Chap-II

METHODOLOGY
I The Problem

The discussion of the different theories analysing political power and the relevant Indians studies, in the previous chapter, indicated the problems involved in the studies and the existing gaps. The elite studies are confined to the study of the background attributes and attitudes of the members belonging to certain political institution(s) without relation to the wider historical socio-economic structure of the state, which is the basis for understanding the complexity of a political system. The elite decisions too were never related to the class interests. Likewise, the class studies, more or less, have remained deductive without adequate empirical support. Further, studies on agrarian class relations at the micro-level are very inadequate and few.

In this situation, our concern is to explore the possibilities of overcoming these limitations to some extent, and make the study relatively more relevant and comprehensive. The problem is to find the relations between the political elite and the ruling class in an Indian state, both at the macro and micro-levels.

At the macro-level, unlike the usual political elite studies which only account for the elected candidates of Assembly or Parliament, this study has taken into account the
constestants of Assembly elections, comprising both elected and defeated candidates. It covers the socio-economic and political background of the contestants and attempts to relate this to the socio-economic structure of the state. At the same time, the major policy decisions of the political elite are analysed to find out the class interest in the policies and in their implementations.

At the micro-level, the study includes a predominantly tribal village, a village characterised primarily by feudal relationships, and a village penetrated by capitalist mode of production. Here due consideration is given to class, caste and power and an attempt has been made to locate their relative importance in each village.

It is impossible to circumscribe in a single study the relative role of all the major classes in the structure of power and society. Thus to evaluate the relative role of the business class vis-a-vis the landlord class form assessment of whether one is more or less dominant than the other, or whether, they are mutually reinforcing and therefore complementary, needs a different kind of study. The present study gravitates towards confounding the relation between polity and society primarily in terms of the agrarian social reality. Hence the focus is on the agrarian social structure and that aspect of the polity which is instrumental in generating the forces of change and status quo. Given this perspective the major propositions derived from the theoretical survey are as follows:

1. In an agrarian society, the political decisions tend to be in a direction favourable to the interests of the landed class; where they are not, the role of the landed interests is to subvert them;
the dominant political parties, irrespective of their differences in ideology and commitment; tend to support the rural power holders, who have the major control over land, and at times, lending and marketing; in a given state, the variations in the development of forces of production lead to a significant variation in the power structure and political consciousness;

at the village level, by and large, caste hierarchy tends to coincide with the class positions of respective groups and the power structure of the village; where it is not, it exposes the control of major instruments of production not in the hands of the higher castes.

In brief, the research problem is identified by stating that the present attempt is to consider the relations between the political elite and the ruling class. Accordingly, the enterprise has been carried out at three levels: (1) analysis of the attributional economic and political data at the macro-level; (2) exposition of the background of the political elite, and its policy formulation and implementations; and, (3) analysis of both the attributional and, relational data on class, caste and power in micro-level situations.

In order to convey appropriately the findings of the study, this chapter narrates the method and approach including their justifications and limitations.
To start with, it is necessary to clarify the rationale and the shortcomings in the selection of the field. There are very few studies on Orissa politics exploring the socio-economic background and class interests of Orissa state legislators. Moreover, the time of field work in the beginning of 1974 has coincided with the mid-term Orissa Assembly elections, which to a considerable extent facilitated the research work.

The field work was divided into two stages. The first stage confined itself to the collection of data relating to the political elite of the state. Here, the units of investigation were the contestants for the legislative seats. There were as many as 404 contestants from different parties and 318 independents. The universe of generalisation for these units, as will be obvious, is the state of Orissa. Hence, the scope of the first phase of the field work is macroscopic.

The second phase of field work, and the more intensive phase, is the empirical investigations carried on in three villages of the state. The selection of three villages was

For literature on Orissa politics see the following:
determined by the requirements of one of the major hypotheses, viz. "the variations in the forces of production lead to significant variations in the power structure and political consciousness". Accordingly, the variation in the forces of production has been accounted for in the 'tribal, 'feudal and capitalist' villages. These villages are tribal, feudal, capitalist in the predominant sense and not in the pure sense, although the tribal and the feudal villages may come closer to the 'pure' end than the village with the capitalist influence.

II Indicators and Methods

Now before coming to the relevant methods and principle variables in the analysis of the macro-level economic and political information, it may be worthwhile to note that it is obviously very difficult to analyse the class structure of the state in a single-handed research enterprise. Hence, the study is forced to limit itself to the analysis of the economic data derived from secondary source material. It is a fact that mere figures are inadequate to the understanding of class relations in a society. But under the constraints of time, personnel and finance, secondary analysis fills the macro-research needs, though inadequately. Accordingly, the present macro-level analysis covers the relevant macro-data on the structure of the asset holdings, the level of productive forces, the problems of production and distribution in agriculture, commerce and industry, with a certain emphasis on the trends of their development, over a period of time.
With regard to the background of the political elite, the study considers certain relevant variables, which help the people to reach the said position. Again, since the entire electoral activity takes place in a social milieu, it is naturally determined by a host of diverse factors. As such, the major thrust would be to use certain explanatory variables on demographic composition (population, sex, migration, etc.), social background (caste/tribe, religion, education etc.), economic distribution (Landholding, ownership of important properties, occupation etc.), and political participation (party position, other political leadership positions, elections won/defeated, votes polled etc.). This list by no means exhausts all the possible socio-economic indicators. But looking at the problems of data collection, nothing more could be accomplished at this level of study. However, the variables included in this analysis are quite adequate to inform the background of the political elite.

The background information of the contestants of 1974 Orissa Legislative Assembly elections is collected by using an interview schedule. Besides, whenever possible attempts have been made to verify the information by the local inhabitants. But often, contrasting information were provided by the candidate and the local informants. Many of the candidates tried to conceal details of their assets while the local informants due to their ignorance or affiliation to candidates provided false or exaggerated information. This problem could
have been reduced to a considerable extent by establishing proper rapport with relevant people and entering into the secondary data, like the revenue records etc. But after a sample trial in a small district—Phulbani—it was found that in addition to other problems, the time needed for verification was forbidden. Moreover, large tracts of land in western Orissa is still unsurveyed. Again, many of the big landowners of the area evaded the point by stressing that much of their possession is left barren or uncultivated or used as grazing and cremation ground. In some places of coastal Orissa also, the problem of accuracy could not be satisfactorily verified. In addition, there was also the problem of categories of agricultural lands differentiated by irrigation facilities, number of crops harvested and their market value.

While the interview schedule was to be filled in by the contestants this often proved impossible as they were too preoccupied with canvassing and therefore difficult to get at within the limited time available for collection of data. To adjust with their time, the time schedule was made little flexible. But still only 194 candidates could be interviewed directly, while in case of the other 154 candidates, the schedules were completed in the party offices of the respective constituencies, and wherever possible they are rechecked by interviewing the candidates(62). Other forms were completed only after interviewing a few local informants(92).

With regard to the analysis of the class interests of the political elite through the policy formulations and implementations, the study has again relied on secondary source materials, mainly government publications and records. Since
the pattern of land distribution is the main source of alienation in an agrarian society, the issues pertaining to land policies, particularly land reform legislations have been considered of primary importance for an analysis of class interests of the political elite. Besides, the study has examined the policies for the protections and privileges of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, legislations on the control of moneylending and bonded labour. In the meanwhile, specially with regard to land policies, the debates in the Orissa Legislative Assembly have been analysed.

At the micro-level, we start with the basic assumption that caste and class share important properties together and are to a large extent interrelated, thus making it easier to study both the tangible factors within a single framework. Accordingly the two basic variables—caste and class are studied to understand the rural power structure. The rationale for this is that all the pertinent issues and the social roots of rural politics are directly related to these two variables.

As pointed earlier, the chief aim of the study of villages is to trace the broad relationship between class and caste and their relations with the rural power structure. To achieve this end, it is essential to locate the main indicators.
In the present situation, the main indicators are land, lending, trade and market, industrial labour, and also income and education. Of these, land relations appear to be the main denominator of the rural class structure. Following from the pattern and kind of land distribution and control of instruments of production, the nature of work performed in the field and obligatory duties, there can be several classes. Likewise is the case with the other indicators.

To get the concerned materials, a household socio-economic census covering the broad information on age, sex, religion, landholding, tenancy, lending, animal husbandry, knowledge of voting and the reasons of their preference, was used. In addition, through a net-work schedule, information on kinship bases of alliance of social forces as well as their relation to the local political positions have been collected. Here the boundaries of study has extended beyond the village. Moreover matters pertaining to qualitative data such as decision making process, obligatory duties etc. have been collected through intensive interview, observation and case study methods.

For the convenience of the study of the economic structure let us mention the main features of different modes of production, especially of feudalism, semi-feudalism and capitalism. Let us begin with the concept of feudalism. Feudalism refers to a historically conditioned socio-economic formation, wherein the production relations are based on the feudal lords ownership of the means of production, primarily land. In this system, "an obligation is laid on the producer by force and independently
of his own volition to fulfill certain economic demands, of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in money or kind”. Maurice Dobb provides a concise outline of its most important features: (a) low level of technique and division of labour, (b) production not for wider market, (c) often farming by compulsory labour services, (d) political decentralization, (e) conditional holding of land by lords on some kind of service tenure, (f) possession of judiciary functions by the landlord over the dependent population. And, the relation between the owners and the serfs is predominantly socio-political, concealing the economic contradictions.

With the breakdown of the self-sufficient subsistence economy and the growth of commodity economy, feudal relation tend to change as they are replaced by the capitalist mode of production. During this transformation, there may be a transitional phase, which may be called semi-feudal or pre-capitalist. In this phase, the working population is exploited through land and lending. This is said to be the main feature of "semi-feudalism" Bhaduri narrates the main features of semi-feudal agriculture:

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3. Ibid, p. 36.
5. See the debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Science and Society, Spring 1950 to fall 1953.
"(a) Sharecropping, (b) perpetual indebtedness of the small tenants, (c) concentration of two modes of exploitation namely usury and landownership, in the hands of same economic class, (d) lack of accessibility for the small tenant to the market". Likewise, Bettelheim argues that, though in to-day's agriculture in India, the classic Marxian categories of feudalism do not apply, there is enough evidence to note the decline of feudalism, and the new situation may be called semi-feudalism: "Typical of the situation is the absence of a labour market in a large part of the rural sector; the personal subservience of the immediate producer to the landlord; the excessive importance of land-rent; the under-developed marketing system, resulting in little social division of labour, a low rate of accumulation, and the use of produce mainly to satisfy immediate needs".

By contrast, the emergence of capitalism in agriculture is marked by a shift to wage labour and simultaneous accumulation and reinvestment of the surplus. Besides, there will be increasing concentration of the means of production and thereby development of the productive forces. The agricultural wage labourers, too, will be increasingly free and unattached to the means of production. A capitalist farmer will tend to (a) cultivate his land

11. See, M.Dobb, op.cit., p.56.
himself rather than lease it out; (b) use hired labour in much greater proportion than family labour; (c) use farm machinery; (d) market an important share of produce and (e) organise his production to yield a high rate of return on his investments.

Before we come to the formation of industrial capital, it is worthwhile to look into the issues relating to merchant capital and interest-bearing capital. These capitals have an independent existence in the precapitalist society and in course of time they are subordinated by the industrial capital. The transition, according to Marx, have two alternative historical possibilities. The path of really revolutionised transformation of the pre-capitalist into the capitalist mode of production is characterised by the growing dependence of merchants' capital on industrial capital, where merchants' capital "is reduced from its former independent existence to a special phase in the investment of capital .... It functions only as an agent of productive capital". While, the second path is characterised by the independent development of merchants' capital within the old mode of production, where "the merchant establishes direct sway over production". Marx emphasised that "however much this serves historically as a stepping stone... it cannot by itself contribute to the overthrow of the old mode of production, but tends rather to preserve and retain it as its precondition".

Capitalism has its base on private ownership of the means of production and the exploitation of wage labour. Under capitalism, the working people have personal freedom but are deprived of the means of production and hence of the means of subsistence. Hence while, there is the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few individuals, large masses of the working people are forced to sell their labour in order to live.

Besides the features of different modes of production, let us consider the different classes at the village level. As is argued in the previous chapter that to discuss politics both at village and state level in terms of dominant and dependent castes is an over-simplification. Also to ignore caste in the class analysis is bound to prove inadequate, for neither caste nor class alone can explain fully the socio-political structure of the society. The social roots of rural politics in India are directly related to both these variables. Again, in transitional social formations, politics is manifested in factional disputes. Thus the model for the study of rural power shall incorporate caste, class and 'faction' and their inter-connections and independent and interrelated impacts, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, on the power structure.

In this connection, it is essential to have a theoretical-methodological framework in the form of a matrix to find out the interrelations between caste, class and faction, and to analyse the political power in the empirical situations of.

village India. To arrive at the matrix let us first clarify the divisions in class and caste at the village level. The classes can be identified (i) in relation to their position in the organization of labour and their relationship to the means of production, and (ii) in terms of the control of over the means of production. Accordingly, there may be the following seven classes in villages of India by the former criterion:

1. Owners of the means of production, do not participate manually in the production process (Landlords)
   a) Main income from land rent, usurious interest and/or other extra-economic form of feudal exploitation (feudal landlords).
   b) Main income from hiring labour (capitalist landlord).

2. Owners employing family labour constituting less than half of the total labour input and wage labour, normally earns a surplus (Rich peasant).

3. Owners employing far more than 50 per cent labour input from their family labour, at times, leasing in a little land. More or less self-sufficient (Middle Peasant and Independent Artisans).

4. Owners having surplus family labour over and above their own requirements and either lease in or work

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Footnote: The formulation of this idea and the algebraic matrix is the contribution of my supervisor, P.N. Mukherji, who is using a much more sophisticated matrix for his forthcoming study on social movements in Bihar and West Bengal.
for wages. Live below the margin of subsistence (small peasant).

5 No means of production, lease-in-land (pure share-croppers).

6 No means of production, earn a livelihood mainly through the sale of their wage labour in agriculture or allied occupations (Agricultural labourers).

7 Others (specify, depending on situation).

A further categorization of class may be based on the classification of the control over the means of production. Here the classification will take into account the attribute of ownership and control over land and other related resources by individual interactants.

Similarly a useful classification of castes may be the differentiation of the ritual criteria, without which caste would lose its identity. Therefore, it may be useful to classify castes according to 'twice-born', 'non-twice born' and scheduled castes and tribes. Tribes generally find a status equivalent and some times lower than scheduled castes in caste/tribe interactions.

However, for a theoretical mapping for a of caste - class structure we may keep the number of castes and classes discrete. Thus let us assume the number of castes and tribes in any given univire study to be $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_t$. Likewise, the number of classes to be $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_l$.

The relations between class and caste may be mapped in a matrix form, which would ultimately differentiate our village situations, and expose their importance in rural politics.
### Caste/Tribe and Class Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste/Tribe</th>
<th>$Ct_1$</th>
<th>$Ct_2$</th>
<th>$Ct_3$</th>
<th>$Ct_4$</th>
<th>$Ct_n$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$Cl_1$</td>
<td>$a_{11}$</td>
<td>$a_{12}$</td>
<td>$a_{13}$</td>
<td>$a_{14}$</td>
<td>$a_{1n}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Cl_2$</td>
<td>$a_{21}$</td>
<td>$a_{22}$</td>
<td>$a_{23}$</td>
<td>$a_{24}$</td>
<td>$a_{2n}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Cl_3$</td>
<td>$a_{31}$</td>
<td>$a_{32}$</td>
<td>$a_{33}$</td>
<td>$a_{34}$</td>
<td>$a_{3n}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Cl_4$</td>
<td>$a_{41}$</td>
<td>$a_{42}$</td>
<td>$a_{43}$</td>
<td>$a_{44}$</td>
<td>$a_{4n}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Cl_x$</td>
<td>$a_{x1}$</td>
<td>$a_{x2}$</td>
<td>$a_{x3}$</td>
<td>$a_{x4}$</td>
<td>$a_{xn}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, it follows:

$$Cl_1 = \sum (a_{11} + a_{12} + \ldots + a_{1n})$$

$$Cl_x = \sum (a_{x1} + a_{x2} + \ldots + a_{xn})$$

This gives a distribution of class by caste/tribe

$$Ct_1 = \sum (a_{11} + a_{21} + \ldots + a_{x1})$$

$$Ct_n = \sum (a_{1n} + a_{2n} + \ldots + a_{xn})$$

Similarly, the above is a distribution of caste/tribe by class.

Given this abstract relationship between class and caste, we may now see the power of each category with respect to interests. As we know, the economic relations present themselves in the first place as interests. That is to say, interests are the concrete forms of the practical operation of objective economic laws. Hence, we may take up a few cases of material
interest (spiritual also) and see the force of caste and class as analytical categories.

Problem I Caste - Class Matrix

(1) Caste stratification = \( C t_1 \rightarrow C t_4 \rightarrow C t_n \)
\[
\begin{align*}
\sum C t_1 &= \sum (a_{11} + a_{21} + \cdots + a_{x1}) \quad \text{and} \\
\sum C t_2 &= \sum (a_{12} + a_{22} + \cdots + a_{x2}) \\
\end{align*}
\]

(2) Class stratification = \( C l_1 \rightarrow C l_4 \rightarrow C l_x \)
\[
\begin{align*}
\sum C l_1 &= \sum (a_{11} + a_{12} + \cdots + a_{1n}) \\
\sum C l_2 &= \sum (a_{21} + a_{22} + \cdots + a_{2n}) \\
\sum C l_x &= \sum (a_{x1} + a_{x2} + \cdots + a_{xn})
\end{align*}
\]

Then:

(1) It follows that if caste and class are perfectly conterminous; then the distribution in the hierarchy will follow
\[
(a_{11}, a_{22}, a_{33}, \ldots, a_{xn}) \quad \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots (A)
\]

(2) In any situation of conflict if the alignments take form of purely caste conflicts then:
$C_t_1, C_t_2, C_t_3, ..., C_t_n$ could in various combinations be in conflict with each other or remain neutral to a conflict-(B).

For example:

\begin{align*}
&\begin{array}{c|c}
  a & a \\
  11 & 12 \\
  a & a \\
  21 & 22 \\
  a & a \\
  x1 & x2 \\
\end{array} \\
&\begin{array}{c|c}
  a & a \\
  11 & 12 \\
  a & a \\
  21 & 22 \\
  a & a \\
  x1 & x2 \\
\end{array}
\end{align*}

or any other such combination.

(3) In any situation of conflict if the alignments take the form of conflict between classes, then:

$C_l_2, C_l_2, C_l_3, ..., ..., C_l_x$ would in various combinations be in conflict with each other or remain neutral (C).

For example:

\begin{align*}
&\begin{array}{c|c}
  a_{11} & a_{21} \\
  a_{12} & a_{22} \\
  a_{13} & a_{23} \\
  a_{14} & a_{24} \\
  a_{1n} & a_{2n} \\
\end{array} \\
&\begin{array}{c|c}
  a_{31} & a_{32} \\
  a_{32} & a_{33} \\
  a_{34} & a_{3x} \\
\end{array}
\end{align*}

or any other such combination.
(4) But neither caste conflict nor class conflict may appear in any pure form:

(a) It may differ contextually... i.e., in certain contexts it can be more class or caste like.

(b) It may operate concurrently - in which case it has to be discussed as to which type of conflict predominates.

(c) This may enable an identification also in term of the prevailing predominant mode of production, i.e. the more feudal the type the more likely it is to be caste like. The farther it is from the feudal mode, the conflicts are likely to be more class like. One can construct a series of alternate hypothesis with caste and class as the major determinants of structure.

Now it is possible, that conflict (of interests etc.) take place neither on the basis of caste nor class exclusively. For example:

\[ C_1, C_2, C_3 \] are in conflict with \( C_1, C_2, C_3 \)

or

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
  a_{11} & a_{12} & a_{13} \\
  a_{21} & a_{22} & a_{23} \\
  a & a & a \\
  31 & 32 & 33 \\
  a_{41} & a_{42} & a_{43} \\
  a & a & a \\
  x_1 & x_2 & x_3 \\
\end{array}
\]

This becomes a factional situation. However, in a factional situation one has to analyse what set of interests are being served by whom and for whom. Clearly this is neither
caste nor class conflict. Therefore question that should arise is: then conflict for whom and to what end?

III Units of Study

The crux of the problem remains firstly in the identification of the political elite in Orissa. Since it is impossible to include all political elites at a macro-level this study has considered all those persons who were the contestants in the 1974 Orissa Legislative Assembly mid-term elections. There too emphasis on the Independent candidates is very less as the majority of them filed nominations either in the interest of one or other dominant party candidates to divide the votes of the rival parties. Further, some contestants belonging to unrecognized parties like, Bishal Utkal Parishad, Jana Sangh and the like whose, organizational strength in Orissa was so weak at the time of the election that it was clear that their contestants cannot manipulate a substantive number of votes, were not considered for reasons of expediency.

Though such an identification of political elite may be deplored by some who would seek to include party executives, M.Ps., ex-MLAs, student leaders, trade unionists, and other 'potential leaders', who were not candidates in 1974 elections, the present study because of its scope and limitation of resources has confined only to the contestants of Assembly in
1974. Again, since the local voters are generally more interested in the election of the Assembly candidates than in that of the Parliamentary candidates, and since the Assembly election had coincided with the time of the field work the unit was restricted only to the Orissa Legislative Assembly (O.L.A.) contestants. Further, the researcher is aware of the fact that the power and influence of the national leaders to some extent influence state political elite, in their recruitment and policy formulations. But with all such omissions, it appears that a study of this kind invariably faces one or other type of such problems, wherever it is undertaken.

The other units of study are the villages. The choice of the three villages is determined by the intention to study a tribal village, an ex-Zamindari village, and a Pattwari village, close to an industrial township. The different types of villages were chosen to facilitate the comparison of the results obtained on the relations of the variables, class and caste/tribe in particular, and their influence on the rural power structure in different socio-economic settings. Here, being aware of the valid objections raised by different sociologists for treating village as an unit of study, the

20. For detail of the village settings see chapter VI.
21. See for instance, L. Dumont and D. F. Pocock, "Village Studies" Contribution to Indian Sociology, Vol. I, 1957, pp. 23-42; and also, A. Betelle, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), where he writes that the agrarian structure of the village cannot be understood, "by considering only the internal structure of the village. Those who represented the top of the hierarchy... had their hands in a number of villages without necessarily residing in any", p. 74.
analysis is often extended beyond each of the villages.

The rationale for the selection of these three types of villages may be briefed with relation to the state of Orissa. Of all the states of the Indian union, the state of Orissa has the highest percentage of population under the category of Scheduled Tribes, being 23.11 percent of the total population. The extent of Scheduled Area is more than one-third of the total area of the state. Further depending on the strength of the tribal population and the extent of Scheduled Area in Orissa, there are 234 Assembly seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the house of 147 (23.13%). Besides, the Scheduled Areas are said to be marked by the backwardness of the instruments of production, existence of the shifting cultivation, indebtedness of the population, increasing land alienation, and poor development of the market economy, which together provide a special significance in the selection of a tribal village belonging to a tribal constituency. Following from this a village, Pokalingia by name, was selected. This village belongs to G.Udaigiri constituency of Phulbani district. The district is the most backward district in the country with 40.31 per cent Scheduled Tribes and 18.98 per cent Scheduled Castes population. In G. Udaigiri constituency about half of the population belongs to the Scheduled Tribes population. The constituency is a reserved

24. Ibid.
one for tribes and does not have a single township to its 
credit. In the constituency, U. Udaigiri is a non-tribal 
settlement and is a marketing centre of the area, Pokalingia 
is situated three kms. away from the G. Udaigiri market.

The second village is selected from an ex-Zamindari 
area, as under British rule the major land settlement in Orissa 
was the Zamindari system. Further, in Orissa 77.4 per cent 
of the total population are engaged in agriculture, and the 
share of the agricultural income in the state's income is 
about 60 per cent. Thus there is enough justification in 
selecting an ex-Zamindari village for the study of class and 
power structure in micro-level situation. The village Talapatna, 
selected from this category, belongs to the Surada constituency 
of the Ganjam district. In this constituency, agriculture 
is marked by the natural concentration of land in a few hands 
and distribution of small parcels of land among a small section 
of the agricultural population. Talapatna is situated at a 
distance of 14 miles away from the main town of the constituency-
Surada.

The third village- Mukundapur by name-is selected 
from the Raytvari area near an industrial township. It may be 
recalled that the Raytvari land system was the most progressive 
land settlement of the British period, and was characteristically 
different from the Zamindari land systems. In Raytvari system

27. B.N. Sinha, Geography of Orissa, (New Delhi, 1971).
28. D. Mohanty, Orissa Samaik O Arthanaitik Chitra (In 
was characterised by peasant proprietorship. Again in Orissa, though less than 6 per cent of the working population are industrial labourers the important role of industry in the state’s economy, cannot be ignored. However, while selecting an industrial constituency, due attention is paid not to select a big industrial plant constituency like Rourkela or Sunabedha, but a medium size industrial constituency. The area was a Mughalbndi area and was affected by the Sutwari system of the British. Mukundapur is situated just one and half kms away from Aska town and is almost at the same distance from the Aska cooperative sugar factory.

At the end, it may be mentioned that though the three villages are selected in the three different areas, enough consideration could not be given on the variations between the villages belonging to the same area.

IV Field Problems and Experiences

When I approached the Congress candidates of Western Orissa during January, 1974 many of them thought that I might be carrying some messages from the Centre, particularly from Indira Gandhi. Mention may be made that this could happen even after telling them my limited purpose of collecting information on the background of the contestants for writing up a book. It seems that they thought I was a bit cautious in exposing my identity. In five cases, they even called a meeting in their party offices for which I was totally unprepared. Some of them even complained that they are not
getting enough money for the election campaign and also about their problems of transport. But when I explained again and again about my position, some became disinterested while others continued to think that I am spying on them in favour of the progress views of Indira Gandhi. In this situation, some had exaggerated their political background and ability, while cautiously concealing their economic positions. Interestingly, except for two candidates none else considered me as a man of Nandini Satapathy, though they knew that I belonged to Orissa.

Let me make it clear that this was not the case with all the Congress contestants of Western Orissa, but quite a few posed this problem. Only 10 to 15 contestants considered me as a research scholar and gave me their full cooperation.

In contrast to the Congress candidates the Swatantra candidates, most of whom are landed aristocrats of the area, either went on opposing the corrupt Congress leadership and emphasized their own honesty or were suspicious of my efforts. Here I shall admit that the Utkal Congress candidates, many of whom are well educated, did not maintain any such misconceptions. By and large, they had cooperated. Of course, the minor parties like Bishal Utkal Parishad, Jana Sangh, Congress(O), SUC, etc. were patient enough to provide any amount of material and time which, I was in need of, from them.

In contrast to the Western Orissa experience, in the coastal region candidates rarely suspected me as a spy of some one or other. But many of the candidates of the important parties were so busy with electioneering that often it was difficult to
get them in time. In general, they were well informed and in fact, many of them assessed that I am less bothered with the success of one or other party in the state. This was truly a sound situation to collect the data. But invariably candidates irrespective of their party affiliation supported very progressive land legislations, trade union movements but concealed their economic control. Probing was often difficult which, consequently limited the degree of validity.

Besides, it was the common experience all over Orissa, that they were interested to know the success of their party in the election. Though initially I clearly expected that the Pragati Party - a combination of the Swatantra, Utkal Congress and SSP - would come to power with a bare majority over the Congress - the result was just the reverse - I had never expressed my judgement. But when candidates with their supporters discussed some valid points, I did not hesitate to participate as this facilitated the collection of relevant data. However, there also I avoided my commitments and opinions on critical issues, even though at other times, I would have been glad to exchange views.

Now let us briefly discuss some of the problems encountered at the level of village studies. To start with let me take up the case of Pokalingia - the tribal village. The moment I reached the outskirts of the village, I was welcomed with the screamings of the school children, who thought that I was the 'terrifying' vaccinator. Anyway, the teacher consoled them and we had a general discussion about the people of the village. Not unexpectedly, he made critical remarks in derogatory
terms about the tribals. However, I could get some rough idea about the village influential, and after a few hours, around evening, I went to meet the Ward Member of the village, who considering me as an important government official called a few elders to discuss their day to day problems. Here my previous experience saved me and I introduced myself as an ordinary student writer and got an accommodation in the male youth dormitory. Indeed, the hospitality was immense. To establish the rapport, I first learnt some of their names and tried to call them by name. In the mean time, I was attending to several patients of the village with my little knowledge of medicine and often tried to eat with the people. Inspite of all these efforts, methods, I could reach nearer to them, but I could never become a part of their village 'confidential' life, till once I fought against two police constables who were taking away four hens from the villagers, by force. Some other actions like stopping hawkers who were cheating the people by their exchange of goods, particularly parched rice and onion for turmeric and mustard seed, could not yield the desired results due to the absence of alternative provisions. Those were only the few initial attempts to be an acceptable person so far as to get the necessary data. In due course, I was called to attend the village council meetings, certain festivities, and even to marriage parties. Let me not describe all those incidences and switch to the main problems in collecting the material in the village.

I had administered the household information schedule only when I established some rapport. Hence, they were generally cooperative. But their knowledge of age, landholding, which were
measured by simple numbers and genealogies etc. were too poor for my purpose. Thus often, I was forced to calculate through other techniques like the age of children. More than this, there was the problem of the factions. In the village, there were two factions, which I could know only after 10 days of my stay over there. By then, without my knowledge I was closer to the elders of one faction, thereby implicitly the other faction members became less happy with my presence. However, the younger generation of both the factions had no such critical eyes on me. In due course this problem was tackled to a considerable extent. But a non-tribal man, who had more contacts outside the village than inside, continued to remain hostile to me.

Now in the second village - Talapatna, I had some different problems altogether. Immediately on my arrival, I was taken by some people to a rich peasant's house, where the rich man tried to give me all the data of the village by himself. And infact, the others, who were present there, were just admitting whatever he said. Later on, while interviewing them, I think almost all of them differed from the rich peasant's statements. This was ofcourse not surprising as many of them were his tenants and moreover, he appeared to be the most influential man residing in Talapatna.

Since there was no other place to reside, I remained in that rich peasant's house. This ultimately kept me alien from the common man of the village. However, on getting some clues from the old rich peasant, I met a peasant leader belonging to an untouchable caste to whom I explained my objective.
Somehow, he was convinced and formally invited me to a feast at his house. Indeed, he tried to test my beliefs against casteism and religion. I had accepted gladly but he then became a little hesitant. That night one of my friends of college days, who is also a peasant leader of the area, visited my host and we together had dinner in his house. Now he could trust me more and that ultimately meant, support of about 50 per cent of the villagers for my work. But the problem came with the rich peasant, who could not digest that a Brahmin could eat cooked food in the house of an untouchable man. Following that incidence, he became indifferent. By then of course, I had collected all that I needed from him and then remained in the house of a weaver. The ex-Zamindar of the area was also happy when I went out of his rival’s house (the rich peasant’s) and provided me the old documents and the history of the Zamindari.

Only in the village Mukundapur - I had a very difficult problem to face. There I remained in the school building and only the teachers of the school became friendly. In the village, there were two main factions led by two landlords belonging to CPI and Utkal Congress, which cut across caste boundaries. Hence caste did not stand in the way of collecting data. But most of the people tended to consider me as a survey man who had little to do with their practical problems. Inspite of my best efforts I could not get the confidence of quite a number of people. In fact, some of them did not find much interest in my work and took it just as any other routine government work which
did not require much importance. In this situation, I contacted the concerned leaders of the two parties who were living in nearby villages. Both of them appreciated my endeavour and convinced their respective 'clients' to help me actively. Yet this too was not sufficient for my satisfaction. Then I started working with the leaders of both the factions, at a time. That helped a bit in projecting me as above the village rivalry. It has to be admitted that till the end of my field-work in Mukundapur, I was left with a feeling that more could have been achieved if there was no time constraint.

These are some of the problems and experiences which have some sociological relevance in the understanding of the field.