CHAPTER IV

THE SETTING
CHAPTER IV

THE SETTING

(A) Orissa: A Profile

Orissa is one of the twenty-five States (federal units) of the Indian Union ranking twelfth in population and tenth in area. It is situated in the north-eastern section of the Indian peninsula. It is bounded in the north by Bihar, in the west by Madhya Pradesh, in the north-east by West Bengal and in the south by Andhra Pradesh. It has land area of 165,755 square kilometers. For administrative purposes, the State is divided into thirteen districts. There are four well-defined physical regions: the hill region (plateau) of the north and north-west; the eastern ghats; the central plateau and the coastal plains.

The coastal plains of Orissa cover the districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, and Ganjam. The coastal plains constitute 25% of the total area of the State. As a maritime State, her people had, in the days of yore, travelled as far as the islands of Java, Bali and Sumatra, which are now components of the Republic of Indonesia. The inland division consists of hill areas and forests covered by mountain ranges between which lie extensive plateaus of rich agricultural land. The hill regions in the north and north-west constitute the mineral belt of the State.

The population of Orissa, as per 1981 census, is 26.37 millions which is 3.84% of India's population. 47.34% of the State's population live in the four coastal districts and the rest in the hill regions. The density of population is 169 per square kilometer compared to the all India average of 221 per square kilometer. Linguistically speaking, Orissa is a homogeneous state as most of the people (85%) speak Oriya, their mother tongue. Orissa has also the highest percentage of the Hindus (96.25%) in her population.

Orissa has a low level of literacy - 34.22% - as against the national figure of 37.38%. There is a large gap between the average literacy of the coastal division and that of the inland division. A peculiar feature of Orissa is the high percentage of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes who constitute 38.20% of the total population of which 23.11% are tribals and 15.09% are scheduled castes. There is a concentration of tribal population in the contiguous belt of the hill areas of north-western, western and south-western parts of Orissa. The tribals are still steeped in poverty, ignorance and tradition and continue to be easy targets of exploitation.

Orissa is predominantly rural in composition. As large as 88.16% people live in her 50,806 villages. The State

continues to be one of the least urbanised in the country. Lack of adequate industrialisation and employment opportunities attract a small percentage of rural people to urban areas.

Orissa's economy is agriculture-dominated. 77.4% of the people are engaged in agriculture which accounts for about 60% of the total resources of the State. Only about one-third of the land is under cultivation. "The unequal distribution of land is a major structural source of inequality in the society. The agricultural sector has long remained in an underdeveloped stage on account of slow and ineffective implementation of land reform and land ceiling measures and lack of adequate irrigation and other modern requisite facilities." 3

Orissa is proverbially rich in resources but poor in economic development. 4 Its predominantly agricultural economy is in an underdeveloped stage and the process of industrialisation has been slow. Despite tremendous industrial potential in the forests, mines, rivers and ocean and other natural resources, Orissa remains an industrially backward state. Her share in the industrial output of the country has remained less than 2% during all the plan periods. Due to the failure to utilise fully her industrial potential, the raw materials of the State find their way out not only to other

4. Jena B.B., Orissa - People, Culture and Polity, Delhi, Kalyani, 1980, p. 27.
states but also to other countries.

Orissa lags behind most other states in transport and communication. It has only 13 kilometers of railway tracks per 100 square kilometers as against the all India average of 18.4 kilometers. Orissa has 12% of surface roads. It has 10 kilometers of surfaced roads per 100 square kilometers as compared to the all India average of 19 kilometers.

Orissa has a traditional caste-ridden Hindu society. Political, economic, social and intellectual leadership in the State is provided mainly by the high caste Hindus. Brahmins and Karans have long since been the elite-castes having not only dominated the job market but also the political arena. Since independence, the Kshatriyas, hailing from the families of the ex-rulers, and the Khandayats who constitute the largest caste group in the State have been politically important.

The high land division which is about 75% of the total geographical area of the State is backward compared to the coastal plains. Leadership in various walks of life is being monopolised by the people of the coastal region. The highland region has inadequate representation in the Council of Ministers of the State under various Governments. In a competitive system, all these factors have contributed to

---

regional rivalry in the State.

Geographically Orissa is regarded as a State of Eastern India, but culturally it is as much a part of North India as of the South. It is a confluence of two streams of culture. Orissa is called the land of Lord Jagannath. The saga of the land of Jagannath tells about the religious, cultural, heroic deeds and scholastic merits of the people of Orissa. Orissa's art, architecture and sculptural beauty of the temples of Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar have attracted tourists from all over the globe. The Oriyas believe in cosmopolitanism based on the cult of Lord Jagannath of Puri.

Orissa has a very rich and glorious history and it was the seat of many important dynasties. Known through the ages as Utkala or Kalinga, it was a prosperous maritime State. The Nandas and the Mauryas of Magadha ruled over Kalinga which extended from the Ganga to the Godavari. Kalinga regained independence under the great Kharavela a century after the historic Kalinga War (261 B.C.).

Orissa was subjected to successive foreign domination for a long time. The last Hindu King of Orissa was Mukunda Dev who captured power in 1560. The Marathas ruled the land from 1751 to 1803. They divided the territory of Orissa into two political divisions - Mughalbandi and Garjats. The Mughalbandi

7. Ibid.
division consisting of the coastal plains was under their direct rule while the Garjat division comprised the hilly regions of the north and north-western parts of Orissa. The Garjat division was ruled by the local chieftains who paid annual tributes to the Maratha Government.

The Mughalbandi areas of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore were conquered by the British from the Marathas in 1803-1804. The British administered these areas as part of Bengal and later as part of Bihar as revenue division. Sambalpur was taken over by the British in January, 1804 and was administered as a part of Central Provinces. The southern regions of Ganjam and Koraput remained under the administration of Madras Presidency. The British did not interfere in the internal administration of the Garjat areas.

The East India Company ruled over Orissa for fifty five years. At least three rebellions broke out - in 1817 and 1833 by the Paikas of Khurda (Puri district) and in 1847 under the leadership of Surendra Sai of Sambalpur. The first war of independence of 1857 had its powerful echo among the Oriyas. During the British rule, natural Orissa was dismembered and Oriya - speaking tracts lay scattered in the neighbouring administrative units of Bengal, Madras and Central Provinces. The formation of the separate State of Orissa was the outcome of a protracted Oriya nationalist agitation since 1903. The leading citizens of the time including many ruling chiefs formed an
association called 'Utkal Sammilani' (Utkal Union Conference) which was used as a forum for carrying out the movement for the integration of the scattered Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration. The spirit behind the Sammilani was Madhusudan Das, 'the grand old man of Orissa'. Other prominent leaders were Maharaja Sree Rama Chandra Bhanja of Mayurbhanj, Maharaja Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deb of Parlakhemundi and Utkalmoni Gopabandhu Das. The movement launched by the Sammilani was perhaps the earliest demand in India for a homogeneous linguistic state.

Convinced of the legitimacy of the demand, the Indian Statutory Commission, known as the Simon Commission recommended a separate province for Orissa. The question came up before the Round Table Conference in London on January 16, 1931 where the Maharaja of Parlakhemundi presented the case of Oriyas forcefully. Orissa was given an independent administrative status under the Government of India Act, 1935 and became a separate Province on April 1, 1936. The new Province consisted of six districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Sambalpur, Ganjam and Koraput.

The process of unification of all Oriya-speaking tracts, however, was not complete until 1948-49. After India's independence on August 15, 1947, the erstwhile Princely States (Garjats) which were attached to Orissa, immediately claimed
sovereignty. The rulers neither granted popular government nor were they willing to merge their States with Orissa. This was followed by an intense political agitation, known as the Prajamandal movement, demanding the merger of Princely States with Orissa. The battle was also fought at higher levels of diplomacy between the Consortium of Rulers and the Government of Orissa, supported by the Union Government. On January 1, 1948, the Congress Government of Orissa assumed the responsibility for the administration of all the former feudatory states with the exception of Mayurbhanj. Twenty-four of the Princely States had ultimately merged with Orissa by 1949 except Sareikala and Kharawan which remained the bone of contention between Orissa and Bihar until the States Reorganisation Commission, 1956 recommended their inclusion in Bihar. Consequent upon the merger of native states, Orissa consists of thirteen districts. Significantly the process of Princely States' integration in India began in Orissa.

(B) Student Politics in Orissa:

Orissa has a long tradition of student politics stretching back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Orissa is one of the few states in the country which has been affected by major student agitations concerning broader political issues. Student politics in Orissa finds expression through various student associations and organisations broadly classified
into two types - official and non-official. The College Union or the students' union is the most important and universal official student association. In addition to this, student bodies like Dramatic Society, Athletic Club, National Service Scheme, the Social Service Guild, Day Scholars' Association, Hostel Unions and a number of academic societies such as Science Society, Commerce Society, Political Science Association, History Society, Planning Forum provide forum for opinion formation and interest articulation of the student community. The College Union is the "sole tribune of students' opinion" on a campus. The various offices of the College Union are elective and the President presides over all union functions. The College union is guided by an adviser and a number of associate advisers nominated by the Principal from among the members of the teaching staff. The principal is the final authority in all matters relating to the union.

College unions primarily meant to be cultural associations have, in reality, assumed political character. In practice, they function as politically oriented groups, exercising pressure on the College, the university and the government. The activities of most other official associations are too patchy and uninspiring. A great majority of them meet twice in the year - for inaugural and closing ceremonies. Students, in general, display little interest in debates, symposia, sports, community welfare programmes and other co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, organised in the
colleges. With growing political interests and orientations in the students, there has been a corresponding decline in the cultural and intellectual activities on the campuses.

Student organisations which do not enjoy official recognition and cover a large number of campuses may be labelled as 'unofficial'. The various youth organisations and student fronts of political parties like All India Student Federation (AISF), Student Federation of India (SFI), Student Congress, Chhatra Janata, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and Democratic Students' Organisation (DSO) are labelled as "student political associations". Formal membership of such unofficial student wings of political parties or larger movements is usually much smaller than the official student bodies on the campuses. Nevertheless, their impact on student politics in general, and student leaders, in particular, is considerable. For the politically aspirant student leader, they provide the necessary link with the wider political network. Moreover, political parties use their student fronts for recruiting student members to their folds.

Student political associations have remained active on the Indian campuses since the formation of the first national

students organisation namely the All India Students Federation, in 1936. The Orissa unit of AISF held its first meeting at Cuttack. After the split of the AISF in 1940 at its Nagpur session, a corresponding split occurred in the Orissa unit of the AISF. The Communist and the nationalist groups parted company. The Communists declared the AISF as their front organisation and the nationalist group, with Congress-Socialist support, reorganised itself into the All India Students Congress. This marked the beginning of a divided student movement in subsequent years.

After independence the Socialists broke away from the Congress in 1948. With this split in the Congress Party, the Student Congress was weakened and the socialists strengthened their youth front, 'Samajwadi Yuvak Sabha' (Young Socialist League). When Nehru and Jaya Prakash Narayan gave a call for creating a National Union of Students (NUS) - a national non-political federation of various student unions, the response of the Student Federation and other non-congress student fronts was rather lukewarm. In Orissa, the state-wide 'anti-fee rise' strike in 1951 discredited the NUS and the Orissa unit of the AISF became the paramount force in student politics.

The post independence period saw the fragmentation of student movement and the proliferation of student political associations. In Orissa, the Young Socialist League was active until 1953 when a new student organisation known as the Utkal Union of Students, (popularly known as Students Union) was formed
with the patronage of Congress Party in Orissa. It was a Congress - P.S.P. combined student front to challenge the growing influence of the Orissa unit of the AISP. From 1953 to 1960, student politics in Orissa was characterised by a fierce competition between the pro-Communist Student Federation and the pro-Congress-Socialist Students Union. Elections on the Orissa campuses were fought on the basis of ideological affiliation to either of these groups and they had a lion's share in campus electoral outcomes.

The split in the Communist Party of India in 1964 led to the emergence of a new leftist student organisation, namely the Student Federation of India(SFI) affiliated to the Communist Party of India(Marxist). This led to the weakening of the leftist student groups and the strengthening of the Students Union which achieved greater success in College Union elections in most parts of Orissa.

In 1963, the PSP elements came out of the Utkal Union of students and formed a separate student front known as 'Chhatra Mahasabha'. In 1966 a new socialist student front known as the 'Orissa Students League' was formed. During the late sixties, the Orissa branch of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyar- thi Parishad(ABVP), a front organisation of the rightist Bharatiya Jan Sangh gained strength while an ultra-leftist student organisation, the Democratic Students Organisation(DSO),
affiliated to the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) came into prominence. By the close of the decade, the Utkal Union of Students was on the decline. A new student organisation known as the Progressive Students Union (PSU) was formed as the student front of the Congress Party in January, 1971.

The proliferation of student political organisations continued throughout the seventies. With the victory of the Janata Party, a 'non-Congress opposition - combine', 'Chhatra Janata', its student front, emerged on the campus scene. With the split in the Janata Party, a new student front, Chhatra Lok Dal also appeared on the scene. Of the present student organisations in Orissa, the AISP, SFI, ABVP, DSO, Students Congress and Chhatra Janata are organisationally viable and active. The ideologically - oriented student fronts, both on the left and the right, make a serious drive for membership and have succeeded in creating a committed cadre in a number of campuses.

Student political associations have proliferated consequent upon the fragmentation of the political life in the country. The personality - oriented politics in the larger society has given rise to a plethora of political parties and a corresponding multiplicity of student political associations. Very few students in Orissa (less than 10%) are formally affiliated to these unofficial student fronts of political parties. Most of the student fronts have only some pockets of influence and none has an all Orissa base.
The major reason for the apathy of the average student to membership of student political associations is that most of them are politically quiescent and more anxious to get a job after the completion of studies. The growing animosity and bitter rivalry among these organisations have vitiated the academic atmosphere on the campuses and the average student with a lower-middle class background, keeps himself at a safe distance from such unhealthy influences. Moreover, the calm, easy-going and career-oriented students fight shy of membership of student political associations for fear of being branded as political students.

Student protest movement in Orissa has a long, glorious and chequered history. Student agitational politics reflected the broader trends in the social and political life of Orissa since the beginning of the twentieth century. There were two main streams in Orissa politics, namely, the demand for separate statehood for Orissa through the unification of Oriya-speaking tracts and participation in the freedom movement. Madhusudan Das played the vanguard role in the fight for a separate identity of Oriya language and culture through the creation of a separate state for the Oriyas, while Gopabandhu Das was in the forefront of the freedom movement in Orissa.

Utkal Sammilani (Utkal Union Conference) was formed in 1903 as an annual forum of the Oriyas to articulate their

needs and grievances and fortify the demand for the unification of all Oriya-speaking regions. That was the most important political demand of the Oriyas in the beginning of the twentieth century. Although eminent Oriyas provided leadership to the Sammilani, Oriya youth and students formed its soul. They were attending the annual conferences in large numbers and acted as volunteers during natural calamities and in spreading the message of a unified Orissa in the farflung Oriya-speaking regions. Oriya students constituted the soldiers, volunteers and messengers of the "Utkal Sammilani movement".

When the Chakradharpur session of the Utkal Sammilani accepted Non-co-operation Movement in 1920, the nationalist agitation in Orissa merged itself with the national mainstream. Students responded to this call with great excitement and enthusiasm. The Non-Co-operation Movement had an electrifying impact on the students of Orissa. Large number of students left studies and joined the national movement. For the first time, students of Orissa came in contact with the wider all India national movement. All Orissa Student Conferences were held regularly with the blessings of the teachers. Ravenshaw College, Cuttack was the centre of student movement in Orissa. In 1928, the lathi charge on Lala Lajpat Rai triggered off student protest in Ravenshaw College. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, many students left school and college and organised intermittent strikes. The execution of patriot Bhagat Singh led

---

to widespread student protest in Orissa. During the Salt Satyagraha (1930-31), Rama Devi and Malati Devi, two prominent women leaders of Orissa, led a hunger strike in front of Ravenshaw College. Students came out of the campus and gave a send-off to the leaders who went out for salt campaign. They boycotted classes for a few days. Many such incidents of student protest against the repressive measures of the British government and student involvement in nationalist movement took place in Orissa. Besides, students of Orissa played their part in the unification movement which aimed at the creation of a separate Province for Oriyas.

The formation of the Orissa unit of the AISF in 1936 was a watershed in the history of student politics in Orissa. It provided a forum for articulating the needs and aspirations of the students and for organizing themselves into collective action. With the formation of Orissa as a separate Province on April 1, 1936, the student movement concentrated its energy and attention on national liberation. In course of time, agitations to form a college union continued in Ravenshaw College and the demand was conceded in 1938. This marked the beginning of student unionism in Orissa and the right to form college unions was extended to other colleges.

The Medical School strike in early part of 1939 was the first major student agitation for some of the academic demands. The then Congress Ministry took stern action and
expelled two student leaders for political activity. The Medical School was closed. Other educational institutions of the State expressed solidarity with the Medical School Students and the agitation continued for more than a month. After a compromise, the expelled students were taken in.

A more widespread and intense strike, known as the 'Independence Day Strike', or the 'Examination Boycott Strike' occurred in 1940 with Ravenshaw College students playing the lead role. Jawaharlal Nehru's presidential address at the Lahore Session of the All India Congress Committee in 1928 had exhorted Indians to observe January 26 as independence day. When two students hoisted the Congress flag atop the Ravenshaw College building on January 26, 1940, they were expelled from the college. Students continued their strike upto 26th February and thereafter decided to boycott the university examination. Although a large number of students appeared at the examination due to governmental protection and pressure, the strike spread to all other educational institutions of Orissa.

The Quit India Movement of August 1942 brought in a good deal of student participation throughout the country. Students provided the second front of leadership to fight the British when the adult leaders were either jailed or went underground. Many students suffered long periods of arrest and
detention.

Another student strike started from Ravenshaw College during 1946-47. When the Union Jack was hoisted on December 12, 1946 on the occasion of the Annual Sports Day of the College, students were agitated and pulled down the Union Jack under the leadership of Manmohan Mishra. Students of different ideological persuasion were united against the punitive measures and launched a strike. This protest movement spread to Cuttack town and other parts of Orissa. After the strike, the Congress Ministry in Orissa decided against hoisting the Union Jack in educational institutions. The anti-Union Jack movement raised the prestige of the Oriya students. It was a politically oriented movement directed against the symbols of imperialism.  

Students of Ganjam successfully launched a movement against the detention of a large number of students in the Test Examinations. The move was a clever ploy of the educational authorities to raise the percentage of pass in the university examinations.

In the post independence period, the decade of the fifties witnessed two major student agitations in Orissa. The first, known as the 'anti-fee rise' strike was organised during July, 1951 against governmental decision to raise tuition fees for college students. A council of action was formed in Ravenshaw College, gave a call for strike which spread to other

\[11. \text{ See Ibid., p.48.}\]
educational institutions of the State. Students offered Satyagraha in front of the Legislative Assembly. The authorities responded by the sine die closure of all the colleges from July 19, 1951. Activist students were arrested and some of them lost one valuable academic year. The strike achieved practical results. There was some reduction in enhanced fees. The percentage of free-studentship was increased from 7.5% to 12.5%. Governmental grants for the Social Service Guild's funds was also increased.

Students played a big part in the S.R.C. movement—the movement against the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, 1956. It was a popular movement of the Oriyas, demanding the merger of Sareikala and Kharwan with Orissa, which had been given over to Bihar by the Commission. Student leaders were represented in the co-ordination committee consisting of representatives of all political parties and various organisations. Many students were arrested and some lost their lives in police firing. The movement came to an end due to the apathy of the Central Congress leadership and split in the Action Committee resulting in the defection of some members.

"The S.R.C. movement was a short but intense agitation of the people of Orissa in which students played a vanguard role. True, the movement did not succeed in achieving its objective, but it demonstrated the solidarity, resilience and
maturity of the students to spearhead a movement for a broader off-campus issue. From the all India perspective, the issue might be construed as a manifestation of regional politics and demands but from the point of view of Orissan students, it was an issue worthy of fight in vindication of the legitimate rights of the people of Orissa.\(^\text{12}\)

The sixties were a stormy decade for student politics in Orissa. The State witnessed two massive student movements during the decade, the first in 1964 and the second in 1969. The 1964 agitation which lasted for two months from September 26 to November 24 sparked off from a trifling incident at a certain radio shop in Cuttack city. Following the alleged assault of an Engineering school student by the shop owner, the alleged storming of the shop by some students in retaliation and the show down between the police and the students, the movement started. In course of time, the focus of the agitation shifted from the immediate cause to protest against police excesses and ministerial corruption and the wrath of the agitators was directed at the Chief Minister Biren Mitra, the former Chief Minister Biju Pattnaik and other Ministers and Officers who were close to the Chief Minister.\(^\text{13}\)

This all Orissa student movement got the support of all the opposition parties and the sympathy of the general public.


public. The Swatantra Party, the S.S.P., the CPI and the Bhartiya Jan Sangha openly associated themselves with the movement. "The S.S.P. and the CPI were the two among the opposition political parties who sponsored agitations over issues like food scarcity, price rise and charges of alleged corruption and mal-administration of the Congress Ministry".¹⁴

The Government of Orissa decided to enquire into the student agitation and a commission was appointed consisting of Mr. Justice S.P. Barman of the Orissa High Court. The Commission came to the conclusion that the police had exercised restraint and the allegation of excess use of force was not justified; that all political parties opposed to the Congress played their respective roles in supporting the students' agitation; that in certain instances some individual political leaders, described as dissident Congressmen actually supported the student agitation; that the official Congress played a healthy role for peaceful solution of the problem by all possible methods and that the loss of damage to property during the agitation amounted to several crores of rupees.

The student agitation of 1964 represents the high watermark of student protest politics in Orissa. It had far-reaching consequences. It administered a severe jolt to the

Congress Party in Orissa. The Chief Minister was discredited for 'administrative impropriety' by a Cabinet Sub-Committee of the Union Government. A perceptive observer of the Orissa political scene writes: "The agitation (1964) subsided, but it thoroughly shook the foundation of the government so much so that on February 1, 1965, the popular 'Dada' of Cuttack (Sri Biren Mitra) had to bow out of office." The wave of anti-Congressism had begun with that agitation and reached the peak on the eve of the fourth general elections of 1967 and the Congress Party secured 31 seats out of 140 in the Orissa Legislative Assembly under the discredited leadership of Biju Pattnaik and Biren Mitra.

A perceptive scholar of the Orissa campus scene observes: "The 1964 agitation is a turning point in the history of student politics in Orissa. It signalled the entry of political parties into the campuses in a big way. Students played an active role in electioneering in 1967 and in all subsequent elections. After 1964, political personalities became conscious that students were a force to reckon with. Political parties vied with one another to build strong bases on the campuses and some spent lavishly for college union elections. The growing politicisation in the campuses in Orissa is, to a large extent, the legacy of the 1964 agitation."  

Another major student strife affecting most of the students in Orissa continued for about two months from August 22 to October 26, 1969. The strike was due to a chain of events which originated from the S.C.B. Medical College, Cuttack. Earlier, students of the College have resorted to a strike in protest against the transfer of a Professor to Burla. They had gone to the state capital Bhubaneswar to place their demands and had been allegedly beaten up by the police and about forty of them were arrested. This was a period of widespread unrest in a number of colleges, and in August 1969, a meeting of student leaders of all colleges was organized to protest against police atrocities on student strikers and to demand the unconditional release of all arrested students.

Trouble started when on August 20, a protest procession by the students of Christ College were disrupted by the Police near Chandinichawk, Cuttack. When the news reached College Square, a showdown between the police and the students of Ravenshaw and other colleges took place. The Government released about seven hundred students arrested and Chief Minister R.N. Singh Deo invited student leaders for discussion on October 4 and the strike was withdrawn on October 25.

A major student movement started in Sambalpur (Western Orissa) in 1980. The movement was occasioned by a
mere scuffle between some businessmen belonging to the Marwari Community and some students on the issue of raising of funds for the flood relief in Sambalpur town. When on 21st September, 1980 some students of G.M. College went to collect funds, a section of the traders refused to give any contribution for flood relief. Consequent upon this controversy, the students were beaten up mercilessly in the presence of the Police by businessmen's hired people. The inaction of the police in punishing the culprits sparked off the agitation and it spread to different districts. It was alleged that the unscrupulous businessmen had the protection everywhere of the police and the ruling party.

All over the backward Western districts of Orissa, the local people have resented the money power of the Marwaris, their clout and prosperity. Marwaris controlled the wholesale business and to a considerable extent, the retail trade also. They are also the leading money lending class in the interior regions of Western Orissa. It has been alleged that the Community gets support from the political leaders because of their liberal contribution to the election funds of different parties.

The people of the locality stood by the students. Police measures could not quell the struggle. The students of Sambalpur called a students convention in the month of October, where the All Orissa Students' Council of Action was formed with Suresh Poovjar as the Convener. They gave a call for strikes in all colleges in the State on November 5 and
demonstration before the Secretariat at Bhubaneswar on November 21 on an eight-point charter of demands, the most important being, stabilisation of prices and punishment to black marketeers and hoarders. The anti-Repression Day was observed on November 26 and from November 27 the anti-price rise and anti-black marketeers week was observed. The programme ended in Orissa Bundh on December 5. The ruling Congress Party, the RSS and the ABVP tried to give the agitation a communal colour. The opposition political parties, which were at first, either hesitant or indifferent, supported the movement seeing its mass character.

As a result of this agitation, trade came to a stand still in the Western districts of Orissa. An appeal was made by the leaders of different Political Parties in the Orissa Legislative Assembly to maintain communal harmony and to preserve the traditional integration among the different communities. The State Government appointed a Committee of educationists headed by Dr. H. K. Mahatab to go through the demands of the students and make suitable recommendations.

This student movement was concentrated mainly in the Western districts of Orissa and caused sufficient anxiety and embarrassment to the party in power. The feeling that Oriyas

are neglected and are not getting justice has developed among the local people. This has accentuated the frustration already prevalent among students because of poor employment prospects in the State. Contrasting this movement with Assam agitation, A.K. Bal writes: "In Assam, the students are agitating against cultural domination by the non-Assamese. They feel a crisis in terms of their cultural identity, but in the case of Orissa, the movement is against economic domination by one community and the concentration of economic powers in its hands". This movement focused on broader socio-economic issues and students played a laudable role in giving the lead "to break the stranglehold of money-power and vested interests pervading all walks of life".

A shock wave spread throughout Orissa by the most unfortunate incident which took place in the early hours of July 14, 1984 in the Burla market area in the district of Sambalpur. It was alleged that students of the University College of Engineering, Burla, had a scuffle with some businessmen in the market area and set fire to the tailoring shop of one Mangat Ram and damaged and looted some shops. Despite police presence, students were allegedly chased and assaulted by a section of the mob and this resulted in the tragic death

of eleven students of the Engineering College and injury to many more.

Students all over the State expressed shock over this tragic incident and demonstrated against police inaction to protect students' lives. The All Orissa Students Action Committee and all opposition parties jointly gave a call to observe 'Orissa bundh' on August 14, 1984. The bundh paralysed the normal life in the State and five people lost their lives and many more were injured, by police measures. The Government appointed a Commission of inquiry on Burdhi incident, but the students dissociated themselves from the Commission.

A review of the landmarks in student political activism in Orissa indicates that students were capable of expressive political activity in times of necessity. There have been quite a few state-wide student movements which have exerted considerable impact on the larger political sphere. During the seventies an all Orissa Student agitation has not taken place. After the establishment of the Berhampur and Sambalpur Universities in 1967, Berhampur and Sambalpur became centres for articulating the grievances and demands of the students of the southern and western regions of Orissa respectively. Until 1969, Cuttack City was the nerve centre of the state-wide student movements and Ravenshaw College Union took up the leadership. In recent years, issues of common concern are
being taken up by students of colleges covered by a university rather than students of the entire state. With the proliferation of colleges, it has been difficult to mobilise students in the entire state on some common issue or programme. Moreover, the ideological and political rivalry and competition amongst different student political associations adversely affects the prospects of a unified student movement.

One of the trends of student politics in Orissa is that ongoing student movements to combat the multifarious socio-economic and political ills and maladies are singularly lacking. Students have frequently come forward to fight for their own rights and interests, but rarely have they acted as agents of social change. Sporadic agitations cannot be characterised as student movements. Nevertheless, students of Orissa have displayed great organising ability and intense political involvement at least on six occasions since independence namely, the anti-fee rise strike in 1951, agitation against the S.R.C. Report, agitation against the Mitra Government in 1964, the 1969 strike, the student agitation of 1980 and agitation over the Burla tragedy in 1984. These agitations affected students of the entire State and put considerable pressure on powers - that-be. "Nonetheless, these instances of effective but sporadic and diffuse political action by students do not indicate the emergence of an on-going student movement. Most of the student
protest activities in Orissa have been organised over campus-oriented issues, although occasionally student leaders have skillfully manipulated the course of an agitation to transform it into a society-oriented one.21

(B) The District of Mayurbhanj:

Mayurbhanj is one of the thirteen districts of Orissa created in 1949 out of the former princely State of Mayurbhanj. It is a land locked district situated in the northern boundary of the State of Orissa. It is also one of the border districts with the district headquarters at Baripada. It is bounded in the north by Mindnapur District of West Bengal and Singhbhum District of Bihar, in the south by Keonjhar and Balasore Districts of Orissa, in the west by Singhbhum and Keonjhar and in the east by Balasore District.

The total geographical area of the district is 10,418 Square Kilometers22 which is about 6.69 per cent of the total geographical area of Orissa. It occupies eighth place in the State in respect of area. For administrative purposes, the district is divided into four sub-divisions. The entire district is divided into three natural divisions, namely, the Eastern, the Western and the Central divisions. The two hill ranges of lesser elevation act as dividing line of the plains into two halves: (i) Eastern and (ii) Western.


The Eastern division slopes gently from the foot of the hills towards the sea and served by a number of hill streams, forms an ideal area for irrigation. It has two subdivisions, namely, Kaptipada and Baripada. The Western portion is mainly a plain rising and falling in gentle slopes studded with many rocky mounds and hills. The soil of northern portion is mainly fertile and lends itself to cultivation. It has Bamanghaty (Rairangpur) sub-division in the north and Panchpir (Karanjia) sub-division in the south.

The central part is covered by a group of hills known as the Similipal range. The Similipal hills (covering major part of the district), untrodden in many parts, have a charm of their own. Rich in resources, they stand in their virgin glory with the captivating scenery, with animals and plants flourishing in their natural habitat. Since 1946, a National Park has been established within Similipal forests to preserve natural fauna and wild life.

Thus geographically Mayurbhanj is a unique district. In the opinion of S.N. Sirkar, "Mayurbhanj is a picturesque country. The hoary hills, mute witnesses of the mighty works of time, the lofty water falls and bubbling brooks singing the songs of eternity, the dark and deep 'sai' forests sheltering all kinds of wild animals, the cultivated valleys and plains, appeal alike to the artist and the man of action." 

The total population of the district is 15.82 lakhs which is 6 per cent of the total population of Orissa. In terms of population, it occupies seventh place in the State. The density of population of Mayurbhanj is 151 per square kilometer as against 169 persons per square kilometer at the State level. The majority of the population are Hindus. Oriya and the tribal dialects are spoken by the inhabitants of the district.

A peculiar feature of Mayurbhanj is the very high percentage of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who constitute 64.3 per cent of the total population of the district as against 38.20 per cent of the State. Koraput district with 69.3 per cent occupies the first place in concentration of highest percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in the State followed by Mayurbhanj with 64.3 per cent. As per the 1981 census, Scheduled caste population in the district is 1.04 lakhs which is 6.58 per cent of the total population of the district as against 15.09 of the State. The Scheduled Tribe population in the district is 9.12 lakhs which is 57.67 per cent of the total population while it is 23.11 per cent in the case of Orissa. Nine out of ten Assembly constituencies of the district are 'reserved' (in these constituencies, persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes can contest in elections and persons belonging to general

---

castes other than S.C. and S.T. cannot contest in them). The aboriginal and semi-aboriginal tribes are mainly Santhals, Bhumijas, Bathuris; Pans, Konds and Gondas.

One of the most important indicators of economic underdevelopment of a region from the demographic aspect is the composition of population and its ratio between rural and urban components. Mayurbhanj, with its 94.28 per cent of population living in the villages and 5.72 per cent in towns (majority of which, in fact, are big villages rather than towns in modern sense), as against 88.18 per cent and 11.82 per cent respectively at the State level, is one of the least urbanised districts of Orissa. Needless to mention here that Boudh-Khondmals district ranks first as the least urbanised district with 5.3 per cent of population in urban areas followed by the district of Mayurbhanj with 5.72 per cent.\(^{26}\)

The level of literacy on the basis of 1981 census in the district is lower than the level of literacy for the State as a whole. It is 25.47 per cent in the district against 34.12 per cent for the State. The level of Scheduled Caste literacy is 24.76 per cent and that of Scheduled Tribe is 14.5 per cent against 22.41 and 13.96 per cent respectively in the State as a whole.

Mayurbhanj is rich in natural resources with tremendous industrial potential in the forests and mines. But it is

\(^{26}\) Ibid., pp.8-9.
one of the most backward districts in the State. Its economy is agriculture-dominated. It is seen from the 1981 census report that 80 per cent of the total working force is engaged in agriculture, 6 per cent in mining and quarrying, 5 per cent in household industries and 9 per cent in other activities. Due to lack of irrigation facilities and other modern technical know-how, this agricultural economy is in an underdeveloped stage. Though the district is rich in mineral wealth, especially iron-ore, this is being sent to other states, mainly to the Tata Iron and Steel Company, Jamshedpur, Bihar. One of the factors of the industrial backwardness of the district is the lack of proper utilisation of its own resources.

So far as transport and communication are concerned, the district provides for better facilities for its people. "Roads may be designated as "the carrier of development" in the district, 1510 kilometers of roads are maintained by the Public Works Department of which 62 per cent are surfaced roads and 38 per cent are unsurfaced. Besides, the local authorities maintain 9,304 kilometers of roads of which 12 per cent are surfaced and the rest 88 per cent are unsurfaced till the end of 1978-79". In addition to this, 77.06 kilometers of National Highway No. 5 (Calcutta-Madras) and 59.40 kilometers of National Highway No. 6 (Calcutta-Bombay) run through the district. Moreover, a broad gauge railway line connects Badampahar mining area of

the district with the industrial and business centre at Tatanagar in Bihar; and a metre gauge line passes through the district from Rupsa of Balasore to Bangripoli.

Mayurbhanj has a very glorious history and a great heritage. "The name 'Mayurbhanj' indicates that the State was named after the two medieval ruling families-Mayuras and Bhanjas."28 "The Mayuras, as known from their records, were ruling over Bonai Mandala contemporaneous with Bhanjas of Khijinga Mandala. There were close social and cultural relation between these ruling families. The headquarters of Khijinga Kota was destroyed by Sultan Firoz Shah Taghluq in 1361 A.D. and the Capital was transferred from Khijinga Kota to Haripur about 1400A.D. By that time the Bhanjas appear to have been culturally influenced by the Mayuras. They had substituted their own royal emblem, the Bull by the Peacock which was the royal insignia of the Mayuras. After shifting the capital to Haripur it was probably not found proper to name the Kingdom after the deserted capital. So the name was changed to Mayurbhanj in commemoration of the traditional relation.29

Mayurbhanj had the distinction of being administered by the Bhanja dynasty in unbroken succession since about the 9th century A.D. till its merger with the State of Orissa in the year 1949. The copper plate inscriptions issued by the early Bhanja rulers indicate that their Kingdom(Khijinga Mandala) was an extensive territory comprising the present Mayurbhanj

29. Ibid.
and Keonjhar districts as well as parts of Singhbhum district in Bihar and Midnapur district in West Bengal. During the Mughal period, the territory of Bhanja rulers extended as far as the Bay of Bengal.

According to R.D. Banerjee, the status of the Raja of Mayurbhanja in 1592 was the same as that of the Gajapati Raja of Khurda and he ruled over a wider area beginning with Singhbhum and ending with Talmunda, Jamirapal and Jamakunda at the north of Subarnarekha river.30

The Bhanja dynasty had many famous and benevolent rulers. During the fratricidal war among the sons of Shah Jahan, Krushna Chandra Bhanja, the Raja of Mayurbhanj assumed much power and plundered the tract from Bhadrak to Midnapur. But subsequently in 1660 A.D., he was suppressed by Aurangzeb. In 1742, the Raja of Mayurbhanj supported the cause of Mirza Baquir who revolted against Alivardi Khan, the latter having had undertaken the subjugation of Mayurbhanj till 1751.31 During this period, the status of Mayurbhanj was like that of a semi-independent state as Alivardi Khan was too much preoccupied with war against the Maratha invaders. The Marathas took control over Mayurbhanj in 1751 and during their rule the state was deprived of many regions in the east.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the headquarters of Mayurbhanj shifted from Haripur to Baripada when Maharani

Sumitra Devi was ruling over the State of Mayurbhanj under the British occupation in 1803, and it is known from Mr. Earnst's letter of the 25th November, 1803 that by that time "Morebunge proper comprises a space about 30 "coss" from east to west and of about 25 miles from north to south with a public revenue amounted altogether to sixa Rupees 16,000. During the period from 1830 to 1834, the Kols of Bamanghaty rose in rebellion against the state and Jadunath Bhanja, the then Raja of Mayurbhanj handed over four large kol pirs of Bamanghaty to the British Government. No other territorial loss occurred till the merger of Mayurbhanj with Orissa.\(^{32}\)

Maharaja Krishnachandra Bhanja Deo laid the foundation of a progressive and benevolent administration in Mayurbhanj which was well maintained by Sri Rama Chandra.

The last part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century ushered a glorious era in the history of Mayurbhanj. It was the period during which Maharaja Sri Rama Chandra Bhanja Deo established a unique benevolent administration in Mayurbhanj. Of course his period was a short-lived one from the time of his accession in 1882 till his premature death in 1912. "Maharaja Sri Rama Chandra was a man whose private character, and public life, whose manners, profound scholarship, administrative ability, high-mindedness and zeal for work, were

\(^{32}\) Orissa District Gazetteer, Mayurbhanj, Op.Cit., p.3.
such as to win the appreciation, regard and affection of all who knew him. His interest ranged from the ancient history of the social and religious antiquities of the State to the most modern methods of its government and of the development of its resources. From the date of his accession almost till the hour of his death, his whole heart and soul were devoted to the improvement of his heritage and amelioration and upraising of the conditions of the people, and the success which he achieved was due in no small measures to his love for the country of his birth and his realisation of the trust placed upon him.  

The benevolent administration laid by Maharaja Krishna Chandra Bhanja Deo and well maintained by Maharaja Sri Rama Chandra Bhanja Deo continued uninterrupted during the time of Maharaja Purna Chandra and Pratap Chandra. Hence there was no scope for massive mass dissatisfaction among the people of Mayurbhanj. In spite of this, there were some incidents of people's resentment in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

In 1866 there was a tribal movement in Damanghaty area against the revenue policy of Srinath Bhanja, the then Raja of Mayurbhanj. "There appears to be neither fixed rents nor times of payment, some pay twice, some not at all". The movement gained momentum due to the undue interference in the traditional way of life of the tribal people. The grave

repercussion of the great famine of 1866 and the illegal imposition of new taxes added fuel to the fire. Under such circumstances, the Raja did not obey the directions of the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahal. With the help of the British administration a pact was signed between the Raja and the subjects but afterwards when the Raja violated it, the agitation took a serious and violent shape and resulted in the taking away of all powers of the Raja by the British government. However, in 1878, the powers of the king were restored. Thus the Bamanghaty 'melee' was the first protest against the inefficiency of monarchical set up.

After fifty years of the Bamanghati 'melee', in 1917 the Santhals who comprise the most significant component of the tribal population, protested against the sending of coolies from this area to France. When the strike turned to be violent, the situation was brought under control by the army.

The Bamanghati melee of 1866 and the Santhal agitation of 1917 were not treated as incidents of mass movement, because they lacked any specific ideology and proper leadership.34

However, the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a new awakening in the life of the people of Mayurbhanj. Some energetic and enthusiastic young men under

the leadership of Sarat Chandra Das took up some constructive activities centering round the Jagannath Club of Baripada. The Club had no political objectives as it was primarily a philanthropic association. But for the development of social and political consciousness of the people of Mayurbhanj, the contribution of this Club can seldom be exaggerated. Even 'Utkal Gaurav' Madhusudan and 'Utkalmoni' Gopabandhu praised the activities of this association very much.

By 1921, the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi had been transformed into a fighting mass movement. Mayurbhanj could not remain unaffected by the patriotic fervour generated by the freedom movement. The freedom movement turned into mass struggle in the neighbouring districts of Midnapur and Balasore. Concerted mass resentment gained momentum against the dictatorial administration of the King of Nilagiri. The bloody mass movement against the Dhenkanal 'durbar' shook the very foundation of the 'garjats' of Orissa. Though the situation of Mayurbhanj was different from all other garjats, the demand for a separate State for Orissa and the establishment of popular and responsible administration created a deep impression on the minds of the people of Mayurbhanj.

The year 1939 constituted a watershed in the political history of Mayurbhanj. The Mayurbhanj "Praja Mandal" was formed.

35. Ibid.
in this fateful year. This was a people's forum having a political ideology. Its primary aim was to unite and integrate the people and to demand the enforcement of their minimum civic rights through the establishment of popular administration. Sarat Chandra Das - the Gandhi of Mayurbhanj 'Praja Andolan' (People's Movement) gave much importance to unity and organisation in all its meetings at different places of Mayurbhanj. The first open session of the Mayurbhanj Praja Mandal was held at Kuradiha and Sarangdhar Das, the great and popular leader of Orissa Praja Andolan (People's movement of Orissa) presided over it. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then President of "All India Garjat Praja Sammilani" commended the activities of Mayurbhanj Praja Mandal.36

By 1941 Mayurbhanj Praja Mandal became a strong organisation and the movement led by it gathered momentum. The historic 'Quit India' proposal was accepted at the Amanida session of the Praja Mandal. A 'Hunger March' of nearly forty thousand people started for Baripada from Betnoti under the leadership of Prasanna Kumar Dach and Late Girish Chandra Roy. The Praja Mandal was emboldened by the 'Paika' movement in Mayurbhanj and gradually got strong public support.

In order to counteract the growing influence of the Praja Mandal, one 'Praja Mangal'—(aiming at the welfare of the people)—was established under the royal patronage. But it

36. Ibid.
ended in a smoke immediately. In the meantime, Sonaram Soren made an initiative to organise the tribal people and in this connection, it is alleged, he got the indirect support of the Maharaja. Towards the fag end of the British regime, the British administration advised the rulers of the princely states to encourage the tribals to protest against the Praja Mandal. However, their tactic did not click.

On May 7, 1947, in an urgent session at Ambajoda, the Praja Mandal took some important decisions. It resolved to give an ultimatum to the King demanding the establishment of a popular and responsible government in Mayurbhanj without further delay and ultimately those were conceded by the King and a ministry was formed under the leadership of Sarat Chandra Das on December 9, 1947.

With the transfer of power from the hands of the British on 15th August, 1947, their paramountcy in respect of the former Indian States lapsed and the State of Mayurbhanj became an independent unit. Soon after that, a State Legislative Assembly was formed by a proclamation of the Maharaja on the 9th December, 1947 who formally transferred most of his powers to this body. When on the 14th December, 1947 Sardar Patel, the then Union Home Minister met the rulers of the eleven 'A' class States of Orissa with his proposal for merger, the Maharaja of Mayurbhanja argued that he had already granted responsible government in his state and a ministry was functioning there.
Hence he could not make any commitment without consulting his ministers. In view of this he was left out of discussion.

But the popular ministers of Mayurbhanj could not properly manage the state and they almost exhausted the savings of the treasury. The administration was becoming chaotic and there was great resentment among the people. The Maharaja, who came to know about the affairs, intimated the Government of India that if something was not done immediately the state would go bankrupt. Accordingly on 17th October, 1948, the Maharaja signed an Instrument of Merger and the administration of the state was taken over by the Government of India with effect from 9th December, 1948 and a Chief Commissioner was appointed to administer the State.\(^\text{37}\) It was subsequently decided that since Mayurbhanj, linguistically and culturally, had close links with Orissa, it should merge with that Province. On 1st January, 1949, Mayurbhanj merged with Orissa.

With the establishment of the Maharaja Purna Chandra College in the year 1948, Mayurbhanj saw the first sunrise of higher education. Till 1976 the number of Colleges in the district was only six, but, in recent years, there has been a steady proliferation of colleges in most of the areas of Mayurbhanj and, at present, there are as many as 30 colleges as against 12 in 1980-81.

Youth and student politics in Mayurbhanj has been marked by a low level of activism and a low degree of

'confrontation politics'. This is the result of Mayurbhanj's long association with monarchical set-up. During the pre-independence period, there occurred a very few incidents in which the youth and students took active part. The active participation of the youth and students in the 'Prajamandal' movement in demanding democratisation of the administration is the only instance of activism. Ultimately, due to the pressing demands of the Prajamandal, which got public support from all quarters, a parliamentary representative, government was established under the leadership of Sarat Chandra Das, an unprecedented event in the Princely States of Orissa.

After independence and the merger of Mayurbhanj with the State of Orissa, the first student upheaval in the district took place in the year 1956. Students of almost all the schools and the M.P.C. College (the only College in the district established by that time) joined the mass movement against the Report of the State Reorganisation Commission, 1956. During that movement some students were arrested at Rairangpur while objecting and obstructing the transport of iron-ore from Gorumahishani (an iron-ore belt in the district of Mayurbhanj) to Tata. Simultaneously, some other student leaders of Mayurbhanj were arrested at Cuttack while visiting the Samaj (the premier daily newspaper of Orissa) office. The primary demand of the mass agitation was the merger of Sareikala and Kharawan with Orissa which had been awarded to Bihar by the SRC. Although the movement failed to achieve its primary
objective, it left an indelible impression on the minds of the people and the students of Mayurbhanj, in particular.

During the sixties, students of M.P.C. College, Baripada, took active part in the All Orissa Student Movements of 1964 and 1969. But student movement in the district was less effective during this period as there was only one established college in the Mayurbhanj district and the three private colleges in Rairangpur, Karanjia and Udala were in their infancy.

The seventies and the eighties (so far) witnessed a steady growth in the number of colleges in the district and with this increase in number of colleges and the number of student population, there has been a simultaneous growth of political consciousness among students. Students of different colleges have resorted to protest activities on demands and grievances pertaining to the respective colleges and the district as well.

The year 1978 was considered to be the most eventful in the history of student politics in Mayurbhanj. For the first time a successful students' strike was organised and continued for a record 64 days under the leadership of Kishore Chandra Das, the then President of M.P.C. College, Baripada. The movement was a district-wide one and its primary objective was the spread of education and especially higher education in this backward district. The major demands of the strike were: opening of Post-graduate classes in M.P.C. College, Baripada, establishment of a Law College at the district head-quarters, a Medical
College and a University - the 'North Orissa University' - in this region. With all these genuine demands, the strike got full support of students of all the colleges, schools and the general public of the district. Schools and Colleges remained closed for days together.

The 'Kishore Das' strike, as it is being termed by the students of Mayurbhanj today, had far-reaching consequences. When it got strong public support, a special press note was issued by the Government of Orissa on January 30, 1978, requesting the students to call off the strike. It was assured that measures would be taken immediately for the expansion of higher education in Mayurbhanj. In spite of this, when the movement did not subside, on March 6, 1978, Mr. Pradipta Kishore Das, the then Education Minister of Orissa, was compelled to give a written assurance to fulfil the demands of the students and with this the 64 days long strike came to an end.

The strike bore some good results: Within a short span, steps were taken for fulfilling the demands; Post-graduate classes in History and Commerce were opened in M.P.C. College, Baripada and a Law College was established in 1978 at Baripada which started functioning in the local M.K.C. High School where the M.P.C. College had begun in 1948.

The 1980 student strike under the leadership of Suresh Poojari, which was caused due to the conflict between

---

the students and a business community of Sambalpur, had no significant impact upon the students of Mayurbhanj. However, some student leaders were greatly influenced by it and supported it by joining the All Orissa Students’ Council of Action.

The Burla tragedy of 1984 resulted in a district-wide stir in Mayurbhanj. Students of all educational institutions vehemently condemned the inhuman event and joined the mass movement. They observed 24th July, 1984 as the ‘Day of Bandh’ all over the district as a mark of respect to the departed souls of the Engineering students of Burla. While picketing, they were arrested batch by batch. In a massive procession under the leadership of Kishore Chandra Das at Baripada, both students and the general public gave slogans against the State Government. In the afternoon, when the offices were closed and the number of agitators swelled, the police immediately started ‘lathi charge’. Some students and innocent people were severely injured. This event of ‘lathi charge’ on peaceful, unarmed, innocent people was a black chapter in the history of Mayurbhanj.39

On 25th July, 1984, a peace Committee was organised and all the lawyers, administrators, influential citizens and leaders of opposition parties were invited to it. The lathi charge was the target of severe condemnation from all quarters and an immediate inquiry was demanded. Side by side, the Students’

39. See The Samaj, Date.28.7.1984.
Action Committee also started 'dharna' before the office of the District Collector demanding a high-level inquiry without delay.

The long-term effects of the police excesses in Baripada cannot be ignored. The State-wide 'Orissa-bandh' call on August 14, 1984, given by the Orissa Students' Action Committee got full response throughout the district of Mayurbhanj. The 'bandh' was a total success, not only at Baripada but also at Rairangpur, Udala and Karanjia. Parallel Independence Day ceremony was observed at all these places under the auspices of students and their supporters thereby boycotting the District-level and Sub-Divisional-level observance. These events created a situation in which students got the support of opposition political parties who played an active role in guiding the agitation. Student wings of different political parties slowly, but surely started gaining ground in Mayurbhanj.

During the last five years, there has been a slow but steady growth of student political activism in Mayurbhanj. Student political associations like the ABVP, the National Students Union of India (NSUI) or Chhatra Congress, the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) student wing of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), the Chhatra Janata of the Janata Party are quite active these days. They are busy in the expansion of their organisational network throughout the district by holding conventions and conferences throughout the year. They have not
only made efforts to sell their ideology to attract membership and to articulate campus needs and grievances, but also projected local/regional problems and issues concerning the district.

(C) The Colleges Under Study:

(i) M.P.C. College, Baripada:

The Maharaja Purna Chandra College, Baripada is the first and foremost college in the district. It is situated in Baripada, the headquarters of the district and an important township in north Orissa. With a view to catering to the needs of higher education, it was founded in July, 1948 by the Maharaja of the erstwhile Feudatory State of Mayurbhanj and was affiliated to the Utkal University in Intermediate Arts and Science with a sanctioned strength of 112 seats in each of the two classes in Arts and 80 students in each of the two classes in Science. The management of the College was taken over by the Government of Orissa from the first January, 1949 when Mayurbhanj State merged with Orissa.40

The College is named after Maharaja Purna Chandra Bhanja Deo of Mayurbhanj, a great lover and patron of learning and culture, who ruled from 1912 to 1928. The College also perpetuates the memory of Maharaja Sri Rama Chandra Bhana,

40. See M.P.C. College Calendar for the sessions 1983-84 and 1984-85.
the doyen of Orissan Renaissance, an enlightened ruler, who
was responsible for various social reforms. Maharaja Pratap
Chandra Bhanja assumed power in 1928. He too, was a great
patron of learning who subsequently became the Pro-Chancellor
of the Utkal University.

The college was housed from its inception in the
then existing building of Maharaja Krishna Chandra High School
and classes were held in the morning and in the afternoon. The
Maharaja's place was purchased in 1956, thus providing sufficient
accommodation for the college. At present the college has
five hostels, including one for women students. The Arts Section
of the college shifted from the school to the palace in 1960
and the Science Section in 1962. Now the college provides for
teaching in Honours in Arts, Science and Commerce up to the
Degree level and in Commerce and History up to the Post-graduate
level.

After the introduction of the +2 classes in Arts,
Science and Commerce, the accommodation problem became more
acute. A new magnificent building is coming up at Takatpur on
an impressive 268.53 acres area in the midst of mango groves,
punctuated by lichi plants.

The college has evolved amidst the beautiful surroundings
of Baripada into one of the foremost institutions of higher
education in Orissa. It has now a strength of above three thou-
sand students on the rolls and members of the teaching staff
The M.P.C. Evening College, Baripada was set up with the specific purpose of providing facilities to the service holders for collegiate education. In fulfilment of this requirement the institution came into being as the Evening shift of M.P.C. College, Baripada in the academic session 1966-67. At the initial stage, of course, there was provision for teaching only P.U. (Arts) Class. Next year the First Year Degree Class (Arts) was introduced. A couple of years after, the institution grew into a Degree College of Arts. To cut the long story short, the session 1972-73 saw the transformation of the institution into a full-fledged College named Government Evening College, Baripada.

Ever since its inception, the College has been housed in the M.P.C. College building, and it functions normally on all working days from 5.45 P.M. to 10.15 P.M. During the session 1978-79, the institution gained in dimension with provision for instruction up to the Honours stage in History and Political Science. In 1979, the College was re-christened by order of Government of Orissa. Since then the College has been functioning as M.P.C. Evening College, Baripada.

---

41. See M.P.C. Evening College Calendar, 1984-85.
(iii) Rairangpur College, Rairangpur:

With a view to catering to the needs and aspirations of growing number of students for higher education, different colleges sprang up with public support and patronage in different parts of the district. Rairangpur College, Rairangpur which came into existence in 1963\(^{42}\) was the first non-government College which inspired the people of other regions of the district to set up similar colleges. The College is situated in the township of Rairangpur which is 85 kilometers away from the district head-quarters, Baripada. The College provides teaching in Arts, Science and Commerce upto the degree level with the facility for Honours in some important subjects.

Like all private Colleges, Rairangpur College has its nagging financial problems. But the College is fully aided by the Government and has also received generous donation of Rs.2 lakhs from the Tata Iron and Steel Company for the construction of the College building. With aid from the State Government and other agencies and the unabated zeal of the local public, the College is expanding steadily.

(iv) Karanjia College, Karanjia:

Karanjia College, situated at a distance of 112 kilometers from Baripada, was set up in July, 1964\(^{43}\) to fulfill

42. See Rairangpur College Calendar for the session 1984-85.
43. See Karanjia College Calendar for the session 1984-85.
a long-felt yearning of the people for the pursuit of higher learning. It came into being as a result of the generous help and donations made by the local public and the sincere efforts of the officials of Karanjia.

Karanjia, situated amidst the woodland grave gives a picturesque surrounding predominantly inhabited by 'Adivasi' tribal populace who were hitherto deprived of the rights of higher education until the College was built up in 1964.

The College provides for teaching in Honours in certain subjects of Arts and Science upto Degree level and in Commerce upto Intermediate level. It has three hostels including one for the women students. It is a non-government College, fully aided by the government.

(v) Udala College, Udala;

Udala College, Udala, situated at a distance of 45 kilometers from Baripada was set up in 1965 in fulfilment of the aspirations of the local people. During the sixties, when the flame of higher education was noticed in different parts of Orissa, a few local intellectuals immensely felt the necessity of establishing a College in this tribal area. A very magnanimous donation by Sri Biju Pattnaik, Ex-Chief Minister of Orissa, at the appropriate time paved the way for the birth of the College in 1965.44

44. See Udala College Calendar, for the session 1988-89.
At the initial stage, the teaching accommodation problem was solved by the local Boys' High School, Town Club and a thatched house constructed by the management with Pre-University Class. In 1966 the First Year Degree Classes in Arts and Science were opened. In 1969 the College shifted to its present compound. The institution grew into a Degree College in 1971 and has been affiliated to the Utkal University. The pressing need of accommodation is largely solved from the last session, i.e., 1987-88 after the completion of a two-storied building under the U.G.C. scheme with an estimated cost of Rs. 3.5 lakhs.\textsuperscript{45}

The College provides teaching in Honours in some subjects in Arts and Science up to the Degree level and for Commerce up to the Intermediate/Higher Secondary level. The present student strength of the College is 1350 as against 80 in 1965 and the strength of teaching staff has gone up from 5 in 1965 to 42 in 1987. It is a non-government College, fully aided by the Government of Orissa.

Away from the din and bustle of the township of Udala, amidst the serene Sal jungle, the College embraces a tranquil atmosphere congenial to study and suitable for academic pursuits.

(vi) Mayurbhanj Law College, Baripada:

With the express purpose of creating legal consciousness among the people and providing legal education, the Mayurbhanj

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
Law College, Baripada was established in 1978 and was affiliated to the Utkal University, the next year. It is a non-government College, well managed by the "Mayurbhanj Law College Association", an active registered body. Classes were being held in the local M.K.C. High School, Baripada since the inception of the College and it shifted to its own building at Takatpur educational complex during the academic session 1987-88.

During the session 1983-84, the College opened two new Societies, namely, Free Legal Aid Society and Audio-Visual Society. In a backward tribal district like Mayurbhanj, where tribal people are being exploited, it was felt to help them in restoring their legal rights and in freeing them from exploitation. The Audio-Visual Society is providing visual knowledge on subjects like sports and games, ecological harmony and other subjects of national interest.

The students of this college get admission after graduation. As such, their levels of political consciousness and political efficacy are higher than the students of other Degree Colleges. Since its inception, students of this College are playing an important role in articulating student demands and grievances in the district.

46. Mayurbhanj Law College Calendar, 1984-85.