Chapter-III

SOCIO-HISTORICAL PROFILE OF
THE SUKINDA REGION

Sukinda is situated in the North-West of the recently
(since 1993) formed Jajpur district, extending from 20.39'N
to 21.5'N latitude and from 85.37'E to 86.4'E longitude of
the Orissa state.\(^1\) After reorganization of the 13 districts
to 30 districts\(^2\) Sukinda is one of the blocks out of Oris-
sa's total 314 blocks and fall in the Jajpur district. It is
unlike any other usual blocks because of its geo-political
factors. For example, its geography is broadly divided into
two extreme poles: plain area and highland area and the
growth of recent political culture adds further new dimen-
sion in the whole region. In the two locations, there are
some contrasting differences and close similarities. As per
the 1991 Census in Sukinda block, there are total 1,01,865
people (out of 3,16,59,736 Orissa total population). Under
the block and police station Sukinda, there are now 20
grampanchayats consisting of 129 villages - 104 are inhabit-
ed and 25 remain uninhabited. The table below gives the

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1. See, the Map of Orissa and Sukinda block.

2. See, *Encyclopaedia of India and Her States*, eds. by V.
Grover and R. Arora, Vol.7, Deep and Deep Publications,
New Delhi, 1998 and India 1998.
'clear picture' about population of the grampanchayats, number of villages (inhabited and uninhabited) and the community-wise population the whole region (block).

Table III.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of GPs</th>
<th>Name of Grampanchayats</th>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kansa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chingudipal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ransol</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kankadapal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kuhika</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dudhujori</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lembo</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sukindagarh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sansailo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Baragadia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Duburi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sarangpur</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Gobarghatti</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pingal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hatibari</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Haripur</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Atta</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bartanda</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kharadi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ampolaba</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>129*</td>
<td>11738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*104 villages are inhabited and 25 remain uninhabited.

Source: Block Office, Sukinda, 1997 (October).
These are the total number of grampanchayats, number of villages and community-wise people. Both upland and high-land people (tribe and caste) are living with their distinct values, culture, religion, custom and convention. The socio-historical profile of the region further reflects that community-wise representation of the people in the block are: Scheduled Castes (SCs) 11.52% (11,738), Scheduled Tribes (STs) 36.57% (37,255), and Other Castes (OCs) 51.91% (52,872). The whole picture is further mentioned below.

Table III.2

PERCENTAGE OF EACH COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE IN SUKINDA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Grampan-</th>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
<th>Scheduled Castes (SC)</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribe (ST)</th>
<th>General Castes (including OBC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M F Total</td>
<td>M F Total</td>
<td>M F Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20  129  6,027  5,711  11,738  11  18,780  18,475  37,255  37  27,077  25,795  52,872  52

*As per 1991 Census.


In the region, mainly the three communities of people i.e. SC, ST and OC are coexisting from the earlier time. As per

3. Field Report. It will be analysed afterwards in the present chapter.
the 1991 census, the number of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is near around 50 percent of the total population i.e. SCs 11,738 and STs 37,255. The third largest community is the other castes (OCs) consisting of other Backward Castes (OBCs). Their number is 52,872 (52%). These three communities of people are well spread over the whole region (high land and plain land). The area looks as usual to an outsider, but there are internal diversities and inherent contradictions.

SOCIAL PROFILE

The Sukinda region (both areas), as the integral part of macro Indian social structure, includes variations such as varna, jati, hierarchy, ascription, achievement etc. Therefore, to know about the special attributes of Sukinda and its socio-historical and political profile, it is imperative to have a glance at its two distinct areas -- low land and high land.

Plain Area

The plain land (Table No.III.1 from sl.no.8 to 20) consists of 13 grampanchayats, namely, Duburi, Gobarghatti, Baragadia, Sarangpur, Ampolaba, Kharadi, Atta Bartanda, Hatibari, Pingal, Sukindagarh, Haripur and Sansailo. The
village land of these grampanchayats is fertile and gives good yielding. In these grampanchayats, there are total 62 villages, out of which 53 are inhabited. The total population of these villages are 56,029 (55%), and their community-wise number is SCs 8,880 (8.71%); STs 14,645 (14.37%) and Other Castes 32,504 (31.90%).

Scheduled Castes

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) are regarded as untouchables and exterior castes. They are Chamar, Pana Kandara, Dhoba and Gokha and having different titles like Behera (Chamar), Jena (Pana), Malik (Kandara) and Sethi (Dhoba and Gokha). Their total number is 8,880 (8.71%) and they are spread over the 13 grampanchayats. Around 94% of them are economically backward and easy going people. Their major occupation is

4. Out of total population of the block i.e. 1,01,865.
5. Sub-caste wise data were not available.
6. These sub-castes viz. Chamar, Pana, Kandara, Dhoba and Gokha are basically poor communities of people. All are different in the nature of their work and occupation. The Chamar, is a subcaste of toddy toppers, who do not deal with leather business. The pana makes bamboo baskets and other items. The Kandara do not have any fixed occupation, but they are very poor and work in the land of the upper castes. The Gokhas are the fishermen. Only Dhoba as the subcaste cleans the dress materials of the upper castes and does some funeral rituals at the time of death of upper caste people. Therefore, except Dhoba, all other sub-castes are having different occupation from the other state sub-castes and they do not fall in line with all-India pattern.
to serve the upper castemen and rich people through multiple ways. For example, chamars' occupation is toddy-tapping and cleaning the coconut and palm trees of the upper caste people. In the coastal areas, the toddy-tapping business does not run well because of frequent rain, storm and cyclone. They basically live with meagre earning as all the time they cannot clean palm and coconut trees. That is why 96% of them are working as manual labourers in the field of richmen and upper caste people. The condition of the 'pana' is also the same and they sell the bamboo made basket, broom etc., which give them just hand to mouth earning. They also remain fully backward and poverty-stricken. The Kandara face more problems as they do not have any fixed occupation. That is why they work in the field of upper caste and rich people. The 'Dhobas' are in demand because their services are needed throughout the year but still their paltry income is not sufficient to sustain their joint families. The 'Gokhas' live with the sale of fish which they sell either in villages or in nearby markets. Since the fish catching is seasonal they do not earn much in order to maintain a minimum standard of life.

Therefore, the SCs are very poor people whose condition is deteriorating day by day. They are economically and
socially dependent upon the rich men and the upper caste people. They are living as per the direction and sanction of the established people in their village and locality. For rendering services, they get both in kind and cash from the upper caste and class people. The females of these castes go to work in the field of the rich men and upper class people. They work as labourers at the time of ploughing and reaping of agricultural products like paddy, jute, groundnut etc. Amongst all these castes there exists bonded labour system and these poor people work as their masters like. They do everything as per the demands of the master. They are accountable, all the time, to their masters who employ them on the basis of contract for a year, two years or even for generations. Therefore, the economic and social condition of the lower caste people are gradually deteriorating. Their long time stay in the area has never brought anything worthwhile benefits which may lead to change and development in due course of time.

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7. The master pays money either in advance or fixes the contract. This system is still prevalent in the area. The servant remains accountable for the master till he completes the term or gets rid of the debts.

8. The system is somewhat similar to ‘Hali system’ of Northern India.
Scheduled Tribes

There are total eight tribal communities living in the region. The name of the communities are Munda, Shabar, Santal, Matya Juang, Malhar, Bathudi and Bhumij. Out of these 8 tribes, only two tribal communities are found in good number and they are (i) Munda and (ii) Shabar. The third category which includes other 6 tribes, is very less in number.

The STs are seen in every grampanchayats and villages, except Haripur and Bartanda grampanchayats. Their total number is 14,645 and percentage is 14.37%. In four grampanchayats viz. Gobarghatti, Sarangpur, Kharadi and Sansailo, they are in majority (90%) and in other grampanchayats their number varies from 50 to 60%. In these grampanchayats mainly, the 'Mundas' of different titles such as Purti, Tiria, Balmuchu, Jamuda, Munda, Hembram, Say, Bage, Gaipai, Jarika, Haibru, Bangira, Badara, Tunduri, Tiu, Melsandi etc. live. Very few (10%) 'Shabar' tribes also live there amicably along with the Mundas. Much before the arrival of the East India Company, the tribes of these villages were living with their natal properties amongst their kinsmen.9

There are 62 tribes living in the state of Orissa, but as

many as 57 are found in the undivided Cuttack district as per 1991 Census. Out of that the principal tribes are Bhumij, Kandha, Kolah, Lodha, Matya, Munda, Santal, Saora and Shabar. These nine tribes constitute 92.86 percent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the district and 93.5 percent of the Scheduled Tribes live in rural areas and others in semi-urban areas. The Munda is the single largest tribe in the whole region. As per 1981 census, under the undivided Cuttack district the total population of the Munda tribe is 26,705. But, out of the total 37,255 tribes living in the Sukinda region, 14,645 (39.31%) reside in the plain area and they belong to the three major tribes. The population of the 'Munda' tribe is 10,082 (68.84%) out of the total plain tribal population i.e. 14,645. They dwell mainly in the Athagarh tahsil of the present divided Cuttack district and in the Sukinda tahsil of the recently (since 1993) formed Jajpur district. In fact, the concentration of the Scheduled Tribe is the highest in the Sukinda tahsil (45,704) and lowest in Kanika tahsil (14) of the Kendrapara district. But, the number of the Munda population in the


11. Ibid., p.181.

12. Ibid., p.177. The tahsil includes two blocks, i.e. Sukinda and Danagadi.
whole region is 24,000 (64.42%) out of the total 37,255 tribes.\textsuperscript{13}

The Mundas belong to Proto-Austroloid racial group and speak a language which belongs to the Austric language family. Their origin and migration are covered with a thick veil of mystery. Sarat Chandra Roy who was the first anthropologist to give a detail account of the tribe, gave a rough outline of the tribals arrival and settlement in the land where they now inhabit. His information is based on the references found in Vedic, epic and later Hindu literature as well as their oral traditions.\textsuperscript{14} The Mundas are divided into large number of exogamous groups called 'killis' (clan). Members of a 'killi' are believed to be descended from a common ancestor and each killi has a totemic name. They are patrilocal and patrilineal. The position of women, though subordinate, is not low. But women cannot inherit property and usually do not participate in communal worship and common gathering. For their marriage, bride-price has to be paid to the parents of the girl. Their

\textsuperscript{13} Field report.

marriage is both ceremonial and traditional. However, divorce is allowed but the decision of the village on divorce case is binding.

For marriage ceremony and religious purposes the Mundas have their own priest called puhan, who performs the socio-religious functions of the village. He also worships to propitiate the local (folklore) spirits to save the village from ravages of wild animals, ensure good harvests and peaceful life. As headman of village Panchayat he also settles disputes.

The dress of the Mundas is simple and scanty. Shoes and slippers are seldom worn and the head usually remains uncovered. In the rain they wear circular rain-hats made of leaves of a creeper found in the jungle. Both male and female especially youngmen and women are very fond of personal decoration. Munda girls greatly appreciate necklaces, bracelets and anklets of silver and brass. Their women like tattoo marks on forehead, arms and hands. The best and noble qualities of a Munda are his keen sense of self-re-
sect, his love of truth, honesty and courage. They under no circumstances go to create any untoward incident if no harm was done to them. They act and react within their social cultural framework to absorb every tribe peacefully. They always want to retain their old and traditional values and norms, as they still love to drink their country made liquor (diang), wear their traditional dresses, speak Mundari language, worship their gods and deities and remain united like earlier. The Mundas are impetuous and sensitive, but repent harsh action committed on the spur of a moment.  

Agriculture and farm labour are their principal occupations. Some of them also collect sal leaves and tooth sticks from the nearby small forests. Male, female and children are put in work in addition to other duties.  

SHABARS  

are the second largest tribal community in  

19. Ibid., p.182.  
20. Ibid., p.182.  
21. There are many versions/nomenclatures of the word Shabar like some say Savar, Saora, Saura, others, Sahara and some others, Shabara. It is very difficult to distinguish between them as there is no particular definition about their identity. In both the cases it is told that they are Hinduised. But the Census of Orissa differentiates the two, as about, Saora, Savar, Saura, Sahara, etc. there is one meaning and for Shabar another meaning. The Cuttack district Gazetteer projects the former as the most advanced one and the latter as still primitive and tribal in character. The term is somewhere distorted and misunderstood.
the region. Their number is 47,473 as per 1981 Census report in the undivided Cuttack district, which is 14.42% of the state’s Shabar population.\(^\text{22}\) But under the newly formed Jajpur district their total number is 11,000 (29.53%).\(^\text{23}\) In the plain land, out of total 14,645 (14.37%) tribes from all communities, the Shabars have a strength of 3,095 (21.13%). They are seen almost in every grampanchayats, with the title, Deuri, Naik, Pradhan, Diani, Duari, Behera, Barik etc. Only in three grampanchayats like Bartanda, Haripur and Gobarghatti, the Shabars are not found but they are an important tribe in the district.\(^\text{24}\)

The Shabar in the Central Provinces belong to Proto-Austroloid racial group and speak Mundari, Aryan Hindi and Uriya vernacular. Some Savars are found in large numbers, as part of former Madras presidency, in the Ganjam district of Orissa and Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.\(^\text{25}\) Further their origin, migration and settlement are entangled with numerous folklores and local/little traditions that is

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22. Ibid., p.184.

23. Field report.

24. Ibid.

The Shabars are divided into several clans and member of a clan are descended from a common ancestor. For inheritance and property each clan has a totemic name and the Shabar society is basically patrilocal and patrilineal. The status of women is subordinate but usually all work together for the maintenance of the family. Male, female and unmarried girls do all types of works throughout the year to earn their livelihood. Their houses are very small and made up of bamboos and straws. They still follow the joint family system though it is gradually weakening because of their migration to other areas.28

Alliance and marriage are very colourful - both ceremonial and traditional. Amongst them, the Deuri performs the religious duties and marriage rituals. Every village and para has at least a Deuri family who does their work. Their dresses and lifestyles are very simple and both male and

26. Ibid., pp.500-508.

27. Savar is more Hinduised and well in the process of acculturation. While Shabar retained its traditional values and live in the scheduled places, forest areas and continue to follow the tribal way of life.

28. Field report.
female wear lungi and sarees. Even small children of male and female do wear lungi and saree. They remain laborious and hardworking throughout the day without any attention to their body and make up.

Most of them earn their livelihood by land cultivation (20%) and as agricultural labourers (40%). Out of 20%, only 4% of the tribals own land, 6% go for shareholding and 10% cultivate the ‘anabadi’\textsuperscript{29} /gochar/benami land. Some of them (30%) go to the mines area daily to work as manual labourers and return to their villages in the evening. Very few of them (4%) subsist largely on jungle products because there are not much dense forest around their plain habitat. Therefore, the tribals’ poor economic condition always put them in backward position and made them less literate.\textsuperscript{30}

OTHERS include six different communities of tribes, viz. Santal, Matya, Juang, Malhar, Bathudi and Bhumij. The number of these tribes come around 1,468 (10.02%) and they are seen to spread over and settle down in various areas of the plain land. Amongst these tribes, Santal occupies the

\textsuperscript{29} These land is basically used by the villagers to freely allow their cattles to move graze. That are unpossessed and government lands, not held by anybody. Anabadi, gochar and benami words are used in Oriya language.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
highest number 550 (3.75%), following Bhumij 370 (2.53%), Matya 204 (1.39%), Juang 170 (1.16%), Malhar 94 (0.64%) and at the lowest Bathudi 80 (0.54%). All these tribes are having their separate custom, convention, folklore, magic, sorcery and own way of life. They speak their own dialects and do their require duty accordingly. For example, the Santal speaks its Santali language. Bhumij speak Mundari and Matya, Malhar and Bathudi speak their own dialects. Majority of them are found engaged in agricultural occupation (wage labourers and bonded labourers) and work in the nearby mines. Since all of them are from subsistence economic background, both male and female remain busy in working for the sustenance of their family. Literacy among them seems to be very poor. They are mostly (98%) Hinduised and animistic in nature in their beliefs and practices.32

Other Castes:

The highest component i.e. 32,504 (31.90%), who lives in the Sukinda region, is the other castes (OCs). They include the Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya except the Shudras (untouchables). Both forward castes (Brahman, Karan) and

31. Ibid.

32. Orissa District Gazetteer, Cuttack District, 1996, Govt. of Orissa, p.177.
Backward Castes (kshatriya and OBCs) represent the other castes (OCs). In the area they have been living from the ancient days.

The Khandayat is the largest caste in the undivided Cuttack district. According to the Census Report of 1931, 5,48,664, or more than one-fourth of the entire population of the district was the Khandayats. Since then, there has not been any mention of caste in other census reports. The Khandayats are originally meant for military service during war but later they became a cultivating class (Chasa). Some of the Chasas have been described as 'Orr-Khandayat', a sub-caste of Khandayat and some other are also called as 'Orr-Chasa'. In 1931 Census, the number of Chasas' were enumerated to be 1,53,663. Therefore, according to the 1981 census the total number of Khandayats/Chasas in the erstwhile district of Cuttack was, 7,02,327. If the general trend of growth of population since 1931 census is taken into account, the number of Khandayats/Chasas may be roughly 15 lakhs in the former district of Cuttack, though no definite figure regarding the population of the caste is now available. There is no doubt that the caste constitutes the single majority population, not only in the former district of Cuttack and present Jajpur but also throughout Orissa.
They are called so because as descendents of Kshatriyas the Kshatriyas, they were in charge of the defence of the country with sword (Khanda). In commemoration, swords and other war weapons are still preserved and regularly worshipped in the houses of Khandayats. The title of the Khandayats are Rout, Pradhan, Patra, Das, Nayak, Sahoo, Bal, Parida, Mahapatra, Jena, Biswal, Samal, Singh, Puhan, Mallick, etc.  

In the Sukinda block, their number is more than other castes. All the titles are seen to be prevalent. Unlike earlier, now-a-days they are cultivating their agricultural land, doing business and also participating in politics. They (70%) are basically better off in economic condition as they have much experience and outside contact. They are also getting help from their 'complimentary filiated' people and kinsmen. Educational consciousness, drive to excel, ambition to make more money and high status constitute the symbols of their establishment and prosperity. They profess orthodox Hindu religion and follow both little and great traditions.  

The Brahman is the second dominant caste not only in the district of Jajpur but also in the whole state of Oris-  

33. Ibid., pp.164-165.  
34. Field report.
sa. Their number as per 1931 census report was 1,86,021 in the former undivided Cuttack district. The Brahmans of the erstwhile (undivided) Cuttack district belong to the Utkal class of Brahmins who are ritually and status-wise superior to other Brahmans. The Utkal Brahmans are originally all Shaktas, but now they all worship many other forms of the gods and goddesses. The ascriptive status of the Brahmans always put them in superior status and that is why they are most influential and assertive caste not only in Orissa but also everywhere. They have the complete monopoly to decide, impose and worship the various deities in temples on behalf of other castes and act as priests, purohits and pandas. Their surnames are Mishra, Tripathy, Acharya, Panda, Nanda, Panigrahi, Rath, Satpathy, Dwivedy, Trivedi, Chaturvedi, Mohapatra, Das Mohapatra, Kar etc. In Sukinda they also hold influence and act as the most powerful 'varna' after the Khandayats. Their occupation is basically priesthood. But now they go for higher study and lucrative service. They still remain as the most powerful caste which enjoys power and privilege.

35. Ibid., p.165.
37. Field Report.
The Gaudas (Gopalas) are the third largest caste group of people with number 1,45,132 as per 1931 Census report. They are pastoral caste corresponding to the Gopalas of neighbouring states of Bengal and Bihar. They rear cattle and deal in milk products. They are also engaged in agriculture and some served as muliyas (labourers) or hired agricultural labourers. They work as domestic servants and till recently followed the practice of palki-bearers for carrying bride and bride-groom in palanquins (palakis) at the time of marriage of higher caste. The caste is mainly divided into five endogamous divisions viz. Gopalparia, Mathurapuria, Solakhandia, Mania and Tanla. The Tanla sub-caste is looked down upon as the lowest in rank. But other four divisions work in unison for the greater interests of the caste, and they still do not go for alliance and marriage with each other except their. For religious and ceremonial purpose, they engage Brahman. They worship Lord Krishna and trace their descent from his dynasty. Dol purnima (full moon day in the month of Phalgun) is their festival. On ceremonial occasions they worship cow and sing song relating to Radha and Krishna.

The plain land Gopalas have different titles like Das, Parida, Pandav, Behera, Pradhan, Patra etc. do their
require jobs. But over the period of the time, the Gopala of Sukinda have almost given up their traditional occupations and now they have achieved upward-mobility. They regard carrying paliki and supplying milk as the duties of the polluted castes (untouchables). Now-a-days they either work as factory labourers or do other jobs. There is a slow development of education among them after the implementation of Mandal Commission. Now many of them can be found doing business, working in private sector and working outside the region.

Other castes refer to the non-Scheduled Caste people, who are mainly Tantis and Telis, Badheis, Gudias, Banias, Jyotishas as Nahakas, Kansaris, Thataris, Malis, Keutas, etc. Their exact number cannot be found since the census of 1931. The Tantis are the weavers and the Telis are the oil-pressers. Some of the Telis are also traders. The surnames of the Tantis are generally Nath and Bunakar and Teli title is Sahu. The Badei (carpenters), Gudia (confectioners), Banias (makers of gold and silver ornaments), Kansaria, Thatarias (bell-metal makers and dealers) and Malis (gardener and seller of flowers) are generally under the title Sahu. Kumbhara (earthen pot maker and seller) and Kamara (maker of agricultural items like plough, iron made items) keep their title as Behera. Some of them are very rich but
most of them are economically poor. Of all these castes viz. the Telis, Banias, Kansarias, Thatarias are well established and economically very sound in comparison to Malis, Kamaras, Kumbhars, Tantis and Keutas (fishermen). 38

The other caste of considerable high importance in the district, though fewer in number, are the Karans - the writer caste of Orissa. Next to Brahmans they are the most advanced and progressive caste and class of people. The latter British days they have been at the helm of affairs in all walks of life. Around 1,850 they were zamindars, tenure-holders or big raiyats, mahajanas (money-lenders) and, during that period, they enjoyed considerable influence among the peasantry and lower castes of people. Now they are at the top of the bureaucracy, education, politics and nonetheless in more commanding position. They are easily distinguishable by the surname of Patnaik and Mohanty and in rare cases by 'Das'. In Sukinda region the Karan is the very 'dominant caste' who not only enjoys power but also upholds its continuous hegemony over all blocks of people. Their number is few i.e. 8% (4,245) in the plain land area but they are more powerful than other castes and tribes. 39

They profess Hindu religion and worship local deities too. Now some of them are in the all India level services as well as doing state level jobs. Mobility among them is very high and on the increase.

There are some other poor and unnoticeable backward classes of people like Keuta (catching and hawking of fish) Unlike Gokhas (fisherman), they are the migrated people from other places. They don’t have good house, proper health and sanitation facilities and education as they still work as either manual labourers or as wage labourers. Their condition is also deteriorating day by day.40

**High Land Area**

The upland area consists of seven grampanchayats viz. Kansa, Chingudipal, Ransol, Kankadapal, Kuhika, Dudhujori and Lembo. Under these seven grampanchayats, there are total 67 villages. The area is butting out like a wedge between the ex-states of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal. The most part of it is surrounded by forest clad hills, which fall within 5 kms of distance bordering both the districts. In the area the small hills and dense forest give a complete new shape. The land is not plane and of course not very

40. Ibid.
fertile. The rocks and semi-rock villages are not giving good yielding/output as expected by tribes and caste people. Out of the total 67 villages, only 51, so far, remain inhabited and rest 16 have lost their identity and location. In the 7 grampanchayats and 51 villages, there are mainly three communities of people living. They are Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Castes (OCs). Number and percentage of each community of people is STs 22,610 (22.19%), SCs 2,858 (2.80%) and OCs 20,368 (19.99%) out of the 1,01,865 block population. In the upland area total 45,836 (44.94%) people are living in the villages from the days of their forefathers and ancestors.41

The Scheduled Tribes (STs), living in the valley area, are called the aborigines or indigenous people. Their settlement is not recent. Their residence is also much before the arrival of the British. By that time the area remain confined to the tribals. From the old days till now the 'Munda' tribe is the most dominant tribe and it is having 61.55% (13,978) population, the second highest is Shabar i.e. 34.96% (7,905) and others include the tribes like Santal, Matya, Juang, Malhar, Bathudi, Bhumij, 3.48% (787). All these eight communities of tribals are living amicably

41. Field Report.
and peacefully without disturbing each other.42

The Munda occupies major status before the other tribes in the upland area. Their total percentage is 61.55% (13,918). They belong to Proto-Austroloid racial group and speak a language belonging to the Austric language family. Their origin and migration are similar to the plain land Munda. Their family, marriage and little and great traditions are also similar to other area’s Munda. They wear the same type of dress, decorate skin in the same fashions and cherish the same values like other Munda. Hence, their socio-economic, cultural, and political institutions have remained the same.43

The ‘Shabar’ represents the second largest community of tribes in the area. Their number is certainly high i.e. 34.96% (7,905) and they are well dispersed throughout the upland area. Their number is quite high in some villages viz. in Deogan village of Chimgudipal grampanchayat, Kansa and Talangi villages of Kansa grampanchayat. Karadagadia and Garamian villages of Kankadapal grampanchayat and Lembo village of the Lembo grampanchayat. In other villages and

42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
grampanchayats they are also seen in good number. All their socio-economic religious and cultural institutions are the same as Shabar tribe living in other areas. Therefore, from their occupation to other aspects like dress, style and way of life are just like those of the tribes of the plain area and upland tribes. Others include the six more tribal groups whose population is very less. The names of the six tribal groups are Santal, Matya, Malhar, Juang, Bathudi and Bhumij. The total number of these tribes are 787 (3.48%). Among these tribes, the Santal comes (i) 200 (0.88%), (ii) Bhumij 150 (0.60%), (iii) Matya 130 (0.57%), (iv) Malhar 110 (0.48%), (v) Juang 100 (0.44%) and (vi) Bathudi 97 (0.42%). These different tribes are retaining their traditional occupation, family and socio-cultural institutions. They wear their own ethnic dress, speak their own language and worship their own deities. Till date they feel proud to maintain their tribal identity, spontaneity and communal way of doing their required things.

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) population is very thin in the highland area. In all the seven grampanchayats, the Scheduled Castes are found and their total population is not

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
exceeding 2.80% (2,858), out of the region’s total population i.e. 1,01,865. The Scheduled Castes, bearing the title, Naik (sweeper), Behera (toddy-tapper) and Sethi (Dhoba) are living in the area. The nature of their work is very low and regarded to be impure. All these castes are engaged in different types of occupations. The sweepers work in the offices of companies, as cleaners or safai karamcharis. They do all the dirty jobs which have been regarded to be polluting and of lowest nature. Both male and female are engaged in work. Some of them do work in the mines as manual labourers because they don’t have the required qualification to go for higher jobs. Therefore all these sweepers are not only socio-economically poor but also educationally backward. They do not have even a low level of unity as they are always quarrelling with each other and creating unpleasant situations.46 The Chamars (toddy-tappers) prepare various essential household items like basket, broom, etc. and sell them moving from village to village. Their toddy-tapping business does not run well as the tribals drink their own fermented diang (country made liquor). In the upland area also not many palm trees are seen, even though some of them are still retaining their traditional occupation. Quite a few Chamars also do work in the mines.

46. Ibid.
as manual labourer. 47

The Dhoba has a negligible number but there are around 100 48 Dhobi families spread over the forty villages in the upland area. Their main occupation is similar to other area Dhobas and they take care of the interests of the upper caste people of that area too. Now-a-days some of them are found in the mines jobs as mere clerks and manual labourers. Their overall socio-economic and family conditions have more or less remained at subsistence level over the centuries.

The caste people are found in all the seven grampanchayats and their total numerical strength is 20,368 (44.43%) before the upland’s total population 45,836. All castes are found in almost every villages and grampanchayat. The castes living in the upland area, are Khandayat, Brahman, Karan and Other Backward Castes (OBCs). The Khandayat titles, like Bhanja, Samal, Biswal, Behuria, Behura, Das, Ray etc. are prevalent Brahman carries Mishra, Tripathy, Panda, Sarangi titles and they live in the area. Other backward classes include Gopala, Tanti, Gudia, etc. The


48. The Ransol grampanchayat’s secretary and some Dhoba people of the Kankadappal grampanchayat told this.
Karan title includes, Mohanty, Patnaik, Das etc.\(^49\)

The *Khandayat* is the warrior caste. Their number is 11,002 (54.01%), out of the area's other castes (OCs) population and having 24% out of the upland’s total population i.e. 45,836. The Khandayat are more concerned about their status in the society. That is why they act, react and continue with their old and traditional values. From the very beginning of their settlement the Khandayats in the area, have been enjoying the command over the weaker castes and tribes. Their *zamindar*’s and *mahajan*’s position still keep them unchallengeable as they are regarded as the most influential and powerful community. For any decision and policy making at the village level, they are always consulted. Their decision is final and all binding. Till now they do as they like and maintain a hegemony over all weaker castes of people - mostly over SCs and STs. The *Khandayats* of the area are not much educationally and economically progressive like other area Khandayats because of low productivity and cash crops, but they put forth their pan-*Khandayat* ideology/hegemony before others to enjoy the superior status and command.\(^50\)

\(^{49}\) Field Report.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
The Brahmans are the legislators who are always remained indisputable throughout the exigencies of historical epochs. Their percentage is 21.78% (4,438), out of the 20,368 upland area other castes population. Their views are all the time respected and abided by all sections of people. They have been directing and suggesting each and every body to accept the existing reality and accordingly, they are acknowledged by all. Because of their knowledge over religious texts (vedas), the people of the valley take them for granted without any hesitation.\(^{51}\)

The other castes include those who are found to be economically, socially, culturally and politically weak. They are not much versatile and significant in the area. Their number is around 16.72% (3,406) and they are seen in every village and grampanchayat. The people who come under this category are similar to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) of other areas. For example, Tanti, Teli, Bania, Kamar, Kumbhar, Gudia, Keuta, are engaged in the same occupations like castes living in other areas.\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.
The Karans have the total strength of 7.16% (1,460) and they have been fully adhering to their traditional status. They are dominant in all walks of life. Irrespective of castes and tribes, all people take them for their pursuance and acceptance. Therefore the Karans are the second powerful caste after the Brahmans in the social ladder (order) in the upland too.53

Hence, from the above plain land evidence it becomes clear that Sukinda is like any other areas with usual caste-tribe continuum and relationship. But a close look gives some different picture because, unlike its present form, the plain area was completely different earlier. At that time, in the plain area the tribal population are quite significant though not more than the castes. In the high land area the tribals are fully preponderant and they have a very stronghold. The reason behind such placement and settlement of the caste and tribe is hereafter getting momentum at the present juncture of the Indian society in general and the Sukinda region in particular.

53. Ibid.
Sukinda is situated on the extreme north-west corner of the Jajpur and Cuttack districts. It is like a wedge between the ex-states of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal. Some parts of Sukinda was of forest clad hills, muddy (katcha) roads from all sides, and moreover, the area remained inaccessible and unknown to the outside people/world. The region was fully beyond the notice of the outside non-tribal caste people because of its extreme location. The area (Qilla) is said to have been acquired in about 8th century A.D. by the Bhoj rulers of central India who expelled the aboriginal chiefs. The Rajas' genealogical table gave the name of 45 chiefs in 1168 years. The estate was permanently settled under Regulation XII of 1805, after the intervention of the British rule. The Britishers entered into treaties with the different princely ruled territories of Utkal in the year 1803 and latter subjugated it to Bengal Provinces in 1805. With their policy of divide and rule they became the potential ruler of the former Utkal state after the subjugation of the princely states. The Britishers had ultimately taken the state under their control as there was internal enmity between the kings and his people. Taking advantages of that situation, the Britishers further widened the enmity and encouraged the social cleavage. In the process, some power
hungry upper castes people came forward to provide the necessary infrastructure to the British and enjoyed the status of zamindar and mahajan. Their zamindar and mahajan status became enforceable as they collected tax and revenue from the common people through their selected/appointed village agents and sub-agents and enjoyed the patronage of the common people. The British also equally enjoyed the highest status as the zamindars and mahajans were loyal and subordinate before them. Therefore, the society was completely divided on the basis of caste identity and the process of hierarchy was percolated down further. The zamindars and mahajans collected revenue that directly went to the treasury of the British. At that time, the revenue was collected in 'Kahana' or 'coweries'\(^{54}\) (Kauri). Of the total area of 2,14,790 acres, only 39,011 acres were cultivable land. Since then, due to the rise of population the reclamation over 1,06,389 acres of anabadi/gochar or unassessed land went on rapidly. The landlord granted reclamation

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54. In the coastal areas the Pana, Kahan and Kauri system of payment was seen earlier. For example the Pana consisted of twenty gandas and one ganda carried four pieces. So in one pana there was eighty pieces. Again one Kahan consisted of sixteen panas. And total number under one Kahan was 16x80=1280 pieces. Further cowerie was the sea product used for the rent purposes by all people including tribes.
pattas\textsuperscript{55} on payment of Salami and hence, allowed rent free enjoyment for a few years after which the land was assessed to rent. Much of the reclamation was done by Mundas because they were always in majority in the area. Out of the cultivable land 224 acres were recorded as zamindar's \textit{Nij-jote}\textsuperscript{56} and 1,753 acres as \textit{Nij-chas}.\textsuperscript{57} But most of the lands were actually let out to tenants on produce rent. The nature of the rent was also different from village to village as sometimes it was settled by kind and sometimes by cash. The internal administration of the region was having close resemblance with a feudatory state. The disputes between tenants were generally decided by the Dewan and subordinate officers with the zamindar acting as the final court of appeal. The British were acting as the legislators but the king of the region and his subordinates (zamindar and mahajan) were the executors of the British policies.\textsuperscript{58}

The whole region was under the suzerainty of the Hindu kings on the genealogical line since 8th century A.D. The last king of the region, Shri Pitambar Bhupati Harichandan

\textsuperscript{55} Formal recognition to the people.

\textsuperscript{56} These lands are cultivated by the landlord or the zamindar of the area/village.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

Mohapatra was Brahman by caste of the Sukindagarh village. Till now the king's dilapidated palace and estate are standing in front of the Sukinda college. From the beginning the king was acting like a benevolent ruler. After the arrival of the British the king became de facto ruler of the region being assisted by his council of members from time to time. 59

**Nature of Governance and Political Development**

From antiquity, the tribals have been living in the region as the area was not opened up to the outside world. Till now they think the region provides them abode. In the olden days, they had their autonomous polity and remained accountable to their tribal chief. The chief at that time was acting like a benevolent ruler as the tribals were accepting his guidance, advice and course of action. The role and functions of the chieftain was very much amiable. His power and authority were meant for the larger interests of his community of people. For example, the chieftain was remaining vigilant over every individual and family problems of the tribes and helping them at the time of crises. He was redistributing the goods and articles to the tribes at the hour of need. His main interest was to look after the

welfare of his community of people. All disputes concerning individual and family affairs were amicably resolved by the chieftains. The tribals fellow feelingness and consciousness were certainly allowed to maintain their greater solidarity. Moreover, the tribals were happy on all accounts and doing their daily work as directed by the chieftain.

The next phase of the development in the tribal society and polity was during the period of sultanate. The Moghul rulers and their governors tried to reach the tribals and intended to control them. They also somewhere tried to correct them through economic harassment (tax) and other regulations. But the intervention of all these outside forces was not very strong as the tribals remained united to face any situation. Their inhabited areas could not be subdued by the powerful rulers because they were living in much dense forest, hill terrains and much away from the non-tribals. Their isolated and segregated life was helping them to cherish their tribal culture and socio-religious values. Therefore, with all attempts the alien rulers failed to annihilate the solidarity of the tribals and their unique life style.

The advent of the British rule added new dimension in the governing pattern among the tribes. Slowly the British
took the land under their control with the help of local king. During that time the king had not divided the region into plain area and upland area. He was keeping a strong watch over each and every happening on the basis of information supplied to him by his agents and sub-agents and tribal chieftains. He, at that time, delegated the power to some of his selected close and believable courtiers, and zamindars. In the cluster of villages, there were some (around ten) courtiers who were taking care of the problems of the people. For any dispute and deviation, there were punitive laws, varying from case to case. Even in some cases, it was noticed that the tribals/people's hands and legs were chopped off if they had committed serious crimes. The cluster of villages was called para and there the decision of the para master (zamindar) was final. All people including tribals were accountable to the law. Under exceptional situation, the case was referred to the court of the king and at that time rule of law was very stringent and inhuman. Hence, generally, caste people and tribals decided to settle down their own disputes within the boundary of their para and village administration in the presence of the zamindar and mahajan. The tribal chieftains were also resolving the matter in the same way, without any second party intervention. But subsequently, the coercive power of the caste
Hindu kings tactfully controlled the tribal chieftains and later the tribals, forcefully, taken into the Hindu fold as the king was controlling them under reclamation of pattas.  

Under such situation the tribals reacted and protested many times but finally all of them were brought under the Hindu king. Therefore, prior to independence, the governance of the area was fully in the hands of the kings and the king’s decision was accepted by the British. There was no village panchayat as such, but the sole intervention of the dynasty and its collaborating forces like zamindars and masulkars (tax collectors) were all in all. Both tribals and castemen were forced to honour the decision of the king and his zamindar. The people did not have voice under the kingly rule. Caste atrocity, lack of consciousness and domination of upper castes were significantly noticed at that time.

Though the king and his company of people were omnipotent and unchallengeable, the tribals of the highland were not able to put up with their hegemonic domination. There were some minor revolts against the British rule as well as the kingly rule. The most violent form of the tribal unrest among the Mundas had taken place in 1890s, when the British


61. Ibid.
tried to intervene in their autonomy. The British also put a restriction upon the tribals easy access to the forest. They were subsequently denied entry into the forest region.

The British's perpetual exploitation, marginalization and alienation brought economy of the tribals down and further put them at subsistence level. Owing to these causes, the tribals of the region started raising their voice against the colonial rule and protested violently afterwards. The Jharkhand movement also influenced and motivated the tribals to get united against the alien ruler and their policies. The Sukinda region's closeness to Keonjhar equally helped the tribals to keep in touch with the other tribals of different districts, areas and states. Though the undivided Cuttack district does not have a sizeable tribal population except Athagarh and Sukinda block and is not coming under 'Jharkhand' region but the impact of the movement among the tribals is imminent. Nonetheless, the tribals of these belts have been fighting to protect their identity, culture, religion and freedom/autonomy. They are gradually becoming conscious of their rights as human beings.

The dawn of independence brought many new things for the tribals of India in general and Sukinda tribes in par-
ticular. They are now concerned about protecting their interests, through the laissez faire policies, welfare programmes and democratic avenues, which are declared by the central and state governments from time to time. The tribals are getting more mobilized through their Jharkhand leaders to get actively involved in the growth of recent political culture. How far they became successful in their struggle is a different matter but they remain alert against exploitation, marginalization and alienation of their tribalsmen.

Both plain land and upland tribals know about the growth of recent political culture and since the Jajpur district is a politically sensitive one, they get chance to know better than the tribes living in other area. The upland tribes are relatively more conscious of the trade union activities of different political parties. The parties like Congress, Janata Dal and other parties have their trade unions which help the tribals minimally to know about basic things and development.

Amongst all these parties, the Socialist Unity Centre of India's (SUCI), trade Union, United Trade Union Centre [UTUC(LS)] has a better impact not only upon the tribals but also other wage labourers and manual labourers. This trade
union has a good base in the valley area as well as among the tribals because it always fights for their rights. The party which keeps the tribals united and takes them to courts and appropriate offices to lodge their complain and pursue their matters accordingly till they listen court verdict or get some solution. The two other parties just want to camouflage their interests through politiking and gimmick. Except the UTUC(LS), the tribals and workers do not go to other parties. The parties use the tribals to meet their narrow political ends as they get cheated, warned and killed. Further, the fast penetration of market economy/money economy/mercantile economy added diachronic dimension which aroused the tribals to interact, exchange and reciprocate with the outside non-tribal people, usurers, businessmen and the 'privilege class'. Hence, the tribals developed some consciousness about the present change and development.

CONCLUSION

Unlike its earlier setting, Sukinda is no more remained an isolated uncommunicated and undeveloped region either in the state of Orissa or in the Jajpur district. The digging of mines, infiltration of outside people and the road communication on all sides brought a new consumer and materialis-
tic culture to Sukinda region. The process of carriage is very much uncompromising and dictatorial in nature because, over the period of time, the tribals or the indigenous people got maximum negative returns. The tribals eco-friendly relationship, settlement, cultivation of land are overtly changed. Their nature of governance, spontaneity, freedom of speech, easy accessibility to the forest have been arrested in the hands of other people. The kingly rule with its coterie of people and ruling machineries interfered with the privacy and life of the tribals. In the process, the tribe as a monolithic category of people has faced the serious consequences of 'apartheid' change. Their economic, social and cultural life are directly challenged by the growing number of caste people in their land. It is happening because of the expansion of road, communication and arrival of outside people into the tribal land. The finding of new mines has opened the floodgate of avenues for others but burried the cherishing ambition of the tribals. They are not only driven out from their ancestral lands, but threatened, openly exploited and marginalized. That is why though they are politically sensitive/aware and very preponderant in the area, they are no more in the same position. Their lands are used for different purposes by the capitalist forces. They are now not in the same status, and in
better economic condition. They have been intentionally made pauper, poor and landless or 'havenots' as their economic condition has gone down to the subsistence level. The hegemony of market culture and intervention of the 'privilege class', have initiated change, which has undermined the tribal life.