CHAPTER - VI

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The term political organisation refers to those aspects of social organisation, specifically concerned with management of the affairs of public policy of a society. In other words, political organisations is the system of social relationship that provides for the co-ordination and regulation of behavior in so far as that behavior is related to the maintenance of public order. Political organisation is that part of culture which functions explicitly to direct the member of the community towards community goals (Hoebel 1966). Government on the other hand consists of an administrative system having specialized personnel which may or may not form a part of political organisation. Depending upon the complexity of the society. Some form of political organisations exists in all societies but it is not always a government. Political organisations is the means through which a society, maintains social order and controls social disorders.

Political organisations of a society may take it as a must to solve certain problems in order to permit the smooth functioning of the group. For the chief, among these problems, is the need to obtain the people's allegiance. In some loosely organised groups every member participates in the making of all decisions, loyalty and co-operation are freely given since each person considers himself a part of the political system.

Political community refers to a group of people whose membership is defined in terms of accompany of a common territory and who have an official with the special function of announcing group decision — a function exercised at least once a year (Naroll, 1984 : 266). Political community is a maximal territorial unit. That means the unit with its leader is not included within a
larger unit. It may be small or large with reference to spatial aspect and population size. Such a unit has a systematic arrangement of components. It has leaders who lead the political affairs. It has a Idigas system sharing with others by means of which conflicts within the political units are resolved and the decisions made by leaders are enforced. Besides, there exist inter political community relations that may embrace diplomacy and warfare. Thus change in the political organisation include the changes in the special and organisational aspects, type of leadership, legal system, military organisations, feuding and warfare.

So far as the political organisation of the Idigas is concerned, it has no military organisation, feuding and warfare. Hence the present chapter limits itself to only those aspect which are applicable to the Idiga community, the territorial, organisational, leadership and legal aspects of the political community.

The traditional political structure of the Idiga caste is not clear. The smallest political unit is termed as gumpu and functions under the leadership of the lineage leader. The Idigas were a stateless group till recently with no political organisation like a few African Communities such as Nuer, Bantu etc. The traditional Idiga caste was a self sufficient administrative and Journal unit with a hereditary official, a headman. He has jural and administrative powers and in this capacity he took care of all political needs of this group. He is assisted by other leaders in the village. The hereditary official is kutapedda - caste chief. The family head is Intipedda Peddamanishi and he participates and assists the former in tribunal meetings. He has a messenger under him to do his errands in summoning meetings and other matters.
Tribunal (Siddis lemma):

The Tribunal presided over by the caste chief (Kutapedda) includes caste elders and all family heads. The tribunal always conducted its proceedings in the public. The parties concerned express freely what they felt about the matter in dispute. They make charges and counter charges before the tribunal. The tribunal hears both the parties and arrives at a decision by the general consensus of opinion. Most of the cases tried by the tribunal are those of adultery, elopement, divorce, or separation. In the case of adultery, the paramour is expected to return the bride – price paid to her parents by her former husband and to pay some fine to the community. (All these matters are dealt with in detail under the title social control)

Assembly (Kutakattu):

The political community of the idigas is homogeneous because it is composed of one or more local groups of the same caste. This permanent political body was designated as the caste assembly (kutakattu), perhaps on par with the caste assemblies of their neighboring castes. Custom played an important part in building up the system of law. The customary rules had the force of law. The habitual course of conduct with regard to a particular matter had the effect of creating or building customary law.

The political community control is the internal and external behavior of its members. While dealing with the internal behavior of its members in, its concern is to regulate the behavior of its members in conformity with the rules of the idiga caste. On the other hand, when it deals with the external behavior the members of the sub-caste or other castes and tribes. Thus was only on hierarchical level in the political community of the idigas.
Caste - Chief (Kulapedda):

The idigas do not have a village level leader who can control all the members. The hereditary leadership is confined to clan level and the leader at this level is known as kulapedda, the clan elder. He is assisted in his duties by other leaders and family heads. He takes an active lead in the adjudication of disputes among the caste members and others protecting the economic interests of the caste members and also arranges for caste level rites and rituals. He acts as a leader, spokesman and representative of the caste group. For the roles he performs, he is presented with customary payments in the form of cash and kind which are nominal (Iyer, 1930 -369). Chieftainship is the widely prevalent institution (Majumdar, 1978-210). Permanent political leadership-which may properly be termed as chieftainship is hereditary or elective (notes and queries, 1967 : 137).

Kulapedda:

Who performs many roles, such as controls his group which can be divided into social, ritual, economical and administrative spheres. He is an important authority and without his or his representative's presence no ritual is celebrated among the idigas. However in many groups such as the Nuer, the chief is considered to be neutral and a certain sanctity attaches to his person so that there is a title likelihood of the deputation being injured. (Even prichand, 1940 – 163). Kulapedda among the idigas too possesses same qualities.

The caste chief enjoys the sociality approved privileges of settling disputes and thus he has the official authority. He is empowered to back his decision with penal sanctions like imposition of fines and excommunication
and he mainly relies on the precedent set by himself, and his predecessors and his counterparts in the other igic political communities. All these conform to three elements of law namely ‘official authority’ ‘privileged force’ and regularity (Hoebel, 1954: 26).

When a pig or goat is sacrificed and killed by his clan for a feast during a festival or marriage, one of its thighs and head are presented to the ‘Kulepedde’. It is only after presenting the share of the caste head that others share the meat. Another occasion where such a respect is shown to him is the meetings for adjudication of disputes. When liquor is served to the council of elders the first serving goes to him. Similarly when the food is served he is served first.

In Nuer tribe when the leopard - skin chief goes to the village to settle the disputes, he is served with beef or meet of a goat. After the settlement of the dispute he is given a young steer or a ram as a token of good gesture (Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 163).

In the Bisilpa village (ortees), the villages headman is called mutha. The mutha headman according to Bailey (1972) has two important functions to perform – fiscal and jural over the years the muthas headman built up a formidable list of pre – requisites attaching to his position. This varied from mutha to mutha but it would almost always include such items as the following; contribution of paddy from the harvest; a gift on the occasion of a wedding of funeral feast often a gift as substantial as an or a cow; contributions to funerals and weddings in the headman’s family; free entertainment when the headman was touring the khond villages; and so forth (Bailey, 1972: 183).
Functions of Kutapeda:

(a) Life – Cycle rituals:

Kutapeda being the head of the clan plays an important role in all the life cycle rituals performed in the families under his jurisdiction. Any death, birth, payment or receipt of payment and gifts made, are naturally brought to his notice. They do so since any payments and receipts by his people are the concern of the entire groups. So he attends all these rites celebrated in individual families and plays an active role in decision making. Since he is the head of the group, it is he who in turn hands over the received gifts etc., which are customarily made during these rites to the concerned through his hands. The important one among them is the exchange of betel leaves and nuts (tambalam) at the time of betrothal of a girl or boy, marriage ceremony and so on. His presence and playing these roles on these occasions is so important that the family or caste priest is entitled to play these roles only at family level and not at clan level.

At the time of settlement of a marriage in his clan and when the betel nut and leaves are distributed to the assembly, the clan head is not only presented with this item first, but also in terms of customarily fixed number of sets. At the time of marriage celebrations the clan headman is given into a special and predominant place and also show with respect and priority in all the matters such as presenting with gifts, serving food and drink and so on.

The Kutapeda has a special role to perform during the funeral ceremony. If a poor or destitute dies, he arrange for the cremation of the dead and by raising funds for expenses. He too personally participates in the cremation.
(b) Festivals:

The Kulapedda has no particular role to play in the conducting of community level festivals. But he attends to his duties from the beginning to the end, giving directions and providing supervision. When village level festivals are celebrated, people go to him for his approval. After taking his consent they collect money and grains to meet the festival expenses. On the festival day kulapedda has the customary right to offer his worship ritual food to the deity first. It is only after his duty that the other members of the idiga community follow.

(c) Economic activities:

Kulapedda acts as a liaison between the toddy-tapper and toddy. Contractors in settling their contracts for tapping the data - palm, today and coconut trees in and far off places. He is under the obligation to protect the interests of his people. He often given suggestions with regard to sowing of seeds, harvesting etc. When disputes arise between the idiga labourers and neighboring caste land - lords, kulapedda appears on the scene and solves

Social control : (Law and Justice)

Social control has been defined by Maittver as 'the way in which entire social order coheres and maintains itself how it operates as a whole, as a changing equilibrium' (1948 : 137). For Ogilv and Ninkoff 'the patterns of pressure which a society exerts to maintain order and establish rules' (1950 : 162) is social control. Randie defines social control as a social process by which the individual is made group responsive and by which social
organisations is built and maintained'. According to Gillin and Gillin 'social control is that system measures, suggestions, persuasion, restraint and coercion by whatever means including physical force by which a society brings into conformity to the approved pattern of behavior or sub-group or by which a group moulds into conformity to its members.

The relation between members of the Idiga caste are regulated by a body of observances, traditions, rules and accepted religious and moral standards. These standards of behavior are inherent in their culture manifested in customs and manners. There are no persons, specially trained in the matters of law and justice etc. among the Idigas. There are only customary rules of behavior.

Legal procedure in the strict sense is concerned almost entirely with the breach of the norms and morals such as homicide, bodily injuries, incest, adultery, seduction, rape, theft, killing of animals, damage to property, slander, disturbance of the peace, revolt against communal authority, witchcraft, black magic and the like.

According to Evans – pritchand, in a strict sense the Neur have no law. There are conventional compensations for the damage, adultery, loss of limb, and so forth. (1971: 162). The Boad outcastes in Bisipira village of Oriisa too (F.G., Bailey) depend on established conventions operated by ('mutha') headman for the settlement of disputes.

In case there is any dispute among the Idiga people they seek the intervention of the chief and other caste leaders. If they fail to get justice here; they take the matter to the court of law. When a dispute is brought to
the caste council, the caste elders meet to settle the dispute, in a public place such as a temple. The disputes between the idiga people and others are taken to the villages council and in these cases, they are represented by their caste chief. Generally the idigas do not take their disputes to the courts of law unless it is a must. This is because it involves so much money which they cannot afford.

When an idiga has a dispute, he first brings it before the lineage chief. He in turn informs other caste leaders and elders. Later, the day, place and time of a meeting to adjudicate the disputes the fixed. Usually they meet in a public place such as a temple and never in a private house. Often the racha bands (a central place in the settlement where a big stone slab is placed in the shade of a 'ravi' or some tree and on which the chief and other elders sit to listen to and settle the disputes) will be used as a seat of justice. The idiga caste leaders bring the accused before the chief. Meanwhile the caste elders and curious villagers assemble at the place. When all the required persons are assembled, the aggrieved party is asked to place his case before the caste council and beg for justice. After this the accused is given an opportunity to give his explanations. After hearing both sides, the caste elders debate on the issue. If the offender is a person of doubtful character, then the chief asks him to be tied to a tree.

After elaborate debating and cross examining both the parties, the chief and the leaders withdraw for a close door discussion. When they reach a decision, they return to the assembly and on behalf of the council the chief
pronounce the verdict, whatever the decision given by the council of elders is final and accepted by the disputed parties. If the decision goes in favor of the aggrieved party the entire expenditure incurred by him in getting the justice is reimbursed by the accused and, immediately.

Standing surety (Jamin system) is in operation among the Idigas. During the adjudication of a dispute when an accused wants to attend the council after sometime or leave the panchayat to fetch a person to speak on his behalf, he has to keep somebody in his absence, responsible for him as a surety. If the accused does not turn up, the person who stands as surety for him has to bear the fines imposed by the chief. One person can give surety to more than one person at a time.

While adjudicating a dispute the Idiga even call for a witness. If a person accuses another of some violation, he should support it with a witness. Otherwise his case will be weak. Similarly more the number of witnesses he provides, it will strengthen his case. The minimum number of witnesses needed is one. Their statement is more valid as a written document to prove a point. Similarly a person who gives false witness is liable for punishment.

Cases of homicide, injury, killing of animals belonging to others, witchcraft, black – magic, rape are completely absent in the Idiga society. The reason being the imposition of heavy fines for it. Sometimes the fines imposed will be more than the value of the article stolen. The most common causes of disputes among the Idigas and the like in any other community are violation of rights and obligations, ill treatment, theft, adultery, elopement etc.

The modes of punishment imposed among the Idigas are fines, social boycott, apology and physical punishment. The established form of begging
an apology among the idiga is that when the chief or caste elders ask the accused to tender an apology to the victim he will have to do so by offering tobacco and touching the feet of the victim for his pardon. He should also request him to continue to have a friendly relation with him as in the past.

When a culprit disobeys the headman and caste leaders and goes against the customary rules and regulations, a social boycott is imposed on him and his family by the community. During this period no person or family should interact with them and are not even allowed to draw water from the village wells. This will continue until the culprit begs for a pardon and his request is accepted in the council.

John M. Robe’s cross-cultural study on oaths, autonomic ordeals and power postulated some hypothesis relating to the structure of the society. It is quite interesting to note that some of these are applicable here in case of the idiga community. They are: 1) Oaths and ordeals are important for societies having the subsistence economy and animal husbandry. 2) The absence of oaths and autonomic ordeals is associated with low political integration; oaths are associated with intermediate and high political organisation as are also ordeals.

In the administration of justice, importance is attached to the establishment of guilt, by what we may call evidence among the idigas. There are two principal ways of doing so; oath and ordeal. The culprit is asked to of Lord Siva). The results of perjury are greatly reared since they are
regarded to be supernatural wrath. If an ordeal is decided upon, the accused is asked to go through ordeals like putting his hand in boiling water or oil, or to hold a piece of red hot iron for a while. If the accused escapes without injury he is acquitted; otherwise he is held guilty. Fairly often witnesses are also called in.

Disputes relating to women:

As is a practice the Idiga women are not allowed to attend the meeting of the village council which sits for adjudication of disputes. Their grievances are first brought before the chief and other leaders. If the accused is a man the aggrieved woman is represented by her father, brother or husband. If a woman is accused for adultery or some such thing, she is brought to the place of meeting and even tied to a pole or by legs and hand; by an elderly woman. However the act of the elderly woman is regarded as her obedience towards the village elders and not as offending. The Idiga council can punish a person physically and an adulterous woman is even beaten with sticks as punishment. If her paramour is a non-Idiga, she will be tied to a pole and beaten with the twigs of tamarind tree until she begs for excuse for the crime committed and promises not to repeat it.

Pre-marital sex is also considered as a sin and violation of moral conduct. When elders learn about such a relation, the person involved are brought before the council of elders. First they are condemned for their immoral conduct and a nominal fine is levied. Later, if both are single they are asked to marry each other. If they refuse, the fine will be increased to a larger sum. The fine amount will be so heavy that offenders rather agree to marry than to pay the fine.
Divorce and Elopement:

Divorce is allowed among the Idigas. If the husband and wife do not like to live together, they are at liberty to go apart. But the matter has to be brought to the notice of the chief and other elders of the village. After a careful consideration and discussion, the elders allow the couple to take divorce. The terms and conditions of divorce are discussed and agreed. Maintenance for children and such other matters are finalised. The divorced person is at liberty to marry again.

Elopement is one form of recognised and preferential marriage among the Idigas. The lovers who do not get parental consent for marriage or do not have money to meet the heavy marriage expenses, they elope to far off place to publish their marriage. The news of their elopement and marriage reach their parent and village elders. The later in turn call the parents of the couple and ask them to approve the marriage and bring the couple back. Accordingly the newly weds are brought and the marriage is formally approved after giving a feast to the community. Now the couple are living with the boy's parents. A token payment of fine is also imposed on the couple for their bad conduct.

When a man elopes with a married woman, this amount to the violation of marriage agreement from the woman's side. When they are traced, the man who eloped is made to return the bride - price (off) amount paid by her previous husband to him. In case her second husband is unable to repay the bride - price, her parents have to pay this to the first husband. If it is established that she eloped owing to the factors responsible by her first husband such as he is an important person, a drunkard or used to illtreat her, there is no need to return the bride - price.
Adultery:

Adultery is common among the Idigas. But when traced the persons are dealt with seriously. Sometimes it results in physical fights and even murders. When such cases are brought before the caste council, they are settled by the kulapadda and caste elders. The culprits are made to pay for a community feast and a fine, up to Rs.500/-.

Among the Idiga society the customary laws are obeyed because of the compulsiveness of public opinion and equation of laws with ethical norms which make a breach of the law a sin. Punishment for which is supernatural visitation and so on. "Consequently, it had been said that the primitive obeyed laws spontaneously, willingly and slavishly. It was Malinowski who showed that there was no automatic submission to law. What actually made a people obey law was interdependence and mutual obligation. If one does not do one's duty towards others, one cannot expect them to do any thing for one's own sake. And no individual nor an individual family is a unit self — sufficient by itself. Malinowski illustrated this mutuality of obligations as it underlies the economic, social and ceremonial ritual life of the Trobriand Islanders. Thus, he showed that unless beachdwellers exchange their fish for the garden produce of those living in the interior and vice — versa, neither group will be able to survive. Consequently mutual obligations must be fulfilled. These obligations are embodied in tribal laws; and the same are not obeyed slavishly but because of self interest and its fulfillment. Economic interests is one of the dominate Self interests which govern the emergence of, and obedience to law's (Majumdar, 1976: 209-210). The same explanation holds true in case of the Idigas who are interdependent socially, ritually economically and politically.
The community development programme aiming at the individual collective welfare of India's vast rural population was inaugurated in 1952. But it failed to develop, as expected, self-reliance and initiative in requisite measures in the village community. Since the public response of the programme was poor. The committees on plan projects in planning commission appointed a study team on community development under the headship of Sri Balwant Rai Mehta in 1957, the study team suggested 'Democratic Decentralization' through a three-tier structure of local self-governing bodies at the village, Block and district levels as a means of securing better implementation of the community development programme.

In 1958 the National Development council endorsed the recommendations for the establishment of a three-tier system of rural local government in the name of panchayat Raj. Specific power and functions in the field of development and local administration were assigned to this new political system, divided into three vertically interconnected institutions namely, the Gram Panchayat at village level, panchayat samiti at area level which includes a few Gram panchayats and zilla Parishad at district level which include all the samitis of the district. Consequently, this impersonalised democratic set up has its serious impact on the normal functioning of the tradition bound political institutions which were hitherto to effective in the maintenance of peace and social order within the community.

The panchayat samiti and zilla parishad came into existence on 1-11-1969 in accordance with the Andhra Pradesh panchayat samiti and zilla parishad Act, 1969. Before this there was the existence of panchayat but
there was not this type of three tier organisation which is an innovation. These institutions are mainly interested in bringing about all sound development by undertaking various extension activities concerning the village as a whole. Panchayat Raj system cannot be identified or equated with the traditional political system of the idigas. The former exists as a separate system independent of the later.

In addition, the idigas of either of the villages are linked with the entire state as well as national political network. They have came in to contact with a number of administrative agencies which are part of this network. They vote in state and national elections. Further, their outside world political field also brings them into contact with the police and courts, the revenue officials, forest officials, excise officials etc.

Earlier the village were governed by traditional panchayats and caste councils. Later the statutory panchayats were introduced during 1959. In Andhra Pradesh, panchayats were formed in accordance with the new Andhra Pradesh legislation Act 1959. Most of the states in India passed panchayat acts in January 1959 in their respective states. With a view to decentralising the administrative powers and privileges which were earlier vested in the single authority of the village, the headman, the panchayat Act was enacted. The panchayat Act consists of three – tier system.

In the traditional panchayats the members were selected on the basis of age, caste, status and family background, where as under the new panchayat Act they are being elected in an election. The traditional Panchayats were arbitrary in their functioning, whose primary function was to maintain the traditional order. But new panchayats are originated to do
welfare work and also bring development in the society. So they advocated change in the physical, social one economic environment of the villages rather than sustaining it.

The panchayats were entrusted with the responsibilities of (i) to enforce sanitation laws, maintenance of village roads and protect the water supply, (ii) settling the disputes that may arise time to time between families and individuals in the village; (iii) to look after the educational and health programmes in the village (iv) looking into the land disputes and those related to cattle that are likely to arise among the families of the village and between the people and neighboring villages; (v) acting as a liaison between the village and the government institutions and officials. It has the power to collect house and professional taxes.

The panchayat samithi and zilla parishad came into existence on 1.11.1959 in accordance with the Andhra Pradesh panchayat samithis and zilla parishad act 1959. These institutions were mainly interested in bringing about change in all development and extension activities concerning the village as a whole.

In 1967, the Government of Andhra Pradesh amended the panchayat Raj Act of 1959 to bring Andhra Pradesh panchayat act (amended) 1968. According to this Act every panchayat should have at least 300 voters. The panchayat samithis were abolished and their places were taken by Mandal Praja Parishads. According to this new Act each Mandal praja Parishad has 35,000 to 50,000 population, covering an area about 3 to 6 square miles. Zilla praja parishad at district level remained as it was in the past except the new nomenclature. The primary aim of this amended act was to take the
Government to the door steps of the people besides involving more and more people in development activities. As per the new act the ward members and sarpanch (President) at village panchayat level, Mandal President at Mandal praja Parishad level and an chairman Act Zilla Praja Parishad level are directly elected by the people by secret and universal ballot. The elections at village Panchayat level are on non-party basis where as, at Mandal and zilla level the elections are on political party basis. Political parties sponsor their candidates besides independents. Another novel feature of this amended panchayat Act 1987 is the reduction of voting age from 21 year to 18 year for the election of local bodies. At ward level seats are reserved for scheduled castes and tribes, backward castes and women. Some reservations are extended to the election of sarpanches, Mandal praja parishad presidents and zilla praja parishad chairman based on the populations of the above said categories.

Persons who are 18 years and above by age are eligible to vote and contest for the panchayat elections. Voting was by universal franchise and secret ballot. Through it was expected that the elections for these local bodies take place in the democratic manner in actuality it did not happen so. The idgas voted to the candidates to whom their traditional leaders asked them to vote. The same practice was followed during the election to elect their representatives to Assembly and parliament. As long as the power and authority of the traditional leaders was strong this method of voting followed. Now the trend is changing with the political awareness increasing with the voters.
The political affiliation between the idiga community voters and the established state level political parties such as Congress (1), Telugu Desam, C.P.1, and C.P.M. take place only during election time. Once the wider level political activities such as the elections are over, higher level political leaders rarely visit the villages and take part in the political process at lower level activities and leave them to the leaders of village or local level. As a result, most of the idiga voters are not happy with the higher level leaders. The political leaders at time use to pass on money to the caste leaders to secure the voters and this often leads to cleavages in the community and disturbance to the traditional political system.

The village panchayat acted as a powerful authority to pass judgments on several matters concerning the village. It imposed of fines on culprits and the cash so collected was kept an general welfare fund of the community in particular and the village in general.

Even after the introduction of panchayat system the village officials, namely accountant (karnam) and magistrate (munesiff) happen to wield considerable influence at Perakur and Perumallapatti villages. These officials of the post are often seen indirectly influencing the panchayat working. In a number of cases, the villages even today, seek their guidance. In certain cases that have been found misusing their influence. New –e –days, the idigas of approaching their headman and other elders, are approaching the influential caste leaders like landlords, the village panchayat president or the village officials for settling their disputes. The modern civil courts are not new to them. The caste people are taking advantage of these factions for their political ends.
One happy result of the panchayat Raj institution was that all the castes and tribes which were culturally different could come together to solve their local problems. Verbal communications between such culturally different groups was not a problem since they all spoke Telugu. But there were structural problem. Now the panchayat could discuss the common problems and thrash out and offer solutions to them. The panchayat worked effectively, settling the disputes that occurred within the village and guiding the people in their economic activities.

The principle of political organisation in the case of the idigas is on the basis of its territorialism. Today it is not based on either genealogical or associational units. There is no lineage or clan leaders. Even kinship is not a major factor in political organisation today. The smallest organisation is family. The caste is organised with the aid of a headman known as kulapedda. The leader is expected to be a talkative type. The leadership is generally based on the individual capacity of knowledge of all socio-cultural activities. Thus we can say it is the result of the political changes and development which took place in rural Andhra Pradesh in general and among the idigas of Rayalaseema villages in particular. In Rayalaseema districts people have been elected to the village panchayats as member and presidents, mandal parishad presidents, zilla parishad chairman, M.L.As. and ministers at the state level from among the people of idiga community.