani, Sambalpur, Sundergarh and Athmalik sub-division of Dhenkanal district as well as Phuljhar and Bindra-Nuaragh region of Chhattisgarh region was adopted.

Koshal activists like the former MLA, Rajib Lochan Hota, Advocate Gorekh Nath Sahoo and Sanad Bihari Mohapatra even proposed to set up working committees at Panchayat levels for mass mobilization. It was also decided to urge all the MLAs and MPs of western Orissa to join this movement for separate state. To strengthen the movement, P.R. Dubey launched a regional political party called the Koshal party on 24th October 1991 and started fielding candidates to fight elections. He undertook a *Koshal Jana Jagran Yatra* (People’s awareness campaign) throughout western Orissa to mobilize support for separate Koshal state. The yatra covered the whole of western Orissa and lasted from 12th February 1992 to 16th February 1992. He however was successful in rekindling the flame of Koshal movement. His only claim to fame is a memorandum which he submitted to the President of India demanding separate statehood to Koshal. Subsequently, on 29th March 1992, the first *Koshal Sammilani* was convened by the *Koshal Sangram Parishad* and the Koshal Party at the Goyal Bhawan at Bolangir and a few resolutions supporting the formation of separate Koshal state were passed. The *Koshal Sammilani* was organized on the lines of *Utkal Union Conference* which was formed in 1903 to spearhead the Oriya nationalist movement. The *Koshali Sammilani* was organized to popularize the notion of Koshali regional nationalism.

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48 See the *Rudra Aawahaan* (Oriya weekly), Bolangir, 19th November 1990.
The activists observed that in the state of Orissa the western (Koshal) region is exploited socio-economically and culturally. Further, after 1985 the political and administrative powers have been controlled by a group of corrupt politicians from coastal districts. It is also contended that the revenues which is obtained from Koshal region have been spent on the development of Coastal districts\(^{50}\). Even it is also alleged that the funds from central government and development grants for SCs and STs of Koshal area have been diverted for the development of Coastal region\(^{51}\). Hence the separatists argue that Koshal region cannot flourish and prosper unless and until it is separated from Orissa.

The second Koshal Sammilani was held on 4\(^{th}\) April 1993 at Nari Seva Sadan in Sambalpur. In this conference the idea of Koshali nationalism was placed in more explicit terms vis-à-vis Oriya nationalism. It was traced at this meeting that the merger of western Orissa (Koshal) region was done in violation of the linguistic principle of province formation in India\(^{52}\). The Sammilani further noted that in post merger Orissa, the leaders of the advanced Coastal region have completely dominated the political and administrative machinery of the state by virtue of their numerical superiority in the Legislative Assembly and Secretariat. The ministers and legislators of western region were marginalized at the decision making level and this has resulted in exploitation of western Orissa by coastal Orissa. As the western region has least control over the administration the budgetary allocation of the state and the distribution of the central grants and assistance were strongly biased in favour of the coastal region\(^{53}\). The Sammilani asserts that the Kohslai people of western Orissa constitute a distinct nationality with distinct historical, linguistic and cultural identity of their own. Therefore it resolves that a new state named Koshal be carved out on linguistic and cultural basis within the constitutional framework of India in order to protect and promote the political economic and cultural well being of the Koshal people.

\(^{50}\) See the resolution of the First Koshal Sammilani, dated 29\(^{th}\) March 1992.  
\(^{51}\) Ibid.  
\(^{52}\) See the resolution of Second Koshal Sammilani, dated 4\(^{th}\) April 1993.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
To define the boundaries of Koshali nationality the separatists used selective historical, linguistic and cultural symbols. The ancient and medieval glories of Koshal Hirakhand are used to provide historical roots to Koshali identity. It rejuvenates their historical roots. The separatists claimed that the average people in western Orissa now consciously identify themselves with ancient and medieval Koshal kingdom. They now consider themselves as people belonging to the ‘Koshal Desh’ which has a long recorded historical tradition of its own.

Language plays an important role in the formation of regional national identity in India. The protagonists of Koshal movement therefore made serious efforts to define the identity of western Orissa people in terms of a separate language. The name Koshali has been used in place of ‘Sambalpuri’ for the purpose of creating distinction and differentiation from the region. According to the separatists perception, Orissa is a bilingual state in terms of major link languages- Koshali is the link language of western region and Oriya is the link language of coastal Orissa. Apart from this some major tribal languages are also spoken in Koshali areas. But the leading Oriya intellectuals held that the Koshali (Sambalpuri) is not an independent language but a dialect of Oriya. On the other hand, some distinguished linguists of western Orissa like Prayag Dutta Joshi and S.N.Bohidar stressed that Koshali (Sambalpuri) language is a complete language with an independent grammatical structure and an alphabet of its own. In their perceptions both Oriya and Koshali language have originated from Sanskrit via ‘Ardha Magadhi’ and ‘Koshali Bibhasa’. Some separatists, however, feel that since Koshali/Sambalpuri uses Oriya script, the average Oriya speakers treat it as a dialect of Oriya. In order to differentiate Koshali from Oriya, therefore, serious attempts were made in the second Koshal Sammilani to evolve a separate script of koshali language. One workshop for this purpose was arranged by the Koshal party.

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They considered it a self-sufficient language and argued that Koshali can be written in either Oriya or Devnagri script. Some separatists, however, feel that since Koshali/Sambalpuri uses Oriya script, the average Oriya speakers treat it as a dialect of Oriya. In order to differentiate Koshali from Oriya, therefore, serious attempts were made in the second Koshal Sammilani to evolve a separate script of koshali language. One workshop for this purpose was arranged by the Koshal party.

The consciousness about Koshali language, quest for a separate script and development of indigenous literature should be seen as an attempt by Koshali nationalists to reconstruct western Oriya identity in separate linguistic terms. The Koshali nationalists alleged that the dominance of Oriya language through official efforts reduced the Koshal language to the status of a dialect of Oriya. The hegemony of Oriya language and culture and the deliberate official and intellectual effort to suppress koshali language posed serious threats to the existence of independent koshali language. They further maintained that the koshali speech community was brought into the oriya fold due to the politics of language. After their integration the cultural identity of the koshalis are deliberately defined in terms of mainstream oriya language and culture. This not only led to undermining the utility of koshali language but also poses a threat to its gradual extinction.57 Two leading literary organizations, i.e., the Koshal Bhasa Sahitya Parishad of khariar and the Sambalpuri lekhak sangh of sambalpur took significant steps for the preservation and promotion of koshali language. Under the aegis of these organizations, publication of periodicals, newspapers and journals are undertaken with an agenda to differentiate koshali identity. Newspapers like Hakua, Sat Kahle Chhate phate and periodicals like Koshal Bharati, published from Sambalpur, Bolangir and Khariar respectively played vital roles in popularizing koshali language.58 For the recognition of koshali as one of the official language in Orissa, the Koshal party submitted a memorandum to the president of India. The memorandum stated that Article 347 of the

57 See the memorandum submitted to the president of India by koshal party for the recognition of koshali language as an official language in Orissa, see N.Panigrahi (1992) (ed), Hame Koshali Hamar Bhasa Koshali (Koshali) Sambalpur, pp. 44-49.
58 See Koshal Bharti, Khariar, Sambalpuri Kabita sankalana, Sambalpuri lekhak Sangha, Sambalpur, 1986.
Constitution empowers the president of India to direct a state of the Indian union to accord official recognition to a language which is spoken by a substantial population of that state. The constitution of India also provides for the preservation of the language of minority groups.\(^{59}\)

In the cultural sphere, symbols like ‘Sakti’ (worship of mother Goddess) and observance of regional festivals like *Nuakhai*, *Puspuni* and *Dalkhai* have been used to distinguish Koshali culture of western Orissa from mainstream Oriya culture. In addition, the rich cultural heritage and folklore of western Orissa is highlighted to provide a distinct cultural basis to Koshali nationality.

The members of the Second ‘*Koshal Sammilani*’ also submitted a memorandum to the President of India urging him to grant provincial statehood to western Orissa on the basis of the separate Koshali nationality claimed by them. The memorandum states that the movement for separate Koshal state is not a struggle against regional imbalance, it is rather a struggle for preservation of Koshali nationality through provincial self-rule within the multinational framework of Indian nation state\(^{60}\). In support of their argument, they referred to the implementation of the linguistic reorganization of the states which satisfied the regional national aspirations of many Indian nationalities. Recently, the *Koshal Sammilani* is rechristened as ‘*Koshal Mahasabha*’ and under its banner the agitation for separate Koshal state is going on in some pockets of western Orissa.

### 4.3 Emergence of Balgopal Mishra

The Koshala movement remained dormant and voiceless till Balgopal Mishra; a firebrand M.L.A from Loisingha constituency raised his voice on the floor of the Odisha Assembly. One has to admit the courage he mustered to raise his voice in spite of being a member of the ruling BJD-BJP coalition. Subsequently he rolled down *Koshala Ratha* (chariot) throughout western Odisha to build up awareness among the people in favour of his demand of separate state. He sought co-operation from all the activists and organizations like KSP, KLF, WOLF and KEM. He generated a lot of public support for

\(^{60}\) See *Koshal Sammilani memorandum* 1993.
a separate Koshal state despite a stiff opposition from the ruling party. With unflinching support from these organizations, he was able to draw response for this historical caravan Koshal Rath. It is alleged that lack of foresight, highhandedness, more particularly his unfriendly behavior towards the leaders and activists other than he committed a tactical blunder by not involving the leaders of Koshala Ekta Mancha (KEM) in his journey. Despite a Luke warm response in the beginning, his journey on the Koshala Rath a total failure. In the 2003 election he fought and lost the Bolangir Lok Sabha seat. His son, from Loisingha constituency for the Assembly seat also lost. Two other stalwarts of the Koshal Raej Kriyanushtan Committee, Brundaban Mahji and Subala Sahoo won from their Assembly constituencies i.e. Laikera and Bijepur respectively on B.J.P and Congress ticket, thereafter both of them withdrew from the Koshala agenda. The defeat to Balagopal Mishra pushed back the Koshala State movement to its original place and his brain child the ‘Koshala Kriyanustana Committee’ became totally defunct.

4.4 Why Koshal State is demanded? Recent Development

The question why is answered in a different way by people of different walks of the life. Some organizations which are involved in raising the demand say-Koshal Ekta Manch views the demand with economic and political background. A rally by Koshali Ekta Manch was organized in Delhi in December 2006. A memorandum was submitted to the President of India with a copy to the Prime Minister and Home Minister a portion of which reads as under: “The people of Koshalanchal are convinced that they can never prosper under the Odisha administration and merger with the mainstream of the nation. For that reasons alone they have started the movement with conviction to free themselves from the ‘Colonial bondage’ of the Odisha administration.

The spirit of the movement is ‘do or die’ as the negligence, exploitation, corruption in the Odisha administration has gone to a point of no return. The people are rotting in Koshalanchal without minimum health services and educational facilities. They are far away from transport and means of communications as a result of which they still remain far away from modern civilization. Their general condition is even worse than the domestic animals as they live a miserable life, a life of frustration. They have lost all their
energy to raise any protest at any quarter, as there is none to hear them. Their misery is increasing day by day and there is no way to address them due to inexcusable callousness of the government of Odisha and its administration.

We, therefore, appeal your honour to take stock of the whole situation which is prevalent in the Koshalanchal and waste no time in taking an unilateral decision without waiting for the consent or any suggestion of the government of Odisha or its administration and make decision for the formation of the state or Koshal Pradesh under the Union of India and by placing the Koshal language in the VIII Schedule of the Indian constitution for the larger benefit of the people of Koshalanchal which will provide them freedom for the shackles of socio-economic and cultural bondage and oblige”61.

Koshal Kranti Dal submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India said:

“All the income that is generated from forest, river, mines and agricultural resources are sucked away by these people. As a result man-made drought has become the permanent feature of Koshala. In service sector, the western Odisha and eastern Odisha ratio stands at around 100:400. In educational institutions the ratio is again 100:300. In per capita income the ratio stands at 100:250. In the aggregate, the Koshali people and the Koshali language are scorned and frowned upon by the present rulers of eastern Odisha. They need immediate redemption from these hegemonic and exploitative colonialists. Koshalis are throbbing for freedom in the free India. For them separate state statehood is the only solution. Practically the Odisha-Bihar scenario of 1936 has reincarnated as Koshal-Odisha scenario of 2005, rather with heightened intensity and with greater urgency.

The infant and maternal mortality rate is the highest in this area causing concern to the National Human Rights Commission. This area is lagging behind in all spheres such as health, sanitation, education, agriculture, irrigation, industry, roads, communication and transport, railways and airlines, tourism, drinking water, electrification etc.

All these 62 years of independence and merger of Koshalanchal with that of Orissa state, the regional imbalance is increasing which the Ghadei Committee set up by the

61 Memorandum for separate State of Koshal (Koshal; Pradesh), Koshali Ekta Manch, Undated.
Government of Orissa, in its report has pointed out. The Government of Orissa is setting up such commissions to enquire and report about the regional imbalance in this region which is of no effect. Recently, another such commission was set up to find out reasons of regional imbalance in Orissa. The economic and social conditions of the people of this region had become the worst and have gone to a point of no return.

All this has happened due to the maladministration of the different governments of Odisha that we had experienced. For all purposes the administration never reached the people of Koshalanchal. They suffer untold misery in the hands of such bureaucrats and executive authorities who mostly hail from that of the people of eastern Odisha. The language and culture of the people of Koshal are different from that of the people of eastern Odisha with who lie the reign of administration and government. During these years of governance and administration they have made the Koshalanchal their colony for exploitation. Most of them do not like to come to this area for language and cultural differences for the reason of which about 50% of the posts in government offices lie vacant in Koshal and the development measures by government are a total failure. Once they come to Koshalanchal they suck the people of this area like parasites. Any one from Koshal, if ever gets into politics or bureaucratic hierarchy is thrown out in no time. There are so many examples of oppression of such officials and politicians of Koshal in the hands of their counterparts in eastern Odisha.

It is needless to say that the people of Koshal were prosperous due to their natural and human resources which were properly utilized once upon a time. When their resources were looted by the people of eastern Odisha they became poorest of the poor.

The Koshal is inhabited mostly by Adivasis, the Harijans and other backward people, who with the death of their language, culture and heritage have started to die themselves untimely.

The geographical situation of both the area: south and west and that of eastern Orissa are different from each other. The Koshalanchal is hilly tracks and infested by forests and rivers whereas the eastern Odisha is endowed with long and plain coastal belt. The linguistic, cultural and social behaviours of the people of both the parts are also basically
different. It is absolutely wrong to presume that the language, culture, social customs and traditions of both the people are one and the same. It is therefore, the formation of Orissa state in 1936 on the basis of language and the merger of the western part of Orissa in 1936 and 1948 was a historical blunder.

Right from their mother’s womb the children of our region listen to the Koshali language which is their mother tongue. After birth they come in contact with the same Koshali language as it is spoken by their parents, friends and relatives and even their teachers who speak the same language except at the time of their teaching in the classroom. The children when they go to school to learn the first lesson they come in contact with a different language which is totally different and alien to them. This causes the mental and psychological barrier in them and hampers their studies. They suffer from terrible inferiority complex and fail to rise in future. That is why they fail to come out successful in the regional and national competitive examinations.

The Koshali people suffer in the hands of the people and rulers of the eastern Orissa by the number game on the floor of the assembly as out of 147 MLAs only 41 belong to our area who cannot raise their voice against the brute majority of eastern Odisha.

The 1881 British-India census report reveal the prosperity of the people of Koshal, but they have been reduced to state of beggars in the hands of people of eastern Odisha who exploit them through maladministration. The secretariat and the Assembly being far away from the Koshalanchal do not cater to the needs of the common poor people. In fact all these highest democratic organizations have proved useless for such poor people of Koshal who cannot go to such organizations to redress their grievances and get justice to establish their democratic rights.

The per capita income of the people of Koshal is the lowest in the country. The literacy percentage is also the lowest. The poverty alleviation programmes are a total failure due to lack of administration. The electrification and drinking water facilities are very poor in this region. Almost all the industrial sectors in western part of Orissa are most neglected leaving the poor farmers and the labour class bereft of patronage. In both the sectors the production has gone down to an alarming situation. The educated and the uneducated
youth, who are the backbone of the state, are the worst sufferers in the KBK and western Odisha without any employment opportunities. All these disparities are caused due to maladministration of Government of Orissa. There will be no change in the situation even if western Odisha remains for another thousand of years with the Odisha administration. Therefore, the people of western Odisha demand justice at the door both economic and administrative. According to Mahatma Gandhi the political independence is meaningless without economic independence. The people of Koshal are deprived of enjoying the fruits of economic independence even after 58 years of political independence.

The recent development which has taken place has widened the gap between the people of Koshalanchal and that of Orissa. In the recent past whenever the question of establishment of National Law University, I.T.I., Branch of AIIMS, etc were raised all the institutions were awarded to the coastal regions only. On the contrary the divested education and health situation of the Koshalanchal was never looked into. Government of Odisha is enriching its state exchequer by exploiting the mineral resources of Koshalanchal but on the question of development its response is totally negative. Be it the case of problem like distress paddy selling, starvation deaths, labour migration or the question of demand for non supply of water to the industries or establishment of High Court Branch the response of the state administration of Odisha is always against the people of Koshal belt. Hence they demand a separate state of Koshal Pradesh with a separate Assembly, Secretariat and High Court which are key to development in a democratic set up and will help the people to take their independent decisions. The proposed state of Koshal Pradesh will comprise of 11 districts and one sub-Division of KBK and western Orissa as mentioned above where the language, culture, social customs and traditions are same and the geographical situation, communication etc are conducive to a homogenous state. The demand for a separate state of Koshal Pradesh is nothing but a Mukti Sangram – a real fight for freedom from the economic and administrative bondage. It is a struggle for life, struggle for bread and butter, a real freedom movement with a do or die spirit.

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62 Memorandum for a separate Koshal Pradesh submitted to the Primie Minister of India, 26th February 2011, Letter No.KKDF/CGC/36/11.
All Koshal Students Union

The student organization, All Koshal Students Union (AKSU) has also submitted a memorandum to the president of India which said-

This part of the land was never with the Odisha state. In the year 1936 and 1948 in two phases this land which is termed as Western Odisha was forcibly merged with political Odisha causing large scale exploitation to this land. Due to prolonged negligence of the state administration, though this land is rich with resources still facing the worst economic situation, example of which is starvation death, labour migration etc. There is want of irrigation facilities road communication and other basic requirements and virtually the people of this land are treated as second grade citizens. Though we have a separate language, distinct culture and geographical entity than the political Orissa, but still then our identity has not been politically establish because of the poisonous conspiracy of the state government of Odisha. Our people as do not expect any justice we have the only alternative between us i.e. formation of separate Koshal state63.

University as Nerve Centre of Struggle

Mobilization of students of the educational institutions in formulating regional demands forms important process of articulating regional demands of the western regions. University students lead the movement, particularly Sambalpur University, emerging as nerve centre of this movement. As it is well known, the participation of the students, research scholars and major educational universities became centre of such sub-regional movement. This is true in the case of Koshal movement. As it was clear from various documents, both published and unpublished reports, pamphlets and newspaper reporting that the university communities were increasingly involving themselves in the Koshal movement. Students formed their joint action committees in their colleges and university level of western Odisha while the All-Koshal Students Union was coordinating and leading the movement. The intellectuals from major universities in the region were gradually playing the role of ideaologue. Many workshops and seminars with the

63 Memorandum of All Koshal Student’s Union to the President of India, Undated.
leadership of certain intellectuals of the region and student activists had become common in the recent years.\(^6^4\) What is significant is that the Sambalpur University which is the sole university of this region which not only represents western Odisha symbolically it is gradually, like Osmania University, is spearheading the movement silently. This is clear from various sources. While celebrating the silver jubilee of the Sambalpur University it issued the publication of emotive and thought provoking collections on the issues of western Odisha which articulated that the region deserves a separate statehood\(^6^5\). Apart from this, the student community had brought out several pamphlets and booklets in recent times like separate statehood for Koshal: A People’s democratic demand, Why Koshal State? Jai Koshal, Jagi Utha Koshala Basi, etc.

During the current Koshal movement, students of diverse political affiliations came together to form the joint action committee that continues to play a vigilant role. Why has the Koshal cause caught the imagination of students here?, students are acutely aware of the problems- the denial of opportunities, discrimination on the basis of region, dialect and a sense of alienation that cut across all sections of western Odisha people. Publications like the *Paschim Odisha: Kali O Aaji* (Western Odisha: Tomorrow and Today) published in 1999 and written by Sri Prasanna Kumar Karna, a school teacher of Bolangir, were more of a compilation of views of others on some aspects of western Odisha in the past and present. In 1962, Siba Prasad Dash, a teacher in the Sambalpur Zilla School, wrote his *Sambalpur Itihas* wherein he had provided an account of history of western Odisha hinterland which he describes as *Hirakhand Samrajya* as a part of Dakshin (South Koshal)\(^6^6\). Another book in Oriya which dealt with important festivals of western Odisha was published in 2002. Edited by an Odia scholar of Sambalpur, Dr. Shyam Sundar Dhar and titled *Paschim Odisar Prasiddha Jatra O Parva Parbani*, consisted some of the very good articles by eminent writers on the rituals and festivals observed in different parts of western Odisha. Notable publication in the field of Sambalpuri language in western Odisha was the publication of Sambalpuri dictionary. Sri


\(^6^5\) *Ibid*.

\(^6^6\) Siva Prasad Das, (1968), *Sambalpur Itihas* (in Oriya), Sambalpur, Vishwabharati.
Gorekh Nath Sahu of Sonepur, a lawyer and a social activist associated with the movement for formation of a separate Koshal state, had in his book in Oriya entitled *Koshal Pradesh* published in 2005, put together several of articles published in various newspapers and periodicals in different times. These articles in general highlighted the dismal economic conditions in the western tracts and the urban treatment that is meted out to the people of these regions and thus supported the arguments towards the creation of a separate state comprising these tracts.

Another significant publication was the working paper entitled ‘Interpreting the Demand for Koshal state in Orissa: Development versus Underdevelopment by Koshal Development forum’ of JNU which also articulated the rising demand for Koshal state in Odisha and looked for factors responsible for it. The paper highlighted that the issue of backwardness, negligence on the part of respective governments, underdevelopment and state apathy-cum-failures in addressing the backwardness of the region has been the single most important factor which has contributed for the demand of Koshal state. Apart from all these publications articulating regional demands, it would be also worthwhile to examine the role of political parties in articulating various regional demands in recent time.

**4.5 Role of Political Party: Koshal Kranti Dal**

Formation of a political party with a strong regional bias was a major event showing the powerful impact of regionalism in Orissa politics. In an open polity one of the important means available to different groups to safeguard their interests is to form some political party that would serve the purpose of interest articulation. The very recent development is the formation of Koshali Ekta Manch which formed on 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 1998 by the combined effort of 72 socio-political and cultural organizations of the western Orissa,

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took the historic stand of declaring and registering itself as a political party entitled *Koshal Kranti Dal* with the motto ‘Matir Lagi Party’ (party for land) on 7th June 2007.

The Koshal movement that is going on in western Orissa got itself crystallized into a political party called the *Koshal Kranti Dal* (KKD). Koshal Kranti Dal the newly formed regional party based in western Orissa is not as popular as it should have been. Even though it has always been a champion for the cause of a separate Koshal state, its electoral performance in the last Parliament, Assembly and Panchayat elections have been too poor to make it a force to reckon with in the region. The Koshal Kranti Dal fielded candidates in the general elections of 2008 both for the Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies of western Orissa. But the performance of the candidates in these elections was miserable. The poor electoral performance of the party may be attributed to a number of possible reasons. Since most of the political leaders and their followers in the region were associated with the dominant party of the state it was not possible on the part of a newly formed party like KKD to emerge victorious. But it is true that the party has already created euphoria regarding the issue of separate statehood among the people. The momentum has changed dramatically with the formation of this political party. The euphoria that the KKD created has not been able to convert that into votes. That is why the votes that the KKD candidates secured in the successive elections are negligible. It is true that in the initial phases of most of the movements the political influence used to be negligible. It can also happen that the movement based party would have huge influence in the region but unsuccessful in politics. The influence may not get converted into votes. As the electoral studies in India suggest the election outcomes are dependent on multiple reasons. For instance, the corruption is a major issue in India, yet so far as election is concerned the party with ‘corruption” as one of the major items of election manifesto may not get desirable percentage of votes. Similar is the case with KKD. Since many other issues determine voting outcomes the single issue of demand for statehood cannot win desirable number of votes.

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The party *Koshal Kranti Dal* has its head quarters at Bolangir, Sambalpur and Bhubaneswar with a secretariat having regional headquarters at Rourkela, Sambalpur, Bolangir and Kalahandi. At district and local levels there are respective offices which are subject to the approval of the central working committee. One of the most important functions of any political party is to serve as the ‘broker of ideas’ by selecting a certain number of countless issues confronting a society in some order of priority and focusing attention on them in campaigns and elections and in the debate of the legislature thereby serving the requirements of interest articulation. The Koshal Kranti Dal identified itself with the issue of separate statehood makes its stand very clear on regional matters.

So far as the role of the *Koshal Kranti Dal* is concerned, it is focusing on the problems which are peculiar to the western region from which it started and demanded special steps to develop the backward western districts of western Odisha and for the removal of regional disparities in the state. In recent times it has already organized several blockades, demonstrations, rallies and agitations relating to several issues in the various parts of western Orissa. For example, several activities of the All Koshal Student’s Union, a wing of the Koshal Kranti Dal by Dolamani Pradhan, Swadhin Mishra and President Koshal Kranti Dal Pramod Kumar Mishra staged a rail roko at Bolangir Railway station on April 13, 2008, demanding formation of a separate Koshal state, setting up of the state’s proposed IIT, and central university in ‘Koshalanchal’, and a Koshal university in Bolangir besides withdrawal of the railway board’s letter to stop the Khurda-Bolangir railway line project. The activists blocked the movement of Sambalpur-Rayagarha Express and Kantabanji-Bilaspur train. These types of activities of KKD have become common in this region. Dolamani Pradhan argued that even though there are eleven universities in the state’s coastal belt, the government has decided to set up the central university in Bhubaneswar. Except the Sambalpur University there is no other university in the western region. In view of the backwardness of the region and in order to accelerate the development process, the central university should be set up anywhere in the Koshal region. Koshal Kranti Dal president said the cancellation of the Khurda-
Bolangir railway line project shows up the step-motherly attitude of the central and state governments towards Koshalanchal.\textsuperscript{69}

Another huge rally was organized by the Koshal Kranti Dal for a separate Koshal state before the collectorate in Bolangir district which was attended by delegates from eleven districts of western Odisha. President of Koshal Kranti Dal Pramod Mishra while addressing the gathering said ‘The people have gathered here to protests against the continuous exploitation by the successive governments at Bhubaneswar, and Koshali not Odia is our mother tongue as well as language of the region. All those anti-Koshal forces making capital of the resources of this region would be ousted from here by 2014. This is a token strike and protests by the people of Koshal region and there would be many more rallies in the future”. According to him separate Koshal state is the only solution to the problem\textsuperscript{70}. Sajjan Kumar, another leader of the Koshal Kranti Dal condemned the reported moves of the government to mine bauxite in the Gandhamardan hills. He said that the mining would destroy the precious flora and fauna of that area besides damaging the ecology beyond repair. He called upon the KKD activists to save Gandhamardan and save the ecology as the next 50 years would be crucial for mankind, as the deteriorating environment is going to bring damages to the earth. He also called upon the people to reject the political party tickets and rather file nominations of a separate state. Similarly, Gorekhnath Sahu another activist of the movement observed the culture and language of the region is one of the best in the world and no political parties have worked for the protection and promotion of the Koshali language. He also presented a film CD on Koshali to Pramod Mishra. The KKD leaders submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister through the district collector demanding a separate Koshal state\textsuperscript{71}.

Similarly, Koshal Kranti Dal also organized meetings in Samablpur to stake its demand for a separate state (where 500 people attended) of Koshal and also to protests the Odisha Divas in Sambalpur. The speakers of the meeting reiterated their allegation of the step-motherly attitude of the coastal leadership towards western Odisha for which this vast

\textsuperscript{69} Pioneer, April 13, 2008.
\textsuperscript{70} Pioneer, (2011), March 13.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
region remains backward in all fronts. KKD president Pramod Kumar Mishra said, “The Odisha government has to leave this region forever and entrust the administration to the people here. At the same time those who live in Koshalanchal but don’t support the Koshal movement will be asked to leave the region”. He also appealed to the people of the region to boycott Odia cinema, albums, opera. The MLAs and MPs, who will not raise the Koshal issue in parliament or Assembly, will be socially boycotted by the year 2014. He gave the deadline of four years to achieve the goal of a separate state. He urged the people of the region to mention their mother tongue as Koshali or Sambalpuri instead of Odia.\(^\text{72}\)

4.6 Methods, Process of Mobilization and its Challenges

Odisha has got about 7 electronic news channels and 12 major vernacular newspapers which are in the forefront of moulding the public opinion. The equity holders of the channels and the entire print media are with the coastal people. The main editors/resident and sub-editors, the film world etc are dominated by coastal people. A coordinated action on their part has the potential of setting the perceptions of the common man. It is observed that the media coverage on the issue has shown a declining trend resulting in a lower intensity of the agitation. Each of the media houses are affiliated to different political parties. In the print media all major newspapers are owned by the coastal people and the regional content published by them play a vital role. Similarly, unlike the electronic channels the print media also got political affiliations. Therefore the media coverage to the issue of statehood is very negligible. Western Odisha media infrastructure is weak; it is depended on pamphleteering tradition. Issues relating to demand for statehood in some cases telecasted in western Odisha but not in coastal or mainstream areas. The method of mobilization is largely depended on individuals, small organizations, and circulation of pamphlets, community sites-through internet creating awareness through Koshal culture, festivals, food, dance and drama. Getting access to internet is limited and socially well off and educated people are part of these community sites. Broadly speaking this movement is led by like elsewhere in the world educated,

upwardly mobile; economically well off, highly educated people. That is why there is argument in the mainstream media largely emanating from the coastal part of Odisha that this movement is led by handful individuals for their personal political interest. It is a fact that in the initial phases of any movement for statehood, the common people do not participate. They participate gradually as mobilization and awareness spread. But the fact of the matter is that many meetings, rally, blockades, various means of agitation have been frequent in these days and this is giving rise to the participation of the even poorest of the poor in the region.

Some individuals are working hard building organizations, spreading the awareness regarding the statehood movement. They are trying to bring the notion of Koshal state into the political domain. The leaders are also divided on various lines which are creating various challenges to build up a unified movement for statehood and to become a viable force. Over these years Koshal sentiment is growing in the hearts of the people in the region however the same have not been converted into votes. Hence this has not become a viable political force to reckon with in the region. Most of the leaders with huge mass support or mass base in Koshal region are already in the national political or dominant political parties like Congress, BJP and BJD in Orissa. They are not openly opposing the movement for statehood and often remain mute on this particular issue.

In the course of time, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has started spreading its political base and winning elections, creating membership for the party in all parts of Odisha. In this context one would find that the MLAs of BJD cannot revolt against the leadership of the party which is largely controlled by the leaders of the coastal region. The issue of separate statehood is not in the agenda of major political parties as my field study indicates. It is also argued by some of the people that they have secret informal organization to improve their political futures which often accommodate the Koshal sentiments. The support for the movement could be traced among the educated and rich people across social groups. In the initial phase’s leaders and individuals from the dominant caste jumped into the movement. The people from the backward class were initially reluctant to go ahead with the movement and people who were leading the movement but they joined hands lately.
Separate statehood of Koshal movement broadly confined to the Koshal region only. Occasionally however some meetings or agitation organized at Bhubaneswar or at Delhi though Koshal sentiment is there in the hearts of the people in the region organization and political parties unable to capitalise this and make it a mass movement. Bal Gopal Mishra first raised the separate statehood demand in the Assembly, took away the Koshal Chariot throughout the Koshal region and organised Koshal Kriyanusthan Committee, the support could not be translated into votes in the ensuing elections. Consequently Bal Gopal Mishra and his son both lost their elections and euphoria created by him lost its momentum and there was no pool of action thereafter.

The second movement began when Dr. Hamid Hussain was the chairman of the Koshali Ekta Manch started touring and having mass contact in the Koshal region in 2007-08. He along with Pramod Mishra conceptualised formation of Koshal Kranti Dal which was to fight assembly and parliamentary elections. The mass contact programme of Dr. Hussain had tremendous public and media response the culmination of it was the massive rally organised in Sambalpur with about 20,000 people to commemorate Odisha Divas as Koshal Mukti Divas on 1st April 2008. The same was followed by memorandum to the Governor of Odisha and ministry of home affairs Central Government. It is also to be noted that in 2007 Dr. Hussain and Shri. Baidyanth Mishra led a rally in Delhi with 250 leading persons from the region and sat on a Dharna at Jantar Mantar at New Delhi. Dr. Hussain’s chairmanship in Koshali Ekta Manch, integration of the movement with similar movement throughout the country that is movement for Vidharva, Harit Pradesh, Kuch Bihar, Telangana, Mithilanchal and Kurk in Assam and Bihar.

He had developed contact with national leaders leading this movement and their respective area, like KK.S. Chandrashekhar Rao, Ajit Singh and Subhash Ghishing. General elections and Assembly elections were declared in 2009, this was a crucial juncture for the movement as Koshal Kranti Dal was to fight the elections on Koshal agenda supported by Koshali Ekta Manch headed by Dr. Hussain. Dr. Hussain and Pramod Mishra, president Koshal Kranti Dal were to lead the campaign jointly. Dr. Hussain expressed that the party has to ally with any of the leading party initially and in
that pursued contact all the three major parties BJD, Congress and the BJP. BJP seems favourably dispose towards this proposition and the matter was taken up with Shri. L.K. Advani the top leader of BJP.

However the state units were not favourable towards such an arrangement. Dr. Hussain had two rounds of discussions with K.P. Singh Deo Pradesh Congress Committee Chief. But despite Singh Deo consent on principle nothing tangible came out till last moment. Dr. Hussain got in touch with Shri. Pyari Mohan Mohapatra Rajya Sabha M.P. who informally agreed to concede four to five MLA seats and one M.P. seat to Koshal Kranti Dal. The matter was placed before the core committee meeting of Koshal Kranti Dal held in Bolangir in Mid-March 2009. Serious differences aroused between Dr. Hussain and all other leaders on the strategy of alliance. Most of the Koshal Kranti leaders were against any alliance with any party, whereas Dr. Hussain considered it a political necessity with one time alliance with any of the three parties especially with BJD who was in a commanding position then. Having found his proposal dismissed by leadership of Koshal Kranti Dal, he withdrew his support for them. He contested Lok Sabha elections from Bargarh parliamentary constituency on BJD tickets and got over 3 lakh votes and lost out the elections marginally.

The distancing of Dr. Hussain from Koshal Kranti Dal did not deter him from highlighting the genuine cause of the area. The real problem of the area as “Dr. Hussain rightly put back of development and adequate welfare measures leaders across party line showed focus on these rather than politicking for the sake of position or fighting in troubled water”73. The issue of separate statehood is not in the agenda of major party of the state. When Bal Gopal Mishra raised the issue in the Assembly he snubbed almost all political party in the assembly. He found no takers for his propositions. Bhakta Charan Das raised the issue of starvation deaths in Kalahandi, Nuapada in 1995-96 and held the view that Western Odisha is a neglected region. He was successful to make it an international issue. Consequently the government at the centre and the state took cognizance of the same. The then Prime Minister of India paid a visit to the area. Consistent efforts by local

73 Interview with Hamid Hussain, former Chairman Koshali Ekta Manch, on Date: 10 January 2011.
leaders in the area culminated in the formation of KBK Yojana and central government started giving funds to the state government for various development programmes in the area.

Koshal movement in recent days led by Dr. Hussain and Pramod Mishra had also indirect ramification. The formidable ruling party BJD offered some seats to Koshal Kranti Dal was testimony to this effect. The response therefore of the state machinery to the movement is through initiation of certain welfare and development measures of the area without considering the agenda of separate statehood of Koshal region. There is acknowledgement of leadership emerging from the movement. Brundaban Majhi and Subal Sahu were the product of the movement who became members of the legislative Assembly by joining mainstream political party. A formidable leader of Bal Gopal Mishra stature could not make into the legislative assembly not to the parliament by fighting independently. Dr. Hussain has a pragmatic approach of joining the mainstream party and is still maintaining a pro-region and pro-people attitude by articulating the aspirations of the people through various fora. He maintained his mass contact and area management and still vocal about Koshli language in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, shifting of headquarters of WODC to Western Odisha, due compensation to the region during calamity, setting up of Paschim Odisha Bhawan at Bhubaneswar, promotion and institutionalization of Sambalpuri dance, drama, songs and culture by setting up of Gangadhar Bhawan at Bargarh, establishment of common facilities and transfer of waivers of Sambalpuri Saris declaration of Koshli language as the second language of Odisha, reservation for jobs in factories and mines for local people of western Odisha, constructing a bridge across Hirakud reservoir to provide linkage to Bargarh Jharsuguda district, integration of tribal’s through innovative schemes and development of tourist corridor in the region.

It would be interesting to watch whether the ruling party in the government responds to the genuine demands of the area phase wise and the response of the state government to the issue of abject poverty, distressed out migration, educational deprivation, and lack of health services, disparity in infrastructure problem and cultural marginalization and poor plight of tribal’s. The future to the movement is intrinsically linked with the issue of
development on one hand and capacity of the leadership to capitalize the emotions of the people. Presently, the leadership is devoid of charisma shown by Bal Gopal Mishra and Dr. Hussain. “Politics next trench bad fellows and has various ways to flow down”. Naveen Patnaik seems to be on the strong saddle of state political process. With the help of Shri. Pyari Mohan Mohapatra who is the key adviser to Shri. Patnaik, post-Naveen politics will be uncertain facing Odisha politics. That is when Koshal movement is likely to have a big chance to leap forward. Another factor will be centre’s response towards Telangana issue and dismemberment of Uttar Pradesh. When these states take steps, it would provide Philip to Koshal movement, provided the leadership is dynamic and pragmatic enough to capitalize the same.

The process through which regionalism had articulated itself was quite significant in the context of the political development of the state. In the beginning regional rivalry assumed the form of a mass upsurge which was conditioned to a great extent by the local and traditional factors. It was a reaction against sweeping changes in the administrative and political set up, the roots of which had gone deep into the soil. The movement imparted a new consciousness to a region in identity formation in the changing pattern in politics in the administration. Subsequently, the movement crystallized into a party accepting the rules of the game and participating in a polity with a determination to fight out the issues. In the process it generated parties, fronts, pressure and interest groups engaged in the task of articulating popular grievances and trying to influence the process of decision making.