PREFACE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is an unfashionable work on an unfashionable class in one of the most unfashionable parts of this subcontinent. When one wishes to work on this sort of a terrain, one's study tends to become more exploratory, i.e., in other words, more 'empirical'. Such exercises usually await theorisation at a later date.

When some of us decided to work on the different facets of political economy of Orissa, our main purpose was to explore facts, and figures which are more often unknown, apart from being concealed in certain kind of scholarship, then web their interconnections and make the facts speak as freely as possible. With this view in mind, Manoranjan Mohanty suggested me to explore 'the formation of the working class' in contemporary Orissa. When we gradually narrowed down its focus to the labour force of the Rourkela Steel Plant - for the sake of a feasible doctoral work - he placed before me three important questions for enquiry: How did the upper caste coastal reformist labour leadership emerge and dictate terms of labour politics in Rourkela for long? How did the left alternatives rise and later fail to become stable counterhegemonic forces? Does one find any inter-relationship between Rourkela labour politics and its surrounding areas?

My supervisor, Rakesh Gupta readily agreed with me to enquire into the above three themes. Without his help and liberalism, I would not have enjoyed liberty to do my work - a fact many young scholars pursuing their dissertation work would surely envy. I wish he were at times more stringent and insistent on the timings so that this thesis might have seen the daylight little earlier. I am grateful to him for his provocative debating stances.
The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta was perhaps too generous in offering me a faculty position to pursue my doctoral work! My tenure in this Centre helped me immensely to grow with the times and the thesis work. The only regret I have is that I could not submit the thesis during my stint there. Pat encouragements, many insightful comments and critical suggestions from Amiya K.Bagchi, Asok Sen, Debadas Banerjee, M.S.S.Pandian, Anjan Ghosh, Ranabir Samaddar, Partha Chatterjee, R.A.P.Sastry and Govind C.Rath were extremely useful. Outside the Calcutta Centre, Sibaji Bandyopadhyay, Aniruddha Lahiri, Sarajit Majumdar and Sanjeeb Mukherjee were always encouraging and ready to share my thoughts and problems of the field work.

I am thankful to my brother L.K.Patnaik who convinced me to treat the thesis as main enemy, not a friend to live with. But I must confess that without the doggedly pursuits and persuasive suggestions of N.Krishnaji and the generosity of R.Radhakrishna and K.S.R.S.V.S.Chalam in allowing me to have 'free time', this work would have been still pending. Thus the credit for submitting it goes to my present employer the Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad.

R.S.Rao's provocative proposal to take up 10 different case studies in order to examine the entire working class formation in Rourkela was very useful. Pankaj Dutt, Kaveri Dutt and Kavita Rao were eager to share my thoughts from the field work and quick to appreciate the direction of my field investigation. Many lively debates with Kulamani Jena and Kedar Pradhan, discussions with Loknath Swain and useful tips from Kartik Sahoo were very stimulating in the course of my field work in Rourkela. Without
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