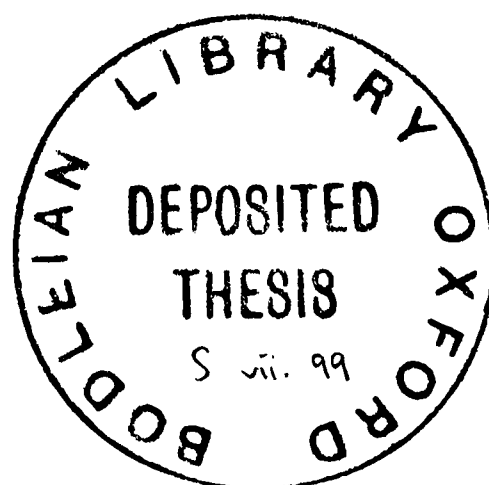


***ORIYA LITERATURE AND THE JAGANNATH CULT,
1866-1936: QUEST FOR IDENTITY***

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SHORT ABSTRACT

This work on 'Oriya Literature and the Jagannath Cult, 1866-1936: Quest for Identity' studies the question of Oriya identity in cultural and religious terms. As the title suggests, the Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult during the period, 1866-1936, have been studied and analysed in order to demonstrate how Oriya identity has been progressively constituted and reflected in them. My work departs from earlier works in a number of ways. The most important departure is the study of Oriya identity from the religio-cultural perspective instead of studying political identity-formations which have already been dealt with at great length in some earlier works. One more important feature of my work is the study of the Jagannath cult in the light of Oriya identity- a question of interrelation hitherto neglected by scholars. Thus, my thesis is exclusively focused on Oriya identity- how it manifested itself in the Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult.

For the purpose, I have first shown in my second chapter how a consciousness about Orissa and Oriya, however rudimentary it might have been, was present in the early Oriya literature and in the Jagannath cult at its earlier stage of evolution. This rudimentary consciousness took the form of identity towards the second part of the 19th century under the compulsion of some historical forces that arose out of British colonialism-imperialism.

In my chapters on the Oriya literature, I have shown from the writings of selected, representative authors how Orissan history, tradition, legend, nature, the Indian link and even externalised 'Other' have been used and constructed in definition of Oriya identity. A major finding of my thesis is the gradual shift in the treatment of Oriya

identity from the inward-looking, reactionary approach to a broad-based, expansive perspective due to changes in the political scenario of Orissa and the development of new, liberal ideas. In my discussion on the Jagannath cult, I have established that Oriya religious identity came to be Jagannath-centred during the period of our study. In order to prove it, while discussing various dynamic aspects of the cult and their particular significance in transforming it to a distinct Oriya faith, I have also studied how Lord Jagannath and His cult were constructed and construed in Oriya literary traditions and historiographical writings and narratives.

Finally, I have tried to establish a causal connection between Oriya identity and the political process of Orissa during the period of study.

LONG ABSTRACT

The religion and literature of a people are two important sources to study how identity is seen and defined. Identity becomes an important issue in literature and religion in certain historical contexts and then produces a sense of common identity. Whatever may be the political promptings for such a common identity, it draws cultural 'boundaries' differentiating one community from the other. In my thesis entitled 'ORIYA LITERATURE AND THE JAGANNATH CULT, 1866-1936: QUEST FOR IDENTITY', Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult have been analysed in order to show how Oriya identity has been reflected in them.

2. Throughout this study, I have used Oriya as a regional rather than an ethnic category. I have shown in the first chapter that the so-called primordial 'givens' of Oriya fail to become the basis of any valid analysis for study of identity and that Oriya, as a regional entity has only validity within the Indian context. This arguably solves the problems of contradiction and mutability in the elements that constitute a particular ethnic category such as Oriya in India.

3. The period under study, i.e. 1866-1936 was very crucial for Orissa, in terms of economic, cultural and political developments. Under British colonial-imperialism, Oriyas were progressively subjected to economic and cultural subordination by the more advanced Bengalis and Telugus. The Oriya-speaking regions were not only divided and attached to at least four provinces and administrative divisions at different times but also denied educational and cultural opportunities. Oriyas became marginalised even in their homeland. In addition, the principal deity of Oriyas, Lord Jagannath, who had been gradually identified with Orissa and Oriyas and His custodian the Oriya Hindu royalty, came into conflict with British authorities. Under new developments when the British came to realize that Oriyas could be no more ignored nor denied of their rights and opportunities, some

developmental works were undertaken, though inadequate and lop-sided. An educated middle-class, though small in number, came into existence. It came to be permeated with an Oriya consciousness which was informed, not only by its common language, culture and religious belief, but also by its collective predicament under the British rule.

4. I have argued in the second chapter that in early centuries there was rudimentary awareness about Orissa and Oriya, both in literature and in the Jagannath cult. This is demonstrated in the writings of Sarala Dasa and other poets of the medieval age. In an earlier period, a common religious experience started to develop around Lord Jagannath. From original texts of the time, epigraphic sources and a critical analysis of secondary sources, I have tried to demonstrate the early stirrings of Oriya consciousness.

5. The whole question of Oriya identity has not been so far addressed, with the exception of a few studies on the formation of political identities in the 20th century. For example, Nivedita Mohanty's work 'Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1936' (New Delhi, 1982) is primarily devoted to the study of political processes during the period, and to the circumstances leading to the formation of a separate Orissa province. A study by B.N. Mohapatra 'The Politics of Oriya Nationalism, 1903-1936' is more concerned with exploring the dynamics of regional politics in Orissa during the period, although he devotes a chapter on the cultural roots of Oriya 'nationalism' - a term which has an ambiguous meaning in the context of Orissa. A more recent study by J. Sengupta, 'Politics in Orissa, 1900-1956: Regional Identity and Popular Movements', focuses primarily on the dynamics of politics in Orissa during this time and tries to bring out the role of Oriya regional identity in political terms. The political processes of the period constitute the centrality of these studies and the question of Oriya identity has been referred to or analysed as and when required. But so far,

an independent study exclusively devoted to the question of Oriya identity in religio-cultural terms has not been undertaken, either in Orissa, or outside. Numerous studies done on the Jagannath cult have been confined to its origin, history, development and theology. The two latest studies, one by O.M.Starza, 'The Jagannath Temple at Puri: Its Architecture, Art and Cult' (Leiden,1993) and the other by H.S.Patnaik, 'Lord Jagannath- His Temple, Cult and Festivals' (New Delhi,1994) do not add any new dimension to the existing discourse on Oriya identity although some new evidences have been put forward on certain aspects of the cult. Starza's work, in particular throws some new light on the iconography and iconology of the Jagannath Triad. One of the most comprehensive studies on the Jagannath cult, 'The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa' (New Delhi,1978), edited by A.Eschmann, H.Kulke and G.C.Tripathi, concentrates mainly on the history of the Jagannath cult and the emergence of the medieval and post-medieval tradition of Orissa. However, apparently, no independent study has been conducted on the connection between Oriya identity and Lord Jagannath.

6. Given the present state of the question of Oriya identity, my study departs from the earlier works in a number of ways:(i) it examines cultural and religious identity as manifested in the Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult, while assuming political identity as its natural corollary;(ii) it explores a causal relationship between the historical compulsions of the time and the construction of identity;(iii) modern Oriya literature has been thematically examined within the broad historical context to show how Oriya identity has been constructed and reflected on the basis of history, legend, tradition, geography, the Indian connection and 'Otherness';(iv) different aspects of the Jagannath cult have been studied to demonstrate how Oriya religious identity came to be based on it and;(v) writings including essentializations about Lord Jagannath and His relations with

Orissa, have been examined in the appropriate historical context, to demonstrate how and to what extent He was appropriated to the religion and culture of Orissa.

7. My study attempts to identify definite trends of identity-manifestation in modern Oriya literature and historicise the context. On the other hand, it also analyses different aspects of the Jagannath cult and tries to establish how during the period of this study, Oriya religious identity came to be reflected in the cult. It also shows that Lord Jagannath has so overwhelming an impact on Oriyas that not only the religious segment but also the socio-cultural aspect of their life came to be controlled by the cult. This subsequently needed a detailed study of the process of appropriation of Lord Jagannath and His cult to Orissa. For this, I have examined Oriya literary traditions and historiographical writings and narratives on Orissa.

8. In paragraph 3 above, I have explained broadly the historical compulsions for a search of Oriya identity - which is dealt with in the third chapter of my thesis. In the second chapter of the thesis, I have shown how both, the early Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult at its earlier stage of evolution reflected a consciousness about Orissa and Oriyas. From the writings of select authors of the earlier period, I have shown how the meaning of 'Oriya' and 'Orissa' was construed and constructed in different ways. The Jagannath cult in its early stage of evolution provided a common experience, a common denominator. This, I have demonstrated with the help of the origin legend, cult-king nexus and eclectic elements of the cult.

The fourth and fifth chapters of my thesis deal with specific, representative Oriya authors whose works have been studied in order to show how they have constructed different aspects of Orissa such as history, tradition, legend, nature, the Indian link and even an externalized 'Other' in their definition of Oriya identity. In the sixth and seventh chapters, I have dealt with Lord Jagannath, His appropriation to Orissa and the

development of a Jagannath-centered religious identity. While discussing various dynamic aspects of the cult and their particular significance in modern times in transforming it to a distinct Oriya faith, I have devoted an entire chapter (seventh) to the study of the construction of Lord Jagannath and His cult in Oriya literary traditions and in historiographical writings and narratives of the period.

9. The findings of my study have been elaborately discussed and analysed in the 'Conclusion'. Some of the important findings are as follows: (a) Broad trends of identity-construction in modern Oriya literature have been identified. There existed and I have shown, two distinct trends in identity-construction, i.e., the reactionary, inward-looking ideas and those that were broad-based, expansive and outward-looking. These were never at cross-purposes, but rather were manifested in response to historical developments of the time; (b) The Jagannath cult was not only constituted as the core of Oriya religious identity, but Lord Jagannath Himself was transformed into a secular symbol of the entire Oriya community. More significantly, in spite of being an exclusive Oriya phenomenon, Lord Jagannath continues to retain His pan-Indian, pan-Hindu character.

10. The project of studying articulation and manifestation of Oriya identity has been undertaken because the question of cultural identity assumed tremendous importance in the late 19th and early 20th century history of Orissa. The historical circumstances which arose in the 19th and 20th century, produced a conceptualisation of Oriya identity. Political motivation might not be ruled out, but what was more important for Oriyas was to assert their identity in cultural terms in the face of the more advanced Bengalis, Telugus and British. This perhaps provided the first historical opportunity to develop 'Oriyaness' or 'Odiatva' among Oriyas and for all practical purposes, this continues to hold Oriyas together.

11. This study is based mainly on primary sources such as the original

texts of the authors, inscriptions, temple chronicle, administrative reports of the time, gazetteers, census reports, Jagannath temple correspondences and other relevant official reports. In addition, there is some secondary material which consists of the works relating to the Jagannath cult and Oriya literature.

12. Finally, I have used the concept of `Odiatva' or `Oriyaness' as an indicator of Oriya identity. Only when Oriya identity was articulated or constituted in categorical terms, did `Odiatva' become manifested in political activism, i.e., the movement for unification of Oriya-speaking territories in the early 20th century. I feel, the importance of my study lies in finally establishing a causal connection between Oriya identity and the development of political process of Orissa.

Acknowledgments

My thesis studies Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult during the period, 1866-1936 in order to show how Oriya identity has been reflected in them. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the help I have received from various organisations and individuals during my research work. First, this study could not have been possible but without a Commonwealth and Foreign Office Award of the British Government and necessary study leave granted to me by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

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Abbreviations

A.G.A	Annual General Administration Report
Bd.Doc	Board Documents
E.I	Epigraphia Indica
E.P.W	Economic and Political Weekly
I.H.Q	Indian Historical Quarterly
I.O.L.R	India Office Library and Records
J.I.H	Journal of Indian History
J.T.C	Jagannath Temple Correspondences
O.H.R.J	Orissa Historical Research Journal
O.S.A	Orissa State Archives
P.B.E	Proceedings of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Education Department
U.D	Utkal Deepika
U.U.C	Utkal Union Conference

Glossary

Amala	Petty official of the local administration
Anasara	A period during which the Jagannath Triad is kept in a secluded place without public viewing for fifteen days
Bada Thakura	Lord Jagannath
Bhagavata Ghara	A small house in village where the sacred text of the Oriya Bhagavata is kept
Bhajana	Devotional songs
Bhitara Gauni	Those temple girls who sing during the daily nap and festivals of the Jagannath Triad
Chandal	Scavenger
Chhatisniyoga	Thirtysix classes of servitors in the Puri temple, supposed to have been established by the Ganga King Anangabhimā II(1211-1238)
Chherapamhara	Ritual of sweeping the Cars of the Jagannath Triad and sprinkling of scented water on them
Daitas	The Puri temple servitors who are supposed to be the descendants of the Savara Viswabasu
Deshaja	Oriya words evolved indigenously
Jama	Total amount of land revenue levied on an estate
Janana	An exclusive genre of Oriya devotional songs addressed to Lord Jagannath
Jati	Caste
Jnana-Misra Bhakti	Knowledge-based devotion

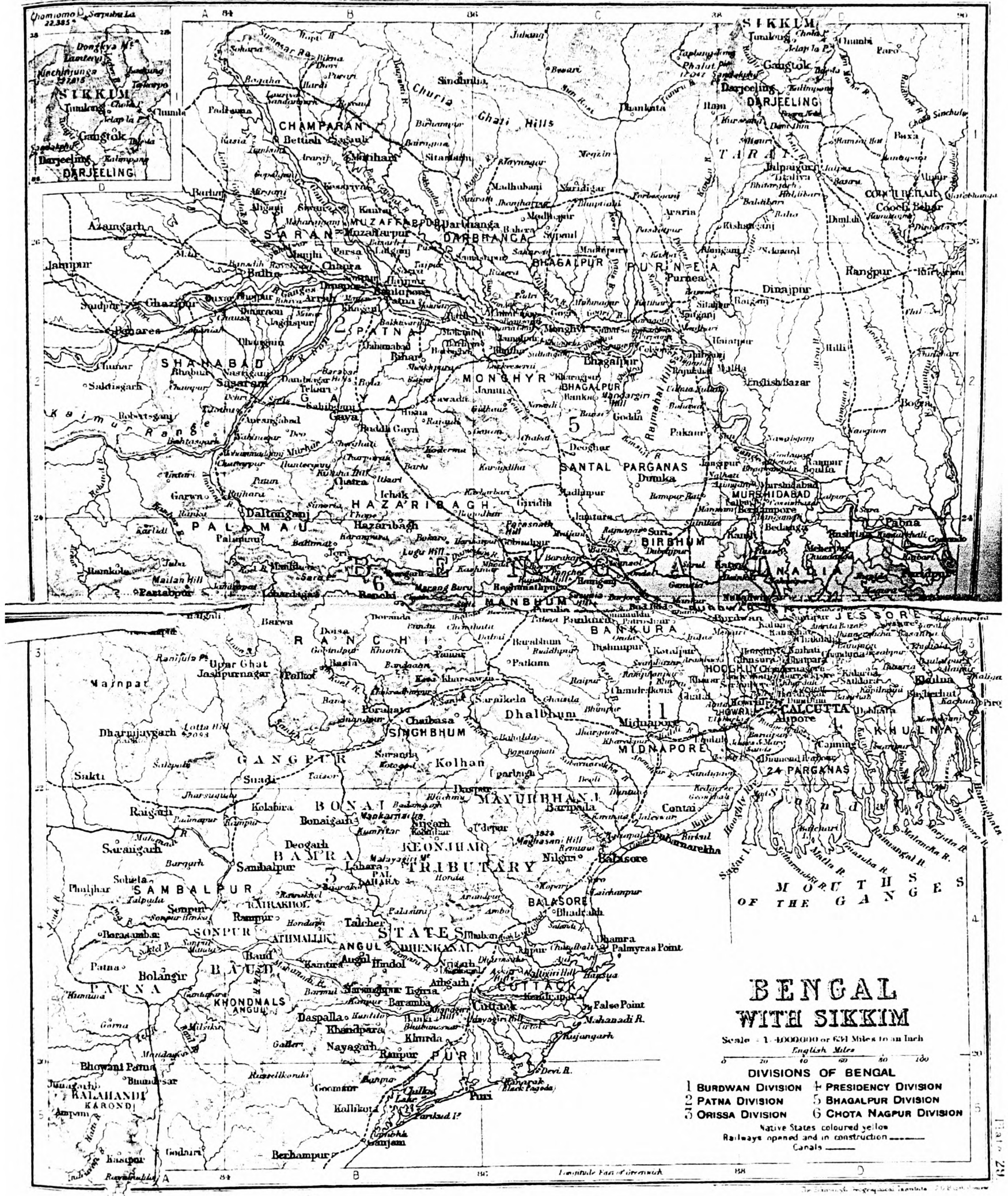
Kshetra	Divine land
Lila	Divine exploits of Lord Krshna
Mahaprasad	Food offered to the Jagannath Triad
Mahatmya	A Puranic text proclaiming greatness of a place, an auspicious time, a deity and so on
Na-anka	Ninth reign year of the Gajapati Divyasinghadeva III(1862-1876) in which a great famine stroke Orissa.
Nazarat	Office Superintendent
Niyoga	Puri temple servitors
Paika	Oriya militia
Pancaratra	Five nights during which five discourses were given by Lord Narayana, to Shiva, Brahma, Indra, the Rshis and Brahaspati
Panchasakha	Five devotional poets of the 16th century Orissa.They are Balarama Das, Jagannath Dasa, Achyutananda Dasa, Yosobanta Dasa and Ananta Das
Pindabrahmanda	Theory of Macrocosm-in-Microcosm as propounded by the Panchasakha poets
Purohita	Royal priest
Rajguru	Preceptor of king
Rajopachara	Royal insignia
Rath Yatra	Car festival of the Jagannath Triad
Samprada Niyoga	Those temple girls who dance during the Jagannath Triad's festival procession

Savara	Tribals belonging to a specific primitive level of socio-economic development
Savari Narayana	Lord Vishnu worshipped by Savaras
Shunya	Void personified
Shparshamani	Touche-stone
Subah	An administrative-territorial division under the Mughal rule
Suddha-Bhakti	Love-based devotion
Tadbhava	Oriya words originating from Sanskrit
Zamindar	Landlord

MAP I

Imperial Gazetteer Atlas of India

Plate 29



Orissa as in 1909

From: The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XXVI (New edn., Oxford, 1909)

MAP I

Imperial Gazetteer Atlas of India

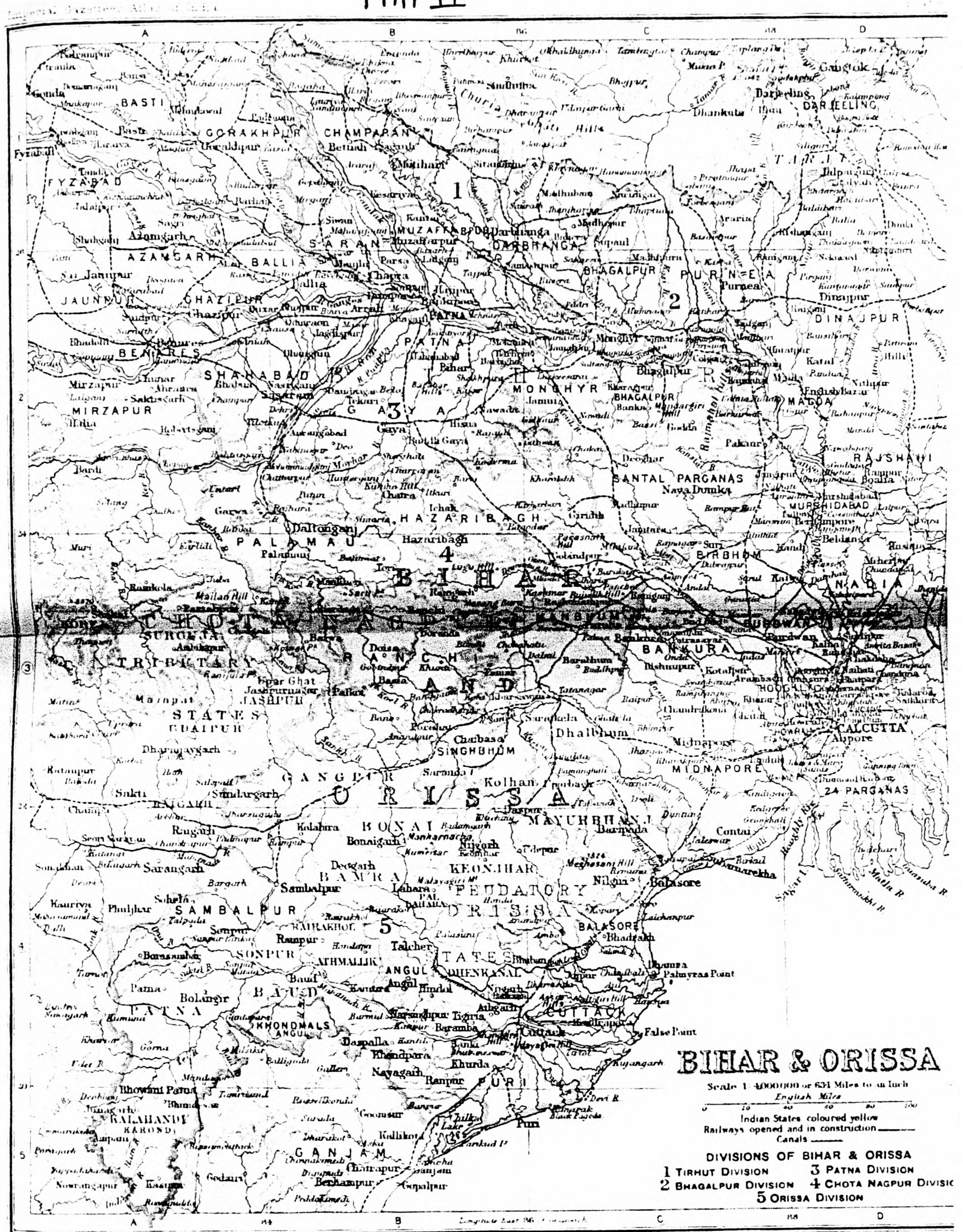
Plate 29.



Orissa as in 1909

From: The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XXVI (New edn., Oxford, 1909)

MAP II



Orissa as in 1931

From: The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XXVI (New edn, Oxford, 1931)



Orissa as in 1931

From: The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XXVI (New edn, Oxford, 1931)



The Trinity- Jagannath(R), Balabhadra(L) and Subhadra(C)

INTRODUCTION

The identity of a group or community is defined on the basis of certain common features which bind together all its members. These features divide one community from the other and in the process become its characteristic identity. The present study addresses the question of Oriya identity in cultural and religious terms. Various elements of such an identity such as history, legend, tradition, landscape, religion and even 'otherness' tend to insist on uniformity and erect cultural 'boundaries' differentiating one community from the other. I have studied Oriya identity on the basis of these common features and shown how identity has been reflected and construed in Oriya literature and in the Jagannath cult during the period from the mid-19th to the early 20th century.

The period of my study is 1866-1936 A.D., although I have moved back and forth in order to show continuity and to show an historical perspective on the subject. I have taken the year 1866 A.D. as the starting point because in this year the great *Na-anka* famine struck Orissa and was the beginning of the language controversy. My study extends to 1936 A.D. because this is the year in which a separate Orissa province was formed, thus fulfilling the political aspirations of the Oriyas. Although the integration of the Oriya-speaking regions within the framework of a separate province addressed the question of the political identity of the Oriyas, it did not address the question of their cultural identity, nor did it invoke subsequent historical reflections on their cultural identity. In the narratives of the administrative and political history of Orissa, the identity question has been largely treated in political terms and has neglected the question of cultural identity. The political processes however that developed in the late 19th and early 20th century in the Oriya-speaking regions, were greatly helped by the recognition of the Oriyas' cultural identity. It is therefore important to address and explore the cultural and religious dimensions of Oriya identity during the period so that the dynamics of the

Oriya identity question in all its ramifications can be understood in their historical perspective.

For my study, I have selected some representative Oriya authors of the time and examined their writings thematically to show how different aspects such as history, legend, tradition and nature have been evoked and constructed as indicators of Oriya. In the case of religion, I have analyzed how and under what historical circumstances, Oriya religious identity evolved around the Jagannath cult. The sources I have used for this work include original writings of the authors studied, newspapers and periodicals of the time, manuscripts, inscriptions, temple chronicles, administrative reports, gazetteers, census reports, Jagannath temple correspondences and many other contemporary official reports.

The thesis has been divided into eight chapters including a conclusion. In the first chapter 'Study of Oriya Identity: Plea for a theoretical framework', an attempt has been made to formulate the meaning of identity and to show how in the Indian context, the concept of identity can be validly applied to the constituent nationalities only when the latter are treated as regional entities. In the second chapter 'Evolution of Oriya Consciousness: An Historical Survey of the Early Oriya Literature and the Jagannath Cult', Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult have been discussed in an historical perspective in order to show how the conceptualisation of Oriya identity in literature and religion had begun as early as the medieval period.

The third chapter 'Orissa in the late 19th and early 20th century: Prelude to Quest for Self-Identity' discusses how an Oriya consciousness developed under the impact of British policies. Colonial interests dictated British policies which were against the interests of Oriyas. As a result, Oriyas became increasingly marginalised and lagged behind in employment opportunities, education, economic gains and cultural-linguistic rights. I have shown how these negative consequences of British rule promoted group-solidarity among Oriyas. This, which we may term as 'Oriya consciousness' was manifested in

a search for self-identity. Contemporary Oriya literature came to be one of the powerful means to define and reflect identity. At the same time, the earlier common religious experience that had developed centering round Lord Jagannath, took the form of a religious identity during this period.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, 'Defining Self-Identity in Oriya Literature' (I&II), I have taken several Oriya authors of the time and examined their writings to show how Oriya history, legend, tradition, nature and an externalised 'Other' have been constructed in order to define Oriya identity. The fourth chapter is entirely devoted to the well-known Oriya literary Trio, Phakirmohun Senapati, Radhanath Roy and Gangadhar Meher, who are supposedly directing forces in modern Oriya literature. In the next chapter, other Oriya authors have been considered.

The sixth chapter, 'Construction of a Religious Boundary: Oriya Identity and the Jagannath Cult' studies how the Jagannath cult came to impart religious identity to the Oriyas. For this, different aspects of the cult have been examined, in order to show how they have given meaning to the religious identity of Oriyas. The seventh chapter 'Lord Jagannath as Construed and Constructed in Literature, Historiography and Narratives on Orissa' deals with the Oriya literary traditions and historiography and narratives on Orissa and demonstrates how Lord Jagannath and the cult have been exclusively appropriated to Orissa as an indispensable part of the religio-cultural heritage.

Finally the findings of my study have been analyzed and some conclusions drawn.

This study of Oriya identity departs in a number of ways from earlier works done on similar or related subjects. For example, S.C.Patra in his book, discusses the political movement, leading to the formation of a separate Orissa province in 1936.¹ He has linked the language controversy of the late

¹S.C.Patra, Formation of the Province of Orissa: The Success of the First linguistic Movement in India (Calcutta, 1979)

19th century with the movement for the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking regions and for a separate Orissa province. For Patra, formation of a separate province was the ultimate fruition of Oriya nationalism. In addition, Nivedita Mohanty has done a study of the political processes in Orissa during the period, 1866-1936 and deals with political forces leading to the formation of the separate Orissa province.¹ Though she has addressed the circumstances responsible for the growth of Oriya nationalism, she has not brought Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult into her discussion. Oriya identity is indeed a vast subject. It cannot be seen only within the narratives of the administrative and political history of Orissa. Political processes apart, cultural factors also shape identity. The latter question has been partially addressed by two scholars, B.N.Mohapatra and Jayanta Sengupta. Mohapatra in his thesis, 'The Politics of Oriya Nationalism(1903-1936)' discusses the cultural roots of Oriya nationalism, but as the title suggests, he is more concerned with exploring regional politics in Orissa during the period under study.² A more recent study, by Sengupta focuses primarily on the dynamics of politics in Orissa during 1900-1956 and tries to bring out the role of Oriya regional identity in it.³ All these studies are mainly concerned with the political processes in Orissa during the early part of the 20th century and only in passing, refer to the growth of Oriya identity in relation to these processes. Moreover, the use of the notion of Oriya nationalism in these studies is problematic because of the India-specific connotation of the term 'nationalism'.

An Oriya work, 'Odia Sahityare Jatiyabadi Chetana' (or Nationalist consciousness in the Oriya literature) by Shakuntala Baliarsingh may also be

¹Nivedita Mohanty, Oriya Nationalism:Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1936 (New Delhi,1982)

²B.N.Mohapatra, The Politics of Oriya Nationalism, 1903-1936 (Unpublished Oxford University D.Phil. thesis,1990)

³J.Sengupta, Politics in Orissa, 1900-1956: Regional Identity and Popular Movements (Unpublished Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis,1994)

mentioned.¹ Blending Indian nationalism with Oriya consciousness, Baliarsingh discusses the impact of both these streams of awakening on Oriya literature. Baliarsingh's study is essentially an exploration of the different facets of this awakening, as portrayed in the writings of certain Oriya authors. But her study is not exhaustive nor does it address the question of Oriya identity. Baliarsingh has attempted to link Oriya awakening with the nationalist, humanist and socialist writings of the time. This makes her work more an analysis of contemporary Oriya literature than an exercise in defining 'Oriya' and its various manifestations.

The present study is primarily concerned with an intellectual history of Orissa during 1866-1936 A.D.. However, the link between Oriya identity and political processes has not been ignored, but instead has been studied whenever necessary. By undertaking such a study exclusively focussed on Oriya identity, it is intended to define 'Oriya' in cultural terms and to contribute to the existing discourse on Oriya and Orissa, for 'imagining' Oriya nationality. Whether it is Oriya literature or the Jagannath cult, the question addressed in this study is how Oriya identity had been constituted and reflected in them under the impact of historical forces.

Mention may also be made that study of the Jagannath cult in the light of Oriya identity makes the present thesis different from the existing works on the Jagannath cult. For example, K.C.Mishra's work 'The Cult of Jagannath' and S.N.Dash's 'Jagannath Mandira O' Jagannath Tattwa' are devoted exclusively to the study of the origin, history, development and theology of the Jagannath cult.² Even, the recent study by H.S.Patnaik is a repetition of the same story though it has broadened its scope by inclusion of the religious

¹Shakuntala Baliarsingh, Odia Sahityare Jatiyabadi Chetana (Published Utkal University Ph.D.thesis,Cuttack,1985)

²See, K.C.Mishra, The Cult of Jagannath(Calcutta,1971) and; S.N.Dash,Jagannath Mandira o Jagannath Tattwa(4th edn., Cuttack,1985)

history of the sacred Puri-Sri Kshetra.¹ On the other hand, Benimadhab Padhi's 'Darudevata' is an exhaustive study of the origin and evolution of the Jagannath cult from its autochthonous/*Savara* stage to the present Hinduized form.² Most of these works borrow heavily from the Puranic sources, the religious texts and earlier writings. Unauthenticated by historical evidence and unexplained by historical context, these works very often tend to be rhetoric in tone and are bound up with 'essentialism' in the Jagannath cult, but still they have brought out many important historical facts about the cult.

On the other hand, a more systematic, objective and scientific study on the Jagannath cult comes from the former Orissa Research Project of Heidelberg University, Germany. The project, led by Kulke, Eschmann and Tripathi however, concentrated mainly on the history of the Jagannath cult and the emergence of the medieval and post-medieval tradition of Orissa.³ Kulke on his own, has also conducted many studies on the cult and demonstrated how the Jagannath cult was used by the medieval kings of Orissa to legitimise their authority and in the process contributed to the formation of state. Two other works on the Jagannath cult may be mentioned here. The anthropologist F.A.Marglin's work focuses on the rituals of the Jagannath temple with special reference to temple dancers, known as *Devadasis*.⁴ On the other hand, O.M.Starza's study on the Jagannath cult is devoted substantially to the iconography and iconology of the Jagannath Triad.⁵

¹H.S.Patnaik, Lord Jagannath-His Temple, Cult and Festivals (New Delhi, 1994)

²Benimadhab Padhi, Darudevata (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1975)

³The research findings of the Project have been published in a book: A.Eschmann, H.Kulke and G.C.Tripathi (eds), The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa (New Delhi, 1978)

⁴F.A.Marglin, Wives of the God-King (Delhi, 1985)

⁵O.M.Starza, The Jagannath Temple at Puri: Its

Given the nature of earlier works, the present work is a departure. It looks at the Jagannath cult and Oriya literature, from a totally different perspective, that of Oriya identity. Both are studied to find out how Oriya identity is constituted in them. It is hoped that such a work on the intellectual history of Orissa will contribute to the understanding of Oriya identity within the broad discourse on India and Indian.

CHAPTER I

STUDY OF ORIYA IDENTITY: PLEA FOR A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity per se, implies an inherent attribute which an individual or group/community possesses. This is a basic notion treating identity as intrinsic which in a metaphorical sense is subject to growth and decline, to health and sickness.¹ On the other hand, at an interactional level identity is a concept existing in the context of oppositions and relativities. At this level, identity is defined in relation to others. Hence, identity becomes divisive- a boundary which encapsulates the identity of the community in question. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with each other and remain distinct in the process of interaction. Boundaries that are national or administrative may be statutory and enshrined in law and others like race, language and religion are merely symbolic. Identity encapsulated by the boundaries of language, religion etc., is inherently oppositional and any matter of perceived difference between a community and the outside world can be used symbolically as a reason for its boundary. The symbolic nature of the opposition means that people can 'think themselves into difference'.²

Thus, the idea of identity can be conceptualised at two levels, one at an essential and the other at a relational level, but this is not a point of difference. Identity becomes relational only in reference to essential attributes. In the Indian context for example, Oriyas possess certain distinctly recognisable attributes which when contextualised, differentiate them from Bengalis, Telugus, Marathas, etc.. Thus essentialist attributes, while implying the core of

¹Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin, 'Introduction', in E.Tonkin, M.McDonald and M.Chapman(eds.), History and Ethnicity (ASA Monographs 27, London, 1989), p.11

²A.P.Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (London, 1985), p. 117

an identity, relate to the outside world in terms of oppositions and relativities.

The identity of a group or community is defined on the basis of a common culture, tradition, language and history. These factors while perpetuating feelings of belonging and commitment to the group, provide the basis for defining the common identity. In this process, the group in question, develops a sense of binary oppositions- 'self' and 'otherness' which remains cardinal to any projection of its image, or definition of its identity. Thus, identity has in itself, a relational meaning because of its being the interface of 'self' and 'otherness'.

In India, the question of identity becomes complicated because of the unique history and variegated structure of society and culture. Diversities based on religion and caste, region, language and dialect and cultural patterns have created various configurations, each with its own often overlapping identity. This poses the problem of defining the identity of such distinct and numerically-vast communities like the Oriyas, Bengalis or Telugus. In this chapter, I will show two possible ways namely, regional and ethnic, in which the identity of a community such as Oriyas can be perceived and argue that ideally Oriyas should be treated as a regional entity because of the weakness of ethnicity arguments in the complexity of Indian realities.

India is a conglomerate of segments whose diverse identities based on ethnicity, language, religion, region etc. are nevertheless united politically into a territorial sovereignty.¹ Scholars are divided over the emphasis they attach to the type of identity from such an array of segments but broadly, they emphasize either an ethnic-based identity or regional identity. Ethnic identity is based on some 'objective criteria'² like common language, religion, culture

¹R.Khan, Federal India:A Design for Change (Delhi,1992) , pp.29-30

²See, Benzamin Akzin, State and Nation (London,1964) ,pp.30-31 for detailed explanation of the objective criteria.

and common descent which are the primary ties. They create a boundary, differentiating one community from the other. Objective differences between ethnic groups are given increasingly subjective and symbolic significance, translated into a consciousness and desire for group solidarity and finally, become the basis of a political demand in order to transform the particular group to a nationality.¹ Thus, nationality comes to be based on the bedrock of ethnicity and ethnicity is always premised on certain objective criteria, as mentioned above. An ethnic community graduates to nationality only when it is politicised. For Brass, 'insofar as an ethnic group succeeds by its own efforts in achieving and maintaining group rights through political action and political mobilisation, it has gone beyond ethnicity to establish itself as a nationality.'² This important aspect, namely the political content which is the prerequisite of a nationality, is generally acknowledged. Akzin for example, categorically mentions that politically conscious ethnic groups are nationalities 'as long they have not become dominant in an independent state.'³ When they become dominant, they are nations; so a nationality is a political phenomenon in a limited sense. Thus according to Hayes,

a nationality is primarily cultural, and only incidentally political: it is cultural because it is a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialect, who cherish common historical traditions, and who constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society; it is incidentally political as it can exist without political unity, that is, without an organised sovereign state of its own, and vice versa, a political state may embrace several nationalities.⁴

Since a nationality evolves from an ethnic community, it is wedded to

¹Paul R.Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism(New Delhi,1991) , p.22.Here Brass explains the process of nationality-formation and the stages involved in it.

²Ibid. ,p.23

³Akzin, op.cit. ,p.31

⁴C.J.H.Hayes, Essays on Nationalism(New York,1928) ,p.5

certain objective criteria which fluctuate and are not fixed. Brass has shown how the language, religion, kinship etc. of an individual or community are changeable and may be shifted in the course of social and political movements.¹ Some other scholars consider nationalities as the product of historical developments and thus accept the flexibility of the objective criteria that went into their making. According to Kohn for example, nationalities come into existence only when certain objective bonds delimit a social group.² For him, these bonds are changeable as nationalities are the product of the living forces of history and are always fluctuating, never rigid.³ While the multi-dimensionality and flexibility of ethnic identity is important to be recognised, a distinction between its immutable and mutable elements is worth considering. Biologically fixed characteristics are not acquired, transformed or abandoned at will. On the other hand, objective criteria may be changed. But such change is practicable at the individual level only; at the mass level it rarely occurs on a voluntary basis. In a recent study, Ishtiaq Ahmed conceptualises objective criteria of ethnicity as both fixed and flexible.⁴

Apart from the general problem of flexibility of the ethnic identity, any theorisation of the existing realities of India in terms of ethnicity loses analytical validity due to the long history of region-specific composition. In India, the most inclusive segment is the territorially defined region. It has its own composition of ethnic and linguistic groups, religious communities and land-based *jatis* (caste). It has also its own specific pattern of economy, craft and loom, a local history, psychological make-up and behavioural pattern. Even all-India religious communities like Hindus and Muslims have clear and

¹For a detailed discussion on how these criteria are changeable, see, Brass, *op.cit.*, pp.70-72

²Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism (New York, 1945), p.13

³*Ibid.*, pp.13-14

⁴Ishtiaq Ahmed, State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia (London, 1996), p.23

distinct regional variation of culture, language, dialects etc. . Hence, regions have a defined and distinct socio-cultural, historical, linguistic, economic and political context and where they co-incide with the boundaries of the state, they also have a juridical-administrative connotation.¹

Etymologically, a region is defined as 'some portion of the surface of the earth', but in India the concept is much broader. B.S.Cohn has classified four types of regions in India i.e., historical, linguistic, cultural and social-structural.² An historical region is one in which there are social myths and symbols, held by significant groups within that area, regarding the relationship of people to their past and their geographic location; a linguistic region is one in which there is a shared and recognised literary language, the standardised form of which is known and identified by the educated groups within that area; a cultural region is one in which there are widely shared and recognised cultural patterns of behaviour, particularly among the common peoples; and a social structural region is one in which there are associated structural variables like caste, religious sect etc. .³ Mention may also be made of the Indian historical tradition in which the country has been divided into five zones namely, *Madhyadesa* (the Middle country), *Purvadesa* or *Pracya* (the East), *Dakhhinapatha* (the South), *Aparanta* or *Praticya* (the West) and *Uttarapatha* or *Udicya* (the North).⁴ They have been explained in the *Dharma-Sutras*, the *Bhuvanakosa* (or gazetteer) section of the Puranas and in the Buddhist scriptures. Interestingly, the provincial distribution of the Mauryan empire conformed to these zones and subsequently whenever there were

¹Khan, op.cit., pp.31-32

²B.S.Cohn, An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays (Delhi, 1987), p.102

³Ibid., pp.102-104

⁴Jay Chandra Narang, 'Regional Structure of India in Relation to Language and History' in Board of Editors, The Cultural Heritage of India (Rept., Calcutta, 1993), I, 46

regional states in India maintaining a balance of power for a reasonably long time, they too generally conformed to the zones.¹ Although divided primarily on geographical lines, the five zones had assumed a regionally-specific identity in the course of time. While the classification given by Cohn or the Indian historical tradition is not always viable because of the overlapping of criteria, it explains Indian reality in terms of the composition of specific regions.

The importance of region in any discourse on the Indian situation is also accepted by scholars such as Spate and Schwartzberg. Spate mentions 'perennial nuclear regions' which are important in Indian historical geography: examples are Gandhara in the vale of Peshwar and Potwar, the Sapta Sindhu region, the Sutlej/Jumna Doab, the Kalinga country (i.e, Orissa) and so on.² Schwartzberg views regions as important cultural categories which are manifested in the existence of cultural productions like 'desadharmasastras' and performances involving regional (desi) musical and ritual forms in contrast to universal or 'marga' forms.³

In the light of the inherent fallacy in the arguments for an ethnic identity and of the validity of region-specific nature of communities in the Indian context, it is more appropriate to study the question of identity from a regional rather than ethnic perspective. Identity based on ethnic considerations cannot explain the reality of the overlapping of different ethnic identifications in India. For example, a Muslim in Orissa speaks and adopts the Oriya language; an outsider domiciled in Orissa for years, adopts the Oriya language and way of life and; the inter-religious marriage of an Oriya does not deprive him of his cultural identity. In each of these examples, two

¹ Ibid

²O.H.K.Spate, India and Pakistan:A General and Regional Geography (London, 1957) ,pp.148-149

³J.E.Schwartzberg(ed.) , A Historical Atlas of South Asia (New York, 1992) ,p.259

altogether separate categories of basic ties co-exist, one by birth and another by acquisition. How can this apparent contradiction be explained? In ethnic terms, a Muslim cannot be justified in adopting the Oriya language and way of life, nor can a Bengali be justified in speaking Oriya, but these are the down-to-earth realities in India. So a primarily ethnic view of identity is theoretically misleading and historically-flawed. Their persistence really poses a problem for any valid analysis of the Indian scenario on an ethnic basis, but it can be resolved within the conceptual framework of region-specific composition.

Anybody, irrespective of his ethnic origin and affiliations, may be referred to as belonging to a particular region if he or she shares the common characteristics and historical experiences of the people living in that region. In India, each region developed specific differences over a long period of history which embodied the fundamentals of the region. In reality, this has resulted in the blurring of ethnic identities and the rise of regional identity, although in cultural terms. The members of such a group having a regional identity have traditionally maintained their identity, even under the condition of intense interaction with outsiders. This has been possible by 'diacritical' distinctions and 'syncretic' values- the two ways, first advocated by S.F.Nadel in his study on African tribes. The 'diacritical' distinctions define the unity of a segment in terms of differentiation from other segments, whereas 'syncretic' values define the unity of that segment in terms of internal solidarity.¹ One region differs from another, for example in matters of socio-economic and religious forms, while within the region there is a consciousness of group and of belonging to the common region.

Treating Oriyas, Bengalis, Telugus etc., each as a regional entity may have analytical validity, but this does not completely diminish the importance of ethnicity attached to every community. This is because ethnic components

¹ S.F.Nadel, 'Dual Descent in the Nuba Hills' in Radcliffe Brown and Forde(eds), African Systems of Kinship and Marriage (London, 1950), p.337

provide the bedrock for differentiation among communities. There is no doubt that the attachments most people develop in childhood or youth have deeply emotive significance and remain with them throughout their life, either consciously in the persistence of such attachments in the everyday routines of life, or embedded in the unconscious realms of adult personality.¹ Since we have already argued above that ethnic components are mostly flexible and partially fixed (biologically-related), the flexibility of ethnic identifications together with the complex realities of India, makes the conceptual differentiation between Oriyas, Bengalis, Telugus and Punjabis on the ethnic basis, analytically invalid. On the other hand, differentiation can be analytically valid when they are treated as regional entities wherein ethnic distinctions get blurred by specific regional formations and the common historical experience of belonging. Given these reasons, Oriya is treated in this study as a regional entity and Oriya identity as a regional identity. This identity is primarily a cultural identity which, although developed over a long period, came to manifest itself in clear terms in the late 19th and 20th century when it impinged on self-definition.

¹Brass, op.cit.,p.70

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF ORIYA CONSCIOUSNESS: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE EARLY ORIYA LITERATURE AND THE JAGANNATH CULT

Consciousness and assertion of one's cultural identity is a modern phenomenon. 'Modern' may differ from context to context, but for India, it began with colonialism which created modern institutions and ideas in order to maintain itself. During this period, the English-educated middle class started to examine and admire things Indian, but in the pre-colonial period different regions of India had already developed their own cultural, religious and social patterns. This chapter seeks to study how Oriya's self-consciousness manifested itself in the early literature and the Jagannath cult long before the British occupation (1803 A.D.) of Orissa, but it was a rudimentary awareness, a common experience without reflection on self-identity nor had it any resource for drawing 'boundaries'.

Consciousness about 'self' first draws upon the particular land and people. The antiquity of both the land and people and their historical evolution inform consciousness at any stage of its manifestation. First it is important to discuss the antiquity and evolution of the geographical territory presently known as Orissa and analyse the significance of the term 'Oriya'.

The region now called Orissa, was much bigger in ancient and medieval times. It extended from the mouth of the Ganges in the north to the Godavari in the south and had included the Raipur and Bilaspur districts of Madhya Pradesh, the Chhotnagpur area of Bihar, the Midnapore district of Bengal and the Srikakulam, Vijaynagaram and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh.¹ But the boundaries of Orissa were never fixed nor did it constitute a

¹J.K.Sahu, 'Historical Geography', in P.K.Mishra (ed.), Comprehensive History and Culture of Orissa (2 vols., New Delhi, 1997), I, 54

single state throughout its chequered history. On the other hand, the vast region was divided into several political units such as Kalinga, Utkal, Odra, Kongada, Kosala and Tosali during different periods of its history. Each of these units denotes a particular historical region within the broad traditional geographical region of Orissa.

The names Utkal, Kalinga, Kosala and Odra are repeatedly mentioned not only in the Mahabharata and the Puranic literature but also in the Buddhist-Pali texts. All these regions were associated with one people or dynasty. In the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, the sage Lomasa pointedly says, 'This is the land, o Kunti's son where the Kalinga tribes dwell, through it passeth, the river Vaitarani on the banks whereof even the god of virtue performed the religious rites..'.¹ This indicates the existence in the Mahabharata age, not only of a distinct land in and around the present Orissa, but also of a people called Kalingas who had occupied that land. Both the Mahabharata and Puranic literature link the lands of Kalinga and Utkal with some mythical kings called Kalinga and Utkal, respectively. Both lands are supposed to have been ruled by the successors of these kings in the mythic past. Kosala is mentioned in the Mahabharata, pointing to the region now comprised of Sambalpur, Bilaspur and Raipur districts. With regard to Odra, ancient Indian texts describe it as a people, a tribe, rather than a region. The Manusamhita and the Brihat Samhita for example, mention Odras as a people along with others, but the earliest reference to the Orissa region in historical record is Bharata's Natyasastra where he spoke of Odhra- Magadhi as a form of dance style prevalent in the eastern regions of India including Kalinga.² The mention of Utkal, Kalinga, Kosala and Odra in ancient Indian texts warrants the existence of an awareness about the macro-Orissa region from early

¹The Mahabharata of Krshna-Dwaipayana Vyasa:Vana Parva, transl., P.C.Roy (Calcutta, 1884), p. 352

²Mohan Khokar, Traditions of Indian Classical Dance (Delhi, 1979), p. 123

times.

The earliest historical evidence for the existence of a people in this region comes from the Greek writings of Pliny who in his 'Natural History', mentioned 'Oretes' living in the territory where mount Maleus¹ stood. The Sanskrit equivalent of 'Oretes' is 'Odras' which is etymologically linked with the terms 'Odisha' (Orissa) and 'Odia' (Oriya).

The 'Odras' as a people were also referred to by Malley in his Cuttack District Gazetteer.² N.K.Sahu states that both the words 'Oretes' and 'Odras' are derived from the term 'Or' or 'Orua' meaning rice and hence, 'Oretes' and 'Odras' are the people who either eat or grow rice.³ This etymological explanation seems plausible as Oriyas are essentially rice-eaters and rice-growers. The word 'Odras' was frequently used on copper plates and in the inscriptions from different centuries to denote the people or the region. Foreign travellers such as Huang-Tsang (7th century A.D) and Al-Beruni (11th century A.D) referred to the present Orissa as 'Odra' or 'Udravisau' (Sanskrit equivalent-Odravishaya). Cunningham has calculated that the ancient province of Odra was limited to the valley of the Mahanadi and to the lower course of the Suvarnarekha river, that it comprised the whole of the present districts of Cuttack and Sambalpur, a portion of Midnapore and was bounded on the east by sea and on the south by Ganjam.⁴ The territory identified by Cunningham was the traditional land of Odra and this has been more or less the land of the Oriya-speaking people. 'Odra' came to be gradually written as

¹Maleus has been identified with the Malyavana or Malaya hill near modern Pallahara in the Dhenkanal district of Orissa.

²L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers: Cuttack (Calcutta, 1906), p.17

³N.K.Sahu, 'Historical Geography' in M.N.Das (ed.), Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa (Cuttack, 1977), p.30

⁴A.Cunningham, The Ancient Geography of India (London, 1871), p.511

'Udisa' or 'Odisha' in later medieval ages. For example, in the 14th century, the Muslim chronicler Shams-i-Siraj Afif identified 'Jajnagar-Udisa' with the Odra region. With regard to Jajnagar, it may be pointed out that Muslim historians in medieval times described the territory of Orissa as Jajnagar, a corruption for Yayatinagar, the erstwhile capital of the Somavamsis in Odradesa. Reference to Orissa as Jajnagar may be found in the chronicles of Tabaqut-i-Nasiri, Tabaqut-i-Akbari, Riyaz-us-Salatin and Tarikh-i-Firozshahi. The identification of Jajnagar-Udisa as Orissa shows how Udisa or Odisha came to denote the Orissa region. The Jagannath temple inscription of Kapilendradeva of 1443 A.D. refers to his empire as *Odisha rajya* (state).¹ From the 15th century onwards, names such as Odisha, Odisha rastra and Odisha rajya came to be used in official, as well as in private records. According to Mahtab, since the word Uddisa or Odisha had already come into use by the 15th century A.D., the poet Sarala Dasa (15th century) could naturally make Odisha or Uddisa synonymous with Odra rastra'.²

Thus, evidently, the present form 'Odisha' (anglicised form, Orissa) is derived from 'Odra' through phonetic and linguistic changes. The people inhabiting this land also came to be known as 'Odia' (anglicised form, Oriya). The term 'Orissa' however, assumed meaning only when it could correspond to the geopolitically-evolved region.

The geopolitical evolution of Orissa is linked with its historical geography. The formation of new states, changes of territorial boundaries and changing alignment of states within the traditional geographical limits of Orissa, contributed to the shaping of the macro-Orissa region as one geopolitical homogenous unit. In different periods of history, the constituent parts of geographical Orissa came under different ruling dynasties. Their ultimate territorial unification and the consequent installation of a unitary

¹P.Acharya, 'The Antiquity of words, Odisha and Odia', O.H.R.J, Vol. II, No. 3&4 (1953-54), pp. 58-59

²H.Mahtab, History of Orissa (2 vols., Cuttack, 1981), I, 6

authority over the whole territory made the macro-Orissa region one geographical unit and the term 'Orissa', used to denote the region, came to objectify this conceptualisation.

In the historical geography of the macro-Orissa region were included the micro-regional states such as Utkal, Kalinga, Odra and Kosala, either independently or jointly in various combinations. The Mauryan emperor Ashok conquered Kalinga, the predominant political unit, in 261 B.C. It expanded to an empire under the Chedi King Kharavela (C.2nd century B.C.) extending beyond the present Orissa region. In the centuries that followed, Kalinga was increasingly dismembered and divided into smaller states. By the middle of the 4th century A.D. when Samudragupta led his southern campaigns, a number of small states had already been created out of Kalinga. Finally, it came to denote the territory between the present Ganjam and the river Godavari in the ages down to the Ganga and Suryavamsi periods.¹ The region of Utkal identified with present northern and north-eastern Orissa came to prominence under the Bhaumakaras (736-916 A.D.) who established a strong rule in Tosali with the capital at modern Jajpur on the river Vaitarani. Tosali, under the Bhauma rule, came to be known as Utkal.² The Bhaumakaras annexed Kongada, roughly comprising the present Ganjam and Puri districts and also subjected a number of smaller states like Nandodbhaba, Tunga, Shulki, Bhanja, Nanda and Swetaka in the north and south. After the fall of the Bhauma rule, the Somavamsis (880-1110 A.D.), who originally ruled over the present western part of Orissa, known as Kosala, conquered Kongada and Utkal and established a united state of Kosala, Kongada and Utkal.

It was under the Gangas (1078-1435 A.D.) that the different micro-regional states of the Orissa region were united. Originally, a ruler of the truncated Kalinga, the founder of the Ganga dynasty, Chodagangadeva

¹Panigrahi, *op.cit.*, p.5

²S.Rajguru, Odisara Samkshipta Itihasa (Cuttack, 1992) ,p.25

conquered the territories of the Somavamsis. He reduced the importance of Kalinga and gave prominence to Utkal or Odradesha, by shifting his capital from Kalinganagar¹ to present Cuttack.² Under the Gangas, all the micro-states, Utkal, Kalinga, Kosala and Kongada were united under one authority and a macro-regional state encompassing the whole region came into existence. Increasingly, the term 'Odisha' came to be used to denote this unified region of Utkal, Kalinga, Kosala and Kongada.

By the 15th century A.D. when the Suryavamsi Gajapati dynasty was established, the macro-region of Orissa had been well established as one geographical unit and was given precise expression through the use of the term 'Odisha' (Orissa). For example, the great Suryavamsi King Gajapati Kapilendradeva (1435-1467 A.D.) used the term 'Odisha-rajya' in his first royal proclamation and the same was also inscribed on the wall of the Jagannath temple of Puri.

I

The Oriya literature that developed during this period reflected, albeit unconsciously, the new meaning that the macro-region Orissa had come to assume. It is possible to show how five leading authors of medieval times displayed a consciousness of Orissa, its land and people, its gods and kings, in their writings.

Sarala Dasa, a contemporary of the Gajapati Kapilendradeva was the earliest Oriya poet to talk with a strong sense of attachment and belonging, about Orissa and its people. Whatever meagre literature such as Vatsa Das' 'Kalasa Chautisa' and Narayanananda Abadhuta Swami's 'Rudra Sudhanidhi' had existed in the pre-Sarala period, was characterised by an intense religious

¹Identified with modern Mukhalingam in Andhra Pradesh

²Nivedita Mohanty, Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa (New Delhi, 1982), p. 3

tone, a verbose depiction of the Radha-Krshna courtship and a pining for sensual pleasures. Thematically these were either, borrowings from the Sanskrit literature, or simple renderings of all-India traditions in the Oriya language. In contrast, Sarala Dasa reflected Oriya life and locale in his works, drawing an outline of contemporary Orissa and its history as he perceived it. This he achieved by setting himself free from the burden of Sanskritic tradition and writing in Oriya instead of Sanskrit. Sarala's preference for Oriya coincided with a trend in all Indian vernacular literatures during the middle ages to adopt the spoken languages of the people.¹ He secured full access for the spoken language into written literature and introduced a whole range of 'tadbhava'² and 'deshaja'³ words into the Oriya language.

Sarala Dasa wrote his magnum opus, the Mahabharata in the Oriya language. Though he followed the main outline of the story of the Sanskrit Mahabharata, he made numerous deviations and added to it many stories of his own. His became almost a new creation and a thoroughly Oriya composition, with indigenous characters and places. All the great heroes and even minor characters of the original Mahabharata were given a distinct local flavour. For example, the Pandava brothers and their mother Kunti were portrayed as belonging to Orissa and depicted as acting and behaving in an Oriya family. The characters of the Mahabharata conversed in the local language, ate typical Oriya food and their lives were controlled by local social rules, regulations and customs.

Sarala's time was that of chivalry and military glory for Orissa as Kapilendradeva waged many a successful battle to establish an empire. His contemporary, Sarala Dasa was inspired 'to make his motherland Orissa loom large and important in the eyes of his compatriots with the holy halo of

¹Chittaranjan Das, Balarama Dasa.Makers of Indian Literature (New Delhi, 1982) p.85

²Oriya words originating from Sanskrit.

³Oriya words evolved indigenously.

Puranic sanctity'.¹ He depicted the Pandavas as visiting all the holy places of Orissa and transformed the gods of the original Mahabharata into local gods. The Pandavas were also brought down to commence their last journey to the Himalayas from Orissa. Before the journey, Sarala made them visit Puri, Bhubaneswar, Konark, Cuttack, Kapilas, Jajpur and other religious places and offer their respects to the presiding deities of all these places.² Moreover, in Sarala's imagination, the mountain of Kapilash situated in the Dhenkanal district became the mythic Kailash mountain, the abode of Lord Hara and his wife Parvati and the Sun-god killed the demon Arka to build the great Konark temple in Orissa. Sarala Dasa's genius in indigenising the Mahabharata reached its climax when he linked Sri Krshna's death at Dwaraka on the western coast of India with the emergence of Lord Jagannath at Neelachal-Puri on the eastern coast. In the Musali Parva of his Mahabharata, he created Lord Jagannath's origin in such a way as to project it as a local event. The Lord was rooted in the Oriya land and locale.³ Thus, by a process of regionalisation of the original Mahabharata and by linking Lord Jagannath's origin with Orissa, Sarala made the land sacred.

The manifold experience that Sarala Dasa gained through his association with the great King Kapilendradeva had widened his knowledge of the history and geography of Orissa. This is shown in his Mahabharata where there is mention of places, mountains, forests etc. of Orissa in great detail. Similarly the history of Orissa, particularly the glorious reign of Kapilendradeva, found its entry into the Mahabharata in an allegorical form. The military exploits of Kapilendradeva were described in the form of battles

¹Mayadhar Mansinha, History of Oriya Literature (New Delhi, 1962), p. 65

²K.C. Panigrahi, Sarala Dasa. Makers of Indian Literature (New Delhi, 1975), p. 42

³Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata (Musali Parva), ed., A. Mohanty (Bhubaneswar, 1970), pp. 74-105

fought by the Pandavas. From the passionate description of the battles and military campaigns, it appears as if Sarala Dasa himself had participated in them. There is mention of places such as Oda-Sivapura situated on the river Godavari and indirect reference to the historic forts of Kondavidu and Devarkonda, as well the Bahamani and Vijayanagar kingdoms in southern India.¹ Historically, Kapilendradeva had attacked and ravaged all these forts and kingdoms and by associating them with the Pandavas, Sarala Dasa allegorically glorified Kapilendradeva's reign.

In transforming the original Sanskrit Mahabharata to an Oriya Mahabharata, Sarala Dasa showed remarkable awareness about the region broadly corresponding to the present Orissa, its locale, geography and gods, but he also used this awareness deliberately to glorify and sanctify the land so that the region to which he belonged was elevated in status.

The Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa, popularly known as the Sarala Mahabharata, created a deep impact on Oriya life. It assumed 'the sanctity and the sancifying power of scripture'.² Its account of the origin of Lord Jagannath, its narrative on the Pandavas' association with the land of Orissa and the construction of proverbs have made the text as sanctified and sacrosanct as scripture. One can explain it more objectively with the help of some proverbs from the text which are invoked by Oriyas as and when occasion demands and their meaning and spirit is well-understood. According to Sarala Dasa for example, the animosity between the Pandavas and the Kauravas started from an unimportant, minor game of Hadodo (Jhimiti)- a contention contained in a proverb 'this is a Mahabharata growing out of a game of *jhimiti* (*Jhimiti khelaru Mahabharata*). It means any incident which becomes spectacular, growing out of a small affair. Similarly, any pious hypocrite is described by Oriyas as 'the tiger in the sacred Tulsi plant

¹Mansinha, op.cit., p.54

²Ibid., p.67

(ocimum santum)' or 'the stork with the cotton wool in its beak'- both proverbs appearing in the Sarala Mahabharata. Creating an array of such proverbs, Sarala Dasa captured the nuances and subtleties of interpersonal relations and built them into Oriya social vocabulary.

The literary tradition created by Sarala Dasa was continued by the *Panchasakha* poets of the 16th century. The *Panchasakha* refers to five devotional poets, Balarama Dasa, Jagannath Dasa, Achyutananda Dasa, Yasobanta Dasa and Ananta Dasa of that period, who were not only contemporaries but also friends and collaborators.¹ Like Sarala Dasa, they also rendered the Indian epics and Puranas in Oriya and made them thoroughly indigenised. If Sarala Dasa is credited to have united in the Mahabharata all the rich but divergent traditions of Orissa into a collective whole, it was the *Panchasakhas* who continued this trend further and strengthened it.²

One example is that of Balarama Dasa who rendered the great Indian epic Ramayana in Oriya. Though the main story-line of the original Sanskrit Ramayana was kept intact, he made it a thoroughly Oriya text with a design of his own. His design was implemented by additions from local tradition, folklore and myth which imparted an Oriya setting and flavour to the original Ramayana theme. The physical geography of Orissa came to substitute the places of the original Ramayana. Ayodhya became Orissa; the original forests, hills, rivers and lakes came to be located in Orissa; the mythical Kailas mountain became the Kapilas hill of Orissa; and even the seasonal cycle of

¹Recently some literary critics and historians of Orissa have disputed the use of term 'Panchasakha' on the ground that these five poets did not belong to the same period nor can their exact period be historically ascertained. However, here the term 'Panchasakha' is used to denote a group of poets of the same genre and similar vision without taking into account their time though they broadly belong to the 16th century.

²Chittaranjan Das, 'Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature of Orissa', in P.C.Bagchi (ed.), Visva-Bharati Annals (Shantiniketan, 1951), IV, 173

Ayodhya was fitted to the Orissan climatic setting. Thus, Orissa was made the main theatre and the original location of the Ramayana episodes was shifted to the new theatre. For example, the Ramayana hero Ramachandra with his wife Sita and brother Laxman visited holy places like the river Chandrabhaga at Konark, the Ekamra Tirtha (Bhubaneswar) and Lord Shiva's abode at Kapilasa hill, during their fourteen years of exile.¹ The forests and hilly tracts of central and western Orissa were depicted as the region where they wandered during the period of exile. The forest tribes of Orissa were also made the camp-followers of Ramachandra.² Like Sarala, Balarama Dasa also situated the battles between Ramachandra and Ravana in Orissa. This, he did by imagining the soldiers as using the very arms and weapons, used by Oriya soldiers during his time.³ According to a scholar, Balarama Dasa made Orissa a miniature world in itself.⁴ The world of the Ramayana was transplanted to Orissa and in the process, Orissa came to contain all the richness of an epic-imagined world, but all its aspects were Oriyanised. An important aspect of Oriyanisation is the identification of Ramachandra, Laxman and Sita with the divine Triad- Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, respectively. Balarama Dasa further stated that on their visit to Puri during fourteen years of exile, Ramachandra had known that he himself was no other than Lord Jagannath. Thus, arguably since the Ramayana is a holy scripture, its association with Orissa also imparted holiness and sanctity to the land.

Yet, another *Panchasakha* poet, Jagannath Dasa rendered the Sanskrit Bhagavata into Oriya. He made it a thoroughly Oriya text which had a language of chastity, elegance, dignity and beauty. All this helped in making

¹Chittaranjan Das, Balarama Dasa, op.cit., pp.31-32

²B.C.Mazumdar, Typical Selections from Oriya Literature (Calcutta, 1921), I., XXV

³For example, different types of arrows such as *Pasupata*, *Narayanastra*, *Agni*, *Fari*, *Amrutastra*, *Meghastra*, *Garjana* etc..

⁴Mazumdar, op.cit., p.XXV

the complex religious theories and philosophies of the Bhagavata intelligible to the Oriya masses. Like the original Bhagavata, Jagannath's Bhagavata also depicted the incarnations of Lord Vishnu and the life and exploits of Lord Krshna in his heroic, pastoral and erotic aspects, but more important was its propagation of the Jagannath cult in the Oriya-speaking region in the garb of Krshna devotionism. By the 16th century, due to the ascendancy of Vaishnavism in Orissa, Lord Jagannath had been identified with Lord Vishnu and then Lord Krshna. Conscious of this trend Jagannath Dasa used Krshna and Jagannath interchangeably throughout the Bhagavata. The re-creation of the Bhagavata in Oriya therefore, glorified and spread the cult of Lord Jagannath. Since Jagannath Dasa like other Panchasakha poets was an advocate of the Jagannath-centric Vaishnavism and since Lord Jagannath and His abode Srikshetra Puri were the highest divine manifestations in their theological conception, he glorified both in his Bhagavata.

Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata became one of the most popular religious compositions of the time and even today it is quoted. It can be found all over Orissa. Generally, villages used to have a *Bhagavata ghara* (house or room) where Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata was recited for villagers. The *Bhagavata ghara*, over the years became an integral part of the rural community life of Orissa as a multi-purpose village institution; school, hall and library, all combined into one.¹

Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata, by way of depicting the story of Krshna-Jagannath in colloquial Oriya brought the glory and essence of their god to the easy comprehension of the masses, both literate and illiterate. As a result, at a popular level, it became a source of spiritual support and solace. For example, even now an ordinary Oriya on his death-bed would wish to listen to lines from the Bhagavata. Even the Bhagabata was used to be read in villages

¹Mansinha, op.cit., p.98

with a belief that it would ward off any danger to the village community. Jagannath Dasa in his life time, would not have thought that his Bhagabata would make so much difference in the daily life of fellow Oriyas, but its impact was really dominant which prompted Mansinha to consider the Bhagavata as 'the commonest and the surest symbol of Oriya nationalism'.¹ Though an exaggerated view, it nevertheless reflects an awareness of belonging to a particular land and of its presiding deity.

The youngest contemporary of the *Panchasakhas*, Achyutananda Dasa rendered the Sanskrit Harivamsa in Oriya. Originally, an appendix to the Mahabharata, the Harivamsa describes the story of Lord Krshna and His 'lila' (exploits) with the Gopis. Achyutananda like his predecessors, recreated the Harivamsa in Oriya. Incorporating many original ideas, he made it almost a hagiography of Lord Krshna in his pastoral aspect as the greatest of cowherds. This book is placed next to Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata as a Sacred Book of Oriyas.² As a result of the religious trend of the time to identify Lord Jagannath with Lord Krshna, the Oriya Harivamsa also became very popular and came to be treated as a sacred text.

Sarala Dasa and three other *Panchasakha* poets are credited as having brought the spiritual lore of the Sanskrit scriptures within easy reach of the ordinary Oriyas. This, they could achieve by incorporating pan-India themes in their literary creations. These reconstructed versions showed the consciousness among the poets, of the land and geography of the region, of its gods and of its people. Their consciousness did not develop out of any naivety, but out of a determination to elevate the status of the region, to which they belonged. It would however, be highly unlikely that in the medieval age, when the geographic limits of Orissa were yet to be defined and Oriya was yet to be given precise ethnic meanings that Sarala Dasa and the *Panchasakha*

¹ Ibid., p. 99

² Ibid., p. 103

poets ever thought in terms of a distinct identity of the land and the people. Arguably they were overtaken by a common experience, a common perception of the land, its antiquity and sanctity. This was reflected in Sarala's Mahabhart, Balarama's Ramayana, Jagannath's Bhagavata and Achyutananda's Harivamsa. It is plausible to argue that although there was no intention of self-identity in terms of articulation and assertion, these early poets enabled members of the Oriya speech-community to develop unity through emotional affinities.

The awareness of Orissa was expressed more forcefully in the treatment of the Jagannath cult by the Panchasakha poets. They imagined Lord Jagannath, the State-deity of Orissa as Supreme Being (Purna Brahma) and Eternal Being (Nitya Purusa) and His Place Neelachal-Puri as Eternal Place (Nitya Sthala).¹ This type of exhaltation induced a sense of pride and belonging not only to Lord Jagannath but also to the land to which He belongs. For the Panchasakhas, Lord Jagannath was at the centre of the Oriya world. Balarama Dasa for example, in his works, 'Bata Abakasa', 'Bhava Samudra' and 'Laxmi Purana', celebrated the divine glory of Lord Jagannath almost in a state of surrender and ecstasy. In 'Bhava Samudra', the poet has described how Lord Jagannath once left the royal chariot during the annual Car festival and boarded the dummy sand-chariot built by him on the sea-shore. The Lord rejected the royal chariot because His devotee the poet suffered humiliation at the hands of the Brahmins.² Balarama Dasa, after being humiliated asked Lord Jagannath, "O'Jagannath! Your Home is at Dwaraka. Why are you in our land? Go and stay there. O'Jagannath! Whence you came and occupied our land, thus earning a bad name!"³ But again the same

¹J.B.Mohanty, 'Jagannath o Odia Sahitya', in Odisha Sahitya Akademi, Sree Jagannatha (Bhubaneswar, 1982), p.136

²Ibid., p.135

³Balarama Dasa, 'Bhava Samudra' (Orissa Museum Library Acc. No.3004) p.118

devotee, in an ecstatic state wondered how the royal chariot could move when Lord Jagannath Himself had been a captive in his mental world.¹ In the poet's imagination, then the Lord rejected the royal chariot and boarded the poet's chariot ! Thus, Lord Jagannath was invoked by the poet at a very intimate level. Again, in Jagannath Dasa's 'Darubrahma Gita' and Achyutananda Dasa's 'Sunya Samhita', Lord Jagannath was categorically associated with the land and its people. In 'Darubrahma Gita', Jagannath Dasa made the origin of Lord Jagannath a purely local event. According to him, the Pandavas carried the body of Sri-Krshna from Dwaraka to Puri and burnt it there on the holy spot called Yamanika or Yamnika and the unburnt navel portion of the body was ultimately taken by a tribal called Viswabasu who worshipped it secretly. It was then obtained by the legendary king Indradyumna who made the wooden images of the Jagannath Triad. What is apparent here is the capturing of the cognitive world of these poets by a religious ecstasy under the influence of which they imagined the intimacy between Lord Jagannath and the self and a divinely-ordained relation between their land and Lord. As a corollary, they had to establish the glory of the Lord so that He became the supreme and highest Godhead.

Awareness about Orissa among Oriya authors in the pre-modern period was also sometimes aroused by anti-foreign sentiments. Though unaware of any ethnic or regional feeling, they were influenced by a common experience of encountering the 'Other'. For example, the great Oriya poet, Brajanath Badajena (1730-95 A.D.) glorified the martial tradition and spirit of Oriyas in his magnum opus, 'Samara Taranga' (Waves of Battle), as a reaction to and protest at the Maratha occupation of Orissa.² It is all about the battle fought between Raja Trilochana Mahindra Bahadur (1764-98 A.D) of Dhenkanal³ and

¹Ibid., p.5

²See, Brajanatha Badajena's Samara Taranga, ed., Devendra Mohanty (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1976)

³A former feudatory state in Orissa and now a district.

the Maratha Governor Rajaram Pandit and that between Mahindra and the neighbouring king of Keonjhar.¹ The battles were fought in 1781 A.D.. Raja Mahindra's fight against the Marathas, is an historical fact which forms the main theme of the 'Samara Taranga', but it has been altered by Badajena to glorify a king of Orissa and the martial spirit of Oriyas.

According to the theme, since King Mahindra refused to pay tribute to the Marathas, the latter attacked Dhenkanal, but were defeated by the army of Dhenkanal. The Marathas again attacked and the battle continued for 18 days. However, they could not defeat Dhenkanal. Ultimately, a truce was signed between the two sides and accordingly, Mahindra had to leave the Dhenkanal fort for two days. However, the fame and prestige of Mahindra spread and being jealous of him, the neighbouring king of Keonjhar attacked Dhenkanal, but Keonjhar was ultimately defeated.² Thus, the 'Samara Taranga' makes King Mahindra hero of the two battles. The historicity of the battle between Dhenkanal and the Marathas has been established beyond doubt,³ but Mahindra's victory was a falsification of historical fact. In reality, after some initial difficulties, the Marathas could inflict defeat on Mahindra who was forced to accept the terms of the former and pay tribute as before.

Leaving aside the historical merit of the 'Samara Taranga', one should judge its importance vis-a-vis the context in which it was written. It was written at a time when the Orissa region was reeling under the Maratha onslaught and misrule. Factually, King Mahindra had suffered a defeat at the hands of the Marathas, but the poet Badajena changed the defeat to a truce so that Oriya's self-prestige was not compromised and their morale was boosted. Moreover, according to the evidence, King Mahindra was rather mediocre and not a worthy hero, but Badajena made him an invincible hero who even addressed

¹Do

²Badajena, *op.cit.*, pp.46-57

³B.C.Roy, Orissa under Marathas (Allahabad, 1960), pp.52-54

his cowardly courtiers in the most encouraging words:

Don't talk of leaving the fort. With sword and shield, let us with God in our hearts, rush into the flanks of the enemy, unconcerned about consequences. Arguments apart, who advises us to compromise with the nuisance of the Bargis?¹

Thus, Badajena glorified an historical character of Orissa, though factually he was wrong, but in the process, he constructed an Oriya 'image' which came to denote bravery and invincibility. This image becomes more meaningful when it is contextualised in the Orissa that had lost freedom, had no unity and was ruled by a foreign power. This is why, an Oriya historian credits Badajena as the first Oriya poet 'charged with lofty patriotic sentiment and a sense of glory in the exaltation of the motherland'.²

Badajena's poem, for the first time in Oriya literature, adopted an historical event as its theme and then constructed the 'reality' in such a way as to glorify Oriyas. The poem, though criticised as a eulogy, presents Oriyas as martially a superior race to the Marathas who invaded the small kingdom of Dhenkanal. Badajena brings out the superiority of Oriyas by constructing the 'Other'- the Marathas as inefficient, low-spirited and less courageous. For example, King Mahindra condemns and deplores the Maratha Chief Chimnaji Bapu as a 'babe in the arts of war and diplomacy' and challenges him, "What can he do with all his arms and ammunition when courage is the mainspring of every action?"³ Thus in Badajena's imagination, the Oriyas were destined to win, as courage was the mainspring of their action and as the Maratha Chief was inefficient, a 'babe' in the arts of war and diplomacy ! The construction of a difference in character between Oriyas and Marathas is symbolic of a diachotomic representation of two separate peoples, in which one is superior

¹Badajena, op.cit., p.51

²G.S.Das, 'The Historical and Literary value of Samara Taranga', O.H.R.J., Vol.II, No.2 (1953), p.1

³Badajena, op.cit., p.11

to the other.

Our discussion of the five well-known authors of the early Oriya literature shows how they were conscious of different aspects of the Oriya-speaking region, from its geography to its history. This consciousness was reflected not only in invoking different aspects of the land, but also in its glorification and sanctification. It may not conform to the 'real past' or to the things that really existed, but it is a symbolic construction of what Orissa and Oriya meant to the authors at that time. One important dimension of this consciousness was the use of Oriya instead of Sanskrit in their compositions. This itself, shows their consciousness of and commitment to their language and by extension, their language-community. Thus, even in the early phase of Oriya literature, the authors set themselves the task of creating a vocabulary for imagining 'Odisha' and 'Odia'.

II

During the course of its evolution over the centuries, the Jagannath cult like early Oriya literature produced a collective consciousness among Oriyas. This was primarily because of the new meaning that came to be attached to Lord Jagannath under the influence of changing historical forces. The origin legend, development and even the quintessential nature of the Jagannath cult, all came to be determined by these forces to a great extent. This section will demonstrate how the consciousness, with its rudimentary ethnic underpinnings, gradually manifested itself in the Jagannath cult.

Lord Jagannath's name is intrinsically linked with Oriya religion and culture. With an area of 57,392 square miles where 97 out of every 100 inhabitants are Hindus,¹ Orissa is the cradle of the Jagannath cult. The close relationship between Orissa and Lord Jagannath is proved by the fact that in

¹Census of India, 1911, Vol.V, Bihar and Orissa, Part I (Calcutta, 1913), p.201

popular parlance, the Oriya religion is called the 'Jagannath cult (Dharma)' and the Oriya culture the 'Jagannath culture (Samskriti)'. The town of Puri, situated on the eastern coast of Orissa on the Bay of Bengal, is the hallowed seat of Lord Jagannath.¹ The massive temple, housing the Jagannath Triad- Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra- is located in Puri. The Jagannath cult is a regional tradition of Vaishnavism in which Lord Jagannath is identified with Lord Vishnu/Krshna.

The Jagannath cult is assigned a mythic past. In popular Oriya belief, Lord Jagannath's origin has been traced to the legendary king Indradyumna of Avanti who is said to have reigned in the mythological age. The legendary accounts of the origin may be found in some of the leading eighteen Puranas of Hindus.² The most elaborate is the Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya which forms a part of the Skanda Purana. Though there are some differences in details, the Brahma Purana and the Narada Purana also treat the subject of the origin legend on almost similar lines. However, the most commonly accepted and popular version is that of the Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya or the Utkal Khanda of the Skanda Purana. According to this account,³ in the earliest stage of its existence, Puri, the present abode of the Jagannath Triad was a forest that had the Blue Hill (Nilagiri), a sprawling, all-bestowing banyan tree called *Kalpa Vrکشya* and the sacred *Rohinikunda* (pond) to the west of the tree. The image of Lord Vishnu in sapphire, known as Nilamani or Nilamadhava, was worshipped in the forest by a Savara, called Viswabasu.⁴ The King

¹ The word 'Puri' is an abbreviation of 'Jagannath Pooree' meaning the abode of Lord Jagannath.

² The Puranas are a branch of the Hindu sacred literature. For details, see, K.S.Ramaswami Sastri, 'The Puranas', in S.K.Chatterji (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of India (Rept., Calcutta, 1991), V, 64-71

³ See, The Skanda Purana. Part V (English trnsl.), translated and annotated, G.V.Tagore (Delhi, 1994)

⁴ Anthropologists have shown that Savara is not a specific tribal community. It rather denotes a primitive or particular

Indradyumna who belonged to the fifth generation of the god Brahma, was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. He had a burning desire to propitiate Vishnu by installing His idol. So as soon as he was informed of Nilamadhava, he sent Vidyapati, a Brahmin, to the Utkal land to ascertain this news. In due course, Vidyapati reached Utkal and became friendly with Viswabasu who alone knew the sacred location of Nilamadhav. Finally Vidyapati managed to visit Nilamadhav with the help of Viswabasu. Then on his return to Avanti, he told the whole story to Indradyumna. Since the King was interested in installing the worship of Vishnu in his country, he immediately started for Utkal to bring the image. He was accompanied by a mighty army and also by the sage, Narada. On his arrival he was utterly disappointed to find no trace of the image. Narada consoled the King by informing him that the image had sunk under the golden sand of the sea, but would reappear in the form of a wooden log. He also advised the king to perform a thousand horse sacrifices to propitiate the Lord.

Accordingly, Indradyumna performed the horse-sacrifices and towards the end, found a wooden log floating on the sea bearing the insignias of Lord Vishnu. Narada informed the King that the log was nothing but the fallen hairs from the body of Vishnu that had incarnated in the form of the log.¹ The log was thereupon brought to the shore and according to an oracle, it was carved into four images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and the wheel of Sudarshana. According to another oracle, the King established the images and constructed a temple at Puri. Then, he went to *Brahmaloka* (the Abode of Lord Brahma) to invite Lord Brahma to consecrate the new temple, but before

socio-economic level of life (as food-gathers and hunters) in Orissa and as such many such communities come under it. Hence, the term 'Savara' is used here to denote somebody who belongs to this level of life. See, N.K.Behura and J.Dash, 'Lord Jagannath, The State Deity and the Sabaras: An Anthropological Enquiry' in K.C.Mishra (ed.), *Studies in the Cult of Jagannath* (Bhubaneswar, 1991), pp.224-237

¹The Skanda Purana, op.cit., pp.110-111

his return, many ages had passed and the temple had been occupied by another King of Utkal, known as Galamadhava. However, after getting evidence of Indradyumna's right over the temple, Galamadhava helped him to consecrate the temple, an act finally completed by Lord Brahma. Since then, the images and the temple have remained there.

The origin legend as mentioned in the Skanda Purana, is fully developed and is a detailed narrative with a series of sub-plots and characters skilfully woven into them, but in the Brahma Purana and the Narada Purana, the origin legend remains at a primary stage of its evolution and the characters of Viswabasu, Vidyapati, Narada, Brahma and others do not figure. The King Indradyumna however, figures in all the three Puranas, as being instrumental in establishing the Jagannath Triad. In whichever form it may be, the origin legend of Lord Jagannath has the King Indradyumna at its centre.

The same Indradyumna legend has been reconstructed by the 15th century Oriya poet Sarala Dasa, in the Musali Parva of his Oriya Mahabharata.¹ In this reconstructed version, the tribals of Orissa called *Savaras* have been assigned a major role in the origin of the Jagannath cult. They have been associated with the legend in such a way as to make it predominantly a *Savara* tradition. For example, according to Sarala Dasa, Lord Jagannath was originally being worshipped as 'Savari Narayan' (Savara Vishnu) in the Nilamadhav form, by the *Savaras* on the Dhauli hill, but the image of Nilamadhav was, in reality, the unburnt body of Lord Krshna who died at Dwaraka from an arrow shot by a *Savara* called Jara. The unburnt body had been recovered from the sea at Shri-Kshetra Puri by the same Jara who preserved and secretly worshipped it as Nilamadhav. When the Vaishnavite King Galaba came to know about Nilamadhav, he wanted to carry Him away to his kingdom, but he failed in his mission as Nilamadhav disappeared. At this, Galaba became terribly angry with the *Savaras* and killed many of them. When

¹Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata, op.cit., pp.74-117

Jara reached the site, a fierce battle ensued in which many of Galaba's soldiers were killed. However, the battle came to an end with Lord Vishnu (Savari Narayan) appearing before Galaba in a dream sequence. The Lord explained to the King his long intimate relations with the Savaras and disclosed how He had even married a Savara girl, Sriya !¹ Thus, the God, Himself tried to prove the innocence of His Savara devotees, but at the same time, cursed the King that his dynasty would be extinct because of the crime he had committed by killing innocent Savaras. When the King repented and prayed for pardon, Lord Vishnu consoled him that He would reappear as Nilamadhav on Nilagiri, but made it clear that the Savaras would continue to serve Him. Then, according to Sarala Dasa, another King called Indradyumna built a temple in Nilagiri-Puri. Lord Vishnu (Krshna) alias Savari Narayan expressed His desire to reappear on the earth, but not as Savari Narayan or Nilamadhav. He wanted to take the incarnation of the Buddha in which he would punish the wicked and nurture the good.² Thereafter, Lord Krshna's body appeared as a log in the Rohinikunda. Indradyumna brought the log to the temple with the help of Jara Savara and a Brahmin, named Basu. The divine carpenter Viswakarma carved the log into the three images, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, with the help of Jara Savara who also put the divine essence- the 'Brahma' into Lord Jagannath's body. At last, Lord Jagannath instructed the King that the descendants of Jara Savara would serve Him as *Daitas* and that of Basu Brahmin would worship Him as priests.

Though Sarala Dasa's account of the origin legend is incoherent, it establishes that the phenomenon of the origin of the Jagannath cult was essentially a local event, in which the major role was played by the Savaras. Both the Puranic and Sarala Mahabharata accounts converge on many points, but the latter is biased towards the Savaras. For example, in Sarala

¹Ibid. ,p.84

²Ibid. ,p.109

Mahabharata when Indradyumna engaged both Jara Savara and Basu Brahmin to lift Darubrahma from the Rohinikunda, Jara could easily lift his portion of the log while Basu did it with difficulty.¹ This suggests that the log-lifting capacity was the measuring-rod to determine a group's relative proximity to Lord Jagannath and its position in the cult hierarchy.² Since the Savaras were the earliest custodians of Lord Jagannath, they were supposedly nearer to the Lord. The autochthonous origin of the Jagannath cult, first mentioned by the Puranas, was thus overplayed by Sarala Dasa. In consequence, the cult was territorialised, that is, Lord Jagannath became specifically linked with the Orissa region and its people.

Sarala Dasa asserted the 'territoriality' of the Jagannath cult by relating Sri Krshna's death at Dwaraka (on the west coast of India) with the emergence of Lord Jagannath in Orissa (on the eastern coast) in His earliest form, Nilamadhava. According to Sarala, the unburnt heart of Lord Krshna was the image of Nilamadhava at Neelachal-Puri. He even gave the king Indradyumna an Oriya identity, by specifying him as the King residing at Yajapura (modern Jajpur) in Orissa. The Indradyumna legend thus tends to confer 'territoriality' on the Jagannath cult by linking the circumstances and central role of Lord Jagannath's origin with Orissa and more precisely with the Puri region. The Indradyumna legend, by assigning the cult a definite territory in which to be born and providing it with a particular social milieu to grow, produces the belief that Lord Jagannath is the deity of the 'land', established by the king Indradyumna with the help of the indigenous people- the Savaras. This belief about 'territorial liminality' helps in formalising the claim to Lord Jagannath as *Ista-Devata* (family-god).

The centrality of the Indradyumna legend, in both the Puranic version

¹Ibid., p. 113

²G.N.Dash, 'The Evolution of the Priestly Power: The Gangavamsa Period', in A.Eschmann, H.Kulke, G.C.Tripathi (eds), The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa (New Delhi, 1978), p.167

and the Sarala Mahabharata, is to explain the origin of the Jagannath cult. The supernatural elements have been interwoven with humans and their deeds, to claim legitimacy for the remote antiquity of the cult, but in the process the origin of the cult has been rendered mythical. Taking the origin to some mythical age, historical time has been transcended, but the geographical region is not mysterious; it has been concretely identified. A world outside history or historical processes is always an object of religious aspiration. This is meaningful in the context of creating a religious belief about the origin of the cult. The legend of installation of the Jagannath cult by Indradyumna with the help of the Divine, under extraordinary circumstances in some transcended time, gives legitimacy to the Oriya belief that 'Bada Thakur' (Lord Jagannath) is beyond the purview of historical time and process. He is transcendental.

The date of the creation of the Indradyumana legend in the Puranic tradition cannot be exactly ascertained, given that it is difficult to set a specific date for composition of any of the eighteen Mahapuranas. However, the Puranas have been connected with the Vedas and keeping in view the re-modelling and recasting of the Puranas, some scholars date them from before the Christian era.¹ It has not been possible however, to date individual Mahapuranas in their entirety, except through conjecture and speculation. The date of the Mahatmyas², attached to the Mahapuranas, is equally uncertain. The Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya where the Indradyumna legend figures prominently, is generally supposed to be a very early composition. Though the date of different accounts of Purushottamakshetra Mahatmyas attached to the Mahapuranas is not yet fixed, their antiquity is well established. This proves

¹See, for problems of dating of the Puranas, Ludo Rocher, The Puranas (Wiesbaden, 1986), pp. 100-103.

²The term Mahatmya refers to a Puranic text which is composed with the specific purpose of proclaiming the 'greatness' of a variety of things: a place, an auspicious time, a deity and so on.

the fact that the Jagannath cult had been 'constructed' even in an earlier period as originating in the land of Orissa or Utkal in some distant past. The Sarala Mahabharata, composed at a later date (the 15th century A.D.), is of course an Oriya composition, but it demonstrates how Oriyas had, by that time accepted Lord Jagannath as their own deity who had existed in their land since time immemorial.

Between the period of the composition of the Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya and that of the Sarala Mahabharata, there is a *Sthalapurana* or local Purana called Niladrimahodaya which was composed in Orissa most probably in the later part of the 14th century A.D. before the end of the Ganga dynasty.¹ It was composed on the model of the Purushottama Mahatmya, but it differs from the latter in giving details of rites, festivals and modes of worship of the Jagannath Triad. It was in all probability the first local treatise to be composed on the Jagannath cult. During the Ganga dynasty when the kings dedicated their whole kingdom to Lord Jagannath, they might have asked for the composition of Niladrimahodaya in order to implement a code of conduct for the cult with royal pomp and grandeur.² It incorporates the theme of the *Mahatmya* and more significantly, prescribes strict rules and regulations for the conduct of the Jagannath cult. The composition itself, of such a *Sthalapurana* confirms Lord Jagannath's continued existence in Orissa and the anxiety for continuation and protection of the cult, even in earlier times. This anxiety is again eloquently expressed when the Purana prescribes fixed purificatory rites after the pollution of the Puri temple made by the entry of the *Yavanas*.³ Thus arguably, by the 14th century A.D., Oriyas had already accepted Lord Jagannath as the deity of their land who therefore must be maintained and protected by fixed rites and rules and regulations. Then in the

¹Niladrimahodaya, ed., Sridhar Mahapatrashaarma
(Cuttack, 1984), p. kh

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 77-79

15th century, as we saw earlier, Sarala Dasa reconstructed the Indradyumna legend and made Lord Jagannath a thoroughly Oriya god.

The Oriya sense of association with Lord Jagannath is also heightened by the textual contents of the Puranas, on the sanctity and glory of Srikshetra-Puri. Not only the Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya but also the Niladrimahodaya glorifies the abode of Lord Jagannath, where all can attain salvation. In the latter for example, it is narrated how even a crow attained salvation and went straight to Baikuntha in the form of Vishnu, after taking a bath in the Rohinikunda and having a 'darshan' of Nilamadhava in Srikshetra.¹ In the words of Goddess Laxmi, should any living-being die in this kshetra, or should anyone having a desire to visit the *kshetra* die before hand, or should anyone die on his way to the *kshetra*, he would attain salvation.² The *kshetra* is thus endowed with an extraordinary power to give salvation to any mortal being.

Myths and legends interpret reality and provide a short-cut for basic personal and social experience. The Indradyumna legend interprets the original cultural and social context out of which the Jagannath cult arose. The context was supposedly tribal with a strong Hindu influence, ritually as well as socially and politically and at certain stage of this development, a king must have heard the fame of Lord Jagannath when he decided to build a temple for Him.³ Anthropological findings also prove that the Jagannath cult originated on the socio-cultural base of the Savaras who are the autochthones of Orissa.⁴ This is strongly suggested in the Sarala Dasa's account and no less

¹Ibid. ,p.2

²Ibid.

³H.Kulke, 'Jagannath-the State Deity of Orissa', in Sri Jagannath Central Library and Research Institute, Sri Sri Jagannath -The Symbol of Syncretic Indian Culture(Puri,n.d.), p.17

⁴Behura and Dash, op.cit.

categorically, pointed out in the Puranas. The fact that the *Savaras* were first worshipping Lord Jagannath in the Nilamadhav form, proves that Lord Jagannath was primarily a *Savara* deity, but once the land was occupied by the Aryans, the autochthonous nature of the Jagannath cult required it to be adapted to the mainstream Aryan or Hindu tradition. The Indradyumna legend, in which one finds co-operation and collaboration throughout between Aryans (Indradyumna, Vidyapati, Galaba/ Galamadhava etc.) and non-Aryan *Savaras* (Viswabasu, Jara etc.) not only made this 'adaption' possible but also retained the *Savara* involvement in the Jagannath cult. It may be suggested that the Indradyumna legend, which is symbolical of the gradual Hinduization or Aryanization of the non-Aryan *Savara* religious tradition, transformed Lord Jagannath into a Hindu deity. Yet, by retaining the *Savara* elements, the Jagannath cult cut across both Aryans and non-Aryans of Orissa and came to be looked upon as their deity by caste, communities and *Savaras* alike.

Scholars like Padhi, Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi have emphasized and elaborated on the Hinduization process of Lord Jagannath. Padhi, for example assumes that the *Savara* tradition of worshipping their 'Kitung' (god) who lives in a tree, developed into the worship of wooden figures of the Jagannath Triad.¹ 'Kitung' has ten figures and 'Jagant' is one of them. The *Savaras* do not cut the tree which they call 'Jagant'. Linking the *Savara* tradition of worship of wooden images to the development of the Jagannath Triad which are themselves wooden figures, Padhi coins the word 'Darudevata' or Wooden Deity to describe Lord Jagannath. Dwelling on the evolution of Lord Jagannath from a tribal wooden image to a Hindu deity, Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi trace in the Hinduization process, the structural patterns which may have governed the iconographic and iconological development of the wooden gods from tribal wooden totems to the Hinduised deities.² Similarly, Surendra Mohanty also sees the whole process of

¹Benimadhav Padhi, Darudevata (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1975), p. 32

²See, chapters IV, V & X in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi

formation of the Jagannath Triad since its tribal inception, in terms of successive waves of Aryanization of the pre-Aryan spiritual culture.¹

The tribal origin of the Jagannath cult is also attested by the existence of a class of temple servitors (niyoga) known as 'Daitas'² who form the core of the servitors. The *Daitas* are supposed to be the descendants of the Savara Vishwabasu who according to the legend, was the earliest worshipper of Lord Jagannath in His Nilamadhava form. During the Car festival³ and the *Navakalevara* (Replacement and Renewal of images) ceremony of the Jagannath Triad, the *Daitas* dominate the rituals while the Brahmin priests remain on the periphery. The *Daitas* also perform all kinds of secret, secular and sacred services during the 'Anasara' period⁴ which starts before the Car festival. During the *Navakalevara*, they play a central role in choosing the wooden log for construction of new images and organising the whole paraphernalia of this ceremony in which they behave like relatives of Lord Jagannath. After putting the old body of the Lord to rest, they observe the purificatory rites as if somebody from their family has died. In addition to the *Daitas*, there is another class of servitors called *Suddha Suaras* who are

(eds.), op.cit.

¹Surendra Mohanty, Lord Jagannath (Bhubaneswar, 1982), pp. 7-13

²Daitas have been traditionally accepted as having Adivasi or tribal ancestors. The credibility to such contention mainly comes from the origin legend, as described in the Sarala Mahabharata and in the popular Oriya poem, Deulatola. But as to the origin of the word 'Daita', there is no unanimity. For more on Daita, see, G.N.Dash, 'Janasruti o' Samajika Itihasa', Jhankar, 34th yr., No.4, July 1982, pp.337-346.

³ Annual festival of the Jagannath Triad in which the three deities are taken out in three chariots in a procession and kept in some other place for seven days. For more, see, Chapter VI

⁴ A period during which the Jagannath Triad is kept in a secluded place without public viewing for fifteen days.

supposed to be the descendants of the offspring from the wedlock between the Brahmin Vidyapati and the Savara Viswabasu's daughter. Their main job is to render assistance in the worship of the Jagannath Triad by way of cleaning utensils and pots, arranging required materials for worship, giving bath to the images during the time of Navakalevara and so on. Both the *Daitas* and *Suddha Suaras* are also mentioned in the Record-of-Rights as Nos.20 and 37 servitors respectively, having clearly-defined duties and rights vis-a-vis Lord Jagannath.¹ The existence of the *Daitas* and *Suddha Suaras* in the Jagannath temple system and the role played by them in the evolution of the Jagannath cult lend evidence to the tribal linkage of the cult.

On analysis, the Indradyumna legend of origin is found to be implying two important aspects of the Jagannath cult, i.e., autochthonous origin and antiquity, both exerting circumstantial weight in favour of the legend's acceptability. But both these aspects are interrelated, since according to the legend, in the remote past, Lord Jagannath originated in the earliest form of 'Nilamadhava' on a given tribal socio-cultural base. Thereafter, Hinduisation/ Aryanisation was superimposed on Nilamadhava, transforming the deity into the present-day Lord Jagannath. The Indradyumna legend assumed emotional and legitimising power. According to Bruce Kapferer, this power came because it enshrines and incorporates a fundamental intentionality, an orientation towards the world of experience.² The tribal and autochthonous elements of the cult, the antiquity of the Jagannath Triad and the vast array of rites and rituals are the realities of the lived experience, thus the legend could assume the legitimacy and emotional power, by which a common awareness is forged in the region. This awareness was not confined to Hindus only. It was also shared by Buddhists and Jainas. It is indicated by the attempt to

¹See, Record-of-Rights prepared under the Puri Shri Jagannath Temple(Administration) Act(Orissa Act XIV of 1952), Parts II & III

²Bruce Kapferer, Legends of People, Myths of State (Washington and London, 1988), p.48

associate Buddhist and Jaina theories with the Jagannath cult in order to explain its origin and nature.

The iconographic peculiarities of the image of Lord Jagannath suggesting formlessness, identified Him with *Anakara* (one without shape) and *Shunya* (void). The Tantric Vajrayana of Buddhism, of which Orissa was an important centre, associated Lord Jagannath with the Void. The *Shunyavada* or Voidism was incorporated into the medieval Vaisnavism of Orissa as an important element, under Buddhist influence. Lord Jagannath, the Supreme Being was imagined as the *Shunya Purusa*, the Void Personified who was *Anakara* (without shape), *Anadi* (without end) and *Nirguna* (without attributes), so the Buddhist influence on interpreting Lord Jagannath in a particular way, is obvious. Indrabhuti (c.9th century A.D.), a celebrated preceptor of Vajrayana, in his book 'Jnanasiddhi' first mentioned Lord Jagannath as a manifestation of the Buddha.¹ Though Indrabhuti's Jagannath-Buddha cannot be precisely identified with Lord Jagannath of Puri, this conceptualisation may be seen as an anticipation of Lord Jagannath/Purushottam of Puri as a Buddhist incarnation. The great Vaishnavite poet Jayadev (c.12th century) also imagined the Buddha as the 9th incarnation of Vishnu.² In the 13th century, the conception of the Puri deity as the Buddha gradually became popular. The 'Dharma Cult' preached by Ramai Pandit in the Midnapore district, then a part of Orissa, popularised this conception. Ramai Pandit, in his work 'Dharma Puja Vidhana', described the deity on the sea-coast as the Buddha, the 9th incarnation of Hari.³

But as we have already seen, Sarala Dasa is the first Oriya poet to

¹P.K.Behera, 'The Influence of Buddhism on the Cult of Jagannath', J.I.H., Vol.LXI (1983), pp.33-35

²Gita Govinda of Jayadev, pub., Dharmagrantha Store (New edn., Cuttack, n.d.), p.11

³Prabhat Mukherjee, 'Buddha and Jagannath', Souvenir of International Seminar on Buddhism and Jainism (Cuttack, 1976), p.29

describe Lord Jagannath of Puri-Srikshetra as the Buddha. In his imagination, Lord Krishna of *Dwapara Yuga* informed Jara Savara in a dream sequence that He would take the form of Jagannath in his Buddha incarnation and punish the wicked and redeem the good.¹ The *Panchasakha* poets (c.15-16th century A.D.) after him, also considered Lord Jagannath as the Buddha, but they did not identify Him exclusively with any particular Avatara (incarnation) whether Krishna or the Buddha. They considered Lord Jagannath to be the embodiment and creation of all the *Avatars*. During this period, the Oriya Vaishnavite poets invariably imagined Lord Jagannath as the Buddha of the *Kali Yuga* who was born to redeem the world. As mentioned above, in the medieval Vaishnavism of Orissa, *Shunyavada* of Buddhism was an important element. In addition, some other elements of Buddhism like Nirguna worship, the principles of Nagantaka and Yogantaka Buddhist systems etc. were also adopted by Vaisnavites, particularly the *Panchasakha* poets. All these elements were ultimately absorbed in the person of Lord Jagannath. This religio-philosophical context facilitated the attribution of 'Buddhatva' to Lord Jagannath.

Moreover, the historical realities of medieval Orissa also played a crucial role in such an identification of the Buddha with Lord Jagannath. An important religion such as Buddhism, which was prevalent in Orissa till the 16th century, had to be accommodated within the Jagannath cult, at least on a theoretical and conceptual level.² Perhaps, Sarala Dasa and the *Panchasakha* poets, by imagining Lord Jagannath as the Buddha, tried to confer on the

¹ Sarala Dasa' Mahabharat, op.cit. , p.109

² N.K.Sahu, Buddhism in Orissa (Cuttack, 1958), shows the development of Buddhism in Orissa from the 5th century down to the early 16th century A.D.. He points out the pre-eminence of Buddhism in Orissa since the rule of the Mauryan Ashok and the origin and spread of the Tantric Buddhism in Orissa (pp.13-24 and 141-155). He also proves that as late as 15th and 16th centuries, Orissa could preserve the vestiges of different schools of later Buddhism, each of which was claiming certain amount of popularity (p.176).

Buddhist sect of Orissa, a religious identity which could be defined within the framework of the Jagannath cult. This became very pertinent especially from the mid-11th century as the Ganga kings were staunch supporters of Brahminical Hinduism. According to one tradition, the Ganga kings persecuted Buddhists during their rule.¹ Iswara Das' 'Chaitanya Bhagavata' (c.16th century A.D.) records a tradition that Anangabhimadeva (1211-1238 A.D.) sided with Brahmins and clubbed thirty-two Buddhists to death when the latter failed to satisfy him in answering a question.² Similarly, during the Suryavamsi rule (1435-1540 A.D.), because of the ascendancy of Vaishnavism-Jagannath cult, Tantric Buddhism, together with other religious faiths, was persecuted. The *Panchasakha* poets were persecuted and subjected to harassment by the Suryavamsi king Prataparudradeva because of their interpretation of Lord Jagannath as the Buddha and the adoption of rituals of the Tantric Buddhism. They were taunted as 'Prachhanna Buddhas' or Buddhists in disguise.³

The *Panchasakha* poet Achyutananda Dasa mentions how different schools of Buddhism like Nagantaka followers of Nagarjuna, Yogantak school and various systems of Tantric Buddhism were then secretly existing in Orissa.⁴ This suggests how in contemporary Orissa under the Suryavamsi rule, there was antagonism towards Buddhists who were driven underground. To evade royal persecution and avoid incurring the wrath and displeasure of Brahmins, the Buddhists played the hypocrite by adopting the religious observances and practices of Hindus.⁵ By the Suryavamsi period, as we shall

¹K.C.Panigrahi, History of Orissa (Cuttack, 1981), p. 312

²Ibid.

³Mohanty, *op.cit.*, p. 21

⁴Achyutananda Dasa, Sunya Samhita (Cuttack, 1928), Chpt. X

⁵Paritosh Das, Sahajiya Cult of Bengal and Pancha Sakha Cult of Orissa (Calcutta, 1988), p. 181

see later, Lord Jagannath, having been identified with Lord Vishnu, had already been established as the State deity. It is plausible that the patronage of the Jagannath cult and intolerance towards Buddhism created a situation where Buddhists had to protect themselves by integrating with the cult. It was facilitated by the prevailing religio-philosophical ideas of the time which we have already discussed. The Jagannath cult came to be liberally interpreted in order to accommodate those who were either persecuted or alienated. Moreover, those who advocated the theory of the Buddhist origin of Lord Jagannath saw Buddhism essentially as a part of broad Hinduism. None other than, the great Hindu teacher Shankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) had declared the Buddha as the 'rebel child' of Hinduism who must be brought back to the Hindu fold. In the Hindu theological tradition, the Buddha had long been accepted as the 9th incarnation of Lord Vishnu, so for medieval Oriya scholars and poets there was no inhibition in attributing the Buddhata to Lord Jagannath, in order to appropriate Buddhism to the presiding deity and cult of Jagannath.

The conceptualisation of Lord Jagannath of Puri in terms of the Buddha by the medieval scholarship of Orissa provided the basis for some later European and Oriya scholars to argue that the Jagannath cult originated in Buddhism, or was at least appropriated by Buddhists at certain stage in its development. Cunningham, for instance, suggested that the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra were derived from the Buddhist symbol of Triratna(Three Jewels), Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and that the secret object which the idol of Lord Jagannath supposedly contained was a relic of the Buddha.¹ Hopkins went so far as to assert that the Jagannath temple was once dedicated to the Buddha, but 'now the name, temple and idol's car are

¹A.Cunningham, The Ancient Geography of India (London, 1871) ,pp.510-511, and The Stupa of Bharhut(London,1879) ,pp.111-112

Vishnu's'.¹ The Oriya scholar Mahtab accepted this view and in addition, emphasized the apparent similarity between the Car festivals of Jagannath and the Buddha, as a proof of the Buddhist origin of the Jagannath cult.² More recently, Mohanty argued that essentially tribal in origin, the Jagannath cult was subsequently appropriated by Buddhists and thereafter under successive waves of Brahmanisation, Jagannath came to be known as *Darubrahma*.³ All these arguments may not stand historical and archaeological investigations,⁴ but what is important is that they borrow from the medieval intellectual tradition of attributing Buddhata to Lord Jagannath. In retrospect, these interpretations also recognise the Jagannath-centric identity of Buddhists- an identity which was 'created' to bring an important segment of Oriya population like the Buddhists, to the fold of the Jagannath cult.

Perhaps, the same logic also applies in the attempt to interpret the Jagannath cult in terms of Jainism. Nilakantha Das, the foremost advocate of the Jaina origin of the cult, believes that Lord Jagannath originated from Jainism; the rituals connected with the worship of the Triad are non-Vedic and the deities of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are the embodiment of the Jaina Trinity, *Samyakjnana*, *Samyakcharita* and *Samyakdristi*.⁵ Another advocate of the Jaina theory, Kedarnath Mohapatra is of the opinion that the legendary and Puranic Indradyumna was a Jaina king. He identifies

¹E.H.Hopkins, The Religions of India (Boston, 1895), p.449

²H.Mahtab, The History of Orissa (Cuttack, 1960), II., is the first Oriya historian to argue the Buddhist origin of the Jagannath cult.

³Mohanty, op.cit., pp.10-12

⁴O.M.Starza, The Jagannath Temple at Puri (Leiden, 1993), pp.57-61 has criticised and rejected the theory of the Buddhist origin in a very objective and detailed analysis.

⁵Nilakantha Das, 'Hints on the Significance and History of Jagannath', O.H.R.J., Vol.VII, No.I (1958), pp.1-7

Indradyumna with the Jaina king Kharavela of the 2nd century B.C. !¹

Though these theories have been ultimately disproved, the uninterrupted history of Jainism in Orissa made it easier to bring Jainism, at least conceptually, within the fold of the Jagannath cult. Historically, Jainism had co-existed with Hinduism in Orissa for a long period because of its remarkable non-antagonistic attitude, though as a minor religion.² The extent of popularity and spread of Jainism in Orissa can be gauged from the archaeological findings and from the Jaina images recovered from a number of districts in Orissa such as Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Keonjhar and Koraput. In the pre-Christian period, particularly during the King Kharavela's rule, Jainism was the most important religion in Orissa. Though it lost royal support in the first century A.D. after the downfall of the Mahameghavahana dynasty, its roots had gone deep in the ancient Kalinga, thus Jainism could maintain its presence in Orissa throughout history. The fact that Jainism had a remarkable tradition in Orissa was used by scholars to argue for the Jaina origin of the Jagannath cult. This is how Jainas came to be imagined as a part of the mainstream Orissan religion, epitomised in the Jagannath cult.

Given these facts, one may argue that both Buddhism and Jainism were drawn to the fold of the Jagannath cult deliberately so that they would be assimilated into the presiding religious current of the region. Though the assimilation was never complete, it provided alternative perspectives to consider Lord Jagannath. In any discourse on the origin and evolution of the Jagannath cult, both Buddhist and Jain theories are put forward, although the cult has been thoroughly Vaishnavised. It is most likely that the attempt to draw them to the fold of the Jagannath cult was part of a regional aspiration to provide the whole language-community with a uniform religious experience.

¹See, Kedarnath Mohapatra, 'Indradyumna Kimbhadantira Aitihasikata', Bhanja Pradip, Dec., 1934

²Panigrahi, op.cit., pp. 302-303, has elaborately discussed this aspect.

Within Hinduism though the Jagannath cult represents Vaishnavism, it has also the essential features of other Hindu sects such as Shaivism, Shaktism and others. This is because the Jagannath cult during its evolution absorbed elements from different strands of Hinduism, prevalent in Orissa from time to time. In consequence Lord Jagannath came to represent 'Pancha Devata' i.e., Narayana, Rudra, Ganesh, Surya and Durga.¹ When He is on the *Ratna Simhasana* (jewel throne), He is Narayana; during the *Navakalevara*, He is Rudra; during *Snanayatra*, He is Ganesh; in the *Rathayatra*, He is Surya; and at the time of *Sayanotsava*, He is Durga.² Being a confluence of diverse strands of Hinduism, the Jagannath cult could be approached by all sections of Hindus in their respective ways. Moreover, Lord Jagannath may also be seen as a folk deity. He is not only a confluence of different faiths and sects but also His origin, food (Mahaprasad) pattern, iconographic features etc. have folk elements.³ The Jagannath cult is community-based and also ritually regulated. The people of different denominations find diverse ways to conform it to their mundane interests i.e., regulation of the time of work and rest, the period of fertility in the year, the festive cycle and so on. All this elevates the Jagannath cult to what Klaniczay would call a 'popular religion'.⁴

These features of the Jagannath cult help it to be conceptualised as an elastic faith, flexible enough to accommodate different strands of Hinduism and even Buddhism and Jainism. The conceptualisation may not be wholly consistent with the practices and rituals in the cult, but it at least helps in imagining Lord Jagannath as eclectic if not syncretic. Oriyas, belonging to

¹Gopinath Mohapatra, 'Lord Jagannath as the Folk Deity', in S.K.Mohapatra(ed.), Folkways in Religion, Gods, Spirits and Men (Cuttack, 1983), p.161

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp.163-164

⁴Gabriel Klaniczay, The Uses of Supernatural Power (Oxford, 1990), p.46

diverse faiths and denominations, came to look upon Lord Jagannath in accordance with their own beliefs. The Jagannath Triad also came to signify a Trinity in diverse ways: Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar of the Brahminical Triad; Shiva, Vishnu and Durga of Shaivism; Krshna, Balaram and Subhadra of the Vasudeva cult; Rudra, Mahabhairava and Durga of Shaktism; Rama, Laxman and Sita of the Rama cult; Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of Buddhism; Samyakjnana, Samyakcharita and Samyakdristi of Jainism and so on. This helps us to imagine Lord Jagannath as the personal deity of a cross-section of people. Even Muslim poets like Haridas and Salabega became great devotees of Lord Jagannath. Salabega in the early part of the 17th century, composed some of the most passionate *jananas* (devotional poems) of Oriya literature, pouring out his grievances and diatribes to Lord Jagannath on a very personal level. Salabega had a Muslim father and a Hindu mother, but the mother's influence on him was so overwhelming that he became a devotee of Lord Jagannath, in spite of the acute social conservatism of the time. He invoked the Lord to crush his sorrows as 'a tusker tramples down a forest of lotuses'.¹

Interestingly, in the later medieval age, Lord Jagannath came to be conceptualised as 'Patitapabana', meaning Redeemer of the fallen. The meaning of 'Patitapabana' is very significant as it took into consideration people of low origin and non-Aryan tribals and constructed Lord Jagannath as their deity. Conceptualising Him as 'Patitapabana', is predominantly a reconciliatory tactic by Aryans/Brahmins who, as we have already argued earlier, Aryanised/Hinduised the tribal deity of Jagannath. The Hinduised Jagannath was then transmuted as 'Patitapabana' for tribals and lowly Hindus who could lay claim on Him. In the Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa, who overplayed the tribal elements in his account of the legend of origin, one finds the earliest reference to Patitapabana-Jagannath. This concept gradually became popular in the later medieval and early modern Oriya literature. The

¹Nilamani Mishra (ed.), Odia Bhajana (2 vols., Bhubaneswar, 1974), I, 16

Panchasakha poets and after them, ornate poets such as Upendra Bhanja (late 17th century A.D.) described Lord Jagannath as 'Patitapabana', the god of the poor, the redeemer of the miserable, the wretched, the low-caste and the tribal. The image of Lord Jagannath also came to be worshipped as *Patitapabana* in some places in Orissa and a *Patitapabana* image was even set up on the entrance of the Puri temple, inside the *Singhadwara* (Lion Gate). The concept of Patitapabana-Jagannath enhanced the acceptability of Lord Jagannath because lowly Hindus and tribals were not prevented from worshipping Him in the new form. Even if they were debarred from direct access to Lord Jagannath in the Puri temple, they could worship Him in His *Patitapabana* image without entering the temple. We may argue that the invention of Patitapabana-Jagannath was symbolic of the formal recognition by Aryans/Brahmins, of the autochthonous origin of Lord Jagannath in the land of Utkal which was once known as 'Bratyabhumi' (the land of fallen). The recognition was, in a sense the undeclared invitation to lowly Hindus, the poor, the miserable and tribals to be ritually associated with the Jagannath cult. There was no doubt, that if Lord Jagannath had to be made the presiding deity of the land, the entire 'Bratyabhumi' had to recognise Him. He could not be confined to the royal court, nor to the high-castes and elite alone.

To this point we have shown how Lord Jagannath has been associated with the different strands of Hinduism, even with the so-called fallen and with Buddhist and Jaina thought and philosophy. This points at the deliberate creation of a common religious experience, however vague the concepts of 'Orissa' and 'Oriya' might have been in the pre-modern period. Nevertheless, it was the awareness of a community of its religious affiliation, one of its many layered senses although the sense of community in question was 'fuzzy', as Sudipta Kaviraj would argue.¹ Though Oriyas in pre-modern period were a

¹For a full discussion on 'fuzzy' community and many-layered senses, see, Sudipta Kaviraj, 'On the Construction of Colonial Power: Structure, Discourse, Hegemony' in Sudipta Kaviraj(ed.), Politics in India (Delhi, 1997), pp.147-148

'fuzzy' community, one can argue that the awareness of a common religious experience based on Lord Jagannath, was the most pronounced 'layered-sense' which could unify Oriyas. This was further enhanced by the Hindu royalty of Orissa.

Historically, the growth of Oriya religious consciousness was inextricably linked with the institution of kingship in Orissa. It was mediated by the king's involvement in the development of the Jagannath cult, his position in the cult and the development of a new ideology of kingship based on the cult. The king, because of his close association with the cult, came to symbolise in his person, divinity on the earth. Here, an attempt would be made to explain this association in its multiple facets and show how it helped in establishing a religious 'boundary' of Oriyas.

Leaving aside the origin legend of the Jagannath cult, the historicity of its existence can be first established with reference to the Somavamsi king Yayati I (925-955 A.D) who reinstated the Jagannath idol at Puri in a new temple.¹ The very fact that the Jagannath cult was renovated and reinstated presupposes the existence of the institution of Lord Jagannath prior to Yayati I, but it is yet difficult to fix with certitude the historical date of the emergence of Lord Jagannath. Scholars such as like K.N.Mohapatra and Binayak Mishra have tried to establish the date of Jagannath-Puri prior to Yayati I. Mohapatra, on the basis of epigraphic records and literary works, argues that Lord Jagannath, as an incarnation of the Buddha was in existence even before the first quarter of the eighth century and that the great Shankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) established the identity of the Buddhist Jagannath of Puri with the Purushottama Vishnu of Hinduism in the course of his spiritual conquest of

¹Madala Panji, ed., A.B.Mohanty (Cuttack, 1940), pp.4-5. This fact is also accepted by Panigrahi, op.cit., p.105; P.Mukherjee, The History of Medieval Vaishnavism in Orissa (New Delhi, 1981), p.12 and; other scholars like H.Kulke and H.von Stietencron.

India.¹ On the other hand, Mishra traces the antiquity of Jagannath-Puri on the basis of Puranic tradition and of the popular Oriya poem, 'Deulatola' (construction of the temple) mentioning that Puri as a sacred Hindu place came into existence in the 7th century A.D..² It may be pointed out that though 'Deulatola' was first composed around the 16th century, its reference to the antiquity of Puri might have been based on traditions and popular beliefs. The Anargharaghava Natakam by Murari Mishra in the 9th century A.D. also refers to the God Purushottama who was being worshipped on the sea-shore. All this testifies to the existence of the Jagannath cult in Puri before Yayati I, but the Jagannath temple was then somehow displaced, deserted and dilapidated.³

Though Yayati was a Shaivite, he restored the Jagannath cult as a result of religious and political compulsion. Firstly by the tenth century, the Jagannath cult had already come into existence in the land of Orissa, although He was still known as Lord Purushottama, but its Vaishnavite content had not fully developed. Though Jagannath was a Vaishnavite deity, the form of His worship used to be materially affected as a result of Buddhist, Shaivite and Tantric influences.⁴ This facilitated the spread and popularisation of the Jagannath cult. Secondly, Yayati I, because of his Shaivite faith and foreign origin,⁵ had to make his authority acceptable to the people of the conquered land and so he restored and reinstated the Jagannath cult which was already

¹See, K.N.Mohapatra, 'Antiquity of Jagannath-Puri as a place of Pilgrimage', O.H.R.J., Vol.III, No.I (1954), pp.6-21

²Binayak Mishra, 'Folklore and Pauranic Tradition about the Origin of god Jagannath', I.H.Q., Vol.XIII, No.4 (1937), pp.600-609

³The cause of displacement and dilapidation is yet to be historically ascertained.

⁴Mukherjee, op.cit., p.2

⁵The Somavamsi dynasty came from a region of central India, known as Dakshina Kosala.

in existence and known to Orissa. Moreover, Yayati I accepted Lord Jagannath as his Lord and addressed Him as 'the Lord of the king of Orissa' (Odisha rajara prabhu).¹ It seems from this that since the days of the King Yayati I, there had developed a tendency to conceptualise the king as the deputy of Lord Purushottama/ Jagannath. The mode of address used for the Lord came to imply the acceptance by the king of the overlordship of Lord Jagannath.

It is important to mention here that some scholars are of the opinion that the entire Yayati tradition was rather a historiographical 'reconstruction'. Stietencron for example, argues that this tradition really refers to the restoration of the Jagannath cult by the Khurda King Ramachandradeva in 1586-87 A.D. of whom mention will be made later.² Interpreting a particular sentence in the account preserved in the Madala Panji, Stietencron believes that the Yayati tradition refers to the Jagannath group of gods (Triad), but since the formation of the Triad was a later development (around 1230 A.D.), the tradition is about Ramachandradeva who reigned during the last quarter of the 16th century,³ but the sentence in question should not be necessarily understood to imply more than one object; it may also mean one, honoured object. Moreover, the same Madala Panji also mentions Ramachandradeva in a later stage, so it would seem quite illogical that the text should mention the achievements of this King twice. Thus in the absence of any conclusive evidence, we cannot accept the author of the Yayati tradition to be anyone other than Yayati Kesari who established the Somavamsi rule in Orissa.

The Jagannath cult was patronised more directly by the Ganga kings who really conceptualised the royal 'deputy ideology' by transforming Lord Jagannath into the state-deity. The Gangas were originally Shaivites and

¹ Madala Panji, op.cit., p.5

² H.V. Stietencron, 'The Jagannath Temples in Contemporary Orissa', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds.), op.cit., p.475

³ Ibid. and see, Madala Panji, op.cit., p.5

Shiva-Gokarneswar was their tutelary deity. Anantavarman Chodagangadeva (1078-1150 A.D.) constructed a huge temple at Puri and dedicated it to Lord Vishnu-Jagannath. This reflected Chodaganga's acumen as a king who took advantage of the spiritual trends of the time to legitimise and consolidate his power in the newly-conquered territories of central Orissa.¹ By that time, Vaishnavism had already been popular in Orissa. The Maihar copper plate grant of the 10th century mentions Purushottama of *Odradesha* (Utkal).² It is in the 11th and 12th centuries that one comes across several inscriptions and dated manuscripts which prove the importance of Lord Purushottama-Jagannath and Sri Kshetra-Puri. So Chodaganga reacted to the Zeitgeist and took advantage of the religious mood of the time to stabilise and legitimise his royal power over central Orissa which by that time, had already become the domain of the god Purushottama-Jagannath.³ Chodaganga became a patron of Vaishnavism and constructed the huge Vishnu-Jagannath temple (218 feet) at Puri, all in order to exploit the religious sentiments of the people and thereby gain their sanction for his rule over central Orissa.

It is the Ganga king Anangabhima III (1211-1238 A.D.) who formalised the royal 'deputy ideology' by invoking Lord Jagannath. In 1230 A.D., according to an inscription at the Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar, he described himself as a servant of the god Purushottama/Jagannath of Puri who was regarded as the real Lord of the Ganga dominions.⁴ In yet another inscription of 1237 A.D., Anangabhima mentioned the 'prosperous and victorious reign of Purushottama' and considered himself as 'rauta' (deputy)

¹See, chapters I and VIII, in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit.

²E.I., Vol. XXXV (1963-64), pp. 171-175

³H. Kulke, 'Early Royal Patronage of the Jagannath Cult', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p. 149

⁴E.I., Vol. XXX (1954), p. 18

of Lord Purushottama.¹ Then as a true 'rauta', Anangabhimba ritualistically surrendered the Utkal country to Lord Jagannath and declared himself, as His 'rauta'. From that time on, Anangabhimba and his successors claimed to rule under divine order (adesha) and as son (putra) and deputy (rauta) of the Lord of Puri who was now, at least symbolically, the King of Orissa. Whatever may be the political undertone² of this new ideology, henceforth the Hindu rulers of Orissa came to be closely linked with the Jagannath cult. Anangabhimba also intervened in the cult by introducing certain new features in the Puri temple. These included thirty-six different types of duties for the thirty-six classes of temple servitors collectively known as *Chhatishniyoga* and the *Panda* system on the line of Christian missionary organisations, to take care of the religious needs of the pilgrims.³ All this, even now, remains essential to the cult.

The nexus between the Orissan king and the Jagannath cult was cemented under the Suryavamsi Gajapati kings (1435-1540 A.D.). By that time, the Oriya-speaking region had been swept by Vaishnavism. The teachings and ideas of Ramanuja, Jaydev and Sri Chaitanya popularised Vaishnavism in Orissa and helped to define the Jagannath theology. Lord Jagannath came to be equated with Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna. Ramanuja (11-12th century A.D.) greatly influenced the development of the Jagannath theology, as under his influence the concept of a couple, connecting Jagannath and Subhadra, was kept away. Jaydev (12th century A.D.) and Sri Chaitanya (16th century A.D.) imagined Lord Jagannath as Lord Krishna, in the mould of consort-service. Chaitanya saw Lord Jagannath as an object of love and evinced for

¹Ibid., p.202 and Madala Panji, op.cit., p.27

²Kulke, op.cit., pp.153-155, discusses how Anangabhimba used 'deputy ideology' to strengthen not only the 'vertical' legitimation of his power over central Orissa after Cuttack (Abhinava Varanasi) became the capital of the Ganga empire, but also the 'horizontal' legitimation in his struggle with the Hindu Rajas of central and southern India for imperial heritage.

³K.C.Mishra, The Cult of Jagannath (Calcutta, 1971), p.44

Him the same feeling which a human lover has for his mistress. This is similar to the feeling (bhava) of the great Radha for Krshna and Lord Jagannath may be invoked in the same 'bhava'. Thus, Lord Jagannath came to be established as a Vaishnavite god, Vishnu and Krshna being His two different manifestations. Apart from these great teachers and theologians, it was the *Pancaratra* system of Vaishnavism which significantly contributed to the development of the Jagannath theology. The *Pancaratra* alludes to the five nights during which five discourses were given by Narayana to Shiva, Brahma, Indra, the Rsis and Brhaspati respectively. The *Pancaratra* followers worship *Pancaviras* namely, Vasudeva/ Krshna (identified with Vishnu) and four members of his family, Baladeva, Sambha, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This system emphasises Lord Krshna's relations with His sister Ekanamsa and His brother Balarama-Sankarsana and in the system Ekanamsa came to be interpreted as a form of Durga and Balarama as a form of Shiva.¹

Ekanamsa came to be identified with Durga during the composition of the Skanda Purana. But since the days of the Mahabharata, which is an earlier composition, Ekanamsa and Subhadra have been described side by side as the sister of Krshna and Baladeva. For example, in the chapter 221 of Adi Parva of the Mahabharata, Subhadra, the daughter of Vasudeva is the sister of Krshna. It is the Hayasirsa-Pancaratra, a Sanskrit text of circa 800 A.D. dealing with iconography, that identified Ekanamsa with Subhadra.² In the Utkal Khanda of the Skanda Purana, Ekanamsa has been virtually replaced by Subhadra- perhaps, a Vaishnavite effort to wipe out traces of Shaktism from the Jagannath theology. These identifications could be ideally applied to the Jagannath Triad. The main deity Purushottama-Jagannath was reinterpreted as Krshna, Subhadra as Ekanamsa-Durga and Balabhadra as Balarama-

¹Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi, 'The Formation of the Jagannath Traid', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p.185

²S.C.Mukherji, 'The Cult of Ekanamsa', I.H.Q., Vol.XXXV, No.3 (Sept., 1959), pp.202-203

Shiva.¹ Thus reinterpreted, the Triad maintained its essential Vaishnavite character. The Shakta elements were Vaishnavised. It was part of conscious efforts to adapt the presiding deity of the region to the mainstream religious current of the time.

From the 16th and 17th century onwards, Lord Jagannath came to be imagined as the supreme god in the Hindu pantheon. He became the Incarnator (Avatarin), not an Incarnation (Avatara). The 17th century Oriya poet Divakara Das, in his 'Jagannathacharitamrta' declared that 'many millions of avataras emerge out of the body of Jagannath and become merged into Him again who is the highest Brahmin Himself'.² In this new exalted conceptualisation, Lord Jagannath became superior to all.

Given this religious mood of the time, Gajapati Kapilendradeva (1435-1467 A.D.) made Lord Jagannath symbolically responsible for all his important deeds. In a Warangal inscription, he is stated to have become the king of the Utkal country at the command of Lord Purushottama-Jagannath of Puri who is the Lord of the fourteen worlds.³ The logical corollary of this divine grace was that he would consult Lord Jagannath before he took any difficult decision, or at least pretend in his inscriptions to have asked for Lord Jagannath's advice. In one of his Puri inscriptions on the wall of the Jagannath temple dated 1436 A.D., he furthermore threatened his opponents with the wrath of Lord Jagannath and declared any opposition to his policy as treason (droha) against Lord Jagannath.⁴ In two other Puri inscriptions dated 1450 and 1466 A.D. respectively, Kapilendradeva declared as a general policy, that anybody who would violate his order or act contrary to the royal deed, 'rebels against

¹Ibid.

²G.C.Tripathi, 'Jagannath: The Ageless Deity of the Hindus', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p.484

³E.I., Vol.XXXIII (1959-60), pp.128-129

⁴Madala Panji, op.cit., p.42, & K.B.Tripathy, The Evolution of Oriya Language and Script (Cuttack, 1962), p.254

Jagannath'.¹ His successors Purushottamadeva and Prataparudradeva continued his tradition of invoking Lord Jagannath for every royal deed. It became almost a practice under Purushottamadeva to threaten the people with committing a sin against Lord Jagannath if the royal order was disobeyed.

Medieval Hindu Oriya royalty gradually adopted to the Jagannath cult and finally made it a part of their imperial heritage. The king's position was made humble by assigning him a subsidiary status of 'rauta' under the 'real' King, Lord Jagannath. The overlordship of Lord Jagannath over Orissa was recognised by royalty without any hesitation. The deputy or *rauta* ideology was really pressed to 'construct' a divine right of kingship whereby the Oriya Hindu kings claimed their legitimacy from the State Deity, Lord Purushottama/Jagannath. In effect, the monarchy became the rallying ground of the entire community in the name of Lord Jagannath. This point can be illustrated by the ways and the purposes for which the kings used the Jagannath cult for legitimacy. We have seen how Yayati I and Anantavarman Chodagangadeva used Lord Jagannath to overcome the handicap of their foreign origin. Similarly, Anangabhimab III sought in Lord Jagannath, a support and source of legitimacy for his imperial ambitions and designs. His military victory against the Muslim ruler of Bengal and the Kalachuri King of Tummana in eastern Madhya Pradesh is well-known.² Moreover, according to Kulke, the imminence of the disintegration of the great Hindu Chola empire in South India perhaps made Anangabhimab ambitious for the imperial heritage of a Hindu empire.³ All his military campaigns could be justified as Lord Purushottama/Jagannath's divine order (adesha) to his 'deputy', to act accordingly, but the most important development during Anangabhimab's time was to identify (in 1230

¹Tripathy, *ibid.*, pp.258 and 277

²H.Kulke, *op.cit.*, p.153

³*Ibid.*, p.154

A.D.) Purushottama, the deity of Orissa, exclusively with Lord Jagannath.¹ Previously, He used to be known as Purushottama only. The word 'Jagannath' is more an epithet than a proper name, meaning the Lord of Universe. The use of this exalted term with a specific meaning attached to it for the State deity, implied a grand imperial vision for not only unifying Hindu forces, but also providing Oriyas with a common, sacrosanct politico-religious authority. Arguably, the renaming of Purushottama as Jagannath was one of the high-points in the evolution of the Oriya consciousness because the new name, though not new in Indian scriptures, elevated the status of a regional deity to that of the universal Lord.

In the case of Kapilendradeva, Lord Jagannath was also used as a source of legitimacy. It is known that Kapilendradeva had no natural claim to the throne, rather he usurped it. His original status of a *Nayaka* (subordinate ruler) and the subsequent usurpation of the Gajapati throne by dint of his *saurya* (prowess), is mentioned in the Raghudevapura grant of 1459 A.D. .² He used the existing deity ideology and 'reconstructed' it to forge a united Oriya support for him in the name of Lord Jagannath.

The medieval Oriya royalty followed the principle of 'cuius regio, eius religio', meaning 'whose the region, his the religion'. Apart from its political consequences, it could foster a religious unity of Orissa under the banner of Lord Jagannath. The king theoretically acting as His deputy, assumed a subordinate status and the king's subjects paid their allegiance to the King (Jagannath) of their king. This established a channel for divine worship, that is, the subjects paid their obeisance to Lord Jagannath by way of paying respect to the king who himself represented the Lord on the earth.

This channel became very effective by means of a ritual called

¹Inscriptions of Orissa, Vol.V, pp.98-99. In an inscription on a slab to the right of the north gate of the Kurmesvara temple at Srikurmam in South India, this identification is mentioned.

²E.I., Vol.XXXIII(1959-60), p.4

'Chherapamhara'. It is the ritual of sweeping the cars of the Jagannath Triad and sprinkling scented water on them, by the king during the annual Car festival (Rath Yatra). This ritual which involves a menial task performed by the king, might have originated at the outset from the days of the installation of the Jagannath Triad in the temple. The Niladrimahodaya states that the Jagannath Triad were taken in their cars (rathas) from the place of their construction to the temple for installation and the King Indradyumna performed the *Chherapamhara* on the cars before their journey began.¹ The other possibility is that the *Chherapamhara* would have been introduced to the *nitis* (rituals) of the Lord as soon as the kings started expounding the 'deputy' or 'rauta' ideology, as a humble mark of submission to the divine Lord. The *Chherapamhara's* significance lies in formalising and glorifying the royal involvement in the Jagannath cult. By devising such a ritual, the king is assigned a duty which is supposed to be below his position and dignity. On the other hand, it is also befitting to the Jagannath's deputy who is subordinate to the Lord by choice, but superior to his subjects the commoners in social hierarchy. We may argue that the *Chherapamhara* does not belittle the king's position, rather strengthens his position vis-a-vis the temple servitors on the one hand and the subjects of his state on the other. It should also be stated that the entire community of servitors was under the control of the king, so the *Chherapamhara* could not have relegated the king to a position below the servitors whose rights and privileges were really owed to the monarch.

Moreover, the kings accepted the *Chherapamhara* duty in conformity with their status as *adya-sevaka* (first servant) of Lord Jagannath. It is Kapilendradeva who first declared himself in a Puri inscription (1464 A.D.) as Lord Jagannath's servant (sevaka).² This was apparently the origin of the title

¹Niladrimahodaya, op.cit., p.33

²K.B.Tripathy, op.cit., p.272

of *adya-sevaka*, to be used by the Gajapati kings of Orissa subsequently, as an epithet for their religious supremacy in the cult hierarchy. The self imposed servant-status was in conformity with the 'deputy ideology', indicating the king's subordinate, lowly position to Lord Jagannath. The king became a servant of the Divine, in other words, an exalted servant and title 'adya-sevaka' became symbolic of the Gajapati king's supreme position in the Jagannath cult hierarchy. The deputy of the god on the earth, as expected, must have a ritual duty or 'seva' for the god and this 'seva' should be befitting to the god's first servant. Accordingly, the 'seva' of *Chherapamhara* was devised, but given the king's position in the cult hierarchy, it was made more a ritualistic and symbolic act than a functional duty.

G.N.Dash argues that the *Chherapamhara* is indicative of an inferior position of the king vis-a-vis the temple priests. According to him, during Purushottamadeva's reign, the institution of *Chherapamhara* was created to legitimise his unjustified accession (he was supposedly an illegitimate son of Kapilendradeva) to the Gajapati throne and to assign him a lowly position vis-a-vis the temple priests who had helped and supported his accession.¹ But Dash's observation is based on certain conjectures which cannot be attested by contemporary records. His claim that the *Chherapamhara* originated during Purushottama's reign is not corroborated by any source. Moreover, if we accept Dash's argument that the *Chherapamhara* tradition was created during Purushottamadeva's reign to legitimise his unjustified accession, then the question arises why it was not created earlier during the reigns of Yayati I and Anantavarman Chodagangadeva, who had foreign origins or even during Kapilendradeva's time, who had no natural claim to the throne. Rather, as we have already pointed out above, there is strong reason to believe that it originated long before the Suryavamsi dynasty. Dash also thinks that the

¹G.N.Dash, 'The Evolution of the Priestly Power: The Suryavamsi Period', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p.213

famous Kanchi-Kaveri legend (which will be discussed in the fifth chapter) concerning Purushottama's conquest of the King of Kanchi and his subsequent marriage with the Kanchi princess, was created to legitimise his function of *Chherapamhara*.¹ In the legend however, the *Chherapamhara* episode is not as important as the victory of Vaishnavism over the *Shaiva-Ganapatya* faith or the Purushottama's military expedition against Kanchi. In some subsequent versions of the legend, the *Chherapamhara* episode is either ignored or excluded.²

Most significantly, the *Chherapamhara* ritual did not require any justification or legitimation, given the fact that it was the most befitting to the 'first servitor' of Lord Jagannath, so Dash's attempt at linking the legend with the *Chherapamhara* on a one-to-one basis is not justified. The problem with Dash is his value-based contention that the *Chherapamhara* assigned an inferior position to Purushottam, but in reality this was not the case. Rather, on the whole, the *Chherapamhara* not only brought the Gajapati king closer to the Jagannath cult but also increased his prestige in society. In the presence of thousands of believers, the performance of the *Chherapamhara* by a king who otherwise occupied the highest position in traditional Oriya society, was symbolic of the close proximity between royalty and divinity. The king was seen as epitomising divinity and for an average Oriya believer, he became a comprehensible and perceptible corporeal medium for identification with Lord Jagannath.

¹Ibid. , pp.213-15

²For example, in 'Katakarajavamsali', a Sanskrit work of early 19th century based on the Jagannath temple records, there is description of the Kanchi-Kaveri legend, but no mention of the *Chherapamhara*. See, Katakarajavamsavali, ed., G.C.Tripathi and Hermann Kulke (Allahabad, 1987). Yet, in another Sanskrit work of early 19th century 'Odradesa Rajavamsavali', one gets a detailed account of the Kanchi-Kaveri legend, but it is completely silent about the *Chherapamhara*. See, Odradesa Rajavamsavali, ed., Bhagaban Panda (Bhubaneswar, 1983) .

The Gajapati king's proximity with Lord Jagannath also came to be strengthened in a later stage by conceptualising him as 'Chalanti Vishnu' (mobile Vishnu) and 'Thakura Raja' (god-king). It identified the king with Lord Vishnu/ Jagannath. The identification of 'mundane' with 'divine' was perhaps the ultimate result of the king's association with the Jagannath cult. After becoming Lord Jagannath's *rauta* and then His *adya-sevaka*, it was the next logical corollary for the kings to be identified with Jagannath/Vishnu. They associated themselves with all kinds of activities, religious and secular, concerning the cult. As a result, even today they enjoy the privilege of *Chherapamhara*; they do a ritual performance in which they have to symbolically perform tooth-brushing with the same tooth-stick, water and coconuts used for morning ablution (*abakasha*) of Lord Jagannath in the temple and more important is the presence of the lion's gate in front of both the temple and the king's palace (*srinahara*).¹ The king's royal insignia, umbrella, fan, trumpet, drums and women who sing for him and accompany him in procession, are also used for the Jagannath Triad. These are called royal insignia or *rajopachara* in that context. These unique privileges of the kings in the cult hierarchy, drawing a parallel between the cult and the king, made the titles of *Chalanti Vishnu* and *Thakura Raja* more acceptable and comprehensible to the Oriya people. The identification had supposedly originated during the time of the King Purushottamadeva who was proclaimed as 'the incarnation of a part of Vishnu/Narayana' or *Narayana Amsavatara*.² However, in due course, this appellation became a powerful means of imagining 'divine' through 'mundane-human'. Even today, the Puri Raja is seen as a stereotype of Lord Jagannath. Attributing divinity to the Gajapati king became an effective means of reaching the divine. Individual experiences added to a collective experience on the basis of uniformity. The king came to

¹N.Patnaik, Cultural Tradition in Puri; Structure and Organisation of a Pilgrim Centre (Simla, 1977), pp. 32-33

²G.N.Dash, *op.cit.*, p. 219

symbolise the religious unity of Oriyas.

After Suryavamsi rule, the structure of Orissan monarchy came to be increasingly dependent on the Jagannath cult. There was turmoil and confusion in Orissa in the mid-16th century due to the Afghan invasion from Bengal, the destruction of the Puri temple and the subsequent loss of independence in 1568 A.D.. During this time, Ramachandradeva, a leader (nayaka) of Khurda, was elected as king of Orissa, but his claim to the imperial heritage of the 'Gajapati'¹ was legitimised only by his act of renewal of the Jagannath cult at Puri. In popular Oriya perception, he became the 'Second Indradyumna', the first being the mythical King Indradyumna who had installed the Jagannath cult. After the renewal of the cult, the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) acknowledged Ramachandradeva as the Gajapati who was also granted the hereditary fief of all the feudatory states of central Orissa.² Politically motivated, Akbar did not interfere in Ramachandra's claim to the Jagannath cult.

Puri, being the centre of the Jagannath cult, gradually became the residence of the Rajas of Khurda who were the titular kings of Orissa only after 1568 A.D.. In the first part of the 17th century, Raja Narasimha I (1622-47 A.D.) of Khurda constructed a palace at Puri, but the Rajas made their permanent move to Puri in the 19th century when the present palace was built. The Rajas of Khurda came to be known as the Rajas of Puri. During the period of transfer, several reforms were introduced by the kings in the Jagannath cult, all aimed at enhancing the royal influence over the cult and the temple.

By the 18th century, the Jagannath cult had been transformed to

¹It is a title meaning 'Lord of Elephants' which was first used by the Ganga king Narasimha I (1234-1245) and which became the most popular title of the Suryavamsi kings. Afterwards, it became the official title of the Orissan kings.

²H.Kulke, 'The Struggle between the Rajas of Khurda and the Muslim Subahdars of Cuttack for Dominance of the Jagannath Temple', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., pp.327-328

essentially a regional faith. The land and the people of the Oriya-speaking region came to be increasingly identified with Lord Jagannath. The resultant awareness was of a common religious experience which again manifested itself in the use of the regnal year (anka) of the Puri Rajas, by the people of all the Oriya-speaking regions in almanacs, horoscopes of newly-born babies, official documents like *sanands* and in literary and scholarly works.¹ This was indicative of a common belief-system in which the god-king nexus was fully accepted. The nexus was important, in the sense that it forged a common belief system- a rudimentary religious unity. It is further evidenced by the Paik Rebellion of 1817 A.D. in Khurda, against the British.

It may be out of context here to analyze the causes and consequences of the *Paik* Rebellion, but for our purpose, it is important to note the religious significance of the event. The *Paikas* (militia) under their leader Buxi Jagabandhu, tried to enlist the support of both the Puri Raja and Lord Jagannath in their struggle against the British. The priests of the Puri temple made an open declaration of the imminent fall of British rule in Orissa and the restoration of the Gajapati rule.² Though the Rebellion was finally suppressed, it was of considerable religious significance to invoke both the Puri Raja and Lord Jagannath for attempted political change in Orissa,. The god-king nexus was used as a plea for rallying the Oriya forces behind the Gajapati. The *Paik* Rebellion thus, demonstrates the extent to which the nexus was acceptable to Oriyas. King and Lord Jagannath became inconceivable in the Oriya mind without reference to each other. Expressions like 'Jagannath Desh' and 'Thakura Raja', used to denote the land and the Hindu king of Orissa, respectively, indicate not only a religious entity (Jagannath and Thakura) but

¹G.N.Dash, 'Jagannath and Oriya Nationalism', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p.363

²G.Toynbee, A Sketch of the History of Orissa, quoted in H.Kulke, 'Juggernaut under British Supremacy and the Resurgence of the Khurda Rajas as Rajas of Puri', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p.353

also of a political entity (desha and raja).

As we saw, the Jagannath cult has a mythic past constructed in the legend of its origin; it is highly eclectic, able to accommodate all Hindu faiths and traditions, even Buddhism and Jainism and it has had a long history of the god-king nexus. In consequence, Vishnu/Purushottama was transformed from a pan-Hindu deity to an Oriya deity called Jagannath, although His pan-Hindu character was retained. He came to assume the meaning of a unifying force of a common religious experience of the people inhabiting the region, so it may be argued that the three aspects of the Jagannath cult namely, a constructed mythic past, eclecticism and king-cult nexus gave to Lord Jagannath, a new meaning of collective consciousness.

Last but not least, medieval and early modern Oriya literature played an important role in re-committing Oriyas to the Jagannath cult.¹ The writings of the *Panchasakha* poets in the early 16th century are amazingly Jagannath-centric. They imagined Lord Jagannath as Supreme Being (Purna Brahma) and Eternal Being (Nitya Purusa) and His place Neelachal Puri as Eternal Place (Nitya Sthala). The glorification of Lord Jagannath and His abode was the main thrust of *Panchasakha* literature, though they invoked Him variously as Krshna, the Buddha and so on. Balarama Das for example, in 'Vedantasara Guptagita' and Achyutananda Dasa in 'Sunya Samhita' glorified Lord Jagannath as the embodiment of both Eternal Krshna and Eternal Radha.² In praising the glory of Lord Jagannath, the *Panchasakha* composed innumerable devotional poems, known as *Bhajana* and *Janana* which are still sung by the beggars and wandering *Sanyasins* in Orissa. *Janana* is an exclusive genre of devotional poems in Oriya, addressed only to Lord Jagannath. It is full of abuses and diatribes aimed at Him, charging Him with utter callousness and indifference towards His devotees. Thus in Orissa,

¹ This has been discussed in detail in Chapter VII.

² Suryanarayan Dash, Jagannath Mandira o Jagannath Tattva (4th edn., Cuttack, 1985), pp. 158-159

developed a genre of Jagannath literature which helped to bring Lord Jagannath and His glory to the Oriya-speech community, both literate and illiterate.

CHAPTER III

ORISSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY: PRELUDE TO QUEST FOR SELF-IDENTITY

The nature of colonialism in the Indian context has long been debated in historical literature. Its impact on Indian society and polity has been interpreted in two rather different ways. Nationalist historiography sees British colonialism as responsible for bringing changes in all layers of traditional Indian society in the direction of a forceful, distorted modernity. Critics of the nationalist argument however, have minimised the role of colonialism in transforming Indian society by suggesting that Indian society was too deeply entrenched to be changed by a relatively short period of colonialism. While both views have either overplayed or underplayed the transformative powers of colonialism because of their ideological positions, its consequences were nevertheless historically decisive. For Sudipta Kaviraj, the coming of colonialism brought Indian society into contact with modernity which, through its many complex turns, has in fact restructured the trajectory of Indian history.¹ The growth of an English-educated middle-class and their anti-colonial consciousness in 19th and 20th century India, may be seen as a crucial and decisive agency in restructuring this trajectory. The anti-colonial consciousness had also a positive thrust, an awareness about the collective self which is itself a modern phenomenon. In the Oriya-speaking regions also, the newly-born middle class, while displaying their anti-colonial consciousness, came to develop an awareness about their collective self. The earlier rudimentary awareness about Orissa and Oriya that we discussed in the preceding chapter, became more marked and self-manifesting and arguably, expressed itself in some form of identity during the period under

¹Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Introduction' in Sudipta Kaviraj (ed), *Politics in India* (Delhi, 1997), pp. 12-13

review.

Orissa lost its independence in 1568 A.D. when it passed under Afghan domination. It was shortly followed by the Mughal annexation (1592 A.D.). The Mughal rule came to an end in 1751 A.D. with the Maratha occupation, but the latter lasted for less than a half a century. Orissa was finally conquered by the British in 1803. British rule in Orissa, like elsewhere in India, brought significant structural changes to the socio-economic fabric, but the changes did not always serve Oriya interests nor did they contribute to the progress of Orissa. The socio-economic transformation of Orissa was arguably brought about as much by British policies as by the dialectical confrontation between Oriya interests and the demands of the colonial state. The transformation, good or bad, created a new material base and the conditions of a cognitive world which urged the Oriya middle class to be engaged in acts of self-discovery and self-definitions.

This chapter seeks to analyze the socio-economic and political transformation of Orissa under British colonialism in the 19th-20th centuries and show how it was conducive to the development of a distinct Oriya consciousness. Suffering from a general tendency to essentialise Orissa and Oriyas, colonial discourse and historiography on Orissa treated the transformation as the logical corollary of the 'civilising mission' of the British. In the scheme of such categorisation by colonial scholarship, such essentialisations became a ready-made apology for effecting changes in the socio-economic character of Orissa. Hunter for example, condemning the pre-British Orissa and Oriyas, described the region as constantly affected by 'invasions and military occupations' and as a 'traditional asylum of revolt' during the last four centuries.¹ He also saw Oriyas as the most 'orthodox and ignorant' people of India.² The situation according to Hunter however,

¹W.W.Hunter, Orissa (2 vols., London, 1872), II., PP. 37 & 139

²Ibid.

changed with the British occupation of Orissa: 'it lapsed into the most peaceful part of the British empire' and roads, embankments, canals and improved harbour communication combined with good government and absolute protection of person and property 'trebled the wealth of Orissa and doubled its population under British rule.'¹ Such stereotyped images, with their presupposition of British rule as a panacea, assume that the changes in the socio-economic composition of Orissa were part a of 'civilising mission', benevolent and conducive to the growth of modern Orissa. The British perceived their mission as meant for altering, restructuring and conquering the culture of Oriya society, but the fallacy of such an argument can be shown by British policies.

The British annexed the Mughalbandi coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore in 1803 A.D. and entered into arrangements with the existing 29 feudatory states of Orissa for fixed *jama* (the amount of revenue to be received). Thirteen of these states were subjected to British regulations and in the process were absorbed into the Mughalbandi region. The remaining 16 states, with some later additions, emerged as the real tributary states of Orissa.² The British also took possession of Ganjam (1768 A.D.) and Sambalpur (1849 A.D.), but all these Oriya-speaking regions were never kept united as a single whole. They were kept fragmented and attached to at least four provinces and divisions at different times of British rule: Bengal, the Central Provinces, Madras and Chhotnagpur Division. This territorial division of the Oriya-speaking regions came to be perceived by Oriyas as their collective predicament. All their disadvantages in British India were attributed to this dismemberment.

In the first part of the 19th century, while consolidating their administration in Orissa, the British adopted a policy of depriving and

¹Ibid.

²B.C.Roy, Foundations British Orissa (Cuttack, 1960), p. 76

peripheralising the Oriya community. First, in the land revenue administration, frequent settlements upto 1837 A.D. created instability and uncertainty in the revenue arrangements as, with each settlement, the demand for revenue increased. According to Prof. B.Chaudhury, in Orissa, compared with the last twelve years of the Maratha rule (i.e.,1791-1802 A.D.), the land revenue income of the Company in 1804-5 increased by about 12% and between 1805 and 1897 by a further 93%.¹ The Oriya *zamindars* and the land proprietors ran into heavy annual arrears. The authorities made settlements each time without any consideration of the actual state of cultivation and the condition of the people. Toynbee, one of the earliest historians of Orissa commented that 'the British did not care for any consideration, direct and indirect, which might have been necessary in adjusting the land revenue, so as to leave the proprietor, a fair profit and at the same time, keep in mind the interests of both cultivators and the government.'² Instead, according to him, the British revenue officers treated Oriya proprietors on a par with Bengali *zamindars* and were determined to exert on them whatever pressure was possible 'in the matter of punctual payment of their revenue'.³ The estates of the defaulting *zamindars* were sold off. The estates below jama of Rs 5,000 were sold at the Cuttack Collectorate, while those above Rs 5,000 *jama* were sold at the office of the Secretary to the Board of Revenue in Calcutta. The underlying idea behind this arrangement was that the Oriyas were in need of capital and were unwilling to speculate, while Bengalis with abundant capital were heavy speculators and so were likely to offer the highest price.⁴ The

¹B.Chaudhuri, 'Agrarian Relations: Eastern India', in Dharma Kumar(ed.), The Cambridge Economic History of India (2 vols., Cambridge, 1983), II., p. 90

²G.Toynbee, A Sketch of the History of Orissa, 1803-1828, reprinted in O.H.R.J, Vol.IX, Nos.1&2 (1960), p.41

³Ibid.

⁴Roy, *op.cit.*, p.176

arrangement had the desired result as the monied Bengalis could purchase the estates and the Oriyas could not even go to Calcutta, because of the distance and expenses involved. Within a period of ten years, 1806-1816, the number of estates sold numbered to 1,011 and of these 350 were purchased by 'foreigners' while 235 estates were purchased by persons holding official positions.¹ Out of 2,340 Oriya proprietors whose names were registered in the first settlement of 1804 A.D. for payment of revenue in Cuttack alone, 1449 names remained at the end of 1816 A.D.² Thus in the process, two-thirds of the original Oriya proprietors were dispossessed and ruined.³

The initial land revenue arrangement with the fixed demand by the state had a negative impact on the whole system of land holdings. Out of the ruin of the original Oriya landholders, a class of absentee landlords developed who were mostly Bengali monied men and officials of the courts. They seldom or never visited their estates, but entrusted their management to agents who were unfamiliar with the land and its people. They were totally ignorant of the local conditions and hence they tried to extract as much as possible from the cultivators. On the other hand, the surviving Oriya landlords were generally neither rich nor prudent. They imposed heavy rents on the cultivators in order to meet the Company's revenue demand. The Famine Commission report of 1866 A.D characterises these two classes of landlords in the following words:

The old Oriya zamindars never thought of improving the land, but many of them had been in the habit of storing grain, and have performed the function of advancing grain to the ryots on exorbitant interest. They seem frequently to have as kindly a feeling towards the ryots as is consistent with making as much as possible out of them. The absentee proprietors, on the other hand,

¹Ibid. ,p.180

²Ibid.

³From W.Ewer to W.B.Bayley, 13 May 1818, Correspondence of Settlement of Khoordah in Puri, reprinted in O.H.R.J, Vol.IV, Nos.1&2 (1955), p.LIX

though probably personally a much superior and generally an educated class, have as little idea of practical improvement of the soil, look only to make the most of the rents as the return for their money, and do not perform to the same extent either the function of grain lenders or that of patriarchal landholders.¹

In this situation, it was natural that neither the surviving Oriya landed class devoid of any education or enlightened view, nor the newly-emergent absentee landlords would play any role in the development of Orissa. On the other hand, the Oriya peasantry had to bear the brunt and were increasingly impoverished.

In addition to the increase in demands for land revenue, the rate of inflation went up under the impact of British monetary policies. The standard currency of Orissa, *cowree* (conch-shells) depreciated on the declaration that it would no longer, after the expiry of the day of grace in 1808 A.D., be received in payment of revenue at the government treasury. It would be replaced by *sicca rupees*. Accordingly, the prices of general commodities went up. The rupees also brought fewer and fewer goods even though a rupee was worth 3,584 *cowrees* around 1870 A.D..² For example, in the town of Balasore, in 1850 A.D. the best unhusked paddy sold at 168 pounds per rupee and in 1870 A.D., at 84 pounds; fine cleaned rice was 100 pounds per rupee in 1850 A.D., 80 pounds in 1860 A.D. and 40 in 1870 A.D..³ The Famine Commission of 1866 A.D. observed that in Orissa in 1866, the pressure of prices both actual and comparative was very much more severe than in the North-Western Provinces in 1837-38 during the time of famine.⁴

¹Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into The Famine in Bengal and Orissa in 1866 (2 vols., Calcutta, 1867), I., p.14

²Hunter, *op.cit.*, p.169

³*Ibid.*, p.170

⁴Report of the Commissioners, *op.cit.*, p.22

The economic deterioration of Orissa was accelerated by the gradual decline of maritime trade and the high-handed salt policy of the British. The trades in cattle, textiles, handicrafts and others were reduced to a minimum and the famous filigree works, bell-metal industries, stone, wood and chalk carvings, horn-works and handloom industries gradually languished without patronage. In addition, in 1814 A.D. the salt monopoly was extended throughout Orissa and this deprived many people of the petty, but profitable business of salt manufacture. The free use of salt was also restricted and the people had to pay dearly for an article of daily necessity, but ironically, the government manufacture of salt was found to be unprofitable. The cost of salt was more than that of made on the Madras coast and imported salt drove out the indigenously-produced salt from the market.¹ Finally, the government manufacture of salt had to be wholly discontinued in 1863 A.D. and the Salt Department of Orissa was transferred to the administrative control of the government of Madras. It spelt out economic ruin and disaster for the thousands of salt manufacturers of Orissa known as *molunghees*. Thrown out of their traditional profession, they joined the ranks of agricultural labourers.

In the initial years of British rule in Orissa, economic ruin was matched by a neglect of education and the corresponding shrinkage of job opportunities for Oriyas. The government spent money on the spread of education in Bengal and gave generous financial help to the Calcutta Book Society (1817 A.D.) and the Calcutta School Society (1818 A.D.) for development of school education in Bengal.² In Orissa however, the first initiative for the development of modern education came from the missionaries who established and managed Anglo-vernacular schools, primarily for the purpose of spreading Christianity. The government's move in this direction was very slow. In 1848-49, there were 9 schools in Orissa with a

¹Ibid., p.14

²Natabara Samantaray, Odia Sahitya Itihasa, 1803-1920 (Cuttack, 1964), p. 45

total attendance of 279 pupils out of a total population of 3 million,¹ but that number increased, as 8 vernacular schools were established in Orissa, at Lord Hardinge's order. Before the Famine of 1866 A.D., there were only 24 government schools in Orissa including Cuttack High School, the district schools of Balasore and Puri and 20 grant-in-aid schools. However, Oriyas showed no enthusiasm for English education. Most of the pupils were the children of the Bengali officials stationed in Orissa and the teachers, text-books and medium of instruction were all Bengali.² This was a national consequence of education being controlled from Calcutta.³ Besides the poverty and conservatism of Oriyas, the scarcity and high price of Oriya text-books also contributed to the slow progress of education. The inescapable result was the systematic exclusion of Oriyas from government positions which were filled up by the outsiders, Bengalis and Telugus. Since the number of Oriya students passing out of schools was very small, they could not be expected to have any substantial representation in government service. In consequence, outsiders acquired strength and importance out of all proportion to their numbers. In this situation, Oriyas came to perceive a threat of economic and cultural subordination in their own land. Perhaps, that is why as early as 1818, in order to counter this perception, Ewer suggested that Oriyas if possible, should hold every government post in Orissa.⁴

The years of official apathy and neglect contributed immensely to the great Famine of 1866 and the Oriya language crisis of 1868-70. In an historical perspective, both events initiated a process of change in government policies

¹L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Puri (Calcutta, 1908), p.230

²John Boulton, 'Nationalism and Tradition in Orissa..' in R.J.Moore (ed.), Tradition and Politics in South Asia (New Delhi, 1979), p.240

³Ibid.

⁴Roy, op.cit., p.295

as well as in Oriya society. It helped the rising educated middle class to consolidate their collective consciousness in the form of their identity. The Famine of 1866 A.D., which resulted from both natural causes and the carelessness of the British authorities, took a heavy toll of life: about a third of the population, or nearly one million people died.¹ The disastrous consequences of the Famine shook Orissa, but at the same time forced the government to consider the deficiencies of the administration and their policies towards the people, who had long been neglected and taken for granted. Coincidental with the Famine, a petition signed by more than a lakh Oriyas was presented to the Secretary of State for India, asking for the protection of the Oriya people and their reunification under any of the existing administrative provinces.² Though the number of people who signed the petition was doubtful, the result of the impact of the Famine was that the Oriyas became aware of the disadvantages of the territorial dismemberment. Oriyas living under different administrative authorities could not get prompt relief, not only because of the absence of any concerted and uniform policy, but also due to a lack of sufficient political will on the part of the authorities to help the Oriya minority in their jurisdiction. The territorial dismemberment therefore came to be perceived by Oriyas as a 'historic wrong' inflicted on them.

If the Famine of 1866 threatened the physical extinction of the Oriya community, it was the language controversy of 1868-70 that challenged their cultural identity. This put the Oriya language at risk of being wiped out from Orissa itself. Paradoxically, this controversy positively contributed to the development of a language-based identity of Oriyas. Before the controversy started, Oriya had already been established and recognised as a separate

¹Report of the Indian Famine Commission, Part I. Famine Relief (London, 1880), p. 13 (IOLR:W. 777)

²Jagannath Pathy, 'Gopabandhu and the Rise of Modern Oriya Nationalism', Bengal Past and Present, Vol. XCVIII, Part I, No. 186 (1979), p. 53

provincial language by the British. After the occupation of Orissa, the British not only introduced Oriya and Persian in the courts, but also got the administrative rules and regulations translated into Oriya for the understanding of the natives. The missionaries also promoted the vernaculars such as Oriya, Bengal, Tamil and others for the propagation of Christianity. They were convinced of the uniqueness of Oriya and hence published their propagandist literature in this language.¹ Oriya was firmly rooted as a separate provincial language by 1840 A.D., as according to a decision of the Bengal government in 1837 A.D., vernaculars like Oriya were made the language of the courts and the revenue departments.² By that time, many Oriya language books had already been published. Even some grammatical and lexical works had been undertaken. Mention may be made of Pandit Vidyavagisha's Odia Byakarana (1806 A.D.), Sutton's Oriya grammar (1831 A.D), Pandit Bisambara's Oriya grammar (1841 A.D), Lecy's Odia Byakaranasara (1855 A.D.) and of the dictionaries by Mohanthakur (1811 A.D.) and Sutton (1841 A.D.). These were the early attempts of scholastic discussion on Oriya philology and linguistic tradition. Text-books in Oriya also came to be written on various subjects,³ but since Oriya books were published in small numbers, Bengali books were compulsorily taught in the Oriya schools. It may be pointed out that lack of government support and the slow spread of education in Orissa were the main reasons for publication of fewer Oriya text-books.

However, the uniqueness and originality of the Oriya language was asserted by the British themselves. Amos Sutton for example, in the preface to his book An Introductory Grammar of the Oriya Language (1831 A.D.) hoped that there might be monuments of antiquity locked up in the Oriya language

¹See, Samantaray, op.cit., pp.200-203 for the missionary activities for promotion of Oriya.

²Ibid., pp.209-212

³See, Samantaray, op.cit., chapter III, for a detailed discussion on the Oriya text-books of the time.

and deposited in the hands of the Pundits and Pandas of Lord Jagannath, Bhubaneswar and Jajpur which were not to be found in any other language of India and which would throw light on many important transactions of ancient Indian history.¹ Sutton's more exciting observation relates to the relation between Oriya and Sanskrit, as he claimed that Sanskrit had been engrafted upon an original Oriya language because there were many words in Oriya which were not found in any other language of India.² Apart from showing uniqueness of the Oriya language, Sutton also brought out differences between Oriya and Bengali and concluded that difference is 'almost as great as that between English and French'.³ All this indicates the admission by the colonial intellectual tradition, of the unique culture of a subject race.

Although Oriya was thus established and recognised as a separate provincial language, later on certain British officials attempted to replace it with Bengali in schools and courts for administrative convenience. The cause of Bengali was also taken up by domiciled Bengalis in Orissa, as a reaction to the efforts of some enlightened British officials such as the Commissioner Ravenshaw, the Collector John Beams and the Inspector of Schools R.L.Martin, all of whom strongly advocated the retention of Oriya. The opposition to Oriya at the government level first came in 1841 A.D. when the Sadar Revenue Board in Calcutta suggested the introduction of Bengali in the courts of Orissa, but the Commissioner of Cuttack opposed the move on the ground that it would create discontentment among Oriyas.⁴ It was the Cuttack

¹Amos Sutton, An Introductory Grammar of the Oriya Language (Calcutta, 1831), p.VI

²Ibid., p.VIII

³Ibid., p.III

⁴Ibid., p.213

Magistrate, Bowring who in 1847-48 suggested for the first time, that since Oriya was a dialect of Bengali, it should be written in the Bengali script and that it should not exist as a separate language in a British province.¹

Though these occasional rumblings by British officials for the replacement of Oriya were not heeded by the higher authorities, they showed clearly that colonial interests manifested a preference for Bengali. Many British officials wanted Bengali as an unifying factor for the whole of the Bengal Presidency, which at that time consisted of Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Bengal proper. Since the British treated Bengali as the most developed language of India, its introduction in the whole of Bengal would help in maintaining peace and order and reduce expenditure on education.² These colonial considerations dictated the British preference for Bengali, even at the cost of a well-established and well-developed language such as Oriya. For example, the then Inspector and Director of Schools of Orissa proposed to remove Oriya and introduce Bengali in Oriya schools.³ The government referred this proposal to the Commissioner of Orissa, T.E.Ravenshaw (1865-1873 A.D.) for his view. The proposal, after becoming known to public, was immediately contested by the leading citizens of Cuttack who decided to represent to the Commissioner against it.⁴ It was, however, realised by the pro-Oriya lobby that the proposal to remove Oriya was mooted because of the dearth of suitable Oriya text books, but they hoped that with government assistance, the situation should soon improve.

Pending a final government decision, Ravenshaw took a keen interest in the promotion of vernacular education and the Oriya language. In April 1868, at the annual prize distribution ceremony of the Cuttack School, Ravenshaw

¹Report of the Council of Education 1848-49, pp.336

²Samantaray, op.cit., p.222

³UD, Cuttack, 4 Jan.1868

⁴UD, Cuttack, 1 Feb.1868

declared that there was no need for the Bengali language in Orissa and insisted that everybody should learn his mother-tongue.¹ In his first report on the status of education in Orissa in 1865 A.D., Ravenshaw had already drawn the attention of the Education Department to 'the almost entire neglect of Oriya' and urged the introduction of Oriya text-books in the schools to the entire exclusion of Bengali books.² Again, in a letter to the government of Bengal in 1868, Ravenshaw referred to the earlier proposal of the Inspector and Director of Schools, Orissa and made it clear that the constant leaning towards Bengali would be detrimental to the education of Oriyas and that Bengali might be an extra language in Orissa, 'but in no case in suppression of Oriya'.³ He also felt that nothing was so likely to encourage the progress of education in Orissa as the adoption of Oriya in all classes of the schools.⁴ In order to achieve this, he proposed that the government, first appoint a separate Inspector of Schools for Orissa and secondly take prompt action to provide translations from other languages into Oriya.⁵

The language controversy which so far had been debated within the official circle, became a matter of public concern when in December 1868 in Cuttack, Rajendralal Mitra, a prominent Bengali scholar and archaeologist, made some disparaging comments on Oriya. He declared that a great injury was inflicted on the Oriya race by their 'attachment to a provincial patois which they wished to exalt into a distinct language'.⁶ Mitra's comment was

¹G.N.Dash, Odia Bhasa-Surakhshya Andolana (Cuttack, 1993), p. 7

²P.Mukherjee, 'Promotion of Education in Orissa by Ravenshaw', O.H.R.J., Vol.XIV, No.2 (1966), pp.22-23

³From T.E.Ravenshaw to Secretary to Govt. of Bengal, No.99, 4 May 1868, PBE, 1868 (IOLR:P/432/9)

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶John Beams and R.L.Mitra, 'On the Relation of the Uriya to the other modern Aryan languages', O.H.R.J., Vol.XXXII,

immediately taken up and used by some domiciled Bengalis to start a campaign against Oriya. Their superiority complex had already turned to hostility against Oriya because of the gradual official support to Oriya in schools and courts. In order to champion Bengali in Orissa, two periodicals, the 'Utkal Hiteisini' (Feb.,1869) and the 'Cuttack Star' (Feb.,1869) were published by the domiciled Bengalis.¹ On the other hand, the cause of Oriya was strongly taken up by the 'Utkal Deepika', the first Oriya periodical published from August, 1866. Now the pro-Oriya and anti-Oriya lobbies clashed in the press. In July,1869, the Deputy Inspector of Schools, Umacharan Haldar suggested that the Oriya language should be written in Bengali script. He argued that if the Oriya script was written on Bengali paper with Bengali pen and ink, why then it should not be written in the Bengali script.² The ardent champion of the Oriya cause, the 'Utkal Deepika' (August,1866) strongly refuted Haldar's argument. Interestingly, in June 1869, a Bengali advocate, Rajkrushna Mukhopadhyaya, published two Oriya poems in the 'Utkal Hiteisini' in order to prove that Oriya could be easily mastered and that the Bengali literary tradition had a strong influence over Oriya.³ The clash between the pro-Oriya and pro-Bengali lobbies in the press continued, showing the existing tension in the Oriya colonial society.

The government however, did not see any rationale behind these contentions and arguments of the pro-Bengali lobby and hence did not accept their proposal to replace Oriya with Bengali. On the other hand, in November 1869, the Bengal government recognised the study of Oriya in all types of schools in Orissa and directed the Education Department to spend more

Nos1&2 (1986) , p.28

¹G.N.Dash, op.cit.,p.9

²UD, Cuttack, 10 Jan.1869

³G.N.Dash, op.cit.,p.10

money on the production of Oriya text-books.¹ The 'Utkal Deepika' elaborated on the government resolution that in the Cuttack High School and other district schools, both Oriya and Bengali would be either taught or made optional, that in middle-level Anglo-vernacular schools, every subject would be taught in Oriya, English would be compulsory and Bengali optional, that in middle class Anglo-vernacular schools, Bengali could be taught as a language till good literature was produced in Oriya and only Oriya would be taught in lower vernacular schools.² For the first time the study of Oriya literature was also recognised by the government and this boosted the development of modern Oriya literature.

Those Bengalis who perceived a threat to their interests from the introduction of Oriya, formed a group and were in the forefront of the anti-Oriya campaign. They rejected the government decision and tried to prove that Oriya was not a separate language. In 1870 A.D., Kantichandra Bhattacharya of the Balasore District School published his controversial book 'Odia Svatantira Bhasa Nahe' (Oriya is not separate language) wherein he tried to prove that Oriya was not a separate language, but a dialect of Bengali. Though couched in a form of philological discussion, the book was an attempt to suppress the Oriya language and epitomised Bengali aspirations for aggrandizement.³ According to Boulton, Bhattacharya envisaged the whole region comprising Assam, West Bengal, Orissa and Bangladesh as one single homogenous geographic, cultural, linguistic and ethnic area i.e., the Bengali language area.⁴

However, the book was immediately dismissed not only by the

¹S.C.Patra, Formation of the Province of Orissa (Calcutta, 1979), p.103

²UD, Cuttack, 27 Nov.1869

³Boulton, op.cit., p.243

⁴Ibid.

government, but also by scholars and philologists of the time, on the ground of fallacious arguments and contentions. The Education Gazette of the Bengal government discarded Bhattacharya's method of proving similarity between Oriya and Bengali and declared that 'Bengali, Oriya and Assamese were all separate languages, born from the same tree, but (were) different branches'.¹ John Beams, a well-known scholar-administrator of the time, reviewed Bhattacharya's book and discarded it as 'profoundly destitute of philological arguments' and proved that the Oriya language was a sister, not a daughter of Bengali.² Beams, in his monumental volumes entitled the Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India, proved the unique quality and originality of the Oriya language. Even the famous 'Calcutta Review' dismissed Bhattacharya's book and his method of proving similarity between Bengali and Oriya. It said that Oriya had rich ancient literature and the language was spoken by three crore people.³

The government also did not accept the biased and unreasonable view that Oriya was not a separate language. Moreover, as discussed above, Oriya had already been established by that time as a separate, provincial language. As a result the language controversy gradually subsided and in 1873 A.D. the government agreed in principle that the 'persistent and potent exclusion of Bengali language and teachers who were not familiar with Oriya was essential to the continued progress and popularity of education in Orissa'.⁴ The Commissioner of Orissa, Ravenshaw was accordingly authorised to use his

¹UD, Cuttack, 30 April 1870

²See, Beams and Mitra, op.cit., pp.16-17 for the arguments of Beams.

³UD, Cuttack, 3 Sept.1870

⁴From T.E.Ravenshaw to Officiating Secretary to government of Bengal, No.741A, 29 Jan.1873, PBE,1873 (IOLR:P/164)

discretion to exclude Bengali in schools.¹

The language controversy of the 1860s cannot be treated primarily as a movement for either the abolition or preservation of Oriya because it was not as such an organised, mass-based concerted move for any great or radical change, on the contrary, it had begun as a language debate by some British officials. The domiciled Bengali middle class had taken up this debate and tried to suppress Oriya and introduce Bengali in educational institutions, courts and offices, in order to protect their own interests, in job opportunities, educational advantages and text-book publication. It may also be pointed out that Rajendralal Mitra, who sparked off public debate on the introduction of Bengali in Orissa, was a great Bengali text-book writer. His 'Prakrutika Bhugola' (1854 A.D.), 'Byakarana Prabesh' (1862 A.D.), 'Manachitra' (1856 A.D.) etc. were important text-books which earned him a fortune, so there was a probable danger that if Oriya text-books were introduced in Orissa, Mitra might be a financial loser because his books would no longer be sold in Orissa.²

The economic dimension of the language controversy was also emphasized by Phakirmohun Senapati, the forerunner of modern Oriya prose. After the publication of Kantichandra Bhattacharya's book, Senapati warned the Oriya *amalas* (petty officials) of the Balasore collectorate in a meeting, that if Oriya was abolished from schools, the sons, brothers and relatives of Bengalis would become *amalas*, Oriyas would be dismissed and their sons and grandsons would not get government jobs.³ The Oriyas of Balasore were so influenced by Phakirmohun's words that a petition signed by five hundred people was submitted to the Collector, asking for the retention of Oriya in

¹From H.J.S.Cotton to T.E.Ravenshaw, No.937, 2 Feb.1873, PBE,1873 (IOLR:P/164)

²G.N.Dash, *op.cit.*, p.44

³Byasakavi Phakirmohun, Phakirmohun Granthavali. Atmajivani Charita (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1963), I, PP.54-55

schools.¹

The language controversy manifested the existing tension in a colonial society like Orissa, arising out of clash of interests between the colonial\dominant and the colonised groups. In Orissa however, the colonial group did not always consist only of the British, it also included Bengalis and Telugus. Preference for a particular language over the other is dictated primarily by the opportunities and advantages that it offers to a particular group. The choice of Bengali by a few Bengalis and British officials in Orissa was prompted by the advantages it offered as a dominant language in India, but Oriya, being the language of Orissa, had its cultural specificities and significance. Hence, the Oriyas were determined not only to protect the language, but also to make it the language of administration and educational institutions in Orissa. So language became a major issue in the confrontation between Oriyas and British\Bengalis and by implication, in the fight to capture opportunities in jobs and text book publication .

The same type of language controversy arose in other Oriya-speaking regions, namely Ganjam and Sambalpur. In Ganjam under the Madras Presidency, Oriya came under the domination of Telugus who wanted to replace it by Telugu. The Director of Public Instruction dismissed Oriya as a semi-barbarous language and the available Oriya text-books as useless.² But the higher authorities did not agree with the Director's contentions and it was allowed to be used in schools and courts. Even Madras University recognised the Oriya language in 1873 A.D..³ In Sambalpur which was then in the Central Provinces, it was decided to introduce Hindi in place of Oriya from 1896, on administrative grounds. Those who wanted to replace Oriya with Hindi advocated that everywhere in the Central Provinces, except Sambalpur, Hindi

¹Ibid. ,p.55

²S.C.Patra, op.cit.,pp.106-107

³Ibid. ,p.107

was in vogue. It caused great administrative inconvenience when Oriya clerks were transferred from Sambalpur to other districts and non-Oriya clerks were transferred to Sambalpur. On this basis, the government decided to replace Oriya by Hindi from January, 1896, but this was resisted throughout Orissa. The Utkal Deepika wrote that nothing could be more atrocious than to try to smother one's mother-tongue and to kill a language.¹ Oriyas in Sambalpur protested against Hindi and sent petitions and delegations to the higher authorities. It was feared that if Hindi was introduced in Sambalpur it would be a stain on Oriyas who would be considered 'useless and without any substance', by those who were in power.²

The Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, Andrew Fraser, was very sympathetic to the Oriya cause. He visited the entire Sambalpur region and recommended the restoration of Oriya. By that time, the census of 1901 A.D. had clearly demonstrated the overwhelming majority of the Oriya population in Sambalpur and also the enormous difficulties and confusion in conducting a census in the Hindi language in a predominantly Oriya-speaking territory.³ Finally, the government had to restore the Oriya language in Sambalpur in 1903 A.D. .

In the light of the above evidence, the language controversy of the 1860s cannot be taken so far as to be described as a language 'protection' or 'abolition' movement, as some scholars have tried to do. It rather arose out of some irrational and unfounded arguments which were sparked off by colonial considerations, but it died a natural death. However, the language controversy demonstrated to Oriyas the negative impact of colonialism on their culture. The emerging educated middle class became aware of the Oriyas' vulnerability as linguistic minorities in large administrative zones where they

¹UD, Cuttack, 27 April 1895

²Sambalpur Hiteisini, Bamra, I Jan.1895

³S.P.Padhi and S.Supkar, Sambalpurare Bhasa Andolana (Sambalpur, 1974) ,p.14

were forced to adopt other major languages, Bengali, Telugu and Hindi. Awareness of the peripheralisation generated reactionary feelings among them that Orissa belonged to Oriyas only and that they must get their 'due' share in their homeland. Their economic plight coupled with linguistic and cultural subordination convinced them of the necessity of protecting their interests, their language and their culture. The Commissioner of Orissa, H.G.Cooke, caught the prevailing mood of Oriyas and informed the government of Bengal that the spirit of the Monroe doctrine existed and gathered force in Orissa.¹ He observed that 'the importance to Oriyas of enabling them to hold their own against foreign competition possessed almost a political character; they did not identify themselves with the inhabitants of Bengal and were desirous of qualifying themselves for service in their own country'.²

What has emerged from the foregoing discussion is that Oriyas in the late 19th and early 20th century were confronted not only with British colonialism but also with Bengali and Telugu dominance. That is why their anti-colonial consciousness also came to be linked with their collective assertion as 'Oriyas' who had an altogether different destiny and history. These developments made the British government increasingly aware of the miseries of Oriyas and they realised that Oriyas could be no more taken for granted. From this time the British took the educational and economic development of Orissa seriously by contributing to the further development and consolidation of an educated middle class.

It was the efforts of Ravenshaw that resulted in the establishment of a

¹From H.G.Cooke to Secretary to govt. of Bengal, General Deptt., No.1059R, 5 July 1895, AGA,1894-95 (OSA No.RIII-I/716). Monroe doctrine refers to the American President James Monroe's (1817-25) policy that Europe must refrain from intervention in the affairs of independent countries in the American continents.

²Ibid.

law class and Normal (Training) school in 1869 A.D., a medical school in 1875 A.D. and a college in 1876 A.D., all at Cuttack. The college, named after Ravenshaw in 1879 A.D., was made permanent in 1881 A.D..¹ Later, this college played a pivotal role not only in producing an educated middle class but also in the socio-cultural development of Orissa. Out of the total number of students who had passed out from Ravenshaw College upto 1882 A.D., three were taken as Deputy Magistrates, two as Sub-Deputies, one as Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, one as Translator to the Commissioner; fifteen became lawyers and the rest went to other professions.² In the case of school education, the number of schools and students also increased. In 1874-75 A.D., in the Orissa Division, there were three higher classes, thirteen middle class vernacular schools and three lower vernacular schools supported by the government, giving instruction to 1,101 pupils; forty-three grant-in-aid schools giving education to 2,442 children; two Urdu schools with 162 pupils; eighty-four old *pathasalas* with 1,740 pupils; eighty-one aided indigenous *pathasalas* with 14,643 pupils and six unaided schools with 237 pupils.³ In other parts of the Oriya-speaking regions like Ganjam and Sambalpur the number of schools increased and more educational opportunities were created for the people. In proportion to the growth of education, the size of the educated middle class also grew. The natural corollary was the gradual absorption of this class into various government positions though they had to face stiff competition and even resistance from non-Oriyas. For instance Madhusudan Das, the future Oriya leader, had to face all sorts of opposition and harassment from the Bengali

¹Mueherjee, *op.cit.*, p.31

²N.R.Patnaik, 'Growth of Political Consciousness in the late 19th Century Orissa', O.H.R.J., Vol.XXXVI, Nos.1&2 (1990), p.33

³From T.E.Ravenshaw to Secretary to govt. of Bengal , General Deptt., No.433, 17 June 1875, AGA, 1874-75 (OSA No.RIII-I/707B)

lawyers in the Cuttack bar before he established himself in the legal profession in the 1880s.

By the end of the 19th century, there was a sizeable educated middle class in Orissa. There were altogether 6,341 schools with 108,956 students in 1899-1900 in the Orissa Division.¹ Ravenshaw College had already been a pioneering educational institution for higher learning because it was not only the only college in the Oriya-speaking regions but also its alumni occupied important positions. The English-educated middle class that took leadership of Orissa in the late 19th and early 20th century, also grew around this college.

The growth of education in Orissa was accompanied by some material development. The previous land revenue system which had disastrous consequences, was streamlined as long-term settlements were introduced and the authorities became more sensitive in their revenue administration. Tenants however, continued to suffer from the excessive demands and from the practices of the absentee landlord system. S.L.Maddox, in his Final Report, echoed the general impression of the officers working among the people that 80% of the rural population were more or less permanently indebted to the money-lenders, proprietary tenure-holders or landlords.² Similarly, the government salt policy resulted in the virtual cessation of salt manufacture throughout Orissa. By the end of the 19th century, the salt industry was totally extinct and the vacuum thus created was filled by imported salt. In the long run, both the revenue system and salt policy became detrimental to Oriya interests. Another visible economic consequence of the British rule in Orissa was the gradual decline of sea-borne trade at the turn of this century. With the introduction of the East Coast Railway, the important ports of Orissa such as Balasore, Chandbali and Puri, languished as the traffic through the sea was

¹From E.B.Harris to Secretary to govt. of Bengal, No.1966R, 18Sept.1900, AGA,1899-1900 (OSA No.RIII-I/718)

²S.L.Maddox, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Province of Orissa(Place and Date not mentioned), I, p.124

diverted to the railways.¹ In consequence, not only the foreign trade but also the coastal trade started declining.

On the other hand, after the Famine of 1866 A.D., the communication system was developed. Measures were taken to prevent the recurrence of similar disasters, hence roads were opened up, the coast surveyed and canals constructed. The railway passing through Orissa from north to south connected it with Calcutta and Madras. After 1866, there were advances in road construction in Orissa: 91 miles of provincial roads were maintained by the Public Works Department and 369 miles of roads maintained by the District Boards.² There were three main provincial roads i.e., the Orissa Trunk Road running from Midnapore to Ganjam reaching Cuttack and Puri, the Cuttack-Sonepur road along the Mahanadi valley and the Cuttack-Sambalpur road also passing up the Mahanadi valley.³ The development of a network of communications might not have a direct link with either the growth of an educated class or the development of national consciousness, but it contributed to the material basis of the emerging educated middle class and the development of an Oriya consciousness among them.

By the late 19th and early 20th century, the educated Oriya middle class had started to express their collective predicament. In this, they were immensely helped by the development of 'print' in Orissa, particularly after the Famine of 1866. Many periodicals and newspapers appeared together with the establishment of printing presses. The two most important Oriya periodicals of the time, Utkal Deepika (1866 A.D.) and Balasore Sambada Bahika (1868 A.D.), played a crucial and decisive role during the Famine and the language controversy. During 1871-80, 1881-90 and 1891-1900, the number of

¹P.K.Mishra, The Political History of Orissa, 1900-1936 (New Delhi, 1979), pp.110-111

²L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers. Cuttack (Calcutta, 1906), p.150

³Ibid.

periodicals published was sixteen, twenty two and thirteen respectively, although many of them were short-lived.¹ They not only stirred Oriyas by reflecting on the issues concerning them but also provided a platform for the emerging litterateurs of the time to develop a new literature. By 1911 A.D., there were six weekly Oriya newspapers with a total circulation of 3,600.² During the same period, the total number of Oriya books published in the combined Bihar and Orissa province and Bengal was 2,592; but the figure for Bihar and Orissa alone was 2,379, representing over half of the total books (4,035) published in different languages in the combined province during the period.³ The effects of a spreading print culture can easily be gauged. In the European context, as Febvre and Martin have shown, printing helped to 'fix' the vernacular languages and encouraged the development of national literatures. By encouraging the multiplication of the number of the texts available in the vernacular, the printing press everywhere favoured the development and systematisation of the literary language of the nation and thus 'fixed' the language.⁴

This became precisely the case with Oriya. 'Print' came to Orissa with the Christian missionaries who started publishing Christian texts in Oriya. The Bible was published in Oriya as early as 1809 A.D. and was followed by other publications, mainly by the Baptist Missionary Society. Though intended for the propagation of Christianity, the missionaries published scripture and

¹See, Samantaray, op.cit., pp.176-180, for a detailed discussion on the periodicals and newspapers of Orissa in the 2nd half of the 19th century.

²Census of India, 1911, Vol.V, Bihar and Orissa, Part I (Calcutta, 1913), p.378

³Ibid., p.367

⁴L.Febvre and H.J.Martin, The Coming of the Book; The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800 (London, 1976), pp.323-324. The authors have established the link between printing and development of European national languages from the 16th century onwards. pp.319-332

tracts and distributed them among the people. They established the first Oriya press, the Cuttack Mission Press in 1837 A.D., for the sole purpose of propagating Christianity through the publication of Christian texts.¹ It was followed by the Cuttack Printing Press in 1866 A.D. and the Utkal Printing Company at Balasore in 1868 A.D.. By the end of the 19th century, 16 Oriya printing presses had been established at different places in the Oriya-speaking regions.² Though small in number, these presses produced Oriya periodicals and books in quantity. Not only text-books but also Oriya literary works came to be published. These books were sold and distributed to Oriya schools and educated people. Samantaray has shown how during the period 1875-89, many Oriya books were published in thousands. For example, preliminary text-books for schools like 'Pathamala' (by Baikunthanath), 'Kavita Kalap' (by Govinda Rath), 'Odisha Bhugola' (by Dwarikanath), etc. came to be published in thousands.³ Printed books maintained a permanent form which was capable of virtually infinite reproduction. Multiplication of the number of books in Oriya systematised and standardized the language and gave it a new fixity to it. The new Oriya became the medium of expression of the new literature.

The print language also became a powerful means of developing Oriya consciousness. The newspapers, periodicals, journals and books printed in Oriya, served to reinforce the linguistic identity which manifested itself in the creation of a national Oriya literature, distinct from the other language-based literatures. Benedict Anderson has demonstrated how printed languages laid the basis for national consciousness in the European context.⁴ They created

¹Samantaray, op.cit., p.171

²Ibid., p.173

³Ibid., p.120

⁴Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (7th impress., London, 1996) has shown how through print-languages in Europe, communities were imagined.

'unified fields of exchange and communication' so that speakers of the same language could comprehend each other via print and papers. In the context of colonial Orissa, with the increased publication and reproduction of printed materials, a fixed language field was created. Oriyas, reading the same newspaper or book, gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands belonging to the same language-field. Print-language also gave a new fixity to language, helping to build an image of 'antiquity' central to national consciousness. For example, the Oriya language printed in the early 19th century, remains almost fixed with only minor changes. The literature produced by the authors in the printed language in the 19th century, is capable of virtually infinite reproduction even today. Religious books like the New and Old Testaments and some History books published by the missionaries in the early part of the 19th century used that Oriya which is more or less the same language in use today. The printed Oriya language, by becoming fixed and standardised, aroused a collective consciousness among members of the Oriya speaking community. They became increasingly aware of the innumerable people using their particular language and at the same time that they belonged to those people. This resulted in what Anderson would call 'vernacular linguistic unification'.¹

This sort of consciousness produced its political manifestation in the Oriya movement which aimed at ameliorating the miseries of the 'peripheralised' Oriyas. The ultimate aim however, was the unification of the Oriya-speaking regions- a panacea for all their misfortunes, economic-cultural domination by other nationalities, their linguistic subordination and so on. As a result a separate Orissa province became a political, economic and cultural demand. The linguistic and cultural consciousness of the educated middle class led to the formation of many associations in Orissa in the later half of the 19th century. Associations such as Utkal Bhasaunnati Sabha (1866 A.D.) at

¹ Ibid., p. 77

Balasore, Utkal Bhasoddipani Sabha (1873 A.D.) at Cuttack and Utkal Hitaishini Samaj (1889 A.D.) at Ganjam made initial attempts to articulate the emerging Oriya consciousness and to protect Oriya interests. The most important organisation of the time, the Oriya Association (1882 A.D.) had the objectives of discussing political and other matters affecting Orissa, sending up memoranda to the government and deputing delegates to the Indian National Congress.¹ While conforming with the ideology, method and practice of the Congress, the Oriya Association also demanded the unification of the Oriya-speaking regions, but it was the Utkal Sammilani (Utkal Union Conference, UUC) established in 1903 A.D., which spearheaded the Oriya movement with its main objective of amalgamating the Oriya-speaking regions and working for the all-round development of Oriyas. The UUC came to symbolise the collective protest of the marginalised Oriyas against the wrongs and injustices inflicted on them by the British, in collaboration with some Bengalis and Telugus. At the same time, it embodied the hopes and aspirations of the educated middle class, to obtain their due share of economic, cultural and political opportunities.

It may be mentioned that Bengalis came to be held responsible for both the economic ruination and the cultural-educational disadvantages of Oriyas. Bengalis were seen as conspiring in collusion with the British to advance their economic and cultural interests by the suppression of Oriya interests. They became the targetted 'Others', but in reality the Oriya-Bengali relations cannot be treated solely in terms of rivalry and competition. Bengalis began settlement in Orissa from the days of the Ganga kings (11th century A.D). With the great Sri Chaitanya (16th century A.D.), many Bengalis came and settled in Orissa. Moreover, the successive governments of Mughals, Marathas and British contained a large percentage of Bengali officials who settled

¹From C.F.Worsley to Secretary to govt. of Bengal, General Deptt., No.1028R, 1 July 1890, AGA, 1889-90 (OSA No.RIII-I/715)

permanently in Orissa. In most cases, Bengalis adapted to Orissa and became a part of the larger Oriya community. Many domiciled Bengalis such as Raja Baikunthanath Deb (1852-1934 A.D.), Gourishankar Roy (1838-1917 A.D.), Radhanath Roy (1848-1908 A.D.), Ramashankar Roy (1858-1918 A.D.) and others contributed to the development of Orissa in the fields of social work, journalism, education and literature. Given this fact, the Oriya-Bengali dichotomy was very often 'overplayed' by the Oriya leaders. The share of Bengalis in committing wrongs and injustice to Oriyas was sometimes overstated, as a manifestation of their consciousness which was generally directed against those who were seen to be opposed to Oriya interests.

Thus in the 20th century, Oriya consciousness came to be channeled in the direction of an organised movement which aimed at ameliorating the conditions of Orissa. The UUC successfully led the Oriya movement under the stewardship of leaders like Madhusudan Das (1848-1934 A.D.), Phakirmohun Senapati (1843-1918 A.D.), Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912 A.D.), Gourishankar Roy (1838-1917 A.D.), Radhanath Roy (1848-1908 A.D.), Gopabandhu Das (1877-1928 A.D.), Maharaja K.C.Gajapati (1892-1974 A.D.) and Chandrasekhar Behera (1873-1936 A.D.). The Oriya cause including the question of a separate Oriya province was also debated in the provincial legislative council and the Indian Legislative Assembly. The movement could be sustained because of the growing number of educated and enlightened Oriya middle class who supported it. By 1921 A.D., the percentage of literates and the English-educated in Orissa was 10.22 and .64 respectively,¹ and in the Ganjam region under the Madras Presidency, 6.38 and .56 respectively.² Though small in number, the educated class became increasingly aware of their collective predicament and of the prospect of amelioration of the state of affairs in

¹Census of India, 1921, Vol. VII, Bihar and Orissa, Part I (Patna, 1923), p. 2

²Census of India, 1921, Vol. XIII, Madras Presidency, Part III (Madras, 1922), p. 63

Orissa by asserting regional identity. It was clearly brought out in the petition of the UUC submitted to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, in 1917 A.D.. The petition pointed out how Oriyas had long suffered under the malign operative influences in the administrative areas under different governments, all tending to destroy their solidarity as a community.¹ It also pointed out how the economic, educational and other disadvantages due to the administrative dismemberment of Oriyas had provided opportunities for the advanced races like Bengalis and Telugus, allowing them to develop vested interests in the Oriya-speaking districts and making Oriyas an insignificant minority; hence Oriyas were exceedingly anxious 'to maintain the identity and to further their special interests'.²

The Oriya movement which grew out of Oriya consciousness was arguably, the concerted search for a political identity. Ultimately, it was crowned with success and in April 1936 a separate Orissa province, comprising the Oriya-speaking regions, was formed. The formation of Orissa on linguistic basis came to be largely seen as realisation of that political identity.

As we have seen, the British colonial policies in Orissa were in direct opposition to Oriya interests. The tension arising out of the opposition became widespread when advanced Bengalis and Telugus became collaborators with the British. The territorial dismemberment, the economic misery, the poor job opportunities and the cultural subordination of Oriyas, all put them in a disadvantaged position in their homeland. This produced a reactionary Oriya consciousness which was used by the educated middle class to launch a movement for their political unification. Political identity apart, it had its cultural manifestation in the quest for their unique cultural roots- the quintessential Oriya. The new Oriya literature that came to be

¹Indian Statutory Commission Report, Vol.IV,PartI (London, 1930), p.560

²Ibid., pp.560-561

produced in the late 19th and early 20th century became one of the important mediums of this quest. It contributed to the realisation of the linguistic and cultural identity of Oriyas, but this search was not always reactionary and inward-looking. Under the changed circumstances when all-India Congress politics reached Orissa¹ and an Orissa-India symbiosis was emphasized, Oriya literature started to articulate a new meaning of Oriya, which was more expansive and broad-based. During this period, the Jagannath cult also came to be seen as reflecting Oriya cultural identity. In different aspects of the cult as well as in literary and historiographical narratives, Lord Jagannath was seen as identified with the Oriya.

At the beginning of this chapter we have argued that the anti-colonial perspective of the Oriya middle class had also a positive development in the form of Oriya consciousness. It was a consciousness about the 'self'- a phenomenon which emerged out of an interplay of that had existed in the preceding centuries and that colonialism brought in its wake. This ultimately resulted in the quest for Oriya identity. However, Oriya consciousness was never divorced from the anti-colonial stance in a pan-Indian context. As we shall see in the succeeding chapters, a pan-Indian consciousness was present not only in contemporary Oriya literature but also in the treatment of the Jagannath cult.

¹In the Chakradharpur session of 1920-21, the UUC formally accepted the all-India Congress aims and objectives including non-co-operation movement. It changed the total perspective of the political scene in Orissa.

CHAPTER IV

DEFINING SELF-IDENTITY IN ORIYA LITERATURE (I)

The Oriya consciousness that evolved during the colonial era had a purpose and direction of its own: it crystalised into a sense of identity. Oriya literature, produced during this period reflected a deliberate attempt on the part of the educated middle class to define that identity. Oriya history, legend, tradition and nature were invoked and an externalised 'Other' was constructed in order to define identity.

With Phakirmohun, Radhanath and Madhusudan- the Great Trio, Oriya literature entered a new era characterised by a passionate search for Oriya identity. In the process, Oriya identity came to be defined, redefined and restated as an exclusive and unique phenomenon. The authors sought for the specific qualities by which it retained its unique, quintessential character.

Phakirmohun Senapati (1843-1918 A.D.), regarded as the father of modern Oriya prose, created an Oriya-centric universe; his characters moved within the bounds and bonds of their community. Those who erred by transgressing were brought back to the fold or penalised for their deeds. As a writer Phakirmohun was so much imbued with Oriya consciousness that he tried to decipher not only contemporary Oriya values and ethos but also its 'past' which to him, symbolised heroism and sacrifice. He did not however, indulge in any romanticisation of history. On the contrary, he drew on it to create the Oriya self. Immediately before British rule, Orissa was under the Maratha occupation (1751-1803 A.D.). The Marathas had captured Orissa (1751 A.D.) from the Nawab of Bengal after repeated invasions. Phakirmohun was historically conscious of the heroic resistance of Oriya feudal lords and *Paikas* (Oriya militia) against foreign invasions. After the loss of Orissa's independence in 1568 A.D., the martial spirit of Oriyas had not died out. It was kept alive by feudal lords and *Paikas* who had sporadically taken to arms

against foreign rulers. Phakirmohun has used this glorious martial tradition in his novel 'Lachhama' (1901-03 A.D.) to construct a new history of Oriyas. It depicts a 'heroic, daring Oriya', in opposition to the Marathas who had brought devastation to Orissa. Based against the broad backdrop of the Maratha rule in Orissa, 'Lachhama'¹ mixes up fact with imagination to glorify the past. Though the grand historical conflict depicted in the novel is between the declining Mughal power (Alivardi Khan) and the rising Maratha power (Bhaskar Pandit), it highlights the valour and humanitarianism of an Oriya chieftain, Samantaray Mandhata, who fought against the Marathas as an ally of the Mughals. Nawab Alivardi Khan had appointed Mandhata of Orissa to protect the Bengal-Bihar *Subah* and though Mandhata was finally killed, he did not surrender to the Marathas. Mandhata could have saved himself had he begged for pardon from the Maratha general, but it would have defamed the entire tradition of Oriya feudal lords. But Mandhata is an imaginary character who has been interwoven with historical characters such as the Nawab Alivardi Khan and the Maratha Chief Bhaskar Pandit and with historic places, as for example the Raibania fort and the city of Murshidabad. Mandhata's lordship over the Raibania fort and his fight with the Marathas were invented to glorify the martial tradition of Oriya.

Mandhata symbolises Oriya resistance to Maratha misrule and exploitation. Though not the main story of the novel, the Mandhata episode assumes meaning in the broad historical context of 18th century Orissa. Due to Maratha misrule and exploitation there was political chaos and confusion everywhere. The repeated Maratha Bergi attacks and the inability of the provincial Muslim governors to control the situation, resulted in the decline of Orissa. Oriyas were politically subjugated and languishing militarily. Phakirmohun created the Mandhata episode against this background to arouse a consciousness among Oriyas of their glorious past, particularly at a

¹Phakirmohun Katha Sahitya, ed., K.B.Nayak (Berhampur, 1980), pp. 1-147

time when they were suffering under colonialism.

Phakirmohun has pitched the Oriya *kshatriya* feudal Lord Mandhata against the Bergi Marathas. Mandhata also represented the declining *kshatriya* power as the eminent *kshatriya* families of the time were on retreat due to repeated Maratha onslaughts. Phakirmohun developed the Maratha episode from his knowledge of the recent past of Orissa. In his autobiography, for example, while mentioning the association of his forefathers with Marathas, he has shown how the Bergis, by their plunder and oppression, were creating awe and confusion in the minds of ordinary people.¹ Phakirmohun was also aware of the pre-eminence of the Raibania fort, situated in the north of Orissa. Though built for safeguarding the northern frontier, the Raibania fort had lost its eminence by the time Orissa lost its independence, but Phakirmohun revived the Raibania fort in 'Lachhama' and made it a symbol of the Oriya resistance to foreign domination in the 18th century. This helped in historicising the Maratha-Mandhata conflict. Thus, Phakirmohun used his knowledge of the past in the construction of a 'new' history of Oriya bravery and sacrifice.

Phakirmohun's historical consciousness is also reflected in some of his features such as, 'Balasore Pangaluna', 'Kamala Prasad Gorap' and 'Kalika Prasad Gorap', all of which have a thematic unity, that is a depiction of the maritime and salt-manufacturing traditions of Orissa. Till the 19th century, Balasore, the home town of Phakirmohun, was an important centre for maritime trade and salt manufacture. Five to six hundred ships used to sail from the Balasore entreport each year and three-quarters of the ships were engaged in carrying salt and the rest were used to carry merchandise to Rangoon, Colombo, Madras and other ports of the Bay of Bengal. Oriya merchants braved the sea without fear of pirates, cyclones and the unknown. Phakirmohun gives a vivid description of the history of the flourishing

¹See, Byasakabi Phakirmohun, Phakirmohun Granthavali. Atmajivana Charaita (2 vols., 2nd edn., Cuttack, 1963), I

maritime activities at Balasore, but at the same time laments over its decline during his time. In 'Balasore Pangaluna' for example, he describes how every year, 9 lakh mounds of salt were being manufactured and out of that, 7.5 lakh mounds were being exported for the use in Bengal. Unfortunately during Phakirmohun's time, Balasore became a 'burial ground.'¹ While narrating the history of maritime activities, he has not forgotten to mention the related problems and risks involved in trade transactions. This itself, attests to the size of the sea-borne trade at Balasore.

In his narrative on maritime history, Phakirmohun mixed up his own boyhood experience as a supervisor of sail-makers with the facts he had gathered from elderly people about shipping activities at Balasore in the previous sixty years. Hence, there is no romanticisation of Orissa's past. Phakirmohun has rather hinted at the importance of the sea-borne trade at Balasore, but the tone is atavistic, as it declined, parallel with the general decline of Orissa. However, invoking the past and constructing a narrative on it, is itself a part of historical consciousness, so essential to the question of identity. Phakirmohun is the first Oriya writer to instil in the Oriya mind the pride of their ancient maritime glory- their sea voyage and oceanic commerce, with the terror of winds and waves and the twang of the brine.

What Phakirmohun intends in his novel 'Lachhama' and other narratives based on maritime traditions, is to recreate the history of the Oriya community. In this, he was helped by his knowledge of the past which was useful in historicising *Paika* and maritime traditions of Orissa. In contrast to Phakirmohun, his contemporary Radhanath Roy's (1848-1908 A.D.) historical consciousness came from his awareness of the past, legends, folktales and the geography of Orissa.

Radhanath's literary genius is marked by romantic imagination. He drew into his literary world Orissan history, legend, folklore and even nature and in

¹Phakirmohun Katha Sahitya, op.cit., pp.38-40

the process Orissa came to assume a distinct identity of its own. He transformed Orissa into a land of superb poetic beauty, a theatre for supernatural beings, a land of myths and legends, of handsome fighting heroes and lovely heroines.¹ All his *kavyas* are set against the Orissan landscape and its geography and topography enter his narratives to give a distinct Oriya flavour to the themes. In the *kavyas*, an Oriya 'history' is constructed which is marked by divine dispensations, mythic antiquity and the glorification of geographical sites. Some of Radhanath's *kavyas* may be critically examined to show how history has been constructed.

One of Radhanath's most popular *kavys* 'Kedara Gauri' (1885 A.D.) is about the love between a boy and a girl, Kedara and Gauri and its tragic consequence.² They were neighbours and in deep love. But their parents did not approve of their love and prevented their marriage, so finally, Kedara and Gauri decided to elope, but as ill luck would have it, their plan did not succeed. Lack of proper communication and planning landed them in such a desperate situation that they committed suicide in the forest, the rendezvous where they were supposed to meet each other. Though destiny was so cruel to them, their love did not die out and was made immortal by King Lalatendu Kesari,³ who built the Kedareswara temple and installed in it the images of Kedara and Gauri. Radhanath has interwoven the Kedara-Gauri story with the history and topography of Orissa. King Lalatendu Kesari is an historical figure and the Kedareswara (Shiva-Parvati) temple in Bhubaneswar has existed for a long time, but there is no historical basis to connect the Kedara Gauri story with King Lalatendu, nor is there any historical truth or even any legend, to link the

¹Mayadhar Mansinha, History of Oriya Literature (New Delhi, 1962), p. 185

²Radhanath Granthavali, ed., Kshetrabasi Nayak (Berhampur, 1975), pp. 34-37

³ Identified with the Somavamsi King Uddyotakesari (c. 1040-1065)

construction of the Kedareswar temple with Kedara Gauri. Radhanath has borrowed the names of the king, the temple and the nearby fountain to give authenticity to the story. In the second edition (1886 A.D.) of this poem, he even claims in the preface that his poem describes the mythological story associated with the Kedaragauri fountain of Bhubaneswar.¹ He draws King Lalatendu Kesari into the the story to give some credence to it. Lalatendu's association with Kedara Gauri had been earlier established by writers like A.Stirling who suggested that Lalatendu had built the city of Bhubaneswar.² Radhanath constructs the narrative of the Kedara-Gauri love with the help of history and topography in such a fashion that it gives an impression of a historical fact. It is further strengthened by linking the story with the Kedareswara temple and the Kedaragauri fountain.

Radhanath's other *kavya* 'Chandrabhaga' (1886 A.D.)³ is also thematically based on Orissa. Set against the backdrop of the famous Konark temple, it creates a new legend with the help of mythological characters. The sun-god of Konark fell in love with the saint Sumanyu's beautiful daughter, Chandrabhaga and desired her, but Chandrabhaga did not agree and resisted his advance. The sun-god tried to capture her forcibly, so being helpless, she jumped into the sea and drowned herself. As soon as Sumanyu came to know about it, he cursed the Konark temple, the abode of the sun-god, causing it to collapse. Consequently, sun-worship at Konark came to an end and the place turned to a desert. Thus, the collapse of the Konark temple and the end of sun-worship came to be linked with the sun-god's irrational sexual desire for Chandrabhaga and the subsequent curse by Sumanyu. In reality, the gradual dilapidation of the Konark temple and the end of sun-worship were brought about by natural causes over a period of time. Radhanath however, makes

¹Radhanath Granthavali, op.cit.,p.37

²Natabara Samantaray, Odia Sahitya Itihasa,1803-1920 (Bhubaneswar,1964),p.275

³Radhanath Granthavali, op.cit.,pp.37-46

extra-human agency responsible for the fall of the Konark temple. The characters of the sun-god and Chandrabhaga (who was herself born from a divine dancer- apsara) and the dramatic consequence of the former's irrational desire, all transform the fall of Konark into a legend, but Konark itself has been a symbol of Oriya's glorious past and prosperity. Thus, the fall of Konark symbolises the loss of Oriya glory and prosperity. Composed in the late 19th century, Radhanath's 'Chandrabhaga' assumes highly symbolic meaning. In the symbolism of the fall of Konark, Radhanath perceives the misery and predicament of Oriyas. In his imagination, Konark and Oriya are identified; their existence becomes one entity.

On the other hand, Radhanath's *kavya* 'Nandikeswari' (1887 A.D.) is based on love and sacrifice, but also rooted in Orissa. Nandika, the daughter of the King Suvarnakasari was madly in love with King Chodagangadeva who invaded Orissa. One night she stole out of her father's fort with the father's mascot jewel and offered her love to Chodaganga, but when he spurned her love, she committed suicide instead of going back to her father's camp.¹ Though the story is set against the broad backdrop of Chodaganga's fight against the Somavamsis to capture Orissa, it has no historicity. Radhanath has invented and superimposed it on the well-known historical event of Chodaganga's invasion of Orissa. According to Radhanath, Nandika did not care the imperial heritage and national prestige while wooing the enemy King Chodaganga. As she was maddened by love, after being rejected by Chodaganga, she committed suicide, leaving a request to her father to treat her lover Chodaganga as his son.² King Suvarnakasari broke down at his daughter's death and out of love for her, relinquished the throne and offered it to Chodaganga together with his mascot jewel. This stopped the bloodshed between the Ganga and Soma dynasties. Thus, in Radhanath's imagination,

¹Ibid., pp. 47-65

²Ibid., p. 64

Nandika's love achieved a great purpose, that is, the end of hostilities between the two dynasties. This makes Nandika an ideal Oriya girl and her love an exemplary one. Radhanath transforms Nandika's mundane love into a legend of love and sacrifice, by making it highly idealistic and superhuman. The credibility and popularity of the Nandika story is enhanced when the poet celebrates the islet of Nandikeswari, situated in the river Mahanadi, as a monument to Nandika's love. He also links the Suvarnapura village near the Ansupa lake in the southern Orissa with the place where Suvarnakasari took to 'sannyas' after relinquishing the throne.

Radhanath's one more *kavya*, 'Usha' (1888 A.D.) is based on a Puranic tradition.¹ It depicts how a divine plan, a teleology was fulfilled in the land of Orissa. The divine musician (called *Gandharva*) Chitrarath and the divine dancer (called *Apsara*) Tilottama were cursed to take human birth. They were actually lover and beloved in their divine form. According to the curse, they were born on the earth as Jayanta and Usha, respectively. Born to two different royal families at Hemapur and Nurupur, Jayanta and Usha met each other at some place, as it was predestined and fell in love. Their families also approved of their love and arranged for their marriage. As foretold, as soon as their hands were tied in marriage, they fell down and breathed their last and were restored back to their *Gandharva* and *Apsara* forms. They were released from the divine curse. The entire Jayanta-Usha story has been set in the Balasore region of Orissa. Radhanath has linked well-known places of Balasore with different incidents of the story. He even links a place called 'Usha-Medha' or 'Usha-Mandapa' in the Sunahat village of Balasore to the supposed cemeteries of Jayanta and Usha. This lends credence to the Jayanta-Usha episode in popular belief.

One of Radhanath's most controversial *kavyas* 'Parvati' (1890 A.D.) is based on a legend about the Ganga King Gangeswar (12th century A.D.).² In an

¹ Ibid., pp. 67-94

² Ibid., pp. 95-135

extreme form of Oedipus complex, the King established an incestuous relationship with his daughter Kaushalya.¹ Radhanath adopted this legend in his *kavya* and described how King Gangeswar ultimately had his daughter and illegitimate child murdered. However, when Gangeswar realised his sin, he was full of remorse and built a tank, known as *Kaushalyganga*, to repent for his sin, but this did not satisfy his queen Parvati who finally killed the husband, to take revenge for her daughter's murder. Like other *kavyas* of Radhanath, here also the credibility of the story comes from linking it with some geographical sites such as Dhauli hill and the Daya river, where Kuashalya and her illegitimate child were supposedly confined to a dry well until death and with the *Kaushalyaganga* tank situated in the Puri district.

For the *kavyas*, Radhanath has borrowed from different sources, foreign literature, legends, folk-beliefs and even Puranic traditions, but he has so thoroughly and tactfully integrated the borrowed elements that the stories look as if they had actually happened in Orissa. Different geographical sites like Kedara Gauri, Nandikeswari, Usha-Medha, Dhauli hill and the Kaushalyaganga tank have been so fully integrated with the main plots that these are believed to be the actual sites of the incidents mentioned in these *kavyas*. The belief is strengthened by the use of historical names such as Lalatendu Kesari, Chodaganga and Gangeswar which Radhanath employs to historicise the fictitious stories. Finally, it is the adoption of Orissan geography and natural features that made the stories appear real to Oriyas. As a result, over the years, Oriyas came to accept the authenticity of the incidents of the *kavyas* and Orissa as their place of occurrence. Even, the characters of Kedara, Gauri, Nandika and Chandrabhaga have been given so much imaginative reality that they have become a part of Oriya collective memory. This was observed by the great Oriya writer and scholar, Nilakantha Das in the

¹This is mentioned in the Jagannath Temple Chronicle, *Madala Panji*, ed. A.B. Mohanty (Cuttack, 1940), pp. 23-24, and *Pyarimohun Acharya's Odisara Itihasa*, ed., Sk. Mutlub Ali

1920s. He observed how some *Brahmins* while taking pilgrims around the Kedareswar temple in Bhubaneswar, used to point out a hole through which Kedara and Gauri were apparently talking to each other and a spot where they died.¹

The *kavyas* of Radhanath were composed in the last two decades of the 19th century. That was the period when the educated Oriya middle class was growing in self-consciousness, with an awareness of its modern self with all its regional under currents. Radhanath's *kavyas* can be seen as projecting this self because they are not only thematically rooted in Orissa but are also narratives on Orissan history, topography and monuments. While projecting Oriya's modern self, Radhanath tried to construct a new history of Orissa, which may be termed a 'make-believe' history. It is make-believe because the invented incidents in Radhanath's *kavyas* appear to be historical facts. This brand of history involves both facts and elements from folklore and legends. The importance of constructing a 'make-believe' history by Radhanath in the late 19th century lies in producing a collective view of the 'self' among Oriyas who were, otherwise, suffering from colonialism and subordination.

The last of the Great Trio, Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912 A.D.) though primarily a metaphysical poet, was not devoid of a sense of history. He made frequent invocations of the glorious traditions of Orissan history in his poems, but unlike Phakirmohun and Radhanath, he did not indulge in the reconstruction of history. He only tried to project, in exalted terms, known history and tradition so as to create an exaggerated view about the Oriya past. This is evident in his poetry collection, 'Utkal Gatha', where Orissa is projected as a 'mother' with virtues and glories. The poem 'Utkal Sangeet' for example, glorifies Orissa as a mother whose name deserves to be chanted day and night. She has a rich religious tradition and a long uninterrupted glorious

(Cuttack, 1995), pp. 80-81

¹ Nilakantha Das, Nilakantha Granthavali (First edn., Cuttack, 1963), p. VI

history which may be dated back to the Mauryan King Ashok, or even earlier.¹ Her artistic excellence epitomised in the Konark temple is evoked:

O' People of Utkal! Remember once the gems
of the stone sculptures of Konark-
with what care the artisan
has unveiled bewitching beauty on it.²

Mother, in the Indian tradition, is the embodiment of *shakti*- the prowess. She saves her children and acts as their custodian. In any construction of an image of ideal mother, she has to have many-sided virtues apart from her prowess so that her children are glorified and also preserved. The idealism of motherhood is very often imputed to the motherland, as a part of our cultural orientation and tradition. Madhusudan has done precisely this. For him, Orissa is an ideal mother who must be granted with all possible virtues, both real and fictitious. For example, in 'Utkal Sangeet' the mother Orissa is glorified as eternally victorious in the field of religion: the remains of Buddhism, the Shaiva centre Bhubaneswar, with many Shaiva temples, the temple of goddess Viraja as the centre of Shakta cult, the temple of Jagannath as the crowning glory of Vaishnavism and the Konark temple as the centre of the solar cult, all are testimony to the religious victory of Orissa.³ This victory however, was never the conquest of one faith over the other; it was rather the accommodation and tolerance of all faiths.

In yet, another poem, 'Utkal Bandana', Madhusudan depicts Utkal/Orissa as a virtuous mother, sustaining her children. She has nectar flowing from her breasts that quenches the thirst of millions; she is beautiful with the sea washing her feet and the rivers, mountains and forests decorating

¹Bhaktakabi Madhusudan, Madhusudan Granthavali (New edn., Cuttack, 1963), pp. 117-118

²Ibid., p. 117

³Ibid.,

her body and at the same time, she is a brave woman having given birth to so many heroes.¹ Though the metaphor of a virtuous woman is employed to glorify and sanctify Orissa, it conjures up a vision of an ideal mother dedicated to the cause of her children. She becomes a heroine who has produced so many heroes throughout history. Their heroism in turn enhances and spreads the glory of the mother Orissa. The poet says:

Many more heroes earned their glory
in this earth by showing their infinite valour
in war, Mother of Heroes!
the world was filled with your fame.²

Ironically, the 'Mother of Heroes' had a pitiable existence during the poet's life time. Her limbs had been cut to pieces. The Oriya-speaking regions were divided and different parts were attached to at least four administrative zones. Yet, in another poem 'Jatiya Sangeet'³, Madhusudan asserts the geographical unity of the whole land of Orissa. He hopes that the separate limbs of Orissa would soon be united and the bond of their union would be 'love' among Oriyas.

Imagining Orissa as the mother objectifies the concept of Orissa and creates a powerful image of the 'geographic space' occupied by Oriyas. The mother claims filial devotion from her children and for Madhusudan, this lies in becoming aware and reviving the past glories of the mother. The mother's glorious past is an important element in the identity of Oriya children. Searching for roots in history and linking them to the present was an historical necessity in the context of the rise of the Oriya movement, spearheaded by the Utkal Union Conference.⁴ Many of Madhusudan's poems were written for the

¹Ibid., p. 119

²Ibid., p. 119

³Ibid., p. 163

⁴For details on Utkal Union Conference, see chapter III.

Conference, glorifying and reminding them of the past glories of Orissa.

The element of cultural self-assertion is explicit in his glorification of the Oriya past.

Phakirmohun, Radhanath and Madhusudan, all had an historical consciousness so important for the construction of a collective sense, but it was not always marked by objectivity or scientific insight. While Phakirmohun and Radhanath reconstructed history, Madhusudan explicitly glorified and eulogised the past. All of them had a common task, that is, to provide Oriyas with a 'history' which may be either real or imaginary. The purpose of an imaginary history¹, as we found in the writings of Madhusudan, is to establish a link between past glories and Oriyas as a whole. This link has to be imagined because the connection is not always self-evident. Madhusudan for example, imagines Orissa as an eternally virtuous, glorious mother. Though this connection between 'Orissa-mother' and 'Oriya-children' was not self-evident, such inventions were intended to make Oriyas aware of their identity in terms of a distinct tradition and culture of their own.

Identity can be defined on the basis of a number of commonalities. Nature and landscape, shared by a people, is a physical means of forging their identity in a fixed geographic space. It may be used to produce powerful imageries in literature so that a sense of belonging can be induced in the people inhabiting that geographical region. Of the Great Trio discussed above, Radhanath Roy was the most prolific in invoking Orissan nature and landscape in his poems, but the great prose-writer, Phakirmohun also had very lofty ideas on the Orissan nature. Take for example, his travelogue, 'Utkal Bhramanam' (1892 A.D.), where he describes Orissa as 'the Holy Land' and 'the Gateway to Heaven' and its inhabitants as 'virtuous'.² He imagines the

¹The concept of 'imaginary history' is used by Sudipta Kaviraj in his, The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India (Delhi, 1995)

²Phakirmohun Senapati, Utkal Bhramanam (3rd edn., Cuttack,

holiness of the whole land as an integral component of the greatness of Orissa. The Maratha emperor Shivaji had once remarked that because of the holiness of the land 'Utkal was fit only for gods and not for human-beings'. Phakirmohun imagines that should Shivaji come back to Orissa, he would judge whether his words still have relevance or not.¹ The geographical land always arouses a sense of attachment in the people who inhabit it. As a result, they impute 'essences' to their land. Phakirmohun who had travelled in different parts of the Oriya-speaking regions in connection with his job, was a great admirer and devotee of this land. So he has attributed such 'essences' as holiness, greatness and virtue to Orissa although these cannot be objectively proved.

Phakirmohun's holy and virtuous land of Orissa is given a distinct, unique personality of its own in the poems of Radhanath Roy. The celebration of the nature in Orissa becomes an integral part in the thematic construction of all his *kavyas*, but it is in his 'Chilika'²(1891 A.D.) where the Orissan nature becomes the most predominant theme. The lake of Chilika is imbued with a living personality, the hills and islets situated in the lake, the dilapidated temples and even the blue water of the lake, all are invoked and celebrated by the poet. The Chilika is made the epitome of Orissan nature. In the words of Radhanath,

Blue sheet of water garlanded with ducks,
Swimming pool of Utkal's Laxmi-
Chilika, you are the choicest diadem of Utkal
The store-house of beauty of that fair land.³

1916) ,p .2

¹Ibid.

²Radhanath Granthavali,op.cit.,pp.137-150

³Ibid. ,p .137

For Radhanath, the lake of Chilika is not merely a beautiful landscape of Orissa, epitomising its nature, it is also eternally sacred. Many holy rivers, like the Bhargavi, the Ratnachira, the Daya, the Gandhavati and the Atharnala have flowed into the Chilika. It makes the Chilika sacred because these rivers are themselves sacred as they are associated either with gods and goddesses, or with some Puranic saints.¹ The bank of the Chilika is also no less sacred as it is the abode of gods and goddesses like Tara, Chandi, Bhagavati and Chandeswar.² The Chilika, because of its association with divinity and holiness, is a sacred place worthy of pilgrimage by Oriyas. At the same time, Radhanath imagines the Chilika as 'the witness to the Orissan past' and 'the theatre of history' (Itihasa-Rangasthali). Many historical events had taken place on her bank and she is a mute witness :

You bear witness to the past;
 you've seen the rise and fall of man-
 so many capital cities rose on your shore
 and fell there itself.
 Your blue waves are now washing the skeletons
 devoured by time.³

Radhanath invokes, in particular, two popular folktales which portray a glorious picture of Orissan history. One relates to the Kanchi expedition of the Suryavamsi Gajapati Purushottamadeva (1467-1497 A.D.) and his victorious return to Orissa with the Kanchi princess Padmavati as a captive and the other one relates to the death of the Telugu general Raktabahu in a devastating storm in the Chilika on his way back after the plunder and loot of Orissa. Though the historicity of both these folktales is doubtful, Radhanath has used them to invest the Chilika with a glorious history. It is not important whether

¹Ibid., p.142

²Ibid., p.143

³Ibid.

the folktales have historicity, but what is important is their association with the Chilika. Radhanath has made the Chilika symbolic of Orissan nature, of Oriya pride and of the holiness of the land. He thus sees the 'essence' of Orissa residing in the Chilika.

For Radhanath, scenic nature is not sufficient claim for the uniqueness of Orissa, so he also attributes the sacred to it. This is evident in his description of the Chilika, but Radhanath has used the sacred as a plea in his incomplete *kavya* 'Mahayatra'¹(1891-92 A.D.) to bring the five Pandava brothers to visit Orissa before their final journey to Heaven. In Orissa, they visited *Srikshetra*-Puri, gods and goddesses, sacred rivers like the Mahanadi and the holy mountains like Kapilash, Mahendragiri and Mainak. By bringing the Pandavas down to Orissa, Radhanath not only proclaims the sanctity of the land but also links it with epic characters of the mythic past.

For Radhanath, Orissan nature came to be synonymous with beauty, glory and sanctity. So far unnoticed and neglected, it became a prominent and living experience in his writings. A vocabulary of holiness and beauty was created by him as a part of the glorification of the 'living space' occupied by fellow Oriyas. As a result, many unknown or little known places, forests, rivers and mountains came to assume a personality of their own. Radhanath was not satisfied at simply attributing virtues to Orissan nature, he also put it in a comparative perspective and hailed it as the best and most virtuous. In 'Chilika' for example, he finds the impact of this lake on him as the most 'benign and peaceful' and his mind is filled with graceful ecstasy and for him, no other landscape in India could give him so much peace and satisfaction.² Again, in 'Mahayatra', Radhanath declares that as flowers in a plant overshadow its leaves, the land of Utkal surpasses all other lands because of

¹Ibid. ,pp.155-202

²Ibid. ,pp.138-139

her virtues.¹ Such glorification is symbolic of the construction of an 'Orissa', distinct and unique from other regions. With Radhanath, Orissan nature entered as an essential element in the discourse on the Oriya cultural identity.

Through the hands of the Great Trio, the geographical Orissa passed into the Oriya mind. Its presence came to be registered both as form and gender, a woman's form and a feminine gender. As a woman, the land rises above its geographic reality and possesses her own virtuous, glorious and luminous self. The woman gave birth to heroes. As feminine gender, Orissa is immaculate, beautiful and unparalleled. The sense of the 'geographic' Orissa becomes so overlaid by images and symbols that its existence or non-existence becomes only a matter of details.

In the writings of the Great Trio, we saw how Oriya history, legend, tradition and nature have been treated and depicted to project Oriya identity. In the late 19th century however, it was also very important to project the changes that came to define Oriya life as a result of the socio-cultural and economic transformation of Orissa under colonialism. Of the Great Trio, Phakirmohun was the most sensitive to the changing scenario of Orissa. The 'Oriya' that he depicted in his novels and stories, was the product of a new society which was characterised by a dialectical tension between traditional and Western mores and values. The changes resulting from such a tension came to reshape and re-orientate Oriya life which was different from that of the past.

Two of Phakirmohun's novels, 'Chhamana Athaguntha' (Six acres and thirty-two decimals, 1897-99 A.D.) and 'Mamu' (Maternal Uncle, 1913 A.D.) are based on the changing socio-economic milieu of Orissa under the impact of colonialism. The disintegrating impact of the new land revenue arrangement and the administrative system on Oriya society, is captured in both novels.

¹Ibid., p.162

They depict the new Oriya, a product of the colonial dispensation and contrast it with the traditional Oriya, an embodiment of agrarian-communitarian oral traditions. In 'Chhamana Athaguntha',¹ the main character Ramachandra Mangaraj, an upstart Oriya moneylender, has taken advantage of the new land system and become a zamindar. Similarly, in 'Mamu',² the main character Natabara Das, a Nazarat (office superintendent) in the Cuttack collectorate, has appropriated the estate of his sister and brother-in-law by twisting the existing legal system in his favour. Both Ramachandra and Natabara have fallen prey to the pressure of the changing dynamics of Oriya society in becoming villains in intentions and deeds. In consequence, Ramachandra has become a land-grabber and a Shakespearean Shylock and ruined the lives of a rustic weaving couple, but ultimately he became the cause of his own death. Natabara Das, in 'Mamu', has been virtually the owner of his brother-in-law's estate after the latter's death and exploited and looted the farmers. Finally, he too is also punished by the law.

The novel, 'Chhamana Athaguntha' set against the quiet rural surroundings of Orissa, portrays the struggle of the innocent couple Bhagia-Saria, against the all-powerful zamindar Mangaraj, to save their only plot of land, measuring six acres and thirty-two decimals. In his early life, Mangaraj was very poor because he was an orphan. He managed to overcome the handicap of his poverty and was able to seize the zamindari estate of Phatepur Sharshanda (to which he belonged), by taking advantage of the new land tenurial system introduced by the British. He grew up to be the richest and most cruel zamindar of the region. His covetous eyes soon fell on the small piece of fertile land, owned by the weaver-couple, Bhagia and Saria. Though Mangaraj ultimately succeeded in capturing their plot, he himself had a tragic end.

¹Phakirmohun Katha Sahitya, op.cit., pp.1-175

²Ibid., pp.1-252

The poor couple had no child and all their affection centred on their pet cow, called 'Neta'. Their ardent desire for a child was exploited by Mangaraj. With the help of his maid and mistress Champa, he succeeded in keeping their land in mortgage at very high rate of interest. Bhagia and Saria had to mortgage their land to get some money for the construction of a temple for the goddess Mangala. By this religious act, the gullible couple were assured of the goddess' blessing for a child, but the consequence was disastrous. They could not even pay the interest and their dear cow was taken away by Mangaraj. The separation from the land and then losing the cow, was too rude a shock for the simple-minded, loving Saria to tolerate. She at last died of despair and agony. Bhagia went mad and was kept in prison. Mangaraj, the villain could not escape the result of his misdeeds. His wife died of mental shock, his sons squandered away the parental property and his house was auctioned. Finally, Mangaraj succumbed to physical injury inflicted by Bhagia. His accomplice Champa also died a violent death, as her paramour attacked her for ornaments taken away from Mangaraj's house. Thus, the story came to a tragic end and nobody survived to enjoy the land. The incidents and the characters of the novel are deeply rooted in the contemporary realities of colonial Orissa. The new land revenue system and corresponding changes in agrarian relations had brought fluidity and instability to the agrarian and communal society. Land became a commercialised commodity and could be shifted from one person to another. At the same time, peasants became vulnerable to exploitation and even to eviction from the land, because of the irregularity in revenue demand and the tenurial system. This social realism is epitomised in 'Chhamana Athaguntha'.

Apart from the agrarian tension which has been developed throughout the text by a series of displacements of *zamindari* estate and by the conflict between Mangaraj and Bhagia-Saria over that small piece of land, the novel delves into certain realities of the traditional Oriya society. Bhagia-Saria's desire for a child, a natural instinct for parenthood, drove them into Mangaraj's

stratagem. They were advised to build a temple, a highly virtuous act by any Hindu standard, in order to be blessed with a child. They were so keen to have a child who would maintain their lineage that they mortgaged their land with Mangaraj for money. Thus, Bhagia-Saria were caught in Mangaraj's evil design which was devised to capture their land. The whole series of subplots in the novel, desire for a child, a religious and virtuous act to get a child and finally, exploitation of the situation by a powerful individual, reflect on the contemporary realities of Oriya society. Phakirmohun thus took a series of snapshots of Oriya society and reflected them in 'Chhamana Atha Guntha'.

'Mamu' is the story of an English-educated, petty official in the Cuttack Collectorate, called Natabara Das who manoeuvred to capture the property of his sister and brother-in-law. Locally, he was known as the Nazarat. He was extremely individualistic and materialistic, but at the same time, he was no less ambitious. According to him, the only purpose of human life is to earn money and all needs in this world are achieved by money only.¹ With this materialistic philosophy, Natabara Das wanted to grab whatever he could. His sister Chandamani who was married into a rich family, soon became a widow and fell a victim to her brother's insatiable greed and power. Natabara took full advantage of the helplessness of his sister and systematically grabbed her property. In his evil design, he was helped by a British official, Mr. Dawson, who made him virtually the owner of the estate of his sister by bypassing the rule of the Court of Ward. Natabara gathered wealth unlawfully and drove the tenants of his sister's estate almost to beggary. Sitting in Cuttack, he would direct his middlemen to collect as much rent as possible from the tenants. He bullied the people and used every foul means to extort money from them. Even, his two innocent, fatherless nephews, who were the real owners of the estate, were treated very badly. Ultimately, he was caught and punished by the law. His sinister design to be 'the king of Naripur' (the name of the estate) was

¹Phakirmohun Katha Sahatya, op.cit., p.50

shattered as he was ultimately cut down to size by the law. He was accused of the misappropriation of government money, but he confessed all his misdeeds, and repented before the Court.

In 'Chhamana Atha Guntha' and 'Mamu', the West, its legal system, land revenue system and officialdom are criticised, by juxtaposing them with the pre-colonial system and values of Oriya society. While depicting the West as evil and destabilising Oriya social structure, Phakirmohun celebrates the latter as central to a cohesive Oriya social order. Thus, the West is externalised and constructed in opposition to Oriya. Mangaraj, the land-grabber, or Natabara Das, the materialistic petty official, have all grown out of an urbanised, mercenary culture imported into Orissa by the West. On the other hand, there are Bhagia-Saria, Natabara Das' sister, nephews and others who stayed within the bounds and bonds of the traditional, communal agrarian society. While systematically building the constant tension between these two categories of Oriyas into his novels, Phakirmohun has consciously made the Good triumphant over the Bad. In his scheme of things, the Good is always represented by people such as Bhagia-Saria who are the upholders of traditional Oriya values and the Bad by the upwardly mobile colonised individuals such as Mangaraj and Natabara. Phakirmohun's emphatic rejection of the West is symbolically suggested by the defeat of the Bad in its clash with the Good, represented by the Oriya agrarian, communitarian tradition.

In 'Chhamana Atha Guntha', Phakirmohun's construction of the 'Other' is couched in symbolism. He for example, with an anti-colonial stance, imagines the poor, colonized Oriyas as the cranes that plod wearily and often unsuccessfully through the mud in the hope of a stray fish, while the smart white water crows (the British) flying in from afar, walk away with the best catch.¹ In this allegory, the colonizer the British and the colonized Oriyas are seen in opposition to each other. The local cranes, the poor Oriyas, are seen

¹Phakirmohun Katha Sahitya, op.cit., pp.60-61

distinctly as a group by itself, different from the 'Other'- the white water crows, the British.

Phakirmohun's other novel, 'Prayaschita'¹ (Atonement, 1915 A.D.) stands in bold contrast to 'Chhamana Athaguntha' as the former is a depiction of the Oriya urban life and its attendant evils. The main character of 'Prayaschita', Govindachandra, an English-educated youth was seized away by an ardent desire to reform existing society. He was so much engrossed in social reforms and the new ideas of the West that he wanted to implant them on the Oriya society without caring for any consequence. Being English-educated and broad-minded, he did not like the rivalry between his family and the family of Indumati into which he ultimately married. This rivalry was based on parochial clan feelings. Govindachandra was under the impression that his marriage into the rival family should bring an end to this rivalry, but he was mistaken. Rather, under peculiar circumstances, he lost his newly-wed wife and mother and took to *Sannyasa* as an expiation for his youthful follies. In spite of his English education and liberal ideas, Govindachandra, could not comprehend the dynamics of a traditional society like that of Orissa. So he failed in his mission and for that had to pay very dearly. His family life was completely ruined. The character of Govindachandra typifies the English-educated Oriya youth of the time, who were in search of novelty and change in their traditional society though it was not yet prepared for that change.

Unlike the two other novels, 'Prayaschita' focuses on a character who is empowered by English education and ideas. Perhaps, this empowerment should have enabled Govindachandra to have a fruitful dialogue with the society from which he came. He could have reformed the society by awakening and educating those who mattered, but not by whimsical and hasty methods. Govindachandra's hasty moves and restlessness made him an easy prey to the rivalry of the two *zamindari* families. He married in the rival family

¹Ibid., pp. 1-182

with the noble intention of removing this rivalry. On the other hand, the father of the bride agreed to this marriage in order to take revenge on Govindachandra's father, but Govindachandra became whimsical and thought of changing the inter-family rivalry to amity and friendship, by his marriage. Things did not work out in the way he desired. Rather his marriage started a chain reaction of family tragedies. His mother and wife were sacrificed at the altar of his whims and follies. 'Prayaschita' is Phakirmohun's last novel and here his protest against Western education and ideas is comparatively mild and soft. Through the character of Govindachandra, he is suggesting a cautious and well-examined course, a way of accepting the West. By creating a character like Govindachandra in the 1910s, Phakirmohun has really captured the 'essence' of emerging educated Oriyas. Their perception of life, their attitude to existing social paradigms and vision for a new society were epitomised by Govindachandra. The West- the 'Other' has to be cautiously approached so that it does not oppose the deeply-embedded Oriya traditions, but facilitates the reforming of those that are rotten, bad and stagnant.

Phakirmohun's novels protest against colonialism's claim of a 'civilizing mission'- of altering, restructuring and conquering the culture of Indian society. He demonstrates the inherent danger of such a mission to a colonised society like Orissa. It generates tension between indigenous, agrarian, communitarian, oral tradition and new ideas and institutions brought together by colonialism. The instability and confusion arising out of this tension had spread in Indian society. Phakirmohun's characters reflect that tension, but ultimately, as we have seen, the Good- the indigenous tradition has been made triumphant. The dichotomy between the 'Self' and the 'Other' is played to the advantage of the former, the Oriya collective self. This is also reflected in Phakirmohun's stories.

Some of his most famous stories like, 'Dak Munshi' (The Post Master), 'Sabhya Zamindar' (The good-mannered landlord) and 'Patent Medicine' reflect the emergent educated Oriya middle class who were torn between the

overwhelming impact of the West and a tenacious holding to the indigenous tradition. The central characters of these stories are stereotypes of this middle class who were faced with disorientation in their personal and family lives. In all the three stories, the West has been constructed as the externalised 'other', destabilising the order and harmony of the Oriya society. There is also a desire for pre-colonial values and institutions. Phakirmohun's characters have failed to escape the trap of the West because they are themselves the products of the Western system, but ironically, the West that produced them, also ultimately devoured them. In 'Dak Munshi'¹ for example the English-educated Gopal Singh has driven out his old, uneducated, unassuming father from home. The son was brought up and given an English education by the uneducated father who had a life-long hope that the son would become a 'babu' one day. Of course, Gopal Singh did not fail to fulfil the poor father's hope, but soon after becoming a 'babu' in the postal department, the father appeared to him as uneducated, unclean and rustic. Especially, in the company of westernised people, he started to feel embarrassed by his father's old-fashioned dress and ignorance of European etiquette. Even, the old man's constant cough at night was a nuisance to the English-educated 'babu'. So the 'babu' finally drove him out of the house. The father went back to his village and the son started living happily alone. Thus, the father-son relationship was ultimately cut off.

In 'Sabhya Zamindar'², the Western-educated Rajivlochan and his wife have ultimately caused their own ruin because of their mimicking the Western values and mores. Rajivlochan inherited a newly-created zamindar estate after the death of his father, but he squandered away his time and wealth in pursuing the interests that he had developed as a result of his English education. He always remained busy in the clubs that he had founded for

¹Phakirmohun Senapat, Galpa Swalpa (2 vols., Cuttack, 1969), I, pp. 149-157

²Ibid., pp. 105-125

implanting Western ideas and values on traditional Oriya society. He and his wife Nayanatara had a disdainful attitude towards traditional Oriya values and customs. They remained preoccupied with the idea of how to Westernise their village, which was thoroughly traditional and communitarian. Their marriage itself was supposed to be 'modern', arranged through a middleman. Rajiv opted for the so-called educated and progressive Nayanatara because for him, all local girls were uneducated and superstitious. The couple's obsession with translating Western ideas to Oriya society resulted in the neglect and mismanagement of the zamindari. The fixed 'jama' payable to the government, could not be deposited in time nor could they pay back the loan incurred during their marriage. As a result, not only their *zamindari* was auctioned but also all their property was confiscated. Thus, the 'Sabhy' Zamindar, literally meaning the Civilized Landlord, was ruined.

On the other hand, in 'Patent Medicine'¹, the English-educated Chandramani Patnaik fell victim to the vices of the new urban culture, but he was reformed by his headstrong wife, Sulochana Devi. Chandramani in his bad company, took to drinking and started going to prostitutes. But his waywardness was ended by Sulochana as she one day beat him with a broom-stick. The immediate provocation came when Patnaik told a lie to her in order to go to a dancing girl and scolded her and her father. Though the situation was somehow melodramatic, the ending of the story is strongly suggestive of the transformation of the Bad to the Good.

In all of Phakirmohun's writings, the theme of the impact of the West on the traditional Oriya society runs like a thread, producing the common consequence of a pervasive degeneration among educated Oriyas. The much-vaunted Western education proved elusive, as it started destroying morals by way of encouraging a senseless imitation of Western life-styles, the rejection of traditions and a contempt for indigenous age-old customs. Tapan

¹Ibid. ,pp.17-32

Raychaudhuri, in his study has illustrated how Western education was not fully comprehended nor imparted in its scientific spirit in India.¹ Arguably, this is why, the positive aspects of Western education could not be adopted and instead there was an unashamed imitation of Western styles and values. In this process, characters like Mangaraj, Natabara Das, Govindachandra, Gopal Singh, Rajivalocochana and Chandramani were born.

Phakirmohun constructed these characters on the basis of negative elements of self-definition to which was attached the identity of the educated Oriya middle class of the period. Since Western education, ideas and institutions were either misused or blindly followed, they came to have a disorientating impact on this class. Phakirmohun treated them as negative elements of their 'self'. The 'West' was seen by him, as primarily in opposition to Oriya society. The mercenary culture, its acquisitive individualism, was opposed as it threatened the integrity of Oriya community and family that had a network of relationships. Contemporary Oriya society, so far very traditional and insulated, had to maintain its distinct nature and identity when being threatened by such a danger. So in Phakirmohun's scheme of things, the products of the West were destined to fail. The negative elements of the West were constructed as defining the identity of the educated Oriya middle class, but paradoxically, the same elements brought about their fall. Only by this paradox could Phakirmohun uphold the integrity and even superiority of Oriya society and culture vis-a-vis the West.

Phakirmohun had not completely rejected Western education, norms and mores. He was rather worried about their misuse and indiscriminate imitation. That is why, in his first short story 'Rebati' (1898 A.D.), he encouraged female education in Orissa which was then seen as taboo or at least a social stigma.² Through the life of a very young girl called Rebati,

¹For details, see, Tapan Raychaudhuri, Europe Reconsidered (Delhi, 1988), pp. 56-62

²Senapati, op.cit., pp. 1-16. Incidentally, Oriya critics

Phakirmohun showed the problem of female education in Orissa and the tensions and superstitions involved with it. After Rebati started her education, she fell a victim to circumstances. Her parents died of cholera one after another and the economy of the house collapsed. As a result, her education came to be seen as inauspicious. The old grand-mother started abusing Rebati. The old woman, an embodiment of orthodoxy, held her responsible for all the misfortunes that befell the family. Basudeva, her teacher, who was the only support and comfort to her in the days of misfortune, also died of cholera. Thus, Rebati's small world crumbled into pieces and all her hopes and dreams were shattered. Finally, she also died in a miserable condition. Rebati failed in this endeavour, but her failure was inevitable in the dismal social milieu of Orissa. In Phakirmohun's 'Rebati', one can find the misery and failure of thousands of Oriya girls in their endeavour to establish a separate identity. Rebati tried it, but failed miserably and her failure symbolised the limitations of Oriya girls during the time. In a traditional society like that of Orissa where education was a gender-related privilege, Rebati could not have succeeded, however necessary and progressive it might have been. In contrast to earlier stories, here Phakirmohun has seen the West, the 'Other' in utilitarian terms, but the 'Other' could not succeed because society was not yet ready to accept it.

Phakirmohun was a social realist as he was not only receptive and sensitive to the social realities of his time but also made a bold and objective depiction of the realities. So in his prose narratives, he made his characters imbibe the *Zeitgeist*- the spirit of the age, that is of nineteenth century Oriya society. His characters represent an Oriya life-style caught in the throes of colonialism. They are in a sense, real persons whom one could meet everyday in the villages and towns of Orissa during Phakirmohun's time.

So far we have discussed the content of the Phakirmohun's writings

describe 'Rebati' to be the first modern Oriya short story.

and the projection of Oriya identity vis-a-vis the 'Other'. But equally important is its form, especially the language and style used in the texts. Previously, increasingly Sanskritization had narrowed the gap between literary Oriya (Sadhu Bhasa) and Bengali to a 'mere handful of suffixes and inflexions', but after the language controversy of 1868-70 A.D., the Oriya of the village street found its way via Phakirmohun's pen into literature.¹ Though the nature of this language is still debated,² one must not forget the fact that the success of a language and style lies in its communicability to all cross-sections of society. This communicability in turn, promotes a language-based identity. Phakirmohun's language and style could achieve this communicability.

It is interesting to note that when his novel 'Chhamana Atha Guntha' was serialised in an Oriya literary journal, 'Utkal Sahitya' during 1897-99 A.D., villagers from far-off places used to come to Cuttack to see the trial of the zamindar Mangaraj in the court, as if it was a real-life event. This sort of effective communicability with the readers was achieved not by using pure Oriya, but by an Oriya which had already taken into its repository, words from Bengali, Persian and other languages. One can easily discern Persian words, for example in Phakirmohun's famous story 'Patent Medicine'. His varied experience in public life and his frequent shift from one feudatory state to another in connection with his job, had enabled him to grasp the language of the common people. He used this language in his writings with his own innovation and improvisation. That language was different from the Sanskritised Oriya used by Phakirmohun's predecessors in their writings. The

¹John Boulton, 'Nationalism and Tradition in Orissa, with special reference to the works of Phakirmohun Senapati', in R.J.Moore(ed.), Tradition and Politics in South Asia (New Delhi, 1979), p.252

²See, for example, B.Pati, 'High-Low Dialogue: Peasant in Oriya Literature', EPW, 8 April 1989, 747-752 and R.S.Mishra and J.K.Nayak, 'Misunderstanding Fakirmohun', EPW, 16 Nov.1992, 2652

use of such a plebeian language also helped Phakirmohun to create effective life-like images of both rural and urban Oriya life. The description of a bathing-ghat in the village or that of court-room scene in Cuttack where Mangaraj was tried in 'Chhamana Atha Guntha' or for that matter the narration of Chandramani Patnaik's courtship with a dancing girl Usmantara in 'Patent Medicine', all produce a deep impact on the mind of readers. In 'Chhamana Athaguntha' for example, Phakirmohun uses a mixture of colloquial Oriya, Persian and even common English words, to describe the trial of Mangaraj, in the most effective way.¹ Expressions in different languages are so neatly intermingled to produce an effective narrative in Oriya that the whole episode becomes a life-like court room scene. Again in 'Patent Medicine', Chandramani Patnaik's use of slang for his wife, praise for Usmantara and her hospitality and pride in his own masculinity- all constructed in a particular idiomatic vocabulary, suggest the Oriyaness of Phakirmohun's language and style.²

If Phakirmohun's Oriya was based on the constructed 'Other', Madhusudan Rao's Oriya came to be related to the outside world. Madhusudan linked Oriya to India and even the whole of humanity. He was very much aware of the Indian element in Oriya identity. So he first tried to locate Oriyas vis-a-vis India in his poems, 'Navayuga' and 'Bharata Bhavana'. In 'Navayuga', discarding the prevailing differences and narrow provincialism in India, Madhusudan welcomes the birth of a new united India where Oriya is an indispensable part: 'The age of distinction in caste and creed is going to end. *Bharat* (India) will turn into *Mahabharat* (Great India) through great penance'.³ Madhusudan thus imagines a *Mahabharat* where Oriya will get his strength from his *Bharatiyata*, the Indian element, but he has not stopped

¹Phakirmohun Katha Sahitya, op.cit., pp.134-142

²Senapati, Galpa Swalpa, op.cit., pp.26-28

³Bhaktakabi, op.cit., p.119

there, he goes further beyond India. For him, not only India, but also the whole of humanity would be united one day on the basis of universal brotherhood and mutual love. This universal consciousness should form a part of Oriya identity. Madhusudan wishes Oriyas to be integrated not only with India but with the whole of humanity. Oriyas must have a broader identity and this broadening of horizon is the new message of 'Navayuga'- the New Age. Madhusudan's expansive and outward-looking consciousness is more explicit in his poem 'Bharat Bhavana' which recapitulates the history of India and imagines Oriyas as integral to the making of the history of India. The destiny of Oriyas is thus intertwined with Indian destiny.

Madhusudan's glorification of Orissa on the one hand and consciousness about India and the whole humanity on the other hand, are not opposed to each other. These are two strands in his poetic imagination and project two components of Oriya identity. The quintessential Oriya that is intrinsic to Oriya identity also includes an Indian element and a tendency to be part of entire humanity. Such a graduation of poetic imagination, from Oriya to Indian and finally integration to the humanity, is a hallmark of modern Oriya literature. This graduation is portrayed very graphically in Madhusudan's poems 'Utkal Sangeet', 'Bharata Bhavana' and 'Navayuga', each emphasizing the identity of the same individual as Oriya, Indian and world-citizen respectively. If in 'Utkal Sangeet', Oriya's identity lies in chanting the name of 'Utkal' which is so glorious and sacred, it is in 'Bharata Bhavana' where 'Oriya' is made an essential part of the great spiritual, religious, heroic and epic Indian tradition. Finally in 'Nava Yuga', both his Oriya and Indian identities are subsumed under the overwhelming identity of the human being a member of the indivisible human race.

Madhusudan's construction of an expansive Oriya identity which reached its acme in projecting Oriya as a part of the humankind, a global citizen, is different from that which Phakirmohun and Radhanath have projected of Oriya, but both ways of looking at identity display the two-fold

layers in identity-construction, i.e., expansive, outward-looking and reactionary, inward-looking. In the next chapter, we will see how the assertion of an expansive identity was the result of the changing politico-cultural scenario of the time.

Phakirmohun, Radhanath and Madhusudan, belonging to the same historical period, really shared the same concern, that is, how to portray and project 'Oriya', how to concretely express and articulate the rising Oriya consciousness. Against the new socio-cultural forces, they drew on history, tradition, legends, landscape and even on 'otherness' in their efforts. Oriyas came to be seen as different from others and this difference was couched sometimes in exalted terms and at others, in realistic description. By this, the Great Trio could develop a discourse on Oriya identity- an intellectual process of cultural self-assertion. It came to oppose the official orthodoxy constituted not only in the writings of scholars like Stirling and Hunter but also in official documents like the Famine Commission Report of 1866 A.D.. In the discourse, Oriyas with rich history, tradition and legend and backed up by a sacred and beautiful landscape, emerged as totally different from Stirling's 'effeminate, ignorant and stupid' Oriyas¹, or from the Famine Commission's perception of Oriya as 'altogether more Boeotian'.²

With the Great Trio, Oriya literature entered its modern phase which came to be characterised by a quest for the 'essentials' that go into the shaping of Oriya identity. Phakirmohun's social realism, Radhanath's romantic imagination and Madhusudan's poetic insight, all were directed towards this quest. After the Great Trio, we come across a whole range of Oriya authors

¹A. Stirling, An Account, Geographical, Statistical and Historical of Orissa Proper, or Cuttack (Serempore, 1822), p. 47

²Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Famine in Bengal and Orissa in 1866 (Calcutta, 1867), I., p. 9. Boeotian is the adjective of Greek Boeotia, proverbial for dullness of its inhabitants. Hence, it also means stupid, dull etc..

who continued their tradition. Different aspects of Orissa's history, tradition, culture and nature came to be re-interpreted and deciphered to discover the 'essentials'.

CHAPTER V

DEFINING SELF-IDENTITY IN ORIYA LITERATURE (II)

With Phakirmohun, Radhanath and Madhusudan, Oriya literature entered a new phase. Increasingly aware of a collective self, authors felt a need to define their identity in terms of a distinct culture and became more aware of their difference from externalised 'Others'. Their self-consciousness also became increasingly anti-colonial.

This is reflected in the outright rejection by the Oriya educated middle class of any disparaging attitude or comments on Oriyas by outsiders. When in the famous literary journal of the time 'Utkal Sahitya', an essayist by the name Krushnaprasad Chaudhury wrote an article pointing out the deficiencies and backwardness of Oriya literature, Phakirmohun Senapati strongly criticised Chaudhury's contentions in the next issue.¹ Senapati declared that the Oriya language had existed for a thousand years in its completely evolved form ! Though Senapati's argument can be discarded as baseless, it is symbolic of the contemporary middle class' search for Oriya cultural roots in the distant past without any concern for historicity.

Oriya authors came to be emotionally involved with the history and tradition of Orissa. The growth of a collective consciousness forced them to look back at their roots and construct their 'history' as different and unique, but history and legend, as they came to be used by those authors, did not imply any historical consciousness, as their portrayal of the past lacked any scientific criticism. It was uncritical glorification and even sometimes, a reconstruction of history in order to meet the demands of the Oriya's search for roots in the distant past. They had to fall back on their past because the

¹Krushna Prasad Chaudhury, 'Utkal Sahityare Prana Pratistha', Utkal Sahitya, Vol.20, No.1, April-May, 1916. Phakir mohun Senapati protested it in the next issue, Vol.20, No.2, May-June, 1916

present could not promise them any hope. We may analyse here the works of some of the contemporary Oriya authors to show how they undertook this exercise of glorification and construction of history.

Ramashankar Ray, (1858-1918 A.D.) regarded as the father of modern Oriya drama, was inspired by the historical glories of the Oriyas. Taking his cue from the emerging trend in Bengali drama, he decided to write Oriya drama on historical themes. First he chose the popular Kanchi-Kaveri legend which, for ages, had inspired Oriya imagination. He wrote his famous play 'Kanchi-Kaveri' (or Padmavati) in 1880 A.D., based on this legend. The historical framework of the legend is provided by the Suryavamsi King Purushottamadeva's (1467-1497 A.D.) battles with the Kanchi King Saluva Narasimha of southern India.¹ Though we have difficulty in accepting the historicity of the legend that assumed divine and romantic accretions over a period of time, it is useful to mention different elements of the legend: Purushottama's desire to marry Saluva's daughter Padmavati (or Rupamvika); Saluva's refusal to give his daughter to Purushottama because the latter was performing the duty of a *chandal*, sweeper during the Car festival (Rath Yatra);² the conquest of Kanchi by Purushottama out of anger and humiliation with the help of Lord Jagannath; the meeting of the milkmaid Maniki with Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra while they were on their way to Kanchi and finally, taking Padmavati captive and marrying her to Purushottama under peculiar circumstances. Ramashankar's play³ has more or less incorporated all these elements of the legend. His credit lies in the fact that he has reconstructed the legend in such a way as to imply the victory of the Orissan

¹K.C.Panigrahi, History of Orissa, (cuttack, 1981), pp.215
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²It is called *Chherapamhara*, meaning the ritual sweeping of the chariots and sprinkling of scented water on them.

³Kachi-Kaveri of Ramashankar Ray, ed., K.C.Rath (Cuttack, 1977)

Vaishnavism over the Ganapatya faith-Shaivism, as the main outcome of Purushottama's Kanchi expedition. Historically, King Saluva was a Shaivite and his family deity was Lord Ganapati. Ramashankar has twisted the legend in such a way that the victory of Purushottamadeva appeared as the victory of Lord Jagannath over Lord Ganapati, that is, the victory of Vaishnavism over Shaivism. That is why, with the fall of Saluva, Lord Ganapati was weakened and He came to be known as 'Bhanda Ganesh' (Fraud Ganapati). Moreover, as a mark of victory, Purushottamadeva brought away the idol of Ganesh from Kanchi and installed it in the Jagannath temple at Puri. Lord Ganapati was thus made subsidiary to Lord Jagannath !

Ramashankar wrote this play at a time when Oriya consciousness was gradually emerging. British policy towards the Jagannath temple and the Gajapati Maharaja of Puri, who had a traditional link with the Jagannath cult, heightened this consciousness. Oriyas reacted very strongly when the Gajapati Divyasinghadeva was sentenced to transportation for life in 1878 A.D. on a murder charge.¹ Arguably, for Ramashankar, that was the right time to use the Kanchi-Kaveri legend to arouse Oriya consciousness. By recreating the legend as literature in the era of print, Ramashankar succeeded in disseminating the glory of Lord Jagannath who was seen to share Oriya's fate and glory.

Long before Ramashankar Ray, the 17th century Oriya poet Purushottama Das had also treated the Kanchi-Kaveri legend within a religious and supernatural matrix, in his narrative poem, 'Kanchi-Kaveri'.² The poem was a myth-narrative, full of supernatural episodes. Lord Jagannath was the real hero of the poem and the battle described in the poem, was fought between Lord Jagannath and Lord Ganesh because of the latter's arrogance. Lord Jagannath is the Vaishnavite deity whereas Lord Ganesh represents the

¹For the British policy and murder case, see chapter VI.

²Purushottam Dasa, Kanchi Kaveri (Orissa State Museum Acc. No. 3002)

Shaivite faith. In the poem Ganesh defied, but ultimately surrendered to Jagannath. It is symbolic of the rivalry between Vaishnavism and Shaivism, where the victory of Vaishnavism was a foregone conclusion. This was because by that time the Jagannath cult had already been established as a Vaishnavite faith and Lord Jagannath identified with Lord Vishnu. By implication, it also meant the victory of Gajapati Purushottamadeva over the Kanchi King. Throughout the poem however, there is not much talk of the bravery of Purushottamadeva nor is there any importance attached to the fight between him and the Kanchi King. On the contrary, the poet portrayed Lord Jagannath as the main instigator of the conflict. Lord Jagannath orders the Gajapati for expedition against Kanchi; He leads the Gajapati army; He personally fights the battle and finally brings victory to the Gajapati. Thus, His dispensation is final. It is plausible to suggest that in the pre-colonial period when a collective self was yet to be determined, only a common religious in a particular region could be a matter of pride and cultural recognition. In addition, Purushottam Das not only made the legend a divine design fulfilled by Lord Jagannath but also imagined Jagannath and the milkmaid Maniki as Krishna and Radha of *Dwapar Yuga* and their meeting as a part of divine consortship in the mango-groves of Mathura.

In the 17th century, it was rather natural to glorify Lord Jagannath so that Vaishnavism's ascendancy could be established over other faiths. The 'Kanchi-Kaveri' was composed by Purushottama Das to show the divine dispensation by which Lord Jagannath is supposed to have brought victory to Orissa and invincibility to Vaishnavism. Even all characters other than Lord Jagannath were overshadowed. Perhaps, that is why, in the poem, the Gajapati Purushottamadeva's role was marginalised and his place taken by Lord Jagannath. One can argue that even Lord Jagannath's meeting with the milkmaid Maniki, their casual romance and Maniki's ecstatic feelings at the touch of the Lord's feet, all aim at spreading Vaishnavite devotion which had already been Jagannath-centric. The meeting between Jagannath and Maniki,

representing that of Krshna and Radha of *Dwapara Yuga*, is a reminder of *Ras lila*- divine dalliances, an essential element of the Vaishnavite tradition.

Legends or myths however, do not possess fixed meanings. Depending on context, their meaning changes. The career of the Kanchi-Kaveri legend can be analysed to show how it assumed two different sets of meaning in two different historical contexts. With Purushottama Das and Ramashankar Ray for example, when the Oriya collective self was yet to crystallise, the Kanchi-Kaveri legend was loaded with religious meanings and made a teleology in which Lord Jagannath unfolded His divine plan and design to establish the superiority of Vaishnavism. But the meaning and significance of the same legend changed with the poet Godavarish Mishra (1886-1956 A.D.) who made it all about recognition of Oriya's power and tradition by the 'Others'. In his play, 'Purushottamadeva'¹ (1917 A.D.), based on the Kanchi-Kaveri legend, *Gajapati* Purushottamadeva is the central character and the real hero. Though the essential elements of the legend are kept intact, the play marginalises the role of Lord Jagannath in the whole episode and there is no mention of Jagannath's expedition against Kanchi. The legend is thus, uprooted from its religious and supernatural matrix and instead, human deeds, Purushottamadeva's military pursuits, are highlighted and glorified. Purushottamadeva's fight against his step-brothers and his ultimate victory over the Kanchi King, without the help of Lord Jagannath, are designed to glorify Purushottamadeva. The prowess of the Oriya *jati* as a whole was also highlighted by bringing the military chiefs and *Paikas* into the battle. Godavarish, thus historicised the Kanchi-Kaveri legend by ignoring divine 'determinism' and secularised the whole legend by making Gajapati Purushottamadeva central to it and his militia the determining force in the battle. This is in contrast to Purushottama Das and Ramashankar Ray who had earlier emphasized the divine elements of the legend and constructed it

¹Godavarish Granthavali, Compiler, R.Mishra (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1968), I

as a victory of Vaishnavism/ Jagannath cult over its rival Shaivism.

The Kanchi-Kaveri legend, in all its versions, has been essentially a discourse on Oriya identity- an identity of religious superiority, of power and honour and of the cultural tradition of Oriyas. Accordingly, the authors have reconstructed the legend and attached meaning to it. The same legend thus, assumes multiple meanings, depending on the context in which it is reconstructed. Purushottama Das for example, in the 17th century, made the Kanchi-Kaveri legend a victorious story of Vaishnavism symbolised in Lord Jagannath, but Ramashankar Ray in the late 19th century, identified Lord Jagannath with Oriya's fate and glory, at a time when the Gajapati kings were in deep trouble. On the other hand, Godavarish Mishra employed the legend, bereft of religious meanings, to highlight the valour and power of Oriyas, at a time when the image of the past was very crucial in their search for a distinct identity. Under colonialism, when Oriyas were being increasingly marginalised, it was necessary to rediscover the Oriya past in an exalted fashion. Godavarish rediscovered the past by projecting Oriya power from the Gajapati days. The legend was stripped of its religious matrix and made to highlight Oriya power and glory in a secular perspective. Thus, each time the meaning of the legend changed, but with each meaning, it assumed the potency of asserting the uniqueness of the Oriya *jati*¹, whether its religious tradition or its *jatiya* virtues.

History as a definite indicator of Oriya identity came to be the predominant theme of Satyavadi literature. It refers to the writings of the group of Oriya writers, poets and scholars who were associated with the Satyavadi School which was established by the great Oriya nationalist leader, Gopabandhu Das in 1909 A.D., at a place called Sakhigopal in the Puri district.

¹ Jati in Oriya connotes race, clan, nationality, community, caste and a host of other meanings. Hence, in Oriya, Jati has context-specific usages. The Oriya translation of 'national' is 'jatiya' which implies Oriya identity. But Oriya 'jatiyata' should not be used in the same sense as Indian nationalism is used. It only means Oriya identity.

The close associates of Satyavadi who were involved with this School were not only the champions of the Oriya cause but also great Indian nationalists. So in the Satyavadi literature, though history and tradition were frequently invoked, the Indian dimension of Oriya identity was not left out, there was an attempt to cross national boundaries in order to reach universal humanism. This broad ideological position of the Satyavadi litterateurs was based on their understanding that Orissa was not separate from India or the rest of humanity. Gopabandhu declared in the Cuttack session of the Utkal Union Conference (UUC) in 1919 A.D.: 'We have to remember that we are first men, then Indian and finally Oriya. Distinctiveness of the Oriya race could be realized only in the context of broad Indian nationalism and liberal universal humanism'.¹

Gopabandhu Das (1877-1928 A.D.) extensively used materials from the history of Orissa and reconstructed history to project a distinct Oriya identity. His poetry collection, 'Abakasha Chinta' (1912 A.D.) contains a record of the achievements of great Oriyas in the past but without a critical form of historiography. Some of its poems eulogise their achievements in exalted terms on the basis of what was in circulation among Oriya literati. In 'Bhakta Kabibara..' for example Gopabandhu compares, the composer of the Oriya Bhagavata, Jagannath Dasa with Vyasadev, the author of the Sanskrit Mahabharat and equates him with the incarnation of Lord Vishnu because he spread deep spiritual knowledge in Orissa.² In yet another poem, 'Balarama Dasa', the two medieval Panchasakha poets, Jagannath Dasa and Balarama Dasa are depicted as incarnations of Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra respectively, who according to the Kanchi-Kaveri tradition, went to fight against the enemy of Oriyas. These two medieval poets spread the message of

¹Gopabandhu Rachanavali, ed., S. Rajaguru (2vols, Bhubaneswar, 1980), II, p. 189

²Gopabandhu Rachanavali, ed., R. Gadnayak (2vols., Bhubaneswar, 1980), I, p. 9

Dharma and Karma.¹. In the poems devoted to the great Oriya poets like Sarala Dasa and Upendra Bhanja and the Kings such as Anangabhimadeva (1211-38 A.D.) and Purushottamadeva (1467-97 A.D.), Gopabandhu has dwelt on their specific contributions to the making of a great, proud Oriya *jati*. The same tendency to uncritically glorify the past was also reflected in Gopabandhu's treatment of ancient monuments and relics of Orissa. For example, in 'Khandagiri Shikhare', the Khandagiri hill and in 'Binsa Satabdira Prathama Dina Barabati Darshan', the Barabati fort are rediscovered as symbolising the glory, tradition and prosperity of the Oriya *jati*. Ancient monuments apart, sometimes it is the Orissan landscape which Gopabandhu fuses with past glory. Take for example, his famous nature poem, 'Rela upare Chilika Darshan' or Viewing the Chilika from the Train where the lake Chilika has been made the repository of past glories in maritime trade.

In Gopabandhu's poems, both the great historical figures and the ancient monuments and relics, are larger-than-life figures so that a grandiose view of history is produced, but Gopabandhu is not oblivious of the link between Oriya destiny and India. He is aware of the Indian element in Oriya identity. Like several other elements, the Indian element forms a crucial part of Oriya identity because of obvious geographical and historical reasons. This is clearly brought out in his long poem, 'Dharmapada' (1923-24 A.D.), where history has been reconstructed on the basis of the existing Dharmapada legend. According to this legend, the twelve hundred architects and sculptors engaged by the Ganga King Narasimhadeva I (1238-1265 A.D.) to construct the Sun-temple at Konark failed to finish the top of the temple, but Dharmapada, the twelve-year old son of the chief sculptor, Bisu Maharana who happened to visit his father completed the work. The artists were afraid that on hearing about Dharmapada's brilliance, the King might behead them considering them as useless and incompetent. Dharmapada realised the fear of his fellow artists

¹Ibid. ,p.12

and so in order to save them, he jumped into the sea sacrificing his life, so that the King could not know who had really finished the work.

Gopabandhu made Dharmapada the symbol of the brilliance, bravery and self-sacrifice of the Oriya race. In the moral dilemma, 'whether the lives of twelve hundred artists are important or that of the son of Bisu Maharana is important', the son Dharmapada solved the dilemma in favour of the artists because 'they were his kinsmen and the necklace of the whole community of artists'.¹ He finally jumped into the sea for the sake of his kinsmen, his countrymen and for the sake of the glorious artistic tradition of Orissa. Thus, the Oriya boy Dharmapada becomes the symbol of sacrifice. Though the historicity of the Dharmapada episode is doubtful, Gopabandhu has tried to historicise it by giving to Dharmapada the national responsibility of finishing the top of the Konark temple. Dharmapada finished the task and in the process transcended the confines of the narrow 'self' and became the saviour of the artistic tradition. For Gopabandhu, Oriya greatness is embodied in Dharmapada. He imagines that like Dharmapada, fellow Oriyas should sacrifice their personal and family interests for the cause of the Indian nation. Every Oriya must develop a 'Dharmapada identity' so that he or she can relate to the broader Indian identity, that is, become a part of the great Indian heritage and tradition. In Gopabandhu's imagination, to work for the cause of India is a necessary component of Oriya identity. By implication, by bringing the Indian element into his narrative, which indicates his anti-colonial consciousness, he advocates that Oriyas must fight against colonialism.

Two other Satyavadi poets, Nilakantha Das (1884-1967 A.D.) and Godavarish Mishra (1886-1956 A.D.) are more Oriya-centric than Gopabandhu Das, in their thematic treatment. Nilakantha's *kavya*, 'Konarke' (1919 A.D.), combining legend with history, reconstructs the story of the Konark Sun-temple and the Mayadevi temple situated within it. While dwelling on the

¹Gopabandhu Das, Dharmapada (7th edn., Cuttack, 1950), p.33

history of the Konark temple, he has traced the rise and fall of its creator, the Oriya *jati*, with an uncontrolled sentimentalism towards the past. The art, sculpture and maritime trade of ancient and medieval Orissa have left their indelible marks on Konark. Nilakantha says:

Your forefathers will descend from heaven
in a moment, and will gladly lead you ahead.
You'll see the artistic temple,
which could not be destroyed even by
the victory of Muhammad of Ghor.
You'll see how the hands of your forefathers
have created history in the beautiful sculptures.¹

Konark is still a living reality in spite of the dilapidation wrought by natural causes. Nilakantha could read the Oriya past on the walls of the Konark temple, but the glorious past was already lost. Yet, Nilakantha makes Konark central to that lost glory and perceives in it the resonance of a vibrant, glorious past.

In the second part of 'Konarke', Nilakantha has used the existing Mayadevi legend to account for the construction of both the Sun and Mayadevi temples at Konark, thus revising the history of their construction.² According to the legend, King Anangabhimadeva's son Prince Narasimhadeva(1234-45 A.D.), fell in love with Mayadevi, the daughter of a feudal lord. He could not marry her however, as he had to marry a Kashmiri princess, because of his father's earlier commitment. However, after the marriage, Narasimhadeva's wife and Mayadevi developed a liking for each other when they met. Unfortunately, Mayadevi did not live long, she died soon after their meeting. At the death of Mayadevi, both the husband and the wife, Narasimhadeva and the Kashmiri princess were deeply shocked. They

¹Nilakantha Das, Konarke (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1947), p.20

²Ibid., pp.67-238

performed her last rites and paid their last tribute to her. At this point, Narasimhadeva felt that Mayadevi was telling him he was the Sun-god born on the earth and Mayadevi and the Kashmiri princess were none other than the Sun-god's two wives Chhaya and Sangya, respectively. This metaphysical feeling afterwards prompted him to build the Sun-temple and Mayadevi temple at Konark. Thus, according to Nilakantha's imagination, the memory of celestial consortship between the Sun-god (Narasimhadeva) and Chhaya (Mayadevi) was perpetuated by the Oriya king Narasimhadeva, who was himself no other than the Sun-god, in His earthly form. The construction of the temples at Konark is thus seen as the fulfilment of a divine plan. The narrative Nilakantha has constructed is remarkable because it fuses history with legend, in a bid to assert the unique nature of Konark.

History is the memory of a people, a discourse in which they retell to themselves their own past. It is central to any construction of identity, but this retelling, inspired by memory, is not always in conformity with the facts; it is sometimes determined by legend and cultural tradition. Nilakantha's depiction of Konark is largely based on legend and cultural tradition although history provides the background. It becomes an effective narrative on the past which could inspire in Oriyas a collective sense of history.

Similarly, Nilakantha's other kavya, 'Kharavela'¹ (1920 A.D.) also reconstructs the history of the Chedi King Kharavela of Kalinga (2nd century B.C.), again with the help of a legend. According to the poem, when Kharavela was leading an expedition against King Dattim of the Bakhtar State, he fell in love with Dhusi, the princess of the kingdom of Bazir. Dattim was harassing foreign merchants including those from Orissa. In his fight against Dattim, Kharavela was helped by Dhusi who in disguise had raised an army of farmers. In the ensuing battle, Dattim was defeated and killed and the poem ended with the marriage between Kharavela and Dhusi. Delving into both

¹For the full text, see, Nilakantha Das, Nilakantha Granthavali (Cuttack, 1963), I.

history and legend, Nilakantha draws an image of Kharavela characterised by bravery, patriotism and love. Being the King of Utkal, Kharavela led the expedition as far as Afghanistan because his fellow Oriya merchants were being tortured and harassed. He was not only successful in his mission but also won the heart of a princess (Dhusi) and married her. Nilakantha's poem is all about Oriya bravery which is represented in the person of Kharavela. Arguably, this is about the recognition of the prowess of the Oriya *jati*. The recognition comes through the victory of Kharavela against enemies as far away as Afghanistan and his marriage to the princess of a far-off kingdom situated on the western bank of the Sindhu river.

For Oriya authors, the last phase of the independent Hindu rule in Orissa was inspiring and exciting. Mukundadeva (1560-1568 A.D.), the last independent Hindu King captured their imagination as an embodiment of bravery and patriotism. Godavarish Mishra in his play, 'Mukundadeva', named after this great Oriya King, glorifies him as an invincible Oriya hero. Mukundadeva, during his reign, was confronted with an invasion by the Bengal Nawab Suleiman Karrani in 1568 A.D.. He could not resist it as he fell a victim to the treachery of some Oriya feudal lords and was killed. Godavarish has treated the Nawab's invasion of Orissa within the framework of a battle between the two enemies- Oriyas and foreigners and not as a battle between the two communities, Hindus and Muslims. Perhaps that is why, in the play, the author makes the Afghan invaders recognise the bravery and generosity of Oriya soldiers. Mukundadeva is described by the Bengal Nawab as 'the bright crown of the Utkal land'.¹ Mukundadeva's fight against the Bengal invaders was Oriya's *jatiya*, the national struggle against their common enemy, but it was bereft of any religious connotation. Godavarish thus highlights the power and valour of Mukundadeva who was praised by Oriyas and foreigners alike for his remarkable bravery and humanity. The author has

¹Ibid., p. 622

deliberately toned down the religious differences and emphasized the martial spirit and virtues which the Oriya militia, including the King, possessed.

Outside the Satyavadi group, another poet Chintamani Mohanty (1867-1943 A.D.) has also glorified Mukundadeva's spirit of bravery and sacrifice. In the context of Mukundadeva's death and his wife's heroic sacrifice, Mohanty writes that, 'bravery is mixed up with soil, sky, wind, sea, stones and charms, in this land'.¹ Mohanty discovers Mukundadeva's bravery spread everywhere in Orissa, meaning that it has been transformed to a legacy which would stay on in the Oriya mind for ages to come.

Buxi Jagabandhu, another great hero like Mukundadeva also sacrificed his life in his struggle against the British rule in the late 19th century. Godavarish's novel, 'Atharasaha Satara' depicts Jagabandhu's heroism in the *Paik* Rebellion of 1817 A.D. against the British. It not only glorifies Jagabandhu's heroic deeds but also celebrates the glorious martial tradition of *Paikas*, the traditional militia of Orissa. Godavarish rediscovers the *Paik* tradition of Orissa as an unbroken continuity for 'even after Jagabandhu, new actors would appear and new life would pervade throughout villages, fields and mountains'.² In other words, Godavarish finds the presence of an eternal spirit of bravery and sacrifice in Oriyas which, for him, is an essential element of Oriya identity.

Since the present offered very little scope for sustaining the *jatiya* pride, Oriya authors had to delve into the past and invoke historic figures. Whether it is Purushottamadeva, or Mukundadeva or Buxi Jagabandhu, all are used by them to evoke the memory of a heroic past. Though most of the time, their account is exaggerated and subjective without any pretence of historical truth,

¹Chintamani Granthavali, ed., U. Mohanty (Bhadrak, 1938), I, p. 387

²Godavarish Mishra, Atharasaha Satara (New edn., Cuttack, 1975), pp. 245-246

it conjures up an image of a glorious past of which Oriyas could feel proud.

Within the Satyavadi group, the sentimentalism of Godavarish and Nilakantha towards Orissa's past is also shared by the historian Krupasindhu Mishra (1887-1926 A.D.). His works are particularly marked by an emotional and exaggerated ardour for the past. For him, the Ganga and the Suryavamsi period is the most glorious epoch in the history of Orissa.¹ He describes the Barabati fort at Cuttack and the Sun temple at Konark as the symbols of Oriya glory and heritage. In the book, 'Barabati Durga' (fort), he describes the fort as embodying Oriya achievements in the past. He hopes that each and every stone of the Barabati fort will serve as the base for a 'palace of Oriya national life'.² It was once the seat of power in Orissa and many fierce battles had been fought here. It is, in a sense a living monument to the rise and fall of Oriya *jati*. Similarly for Mishra, the Konark Sun temple is the pillar of Oriya glory.³ It represents the climax of Oriya art that had evolved through the ages. Its artistic excellence and the human labour and sacrifice that had gone into its making, symbolise the greatness of the Oriya *jati*.

Obsession with the past however, has not prevented the Satyavadi authors' vision of a better future. Gopabandhu Das for example, in a poem 'Baliyatra Sandhyare Mahanadi Tire' (1906 A.D.) or On the bank of the Mahanadi in the evening of Baliyatra, is optimistic that as by the logic of the cycle of rise and fall, the Barabati fort would again rise, regain its lost glory and give birth to new heroes.⁴ Gopabandhu's rejection of the modern concept of time as a linear framework and recognition of the traditional cyclic

¹Krupasindhu Mishra, Utkal Itihasa (Cuttack, 1979), p.104

²Krupasindhu Mishra, Barabati Durga (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1918), p. 62

³Krupasindhu Mishra, Konark (3rd edn., Cuttack, 1977), p.279

⁴Gopabandhu Das, 'Baliyatra Sandhyare Mahanadi Tire', Mukura, Vol.I, No.8, Nov.-Dec., 1906

framework of time, comes from his optimism for the restoration of the lost Oriya glory. The present misery was temporary; the manifold evils affecting Oriyas would disappear and the quintessential Oriya would be restored.

The great playwright Aswini Kumar Ghosh (1892-1962 A.D.), while following the Satyavadi tradition of reconstructing history, has reinterpreted and rehabilitated certain historical characters. His plays 'Konark', 'Govinda Bidyadhar' and 'Kesari Ganga', treat a particular historical character in a new perspective so that a glorified view of history is projected. 'Konark'¹ (1927 A.D.), based on Gopabandhu's poem 'Dharmapada' identifies the human Dharmapada with the Sun temple at Konark and treats Dharmapada as more real and important. The Konark temple, made of stones and bricks is brittle and momentary, but Dharmapada who completed it, is real and eternal. With this poetic insight, Aswini Kumar emphasizes the artistic achievement and supreme sacrifice of Dharmapada and transforms him to the real 'Konark' of the Oriya *jati*. This Konark would never die; it would survive all the vicissitudes of time and clime and his spirit of excellence and sacrifice would continue to inspire Oriyas. So instead of the Konark temple which now stands dilapidated, it is Dharmapada, the embodiment of Konark who symbolises Oriya *jatiya* glory and hauteur. Earlier, the Konark temple used to be presented as a symbol of Oriya's national glory, but in its place Aswini Kumar substitutes Dharmapada.

In two other plays, Aswini Kumar has rehabilitated some historical characters who had been denigrated by historical scholarship. By way of rehabilitation, he reconstructed new history, aimed at glorifying the Orissan past. In the play, 'Govinda Bidyadhar'² (1921-22 A.D.) for example, the Bhoi King Govinda Bidyadhar (1542-49 A.D.) was portrayed as a loyalist and great supporter of the Gajapati Prataparudradeva, but according to history, he was a

¹Aswini Kumar Ghosh, Aswini Kumar Granthavali (2 vols., Cuttack, 1963), I, 865-908

²Ibid., pp. 675-737

traitor and a greedy minister who usurped the Gajapati throne after murdering Prataparudradeva's two minor sons, Kalluyadeva and Kathruiyadeva. Aswini Kumar sets him free from this accusation. In stead, he portrays Bidyadhar as a great patriot, an ideal minister, who sacrificed his son and daughter-in-law for the cause of Orissa even though he was ill-treated by Prataparudradeva's family. The character of Govinda Bidyadhar is thus projected as that of a great hero and patriot for whom the interests of the motherland were more important than the lives of his own relations.

Similarly, Aswini Kumar's one more play, 'Kesari Ganga'¹ (1927 A.D.) rehabilitates the character of Nandika, the daughter of a Soma King, called Suvarnakesari.² According to the legend, Nandika was a very selfish, pleasure-seeking princess, who betrayed her father because of her love for Orissa's enemy Chodagangadeva (1078-1150 A.D.), the founder of the Ganga rule in Orissa. Aswini Kumar transformed her into an ideal character who ultimately killed herself to bring an end to the battle between her father and the lover. According to the author, had Nandika and Chodaganga been united, both the kingdoms would have been one and Orissa could have had lasting peace and stability.³ Chodaganga however, did not accept Nandika, but rather branded her as a bad character. There was no other way left to stop the continuing battle, so Nandika killed herself with this intention, 'to stop the epidemic of war and to unite the king with the king and the servant with the master'.⁴ She died 'for the welfare of the motherland, the king and his subjects, for the elimination of the root-cause of the battle and removal of blame from the Soma dynasty'.⁵ According to the story, Chodagangadeva attacked Orissa

¹Ibid., pp. 795-864

²The historicity of Suvarnakesari is yet to be ascertained.

³Ghosh, op.cit., p. 807

⁴Ibid., p. 861

⁵Ibid.

because Suvarnakasari had humiliated the former's emissary who had come with the marriage proposal. Nandika offered herself to Chodaganga to stop the battle and establish peace. Chodaganga failed to understand her noble intention and did not accept her, but she was determined to stop the battle, so she killed herself. The well-being of fellow subjects and the motherland was her prime consideration in that critical situation and she did not hesitate to sacrifice herself. Thus in the hands of Aswini Kumar, the Nandika episode, from being a legend of love-lorn heart and treachery, was transmuted to an historical legacy of the love, duty and sacrifice of Oriyas.

Thematically, Aswini Kumar's plays might lack historicity, but what is important is his attempt to recreate a 'history' in which Oriyas could take pride and discover something unique and specific in their past. This has been precisely the intention of the authors so far discussed. Arguably, this is why they look at the past sentimentally and romantically, without any objective criticism.

During this time, Tarinicharan Rath (1883-1922 A.D.) wrote his famous novel, 'Annapurna'¹(1920 A.D.) which delves into the past of Orissa and reconstructs the history of the Gajapati Prataparudradeva (1497-1540 A.D.). Annapurna alias Jaganmohini (Tuka), is the daughter of Prataparudra who repeatedly fought with the ruler of the Vijaynagar empire, Krishnadev Ray. After one such battle, a truce was signed according to which Prataparudra had to give Annapurna in marriage to Krishnadev and surrender to him the southern part of Orissa. Annapurna had to marry Krishnadev against her wish, so initially they failed to consummate their marriage. However, ultimately, she realised her mistake and the husband and wife were united. The Annapurna-Krishnadev episode is not fictitious, it is a historical fact.² It is put into a novel

¹Tarinicharan Granthavali, compiler, B.Rath (Berhampur, 1980)

²The historicity of this episode is proved by Chakradhar Mohapatra. See, his, Utkal Itihasara Eka Agyata Adhyaya (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1989), pp.39-43

form by Rath to glorify the character of the Oriya princess, first as the daughter of Prataparudra and secondly, as the wife of Krishnadev. As the daughter, she is portrayed as an ideal Oriya girl, obedient to her father. She also inherits the martial tradition of her Gajapati dynasty. As a wife, after initial years of mental confusion, she became an ideal wife and at her insistence Krishnadev devoted his time and energy to the welfare of the subjects, the restoration of ancient monuments and other improvements.¹ Annapurna had married Krishnadev with the noble intention that the marriage could stop the war and save the lives of the people of Orissa. After marriage, she became a devoted wife and contributed to her husband's success. Rath, in the character of Annapurna, projects the picture of an ideal Oriya woman. Annapurna represents the woman whose main concern is the pursuit of their *dharma*, sanctioned by traditions and *sashtras*. She played her role successfully both as daughter and wife. Rath thus, makes her a role-model and in the process the past becomes glorified and inspiring for the all Oriya women.

Authors have invoked not only medieval Orissa in their interpretation of history; they have also looked for pride and glory in ancient Orissa, a region then known differently. Kalindi Charan Panigrahi (1901-1991 A.D.) for example, invokes ancient Orissa and its ever-lasting impact on the Mauryan emperor Ashok of the 3rd century B.C.. He depicts Ashok's expedition to Kalinga (Orissa) and his subsequent change of heart, from cruelty and violence to peace and piety. His play, 'Priyadassi'²(1933 A.D.) depicts Ashok's heroic pursuits in his Kalinga expedition (261 B.C.), but at the same time glorifies Kalinga which changed Ashok from *Chandashoka* (Ashok, the Violent) to *Dharmashoka* (Ashok, the Virtuous). The Kalinga war convinced Ashok of the futility and barbarism of bloodshed and made him realise the eternal values of peace and love, so for Ashok, the Kalinga war became his last military

¹Tarinicharan Granthavali, op.cit., p.192

²K.C.Panigrahi, Priyadassi, (Re.edn., Cuttack, 1980)

expedition. Thus, though he came to physically conquer Kalinga, his heart was at last conquered by Kalinga. In the play, Panigrahi also created an imaginary Oriya prince, Jaypala, who was made to sacrifice his life for Kalinga even heedless of the love of Ashok's daughter Sanghamitra.¹ Although the change of Ashok's heart and his subsequent withdrawal from further war is still historically contested and the character of Jaypala is an 'invented' one, Panigrahi has glorified them in the play in order to glorify ancient Orissa. Kalinga's influence on Ashok has been exaggerated to sanctify the land as has the character of Jaypal been idealised to show the spirit of duty among Oriyas. Here both the land and the people are glorified. This is symbolic of creating a glorious past which differentiated the Oriya *jati* from the rest.

An author does not create in the void, his urge to create is concerned with a definite pattern of experience and his creation is ultimately fed on the nature of the milieu in which he lives. Glorification of the past, or the construction of new history by an author, is primarily an impulsive reaction to the existing context. It is immaterial whether the 'new history' matches the 'real past'; 'new history' assumes meaning when contextualised in the milieu where the author lives. In the late 19th and early 20th century, under the impact of colonialism, Oriya authors reacted to the needs of the time to discover their roots, in order to assert their identity. When there was a humiliating present in which they could take no pride, it was quite natural to look back to the past and select and reconstruct 'history', though their past was irretrievably lost. They did a selective appropriation and obliteration so that the virtues and strengths of the Oriya past were projected and in the process made Oriyas conscious of a separate cultural identity.

In the same way, the traditions of Orissa also came to be used in the writings of Oriya authors. One example is the martial tradition of Orissa which is embodied in the *Paikas*. They were divided into three ranks and were

¹Ibid., p. 92

distinguished by the names taken from their occupations or the weapons which they used. These were: *Paharis*, who carried a large shield and a typical sword called *khanda*; *Banuas*, who used shield and sword and *Dhenkias*, who were armed with bows, arrows and a sword.¹ *Paikas* had once marched triumphantly along the eastern coast from the Ganges to the Godavari. Though the days of their glory were long past, their tradition had not died out. Their spirit of bravery, sacrifice and commitment manifested itself in the *Paik* Rebellion of 1817 A.D.. This *Paik* tradition, as imagined by Godavarish Mishra in his novel, 'Atharasaha Satara' is an unbroken continuity. This continuity is asserted more categorically by the poet Godavarish Mohapatra (1899-1965 A.D.), in his poem 'Paikara Yuddhayatra' (1918 A.D.), meaning a *Paika* military expedition. Here, not only are *Paikas* glorified but the entire Oriya *jati* is projected as 'fearless, invincible and world-conquering'.² Their forefathers were also imbued with the martial spirit. In this way, Mohapatra asserts the martial superiority of Oriyas, for him 'Oriya' and martial tradition are inseparable.

Paikas as a warrior class, had fought many battles to safeguard the freedom of Orissa and so it is natural that *Paikas* are romanticised in Oriya literature. Aswini Kumar Ghosh, for example, glorifies the *Paika* community in his play 'Paikapua'³ (1933 A.D.). During the reign of the Ganga King Raja Raja III (1198-1211 A.D.)⁴, the *Pala* King Laxmansen of Bengal took shelter in Orissa after being defeated and driven away (1204-05 A.D.) by the Afghan general Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji. The Oriya *Paikas* fought valiantly against the

¹J.K.Jagdev, 'Ethnic Participation of Paiks in the Cultural Evolution of Orissa', O.H.R.J., Vol.XXXX, No.1-4,1995

²Godavarish Mohapatra, Godavarish Lekhavali (Cuttack, 1978), I, p.122

³Ghosh, op.cit., pp.1085-1113

⁴But Ghosh has mistaken Anangabhimadeva III for Raj Raja III.

Afghans in defending Laxmansen. This even won the appreciation of the Afghan Commander Siraj, who praised *Paikas* as monarchists, liberal, intelligent and tricky and described them as 'the real pillar of the Oriya *jati*'.¹ *Paikas* were glorified not only for their heroism but also for their intelligence and loyalty. Thus, in the hands of Aswini Kumar, a tradition which is already dead is not rejected, but employed for the glorification of the past.

Another similar tradition is the maritime trade which had brought economic strength and prosperity to Oriyas in the past. This tradition was celebrated by the great novelist Kanhucharan Mohanty (1906-1994 A.D.) in his novel, 'Baliraja'² (1926-27 A.D.). It is the story of an enterprising Oriya, Mania who colonised Bali, an island in the Indian ocean and promoted the maritime interests of merchants. Mania became the King of Bali and came to be known as Baliraja. He suppressed pirates and facilitated the maritime activities of Oriya merchants. Mania came to symbolise the glorious maritime tradition of Orissa and its resistance to all obstacles. Thematically, 'Baliraja' is an imaginative construction, but it is based on an historical tradition. In the past, Orissa had rich maritime relations with far-off places like Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Bali and even Persia and Oriyas had established colonies in Java, Sumatra and Bali. These places still have the remnants of Oriya culture. On the island of Bali, now a part of modern Indonesia, there are many Hindu inhabitants who still call themselves 'klings' or descendants of the Kalingas. Kanhucharan employs this glorious tradition to assert valour, dynamism and prosperity of Oriyas in the past. The character of Mania embodied this tradition. His colonisation of Bali and the subsequent promotion of the maritime trade of Orissa in an imaginary past might not have any historical truth, but the tradition which it depicted, was a reality. Kanhucharan perceives it as an important component of Orissan history. Since Mania is an 'invented'

¹Ibid., p.1099

²See, Kahnucharan Mohanty, Kahnucharan Granthavali (Cuttack, 1966), I

character, he can be fitted to any period of history as embodying this tradition. The invention of a character such as Baliraja assumed relevance at a time when Oriyas were searching for their roots in a future political state of their own. It could be said that Bali can be seen here as a metaphor for modern Orissa, a single home for all the scattered Oriyas, which is anticipated in Kanhucharan's novel.

Oriya authors were not only consoled by obsolescent traditions, they tried to rediscover and add 'essences' to the traditions which were still actively followed and a living experience of the Oriya community. Gopalchandra Praharaj (1874-1945 A.D.) and Chintamani Mohanty invoked two such living traditions and used them as characteristics of Oriya identity. Praharaj shows the tradition of the *Bhagavata Tungi* (room) as integral to rural life and considers it as a strong Oriya identity-marker, in his long essay, 'Bhagavata Tungire Sandhya'¹(1903 A.D.). The *Bhagavata Tungi* is a room or small house situated in almost every village of Orissa. Originally, it was meant for villagers who gathered there in the evening to listen to the recitation of the *Panchasakha* poet, Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata , after a day's hard work. In practice however, the *Bhagavata Tungi* has been transformed into a multi-purpose village institution - the library, the community hall and the school, all combined into one. For Praharaj, the *Bhagavata Tungi* is the centre-stage of rural life. The manifold uses of the *Bhagavata Tungi*, including its role as a seat of daily gathering of villagers, make it central to the village life of Orissa. The 'Tungi tradition' may still be seen in many villages, a typical self-perpetuating cultural feature. Praharaj describes how village folk gather there to discuss important issues concerning Orissa and Oriyas. The people gathered generally include the village priest, the village school-master and the money-lender. Praharaj says how once the village community discussed and debated in the *Tungi* ideas and perceptions of others about Oriyas. In their

¹Gopalchandra Praharaj, Bhagavata Tungire Sandhya (4th edn. , Cuttack, 1949)

discussion, they opposed others' misconceptions about Orissa and Oriyas. For example, the negative stereotypes formed by the British and Bengalis about Oriyas and their deity, Lord Jagannath were strongly contested in the gathering.¹ In a sense, Praharaj has tried to build up an Oriya critique of the hegemonic attitudes of the British and Bengalis.

On the other hand, Chintamani Mohanty (1867-1943 A.D.) highly appreciates and rediscovers the *pakhal* (watered rice) eating tradition of Oriyas. He describes *pakhal* as the most valuable possession of Oriyas. His poem, 'Pakhal', celebrates it as the nectar and as the unifier of the Oriya jati from the Ganges to the Godavari. In his words:

Pakhal, the life-giving nectar of Utkal,
can at once remove hunger, thirst and fatigue.
Sweet, cool and nourishing,
like the chiding of a wise man.
It is the great wealth of the Oriya race,
bearing super-human strength in its water,
which raised the glorious race aloft
by making Ganga to Godavari into one unit.²

Pakhal is seen as the symbol of '*Odiatva*' or Oriyaness and as such its presence is felt in all the activities and achievements of Oriyas. If *Pakhal* is not respected then, '*Odiatva*' would be destroyed. Its water is imagined as having super-human strength which had raised the status of Oriya *jati*. Mohanty, by imagining its existence behind every activity of Oriyas, makes it a strong mark of identity. It may be pointed out that *Pakhal* is also offered daily to Lord Jagannath as '*prasad*'. To Mohanty, *Pakhal* was instrumental in creating the glories of the Oriya *jati* in the past and in the present it would hopefully act in the same fashion. Thus, according to Mohanty, *Pakhal* is specific to the Oriya culture and it has the power to uplift Oriya status.

¹Ibid., p.103

²Chintamani Mohanty, '*Pakhal*', Mukura, Vol.XII, Nos.8&9, 1917-18

Traditions are important in cultural self-assertion because they are community-affairs. They represent the unique nature of a culture and hence, the identity of a community develops from them. All the traditions discussed above highlight one or other aspect of the Oriyas by which they are differentiated from the rest. The authors, in their search for identity, have explored the quintessential Oriya in these traditions intrinsic to Oriya cultural identity. It may be martial spirit, maritime enterprise, *Tungi*-based rural life or *Pakhal*-eating, but all have that which is uniquely Oriya.

We have seen how Oriya authors relied on history and tradition in their search for a distinct Oriya identity, but their treatment of history and tradition lacked objectivity, without any scientific or critical outlook which is the hallmark of modern historiography. Consequently, their literature was coloured by personal sentimental attitudes towards the past. The historical writings of Oriya authors during the period, were marked by the same tendency. For example, Jagabandhu Singh's (1876-1944 A.D.) 'Prachina Utkal' (1929-30 A.D.) though an historical work, makes Orissa history more a subjective and interpretative narrative of the past than a factual account. He frequently invokes epics and Puranas to prove or illustrate his points. He also borrows from the Madalapanji, (the temple chronicle of the Jagannath temple at Puri), as source material, though some of its information is now found to be incorrect. The result of using such source materials is the construction of a history which lacks any objectivity. Singh's assumptions are marked by imagination, eulogy and subjectivity rather than by objectivity and historical analysis. For example, he assumes that because the name Utkal figures in the Mahabharata, which is itself a very ancient composition, the kingdom of Utkal must have been in existence for at least 5,000 years¹. Again he observes, 'the Jagannath cult has been a universal cult irrespective of caste, creed and even religion !'² This sort of assumption may not be historically correct, but what is

¹Jagabandhu Singh, Prachina Utkal (Berhampur, 1964) , p.10

²Ibid. , p.235

important is that it interprets and communicates the values of the past and relates them to the present. At the outset of the book, Singh expresses his anguish at the dismemberment of the Oriya-speaking regions and proposes to find out its causes and consequences. For him the past was a golden age when the Oriya *jati* had produced remarkable achievements in all fields including religion, art, sculpture and trade. Present day Oriyas could have a feeling of cultural superiority based on the strength of their past even though blighted by the predicament of division and subordination. Singh even asserted that Oriyas once had super-natural powers !¹ The past, thus interpreted, becomes a golden age which is now irretrievably lost. It provides a supposedly rich and glorious ancestry to Oriyas.

Engaging himself in the writing of patriotic history, Singh has fallen a victim to his own perceived cultural inferiority. He feels that Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet received Nobel prize as a result of publicity, whereas there are qualitatively greater literary works in Oriya.² He claims that had Upendra Bhanja, Abhimanyu Samantasimhara and other medieval Oriya poets been translated, each of them would have got a Nobel prize ! Aware of the political decline and the cultural defilement of Orissa during his time, Singh perhaps intended to raise the morale of Oriyas by claiming their superiority in the cultural field. At the same time, he also opposed the misinterpretation by some outside scholars of Orissan history and their attempt to appropriate its glorious achievements.³ He discards their writings as childish. It is plausible that the entire historiographic exercise of Singh was a consequence of his recognition of the fact that there was no written chronological ancient history of Oriyas. He undertook this exercise with a conviction that the ancient history of a *jati* (in this case, Oriyas) is its prized

¹Ibid. ,pp . 93-94

²Ibid. ,p . 212

³Ibid. ,p . 4

possession and the main foundation of its future prosperity.¹ Therefore, for Singh, the utility of history-writing lies in communicating and interpreting to the present how glorious and unique was the past. To this he has tended sometimes to be chauvinist in asserting the unique nature of the Oriya vis-a-vis 'Others'.

While invoking and glorifying the positive aspects of the Oriya past, authors have not left out its negative aspects. Identity cannot always be defined in terms of positive elements only. Identity per se, includes both positive and negative elements. Negative elements can also be used in the construction of identity. For example, Bira Bikrama Dev's play 'Utkal Durdasha' or the Misfortunes of Utkal (1904 A.D.), lists certain vices such as selfishness, lethargy, prodigality, fear, disease and ignorance which, according to the author, were responsible for the misfortunes of Orissa.² Modelled on the famous Hindi playwright Bharatendu Harishchandra's drama Bharata Durdasha, it personifies these vices and claims they are responsible for bringing misfortune to Orissa. According to Bikram Dev these vices or misfortunes could not be a permanent feature of Oriya life, rather they constituted a temporary phase which would soon be replaced by the original Oriya virtues such as knowledge, prosperity, civility, perseverance, broad-mindedness, self-esteem, truthfulness and mental strength.³ The negative elements of Oriya identity, as perceived by Bikram Dev, would be short-lived, but to him, they explained the present state of affairs in Orissa.

The novelist Kanhucharan Mohanty tries to bring out the historically-embedded negative elements of Oriyas in his novel, 'Ha Anna' (1933-34 A.D.). 'Ha Anna' is based on the devastating impact of the Great Famine of 1866 A.D.. It is the story of two lovers, Jagu and Uma who during the Famine, were

¹Ibid., pp. 5-6

²See, Bira Bikrama Dev, Utkal Durdasha (Cuttack, 1904)

³Ibid., p. 4

separated, but were finally reunited after many ordeals. Mohanty has used the symbolism of famine to illustrate the negative elements within Oriyas. He attributes their origin to the days of Sri Chaitanya and Ramananda, the great medieval saints who by their religious orthodoxy and sermons, injected a pessimistic outlook into Oriyas. He laments:

It rendered Oriyas impotent and demilitarised; life, property and everything mundane was seen as unreal; only Lord Krshna became real; so there was no need to acquire land or property, no need to fight with the enemy; on the contrary, it was more desirable to spend the whole of life chanting the name of Lord Krshna/ Jagannath.¹

According to Mohanty, this sort of pessimism made Oriyas forget their martial traditions and glorious history. This shocked the author and so he became hesitant to accept the historicity of the glorious achievements of the great Oriya kings such as Kharavela, Anangabhimadeva and Purushottamadeva. He wonders, 'Perhaps, Oriyas' history is false and it is nothing but legend; if that is not so, why are Oriyas now fearful, cowardly and poor !'²

What one can argue here is that Mohanty has used in his novel 'linguistic relativity', in the construction of the reality of the pre-famine Orissa. It suggests that the structure of language tricks one into a certain way of perceiving reality, with the implication that awareness of this trickery will enable one to see the world with fresh insight.³ Mohanty's narrative, couched in negative expressions, makes him perceive the past in a disdainful, doubtful and pessimistic manner. Yet, Mohanty does not negate history, but expresses his anguish at the decline of Oriyas. His narrative does not suggest any denial,

¹Kanhucharan Mohanty, op.cit., p.458

²Ibid.

³The concept of 'linguistic relativity' is borrowed from B.L.Whorf. See, J.B.Carrol(ed.), Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of B.L.Whorf (London and Massachussetts, 1956)

but doubt and pessimism. To him, the negative elements in the Oriya character, developing from medieval times onwards, explain the cause of the Famine of 1866 A.D.. In the pre-famine days, Oriyas were treated everywhere as, 'the sheep who would run at the sight of a stick'.¹ Mohanty was convinced that Oriyas caused their own ruin by cowardice and effeminacy.

Thus, Mohanty makes his fellow Oriyas responsible for the misfortune that befell them in the form of the Great Famine of 1866 A.D.. The characterisation of Oriya as 'degraded and fallen', or 'effeminate and cowardly' is symbolic of the decline and misfortune of Oriyas under foreign rule from the 16th century. 'Ha Anna' makes the negative elements of Oriya identity meaningful within the symbolism of the Great Famine. Apparently, Mohanty wrote it as a reaction to the contemporary realities of Orissa in the early 20th century so that Oriya consciousness could be heightened. Oriyas were languishing politically and suffering from cultural defilement. This collective predicament had its positive side-effects in inducing a collective self. 'Ha Anna', tracing the origin of this predicament to medieval times, arguably knits together the Oriya community in the common fabric of inherited 'misereries'.

If history and legend explain the past of a particular people, it is nature and landscape that identify that people with a particular geographical area. That is why, in different oral traditions and literatures, nature is very often invoked and celebrated. In the period under discussion, Oriya literature was marked by a tendency to glorify the land of Orissa. The Orissan landscape came to be used as a definite characteristic of the land. Communities are inseparable from their own habitats which suffuse their collective consciousness by their imprint on the community's life, so the nature or the landscape which a people possess, becomes an object of veneration and glorification.

¹Ibid. ,p. 476

We have already seen in the last chapter, how Radhanath Roy was the first modern Oriya poet to celebrate nature in Orissa. The literary tradition he established was continued by Gangadhar Meher (1862-1924 A.D.). Meher imagines Orissa/Utkal as the Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of richness and beauty. His nature poem, 'Utkal Laxmi'¹ (1894 A.D.) celebrates these riches. It speaks of the whole of geographical Orissa and not just the contemporary political Orissa of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. Thus, 'Utkal Laxmi' celebrates not only the landscape of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore but also many unknown or little known places in western Orissa. For example, places such as Hirakud, Huma and Ramachandi, mountains Budharaja, Sisupala, Barapahara, Jharaghati and Chhelia and rivers Ib, Anga and Jira, all in western Orissa, have been given a separate identity. Individually, their beauty and significance are celebrated and glorified. In addition, Chilika lake and the Meghasana, Gandhamardan and Kapilasa mountains of north and central Orissa, all assume a living personality heightened by poetic description. In a sense, the whole of Orissan nature, which Meher adores as 'Utkal Laxmi', is invoked and celebrated. For the poet, 'Utkal Laxmi' is the most beautiful place on earth and the embodiment of all natural beauty:

O'Mother Utkal! You're the only beauty
on this entire earth. Your body holds
all the beauty of Nature.²

At the same time, 'Utkal Laxmi' is also the holiest and greatest on earth. According to Meher, the gods of the Heaven were so attracted by the land of Orissa that they came to reside there: Lord Jagannath and Lord Shiva were here and the river Ganges came to Orissa following Lord Shiva and took the name Chitrotpala. For the poet, in this *Kaliyuga* characterised by manifold

¹Gangadhar Granthavali, ed., H.K.Das (New edn., Berhampur, 1977), pp. 51-64

²Ibid., p. 51

evils and socio-cultural decadence, Utkal is the holiest place on earth as it is the abode of Lord Jagannath, the Lord of Universe. Utkal Laxmi is not only that but was the scene of the glorious achievements of many great kings such as Anangabhimadeva, Lalatendu Kesari, Langula Narasimhadeva and Purushottamadeva. Great figures such as Jagannatha Dasa, Balarama Dasa and Upendra Bhanja have also left indelible mark on the Oriya literary scene. When confronting the afflictions of *Kaliyuga*, Meher is perhaps solaced by his perception of Orissa as the holiest and the greatest land of all.

Both Gangadhar Meher and Madhusudan Rao¹ have used a feminine metaphor to describe the land of Orissa. While Rao uses 'mother', Meher uses 'Goddess Laxmi' to describe Orissa. This metaphor objectifies Orissa and attributes a distinct feminine personality to it which is more readily acceptable to the Oriya psyche. Moreover, by using the metaphor Goddess Laxmi for the whole of Orissa, Meher's 'Utkal Laxmi' assumed political significance in the late 19th century. It suggested the indivisibility of Orissa and in a sense, the possibility of union of all Oriya-speaking regions.

Gangadhar's young contemporary, Nandakishore Bal (1875-1928 A.D.) made the Oriya village central to the thematic treatment in his nature poems. The village landscape together with the multi-faceted rural life was evoked in his poems in a lyrical tone, bringing out all their nuances. Morning and evening, dawn and dusk, the seasonal scenery, the kaleidoscopic changes in the people's lives and the pastoral life of the village, all have their place in his poems. Bal's poetry collection 'Pallichitra' or Vignettes of the Village² captures rural life in its various manifestations. Even activities on the threshing floor and in the fields, the village school, the landscape of mangroves, the burial ground rituals and the observance of different festivals do not escape the poet's notice. As the real pageant of village life, 'Pallichitra'

¹ For Rao, see Chapter IV.

² Nandakishore Bal, Nandakishore Granthavali (Cuttack, 1962), pp. 1-95

creates such impressions on the readers' mind that the village landscape becomes a part of Oriya consciousness. For Bal, the Oriya village has divine beauty too because of its pristine, innocent nature and people:

The lonely village garden,
the innocent face of the village maiden;
the village bride sucking the love-honey of youth,
her bewitching brows,
village! Hail your divine beauty.¹

But for Bal, the village is not the end, he has gone beyond it and brought the whole geography of Orissa into his poetic fold. He describes Orissa as sacred and beautiful and compares her body with that of a graceful woman 'whose body is decorated with gems':

Sacred land of Utkal-beautiful and virtuous-
like a graceful woman, whose body is bedecked with
the jewels made by an expert goldsmith.²

Like Radhanath, Madhusudan and Gangadhar, Nandakishore has also glorified the land of Orissa by linking it with its past. For example, in a poem 'Utkal Shilpi', he dwells on the artistic excellence of Oriyas³ and in 'Utkal', he glorifies the literary and religious traditions of Orissa.⁴ In one more poetry collection 'Janmabhumi' (published in three parts), Bal celebrates Orissa as the mother who is glorified by the achievements of her sons.⁵

¹Ibid., p.2

²Ibid., p.262

³Ibid., pp. 65-66

⁴Ibid., pp.263-264

⁵See, Janmabhumi, Part II &III in Bal, *ibid.*, pp.325-403

One can find Nandakishore's treatment of Orissan nature at two levels, one at a micro-level, the village where landscape and village folk are invoked and the other at a macro-level, natural Orissa where the whole Oriya-speaking region is invoked as a mother and her past glory is celebrated. Orissa as a whole and its villages individually, arouse a collective consciousness about the habitat and its singularities.

Investing nature of Orissan with divinity and motherhood was continued by the poet Chintamani Mohanty. His 'Utkal Kamala' (1918 A.D.), like Gangadhar Meher's 'Utkal Laxmi', uses the metaphor of goddess to describe the land of Orissa. The goddess appears dramatically in Chintamani's imagination and narrates her own beautiful landscape, riches and glories. Only divinity can have all such virtues and since Orissa is divine, it is also adorned with beauty, glory and riches. Apart from 'Utkal Kamala', Chintamani's other poems like 'Meghasana', 'Salandi', 'Prakruti Petika' and 'Mahodadhi' also adorn the Orissan nature. Like in Meher's poem, many unknown or little-known places and geographical sites of Orissa came to prominence as they were endowed with an identity of their own. In 'Salandi', for example, the river Salandi and the places on its banks which were hitherto almost unknown, became known and distinct to the Oriya mind through the narrative.

What is important in the treatment of the Orissa nature by these poets is its feminization and historicisation in an attempt to objectify the nature. The nature is endowed with all feminine virtues and come to be imagined as either goddess or mother. On the other hand, it is also historicised and made a repository of Oriya historical traditions. Thus, the Orissan nature in the poetic narrative surfaces from obscurity and neglect, to embody the best of femininity and to become the centre-stage of history. In the process, it becomes objectified and an essential element in the cultural discourse on Orissa.

Nature in Orissa was also invoked and celebrated in prose writings. It was Shashibhusan Ray (1877-1953 A.D.) who captured images of nature in his

prose pieces. He was thoroughly familiar with its topography. This is quite evident in his two works, 'Utkalra Rituchitra' and 'Utkal Prakriti', both of which celebrate nature. In 'Utkalra Rituchitra' (Portrayal of Seasons in Utkal),¹ the primary emphasis is on the kaleidoscopic changes of the natural landscape in the cycle of six seasons. In different seasons, the land assumes different shapes and moods. Change of season not only affects the landscape of a place but also brings with it new folk festivals. Ray shows these events under the impact of the six seasons and bring out their peculiarities.

On the other hand, his 'Utkal Prakriti (Nature of Utkal),² invokes various places in Orissa and celebrates their beauty and sanctity. Many little-known places of Orissa, such as Malyagiri, Kapilash, Chakrasila, Barkul and Chandipur are given their due identity in his narrative. These places are seen not only as constituting the beautiful landscape of Orissa, but also as the epitome of holiness. Ray has also linked history with nature so as to establish the greatness of the places described. While describing *Swargadwara* (Gateway to Heaven) of Puri for example, he associates it with great religious teachers such as Sri Chaitanya of the medieval age.³ In 'Uttaresvare Godhuli' or Dusk in Uttaresvara, he celebrates the artistic traditions of Orissa after seeing the sculptures on the temple walls of Bhubaneswar.⁴ For him, the ancient Oriya civilization is manifested in these sculptures. This is how, Ray explains to his fellow Oriya readers the unique nature of the 'geographic space' occupied by them. History is fused with geography to glorify the habitat.

By the first quarter of the 20th century, nature was established as an

¹Shashibhusan Ray, Utkalara Rituchitra (Cuttack, 1913)

²Shashibhusan Ray, Utkal Prakriti (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1925)

³Ibid., p. 168

⁴Ibid., p. 144

important theme in Oriya literary tradition. It was made an essential part of the literary narratives. Natural features became historicised through identification of natural with historical sites; they became agents in the reconstruction of history. Whenever the authors invoked the nature, they also invoked the past and fused the both so that the nature gradually became part of the Oriya consciousness. Consequently, the image of the Orissan nature became more of a living embodiment of history and sacredness of the land than of a feminine beauty. Thus, the nature came to be a distinct Oriya identity-marker.

There are also other elements that shape Oriya identity. In 20th century Oriya literature authors came to diversify their quest for identity by way of rediscovering them and their ability to explain identity. For example, one important element was the the *Bharatiyata* or Indianness which became an important factor in their search for identity. Even in some cases, the Indian element is defined as a primary factor in Oriya identity.

It was previously pointed out that in the broad ideological position of the Satyavadi school Orissa was inseparable from India. Gopabandhu Das in particular, had clear ideas on the inseparability of Orissa and India. This is clearly brought out in his poem, 'Bandira Atmakatha' or Own-Story of a Prisoner (1923-24 A.D.) where he imagines Oriyas as the children of Mother-India and Orissa as integral to India. The great sanctity of Puri-Srikshetra, the abode of Lord Jagannath, is seen by Gopabandhu as pervading all India.¹ For him, Srikshetra is related to India and the whole world, like a filament (Puri) of lotus (India) in a pond (world): 'India is the lotus in the pond of the earth, where the sacred Nilachal is the filament.'² Orissa is imagined as symbiotically related to India and the world, hence, the greatness and sacredness of Orissa also glorify India and vice-versa.

¹Gopabandhu Das, Bandira Atmakatha (4th edn., Cuttack, 1949), pp. 20-21

²Ibid., p. 20

Surprisingly, a chauvinist like Jagabandhu Singh who traces the origin of Utkal to the distant past, is not wholly reactionary or inward-looking. He also discovers the Indian element in Oriya identity. His expansive outlook is well reflected in his contention that as different metals are melted and made into an 'Astadhatu' (alloy made of eight metals) which is very strong and powerful, the diverse interests of all the nationalities of India must be synthesised to produce a common 'Indian interest' which would be very powerful.¹ In this way, Singh accepts the Indian component in Oriya identity.

In an article, 'Jatiya Jivana', Jagabandhu Singh defines national (Indian) life in terms of the individual's love, attachment and sympathy for his own nation and identifies individual development with national development.² On this basis, he glorifies Indian life which, according to him is religio-centric and spiritualistic as opposed to worldly life marked by materialistic cravings.³ This type of rhetoric about India explains Singh's Indian sentiment that inspires him to imagine India as superior and great. It adds a new dimension to the evolving discourse on Oriya identity as it makes Oriya life integral to Indian life.

It may be pointed out here that the development of an Indian perspective by Oriya authors was the outcome of the changed socio-political scenario. The growth of a movement for integration of Oriya-speaking regions, a progressive realization of the evil effects of colonialism, the gradual dragging of Orissa into the all-India nationalist politics and finally, the spread of liberal modern education, all played a vital role in the development of an Indian perspective.⁴ Apart from the historical reasons given above, the

¹Jagabandhu Singh, 'Jatiya Jivana', Mukura, Vol.VIII, Nos. 10&11, 1914

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴ These developments have been discussed in Chapters III and IV.

development of an Indian perspective can also be considered in the light of Edward Shils' treatment of centre and periphery. In his highly-acclaimed essay, he argues that the centre is not merely a spatial location but a central zone of symbols, values and beliefs that govern society.¹ Human beings have to be in contact with this central zone which is larger in its dimensions than their own bodies and more central in the ultimate structure of reality than in their routine everyday life. It is in this light that we can approach the phenomenon of the development of an Indian perspective. The educated Oriya middle class felt the need to incorporate that which transcended its peripheral geographic limits. Hence, it incorporated the central system that is, Indian, which is larger in dimension and more central in its existence than Oriya. This reached its logical conclusion in the claim that Oriya identity lay in 'being' Indian. For example, the famous authoress of the time, Kuntala Kumari Sabat (1900-38 A.D.) asserted very eloquently the Indian dimension of Oriya identity as she identified Oriyas' interests, love, faith and religious feelings with that of Indians. In her poetry collection, 'Archana' (1927 A.D.), Oriya is unequivocally given an Indian identity, Indianness or *Bharatiyata* is manifested in singing the glories of India and wearing the *khadi*. Together with other Indians, Oriyas enjoy many things in common such as the same land, the same interest, the same devotion, the same fate, the same pain and pleasure and finally the privilege of a common mother.² Oriya identity is also fed by the past glories of the Mahabharat, the Ramayana and by the glorious history and traditions of India. Sabat used this new-found identity of Oriyas as a plea to involve them in the on-going Gandhian movement, but at the same time, her Oriya sentiments forced her to invoke Lord Jagannath to help Indians in their fight against the

¹Edward Shils, Centre and Periphery: Essays in Microsociology (Chicago, 1975), p. 7

²Kuntala Kumari Granthavali, ed., K.B. Dash (Cuttack, 1968, I, p. 104

British.¹ According to her, Oriyas' god Jagannath might lead the way for Indians !

Sabat set herself the task of defining Oriya against the broad backdrop of new emerging perspectives in the socio-political sphere of India and Orissa. The anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle of the Congress had already penetrated to Orissa. Under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das, Orissa plunged into the Freedom Movement. Moreover, as shown earlier, the All-India Congress gradually changed its policy and became sympathetic to Oriya demands and aspirations, so Oriyas could no longer remain alienated from mainstream Congress politics. The inevitable result was a shift in thinking among Oriyas. Their destiny came to be linked with the destiny of the entire Indian nation. Sabat's novel, 'Raghu Arakshita' and her long story 'Kalibohu' display this shift in thinking. In 'Raghu Arakshita', the hero Raghunath has dedicated himself to the service of both India and Orissa and in 'Kalibohu', the heroine Laxmi, a widow, has become symbol of the new identity of Oriya womanhood. Raghunath, after the initial years of turmoil in his personal life, devoted himself to serve the country, imbued with the Gandhian ideology.² He was inspired by the new all-India nationalist ideology. In 'Kalibohu', Laxmi initially suffered in her personal life, but then managed to overcome all the problems and devote herself to the cause of Oriya womanhood and the nation.³ She also became an author and her writings came to influence the people. Though Laxmi finally remarried, she did not forget her duty. The welfare of Orissa continued to be 'the chant of her life'. Laxmi thus, came to symbolise the new consciousness of Oriya womanhood characterised by an ardent desire to serve the nation. In the character of Laxmi, Sabat finds a new 'Oriya woman' surcharged with nationalist and humanitarian feelings. Both

¹Ibid. ,p.220

²Kuntala Kumari Granthavali, ed., K.B. Dash (Cuttack, 1969) ,II, pp.151-358

³Ibid. ,pp.85-111

Raghunath and Laxmi were the products of the changing socio-political and cultural scenario of India and Orissa, in particular. In the 1920s, Oriyas were not only swayed away by the movement for a separate province but also active in the all-India nationalist movement against the British. Raghunath and Laxmi could hardly have escaped from the influence of both the movements. Authors like Sabat did not find any contradiction in the two movements which had different objectives. Participation in both movements came to authenticate a broad-based Oriya identity which was embodied in characters such as Raghunath and Laxmi. In the Oriya literary tradition, similar characters were later created.

For example, the 'new Oriya' became the central character in Harekrushna Mahtab's (1899-1987 A.D.) socio-political novel, 'Nutana Dharma'¹ (1927 A.D.). The 'new Oriya' must emerge from the parochialism of caste, colour, creed and religion and only then can it sincerely serve the country. 'Nutana Dharma' or the new message is symbolic of this new outlook and approach. The characters in this novel, Mayadhar, Harihar, Kamala and Sundaramani, all intend to reform existing Oriya society, but their social work is linked to a greater political purpose, that is, the redemption of India. All this is rooted in 'Nutana Dharma' of the age. Mahtab makes humanism - a component of 'Nutana Dharma', the basis for political activism. Under the overwhelming impact of humanism, even the old Oriya-Bengali antagonism has been toned down. For Mahtab, if Oriyas ever sang or wrote in Bengali, it was not out of any cultural domination by Bengalis, but it was a matter of conviction and appreciation.² Thus is the impact of 'Nutana Dharma', as imagined by Mahtab. The identity of the 'new Oriya' would be unfolded only in the implementation of 'Nutana Dharma'.

The image of the 'new Oriya' was constructed by authors not from void,

¹Harekrushna Mahtab, Nutana Dharma (New print, Cuttack, 1935)

²Ibid., p. 33

but as a reaction to the changing socio-political scenario. Harishchandra Badal, for example, constructed the 'new Oriya' in his play, 'Deshara Daka'¹(1932 A.D.) or Call of the Country, at a time when both the Oriya movement and the all-India nationalist movement had greatly mobilised the people. Badal's deep empathy with the political mood of Oriyas is reflected in his construction of the 'new Oriya' who was actuated with both Oriya and nationalist feelings. 'Deshara Daka' is primarily a celebration of the Oriya movement, but at the same time relates it to the nationalist movement. Thematically it shows how a group of youths have devoted themselves to the Oriya movement under the leadership of their mentor, Desamitra Mohanty. The two main characters, Manoranjan and Nabakumar represent the 'new Oriyas' who have sacrificed their personal interests and comforts for the Oriya cause. Their mentor, Deshamitra is a prototype of the great leader, Madhusudan Das.

Though the Oriya cause is the predominant theme of the play, Badal has imagined a symbiotic relation between India and Orissa. The 'new Oriya' is incomplete without his Indian identity. A character in the play, Dinabandhu is committed not only to the Oriya cause but also to the Indian cause and even to the whole of humanity. In his words: 'My ideal is the progress of the country- not only of Orissa or Oriyas but also of India and the whole world. My ultimate aim is the progress of all human beings'.² Dinabandhu, thus represents the new consciousness which combined both the Indian and humanistic outlook. Both the Oriya movement and the nationalist struggle were important for Oriyas in the 1920s and 1930s. The emerging educated middle class participated in both. For them, Orissa and India were inseparable; a true Oriya was for all practical purposes, an Indian. This apparent paradox really adds an Indian element to Oriya identity. Sabat, Mahtab and Badal, have all tried to bring out the Indian dimension of the identity, but before them, it was

¹Harishchandra Badal, Deshara Daka (Cuttack, 1932)

²Ibid., p.140

Madhusudan Rao, Gopabandhu Das and Jagabandhu Singh who first invoked the Orissa-India symbiosis and imagined their inseparability. What they earlier constructed in theory, Sabat, Mahtab and Badal later applied in the actions of their imagined characters.

The construction of Oriya identity in literature took a new turn with the emergence of the Sabujite group on the literary scene in the 1920s. Rejecting history, tradition, legend and nature as elements of identity, the Sabujites articulated the meaning of 'Oriya' in a totally different perspective. They imagined Oriya in the most liberal, humanist and enlightened terms. The word '*Sabuja*', meaning green, is symbolic of life. The Sabujites rejected history, transcended all geographical or political confines and protested against traditionalism. Their literature was based on humanism and the new values of the age.¹ The Sabujites were influenced more by Western liberalism and Marxist-Communism than by the Oriya cause or the all-India nationalist ideology. This is why, the 'Oriya' they imagined, has a more broad-based and expansive identity. Their 'Oriya' is essentially universal, not confined to any parochial consideration.

Though the Sabujites were a group of five litterateurs, *Sabuja* literature centred mainly on three members of the group, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, Annada Shankar Ray and Baikunthanath Patnaik. The Sabujites were active during the period, 1921-35 A.D.. Leaving their own past and tradition behind, they used the term '*Sabuja*', symbolising a new meaning of life which is not rooted in the past, but filled with new possibilities. They had borrowed the term '*Sabuja*' from contemporary Bengali literature. In the writings of the Nobel-laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Pramath Chaudhury, '*Sabuja*' was used as symbol of new life set against mental inertia and lethargy. Though the Oriya Sabujites were not completely guided by the Bengali use of the term, they accepted to some extent the philosophy of '*Sabuja*' as understood by

¹Annada Shankar Ray, Sabuja Akshyara (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1988), pp. 3-4

these Bengali authors.

Outlining the identity of the new man, Ray says that the new man would be enlightened, humanist and destroyer of all falsehood and deception. In his poem, 'Pralaya Prerana' or Inspiration for Destruction¹ (1924 A.D.), the new man does all these things. By bringing a *pralaya* (destruction) only, the new man achieve one stage of redemption, but he does not need to be a destroyer alone, he may be also a humble, sober and benign agent of change. So Ray, in his poem 'Srujana Swapna' or Dream for Creation imagines this new man as desiring to create a new heaven and earth and in the new creation, he would paint the beauty of his beloved:

I wish to create a beautiful sky
with the honey of my heart-
a firmament of new Sun, Moon, and Stars,
where O' my Beloved,
I'd paint your beauty anew
with my dreams.²

Thus, for Annada Shankar Ray, the new life has the potential to destroy the old order and create a new world. The new Oriya has to realise these potentials.

For Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, another Sabujite, ideology becomes the mainstay of the new Oriya. In his poem, 'Puri Mandir'³(1927 A.D.) the new man is made without blind faith and belief. Instead of praying for salvation, he wants to live in this world amidst the millions of humanity because he loves to 'live the life'. All the contrasts of this earth are dear to him and hence, he does not aspire to Heaven.⁴ This deep humanism of the new man is reflected in the Jagannath temple of Puri which for Panigrahi, is the symbol of sacrifice,

¹Ibid., pp. 3-7

²Ibid., p. 11

³Kalindi Charan Panigrahi (ed.), Sabuja Kavita (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1968), pp. 125-131

⁴Ibid., p. 127

equality and hope. It is the embodiment of humanism. According to the legend, King Indradyumna, who built this temple, prayed to Lord Jagannath after his consecration that his dynasty might become extinct so that none of his descendants could boast of the temple he had built. History also links Puri-Srikshetra to great religious teachers such as the Buddha, Shankar, Kabir, Nanak and Sri Chaitanya who preached their own faith and sang the glory of tolerance and equality in Puri. So, for Panigrahi, the Jagannath temple stands more for human virtues such as sacrifice and equality than it does for religious virtues. The new Oriya has to imbibe these human values and his identity lies in their realisation.

The Sabujites transcend all provincial and national barriers and imagine their 'new man' as belonging to all humanity. He is the immortal child of nature, not confined by any geographical or political barriers.¹ In 'Atma Prakash', or Self-Expression, Baikunthanath Patnaik imagines that the unlimited sky, the fountains, the mountains, the paddy-fields, the bright stars and the moonlit, all belong to the 'new man'. The Sabujites try to escape to a different world, a utopia. Patnaik for example, in another poem 'Pranayira Swapna' or Dream of the Beloved (1924 A.D.) imagines the new man with his beloved in a land where there is nothing but love, where winter never comes, where one's eyes are never tired, where rainbow appears in the evening sky and where sky and wind bring dreams only.² In the poem 'Srujana Swapna' too, Ray wants to escape to a distant land with his beloved and to create everything new there.

The Sabujites however, are not really escapists. Their escape to a utopia symbolises a new construction of life in some distant time, which they adore and idealise. This life is rooted in the Sabujites' world-view and in the negation of all man-made boundaries. The identity of the 'new Oriya' lies in

¹Baikunthanath Granthavali, ed., K.B.Dash (Cuttack, 1978), I., p.85

²Ibid., p.283

realising this new meaning of life.

The Sabujites' treatment of woman shows more explicitly the point made above. They are more liberal and humanist than Kuntala Kumari Sabat in their approach to the whole question of Oriya womanhood. Annada Shankar Ray for example, sees woman essentially as a partner and collaborator with man, rather than a submissive follower in a male-dominated world. In his poem 'Pralaya Prerana', he empowers woman with the potential to be a champion of her own freedom. Anticipating woman's liberation, Ray's empowered woman cannot remain servile to man nor lie as an 'imprisoned bird', even though she can be a mother, a sister, a daughter and even a wife to a man.¹ The only bond that brings together woman and man, is love.

The Sabujites' position on womanhood becomes clear in the novel 'Basanti'² (1931 A.D.) which was written by nine authors including the Sabujites and those who subscribed to their views. It is the story of a young Oriya girl called Basanti, an educated woman, championing the woman's cause. Her education and progressive ideas create problems in her marital life as her husband Debabrata misunderstands her and doubts her integrity. Basanti's liberal education and exposure to urban culture inspire her to protest against the male-dominated society where she wants to see 'a completely separate identity of womanhood, beyond any relation with man'.³ In the 1920s and '30s, Indian women had already begun to abandon their traditional role under the impact of the Western liberal ideas and the on-going Indian national movement. In Orissa too, quite a few women had higher education and joined in political activity. Basanti is 'constructed' after their image, but she is more progressive and does not want to confine herself to four walls, nor does she accept the pre-determined subordinate position of

¹Ray, op.cit., p.6

²Kalindi Charan Panigrahi and others, Basanti (Rev.edn., Cuttack, 1968)

³Ibid., p.128

woman in society. Her determination and commitment to her ideals is shown by the fact that she temporarily separates herself from her husband, but it is only love that again can unite them. Basanti is at the same time, a traditional Oriya girl who is competent in the household and is devoted to her husband and in-laws.¹ She combines both, the ethos of a traditional Oriya woman and the potential of an educated, progressive girl. For the Sabujites, in this combination lies the new identity of Oriya woman. Basanti anticipates a new Oriya womanhood which is characterised by liberal education and a new vision of the male-female relationship in society, without forgetting her traditional role.

As we saw above, Oriya literature of the late 19th and early 20th century became a means of defining 'Oriya'. From various sources, authors tried to decipher the meaning of 'Oriya'. For some, it meant a glorious past and tradition, for others it was the manifestation of a distinct, sacred, beautiful landscape and yet, for some others, it was the part and parcel of Indian entity. In spite of different meanings imputed to 'Oriya' by different authors, their underlying unifying factor was to search for the essential elements by virtue of which Oriya is differentiated from others. They saw it as a totally different community with its own destiny and historical role. This is clearly brought out in the metaphorical description of Orissa as 'mother' and Oriyas as her 'sons'. The great Oriya leader, Madhusudan Das imagined the 'mother' Orissa crying over her misfortune, but then Das was optimistic that her sons were there to follow her everywhere and rescue her from any plight.² This conjures up a vision of a mother-son relationship where they are interlocked in a long traditional lineage.

In the third chapter, we saw how a sense of deprivation and peripheralisation, arising out of colonial policies, contributed to the

¹Ibid., p. 87

²Madhubabunka Odia Baktruta O' Gita, ed., Nabakishore Das (New edn., Cuttack, 1958), pp. 4-5

development of the Oriya consciousness. This consciousness was clearly manifested in the quest for Oriya identity in contemporary literature. From Phakirmohun to the Sabujites, all tried to define 'Oriya' in their own way. Their definition of 'Oriya' may be broadly categorised as the inward looking Orissa-centric and outward looking and broad-based, but both were not at cross-purposes nor were they chronologically exclusive. One can discern both orientations simultaneously, in the thematic treatment of their writings. We have seen how, as early as the late 19th and early 20th century, the poet Madhusudan Rao saw the broad Indian identity of Oriyas. The Satyavadi group and Gopabandhu Das in particular, emphasized the Orissa-India symbiosis. Gopabandhu used metaphor to describe this relationship. Sabat, Mahtab and Badal celebrated it by imagining a 'new Oriya', who would embody this relationship. Then, came the Sabujites who expanded Oriya identity beyond the limits of Orissa and India and made it a part of the universal consciousness of liberalism and humanism. The gradual expansion of Oriya identity became possible as a result of politico-social changes in India and Orissa in particular.

In the third chapter, it was pointed out that the Utkal Union Conference under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das accepted in its Chakradharpur session (1920-21 A.D.), the aims and ideologies of the Indian National Congress including non-co-operation. It was facilitated by the change of Congress policy in the Nagpur session of the All-India Congress Committee (1920 A.D.) where it was decided to reorganise the Congress cadres on a linguistic basis.¹ This decision was an indirect recognition by Congress, of the Oriya movement for the linguistic unity of Orissa. In early 1921 A.D., the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee was formed with Gopabandhu Das as its first President and the district Congress committees soon followed. Mahatma Gandhi visited Orissa in 1921 A.D. which gave a boost to the nationalist

¹B.Pattabi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1935 (Bombay, 1946), I., p.209

ideologies and policies in Orissa. By June 1921, the Utkal Congress Committee already had enrolled 39,000 Congress members and introduced 16,000 spinning wheels in Orissa.¹ Together with the gradual entry of Orissa into the arena of nationalist politics, the British government increasingly softened its policies towards Orissa. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1917 A.D. for example, recommended a 'Sub-Province' for the Oriya-speaking people. One of the architects of these Reforms, Mr. Montagu also sympathised with the Oriya cause for amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking regions. It was the Indian Statutory Commission in 1930 A.D. that recognised the Oriya problem and maintained that the province of Bihar and Orissa, created in 1912 A.D., was the most artificial unit of all the Indian provinces.² Finally, the Orissa Committee set up in 1931 A.D. under the chairmanship of S.P.O'Donnell recommended the formation of a separate Orissa province.³ All these developments prompted the educated Oriya middle class to search for a broader expansive Oriya identity linking it to the Indian and beyond to the world-stage.

However, the inward-looking Orissa-centric orientation was the predominant tone of Oriya authors during the period under our study. But with the changed socio-political scenario, an expansive identity developed in parallel. There was no tension between the two trends as they served the same purpose, that is, the realisation of a regionally based identity.

¹K.M.Patra, 'Growth of National Congress and Freedom Movement in Orissa', The Indian Historical Review, Vol. XII, Nos. 1-2 (1985-86), p. 321

²Indian Statutory Commission Report, Vol. I (London, 1930), p. 68

³Report of the Orissa Committee, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1932), p. 34

CHAPTER VI

CONSTRUCTION OF A RELIGIOUS BOUNDARY: ORIYA IDENTITY AND THE JAGANNATH CULT

Identity defined by religion tends to iron out diversity and insists on uniformity. It also implies the homogenization of differences. The core of a religious identity is the collective consciousness that shapes it. In the Indian context colonialism, in its wake, developed collective consciousness. Different communities came to be aware of their collective 'self' and their historical destiny, but this is not to deny the existence of any pre-colonial awareness which was already there, albeit in a rudimentary and inarticulate form.

The second chapter showed how a common Jagannath-centered religious belief system developed among Oriyas, in the course of the evolution of that cult. This chapter will consider how this belief system was strengthened and formalised and how the Jagannath cult came to confirm the religious identity of Oriyas during the later half of the 19th and early 20th centuries at the high point of colonialism.

The god-king nexus that developed in the 10th century A.D. continued after the British occupation of Orissa (1803 A.D.). During the period 1568-1803 A.D., when Orissa was successively ruled by the Afghans (1568-1592 A.D.), the Mughals (1592-1751 A.D.) and the Marathas (1751-1803 A.D.), both the cult and the kings had an unstable existence. Often, the idols of the Jagannath Triad had to be taken away from the Puri temple and the kings had to flee to remote areas, in order to save themselves from the invasion of non-Hindu Afghans and Mughals. Thereafter, with the Maratha occupation of Orissa (1751 A.D.), the king's position was drastically weakened as his three *parganas* and fourteen feudatory states were taken away by them and he lost control of the Puri temple.¹ In spite of these vicissitudes, the kings did not lose their imperial

¹B.C.Roy, Orissa under Marathas (Allahabad, 1960) , pp. 130-132

heritage of Gajapati in popular Oriya perception and there still persisted a strong feeling among Oriyas that the kings were 'the fallen, but still revered, descendants and representatives of their ancient native sovereigns'.¹ So the stereotypes, *Chalanti Vishnu* (living god) and *Thakura Raja* (god king) that had evolved earlier to describe the Gajapati kings, continued to imply the same intimate relationship between the Jagannath cult and the kings.

During the British rule, the god-king nexus was transformed into a symbiotic relation for both became inter-dependent for their survival. The declared policy of the Cornwallis Code (1793 A.D.) to protect the Indian subjects 'in the free exercise of their religion', served as a 'compact' between the Company Government and its Indian subjects.² This 'compact' came to determine the extent and nature of British involvement in the Jagannath cult, at least during the first few years of the British occupation of Orissa. First, to minimise the influence of the Gajapati king who was now no more than a vassal, the British took the charge of directly administering the Puri temple. They protected the rights of the temple priests and continued the annual payment for the maintenance of the temple. They also made attempts at streamlining the temple administration because of their political commitment under the 'compact'. But they soon realised that their direct involvement in the Jagannath cult had its limitations. As non-Hindus, who had no right to enter the temple, the Christian authorities could not manage the details of a Hindu temple. Moreover, their involvement produced mounting criticism from Christian missionaries, who dubbed the Company government as 'Jagannath's churchwarden'.³ It was under these pressures that the Company

¹From W.Ewer to W.B.Bayley, 13 May 1818, Correspondence of the Settlement of Khoordah in Pooree, reprinted in O.H.R.J., Vol.III, No.4 (1955), p.III

²N.G.Cassels, Religion and Pilgrim Tax under the Company Raj (New Delhi, 1987), p.IX

³J.W.Kaye, Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative (London, 1859), p.385

decided to entrust the administration of the Puri temple to the Gajapati kings, traditionally the first and foremost servant (sevaka) of Lord Jagannath. Consequently, according to Regulation IV of 1809, the administration of the temple together with the conduct and control of its affairs was vested in the kings.¹ This was further confirmed by Act X of 1840, which gave the kings full and absolute authority over the management and internal economy of the temple.² In this way, the traditional power and influence of the Gajapati kings over the Jagannath cult was recognised.

The initial British policy of 'reluctant disengagement' towards the Jagannath cult, was reflected in their handling of the pilgrim tax.³ As a regulatory tax, the pilgrim tax was meant to provide for the welfare and security of the pilgrims to Puri temple. Regulations in 1806, 1809 and 1810 streamlined its administration, but it soon came under fierce attack from Christian missionaries, both in India and England. They called it a state sanction for idolatry. The Baptist missionary, James Peggs complained that the pilgrim tax enhanced the supposed value of pilgrimage and fame of idolatrous places, but according to him, 'the poverty, sickness, mortality and brutal treatment of the dead, consequent upon vast assemblies of pilgrims, demonstrated the pernicious tendency of a system which regulated, supported and aggrandized idolatry'.⁴ As the scathing attack by the

¹The Regulations and the laws enacted by the Governor-General in Council for the Civil Govt. of the whole of the territories under the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal, Vols.V&VI (Calcutta, 1828), IOLR:V5239

²L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers. Puri (Calcutta, 1908), p.121

³See for a detailed discussion, Prabhat Mukherjee, History of the Jagannath Temple in the 19th century (Calcutta, 1977); K.M.Patra, Orissa under the East India Company (New Delhi, 1971) and; Cassels, op.cit.

⁴James Peggs, India's Cries to British Humanity (London, 1832), p.120

missionaries mounted, the Company government was finally forced to abolish the pilgrim tax by Act X of 1840 which also forbade the temple authorities to impose a tax of any kind upon pilgrims for admission into the temple and the performance of ceremonies.¹ It removed one of the main instruments of the Company to control the Jagannath cult, but inversely the power and influence of the kings in the cult increased.

Under continuous pressure from Christian missionaries, the British were forced to gradually sever all direct links with the Puri temple. Instead of providing an annual payment for the maintenance of the temple, the British transferred (1843 and 1857 A.D.) the land endowments of the temple to the management of the king. For the maintenance of law and order in the temple, the king was now supposed to make his own arrangements out of some estates transferred to him in 1863 A.D.. The king as the superintendent of the temple had to hold these lands in trust for the temple. Thus, the Puri Raja, as the king came to be known, became more independent in religious affairs. His authority over the temple and position in the Jagannath cult was legitimised by the British authorities, though he was divested of all political authority. Even the government-appointed Magistrate of Puri had no right to exercise control or to interfere in the daily administration and observance of ceremonies at the temple; these were 'left to the unfettered discretion of the Superintendent-the king'.²

The British policy of 'reluctant disengagement' which strengthened the god-king nexus, was virtually dictated by the prejudices and ignorance of Christian missionaries about the Jagannath cult. Their perception of the cult was the result of their general misunderstanding of Hinduism.³ William Bruton,

¹Malley, op.cit., p.121

²From C.Beadon to A.P.Young, Secretary to the government of Bengal, No.92, 11 Jan.1859, JTC(Part IV, 1859-70)

³For example, Charles Grant, the Evangelical who became the Chairman of Court of Directors, believed Hinduism to be erected upon the darkest ignorance and the boldest falsehood.

who visited Puri as early as 1633 A.D., described the Puri temple as 'the house of satan' where the priests daily offered sacrifices to god Jagannath and imagined the idol in 'the shape of a serpent with seven heads'.¹ In 1806 A.D. Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain from Calcutta, found the giant Jagannath idol to be 'the monster holding high carnival'.² Later in a religious tract, 'Christian Researches in Asia' published from England, he asserted that 'a record of Juggernaut would be a roll written within and without with blood, obscenity and woe'.³ This sort of initial misunderstanding and prejudice against the Jagannath cult was carried on by later missionaries such as James Peggs, J.W. Kaye and W.B.Laurie. They castigated Lord Jagannath as 'the seat of the Empire of Moloch' and vigorously advocated severance of all sorts of relations with the Jagannath cult. Though their endeavour met with success, paradoxically it caused a considerable strengthening of the Jagannath cult. The theological misunderstanding of the missionaries who had concentrated on the Puri temple in their struggle against 'idolatry' in India, really increased the fame of Lord Jagannath and His First Servitor (Adya Sevaka), the *Raja* of Puri.⁴ No reluctancet developed among Oriyas to accept Lord Jagannath, in the face of the anti-Jagannath propaganda and activities of Christian missionaries, on the contrary it contributed to a determination for protecting the institution of the cult from the British - a fact authenticated by the subsequent legal battle over it.

With the appointment of the king as the superintendent of the Puri

¹P.T.Nair(ed.), Bruton's visit to Lord Jagannatha 350 years Ago (Calcutta, 1985), p. 68

²Kaye, op.cit., p. 370

³Cassels, op.cit., p. 78

⁴Hermann Kulke, 'Juggernaut under British Supremacy and the Resurgence of the Khurda Rajas as Rajas of Puri', in A.Eschmann, H.Kulke, G.C.Tripathi(eds), The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 356-357

temple and the gradual British disengagement from the affairs of the Jagannath cult, the god-king nexus entered a perceptible symbiotic relation: the *raison d'être* of the *Gajapati* king depended on his hold and influence over the Jagannath cult; but the latter needed the king for protection and survival. King Mukundadeva II, after being appointed as the Superintendent (1809 A.D.), tried to re-establish the Gajapati's traditional domination over the Jagannath cult. First he denied the rights and privileges¹ which various feudatory kings claimed to have received from the Gajapati kings with regard to the Jagannath cult. For example, the Raja of Khimedi from southern Orissa and the Raja of Khandpara from central Orissa, were prevented from entering the temple when they came for a 'darshan' of Lord Jagannath. Mukundadeva wanted to monopolise the cult and become the leading figure in the cult hierarchy. This was viewed with suspicion by the British authorities. As early as 1814 A.D., the Settlement Commissioner Richardson informed the Governor-General that 'the Raja entertained and inculcated the belief that he would one day, through the power and influence of Juggernaut, be restored to the supreme command and authority of the Province of Cuttack'.² This observation brings out the potent truth that the kings had already established their sway over the cult. Though the British were aware that such hopes by the kings were 'chimerical, delusive and obtrusively-viewed apparently innocent', they might in the course of events at some critical juncture, could have bad significance.³ So there was justification for the British to suspect the growing royal authority over the Jagannath cult.

As we have already seen, by 1863 A.D. the British had severed all direct links with the Jagannath cult, but this did not prevent them having supervision

¹See for details, Hermann Kulke, Kings and Cults (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 51-65

²Richardson to Governor-General, No. 29, 8 Jan. 1814, Bengal Revenue Consultations

³Ibid.

or control over the Puri temple as they were not only the rulers of the land but also committed to protect the religion of their Indian subjects under the 'compact' of the Cornwallis Code. Their 'reluctant disengagement' gradually changed to 'active interference' in the cult's affairs, not under any missionary pressure but under the logic of their professed policies. This change of policy was effected when the management of the temple deteriorated under King Divyasinghadeva. The king was accused of imposing fees on pilgrims during certain ceremonies of daily worship, illegally appointing the temple servitors, supplying inferior quality substances for the preparation of *Bhoga* offered to the gods, misappropriating the temple funds, ill-treating the servitors and pursuing general conduct 'in variance with the recorded rules and institutions of the temple and the ancient and established usage and custom connected with the temple'.¹ Matters came to a crisis point in 1878 A.D. when he was arrested and convicted on the charge of murdering a *sadhu* (saint) and was sentenced to transportation for life. The king's direct involvement in the murder was strongly established by the Magistrate Armstrong, in his report to the Commissioner of Orissa.²

Surprisingly enough, Oriyas did not believe that Divyasinghadeva was really guilty. Their *Chalanti Vishnu* was infallible ! They concluded that injustice had been done to the king who had been sacrificed by the British at the altar of deep political designs.³ According to the weekly Utkal Deepika, everybody in Orissa felt sorry for the Raja and devotion and reverence for him was so deep-rooted that everybody would sympathise with him unless he or see had a cruel heart.⁴

¹From Panda Nijoge and others to Commissioner of Orissa, 5 August 1876, JTC (Part V, 1871-79)

²From J.S. Armstrong to Commissioner of Orissa, No. 324, 13 March 1878, JTC (Part V, 1871-79)

³G.N. Dash, 'Jagannath and Oriya Nationalism', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), *op.cit.*, p. 366

⁴UD, Cuttack, 13 April 1878

The same unflinching Oriya faith in the Gajapati king prevented the institution of kingship from being separated from the Jagannath cult. After Divyasinghadeva's transportation, there arose an anomalous situation, inasmuch as, under Act X of 1840, the superintendence of the Puri temple remained with the king even after his transportation. The British took advantage of the situation and tried to take over the management of the temple. Sensing the perfidy of the British, Divyasingha's mother Suryamani Pattamahadevi immediately declared her grandson, the five-year old Mukundadeva Raja of Puri and superintendent of the temple. She started managing the temple affairs on Mukunda's behalf as his legal guardian during his minority. This unilateral arrangement was not acceptable to the British who passed the Puri Temple Act of 1880, repealing the Act of 1840. According to the Puri Temple Act, the administration of the temple and its interior economy, the conduct and management of its affairs and endowments and the control over its priests, officers and servants vested in a Committee of Management.¹ The *Raja* of Puri would be the hereditary President of the Committee for the time being and would be assisted by a Hindu manager.² The Act was hotly contested by the priests of the temple, the royal family and the general public alike. The *sevakas* (servitors) of the temple opposed the appointment of the trustees and considered it unjust to deprive the *Raja* of Puri of the temple management for no fault.³ Even the leaders of the *Brahmin Sasanas* (villages) petitioned that the king of Puri was the most respectable person among Hindus and that according to the Hindu scriptures, the rites and worship of Lord Jagannath could not be performed in the absence of and without the king.⁴

¹Puri Temple Act of 1880, JTC, Acc.No.427 Bd.Doc

²Ibid.

³From Bhiatachow Govinda Mohapatra and others to Commissioner of Orissa, 6 July 1882, JTC(PartVI,1880-84)

⁴From the Pundits of Purushottam Kshetra and of 16

The queen-mother Suryamani Pattamahadevi, claiming Lord Jagannath as their family god and the services and ceremonies as the exclusive privilege of the royal family, petitioned against the government's decision.¹ Finally, under public pressure, the British were forced to repeal the Act of 1880 and granted a certificate to the queen-mother, allowing her to administer the temple on behalf of the minor Mukundadeva, who was also given the title of 'Raja'. It was a great victory for the religious-minded Oriyas for whom even the name of Mukundadeva evoked an image of past glory and divine acts achieved by the former kings who bore that name.

Though the British attempt to control the Jagannath cult thus proved abortive, they did not give up. Again, during 1885-87 A.D., they tried to achieve it by judicial methods which gave rise to the famous Puri temple case. In 1885 A.D., the government instituted a suit in the court on the presumption that there was no superintendent of the temple. It aimed at appointing a committee of management in the place of a superintendent and introducing a scheme for temple management with government control.² Thus, the government planned to take away the hereditary rights of superintendence and management of the Jagannath temple from the Gajapati king and to vest them in a committee. The suit was hotly contested and there was widespread discontent and agitation against it throughout the Oriya-speaking region. In the Puri district, many meetings were held to discuss and debate the suit.³ In a large public meeting held in Cuttack, a resolution was passed to the effect that the government

Sasanas to Commissioner of Orissa, 8 July 1882, JTC (PartVI, 1880-84)

¹From Rani Suryamani Pattamadevi to government of Orissa, 18 July 1882, JTC (PartVI, 1880-84)

²From C.T.Metcalf to Secretary to government of Bengal, No.888, 25 June 1887, JTC (PartVII, 1885-1919)

³From C.T.Metcalf to Secretary to government of Bengal, No.876, 22 June 1887, AGA, Orissa Division, 1886-87 (OSA No.RIII-1/711)

should withdraw the suit.¹ The resolution was not only submitted to the government but also forwarded to the feudatory states to produce their reaction.

The religious feelings of Oriyas got a rude shock when the government, pending the final disposal of the Puri temple case, appointed a receiver, an assistant receiver and a tahsildar to take charge of the temple properties. It intended to marginalise the king's position in the Jagannath cult and hence the cry that 'religion was in danger' was raised in the vernacular press. The weekly Utkal Deepika strongly demanded the restoration of the Puri temple to the *Raja* of Puri. It argued that since the prestige and honour of the king depended on Lord Jagannath, he was the fittest person to preserve the services in the temple.² It also advocated that even if the government had any doubt about the integrity of the king, he should have been allowed to manage the temple, pending the decision of the case.³ General unrest and dissatisfaction against the Puri temple case was reported throughout Orissa. The Utkal Sabha, in a huge gathering, condemned the government move to dislodge the King from his traditional role in the Jagannath cult and decided to send a resolution against it to the Bengal government.⁴ At this stage, the queen-mother Suryamani Pattamahadevi had recourse to the judiciary with the help of Madhusudan Das, the future leader of the Oriya movement. Though a Christian himself, Das fought the case against the British because he was convinced that Lord Jagannath was the embodiment of Oriya identity and the Gajapati king was the hallmark of Oriya's Jagannath-centered universe because of the link between the two institutions.

Ultimately, the queen-mother won the case, as the High Court set aside

¹Ibid.

²UD, Cuttack, 11 Dec.1886

³UD, Cuttack, 18 Dec.1886

⁴UD, Cuttack, 11 Dec.1886

the appointment of the receiver. The Order of the High Court mentioned, inter alia, that there was no necessity to appoint a receiver because there was no trace of specific charges of dishonesty or misconduct against the Royal Superintendent.¹ This favourable court decision came as a victory for Oriyas when the British bowed down to popular pressure and made a compromise with the queen-mother in 1888 A.D.. This stipulated, inter alia, that the right of superintendence over the Puri temple would continue to reside in *Raja* Mukundadeva, but during his minority the queen-mother could exercise it on his behalf with the help of a manager, till the minor came of age.² The arrangement, thus provided under the compromise continued till 1897 A.D. when Mukundadeva attained his majority and became the Superintendent of the temple.

The British attempt to take over the administration of the Puri temple failed because of the mounting pressure from Oriyas for whom the *Raja* of Puri was still the *Chalanti Vishnu* and the *adya-sevaka* of Lord Jagannath. Not only the Press but also the Oriya associations vehemently opposed the government attempt to oust the king from the management of the temple. The popular Oriya perception of a symbiotic relationship between the king and the Jagannath cult was so strong that it was in actual practice difficult to separate the *Raja* of Puri from the Jagannath cult. Perhaps, this is why, in contrast to the Puri temple case, nobody made any protest when similar earlier government actions were taken in relation to the other temples of Orissa such as Lingaraj, Baladeva and Sarala Chandi.³

Gradually the god-king symbiosis of interdependence came to assume symbolic meaning for a common Oriya religious consciousness. This was not

¹Surendra Mohanty, Madhusudan Das (2nd edn., New Delhi, 1981), p.48

²From Commissioner of Orissa to Secretary to government of Bengal, No.193R, 31 Jan.1889, JTC (PartVII, 1885-1919)

³Mukherjee, op.cit., p.410

only because of the gradual tightening of government control over the cult and the temple, but also because of the progressive secularisation of the kings' life-style and palace-rituals.¹ All this began with the king Mukundadeva (1879-1926 A.D.) during whose time the government appointed (1902 A.D.) a manager for the proper management of the temple. Throughout the British period government control continued and after independence, under the Sri Jagannath Temple Act of 1954, the temple came to be managed by the Temple Managing Committee with the *Raja* of Puri as its hereditary chairman. The role of the *Raja* has, however, now been restricted to the discharge of duties of a *sevaka* in respect of the *Gajapati Maharaja Seva*, as recorded in the Record-of-Rights.²

According to Kulke, after the superintendence of the Puri temple was vested in the Gajapati kings, they compensated for the loss of their political power by building up a 'religious state' through the control of the temple,³ but in the light of above discussion, it is difficult to agree with Kulke. The kings' authority over the temple was neither unchallenged nor free of control and interference, though they were made the superintendent of the temple. The so-called 'religious state' based on the king's supposedly independent jurisdiction over the Puri Jagannath temple could never become a reality because of increasing government interference in temple affairs and of the indifferent attitude of the feudatory kings in their traditional and ritualistic respect and courtesy to the Gajapati kings. The kings, of course, continued to enjoy the highest position in the social hierarchy in Orissa because of their

¹See, N.Patnaik, 'The Recent Rajas of Puri: A Study in Secularisation', Journal of Indian Anthropological Society, Vol.5, No.1/2 (1970), for secularisation of king's life-style and palace rituals.

²Record-of-Rights, prepared under the Puri Shri Jagannath Temple (Administration) Act, Orissa Act XIV of 1952.

³Hermann Kulke, 'Kings without a kingdom: The Rajas of Khurda and the Jagannath Cult', in B.S.Das (ed.) Glimpses of Orissa (Calcutta, 1986), p. 31

close association with the Jagannath cult, but it did not allow them a free hand in the affairs of the Jagannath cult. Yet, in popular esteem, there was no dilution in the respect and sentiment for them.

We have seen, how the British always interfered in the affairs of the temple. Sometimes they even humiliated the *Gajapati* kings, trying to diminish their prestige and importance in popular esteem. In 1875 A.D. for example, King Divyasinghadeva sent a petition against the change of the designation of his allowance from a 'malikana allowance' to a 'political pension'.¹ The King was not happy with the designation 'political pension' as it meant a subordinate status for him. The British however, did not agree to the King's petition and insisted on the new designation, replacing 'malikana allowance', which implied authority and control. Again in 1877 A.D., King Divyasinghadeva was accused of 'apathy, neglect and want of control over his subordinates' which resulted in the deaths of some pilgrims in the Jagannath temple on the two festivals, *Govinda Dwadasi* and *Dola Yatra* in the month of February.² As a mark of displeasure, the government decided to temporarily suspend the conferring of 'sunnud' and 'khillut' on the King until the latter submitted a scheme for regulating the flow of pilgrims to the temple.³ The King had to finally meet the government's demand. All this shows how and to what extent the Gajapati kings were subjected to British control throughout.

Again in their ritual position as the first and foremost servant of Lord Jagannath, the *Rajas* of Puri also lost much of their authority. From the days of Mukundadeva, the feudatory kings gradually abandoned their respect and courtesy to the *Rajas*. For example, only a few minor kings of princely states

¹From Acting Junior Secretary to the government of Bengal, to Officiating Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Calcutta, no.753, 24 March 1875 (JTC, Acc.No.373 Bd.Doc.)

²From S.C.Bayley, Secretary to the government of Bengal, to Officiating Commissioner of the Orissa Division, No.143T, 21 May 1877 (JTC, Acc.No.404 Bd.Doc.)

³Ibid.

like Badamba, Tigiria, Dasapalla, Nayagarh and Ranpur attended the Installation ceremony of Mukundadeva and performed their duties in the traditional manner.¹

Kulke, by quoting some cases such as those of the feudatory kings of Khimedi and Khandapara, tries to prove that the Gajapatis succeeded in monopolising special rights in the Jagannath cult. Mukundadeva II, after being appointed as the Superintendent of the Puri temple (1809 A.D.) tried to prevent the feudal kings of Khimedi and Khandapara, from enjoying special rights during the time of their visit to Lord Jagannath, but he did not succeed in his attempt. He was forced by Company officials to provide necessary facilities to the feudal kings according to their rank, for the 'darshan' of Lord Jagannath.² In 1842 A.D., when the *Raja* of Dhenkanal came on a pilgrimage to Puri, the *Gajapati* king unsuccessfully tried to prevent him from entering the temple with any special privileges.³ In 1853 A.D., in the case of a *zamindar* family from the Ganjam area (southern Orissa), the *Gajapati* demanded money from them for the performance of a special ceremony inside the temple,⁴ but the British Collector intervened and compelled the *Gajapati* to allow the *zamindar* family to perform inside the temple without the payment of any money. So Kulke's observation is not warranted by the available facts. What is apparently viewed as the *Gajapati's* growing authority in the Jagannath cult, is in reality, only his attempt to monopolise the cult, while treating the native Hindu princes and chiefs with disrespect and contempt. Moreover, according to Kulke, through the acts and regulations of 1809 and 1840, the *Rajas* of Puri received imperial British legitimation for their authority over the Jagannath temple, but in reality, their authority could never become absolute. The British very often interfered

¹N.Patnaik, *op.cit.*, p.98

²Prabhat Mukherjee, 'Rambles on the Jagannath Temple', *O.H.R.J.*, Vol.XXIV, XXV & XXVI (1980), pp.188-89

³*Ibid.*, p.189

⁴*Ibid.*, pp.189-90

in the cult affairs, in order to promote their colonial interests, under the pretext of a moral obligation, arising out of the Cornwallis' Compact (1793 A.D.).

In the light of all this evidence, we may conclude that the Gajapati kings could ritually establish their influence over the Jagannath cult- the 'kshetra', their traditional sacred centre, but the influence could never become that of a full-fledged authority. The influence was merely a revival of the *Gajapati's* original position, in terms of ritual hierarchy in the Jagannath cult, which they enjoyed since the Ganga days. During British rule, the *Gajapati* kings were only reinstated in their ritually dominant position in the cult. This situation continued until the end of the last century. Thereafter, the king's influence in the cult was gradually diluted, but by that time the god-king symbiosis had been formalised in the religious belief of most Oriyas. As we saw in the second chapter, the god-king nexus, from the Ganga rulers onwards, was gradually strengthened. It went so deep into the psyche of Oriyas that the *Gajapati* king was finally given the attributes of divinity and came to be looked upon as a living Jagannath- *Chalanti Vishnu*. In the modern period, the nexus turned into a symbiotic relationship. Mutual indispensability between Lord Jagannath and the king was perceived as natural and irreversible, divinely-ordained. It became a part of the formal belief system of Oriyas. Many are still not concerned with the gradual changes in the status of the *Raja* of Puri or the gradual secularisation of the temple management; they continue to believe in the king as *Chalanti Vishnu*.¹ It is therefore plausible to argue that the Oriya religious consciousness continued to grow despite any change in the status of the kings. The British attempt to undermine the power and prestige of the kings in the cult hierarchy did not bring any change in the Oriya estimation of them. This is shown in the public uproar during the conviction of Divyasinghadeva in a murder case and the Puri temple case.

¹N.Patnaik, Cultural Tradition in Puri; Structure and Organisation of a Pilgrim Centre (Simla, 1977), p. 97

Anthropologists have debated the role and function of religion in society. Though there is no final conclusion, the harmonising, integrating and psychologically-supportive role of religion in a given society cannot be disputed. Clifford Geertz therefore sees religion as essentially a cultural system that gives meaning and direction to human existence. For him, religious beliefs provide meaning by way of offering explanations for anomalous events and experiences and for the incongruence between things as they are and as they ought to be.¹ Thus according to him, religion contributes to integration and stability, by way of providing meanings. In the Jagannath cult, the association of royalty, as we saw, delivers to Oriyas a meaning of immediacy of experience of the divinity. *Gajapati* kings, being treated as *Chalanti Vishnu*, came to objectify the divinity in temporal form and function. As a result, they came to be invoked to explain many anomalous events and experiences of everyday life of Oriyas. Their regnal year for example, came to be used in almanacs, horoscopes, official documents such as *sanands* and in other relevant documents to determine the timings of temporal functions. In the name of Lord Jagannath, *Gajapatis* came to enforce uniformity and order.

If the *Gajapati* king, because of his proximity to Lord Jagannath, provided the immediacy of religious experience to lay-Oriya followers, it is the rituals and festivals of the Jagannath cult that took a strong hold on the mind of Oriyas, thereby transforming that experience to a collective consciousness. The Jagannath cult developed an elaborate system of rituals and festivals, in the course of its evolution. Their re-enactment commits a system of meaning to memory, so that they are not lost sight of, nor trivialised in the life of Oriyas. In consequence, the Jagannath-centric consciousness is repeatedly induced.

Broadly, there are four types of rituals or *nitis* in the Jagannath cult. These are: daily rituals which are fixed and observed in a routine way; special

¹Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York), p. 90

rites which are observed according to the importance of certain days, months etc.; festive rites which include various festivals observed during the year and; secret rites which are performed according to the old customs, practices and usages of the temple.¹ The rituals have been so designed that in the process, the divinity has been anthropomorphized: the rituals consist of treating the three deities Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, as honoured persons of very high status. For instance, according to the daily rites, the deities are awakened (Dwaraphita and Mangalaati), made to symbolically brush their teeth and bathe (Abakasha), given new attire (Mailam), allowed public viewing (Sahana mela), given breakfast (Gopalaballav Bhog and Sakala Dhupa) followed by lunch (Madhyahna Dhupa) and an afternoon nap (Madhyahna Pahuda); the deities are again awakened and given an offering (Pahudaphita and Sandhya Dhupa) followed by public viewing, anointed with sandal paste (Chandanlagi), decorated with flowers (Badasimhara Besha) and finally, after dinner (Badasimhara Dhupa), the deities are put to sleep with a performance of music, singing and the offering of flowers.² An Oriya saying aptly captures the essence of these rituals: 'as it is done for one's body so it is done for the god's' (*jatha dehe, tatha debe*). Because of these rituals, the divinity ceases to be divine and becomes One who may be looked upon at will as master, friend, parent or even lover of the worshipper and His service is modelled accordingly.³ The symbolic metamorphosis of the divinity, by way of creating multiple images of Lord Jagannath helps in binding together the Oriya laity on the common platform of the Jagannath cult. How one looks upon Him may differ, but all roads lead to Lord Jagannath.

¹N. Senapati and D.C. Kuanr, Orissa District Gazetteer. Puri (Bhubaneswar, 1977), p. 808

²Record-of-Rights, op.cit. and Government of Orissa, A Day in the life of Lord Jagannath (Bhubaneswar, 1977), pp. 7-12

³R.L. Mitra, The Antiquities of Orissa (2 vols., Calcutta, 1880), II., p. 110

The ritual practices of Lord Jagannath help to identify Him with Oriyas. For example, the food and the dress used for the deities typify that of Orissa and by way of such typification, a sense of belonging to the same religious world is induced. The deities are offered only locally-produced vegetables and even potato and tomato, being foreign in origin, are excluded. The fifty-six varieties of *Bhogas* or dishes usually offered to the deities are typical of the Oriya preparations of rice, curry, cake and sweet. Interestingly, the most typical of the Oriya dishes, *pakhala* or watered rice is offered to the deities three times a day.¹ The dress used by the deities at different times of a day broadly typifies the traditional Oriya dress that consists of two pieces, a lower garment and an upper garment.

The festive rites of Lord Jagannath also play a very important role in the development of the religious identity of Oriyas. Many rites of passage of Oriyas are determined by these rites. For example, with the *Sayana Yatra*, when Lord Jagannath symbolically goes to sleep for three months, ceremonies like marriage, *upanayana* (sacred thread), *Navabadhu Yatra* (coming of the bride to her father-in-law's place) etc. are suspended.² These are again resumed with the rising ceremony, *Devottana*, of Lord Jagannath. In the annual almanacs of Orissa, certain days or tithis of the month are denoted by the festivals of Lord Jagannath like *Devasnana Purnima* (bathing ceremony) to commemorate the birth of Lord Jagannath on the full moon day of Jyestha, *Chitalagi Amabasya* (wearing-of-jewelleries ceremony) on the new moon day of Shravana, *Chandan Purnima* (sandal festival) on the full moon day of Baisakha, *Damanaka Chaturdashi* (ceremony of Dayana flowers) on the 13th and 14th day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra etc.. This practice of denoting the Oriya calendar with the festivals of Lord Jagannath establishes a link between the Jagannath cult and the Oriya almanacs, according to which ordinary Oriyas observe their rites of passage and seasonal rites.

¹K.C.Mishra, The Cult of Jagannath (Calcutta, 1971), p.196

²Senapati and Kuanr, *op.cit.*, p.826

Most of the festivals of Lord Jagannath are observed throughout Orissa. The laity can be held together, not by daily prayers and routine formulae alone, but also by frequently recurring festivals in which people may participate for mirth, gaiety and entertainment, with which religion is blended. Festivals, because of the people's participation, rapidly take a strong hold of the mind of the masses and once established, they hold on with great tenacity. This is precisely the case with the festivals of the Jagannath cult. Traditionally, the festivals of Lord Jagannath are collectively known as *Dwadasa Yatras* or Twelve Yatras,¹ but in actual practice there are more than sixty-five festivals celebrated in a year in honour of the Jagannath Triad. All have their significance, their re-enactment committing a system of meaning to the collective memory of Oriyas.

Of these festivals, the *Ratha Yatra* (Car Festival) is the most important festival, not only because of its fame and popularity, but also because of its significance for the purpose of our study. The sequence of the *Ratha Yatra* proper is as follows: on the *Asadha Shukla Dwitiya* (the second day of the bright fortnight of Asadha, June-July), the deities are taken out of the temple in ceremonial procession (*pahandi*) and placed in separate chariots; the *Gajapati* king performs the symbolic *Chherapamhara*, the sweeping of chariots and sprinkling them with scented water; the people drag the three chariots to the *Gundica Ghara* where the deities stay for nine days; after a sojourn of nine days, the deities come back (*bahuda*) and finally, the deities are taken back to the temple. The whole ceremony of the *Ratha Yatra* is preceded by another festival called the *Snana Purnima*, the day on which the deities are bathed and then undergo a period of illness (*anasara*) for a fortnight. Their illness is over on the new moon day (*amabasya*) and on the following day, they are symbolically invested with eyes in a ritual called *Netrotsava*. Then, takes place the *Ratha Yatra* proper: the *pahandi*, the

¹These are supposed to be instituted by the Ganga king Anangabhimadeva who constructed the present Jagannath temple.

Chherapamhra and the dragging of the chariots, all on the same day, *Shukla Dwitiya*.

The *Ratha Yatra* is the ritual re-enactment of the supposed first arrival of Lord Jagannath on the earth. According to the Indradyumna legend of the origin of Lord Jagannath which was discussed in the second chapter, Lord Jagannath first appeared as a wooden log which was carried to the place where Indradyumna was performing one thousand horse-sacrifices on a *vedi* (altar). According to tradition, the Jagannath Triad was carved out of the log on this *vedi*. The whole location is called *Gundica Ghara*, *Mahavedi*, *Jajnamandap* and *Janmapuri* and in the *Ratha Yatra*, this is the destination of the chariots of the deities. In the Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya of the Skanda Purana, Lord Jagannath commands Indradyumna to bring Him annually to *Gundica Ghara* with Balabhadra and Subhadra in chariots since it is 'the most sacred place in the world' and 'eternally pleasing to Him'.¹ So the *Ratha Yatra*, in the first instance becomes symbolic of the origin of the Jagannath cult and a constant reminder of its earliest stage of evolution. But Mohanty argues that the *Ratha Yatra* and subsequent sojourn of Lord Jagannath in the *Gundica Ghara*, symbolise the god's temporary return from His Brahminical temple to His autochthonous habitat.² He substantiates his argument by pointing out the predominance of the Daita *sevakas* in the rites of the *Ratha Yatra* and the tribal origin of the term 'Gundicha'.

Whatever may be the origin of the *Ratha Yatra*, it is the biggest annual event of Oriyas of all denominations who gather around Lord Jagannath and renew and recommit their faith to the State deity. Perhaps, this is the reason, why the *Ratha Yatra* annually draws a crowd of pilgrims, two to three times the average population of Puri. Most of the pilgrims come from the surrounding

¹The Skanda Purana. Part V (English transl.), translated and annotated, G.V. Tagore (Delhi, 1994), pp. 165-166

²Surendra Mohanty, Lord Jagannath (Bhubaneswar, 1982), pp. 58-62

villages and the region, though Hindus from outside Orissa also come for the *Ratha Yatra*. Rosel has mentioned how thousands of local peasants on foot or with their ox-drawn carts converge yearly upon the broad road called 'Bada danda' which leads in a north-easterly direction from the main gate of the temple to the outlying *Gundica Ghara*, the destination of Jagannath's Car Festival.¹

Historically, the precise date of the beginning of the *Ratha Yatra* is difficult to establish, in the absence of any authentic source, but it is *Gajapati* Ramachandradeva (1568-1600 A.D.) who reintroduced this great festival, together with the reinstallation of the Jagannath cult. It is clearly mentioned in the play, 'Srikrshna-Bhakta-Batsalya Natika' written by Ramachandradeva himself and interestingly enough this play was enacted in Puri during the reintroduction of the *Ratha Yatra*.² So the *Ratha Yatra* has a known authentic history of at least four hundred years, though it was prevalent long ago, according to the Puranic source.

The *Ratha Yatra* is a typical example of a festive ritual which, by way of endowing people with a sense of personal identity, forges a collective consciousness of commitment and belongingness. It allows everybody to approach Lord Jagannath in his own way, as there is no structured mode of worship nor any priestly control over the human-divinity communion. More important is the temporary elevation of the status of the ordinary laity to that of 'sevaka' (servitor) of Lord Jagannath as they draw the chariots to the Gundica Ghara. As early as 1633 A.D., William Bruton, the first Englishman to visit Puri observed that, 'the people were so eager and greedy to draw the ratha, that whatsoever, by shouldering, crowding, shoving, heaving, thrusting, or any violent way, could but come to lay a hand upon the ropes, they thought

¹J.A, Rosel, 'The evolution and organisation of pilgrimage to Jagannath at Puri', in L.Gopal and D.P.Dubey (eds), Pilgrimage Studies: Text and Context (Allahabad, 1990), pp. 98-99

²Sri Krshna Bhaktabatsalya Natika of Gajapati Ramachandradeva (Orissa State Museum, SMS.3), p.1

themselves blessed and happy'.¹ The same passion for drawing the ratha or at least laying a hand on the ropes, is still present with the laity. This endows them with a sense of personal identity as 'sevaka' of Lord Jagannath. By simply touching the rope that is, by being temporary 'sevaka', they believe, all their vices may be wiped out.

The temporary phase of 'sevaka', that is, when the pilgrims are surcharged with emotions and put all their efforts to get the divine grace of Lord Jagannath, represents the liminal phase of the ritual system. As Turner explains, liminal phase (threshold) entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial.² In the liminal period, a society emerges as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and undifferentiated community, or even a communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.³ The pilgrims to the *Ratha Yatra*- an unstructured and relatively undifferentiated community through their symbolic participation in the festival- tread during the liminal period as if they are neither ordinary, mundane humans nor are they members of the community of the formal 'sevakas' of Lord Jagannath. But by drawing the chariots of the Jagannath Triad, they are then aggregated to the community of 'sevakas' though for a temporary period. This symbolic aggregation, in Turner's scheme, is the 'status elevation' of the pilgrims.⁴

Thus the *Ratha Yatra* first makes a pilgrim a 'sevaka'- a liminal phase of commonality of experience which is followed by aggregation. The process involves the whole community of pilgrims and hence a collective

¹Malley, op.cit., pp.35-36

²Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London, 1969), p.95

³Ibid., p.96

⁴Ibid., p.167

consciousness or identity is forged. It is again formalised by the tradition that different areas of the hinterland of Puri provide fixed service during the Ratha Yatra. For example, still today, Dasapalla, a former feudatory state of Puri supplies the timber used for the construction of the chariots and the lowlands around Puri annually send thousands of peasants to drag the chariots. Writing as early as 1872 A.D., Hunter describes these peasants as 'professional pullers' and estimates them to be 4,200 in number.¹

The same ritual re-enactment of the *Ratha Yatra* and the corresponding process of creating a cohesive group of believers in Lord Jagannath also take place in different places of Orissa. O'Malley mentions how in Sambalpur town and its surrounding villages of western Orissa, the *Ratha Yatra* was an important festival and a day of general festivity- the day on which the people wore new clothes and ate rich food.² As a replica of Puri, the cars were prepared for the festival and the deities were seated on them and even the peasants of the villages where the *Ratha Yatra* was not held, used to go to the nearest village where it was observed.³ Similarly, in the feudatory states of the Puri *Raja* such as Tigeria, Baramba, Ranpur and Dasapalla who had established the Jagannath temple in their capitals, the *Ratha Yatra* was the main event in the religious calendar.⁴

All the rites of the Jagannath cult, whether observed in the Puri temple alone or observed both inside and outside the temple, aim as much at erecting a religious boundary as at consolidating internal values and meanings. How internal values and meanings get consolidated may be examined with

¹W.W.Hunter, Orissa (2 vols., London, 1872), I., p.133

²L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers. Sambalpur (Calcutta, 1909), p.88

³Ibid.

⁴Hermann Kulke, 'Rathas and Rajas: The Car Festival at Puri', in D.Panda and S.C.Panigrahi (eds), The Cult and Culture of Lord Jagannath (Cuttack, 1984), p.194

reference to the concept of fertility and the life-cycle. On the *Akshaya Tritiya* (the festival that falls on the third day of the bright fortnight of Baishakha), the construction of the new chariots for the *Ratha Yatra* (Ratha Anukula) starts. On the same day also begins the *Chandan Yatra* (the sandal festival) of the Jagannath Triad, spreading over a period of forty-two days. This is also the day, on which the farmers throughout Orissa start sowing operations in a ritual manner. The beginning of the process of the *Ratha Yatra* and sowing seeds for the new crop on the same day, symbolise a new cycle of life. The *Chandan Yatra*, a festival of merry-making on water and the following *Snana Purnima* of the deities, represent a move for new life which is symbolically enacted by Oriya farmers on their fields in the form of sowing operations. Finally, the *Ratha Yatra* on the second day of the bright fortnight of Asadha (marking the onset of the monsoon) symbolises that the new life is now here, as Lord Jagannath is commemorating His arrival on the earth. This symbolism may also be explained with reference to agriculture, as by the time the *Ratha Yatra* is over, the leaves of the seedlings on the fields are open. The fact that Lord Jagannath's *Ratha Yatra* makes allusions to fertility and life-cycle, is also suggested by the popular bawdy songs, sung by the 'dahuka' or the charioteer during the journey of the cars. These songs, called *Dahuka-gitas*, are full of references and broad, titillating allusions, suggestive of fertility. It is believed that unless the Dahuka-gitas are sung, the chariots would not move. It is interesting to note that 'dahuka' is also the name of a bird that starts chirping at the onset of the monsoon. This is how, the *Ratha Yatra* symbolises fertility and life-cycle which are consolidated in the collective memory, as having a system of meaning and value for human life.

Rituals constitute a key element in the construction of religious identity. They maintain unity through repetition and hold the values of the community. The rites associated with the Jagannath cult have a long past, but are enacted in a routine way. In the late 19th and early 20th century during the heyday of British colonialism, there was no threat to the observance of rituals. These

continued as usual without any dilution in their importance. This is shown by W.W.Hunter's and R.L.Mitra's observation way back in the 1870s. By this unbroken continuity, deeply-held Oriya values and ideas pertaining to the customary socio-religious practices, are maintained. Because of this specific function of rituals, Oberoi in his study on the Sikh identity, describes rituals as metaphors of collective consciousness that distinguish between outsiders and insiders by erecting religious boundaries.¹

The religious consciousness of Oriyas revolving round the Jagannath cult, is symbolised in the *Mahaprasad* system. *Mahaprasad* is the food offered to the Jagannath Triad in the Puri temple. This consecrated food can be taken by everyone alike; out of the same pot Brahmin and the so-called untouchable can both eat and neither of them washes his hands but cleans them by wiping them on his hair. Thus, in a sense *Mahaprasad* cuts across caste and class distinctions. As early as 1892 A.D. Bulloram Mullick wrote that *Mahaprasad* is 'potent to humanise the votary' and 'it knows of no pollution by touch of caste-ridden inferior humanity'.² This symbolism of *Mahaprasad* has got socio-religious significance in Oriya society. *Mahaprasad* becomes a means of entering ties of brotherhood, revocable only at the cost of committing a sin against Lord Jagannath. This is why, invariably before any marriage in an Oriya family, the engagement ceremony is solemnised by the exchange of *Mahaprasad* or *Nirmalya* (dried cooked food), so that the parties are committed in the name of Lord Jagannath to enter the marital relations. This engagement is known as *Mahaprasad Nirbandha*. Even for the marriage, there is still a custom in Oriya families, to first send a coconut and arecanuts smeared with turmeric paste to Lord Jagannath, as a token of invitation so that Lord Jagannath might attend the ceremony to bless the married couple.

¹Harjot Oberoi, The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition (Delhi, 1994)

²Lord Jagannath in Indian Religious Life written by Bulloram Mullick, ed., H.C.Das (Calcutta, 1985), p. 67

This is indicative of an abstract understanding of *Mahaprasad* that it sanctifies and hence makes social relations inviolable, entered in the name of Lord Jagannath. Because, in *Mahaprasad* all distinctions are submerged, it is 'like a great levelling agency'.¹ If this principle is not recognised nor put in practice, the offender is supposed to be punished. O'Malley, writing in the Puri District Gazetteer in the first decade of the 20th century, mentions the prevailing popular belief among Oriyas that if a low-caste man offers *Mahaprasad* to one of higher-caste and the latter turns away his head in contemptuous refusal, 'his neck becomes rigid and his head remains in that position'.² But in actual practice, Oriyas enter and respect *Mahaprasad* brotherhood not under any imaginary threat of punishment, but with a personal conviction.

During the closing years of the 19th century, the symbolic meaning of *Mahaprasad* in social relations had been construed by the British officials, as a typical Oriya-bond. In 1895 A.D., the government of Central Provinces decided to introduce Hindi in place of Oriya in the constituting district of Sambalpur.³ But Sambalpur is an Oriya-speaking region and in 1891 A.D. the Oriya population was 596,604, constituting the majority.⁴ Apart from administrative and linguistic reasons put forward to justify such a shift to Hindi, there was a peculiar socio-religious consideration, advocated by the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, Sir John Woodburn. According to this consideration, since Lord Jagannath's *Mahaprasad* friendship united all the Oriya officials in Sambalpur, abolition of the Oriya language would

¹Lord Jagannath in Indian Religious Life, op.cit., p.67

²Malley, District Gazetteer.Puri, op.cit., p.119

³Sambalpur Hiteisini, Bamra, 30 Jan.1895

⁴Census of India, 1891, Vol.XII, The Central Provinces and Feudatories, PartII (Calcutta, 1893), p.56

minimise this friendship.¹ Woodburn believed that under the *Mahaprasad* system in Orissa, 'men of different castes bound themselves to one another in an offensive and defensive alliance which though originally designed as a cement of friendship, had certainly proved an effective barrier to the discovery and remedy of administrative evils'.² But the supposed evil effects of *Mahaprasad* might be eradicated by transferring non-Oriya Hindi speaking officials to Sambalpur and Oriya officials to other districts of the Central Provinces after the abolition of the Oriya language from Sambalpur. The contention of the Commissioner was thoroughly baseless and absurd; it was, the result of an incorrect reading of the *Mahaprasad* system and the Jagannath cult. In 1878 A.D., writing a 'Note on the Custom of Mahaprasad in the Sambalpur District, Central Provinces', Captain Brooke warned against the development of the *Mahaprasad* tie as it had 'a pernicious effect on the habits of the people'.³ According to him, the *Mahaprasad* ties were even bought and sold and 'in cases before the courts the evidence of witnesses was almost daily objected to and discredited, on the score that they were mahaprasads (meaning, friends) of the persons in whose favour they were deposing'.⁴

Thus, the *Mahaprasad* system was misinterpreted at the government level, ignoring the real spirit behind this noble system. It was instead distorted to achieve politico-administrative ends. However, according to an earlier decision of 1895 A.D., from Jan.1896, Oriya was replaced by Hindi in Sambalpur. The government reaction to the *Mahaprasad* system illustrates the fact that by that time the Jagannath-centered Oriya community had become a reality. Oriyas came to be perceived as externalised 'Others' within the

¹UD, Cuttack, 11 May 1895

²UD, Cuttack, 22 June 1895

³W.S.Brooke, 'Note on the Custom of Mahaprasad in the Sambalpur District, Central Provinces', The Indian Antiquary, Vol. VII (1878), p.114

⁴Ibid.

religious boundary of the Jagannath cult. And the *Mahaprasad* friendship was perceived as a unifying factor among Oriyas.

The religious identity of a community also implies the authority of that particular religion/faith over the socio-religious life of the members of the community. The exercise of authority subsumes alternative ideals and produces uniformity and unity in a period of flux and change. In the Jagannath cult, this authority is traditionally embodied in the *Mukti Mandap* of the Puri temple. It is the assembly of the learned *Brahmins* from *Sasana* villages- that is, the villages established for *Brahmins* by different *Gajapati* kings. *Brahmins* sitting in the *Mandap*, which literally means 'platform of redemption', study and discuss the sacred scriptures, decide the merits of different acts and sins committed by the people. The issues brought forward to the *Mandap* would usually be concerned with intra-family, intra-caste or intra-village conflicts, insoluble by the local peace-keeping institutions.¹ Matters relating to intercaste marriage, intercaste dining etc. are brought to the *Mandap* whether the particular act is in conformity or in violation of the tradition of *Dharmasastras*. Thus, the *Mukti Mandap* is supposed to keep up the tradition of the *Dharmasastras*. It does not provide for punishment of the guilty party, but prescribes penances-'prayascit' which consists mostly of purification and expiatory actions such as gifts to Brahmins, fasting, going on pilgrimage and reciting the name of god. Thus, the judgements of the *Mandap* would demand maximum conformity to the *Dharmasastras* and minimum material sacrifices from the guilty parties. The *Mandap* really assumes the role of a 'theocratic legislative council'² in the socio-religious affairs of traditional Oriya society.

Like the Jagannath temple, the *Mukti Mandap* is also supposed to have

¹G.Pfeffer, 'Puri's Vedic Brahmins: Continuity and Change in their Traditional Institutions', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi (eds), op.cit., p.427

²Ajit Roy, 'A Brahmin Village of the Sasana Type in the District of Puri, Orissa.', Man in India, Vol.36, No.1 (1956), p.8

existed from a mythical age. This is explained by a popular belief that the platform on which the *Mandap* is located is exactly the same spot where the foundation-consecration ceremony of the temple was held. Attributing such antiquity to the *Mandap*, its hold over Oriya society has been made rather more sacrosanct. There is historical evidence of the existence of the *Mandap* at least since the early 16th century. The *Panchasakha* poet Balarama Dasa, in his 'Sri Vedantasara Guptagita' mentions how in the 17th anka (regnal year) of Prataparudradeva (1497-1540 A.D.) on a Thursday, the *Mukti Mandap* assembly met to discuss the scriptures.¹ It also establishes the fact that the *Mandap* was very much in existence during the reign of Prataparudradeva. But the present *Mukti Mandap* was built by Gaurarani, the wife of Akbar's Hindu general Mansinha.² Mansinha had come to Orissa and visited the Puri temple in 1592 A.D. and to mark the visit, his wife had built the *Mandap*.

It may be mentioned that of late, Kanungo has tried in an article to prove that the *Mukti Mandap* was originally known as *Mukta Mandap*, meaning a stage or altar free for all.³ He takes the cue from Madalapanji and on the basis of a phrase '*Mukuta Mandap*', equates the Oriya word *Mukuta* with *Mukta*, the first being the colloquial version of the second one.⁴ He supposes some historical compulsions under which the *Mukuta* or *Mukta Mandap* was transformed to the *Mukti Mandap* and was reserved only for *Brahmins*. But from linguistic point of view, the correct colloquial version of *Mukta* is *Mukata* though in villages people may sometimes pronounce it as *Mukuta*. Secondly, Kanungo has based his argument on one of the texts of the *Panchasakha*

¹Sri Vedantasara Guptagita of Balarama Dasa, ed., Govinda Rath (Cuttack, 1910), p.1

²Madalapanji, ed., A.B. Mohanty (Cuttack, 1940), p. 64

³ Harihar Kanungo, '*Mukti Mandap o' Shree Jagannath Mandirara Samparka*', Jhankar, 48th year, No.4, July 1996, pp.406-413

⁴ Madalapanji, op.cit., p.64

poets Balarama Das. But one cannot lose the sight of the fact that in the Oriya literary tradition even of the *Panchasakha* poets, there was a tendency to eulogise Lord Jagannath and prove His institution as open to all, irrespective of caste and creed. Kanungo however, accepts that the name of *Mukta Mandap* was changed to *Mukti Mandap* sometime after the 16th century. Even if this thesis is accepted, the antiquity of the *Mandap* can be easily traced back to few hundred years.

The *Mukti Mandap* is originally an assembly of 16 *Brahmins* representing 16 *Sasana* villages. This is indicated by the presence of 16 pillars in the *Mandap*; each representing one of the 16 *Sasana* villages, but in actual practice, in addition to 16 Brahmin representatives of the *Sasanas*, 4 *Brahmins* from *Karabada* villages (established by queens or other officials of the kings) and temple *sevakas* such as *Rajguru* (preceptor of the king) and *Purohita* (priest) also sit in the *Mandap*. They, while sitting in the *Mandap*, supposedly represent the god Brahma who in the Hindu pantheon, is the creator of the universe and the source of all knowledge.

Though the *Mukti Mandap* was organised in its present form in 1904 A.D., it has had a long hold on Oriya society. As early as 1805 A.D., the Cuttack Collector Gromes reported that on the appearance of any bad omen, it was customary for the pundits, *sanyasins* etc. of Puri and *Sasanas* to be assembled in the *Mukti Mandap* where scriptures were consulted as to the best means of averting it.¹ It may be mentioned that in the beginning of the 20th century, an organisation of the *Pandits* and *Sannyasis* of Puri came into existence within the precinct of the *Mukti Mandap*. In a news report of the Utkal Deepika in 1905 A.D., the existence of the *Pandit Sabha* together its purpose was clearly mentioned.² The *Pandit Sabha* ruling was also the *Mukti*

¹From C.Gromes to Fortescae, 10 May 1805, Report of C.Gromes (OSA Acc.No.3C)

² UD, Cuttack, 20 May 1905

Mandap ruling;¹ hence, the *Sabha* cannot be seen separately from the *Mandap*, rather it was operating on the strength and basis of the *Mandap*. How the authority of the *Mukti Mandap* was obeyed and respected in Oriya society, can be measured by these examples.

In one case, in 1908 A.D. a person called Purushottam Mohapatra, from the Sambalpur district, wanted a ruling from the *Mukti Mandap* on a *Brahmin* boy who was born to a drunkard father and who was staying separately from the parents immediately after his expiation on the eve of the sacred-thread ceremony.² The *Mandap* gave a ruling that there was no problem for such a man (the *Brahmin* boy) to move freely in the society. In 1929 A.D., there was a petition from a woman called Phula Das, from the Sambalpur district, asking for a ruling on her eleven year-old daughter who had been taken by a scavenger, but had returned home after some days.³ The *Muti Mandap* condemned it as a sin and subjected Phula Das' daughter to expiation by performing some fixed rites. In yet another case in 1930 A.D. one Raghunath Rathsharma, from the Cuttack district, sought the *Mandap's* ruling concerning some devoted *Brahmins*, including himself, who ate rice-pudding in the house of a *Shudra* during the period of a rite of passage for the death of the latter's mother.⁴ The *Mukti Mandap* did not approve of it and condemned the *Brahmins* for eating in the house of a *Shudra*.

Whether that the *Mukti Mandap* rulings were obeyed or not, is not an important issue. What is important was the Oriya belief that unless the *Mukti Mandap* rulings were sought, it was difficult to live in society without performing any expiation for an act committed contrary to the

¹ Ibid

²No.61, Byabastha Book, Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha Library (Judgement on 16.07.08)

³No.24, *ibid.*, (Judgement on 21.11.29)

⁴No.21, *ibid.*, (Judgement on 02.02.30)

Dharmasastras.¹ This belief still prevails among Oriyas as there are instances in recent years of requests for *Mukti Mandap* rulings.

In one case² in 1958 A.D., a petition was sent from a village in the Kalahandi district to the *Mukti mandap*, asking whether the villagers could construct a new temple on the ruins of the old one. The *Mukti Mandap* allowed a new temple only after a ceremonial atonement which was meant to overcome the transgression of the 'samkalpa'-the original resolution that the throne of the deity, once constructed, would remain there as long as the sun and the moon endured. In another case,³ in 1960 A.D., an inhabitant from the Bolangir district, Ghasiram Hota, applied to the *Mandap* to end his status as an outcast imposed on him because of his alleged involvement with a woman of the *Kandha* tribe. The *Mukti Mandap* agreed to Ghasiram's return to his caste, provided he performed one of the several expiations such as *Chandrayana* or a gift of four cows to *Brahmins* and that he drank the five products of a cow, 'panchagavya' i.e., milk, curd, butter, urine and dung. In yet another case,⁴ in 1960 A.D., the *Mukti Mandap* allowed an inhabitant of the Bolangir district, Parameswar Kar to marry a woman whose husband had absconded for many years. But at the same time, he was found guilty of accepting a bride who had been 'given away' earlier to somebody else; therefore an expiation was prescribed for Parameswar Kar which consisted of chanting the *Gayatri mantra* one hundred thousand times.

In all these cases, as usual the carrying out of the expiation was left to those who were involved. The *Mukti Mandap* does not enforce its decision nor

¹Interview with Pandit Harihar Mohapatra, the Purohita of Lord Jagannath, at Puri on 24.12.1995

²Chandrika Panigrahi, 'Muktimandap Sabha of Brahmans, Puri', in N.K.Bose(ed.), *Data on Caste:Orissa* (Anthropological Survey of India Memoir No.7, 1960), pp.187-188

³Ibid., pp.183-184

⁴Ibid., pp.181-183

supervise whether or how its decision is carried out. But generally, the sacred rulings are obeyed and honoured because these emanate from their *Ista Devata*, that is, Lord Jagannath. Moreover, asking for a *Sabha* ruling is not a compulsion, but it is a voluntary act in order to remain within the disciplines of traditional Oriya society.

Obedience to the authority of the Mukti Mandap is visible in the day-to-day socio-religious life of Oriyas. As in any other part of India, Oriyas celebrate their religious festivals and social rituals in accordance with the calendar, called *panji*, but the Oriya *panji* becomes authentic and operative only after being approved by the *Mukti Mandap* assembly. The *Mandap* assembly determines the days on which religious festivals and social rituals such as marriage, the sacred-thread ceremony and the inauguration of newly-constructed house are to be observed.

The *Mukti Mandap* has traditionally played an important role in maintaining the religious unity of Oriyas. In its capacity as an authority to protect and interpret the 'scriptural sanctity' of the society, it becomes an instrument to confer 'Jagannath-centered' identity on Oriyas.

Both the *Mahaprasad* and the *Mukti Mandap* may be seen as means or mechanisms by which order is intended to be established in Oriya society which would be less vulnerable to contradictions and exceptions. This order, ironing out all differences, tries to bring unity, by giving a sanction, a bond in the name of Lord Jagannath. Though introduced in the Jagannath temple precinct for religious purposes, the *Mahaprasad* and the *Mukti Mandap* gradually became a unifying factor in Oriya society which still considers them as sacrosanct and infallible.

The overwhelming impact of the Jagannath cult on Oriya life is also manifested in Oriya culture. This is shown in the Odissi dance which, from being a temple ritual for Lord Jagannath, developed to be a typical symbol of Oriya culture. The continuity of a unique dance tradition, through the Jagannath temple ritual over the centuries, shows the Oriya association with

this tradition.

Odissi in its original shape, was a temple ritual and integral to worship of the Jagannath Triad. It was primarily a religious art, performed by a class of temple dancers who came to be known as *Maharis* from the 11th century. Its link with religion has given rise to some legends about its origin. The legends associate the origin of the dance with supernatural elements. The Utkal Khanda of the Skanda Purana says that when Lord Brahma came from the heaven to consecrate the temple for the Jagannath Triad, He was accompanied by the *apsaras*, the divine nymphs who danced during the consecration ceremony.¹ Another legend relates how one night Lord Jagannath had been to a particular 'kunjia' (grove) to enjoy dancing and music and consequently, how the *Raja* of Puri appointed a dancer for regular merry-making with the Lord.² *Maharis* generally trace their origin to these legends. Some scholars even believe that the mythical sage Narada, the great Veena-player, introduced the dance ritual in the Jagannath temple.³ Though it is difficult to establish the historicity of these legends and beliefs, it is certain that the dance ritual prevalent in the temple had originated long ago coinciding with the origin of the Jagannath cult. The description of dance as a service to Lord Jagannath in the Skanda Purana and the Brahma Purana, attests to the antiquity of the temple dance which was at that time, known as the *Odra* dance. Though the date of compilation of these *Puranas* have not been conclusively established, it is certain that these are very old compositions, dating back to the early centuries of the Christian era. The existence of the *Odra* dance dedicated to Lord Jagannath from very early days, cannot be disputed.

The prevalence of the *Odra* dance in Orissa was also referred to in

¹The Skanda Purana. Part V, op.cit., p.156

²R.K.Das, Legends of Jagannath Puri (Bhadrak, 1878), p.95

³For example, see, S.Rathsharma, 'Odissi Nrutyara Utpatti', in K.C.Pattanaik (ed.), Odissi Nrutya Alocana

Bharata's Natyashastra written around the 2nd century A.D.. Dividing the prevailing dance styles or *natya* art into four regional types, such as Avanti, Dakshinatya, Pancali and Odra-Magadhi, Bharata mentions that the *Odra-Magadhi* type was prevalent in Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Vatsa, Odra, Magadha, Pundra and certain other eastern regions of India.¹ Evidently, a particular dance style was prevalent in Orissa, as Kalinga and Odra correspond to the present Orissa region. However, it was pointedly described as 'Odra Nritya' or *Odra* dance in the most authentic manual on Odissi, 'Abhinaya Chandrika' written by Maheswar Mohapatra circa the 15th or 16th century. The Odissi dance, in its *Odra-Magadhi* or *Odra form* was practised in the Jagannath temple as a 'Nritya seva' to the god. This was performed by the temple-dancers, who later on came to be known as *Maharis* and who formed one of the original thirty-six *niyogas* (temple-servitors) of the temple. In addition, the Record-of-Rights categorises temple dancers under 'Bhitara gauni'² and 'Samprada niyoga'³ who are supposed to perform ritualistic dancing and singing before the god.⁴ For a temple dancer who is at least theoretically married to Lord Jagannath, her 'Nritya seva' is divinely-ordained. Again, since Lord Jagannath is the Supreme Being, the Creator, He has the right to have all human sports (leela)⁵ and thus Lord Jagannath has the right to be entertained

(Bhubaneswar, 1978) , pp. 4-5

¹Mohan Khokar, Traditions of Indian Classical Dance (Delhi, 1979) , p.123

² They are mentioned at serial No.75 in the Record-of-Rights as those who sing during the nap and festivals of the Triad.

³ They are mentioned at serial No.76 in the Record-of-Rights as those who dance during processions.

⁴Record-of-Rights, op.cit.

⁵Interview with Ms.Parashamani Devadasi, a former Mahari at Puri, on 17 Sept.1994.

by dance and song. Perhaps, that is why it is generally believed that the ritual dance has existed in the Puri temple ever since the origin of the Jagannath cult.¹

The generic term 'Mahari', used for the temple-dancers, was invented at some point of time to differentiate the *Devadasis* of Lord Jagannath from that of other regions, but it is obvious that long before this term came into use, the ritual temple dance which was called 'Odra Nritya', was prevalent in the temple precinct of Lord Jagannath. However, *Maharis* preserved, modified and continued the *Odra* dance over a long period. Hence, in popular perception, *Mahari* and the Odissi dance have been identified, which is historically incorrect. Long before *Maharis* came into existence, the *Odra* dance, the precursor of Odissi, was in vogue and its performers were *Devadasis*.

Though the popular beliefs and deeply-embedded convictions of *Maharis* about their origin and relationship with Lord Jagannath are difficult to be ascertained historically, the fact remains that *Maharis* enjoy the unique privilege of being the closest to Lord Jagannath. The *Mahari* tradition, ever since its origin, is not merely a ritual dance; it is a way of life in which the dancer surrenders herself at the feet of Lord Jagannath with the gaze of her innermost soul riveted in rapt adoration upon His image.² This is expressed in the very first words she utters when she starts dancing, "*Jagannathaswamy nayanapathagami bhavatume*" (may Lord Jagannath come into the path of my vision.). Perhaps, because of this proximity with Lord Jagannath, the temple dancers feel more comfortable with their title 'devadasi' (literally meaning, maid of god) than with 'Mahari'.³

According to the temple system, *Maharis* have to dance before the god, twice a day. During the morning offering, dance is confined to 'nritta', pure

¹Ibid.

²Ritha Devi, 'The Descendants of Urvashi', Journal of the Indian Musicological Society, Vol.2, No.2 (1971) .p.8

³Ms.Parashamani Devadasi, op.cit.

dance with only body gestures but without song and during the god's ritual adornment before going to bed, dance is expressive and known as 'nritya' with song, music and body gestures. In addition, they are also supposed to dance on festive occasions such as Chandan Yatra and Jhulan Yatra. Thus, dance in the Jagannath temple is performed for Lord Jagannath and hence it may be described as a 'ritual dance'.

Historically, this ritual dance was nurtured and sustained in the Jagannath temple by the active patronage of the Orissan kings. The Ganga king Chodagangadeva (1078-1150 A.D.) constructed the present Jagannath temple at Puri and formalised the *Mahari* seva. Some scholars think that with Chodagangadeva, the term 'Mahari' came into vogue.¹ According to Rathsharma, from the days of Chodagangadeva, the equation of *Devadasis* as *Maharis* and thereby assigning them a lower position in society, was strengthened.² However, during Chodaganga's time, *Maharis* were provided with maintenance, residence and a regular income.³ His son, Rajarajadeva II (1170-1194 A.D.) appointed twenty dancing girls in the temple.⁴ But it was the *Suryavamsi Gajapati* kings who really gave a boost to the ritual dance. In the intervening period, Jayadeva composed his celebrated Gita Govinda (circa 12th century) which brought about changes in the dance techniques throughout India because of its celebration of Lord Vishnu and of His manifestation, Lord Krshna. Since by the 12th century, Lord Jagannath had already been identified with Lord Vishnu, the Gita Govinda was readily absorbed into the ritual dance of the Jagannath temple. The *Gajapati* king Kapilendradeva (1435-1467 A.D.) built the *Natya Mandap* in the Jagannath temple for the performance of dance. He made it a rule that *Maharis* would

¹Ritha Devi, op.cit., p.6

²Rathsharma, op.cit., p.11

³Sunil Kothari and Avinash Pasricha, Odissi: Indian Classical Art (Bombay, 1990), p.41

⁴D.N.Patnaik, Odissi Dance (Bhubaneswar, 1971), p.37

dance twice a day (the morning offering and the ritual adornment before going to bed) and began having the Gita Govinda rendered in dance and song as part of the ritual dance for Lord Jagannath.¹

It is during the reign of Prataparudradeva (1497-1540 A.D.) that the ritual dance took a new turn and became more visibly precursor of the contemporary Odissi dance. Prataparudradeva made a strict ruling that only the Gita Govinda and no other text should be recited or used for dance in the Jagannath temple- a ruling which holds good to this day .² More important was Prataparudradeva's declaration that, 'if a steward caused other songs to be recited, he was in revolt against the god Jagannath'.³ Another significant development during the period was the introduction of 'Abhinaya' (dance performed to a sung text) in the ritual dance, by Ray Ramananda, the great devotee and collaborator of Sri Chaitanya. It is believed that Ramananda had made Maharis act in his own composition, 'Jagannath Ballava Natakam' and in the Jayadeva's Gita Govinda.⁴

Before the introduction of the Gita Govinda in the Jagannath temple, the ritual dance was essentially 'nritta', pure dance. This was the greatest spiritual 'seva' or service of Maharis to Lord Jagannath.⁵ But as we have seen, with the *Suryavamsi Gajapati* kings under the impact of Vaishnavism, dance became 'nritya' with song, music and body gestures. *Nritya* also included *Abhinaya* when dance came to be performed to a sung text, primarily the Gita Govinda. Thus, over a period of time, it came to include all the three aspects, *Nritta*,

¹Mohan Khokar, The Splendours of Indian Dance (Rev.edn., New Delhi, 1988), p. 57

²K.B.Tripathy, The Evolution of Oriya Language and Script (Cuttack, 1962), pp. 300-301

³Ibid.

⁴D.N.Patnaik, Odissi Nrutya (3rd edn., Bhubaneswar, 1988), pp. 50-51

⁵P.C.Das, 'Odissi Nrutyara Bibhagikarana o Kramanirupana', in K.C.Pattanaik (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 87

Nritya and *Abhinaya*- which now form the three planks of Odissi. It is plausible to argue that the historical evolution of the Odissi dance to a systematic dance form took place within the framework of a Jagannath-centric consciousness. The medieval Hindu royalty patronised it as a necessary ritual for the god and in the temple arrangement its continuity was predicated on the Oriya belief and devotion in Lord Jagannath.

The tradition of Odra dance from a ritual *Seva*- oriented dance to the present Odissi was maintained by emergence of another class of dancers, known as *Gotipuas*, *Gotipos*, *Gotipilas* or *Akhadapilas*. They all mean boy-dancers dressed as girls. They dance in the Jagannath temple and public places for general entertainment. The *Gotipua* dance tradition was created because of the gradual decline of the *Mahari* tradition under the devastating impact of the Muslim invasion on the temple.¹ *Maharis* were forcibly employed for entertainment in the royal courts and hence gradually lost their sanctity and ceased to be respected as *dasis* (maids) of Lord Jagannath. As a result, it became necessary to create a new class of dancers to continue the ritual dance. To employ young boys for this purpose was also dictated by the Vaishnavite traditions i.e., forsaking the company of women and self-surrender to Lord Krshna as his *Gopis*. The Vaishnavites under the influence of Sri Chaitanya advocated the *Sakhi Bhava* or *Gopi Bhava* cult, that god could be approached only through ecstatic devotion as in the manner of the *Gopis* of Brindaban who worshipped Lord Krshna and that the Lord alone is *Purusa* (male) and all devotees *Gopis*. This gave impetus to the introduction of the *Gotipua* dance. It was the Khurda king *Gajapati* Ramachandradeva (who had reinstated the Jagannath cult) who took special measures for the *Gotipua* dancers and formalised them as a group of temple-dancers in the early 17th century. He built seven streets near the temple of which one, known as 'Chapa Akhanda Palli', was allotted to *Gotipuas*.²

¹For details, see, D.N.Patnaik, op.cit., pp. 62-67

²Kothari and Pasricha, op.cit., p. 44

Gotipuas not only continued the ritual dance tradition but also improved its style by adding several *bandhas*-acrobatic feats which are mentioned in various manuals pertaining to Odissi.¹ Like *Maharis*, *Gotipuas* have also been assigned to dance in some festive rituals of Lord Jagannath. For example, during the *Chandan Yatra*, both *Maharis* and *Gotipuas* are supposed to dance in the boats on the Narendra tank, to entertain the Jagannath Triad. In another festival, *Jhulan Yatra*, an image of Lord Jagannath is placed on a swing and *Maharis* and *Gotipuas* dance in front of it.

With the passing of time, because of the growing public criticism of the temple-dance and of temple dancers and lack of government support, the *Mahari* ritual dance has been almost discontinued in the Jagannath temple. There is now only symbolic enactment on festive occasions, but as we have seen, both *Maharis* and *Gotipuas* continued and preserved this ritual dance. It was given new life and a systematic vocabulary of expression and consequently, the dying temple ritual dance once known as 'Odra dance', emerged in its new incarnation as 'Odissi'.

Odissi, when contrasted with other forms of classical dance in India, seems to have a unique historical tradition. There is no doubt that like Odissi, other dance forms such as *Bharat Natyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Kathak*, *Kathakali*, *Mohiniattam* and *Manipuri*, had somehow been associated with religion and the temple in the early stages of their evolution. But in contrast to Odissi they, in course of their evolution, have been fed and nourished by multiple sources. Comparison between Odissi and other major forms of Indian classical dance, is relevant because it shows how only the Odissi had a one-to-one relationship with religion and temple. Unlike any other form, it was exclusively a ritual dance and was nurtured and sustained in the temple, primarily in the Puri temple. Moreover, Lord Jagannath was its prime moving-force, because as we have seen, it was enacted for Him as a daily ritual. Even to this day, the

¹Sunil Kothari, 'Gotipua Dancers of Orissa', Sangeet Natak, No. 8 (1968), p. 33

Odissi dancers feel the presiding influence of the Lord on their dance performance. For instance, the great Odissi danseuse the late Sanjukta Panigrahi used to feel that whenever she was dancing, she was offering something at the feet of Lord Jagannath and that it was by His grace that she was able to move her fingers or feet.¹ For Panigrahi, dance was a 'puja' or offering to Lord Jagannath. While Lord Jagannath's association with the Odissi dance has been so predominating and decisive, the king's association with Odissi was primarily confined to the sustenance, regulation and continuation of the dance as a ritual; it did not contribute to the evolution of Odissi's form and content which was determined mostly by the tradition of the ritual dance itself. It may thus be argued that only Odissi has a purely temple-based, ritualistic lineage among all the major Indian classical dances.

The claim made above for the Odissi dance may be examined vis-a-vis other forms of classical dance. *Bharat Natyam*, for example developed not only from the *devadasi* dance prevalent in the temples of the Southern India, but also from the tradition of court-dancing of the *Rajanatakis* (Royal Dancers), particularly in the courts of the Maratha kings of Tanjore (1674-1855 A.D.). The present form of *Bharat Natyam* was defined and crystallised through the remarkable contributions of four great masters, Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Vadivelu and Sivananda - all patronised by the Maratha court of Tanjore. The *Kuchipudi* dance from the State of Andhra Pradesh is associated with Siddhendra Yogi and his play, 'Parijatapaharanam'² of the 13th century A.D., but its tradition was also greatly influenced by the *Bhakti* movement which had emerged in the South in the 6th century A.D. . *Kathak* in northern India has its roots in the *Kathakara* (story-telling) tradition prevalent in the temples of northern India. In this tradition, mime, gesture, music and dance were used for narration of a story. With the establishment of Mughal rule, the

¹Interview of late Sanjukta Panigrahi, published in The Times of India, New Delhi, 26 July 1997

²Khokar, op.cit., pp.74-75

court-dancers, called *nautch-girls*, adopted the *Kathakara* dance style. Ultimately, Mughal court dancing shaped the present form of *Kathak*.¹ In the 15th and 16th centuries A.D., with the ascendancy of Vaishnavism, the sacred Radha-Krshna legend - the *Ras lila* contributed to the evolution of the content of *Kathak*.

In the South, the *Kathakali* dance from Kerala owes its origin as much to ritual dance style as to dance-dramas of the region. The ritual dance performed in the *Bhagavati* cult (Worship of the Mother Goddess) and the dance drama, called *Mudiyettu*, greatly contributed to its evolution. In the 17th and 18th centuries A.D., two forms of dance-drama, such as *Krshnattam*, depicting the life-story of Lord Krshna and *Ramanattam*, depicting the life of Lord Ramachandra (hero of the great epic the Ramayana) anticipated the modern *Kathakali* dance. Another classical dance form from Kerala, *Mohiniattam* has its origin in the *devadasi* dance tradition (*Dasiyattam*) and in court patronage as well.² It got its name from the female character *Mohini* of the Hindu mythology - the arch enchantress *Mohini* who tempts, baits and seduces man. This is because the *devadasis* of Kerala combined the high standard of technical excellence, with the enticing acting of *Mohinis* as mentioned in the ancient texts. On the other hand, the *Manipuri* dance from the north-eastern State of Manipur evolved as a result of mutual interaction between the dances of *Meitheis* (valley people of Manipur) and the Vaishnavite dances like *Raasa* and *Sankeertan*.

Apart from its unique tradition, the Odissi dance is also regarded as the oldest classical dance in India. It is a continuation of the art which was practised two millennia ago. It contains elements such as adaptations of some *karana*, *hasta* and movements of body and limbs which are based on the

¹Projesh Banerji, Kathak Dance through Ages (New Delhi, 1982), pp.21-22

²For example, the ruler of Travancore, Swati Tirunal (first half of the 19th century) patronised Mohiniattam.

Bharata's Natyasastra and which are not found in any other form of *shastric* dance today.¹ More important is the fact that from being nurtured and sustained in the Jagannath temple as a ritual dance- a divine art, it was transformed over a period of time, to a distinct cultural pattern of Orissa. The Jagannath-centric Odissi dance is now an essential component of the Oriya cultural repository.

The history of the Odissi dance demonstrates that Oriyas maintained this tradition more as a religious ritual, unaware of its cultural potency. The dance survived all the vicissitudes and continued through *Maharis*, *Gotipuas* and finally the present host of dancers. It is symbolic of the Oriya religious consciousness that it manifests and asserts itself by maintaining and nurturing this dance form.

In the preceding pages, we have seen how Oriya religious identity came to be manifested in the Jagannath cult. This process had started even in the early stage of the evolution of the cult. During that time, a common experience centring round Lord Jagannath had developed, but in the 19th and 20th centuries, it became more-marked and self-manifesting, taking some form of identity. Arguably, it is in the god-king symbiosis, festivals and rituals, *Mahaprasad* system, *Mukti Mandap* assembly and in Odissi dance, that this common experience took a form of identity. They came to explain the specific essence by virtue of which Oriya religious identity was constructed and construed.

The overwhelming Jagannath-centric identity of Oriyas was not maintained without theological opposition and criticism. The challenge had been very often autochthonous, arising out of the Hindu tradition itself. For example, in 19th century Orissa, a protest movement was launched within the

¹Mohan Khokar, Traditions of Indian Classical Dance (Delhi, 1979), pp. 123-124. Moreover, Kapila Vatsyayana also argues Odissi to be the earliest classical dance style on the basis of archaeological evidence. Kapila Vatsyayana, Indian Classical Dance (New Delhi, 1974), p. 34

Hindu community itself. Popularly known as *Mahima (Alekh) Dharma*, it is believed to have been directed against the Jagannath cult and its theological discourse constituted a critique of the Jagannath-centrism of the Oriya religious world. The Jagannath cult came to be seen as the 'Other' and was seen as opposed to the recently-grown indigenous faith, *Mahima Dharma*. An examination of the *Mahima Dharma's* relation with the Jagannath cult is meaningful, in the context of our study of the Jagannath-based religious identity of Oriyas.

The founder of the *Mahima Dharma* was known as Mukunda Das, who was a Vaishnavite and had lived in Puri for a long time. He came to live on the Kapilas mountain in the Dhenkanal district for some years from where he started preaching his new doctrines. In the *Mahima Dharma* tradition, its founder was attributed with divine and supernatural powers. Mukunda Das was, for example known as Mahima Gosain, one not born out of his mother's womb (ayonisambhuta), but a pure incarnation of the *Mahima* (radiance, glory). He was also known as Alekh Svami, meaning the Lord whose attributes cannot be described in writing. It is said that Mahima Gosain believed in the existence of Hindu gods and goddess who were supposed to be under his command and bound to obey whatever he wished them to do.¹

The most important tradition attached to Mahima Gosain's life is that the God Jagannath Himself was the first to know the advent of Mahima Gosvami and hence, He left the Puri temple to become his first disciple. As soon as Lord Jagannath was converted by Mahima Gosain, all His sins as an incarnator (Avatari) were eliminated and He was baptised as Govinda baba. This is how, Lord Jagannath was absorbed to the Mahima tradition.

Mahima Gosain preached in the former feudatory States of Orissa, Tigeria, Angul, Dhenkanal, Baudh, Rairokhol, Soneper and Banki and gathered a fast growing number of disciples around him. He also set up a number of

¹Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1882 (Calcutta, 1882), pp. 4-5

Mathas and Tungis, the places of worship and congregation, but his followers mostly consisted of ignorant and illiterate people of the lower classes of the Hindu community who were induced to adopt the new religion by hopes of enjoyment if they followed it and by threats of perdition if they did not follow its precepts.¹ However, the most important and prominent follower of the *Alekh Dharma* was the great Oriya poet Bhima Bhoi (1855-1895 A.D.), who also popularised the teachings of Mahima Gosain and the tenets of the *Alekh Dharma*. Like Mahima Gosain, miracles have been attributed to him, which are also mentioned in his writings. One such miracle relates to Lord Jagannath. Bhima Bhoi, who was born-blind, met Mahima Gosain and Lord Jagannath (already a disciple of Gosain) in a vision and they restored his eyesight. But not wishing to see bad things in the world, he requested his visitors to take away his eyesight and instead, bestow on him prophetic and poetic gifts so that he could preach the *Alekh Dharma*!²

Thus, in the *Mahima Dharma* tradition, one finds a deliberate attempt to associate Lord Jagannath not only with its founder, Mahima Gosain but also with its the most famous exponent and intellectual, Bhima Bhoi. This association is contrary to the general belief that the Mahima Dharma is anti-Jagannath. Its tenets and practices and its position vis-a-vis the Jagannath cult may be examined here to determine the nature of its relation with Lord Jagannath.

The *Mahima Dharma* believes in one Supreme Being or *Parama Brahma*, who is called *Alekh* (who is indescribable in writing) or *Mahima* (glory, radiance). This Supreme Being, as in the *Panchasakha* conception which has been discussed in detail in the next chapter, is identified with *Shunya* (emptiness) which is beyond all existence and non-existence. The *Shunya*

¹Ibid., p.4

²A.Eschmann, 'Mahima Dharma: An Autochthonous Hindu Reform Movement', in Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi(eds), op.cit., p.382

Parama Brahma is characterised by *nirguna* (without attributes), *nirakara* (formless), *anadi* (eternal) and *niranjan* (pure or without spot). As we shall see later, the *Panchasakha* poets in the medieval age, had already conferred these attributes on Lord Jagannath in their invocation. If Lord Jagannath is the ultimate or the acme in the *Panchasakhas'* theological conception, for the *Mahimapanthis* (followers of Alekh Dharma), the Supreme Being, *Alekh* with all the attributes mentioned above, is the ultimate.

In the writings of Bhima Bhoi, the intellectual preceptor of the *Mahima Dharma*, the *Panchasakha* tradition was maintained, although the Jagannath-based tradition was criticised. But it does not constitute any denunciation or theological opposition to the Jagannath cult. For example, one may consider Bhima Bhoi's 'Shrutinisedha Gita', where the poet has raised some doubts about the conventional wisdom regarding Lord Jagannath. Attacking the rituals of the Jagannath cult, he advises people not to observe the externals of religion, but to worship its essence. Bhima Bhoi does not believe that Lord Jagannath resides in the Puri temple, otherwise there would not have been violence, inequality and hatred.¹ Moreover, if He is really Jagannath- the Lord of the Universe, He should not have confined Himself to one place and should have made everybody equal, but unfortunately His glory is confined to five 'Kos' (a distance measurement unit) of Puri only.² So there is no justification in His name 'Jagannath' which literally means Master of the Universe. On the contrary, Bhima Bhoi finds that Lord Jagannath resides in every human being and therefore, it is useless to worship His wooden image.³ Maintaining the *Panchasakha* tradition of *Pinda Brahamanda* (macrocosm-in-microcosm) theory, he identifies every individual with Lord Jagannath and reminds him of his unlimited potentials. In Bhima Bhoi's words:

¹Bhima Bhoi Granthavali (Cuttack, 1971) , pp. 8-9

²*Ibid.* , p. 9

³*Ibid.* , p. 10

Jagannath is there in this body,
 But man is worshiping His image in vain.
 Image is just dried wood,
 How can it take someone to Heaven?
 Without recognising image in own body,
 Man runs after falsity.
 O' man, you are yourself Jagannath,
 Your potentials are unlimited for you.¹

It is strange that though, in 'Shrutinisedha Gita' Bhima Bhoi denies the existence of Lord Jagannath in the Puri temple, in 'Stuti Chintamani', he accepts the scriptural proof of His existence in Nilachala-Puri. In the 8th chapter of 'Stuti Chintamani', he celebrates Lord Jagannath of Puri and says that His beauty is not comparable even to the brightness of millions of suns, put together.² He even justifies different synonyms for Lord Jagannath such as Madanamohan, Giridhari, Benudhar, Chakadola, Banamali etc. and explains their significance.³

Bhima Bhoi has never denied the existence of Lord Jagannath. In a long poem 'Nirbeda Sadhana', he mentions the *Mahima Dharma* tradition of how Lord Jagannath Himself left the Puri temple, met Mahima Gosain, received the knowledge of *Brahma* and *Bhaktiyoga* and how all His sins of becoming an incarnator of ten incarnations were washed away.⁴ Bhima Bhoi imagines Lord Jagannath as 'human Vishnu' (Manaba Vishnu) whose sins of an incarnation were burnt by *Brahma*, *Anadi-Alekh*.⁵

As we have already shown, in the theology of the *Mahima Dharma*, the supreme and the highest being is known as *Alekh* or *Param Brahma*. In Bhima

¹Ibid. ,pp.10-11

²Ibid. ,pp.647-648

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. ,pp.35-104

⁵Ibid. ,p.39

Bhoi's conception, Lord Jagannath is made subsidiary to *Alekh*. This is evident in his 'Nirbeda Sadhana' where Lord Jagannath is said to have left His abode at the Puri temple and followed Alekh day and night.¹ In 'Shrutinisedha Gita' also, *Alekh* is said to have created Lord Jagannath as a human incarnation.² Thus, Lord Jagannath is assigned a lowly position vis-a-vis *Alekha*, but He is not denied nor is His existence doubted.

Eschmann, by drawing some parallels between the *Mahima Dharma* and the Jagannath cult, has tried to show a similarity between the two.³ The *Mahima Dharma* was not really an anti-Jagannath movement as is a general misconception of some scholars and commentators. We have already seen that in both the *Mahima Dharma* tradition and theology, Lord Jagannath has been frequently invoked. Though in its tradition, Lord Jagannath occupies a subsidiary position, Bhima Bhoi identifies Him with the *Alekh* Supreme Being when he says in 'Shrutinisedha Gita' that Lord Jagannath resides in every human being. Apparently, whatever anti-Jagannath tirades are there in the *Mahima Dharma* tradition or in Bhima Bhoi's writings, are a critique of the orthodoxy of the Jagannath cult. From this perspective, one may analyse the much-publicised incident of March, 1881 when some *Mahimapanthis* forcibly entered the Puri temple to drag out the idols of the Jagannath Triad for destruction.

According to the report, a group of twelve men and three women who were devotees of Bhima Bhoi, forcibly entered the temple with the object of burning the Jagannath Triad and they were almost in a state of nudity, shouting '*alekh*', '*alekh*'.⁴ They were induced to come to Puri to burn the idols,

¹Ibid., pp. 36-37

²Ibid., p. 27

³For details, see, A. Eschmann, op.cit., pp. 387-389

⁴Resolution No. 4209J (Judicial), Dated Calcutta, the 21 October 1881, JTC (Part VI, 1880-84)

at the instigation of one of their co-religionists, Dasharam, who had been supposedly commanded by Alekh Svami to destroy the idols. The intruders came up to the great hall of the temple, in front of the shrine, but finding the door, called *Jaivijay*, shut they rushed about like mad people, trying to find an entrance to the shrine in some other direction.¹ They were resisted by the temple priests and pilgrims. In the ensuing struggle, Dasharam, their leader fell on the stone pavement and was trampled to death.² The others were soon arrested by the police.

Though the *Mahimapanthis*' attempt to burn the idols of the Triad was prevented, this incident came to be seen as a direct onslaught on the well-established tradition of the Jagannath cult. The *Mahimapanthi* intruders came to burn the idols because they had the command of Alekh Svami that since there was no 'Brahma' in the Jagannath Triad, it was useless to retain the idols in the temple.³ This so-called command was, in reality, symbolic of the recognition of the extreme orthodoxy of the institution of Jagannath involving too many rituals and externals, in the late 19th century. Perhaps, the *Mahimapanthis*, being followers of an attribute-less Supreme Being, could not tolerate this orthodoxy and wanted to purge Lord Jagannath of it.

Taking into account this unfortunate incident in the Puri temple, the contemporary British government reports dubbed the *Mahimapanthis* as Hindu 'dissenters', 'fanatics' and 'rioters'. But given the real state of affairs and the theological understanding of Bhima Bhoi, it is really difficult to accept these uncharitable comments. The intruders also formed part of a *Mahimapanthi* group which had developed around Bhima Bhoi at Khaliapala in Sonepur. But we have already shown Bhima Bhoi's attitude and sentiments towards Lord Jagannath, as found in his writings and so it is very difficult to

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³UD, Cuttack, 26 March 1881

accept the argument that the group attached to him, could have conducted a 'raid' on the Puri temple to 'burn' the images. Moreover, according to the *Alekh Dharma* tradition, Lord Jagannath had already left His dwelling at Puri as soon as he became a disciple of Mahima Svami. It is therefore difficult to see what purpose there would have been for *Mahimapanthis* to burn the image of Lord Jagannath when His 'essence' had already left the wooden body. On the contrary, it is more sensible to describe the whole incident as an emotional outburst of the *Mahimapanthis* against the externals and rituals of Lord Jagannath. It was not a 'raid' nor an attempt to 'burn', in the literal sense of the terms; rather it was a symbolic act to destroy the orthodoxy and pride and hauteur that had already crept into the Jagannath cult.

Chittaranjan Das argues that *Mahima Dharma* began in Orissa with the uprooting of the Jagannath cult.¹ He also sees many possibilities and prospects in the Mahima Dharma and declares liberalism as its essence. It is true that this indigenous religious movement has some liberal principles such as anti-casteism and common feast, but Das' conclusion that the Jagannath cult had been uprooted in Orissa is not supported by the facts. Perhaps, he is not aware that the initial success of the *Mahima Dharma* in the second half of the 19th century was at least, partly due to the introduction of the Jagannath cult in the former feudatory states of Orissa. The *Mahima Dharma* came to regard itself as the final stage and the true revival of Jagannath worship, thereby admitting everyone, even the lower orders that were no longer allowed at this time within the orthodox Jagannath cult.² Furthermore, as the evidence suggests, the *Mahima Dharma* is not a counter or alternative movement to the Jagannath worship. It brought Lord Jagannath Himself to its fold and readmitted some original essential elements of the Jagannath cult such as equality and the common feast. Some rites similar to those in the Puri

¹For his arguments, see, Chittaranjan Das, Odisara Mahima Dharma (Shantiniketan, 1952)

²A. Eschmann, *op.cit.*, pp. 387-388

temple are also performed in the main *Mahima* temple at Joranda (in the district of Dhenkanal). One may not also lose sight of the presence of the image of a seven-hooded snake on the top of the *Mahima* temples. This has some allusion to Vasuki, the snake on which Lord Vishnu reclines on, in His abode of the ocean of milk. The *Mahimapanthis* and Bhima Bhoi in particular accept that Mahima Gosain is the incarnation of the ocean-dwelling Lord Vishnu. They further believe that Lord Vishnu in the form of Mahima Gosain brings the *lila*, the sportive dalliance from His ocean of milk to the land and so the seven-hooded snake is placed on the *Mahima* temples.¹ Thus, in both theology and practice, some elements of the Jagannath cult find their presence in the *Mahima Dharma*. Hence, the *Mahima Dharma* might be described more appropriately as a 'successor' movement to the Jagannath cult.

Our attempt to locate the *Mahima Dharma* within the broad spectrum of the Jagannath cult is also partly prompted by the new orientation, rendered by Visvanath Baba, to the *Mahima Dharma*. He not only systematised its teachings by way of 'Sanskritisation', but also remodelled them vis-a-vis older Hindu texts. Take for example, his 'Satya Mahima Dharma Pratipadaka' (first published in 1931 A.D.), where he makes frequent references to the Bhagavat Gita, the Bhagavata Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Vishnu Purana, the Upanishada and to the Sanskrit texts of the *Vedanta* school.² While substantiating the *Mahima Dharma* with the help of the Sanskrit texts, Visvanath Baba has not dissociated it from the *Panchasakha* philosophy and tradition. He has rather tried to dissociate it from the regional esoteric traditions. The Jagannath cult, as a regional variant of Vaishnavism, has been fed on the Sanskrit texts and traditions mentioned above. So at a theoretical

¹ B.B.Mishra, *Religious Movements in Orissa* (Jaipur, 1998), p. 96

² See, Visvanath Baba, Satya Mahima Dharma Pratipadaka (2 vols., 4th edn., Bhubaneswar, 1971), I

level, it is not logical to describe the *Mahima Dharma* as opposed to the Jagannath cult, when both of them draw on the same sources for their legitimacy.

The overriding presence of the Jagannath cult with its long, well-entrenched history in Orissa, has contributed to the nurture of critics such as Mahima Dharma. So it is very difficult to find any indigenous opposition or protest in Orissa, which is beyond the spell of the Jagannath cult. Arguably, the Jagannath cult could provide religious boundary to Oriyas, including those who appear to be critical of it. Such a construction of the Jagannath cult as religious boundary of Oriyas raises the problem of its reconciliation with pan-Hinduism. We have seen earlier, how the Jagannath cult developed as a Vaishnavite tradition and Lord Jagannath came to be ultimately identified with Lord Vishnu/Krshna. Thus essentially a Hindu tradition, the Jagannath cult was transformed in course of time, to a distinct regional faith, but at the same time became a main pilgrimage centre of the Hindu world. This however, is not a contradiction, but rather an indication of the importance of Lord Jagannath in the Hindu pantheon. Lord Jagannath is the outcome of many shapings and reshapings by various religious cross-currents and He has been the great Lord (Bada Thakur) of all religious upheavals in Orissa, be it Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism or Buddhism.¹ And His cult could become the Oriya religion because of its overwhelming impact on the whole of Oriya life. At the same time, Lord Jagannath has been a prominent Hindu god because of His identification with Lord Vishnu/Krshna. Moreover, His acceptability in the entire Hindu world is enhanced by the fact that the Jagannath cult fosters the confluence of different streams of Hinduism.

It may be argued that Lord Jagannath is both, an Oriya deity and a pan-Indian, pan-Hindu god. We have already seen that Lord Jagannath attained eminence in the Hindu world when He came to be identified with the pan-

¹C.R.Das, 'Studies in medieval Religion and Literature of Orissa', in P.C.Bagchi (ed.), Visva-Bharati Annals (Shantiniketan, 1951), IV, p.114

Hindu deity, Vishnu/Krishna. This was part of the process of 'universalisation' which, according to Marriot explains the origin of the great tradition of an indigenous civilization.¹ The Jagannath cult, though it started off as a regional faith, underwent a process of 'universalisation' under the influence of great religious teachers like Chaitanya and the religious-philosophical writings of the *Panchasakhas*.² The devotional Oriya poets of the medieval and early modern ages also imagined Lord Jagannath as the centre of the universe. Yet, given the historical compulsions, He remained essentially an Oriya deity.

This brings out the fact that an Oriya devotee of Lord Jagannath is a member of pan-Hinduism, but to be a devotee of Lord Jagannath does not require that one must be an Oriya. This does not militate against Oriyas identifying themselves with Lord Jagannath. Perhaps, that is why, only an Oriya utters very frequently 'Jai Jagannath' (victory to Jagannath) before undertaking any important task. Still today an Oriya only enters into a social relationship with somebody in the name of Lord Jagannath and acquiesces in the Lord for all his fortunes and misfortunes. No other land except Orissa is known as 'Jagannath Dham' (the land of Jagannath) and only the Oriya culture is known as the 'Jagannath samskriti'. For all practical purposes, Lord Jagannath is a member of the Hindu pantheon for outsiders who may worship and venerate Him, but it is only Oriyas who take Him as a reflection of their identity.

The overwhelming impact of the Jagannath cult on Oriyas has not been confined to their religious world alone; it has spread to their socio-cultural life as well. Consequently, Lord Jagannath has been appropriated as a secular symbol of Orissa. It could be possible because the Jagannath-based religious

¹McKim Marriot, 'Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization', in McKim Marriot(ed.), Village India: Studies in the Little Community (Chicago, 1955), pp.197-198

²See for details, Chapter VII

identity acquired increasingly subjective and symbolic significance. We have seen that, by the 20th century, the Jagannath cult had been formalised as a collective experience uniting Oriyas. It was concretely manifested in a number of instances such as the Puri temple case of 1886-87 A.D., the Sambalpur language controversy of 1895-96 A.D. and the birth of Odissi dance which have been discussed above. All this shows how the collective Jagannath consciousness has been translated into symbolic meaning. Agitation in Orissa over the British attempt to take charge of the Puri temple was as much symbolic of the collective Jagannath consciousness as the preservation and emergence of the Odissi dance.

In the secular mould, Lord Jagannath came to symbolise the essence of Oriya. This is manifested in the transformation of Lord Jagannath to a secular force in the Kanchi-Kaver legend.¹ From representing the strength and triumph of the Oriya's Vaishnavite faith, Lord Jagannath, in the recent version of the legend, came to symbolise the valour, spirit and victory of Oriyas. Perhaps, the simplest answer as to the reason why Lord Jagannath came to symbolise Oriya, lies in Hunter's observation: 'This great yearning after Jagannath is to some extent the outcome of centuries of companionship in suffering between the people and their god. In every disaster of Orissa, Jagannath has borne his share'.² This companionship has been traditionally acknowledged by Oriyas. Oriya soldiers have fought the battles against their enemies under the banner of Lord Jagannath with the cry, 'Jai Jagannath', meaning victory to Jagannath and the land He represents. In a way, Lord Jagannath and Oriya have been interlocked in companionship.

In the present century, Lord Jagannath has been often invoked by the Oriya leaders as a rallying ground. For example, the great Oriya leader Gopabandhu Das, in his poem 'Bandira Atmakatha' interpreted Lord

¹See, chapter V for details.

²Hunter, op.cit., p.84

Jagannath as the leader of Orissa who led the Oriya army in Purushottamadeva's Kanchi expedition (according to the Kanchi-Kaveri tradition).¹ Perhaps, the companionship with Lord Jagannath had been an overwhelming influence on Gopabandhu, so he declared, 'wherever I might be in India, I would always feel to be with Lord Jagannath'.² Inspiring Oriyas in the name of Lord Jagannath so that they could be united, was the aim of the Oriya leaders. It became all the more, a politico-cultural necessity in the early part of the 20th century, when the Oriya-speaking regions were scattered. Gopabandhu Das for example, created strong Oriya sentiment in the Oriya-speaking regions of Bihar, Bengal and Madras Presidency by means of a slogan: 'Let us tread this path and meet the Orissan road and let us tread this path and have a darshan (glimpse) of the black-faced god (Jagannath)'.³ Lord Jagannath was thus invoked as the symbol of Oriya unity which was a sine qua non for the unification of the Oriya-speaking regions.

Yet, another champion of the Oriya cause, Madhusudan Das, who was a Christian, invoked Lord Jagannath as a 'saviour of Oriyas'. While addressing a public meeting at Cuttack in 1928 A.D., he appealed to the millions of Oriyas in a poem, to utter the cry in unison, 'Save us Jagannath' and so that 'darkness that besieged Orissa would end and the road to progress in Orissa would be visible'.⁴ Thus, Lord Jagannath from being the religious symbol of Oriyas, turned out to be a symbol of Orissa and Oriyas. Perhaps that is why, when K.C.Gajapati Narayanadeva became the first Prime Minister (Chief Minister) of Orissa in 1937 A.D., one of his first acts was to pay a ceremonial visit to the Puri temple. This tradition is invariably followed even now, as whenever there

¹Gopabandhu Das, Bandira Atmakatha (4th edn., Cuttack, 1949), p. 9

²Ibid., p. 21

³Suryanarayan Das, Utkalmani Gopabandhu. Purbarddha (2nd edn., Cuttack, 1979), pp. 320-321

⁴G.N.Das, op.cit., p. 374

is a new government in the state, they pay a ceremonial visit to the temple immediately after assuming charge. Its message is clear. The visit to the temple is meant to acknowledge Lord Jagannath's overlordship over Orissa and Oriyas; hence, a visit to Him by the highest leadership of the state is expected to make it more acceptable to Oriyas, cutting across party and political lines.

However, all this does not mean that the religious significance of the Jagannath cult for Oriyas has been diluted. Lord Jagannath still determines the religious life of an average Oriya who is not bothered whether He has been transformed into a secular symbol or His earthly embodiment, the Puri *Raja-the Chalanti Vishnu* has lost the divine sanctity, due to increasing secularisation of royal affairs. It is because, the Jagannath cult has already acquired symbolic meaning whereby the cult implies the religious identity of Oriyas. Thus not the concrete object, but its symbol and its implication is now more meaningful.

CHAPTER VII

LORD JAGANNATH, AS CONSTRUED AND CONSTRUCTED IN LITERATURE, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND NARRATIVES ON ORISSA

The centrality of Lord Jagannath in Oriya life comes from the fact that Oriya religious identity is based on the Jagannath cult. In the last chapter, we saw how different aspects of the cult such as the king-cult relationship, festivals and rituals, Mahaprasad system, Mukti Mandap assembly and ritual dance have imparted a Jagannath-centric identity to Oriyas. But we have already seen how in an earlier stage much before colonialism, a common religious consciousness developed through a common system of belief although without any reflection on self-identity. This chapter seeks to analyse how Oriya literature and the historiography and narratives on Orissa have treated and constructed the Jagannath cult. The intellectual discourse that developed from it, tried to appropriate the Jagannath cult to Orissa and Oriyas. In the process, the cult was re-stated and redefined so that Lord Jagannath could be brought within the reach of the Oriya folk.

This chapter is divided into two sections, the first dealing with Oriya literature and the second dealing with the historiography and narratives on Orissa. However, in both sections we have moved back considerably in order to first show the long tradition of intellectually 'constructing' Lord Jagannath and secondly demonstrate the shift in perspective during the period of our study.

I

Ever since the days of Sarala Dasa who is regarded as the originator of Oriya literature, Lord Jagannath has been frequently invoked in the writings of Oriya authors. Sarala Das first invoked Lord Jagannath in his magnum opus the Mahabharata in the 15th century A.D.. Deviating from the Puranic

accounts of the Jagannath cult, he recreated a new legend of its origin.

Like the Puranic versions¹, Sarala's Mahabharata placed Lord Jagannath in the land of Orissa; but in addition, Sarala Dasa created the legend as a local phenomenon, infusing into it indigenous traditions and culture. As a result, the legend was re-stated and the indigenous people of Orissa- the *Savaras*² came to be emphatically and categorically associated with the origin of Lord Jagannath.

Since the Mahabharata version of the origin legend has been discussed in detail in the second chapter, we will restrict ourselves here to an analysis of its meaning and significance to Oriya religious and social traditions. Before Sarala Das, Lord Jagannath had already been established as the presiding deity of Orissa, but He had not been identified exclusively with Orissa nor was there any Oriya text singing His glories. The Sarala Mahabharata, written in Oriya, localised the origin legend and identified pan-Hindu, pan-Indian gods with Lord Jagannath. In two volumes of the Mahabharata, viz., Vana Parva and Musali Parva, Sarala speaks of the origin of the Jagannath cult.³ According to him, Lord Jagannath was being worshipped in the land of Orissa from time immemorial, by the indigenous, pre-Aryan tribals though Orissa was known by a different name at that time. Lord Jagannath was known as '*Savari Narayan*', implying His tribal essence and His image in sapphire was known as Nilamadhav. According to Sarala, '*Savari Narayan*' was worshipped by the forefathers of a *Savara*, called Jara who played a vital role in His metamorphosis into the present day Jagannath. In Sarala's imagination, Jara was none other than Ekalavya, the *Savara* boy of the Mahabharata age who had been refused military training by the great teacher Dronacharya because of his non-Aryan origin. Ekalavya grew up to become the Jara who by mistake

¹See Chapter II for details.

²See, Chapter II for an explanation of the word, *Savara*.

³See, for details, Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata (Vana and Musali Parvas), ed., A. Mohanty (Bhubaneswar, 1966 and 1970)

killed Lord Krshna at Dwaraka. Again, the same Jara recovered the unburnt body of Lord Krishna from the sea at *Sri-Kshetra* Puri and started worshipping it secretly. After narrating this Savara link with Lord Jagannath, Sarala mainly follows the line of Puranic account by bringing the kings Indradyumna and Galava and the emissary Basu within the original legend. He also mentions the construction of a temple at Nilagiri-Puri, the appearance of Lord Krshna (or Vishnu) in a log form in the *Rohinikunda* and finally the carving of the log to the Jagannath Triad.

Though Sarala Dasa's whole account of the origin of the Jagannath cult is incoherent, two aspects clearly emerge from it. One is the major and crucial role assigned to *Savaras* in the origin of the cult. A local tribal, called Jara Savara, is associated not only with the creation of the present form of Lord Jagannath but also with His previous form as Lord Krshna. He killed Lord Krshna, collected the wood of the *Agaru* tree (*Amaris Agallocha*) to burn His body and followed the unburnt portion of His body as it was washed away by the waves of the sea. Then, after getting it on the sea-shore of Puri, Jara started worshipping it secretly. When King Indradyumna built a temple, it was Jara who was informed by Lord Krshna in a dream sequence that He would like to appear on the earth in the Buddha incarnation and would punish the wicked and nurture the good. Finally, the same Jara helped in retrieving the log from the *Rohinikund* and carving it into the Jagannath Triad, with the help of the divine architect, Viswakarma. Jara was made to put the 'essence' in Lord Jagannath's body at the time of the construction of the deity.

Jara's association with the origin of the Jagannath cult is symbolic of its autochthonous, tribal origin and nature. The pre-Aryan, pre-Brahminic religious practice of Orissa which is eloquently suggested by Jara's association with Lord Jagannath, was ultimately absorbed into the institution of Lord Jagannath. It would seem that Sarala Dasa was concerned to prove Lord Jagannath to be essentially a deity of Orissa, existing since time immemorial in the pre-Aryan, pre-Brahminic days. In the origin legend, Jara

himself symbolises the autochthonous elements that went into the origin of the Jagannath cult. While assigning a predominant role to *Savaras*, Sarala Dasa also made Orissa the centre-stage of the events associated with the legend. Thus, the origin of the Jagannath cult became essentially a local phenomenon.

The second important aspect of the Sarala's account is the identification of the pan-Hindu deities Sri Krshna and Vishnu with Lord Jagannath. Before Sarala, there had already been a tendency in Orissa to imagine the inseparability between Lord Jagannath and Lord Krshna. It was the great poet Jaydev who first propagated this idea. Kedarnath Mohapatra proves that at least since the last part of the 12th century, there had been an attempt to identify Lord Jagannath with Lord Krshna.¹ But Sarala Dasa is the first Oriya author, in his writing to bring down the Vaishnavite deities to Orissa and make them merge into the institution of Jagannath. We have already seen that Jara Savara killed Sri Krshna and that the unburnt body of the latter finally metamorphosed itself into the present day Lord Jagannath. So for Sarala Dasa, Sri Krshna and Jagannath are one and the same. Similarly Lord Vishnu, who is supposed to have taken the form of Lord Jagannath in this *Kaliyuga*, was also categorically identified with Him. The Brahminic deity of Vishnu is first imagined as a tribal, autochthonous god who was supposed to have existed among *Savaras* as '*Savari Narayan*' (Vishnu) since time immemorial. '*Savari Narayan*' was the precursor of the present day Lord Jagannath. In the Puranas which deal with the Jagannath cult, there is clear mention of Lord Vishnu's transformation to Lord Jagannath. Though Sarala would have been definitely influenced by the Puranic version, what is novel in his version is the introduction of the concept of '*Savari Narayan*'- the *Savara* Vishnu who was

¹See for details, Kedarnath Mohapatra, '*Prachina Odia Sahityare Sri Jagannath*', in *Shree Jagannath*, ed., Sahitya Akademi (Bhubaneswar, 1982), pp. 86-118

even married to a Savari girl, called Sriya.¹

Throughout the Mahabharata, Sarala Dasa has used different appellations of Lord Vishnu such as Narayana, Madhava, Krshna, Sri Rama and Purushottama interchangeably for Lord Jagannath. In the Vaishnavite tradition, these different appellations denote one and the same- Lord Vishnu. By using them for Lord Jagannath, Sarala establishes Him as a Vaishnavite deity. With him a new Vaishnavite tradition, centring round Lord Jagannath, developed in Orissa. This tradition came to be expounded, nurtured and continued primarily in the literature of the medieval Oriya poets who re-interpreted the Jagannath cult in a new perspective. It helped to bring Lord Jagannath to the comprehensive reach of the Oriya folk.

It is the *Panchasakha* poets² who really concretised and expounded the regional variant of Vaishnavism, based on Lord Jagannath. And in course of time, it came to be known as Odissi Vaishnavism. The period (late 15th and 16th centuries) to which they belonged, was that of a religious re-orientation in Orissa, marked by a conscious attempt by diverse religious trends such as Buddhism, Shaivism, Tantrism and Jainism, to adopt the presiding deity, Lord Jagannath. The *Panchasakha* poets took advantage and drew upon some of the core elements of different religions to propound a new religious philosophy of their own which became highly eclectic in nature. Though it is difficult to assign their philosophy categorically to any religion, they made Lord Jagannath epitomise and embody their philosophies. But the Vaishnavite thrust of their philosophy was clearly brought out by the identification of Lord Jagannath with Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna. Throughout their writings, Jagannath, Vishnu and Krshna are used interchangeably.

The glorification of the Jagannath cult was the most important aspect of the *Panchasakha* philosophy. They considered Lord Jagannath as the

¹Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata (Musali Parva), ed., A. Mohanty (Bhubaneswar, 1970), p. 84

²For more on Panchasakhas, see Chapter II

Incarnator and His abode *Srikshetra*- Puri as the Abode of Eternal Sport. All the ten incarnations and even Lord Krshna emanated from Lord Jagannath and were again absorbed in Him.¹ This is in contrast to the belief of the *Gaudiya* (Bengali) Vaishnavism that Lord Krishna Himself was the Incarnator. The *Panchasakhas* also imagined Lord Jagannath as the Lord of the Universe and the Embodiment of sixteen 'essences'. In 'Bata Abakasha' for example, Balaram Dasa sees Lord Jagannath as the Soul of the Universe which exists throughout without being spent or reduced.² The *Panchasakha* poets glorified not only Lord Jagannath, but also His abode- *Srikshetra* Puri which came to be seen as the *Nitya Kshetra* (Eternal Place) from which were born other *Kshetras*. They also identified different places in Puri with different sites of Mathura-Brindabana, supposed to be originally associated with Lord Krshna. Thus, the Bhargavi river became the Yamuna river; the Gundicha Mandap became the Govardhan hill; the Markandeswar pond became the Kalindi Lake and Atharanalaghata became the Kadambaghata of Gopapura.³ Ultimately, Puri became the *Nitya Golaka* (Eternal Paradise) where Lord Jagannath has His *Nitya Leela* (Eternal Dalliance). In the poet's imagination, the *Nitya Golaka* has four doors in four directions and these are guarded by Lord Jagannath and His manifestations such as Ramachandra, Krshna and Vishnu.⁴ This sort of Jagannath-centric construction of Vaishnavism was in opposition to the philosophy of *Gaudiya* Vaishnavism. According to the latter tradition, Lord Krshna is the centre of the universe and the places like Mathura and Brindaban are the *Nitya Sthalis* (Eternal Place) and His *Raasa Krida* (youthful frolic) is the *Nitya Leela* (Eternal Dalliance).

¹Achyutananda Dasa, Shunya Samhita (New edn., Cuttack, n.d.), I, p.13

²Balarama Dasa, Bata Abakasha (Cuttack, 1930), p.35

³K.C.Mishra, Odissi Vaishnava Dharma (Bhubaneswar, 1961), pp.56-57

⁴Jagannath Dasa, Tulabhina (New edn., Cuttack, n.d.), p.34

The *Panchasakha* conception of Lord Jagannath and Srikshetra was expanded and elaborated by the 17th century Oriya poet Dibakar Das in his hagiographical work, 'Sri Jagannath Charitamrta'. For him, Lord Jagannath was the *Param Brahma* (Highest Brahma) from whom emerged millions of incarnations.¹ He interpreted Lord Jagannath as the embodiment of truth, consciousness and bliss and as Endless, Infinite and Original.² He also identified Jagannath with Krishna, but surprisingly Srikshetra became Sri Radha for him. The eternal celestial love between Krishna and Radha was embodied in Lord Jagannath. By emphasizing this aspect of Jagannath/Krishna's divinity, Das created Lord Jagannath as a benign, eternal lover of the *Gopis*.

Neelachala-Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath was the *Nitya Baikuntha* (Eternal Baikuntha) for Dibakar Das who imagined other *Baikunthas* as emanating from this.³ The Lord of the *Nitya Baikuntha* was Jagannath, hence He was the Lord of other *Baikunthas* too.

Such an exalted conceptualisation of Lord Jagannath and *Srikshetra-Puri* by the *Panchasakha* poets and Dibakar Das, not only made the deity and his abode the centre of the Universe, but also set a new religious trend centring around Lord Jagannath. In proportion to this conceptualisation, the *Panchasakha* poets also imagined how Lord Jagannath's glory and potentialities brought miracles to their personal lives. Balarama Dasa, for example, in his 'Bata Abakasha' mentions a personal anecdote relating to Lord Jagannath who took him for a visit to Lanka (Ceylon) in one night.⁴ According to the Lord's command, he followed Him with the jewelled umbrella,

¹Dibakara Das, Sri Jagannath Charitamrta (Puri, 1963), p. 65

²Ibid., p. 79

³ Ibid., p. 300. Baikuntha is the mythical abode of Lord Vishnu.

⁴See, for details, Balarama Dasa, Bata Abakasha (Cuttack, 1930)

but after returning from Lanka, he forgot to put the umbrella back in the temple. Next morning when everybody started searching for the umbrella, Balarama Dasa revealed the truth before the King. At this the King was utterly surprised and considered the whole episode as Lord Jagannath's divine 'plot'.¹ The glory of Lord Jagannath spread and Balarama himself declared his surrender at the feet of the Lord for all births to come.² In yet another lyric 'Bhava Samdra', Balarama Dasa describes how once Lord Jagannath left His chariot during the Car festival and, boarded the sand chariot built by the poet on the sea-shore.³ During the Car festival, Balarama Dasa had been abused and beaten up by the Brahmins and royal officials as he tried to climb up the chariot reserved for the King and the *Brahmins*. Humiliated, he ran to the sea-shore, built dummy chariots out of sand and poured out all his heart in mental agonies, shame and devotion. Lord Jagannath was moved by Balarama's prayer and in consequence, His chariot did not move further on the high street of Puri, He boarded Balarama's sand chariot. In the night, Lord Jagannath appeared before the King in a dream and told him about the sincerity and devotion of His devotee, Balarama. The following morning, the King came to Balarama Dasa and apologised for the ill-treatment and then, the chariot started moving on the high street.

Both 'Bata Abakasha' and 'Bhava Samudra' are emotionally surcharged with glorifying and eulogising Lord Jagannath. Such narratives about the god's grace to his devotees helped in popularising the Jagannath cult in medieval Orissa. He was brought down from the superhuman realm and projected as the redeemer of devotees.

Apart from glorifying Lord Jagannath, the *Panchasakha* poets, under the influence of diverse religious trends in Orissa, propounded a philosophy

¹Ibid., p. 32

²Ibid., p. 30

³Balarama Dasa, Bhava Samudra (Orissa State Museum Acc. No. 3004)

which was again epitomised in Lord Jagannath. First cosmology was reconstructed by the *Panchasakhas* to ultimately make Lord Jagannath the centre of the universe. Borrowing from the Buddhist concept of *Shunyavada* (voidism), the *Panchasakhas* imagined a *Shunyarupa* (void shape) of the Supreme Being before the creation. Balarama Dasa, in his 'Brahmanda Bhugola' and Achyutananda Dasa, in his 'Chhayalisha Patala' describe the period of the *Shunyarupa* as without world, day, night, land, water, sky, man, god or monster. In their imagination, Lord Jagannath ultimately embodied this *Shunyarupa* and became *Shunya Purusa*, the Void Personified. The whole world was created from *Shunya* which was the original shape of the god Jagannath. Achyutananda in his 'Shunya Samhita' sings the glory of *Shunya Purusa* and characterises Him as both *Saguna* (with attributes) and *Nirguna* (without attributes). *Shunya Purusa/Jagannath* is imagined as residing in everybody and guarded by truth, peace, comparison, desire, anger, etc.¹ But at the same time He is *Nirakara* (formless) and expresses Himself as *Alekha* (indescribable).² For the *Panchasakhas*, *Saguna* and *Nirguna* are as inseparable as the two wings of a bird and *Nirguna* becomes *Saguna* when one wishes to realise *Sunya Purusa/Jagannath* by worship and meditation.

For the *Panchasakhas*, *Shunya Purusa/Jagannath* is self-created. In 'Kaibarta Gita', Achyutananda, while narrating the characteristics of *Shunya Purusa*, mentions Him as formless who is self-created and who resides in space.³ At the same time, He is the cause of all causes.

The *Panchasakha* conceptualisation of Lord Jagannath as *Shunya Purusa* recognises the concept of *Shunya* (void), as an attribute or description of the nature of a personal god whom one has to approach through both

¹Achyutananda Dasa, Sunya Samhita (New edn., Cuttack, n.d.) I, pp. 51-52

²Ibid., p. 52

³Achyutananda Dasa, Kaibarta Gita (New edn., Cuttack, n.d.), p. 6

Jnana (knowledge) and *Bhakti* (devotion). The *Panchasakhas* combined both mediums for the god-realisation and their new, synthesized approach came to be known as *Jnana-Misra Bhakti* (knowledge-based devotion) as opposed to *Suddha-Bhakti* (Love-based devotion) of the Bengali Vaishnavite tradition.

The *Jnana-Misra Bhakti* of the *Panchasakhas* is brilliantly expressed in their *Pindabrahmanda* (macrocosm-in-microcosm) theory. According to this theory, the cosmic universe (Brahmanda) is epitomised in the individual body (pinda). All the parts of the body are the various sacred places of the universe. Different aspects of the universe such as sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers and even the Supreme Being can be realised inside the body. The mystic idea of realisation of the Supreme Being inside the body has been expressed by Balarama Dasa, in an allegorical form such as the vessel containing water in the midst of water. Here, vessel stands for the body and water for the universe. Balarama Dasa's 'Brahmanda Bhugola' expounds the theory of *Pindabrahmanda* and traces the spread of the universe in our body.¹ All the possibilities lie hidden and suggested in the body itself. The aspired-for goal and its realization are potentially there in the human body. Balarama has also located the entire complex of the Jagannath temple in the same body- the twenty-two steps leading to the entrance, as well as the sanctum sanctorium where the Jagannath Triad is seated.² The *Panchasakhas* have imagined each part of the human body, from nail to hair, as different holy places of the Universe. Both Balarama and Achyutanda even imagine our body as containing the earth, the heaven and the underworld. But the whole *Pindabrahmanda* theory has been enunciated by the *Panchasakhas* for the convenience of *Sadhana* or spiritual practice for god-realisation and arguably to reach Lord Jagannath.

¹See, for details, Balarama Dasa's Brahmanda Bhugola, ed., K.C. Sahu (Cuttack, 1985)

²Ibid.

In the *Panchasakha* scheme, since Lord Jagannath has to be ultimately realised, their *Pindabrahmanda* theory reaches its acme in the image of Jagannath. Achyutananda for example, imagines the Lord Brahma's 'thula' (integrated) existence in Lord Jagannath. The Puri temple is considered as the 'kaya' or the body where Lord Jagannath is the presiding deity.¹ Moreover, the Jagannath Triad has been symbolised by different parts of the body and even by different portions of the eye. In 'Gupta Gita', Balarama Dasa describes Lord Jagannath as the eye, Lord Balabhadra as the ear, goddess Subhadra as the lips and even the Sudarshan wheel as the nose of the body.² Elsewhere, Balarama makes the black, white and purple portions of the eye, representing Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra respectively.³ In his imagination, different parts of *Srikshetra* and the Jagannath temple are also situated in the body. The face is the high street and the lower part of the throat is the twenty-two staircase of the temple.⁴ Another *Panchasakha* poet Sisu Anantha Dasa, in his 'Hetu Udaya Bhagavata' imagines the very existence of the entire universe in the embodied form of Lord Jagannath, inside the human body which is compared with '*Srikshetra-Puri*'.⁵

The *Panchasakhas* thus rediscovered Lord Jagannath at the centre of the universe and created Him as the Highest and Final in their religious and philosophical speculations. Drawing on some of the core elements of different religions, the *Panchasakhas* reinterpreted them so that the Jagannath cult could be seen as containing them. He was made Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient. In a sense, Lord Jagannath became 'universalised': He was

¹Balarama Dasa, Birata Gita (3rd edn., Cuttack, 1959), p.10

²Balarama Dasa, Gupta Gita (Cuttack, n.d.), p.20

³Balarama Dasa, Amarakosa Gita (Cuttack, n.d.), p.12

⁴Balarama Dasa, Birata Gita, op.cit., p.10

⁵See, for details, Sisu Ananta Dasa, Hetu Udaya Bhagavata (Jagatsinghpur, n.d.)

imagined as self-pervading and the Mover of the universe. All the theories and principles concerning universe, life, soul, Supreme Being etc. came to be subsumed by the Jagannath cult. This Jagannath-centric Vaishnavism of Orissa propounded by the *Panchasakhas* may be aptly described as 'Jagannath Dharma'. Though a regional form of Vaishnavism, it retained its uniqueness with its emphasis on Lord Jagannath.

This conceptual development had a far reaching influence on the later generation of Oriya poets, for whom the celebration of life and glory of Lord Jagannath became a favourite theme. Take for example, the poets Upendra Bhanja and Dinakrushna Das who belonged to late 17th-early 18th century. Both have glorified and praised Lord Jagannath not only for His greatness but also for His beauty. Bhanja imagines Him as a million times more beautiful than Lord Kandarpa, the god of love and describes how He is beautifully dressed with the golden crown and seated on the *Ratna Simhasana* (Jewel Throne).¹ Das feels the beauty and grace of Lord Jagannath to be indescribable. According to him, by looking at the Lord's face, one gets more solace and comfort than by applying naphthlene or sandalwood powder on the body.² Both look at Lord Jagannath as their redeemer. In the poet's imagination a sympathetic glance from the Lord wipes out all sorrows as an axe brings down a tree. Lord Jagannath is like the sun and like the sun eliminating darkness, the Lord takes away sins and establishes virtue on the earth. The abode of the Lord, Srikshetra Puri is also no less great or important. The land is magical as it can take away sins and eating the *Mahaprasad* and hearing the bell-ringing from the temple removes all sins.³ Bhanja goes further and imagines Lord Jagannath as capable of granting the four goals of life,

¹Upendra Bhanja's Kotibrahmanda Sundari, ed., K.C. Behera (Cuttack, 1993), p. 4

²Dinakrushna Das' Rasakallola, ed., Devendra Mohanty (Cuttack, 1969), p. 126

³Ibid., p. 125

namely *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (Enjoyment) and *Mokshya* (salvation) to one and all belonging to the four varnas: *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*.¹

Thus, Lord Jagannath came to be seen as the redeemer of sufferers and donor of the four desired goals of life. Divinity was equally attributed to His abode, *Srikshetra* -Puri which was seen as capable of doing away with sins. Though the poets realise the glory and greatness of Lord Jagannath, they have not asked anything from Him for themselves. Hence, their appreciation and realisation of the Lord's glory is without any desire or motive. Their vision of Lord Jagannath is rather marked by abstract understanding which sometimes makes their conceptualisation esoteric.

Lord Jagannath and His cult did not remain confined to intellectual musings or rhetoric only. The Oriya poets started bringing Lord Jagannath down to a very personal level on which they addressed Him with intimacy. This gave rise to a genre of devotional poems addressed to Lord Jagannath in Oriya. This poetry can be divided into *Bhajana* and *Janana*, though the distinction between them is very often blurred. As in other Indian literatures, the Oriya *Bhajan*s are essentially devotional poems, but most of them are composed in praise of Lord Jagannath. There are paeans of praise in exalted terms, addressed to Lord Jagannath for deliverance from mundane or spiritual agonies. Here the poet surrenders himself to Lord Jagannath. But *Janana* is a cascade of abuses and diatribes aimed at Lord Jagannath alone, charging Him with utter callousness, indifference and partiality towards His devotee/poet. But the poets' abuses and diatribes have no malice or hatred. They are deeply inspired by the poet's intimate feelings that Lord Jagannath is his protector, mentor and redeemer. Though *Jananas* are an exclusive genre of devotional poems in Oriya, the distinction between *Bhajana* and *Janana* is very subtle and sometimes it is difficult to discriminate between the two.

¹Bhanja, op.cit., p.3

However, it is both *Bhajanas* and *Jananas* that popularised and spread the glory of the Jagannath cult among the Oriya masses. A feeling of passion and intimacy seized the people.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, there was a rapid growth of *Bhajanas* and *Jananas* in the Oriya literature. The most famous poet of this period was Baladeva Rath (1789-1845 A.D.) who showed a rare blend of ornate style and lyricism in his *Bhajanas* and *Jananas*. With a feeling of intimacy and confidence, he invokes Lord Jagannath and compares Him with a snake.¹ In the poet's imagination, as a snake is charmed by chants- *mantras*, so Lord Jagannath is also worshipped by *mantras* and as a snake swallows whatever it gets, He has swallowed millions of Universes.² Though the poet abuses Lord Jagannath as a snake, he ultimately surrenders to the Lord with a desire to be saved by Him from the cruel hands of Yama, the god of Death.³ The poet asks for the Lord's grace as a matter of right. In order to strengthen his case, he cites examples from mythologies and Indian tradition in which the Lord's grace to the poor, the helpless and the down-trodden is illustrated. In a *Janana*, called 'Jagannath Janana', Rath mentions that in the Mahabharata age, Lord Jagannath (as Sri Krishna) had saved the Pandavas' wife Draupadi from shame by providing her with cloth in the court of the King Dhritarastra and in the *Dvapara* age again, He had delivered a hump-backed lady and a washerman, by the wonder of His touch.⁴ Thus, lengthening the list of examples of the Lord's grace to the needy and distressed in different ages, Rath claims His grace for himself and declares that Lord Jagannath is his only resort. Rath's approach to Lord Jagannath is markedly different from that of his predecessors. A mixed tone of aspersion and demand runs through his

¹Life and Works of Kavisurya Baladeva Rath, compil., K.Das. Kavyatirtha (6th edn., Cuttack, 1956), pp. 315-316

²Ibid., p. 316

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 317

narrative although devotion remains central to his approach.

The poet Banamali Das of the 18th century adopted the same approach in his invocation of Lord Jagannath. Das was materially so deprived that he was always preoccupied with wherewithals, but Lord Jagannath, inspite of Das' unflinching faith and devotion, showed no favour to him. In a *Bhajana*, 'Chakadola Chikkana Kalia He', he condemns Lord Jagannath as a dacoit, who in His Krishna incarnation, went to Mathura, killed His maternal uncle- the demon king Kansa and won the *Gopis*.¹ But in spite of making accusations, the poet asks the Lord to save him from material agonies and take away all his sorrows. To pacify Lord Jagannath against whom he has complaints of apathy and negligence, Das declares in yet another *Janana* that he does not want anything but a small place on the main road of *Srikshetra* Puri called '*Saradha bali*':

Oh, Jagannath
I beg not anything from you---
neither wealth nor children;
I do beg a bit of place at '*Saradha bali*'.²

While accusing Lord Jagannath of partiality, apathy and cruelty, Rath and Das have surrendered themselves to Him. They realise that only Lord Jagannath can save them from whatever tortures and sufferings they are undergoing in the present life. That is why, though they initially abuse Him, they at last desire His grace. The 18th century poet Brajanath Badajena (1730-1795 A.D.) also accuses Lord Jagannath of cruelty. In a *Janana*, 'Dinajana Bandhu Artatrana', he challenges the Lord that throughout the ages He has shown grace to so many poor and suffering that He has now been drained of

¹Sri Jagannath Padyavali, ed., K.B.Nayak (Berhampur, 1978), II., p.33

²*Ibid.*, p.40

his compassion and consequently has turned out to be cruel.¹ The poets like Rath, Das and Badajena have really praised and glorified the god in the pretext of condemning Him. They have used a type of *Alankara*, rhetoric called *Byaja Stuti*, in which one can be praised by way of condemnation and vice-versa. These poets have adopted this rhetoric more as a convenient means to express their grievances and desires to Lord Jagannath. This is again symbolic of experiencing Him at a very personal level and appropriating Him to their personal world.

It was not common people alone who expressed their sorrows and desire to Lord Jagannath. The *Gajapati* kings of Orissa who are His traditional custodians, have also sought His grace in times of misfortune. The Gajapati Birakesari Dev (1737-1793 A.D.) for example, has composed *Jananas* in which he pours out his wounded feelings and sentiments to Lord Jagannath. During the Maratha rule (1751-1803 A.D.) in Orissa, Birakesari Dev had been dethroned, imprisoned and even deprived of his hereditary right to serve Lord Jagannath for some years. This was a great shock to him and he felt himself carried away on an ocean of sorrow, but he requested Lord Jagannath to save him by sending a boat.² Loss of the throne is not so shocking to him as the loss of his status as the first servitor (*Adya Sevak*) of Lord Jagannath. Finally he wants to be killed by Lord Jagannath if he cannot serve the Lord.³ His royal arrogance disappears before Lord Jagannath. Whenever misfortune had befallen the *Gajapati* kings, they prayed and surrendered to the Lord to save them. With the British occupation of Orissa in 1803 A.D., there was widespread protest and even revolt against them. The *Gajapati* King Mukunda Dev (1798-1807 A.D.) was driven from his throne and the British wanted to arrest him on the charge that he was a rebel, but Mukunda Dev ran away to the forest to

¹Ibid. , III , p . 32

²Ibid. , p . 74

³Ibid. , p . 76

avoid arrest. A *Maratha* employee of the *Gajapati*, Rajadhi Pandit betrayed him and the *Gajapati* was arrested and kept prisoner in the Barabati fort. During the imprisonment, he composed a highly sentimental *janana* conveying his misfortunes to Lord Jagannath. In the *Janana*, he surrenders to the Lord and requests Him to take out weapons from the armoury and kill the enemies of Orissa.¹ Thus, both Birakesari Dev and Mukunda Dev have forgotten their status and royal pomp in the face of misfortune and invoked Lord Jagannath's grace.

The phenomenon of Lord Jagannath and His cult has been looked upon from different perspectives by Oriya authors. But whatever may be the perspective, it has helped in spreading and popularising the Jagannath cult among the Oriya masses. In the perspectives that we have discussed Lord Jagannath and His glory have been very often mystified and even expressed in theological-philosophical vocabulary. But sometimes poets have also narrated the life and glory of Lord Jagannath in the form of folklore. The origin legend of Lord Jagannath which originally figured in the Sanskrit Puranas and then in Sarala Dasa's 'Mahabharata' has been twisted and dramatised by some later Oriya poets, in a simpler and more easily comprehensible form. It came to be known in general Oriya parlance as 'Deulatola', meaning the construction of the temple. Though different poets have composed 'Deulatola', the most popular is that of Krshna Das, composed in the 17th century. The main outline of the legend as mentioned in the Puranas, is almost maintained in 'Deulatola', but some variations and additions are there. For example, Krshna Das has added a romantic love-story between King Indradyumna's emissary Vidyapati and the *Savara* Viswabasu's daughter Lalita.² During his search for Nilamadhav/Vishnu in the East, Vidyapati came across a *Savara* village where he fell in love with the *Savara* Chief Viswabasu's daughter Lalita

¹Ibid. , (Berhampur, 1980) , IV, pp. 7-9

²See for details, Krshna Das, Deulatola (New edn., Cuttack, n.d)

and married her. Then with her help, he managed to find Nilamadhav in *Nilagiri* and return to Avanti to inform the King Indradyumna of his discovery. Krshna Das, taking a clue from Sarala 'Mahabharata', identifies Viswabasu as the son of Jara Savara who killed Sri Krshna in the *Dvapara* Age.¹ Thus, in 'Deulatola', one finds the fusion of Brahmin and tribal elements.

In 'Deulatola', the origin legend has been simplified and couched in the readily-acceptable vocabulary of love, devotion and miracle. Here is a brief account of the legend as mentioned in 'Deulatola', though we have already discussed its Puranic version in detail in the second chapter. After marrying Lalita, Vidyapati was able to go with his father-in-law, Viswabasu to Nilagiri and have a glimpse of Nilamadhav/ Vishnu. He was taken to Nilamadhav blind-folded but Lalita tied some mustard seeds in his cloth so that these would be sown on the way. The purpose was that when it would rain, the seeds would grow into plants indicating the path to Nilamadhav. After visiting Nilamadhav, Vidyapati came back to the court of his master, King Indradyumna and narrated the whole story. On hearing it, Indradyumna immediately started for Nilagiri with the sage Narada and his army. But on arrival, he did not find the deity as the latter had already disappeared. The King was punished for his pride that since he would be worshipping Nilamadhav, he was the greatest in the universe. Without realising his mistake, he thought that the Savara Viswabasu had stolen the god's image, so he arrested him. At this point the King heard an oracle and was instructed to free Viswabasu. He was also asked to construct a temple where the god would reappear. Accordingly he constructed a temple and then went to Brahmalok (Abode of the Lord Brahma) to invite Lord Brahma to consecrate the temple. During his absence, many ages had passed away on the earth and the temple was buried in sand. One day, a King, by the name of Galamadhav discovered the temple and decided to install the deity in it, but as soon as Indradyumna returned from *Brahmalok*,

¹Ibid. ,pp.4-5

there arose a dispute over the ownership of the temple. Interestingly, a crow sitting on the *Kalpavrkshya* (Desire-fulfilling tree) and the turtles living in the nearby pond, gave witness in support of King Indradyumna. So the King got back his temple, but he had no idols to install. He was struck with grief and gave up food and water.

The King was finally ordered in a dream to bring the log that would be found floating on the sea in a place called *Banki Muhana* in coastal Orissa. Accordingly, the King proceeded to *Banki Muhana* and recovered the log impressed with the insignia of Lord Vishnu. In fact, the god himself had appeared in the form of the log. No carpenter however, could carve the images from the log. At last, the god himself came in the disguise of a carpenter, bearing the name Ananta Maharana and made it a condition that he should be left alone with the log in the closed temple for twentyone days. The King agreed, but after fourteen days his wife Gundicha insisted on opening the door as there was no sound coming out of the closed sanctum. The King opened the door, but to his utter dismay he found the incomplete images of the Jagannath Triad (Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra). He was so full of remorse that he wanted to die, but the god consoled him in a dream sequence that He would reappear assuming the Buddha incarnation in the *Kaliyuga*.

The 'Deulatola' version of the origin legend, when compared and contrasted with the Puranic and Mahabharata (Sarala's) versions, has elements which make it almost a folk song. The Vidyapati-Lalita episode, the lineage of the Savara Viswabasu, the dramatic appearance of the god himself as a carpenter bearing the name Ananta Maharana and the way the Jagannath Triad was carved, all make the origin legend acceptable to the tastes and beliefs of the Oriya folk. Towards the end of 'Deulatola', as opposed to the Sanskrit version of the origin legend, there is a mention of three types of servitors of Lord Jagannath, viz., *Prakruta Sevakas* (real servitors)- the descendants of the Brahmin Vidyapati, *Daita Sevakas* (Daita servitors)-the

descendants of the Savara Viswabasu and *Suddha Suaras*- the descendants of the offspring from the marriage between the *Brahmin* Vidyapati and the Savara girl Lalita.¹ Out of these three types, the *Prakruta Sevakas* are assigned Brahmin lineage whereas *Daita Sevakas* and *Suddha Suaras* are assigned either mixed or the non-*Brahmin* tribal lineage. All the three classes of servitors still exist in the Jagannath temple. The creation of such a tradition of servitors for Lord Jagannath also indicates the nature of Oriya society, out of which grew the Jagannath cult. The *Daita Sevakas* and *Suddha Suaras*, having duties other than that of *Brahmin* servitors, are believed to have tribal origin. The presence of non-*Brahmin* elements in the Jagannath cult warrants the autochthonous, tribal background upon which Brahminisation/Aryanisation was imposed. Again, the presence of both *Brahmin* and non-*Brahmin* servitors in the Jagannath cult recognises its hybridization and the hybrid character of Oriya society then as now.

It may be pointed out that the 'Deulatola' origin legend is a deliberate attempt by the Oriya poets to strengthen the claim of the subaltern Savaras of their association with the Jagannath cult. The creation of the Vidyapati-Lalita episode and the relation of a particular class of servitors (*Suddha Suaras*) to the descendants of the offspring of Vidyapati (*Brahmin*) and Lalita (Savara), aim at establishing a blood-relation between the *Brahmin* and the non-*Brahmin* servitors of Lord Jagannath. According to G.N.Dash, this might have the important function of recognising the *Brahmin* identity of the Daita servitors,² but more important is its symbolism of appropriating the Savaras to the mainstream of Oriya society and religion so that Lord Jagannath might be recognised as the presiding deity of Orissa.

It is now well accepted that the Jagannath cult arose from tribal surroundings. The socio-cultural context of the period must have played an

¹Krshna Das, op.cit., pp.30-31

²See for details, G.N.Dash, Janasruti o' Samajika Itihasa', Jhankar, 34th yr, No.4, July 1982, pp.337-346

important role in the evolution of the cult. All the origin legends have preserved an awareness of this original context. But with the appropriation of the Jagannath cult by the process of Brahminisation/ Aryanisation, the original tribal elements needed to be absorbed into the mainstream socio-cultural context. Perhaps, this is the precise reason why these elements have been made a part of the mainstream, by the creation of such classes of servitors as the *Daita Sevakas* and *Suddha Suaras*.

The origin legend as constructed in 'Deulatola', takes the glory of Lord Jagannath to the Oriya folk in the villages. It is still sung by the wandering Sannyasins and beggars in Orissa and enacted as *yatra* (folk drama) in the villages. The appeal and popularity of 'Deulatola' can be gauged from the prevalence of 'Deulatola' episodes both in oral and textual forms by different poets, the most famous being those of Krshna Das, Bipra Nilambar, Maguni Jyotisa and Dama Das. But they do not differ in content, but only in details and language. At a popular level, 'Deulatola' exploits the desire of ordinary people to create a Jagannath-centric identity.

As we see, the Jagannath cult has occupied a predominant place in Oriya literary tradition, right from the days of Sarala Dasa (15th century). The Oriya poets have viewed, imagined and invoked Lord Jagannath and His cult, in accordance with their own ideas and understanding. As a result, they succeeded in 'Oriyanising' Lord Jagannath, that is, rooting the Jagannath religious tradition in the socio-cultural matrix of Orissa. During the period of our study, from the late 19th to the early 20th century, there was a marked shift in the treatment of the Jagannath cult in Oriya literature, as Lord Jagannath came to be increasingly loaded with secular symbols in the new socio-cultural context. The tone of invoking Lord Jagannath changed accordingly as the devotee's relation with Him became more that of patron-client or benefactor-beneficiary than of god-devotee. His grace was not prayed for, but claimed as a matter of right.

We may consider the writings of some of the Oriya authors of the time

to analyse how they have treated Lord Jagannath. In the 19th century, two well-known poets Hanuman Rajguru (1827-91 A.D.) and Gauracharan Adhikari (1814-90 A.D.) composed many *Bhajan*s and *Janana*s for Lord Jagannath. Rajguru is afraid of death. He even imagines that in the *Yamapura*, the Abode of the god of death (Yama), his body will be chopped up and he will be made to sleep on a bed of pointed weapons.¹ He is also aware of the sins that he has committed in his life and knows that he will one day be punished in this way. But he is confident that Lord Jagannath will save him because He is capable of rescuing the whole universe. Rajguru wants his mental agonies and sufferings to be taken away by the Lord who will show him the path to a peaceful life. If not, he will die in the Lord's hands or commit suicide by drinking poison.² He declares that he does not see any hope in his life without the Lord's grace.³ In a sense, Rajguru, surrenders to the Lord and asks Him either to save him or let him die.

A contemporary of Rajguru, Gauracharan Adhikari approaches Lord Jagannath very tactfully. He describes the Lord's *Rath Yatra* (Car festival) and asks Him a very personal question why, during the *Rath Yatra*, He leaves behind His wife (Laxmi) in the temple and takes his sister, Subhadra with Him to the *Gundicha Ghar*, the abode of His aunt.⁴ With this personal note, Adhikari asks for Lord Jagannath's grace as He is the Ultimate, the final Mover of the universe. Arguably, if he can ask such a personal question to the Lord, he has every right to ask for the Lord's grace.

The demanding tone of the poets is sometimes accompanied by a tone of challenge and protest. Take the example of the Oriya hero Chandan Hajuri who played an important role in the Great Revolt of 1857 A.D.. In a *Janana*, he

¹Sri Jagannath Padyavali, op.cit., III, p. 61

²Ibid., p. 68

³Ibid., p. 77

⁴Ibid., II, pp. 117-120

complains to Lord Jagannath about His indifference and callousness and accuses Him of cruelty.¹ He doubts if the Lord is Omnipresent and Omniscient because He does not take away his mental agonies ! Yet, he waits for the Lord's grace to be bestowed upon him. In the complaint of Hajuri, one thus still finds a soul optimistic enough to wait for the Lord's grace. But all are not so optimist; sometimes, the devotee becomes frustrated and protests against Lord Jagannath's negligence and callousness. This is true with the *Gajapati* King Divyasingh Dev III (1859-1888 A.D.) who was convicted on the charge of murdering a *sadhu* (saint) in 1878 A.D. and was sentenced to transportation for life.² Divyasingh Dev prays to Lord Jagannath as his last resort. He says that if he is ultimately transported for life, the Lord would be blamed and nobody would accept Him any more as *Patitapabana*- the Lord of the fallen.³ He wonders at the reluctance of Lord Jagannath to help him although He had earlier helped the *Gajapati*. The poet has nobody except the Lord to whom he can complain. This voice of frustration and protest was heard again in the 20th century when the Government of Orissa in independent India decided to take away the management of the Puri temple. The *Gajapati* Birakishore Dev blames Lord Jagannath in a *Janana* for abandoning his company and giving away His 'own house' (meaning the temple) to others.⁴ He anticipates chaos and confusion in the temple once it passes into the hands of the government.

By the 20th century, Lord Jagannath had become a favourite theme in the creative writings of Oriya authors. By imagining and approaching Lord Jagannath in different ways, the authors transformed Him to a familiar archetype, making Him an important symbol of Oriya pride and hauteur. The

¹Ibid., IV, p. 65

²See for detail, Chapter VI.

³Sri Jagannath Padyavali, op.cit., IV, p. 4

⁴Ibid., pp. 9-10

Kanchi-Kaveri Legend for example, was recreated in *yatra* and ballad forms which had a more popular appeal and wider circulation among the masses. The popular poet Gopala Dash (1876-1939 A.D.) has rendered the Kanchi-Kaveri legend into the *Yatra* form, incorporating the popular elements of love and romance.¹ The *Gajapati* Purushottamdeva and the Kanchi Princess Padmavati are shown in love with each other. Padmavati expresses her doubt whether she can live without him. Padmavati and Purushottamdev had met each other at Puri during the *Rath Yatra* and fell in love. The Kanchi King had also promised to give his daughter to the *Gajapati* Purushottamdev. But all this changed when the Kanchi King discovered the *Gajapati* performing *Chherapamhara* on the cars. He declined to offer his daughter to somebody who was doing a sweeper's job. The reluctance of the Kanchi King led to a battle between the Kanchi King and the *Gajapati*. Because of her love for the *Gajapati*, Padmavati tried to dissuade her father from engaging in a battle with him. She warned her father that since the King Purushottamdev had the support of Lord Jagannath, he might even win the earth, the heaven and the underworld. But the Kanchi King did not care for her daughter's words and went to fight. The *Gajapati*, helped by Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra won the battle and brought Padmavati with him to marry her.

The Kanchi-Kaveri legend has been so reconstructed as to make it look like a romance and the victory of Purushottamdev as the triumph of love between Padmavati and Purushottamdev. It is Gopala Dash who for the first time made the Kanchi-Kaveri legend a popular romance. The religious matrix and the divine elements of the legend are underplayed and instead, human elements of love and romance become important in the *yatra*. This demystifies the legend and makes it more mundane and appealing.

The symbolism of Lord Jagannath has been more directly applied in the

¹See for the text, Ganakabi Gopala Dash Granthavali, ed., B.C.Samal (Cuttack, 1995), I. This legend has been extensively discussed in chapter V.

ballad 'Padmavati' by the Satyavadi poet Godavarish Mishra (1886-1956 A.D.).¹ Based on the same Kanchi-Kaveri legend, 'Padmavati' highlights the valour of the Gajapati Purushottamdev. Mishra describes the *Gajapati* as an emperor having twenty eight kings and forts under him and ruling over twenty five million people in a vast empire.² But such a mighty emperor was challenged by the Kanchi King who condemned the *Gajapati* as 'a blacksheep, a degraded man who had captured other territories by trick and plot.'³ The *Gajapati* was compared to a grass-hopper who desires to fly in the sky and with an ant who ventures to climb to the top of a lamp-stand.⁴ The Kanchi king gave an open challenge to the *Gajapati* to fight if he wished to take away his daughter. This was a humiliation and disgrace to the *Gajapati*, who decided to take revenge on the Kanchi King. So he led an expedition against Kanchi and finally defeated him. The King of Kanchi was forced to offer his daughter to Purushottamdev, who also collected a lot of war-booty. Purushottamdev was able to conquer Kanchi because of the grace of Lord Jagannath who accompanied His army together with his brother Lord Balabhadra. It was Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra who had maintained the prestige of Orissa. But Mishra does not consider Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra as mere gods who came into the rescue of Purushottamadev, rather, he sees them as the feudal lords of the *Gajapati*, leading his army.⁵

Both Gopala Dash and Godavarish Mishra have emphasised two different aspects of the Kanchi-Kaveri legend, that is, love and romance on the one hand and chivalry on the other. Both these aspects really make the legend

¹Godavarish Mishra, Alekhika (8thedn., Berhampur, 1963), pp. 24-42

²Ibid., p. 27

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 29

⁵Ibid., p. 32

more human and down-to-earth and Lord Jagannath is consequently seen, lending meaning to the human, non-religious aspects of life. This is important in understanding Lord Jagannath in a demystified form.

In the fifth chapter, we have discussed at some length the Kanchi Kaveri legend and shown how its meaning changed according to the context. Gopala Dash's *yatra* and Godavarish Mishra's ballad, both leave out the divine elements in the legend. Dash has highlighted the love aspect, whereas Mishra has emphasized the prowess of the Oriya *jati*. In both cases, the victory of Purushottamdev symbolically represents the victory of the Oriya *jati*- their power and cultural tradition. But it revolves round Lord Jagannath, so in a sense it is a recognition of His supremacy.

The origin legend of the Jagannath cult also underwent transformation in literary writings of the 20th century Oriya authors. It was reconstructed and dramatic elements were incorporated, to reach wider sections of the Oriya population. We have already seen how the 'Deulatola' version of the legend became almost folklore about Lord Jagannath. It had all the elements of folklore including the invocation of the supernatural. But it is the great playwright Aswini Kumar Ghosh who, in his play 'Sri Mandir' (1934 A.D.) uproots the origin legend from its religious matrix and departs from the original story in a number of ways.¹

According to 'Sri Mandir', Vidyapati, the commander and minister of King Indradyumna of Avanti, came to Utkal in search of Nilamadhav, the sapphire form of Lord Vishnu. During his search, he came to the *Savara* village where he touched the village Chief Viswabasu's daughter Lalita by accident. According to the *Savara* tradition, he had to marry Lalita as he had touched her. In due course, Lalita came to know about her husband's real intention, but as a devoted wife, she helped him to visit Nilamadhav who was being secretly worshipped by her father Viswabasu. Lalita also stole the

¹Aswini Kumar Ghosh, Aswini Kumar Granthavali (Cuttack, 1963), I, pp. 333-367

father's ring of 'fearlessness' and gave it to her husband. She herself took Vidyapati to Nilamadhav for a visit. Then, one day Vidyapati stole the image of Nilamadhav and managed to send it to Avanti.¹ After the disappearance of Nilamadhav, Viswabasu broke down and finally died. Vidyapati and Lalita were also separated over the issue of Nilamadhav. Lalita asked Vidyapati to return the image, but the latter refused to do so. Meanwhile, Nilamadhav was installed in Avanti. King Galamadhav of Utkal (Orissa) also cleared the forest where the Savara Village was originally situated and established a city there. He also unearthed a temple from the sand, restored and named it 'Sri Mandir'. But the right of Galamadhav over the temple was contested by King Indradyumna and a battle ensued between the two. Lalita was entrusted by Galamadhav to protect the temple. In the battle, when Vidyapati as the commander of Indradyumna came to occupy the temple, he was killed. The death of Vidyapati changed the whole course of events. Lalita was broken at the death of her husband and committed suicide. Everybody was shocked. The battle came to an end and King Indradyumna returned the image of Nilamadhav which was installed in the temple restored by Galamadhav.

Thus, the recreated version of the origin legend adds a lot of new elements to the existing one in the Puranas and 'Deulatola'. The theft of the Nilamadhav image by Vidyapati, the death of Viswabasu, the separation of Lalita and Vidyapati, the battle between Indradyumna and Galamadhav, the death of Lalita and Viswabasu and finally the installation of the image of Lord Jagannath, all are deviations from the original legend. In Ghosh's scheme of things, there is no place for any supernatural event nor is there a series of predestined events such as Lord Vishnu's desire to manifest Himself as Lord Jagannath, His disappearance from Nilagiri, His reappearance in the form of a wooden log and the carving of the Jagannath Triad from that log by the divine carpenter. On the other hand, Ghosh makes the emergence of the Jagannath

¹Ibid. ,pp. 352-353

cult very simple and straightforward: the image of Nilamadhav which was stolen by Vidyapati, was returned to Utkal and installed in the temple 'Sri Mandir' after a fight between King Indradyumna and King Galamadhav. Moreover, in Ghosh's version of the origin of the Jagannath cult, one does not find any tension between royalty and aboriginals- the *Savaras*. But in Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata, King Galaba (who may be identified with the Indradyumna of the Puranas) killed the innocent *Savaras* after the disappearance of Nilamadhav. Even in Krshna Das' 'Deulatola', the disappearance of Nilamadhav incurred the wrath of King Indradyumna against the *Savaras* so that he punished them.¹ One does not find such tension or enmity between royalty and *Savaras* in Ghosh's play which rather celebrates Vidyapati and Lalita's union as symbolic of the union of Aryan and *Savara* traditions. Even in Ghosh's imagination, Indradyumna and Galamadhav decide to have equality in the Jagannath temple as they allow everybody to partake of the *Mahaprasad* (the offering to the Jagannath Triad), as a tribute to the love of Vidyapati and Lalita.²

In the play, Ghosh has not only demystified the origin of the Jagannath cult but also celebrated the *Aryan-Savara* unity. For him, the *Mahaprasad* symbolises the unity which was manifested in the love of Vidyapati and Lalita. Thus, uprooting Him from His religious matrix, Ghosh secularises Lord Jagannath and makes Him symbolic of a synthesis of two different cultures.

The Satyavadi poet Godavarish Mishra has created another ballad on the basis of the origin legend of Lord Jagannath. This is with regard to King Galamadhav who is supposed to have contested the right of the King Indradyumna to the temple, built for the Jagannath Triad. This part of the legend is found in the Puranas and even in the 'Deulatola' versions. But Mishra has twisted the Galamadahav episode and made him the restorer of the

¹Krshna Das, op.cit.,p.32

²Ghosh, op.cit.,p.367

temple and the Jagannath Triad. He does not bring Indradyumna into the picture and gives the entire credit for restoring the Triad to Galamadhav. Mishra, in the ballad entitled 'Galamadhav' describes how once the king of Orissa, Galamadhav discovered the Jagannath temple.¹ On his way back from a battle, his horse suddenly stumbled against the wheel of a buried temple. The King stopped there and put his people on the job to dig out the hidden temple. After two months' labour, the temple was revealed and the Jagannath Triad was found to be seated on the throne inside it. Galamadhav was surprised at this and inquired about the temple. He was told that King Indradyumna had built the temple, but that it had been buried under the sand as there was a great deluge. Galamadhav was also told that one of his forefathers had tried to restore the temple. But Lord Jagannath had refused at that time to appear because the people on the earth did not care for Him because of their obsession with women. However, He had promised to reappear once the people started caring for prestige and honour.² After this incident, no king till Galamadhav had ever attempted to restore the temple. Galamadhav restored the temple, without thinking of his wife. Though he had long been absent he did not think of her, but instead, consistently worked for the restoration of the temple.

Mishra glorifies Galamadhav as the King who restored the Jagannath cult. He founded Puri-Sriksetra as the greatest pilgrimage centre in the world. According to Mishra, since Galamadhav gave up his desire for union with his wife, he could succeed in restoring the Jagannath cult. Mishra thus popularises the character of Galamadhav who is rather described in the Puranas as the person who challenged Indradyumna's right over the temple. But in Mishra's scheme of things, there is no challenge, but revival and continuation of the work done by Indradyumna. What is emphasised in

¹Godavarish Mishra, op.cit.,pp.178-191

²Ibid.,p.186

Mishra's ballad is that King Indradyumna had built the original temple in some point of time, but it was buried under the sand due to some natural calamity. Then, it was King Galamadhav of Orissa who restored the temple.

The period between Indradyumna and Galamadhav is imagined by Mishra as a period of decline epitomised in the kings' desire for enjoyment of woman. Lord Jagannath's refusal to reappear on the earth during this period of decline and His final reappearance is symbolic of Mishra's invocation of Lord Jagannath at a time when Oriyas were ready to fight for their cause. Lord Jagannath, in the ballad, promises to reappear on earth when people are seeking for honour and prestige ! In the late 19th and early 20th century, when Oriyas were fighting for their cause, for their legitimate demands, Lord Jagannath could perhaps provide moral strength and support to them. So according to Mishra, the Lord is required more for secular, mundane things than for any spiritual or religious gain. This is how, Lord Jagannath came to be increasingly seen by Oriya writers as a secular symbol. The origin legend, as reconstructed by Ghosh and Mishra, does not have an element of divine determinism, but highlights the potency of the human agency and in this case, of the Oriya *jati*. Lord Jagannath was installed not by any divine will, but by human efforts. This sort of assumption symbolises the potency of the Oriya *jati*. So it is plausible to argue that not Lord Jagannath but the Oriya *jati* is given prominence in the new versions of the origin legends, as founder of the cult.

The symbolism of Lord Jagannath has been used by Aswini Kumar in his play 'Dasia Bauri' also known as 'Bhakta Harijan' (1933 A.D.). It shows the Lord's care and concern even for the socially most disadvantaged Oriyas, i.e., the *Harijans*, the down-trodden. Based on a legend preserved in the 19th century hagiographical work 'Darhyata Bhakti' by Rama Dasa, it shows the unflinching devotion of a *Harijan* couple, Dasia and Gellihi to Lord Jagannath and the gratitude shown to them by the Lord.¹ The couple has so much

¹Aswini Kumar Ghosh, *op.cit.*, pp.167-205

devotion for Lord Jagannath that even at the mere suggestion of going to Srikshetra-Puri, Dasia feels as if he is drinking nectar.¹ His wife Gellhi is unable to go to Puri, but the Lord Himself comes to their house, in the guise of a child. On another occasion, Lord Jagannath Himself has accepted food from the hands of Dasia. All this surprises the orthodox Brahmins of the village where the couple lives. Though they are supposed to have a privileged claim over Lord Jagannath, by virtue of their caste, they have to bow down before Dasia because of his close proximity with the Lord.

A play such as 'Dasia Bauri' frees Lord Jagannath from the traditional control of the orthodox Brahmins and brings Him within the reach of all, cutting across caste and faith. Though according to the origin legend, tribal elements played a major role in the evolution of the Jagannath cult, the socially down-trodden and low-castes have always had problems of temple access to Lord Jagannath. Lord Jagannath has been virtually monopolised and privatised by a few sections of society. Ghosh's 'Dasia Bauri' is a symbolic protest against this monopoly and makes Lord Jagannath accessible and comprehensible to all. By bringing the deity to the reach even of *Harijans*, Ghosh suggests Lord Jagannath's thorough appropriation by Oriya society which consists of high and low castes.

One of the most important developments in 20th century Oriya literature is the restatement and rediscovery of Lord Jagannath in a secular mould, whereby He came to be seen as symbol of 'Oriyaness'. The great Oriya leader and the Satyavadi poet Gopabandhu Das, made Lord Jagannath virtually the leader of the Oriyas. Gopabandhu was not only a Congress nationalist leader but also an ardent champion of the Oriya cause. So it is only natural that the state deity of Orissa came to be invoked again and again in his writings. It is of no concern if all the leaders of Orissa are arrested because Lord Jagannath is there to lead the Oriya people.² He asks for the Lord's

¹Ibid., p.176

²Gopabandhu Rachanavali, comp. R.Garanayak (2vols.,

leadership in the nationalist struggle of the Oriyas against the British. In order to justify His leadership of Orissa, Gopabandhu cites the example from the Kanchi-Kaveri legend, which for him, is not merely a legend, but a national saga. As we have seen, according to this legend, Lord Jagannath led the Oriya army against the Kanchi King. Gopabandhu is optimistic that He would also lead Oriyas in their struggle against the British.¹ Recognising the Lord as the Leader of Orissa, Gopabandhu asks the wind in his prison-room if it has brought any message for him from the Lord.²

Gopabandhu thus imagines Lord Jagannath sharing the fate and destiny of Oriyas. This is a secular role assigned to the Lord. Gopabandhu also does not see anything religious in the abode of the Lord, *Srikshetra* Puri. Rather he finds human virtues prevalent there. In a poem, 'Nityadhama Nilachala', he imagines that those who reside there, are above the parochial considerations of 'mine and thine' and love the poor, sacrifice their life for the welfare of the world, practise truth and sing the glory of equality and friendship.³ All these human values make *Srikshetra* a place of glory and virtue. Gopabandhu feels the presence of the greatness of this place wherever he goes and all the places of India appear to him as replicas of *Srikshetra*.⁴ Moreover, he thinks that the message of equality would spread everywhere as Lord Jagannath would induce it. Gopabandhu thus sees Lord Jagannath as essentially the embodiment of human virtues which would guide and lead Oriyas. Perhaps, that is why he does not see any need for a leader for Orissa when Lord Jagannath Himself is present.⁵

Bhubaneswar, 1980) , I , p . 166

¹Ibid. , pp. 166-167

²Ibid. , p. 123

³Ibid. , p. 95

⁴Ibid. , pp. 178-179

⁵Ibid. , 168

The same tone of confidence and faith in Lord Jagannath is also found in the poetess, Kuntala Kumari Sabat's poems. In a poem called 'Awahan' (1930 A.D.), Sabat makes Lord Jagannath, the leader of the anti-British movement. This poem which was written on the eve of the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930 A.D.), had been banned by the British government. In the poem, Sabat dwells on the miseries and sufferings of Indians under the British rule, but asks them not to lose heart as Lord Jagannath is their leader. He would take away all miseries and remove injustice and victory is inevitable for India.¹ Sabat inspires the suffering Indians with the following words:

Victory to Thee, Lord Jagannath
Shouting, this clarion call
Come, Oh valiant sons of India
Come forward.²

Sabat makes Lord Jagannath the symbol of courage and action. The brave sons of India, by taking His name, should be inspired to work for the nation.

Thus, in the writings of the nationalists and the champions of the Oriya cause, Lord Jagannath and His glory were invoked in secular terms. It is indeed a long way from the 15th century poet Sarala Dasa and the 16th century *Panchasakha* poets who not only appropriated Lord Jagannath to Orissa but also put Him at the centre of its religious traditions. The reconstruction of the origin legend, the glorification of the Lord and His abode *Srikshetra* Puri, development of a religious philosophy and surrender to Lord Jagannath as the last resort, all were instrumental in appropriating the Jagannath cult to Orissa. Once appropriated, Lord Jagannath was

¹Kuntala Kumari Granthavali, ed., K.B.Dash (2 vols., Cuttack, 1968), I, p. 220

²Ibid.

transformed to a secular symbol by nationalists and champions of the Oriya cause. He came to be loaded with secular meanings. He came to signify the union of Aryan-tribal elements, as in case of Aswini Kumar's 'Sri Mandir'. He also came to stand for the down-trodden, the socially underprivileged section, in his 'Dasia Bauri'. Finally, in the hands of Gopabandhu and Kuntala Kumari, Lord Jagannath was uprooted from His religious matrix and made the leader of Oriyas. This gradual secularisation was achieved by demystifying the phenomenon of Lord Jagannath and making Him a symbol. Godavanish Mishra for example, in his ballad 'Galamadhav' does not talk of the mysterious Nilamadhav form of Lord Jagannath nor of his supernatural elements that went into the emergence of the Jagannath Triad. Rather, he accepts the pre-existence of the temple and the Triad which were restored by an Oriya King called Galamadhav. On similar lines, Ghosh, in his 'Sri Mandir' historicises the origin of Lord Jagannath by eliminating the divine elements and incorporating natural human activities such as the theft of the deity, the construction of the temple and the battle over the ownership of the temple. Thus, lord Jagannath is demystified. This is followed by identifying Him with the land and people of Orissa. Lord Jagannath came to be seen as representing the quintessential 'Oriya'. Making Him the leader of Orissa means to identify Him with Oriya destiny.

In this section, a considerable portion has been devoted to the study of Sarala Dasa, *Panchasakha* and other leading later medieval poets, *Gajapati* kings and the 'Deulatola' versions of the origin legend. Their ideas and perceptions of the Jagannath cult, while locating Lord Jagannath at the centre of the Oriya religious world, served as the base for modern poets and scholars to look at the Lord in a perspective that helped for thorough Oriya appropriation.

Like Oriya Literature, the historiography and the narratives on Orissa also played an important role in identifying Lord Jagannath with Orissa and Oriyas. The Jagannath cult came to be seen and restated in two different perspectives i.e, colonial, anti-Jagannath and sentimental, nationalist- both of which rooted Lord Jagannath to Orissa. Both perspectives, either consciously or unconsciously 'constructed' the Jagannath cult as an exclusive phenomenon of Orissa.

The colonial, anti-Jagannath perspective arose out of the orientalisng tendencies of the West. From the West's first contacts with Lord Jagannath, there developed a Western style of restructuring the ideas and values associated with the latter. As early as 1321 A.D., Friar Odoric, while describing the Car festival of Lord Jagannath, writes how pilgrims throw themselves under the chariot and how the 'car passes over them and crushes them and cuts them in sunder and so they perish on the spot.'¹ This observation, devoid of any understanding of the real cause of such deaths, was the result of the limited knowledge of the West about India. The Westerners' understanding of Lord Jagannath at that time was dictated by their general ignorance and even prejudices about the latter. For example, in 1633 A.D. William Bruton, the first Englishman to visit Puri and the Jagannath temple, gave an absurd, irrational account of the temple. In his travelogue, 'News from the East Indies' or 'A Voyage to Bengalla', he describes the idol of Lord Jagannath as 'a giant serpant figure with seven heads' and imagines that 'on the cheeks of each head, it has the form of a wing which opens, shuts and flaps as the idol is carried in a stately chariot'.² Bruton's description of Lord Jagannath arises not

¹Henry Yule and A.C.Burnell, Hobson-Jobson. An Anglo-Indian Dictionary (Reprt. ,Ware,1996) ,p.466

²P.T.Nair(ed.) , Bruton's Visit to Lord Jagannatha 350 Years Ago (Calcutta,1985) ,p.68

only out of his ignorance about the idol but also from his lack of adequate knowledge about Hinduism. For example, he describes Lord Jagannath as a 'wicked god, put by Brahmins in the chariot during the Car festival'.¹ Here, one can read into it not only Bruton's ignorance about the pre-eminence of Lord Jagannath in the Hindu pantheon but also his dominating and authoritarian attitude towards the East and its institutions.

Since the Jagannath temple is a Hindu institution, the right to enter the temple is restricted to Hindus. Western visitors had no opportunity to look at the Jagannath Triad, except during the Car festival when the Triad are brought out of the temple. So their description of Lord Jagannath was based primarily on what they perceived during the festival. Both their limited knowledge as well as a judgemental attitude resulted in their understanding the Jagannath cult in a negative mould. Bruton for example, describes the Puri temple as 'the mirror of all wickedness and idolatry' and as 'the house of Satan' where *Brahmins* daily offer sacrifice to Lord Jagannath.² In the latter half of the 17th century, a sailing-master, Thomas Bowrey in his narrative on the regions around the Bay of Bengal, describes Brahmins of the temple as diabolic. His description of the temple which is worth quoting demonstrates his utter ignorance about the temple and the idol:

In that great and sumptuous Diabolical Pagod, there standeth their greatest God John Gernaet, whence the Pagod received that name alsoe. This image is of massy Gold very richly wrought, and in the full Stature of a man, Kept in a large dark room of its selfe, but by the lustre of his Eys which are two Diamonds of Exchange value, the place is by relation as light as though there were more than two candles lighted.³

¹Ibid., p. 70

²Ibid., p. 68

³R.C. Temple (ed.), Thomas Bowrey's A geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669-1679 (Cambridge, 1903), pp. 15-16

Writing in old English, Bowrey calls Lord Jagannath as 'John Gernaet' and describes His image as a massive golden statue of a man which has two eyes made of diamond. The distorted description of the Jagannath idol like that of Bruton results from the fact that he had no first-hand information about Lord Jagannath. His lack of understanding also distorts his description of the Car festival which is otherwise an open, public event. The chariot of Lord Jagannath is diabolical and under its wheels are pressed many beholders for whom, it is a 'noble, heroic and zealous death'.¹ Apparently, Bowrey perceives the entire institution of Lord Jagannath in a negative spirit which again resulted from his ignorance and misunderstanding of Hindu institutions.

The same attitude of the West towards Lord Jagannath continued during the colonial period. In 1806 A.D., a chaplain from Calcutta, Claudius Buchanan describes the Jagannath idol as 'the monster holding high carnival' and the Puri temple as 'a stately pagoda-a hideous grotesque thing, of huge proportions, in the semblance of mutilated humanity stuck about with pseudo-divine emblems....'.² This prejudice against the idol and the temple is also blatantly reflected in his narrative on the pilgrimage to Lord Jagannath during the Car festival. He describes it as 'full of obstacles like harsh climate, want and horrible diseases which are surmounted by pilgrims finally to kill themselves under the wheels of the car in a sort of ecstatic mockery of martyrdom'.³ According to Buchanan, the pilgrimage to Lord Jagannath is a killer and the idolatry of Hinduism is responsible for it. In a religious tract, 'Christian Researches in Asia', he condemns that 'a record of Juggernaut would be a roll written within and without with blood, obscenity and woe'.⁴

¹Ibid., p.18

²J.W.Kaye, Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative (London, 1859), p.369

³Ibid, p.370

⁴N.G.Cassels, Religion and Pilgrim Tax under the Company

Buchanan had, of course visited Puri, but the impressions he had formed about the entire institution of Lord Jagannath, were influenced partly by the theological misunderstanding and partly by the colonial, hegemonic considerations. The theological misunderstanding of the Jagannath cult was really based on the general misunderstanding of Hinduism. For example, Charles Grant, the Evangelical who became the Chairman of Court of Directors of the East India Company, strongly believed Hinduism to be erected upon 'the darkest ignorance and the boldest falsehood'. This prejudice finally turned to strong opposition to idolatry. It became almost a struggle of the West against Hindu idolatry. In the 19th century, the Christian missionaries continued this struggle, concentrating on Lord Jagannath. Their struggle was no less inspired by the motive to disengage the British government from the affairs of Lord Jagannath and the temple. We have seen in the last chapter, how after the occupation of Orissa in 1803 A.D., the British involved themselves in the affairs of the temple and rigorously imposed the pilgrim tax. This was incompatible with the outlook and activities of the Christian missionaries. They started to oppose and attack the Jagannath cult and accused the British government of encouraging idolatry.

Another missionary, W.F.B. Laurie, describes Orissa as a huge cauldron 'which has been boiling for many hundred years, into which ignorance, stupidity and bigotry, have cast so many poisonous ingredients that it is difficult to say when the contents will become purified and good'.¹ This orientalisng tendency about Orissa ended in a description of Lord Jagannath as 'the principal stronghold of Hindu superstition'.² Ignorance, stupidity and superstition, as essential features of the East, were seen as maintaining the idolatry of Lord Jagannath. Laurie, then expounds the evil

Raj (New Delhi, 1987), p. 78

¹W.F.B. Laurie, Orissa, The Garden of Superstition and Idolatry (London, n.d.), p. 5

²Ibid., p. 6

consequences of the idolatry by pointing out the results of the annual Car festival of Lord Jagannath. According to him, the entire scene of the festival 'savours, to an incredible extent, of the ludicrous, the barbarous and the awful' and after the festival is over, the people 'either retire or die, or reach their deserted homes, the victims of ignorance, poverty and wretchedness'.¹

Finally, Laurie concludes that the whole history of Jagannath, from nearly beginning of the 19th century, is neither more nor less than one huge calender of crime'.² Thus, Laurie restructures the existing knowledge about the Jagannath cult on the basis of his limited knowledge of Lord Jagannath and the general colonial attitude towards religion, culture and institutions of the subject race. How the colonial attitude dictates the restructuring of knowledge about the subjects, becomes clear from Laurie's locating Christianity on a high pedestal vis-a-vis the Jagannath cult. In his imagination, in the face of the Jagannath cult, 'Christianity is shuddering and morality in it is weeping and intellect slumbers in silence, awaiting the dawn of a better day'.³ So, in comparison to Christianity, the religion of the West, the Jagannath cult is barbarian and superstitious and the Christianity is awaiting the dawn of a better day ! In a sense, Laurie was hopeful that one day the Jagannath cult would be purged of its institutions which he perceived to be evil.

Playing down the Jagannath cult, the Christian missionaries not only wanted to score a point for Christianity but also tried to maintain a superior position, as part of the colonial authority. Only from a position of strength and authority, one can control knowledge about the weak and subordinate. The missionaries, being a part of the colonial authority, attempted to restructure knowledge about the subject people. In consequence, the Jagannath cult came to be regarded as an inferior, superstitious religious faith. The

¹Ibid., p. 47

²Ibid., p. 51

³Ibid., p. 47

missionaries also felt that it was not befitting for the British government to support and encourage the Jagannath cult. The government involvement in the affairs of the Jagannath cult came under the scathing attack of the missionaries. Kaye for example, dubbed the government as 'Jagannath's churchwarden' and challenged the government role in the Jagannath temple.¹ He blames the Christian government for 'openly and authoritatively aiding and abetting the worst forms of devil-worship' and of 'taking all the hideous indecencies and cruelties of Hinduism under their especial patronage'.² Here, while advocating for severance of all sorts of link with the Jagannath cult, Kaye describes the Jagannath cult in the most derogatory terms, viz., devil worship, indecencies and cruelties. Thus, the Jagannath cult is projected as uncivilised, uncouth and superstitious before the West and Lord Jagannath is projected as inferior to Christian gods .

Since in the missionaries' estimate, Lord Jagannath was the embodiment of idolatry, superstition and wretchedness, it was not right that a civilised Christian government should be entangled in the affairs of the Puri temple. This was precisely the contention of the Baptist missionary James Peggs who strongly opposed his government's association with Lord Jagannath. He attacked the pilgrim tax, supported and maintained by the government. According to him, the pilgrim tax enhanced the supposed value of pilgrimage and the fame of an idolatrous resort like Puri.³ He found the government sanction of idolatry at Puri incompatible with the national character of Britain. Describing the pilgrim tax as inhuman, impolitic and un-Christian, Peggs declares that 'for the character of Britain to be associated with idolaters in their scenes of revelry, vice and misery, is degrading to our

¹Kaye, op.cit.,p.385

²Ibid.,p.373

³James Peggs, India's Cries to British Humanity(London, 1832) ,p.120

national character'.¹ In other words, he does not approve the association of his government with an idolatrous people who are 'a painted, pagan, semi-barbarous race'.

The anti-Jagannath theological propaganda became one of the main planks of missionary activities in Orissa. The first Baptist missionaries, William Bampton and James Peggs came to Orissa in 1822 A.D. and started their activities at Cuttack. They undertook their task of propagating Christianity by establishing schools and printing Christian literature in Oriya. The missionaries established the first press in Orissa, 'Orissa Mission Press' in 1838 A.D. and it was exclusively devoted to the publication of Christian literature and tracts. It is no wonder, that the first book published by this Press was on Lord Jagannath and it was entitled 'Jagannath Tirtha Mahatmya' or Glory of Jagannath *Srikshetra*!² It describes the sufferings of pilgrims to Puri-*Srikshetra* and their frustration and miseries during the pilgrimage.

Lord Jagannath, being the centre of the Oriya religious world, came to be seen by the missionaries as the main prop on which Hindu Oriyas' religious ideas and convictions rested. So the institution came under scathing criticism and attack with the intention to degrade it and downplay its importance and popularity. The first Oriya Bible, translated by William Kerry in 1808 A.D. was distributed among pilgrims at Puri to introduce them to the tenets of Christianity. It is worth-mentioning that the printing of the Oriya Bible necessitated the establishment of the Mission Press at Cuttack in 1838 A.D.³

With the arrival of 'printing' in Orissa, many Christian tracts and literature in Oriya came to be produced. One such tract was 'Jagannath Parikshya' or Jagannath Tested (1889 A.D.) written by a Christian called

¹Ibid., p.134

²P.K.Patra, Odisare Baptist misanari sosaitira karya abam Christia mandali sthapanara Itihasa, 1822-1942 (Cuttack, 1943), p.178

³Ibid., p.173

Mukunda Das. Making a comparison between true Jagannath (Jesus Christ) and false Jagannath (Lord Jagannath of Puri), the book dwells upon the origin, ceremonies, pilgrimage and Car festival of Lord Jagannath and denounces Him while celebrating the glory and importance of true Jagannath- Jesus Christ.¹ While describing different aspects of the Jagannath cult, the book makes disparaging comments on them. It mentions that as a shop-owner opens a shop to earn his livelihood and as a hunter spreads nets to catch animals, so Lord Jagannath is likewise installed by people with vested interests.² In another small poetry-book, 'Christashcharyakriya' or Miracles of Christ, there is an account of miracles done by Jesus Christ and finally, Jesus is declared as the true and only saviour.³ This is how Christian missionaries put forward Jesus Christ against Lord Jagannath and tried to downgrade the latter by eulogising and glorifying the former.

The observations and perceptions of Lord Jagannath coming from the missionaries, produced an anti-Jagannath perspective. Lord Jagannath was seen essentially in a negative mould and interpreted as the embodiment of superstition, ignorance and diabolism. Accordingly, a Western discourse on the Jagannath cult developed and Lord Jagannath was imputed with certain essentialisations. On an examination, these essentialisations may be found incorrect, but their importance lies in increasing the fame of Lord Jagannath. By interpreting Him as an irrational, yet exclusive Oriya phenomenon, the West sets Him off as the opposed, inimical 'Other'. This externalised 'Other' connotation of Lord Jagannath strengthened the roots of the Jagannath cult in Orissa and the anti-Jagannath tirades of the missionaries helped Oriyas to

¹See for details, Mukunda Das, Jagannath Parikshya (12th edn., Cuttack, 1889)

²Ibid.

³See, Christashcharyakriya (6th edn., Cuttack, 1898). The name of the author is not known.

rally behind the Lord to protect Him.

The missionary perception of Lord Jagannath and His cult continued in the historiographical writings of the Western scholars on the institution of Jagannath. Hamilton for example, while giving a general description of the Jagannath cult including its origin, says that 'the concourse of pilgrims to this temple is so immense, that at 50 miles distance its approach may be known by the quantity of human bones which are strewed by the way.'¹ Prejudiced against the pilgrimage system, he states that 'many perish by dysentery and the surrounding country abounds with skulls and human bones'.² The pilgrimage to Puri and the Car festival of the Jagannath Triad are depicted by Hamilton in horrifying terms. Lord Jagannath is made responsible for the deaths of the people who visit him. The historian Beveridge had also written (1814 A.D.) that during the Car festival the sight was such that it beggared all descriptions and that people lost their lives in the crowd.³

The pilgrimage and the Car festival had long been misunderstood and hence misinterpreted by Christian missionaries and other early Western commentators. This is partly due to their malobservation of the actual state of affairs and partly to their intention to defame and degrade Lord Jagannath so as to establish the pre-eminence of Christianity. It has already been pointed out that the general theological misunderstanding of Hinduism had prompted the missionaries to project a distorted picture of Lord Jagannath. The pilgrimage and the Car festival were seen as the superstitious and evil practices of Hindu idolatry. Hence, some deaths here and there during the long march of pilgrimage or an accidental death during the crowded Car festival came to be seen as evil consequences of the idolatrous practices. In

¹W.Hamilton, *The Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan and the Adjacent Countries* (1820), Vol.I, reprint. in Sri Mandir, Vol.XXIV, Oct.1994, p.5

²Ibid., p.5

³Yule and Burnell, *op.cit.*, p.467

reality, death was not in the nature of suicide or sacrifice, rather it was caused mostly by accident and natural causes. Perhaps, that is why, the scholar-administrator Andrew Stirling, while echoing the words of Hamilton about the deaths of the pilgrims to Puri, himself confesses that the fanaticism which once prompted the pilgrims to kill themselves 'has happily long ceased to actuate the worshippers of the present day'.¹ He also points out that 'the number of pilgrims resorting to Jagannath has been exaggerated, as well as the waste of human life occasioned thereby'.² This observation, coming from a British official was significant. After a prolonged observation and analysis, he put the incidence of death in the right perspective. There might be occasional cases of death, particularly during the Car festival, but it was not on the scale suggested by the Christian missionaries. The causes of death included hostile weather conditions, overcrowding, hardship and unhygienic living conditions. In 1813 A.D. for example, during the time of the Car festival, thirty-four people were killed near the Lion gate of the Puri temple due to a stampede in the crowd.³ The myth of self-immolation by pilgrims was finally exposed by the historian W.W.Hunter who carefully examined the whole evidence on the subject, from 1580 A.D. when Abul Fazal wrote, down through a long series of travellers, to the police reports of 1870 A.D. . He concluded that the deaths at the Car festival were almost always accidental.⁴

Thus, without properly understanding the nature, extent and cause of human death during the time of the pilgrimage and the Car festival, it was blown out of all proportion in the West, particularly by the missionaries. Lord

¹Andrew Stirling, Orissa: Its Geography, Statistics, History, Religion and Antiquities (London, 1846), p.127

²Ibid.

³S.N.Dash, Jagannath Mandira o' Jagannath Tattwa (4th edn., Cuttack, 1985), p.28

⁴L.S.S.O' Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers. Puri (Calcutta, 1908), p.109

Jagannath was seen as diabolic. His name, in a distorted form of 'Juggernaut' came to be used as a metaphor for any relentless force or object of devotion and sacrifice. Even during the Second World War, the American President Roosevelt used the term 'Juggernaut' to explain how the ordnance was being manufactured relentlessly in his country.¹ This shows, how the West had restructured the knowledge about Lord Jagannath from a position of strength and authority, in order to denounce a popular and highly-respected Hindu institution.

Hunter had an objective and detached view of Lord Jagannath. In his two volumes on Orissa, the first he has devoted substantially to Lord Jagannath, His origin legend, His cult and His association with Orissa.² Pointing out the eternal search for the Lord by the Oriya race, he writes that

Jagannath exhibits the goal to which a highly intellectual race painfully arrives after ages of polytheism, during which the masses were sunk in darkness which the higher spirits of each generation having been groping after the One Eternal Deity.³

According to Hunter, Lord Jagannath reigns supreme among the common people of Orissa. He correctly points out that different fiscal divisions of Orissa claim as a precious hereditary right, the privilege of rendering service to the god and that Oriyas delight to explain the etymology of their towns and villages, by referring their names to some incident in the history of Lord Jagannath.⁴ Hunter also brings out the reason for Oriyas yearning for Lord Jagannath,

¹S.N.Dash, op.cit., p.24

²See for details, W.W.Hunter, Orissa (2 vols., London, 1872), I

³Ibid., p.88

⁴Ibid., p.115

It is to some extent, the outcome of centuries of companionship in suffering between the people and their god as in every disaster of Orissa, Lord Jagannath has borne his share, and in every fight of the people before an invading power, He has been their commander.¹

Hunter thus, recognises the Jagannath-centricism of the Oriya life. But he also suffers from the general tendency of the time to essentialise Lord Jagannath. In a chapter, 'The Pilgrims of Jagannath', he exaggerates the negative consequences of the pilgrimage to Puri. He sees pilgrims as the carriers of an epidemic which might threaten even Europe ! He is afraid that, 'the over-crowded, pest-haunted lodges in Puri may become at any moment, the centre from which the disease radiates to the great manufacturing towns of France and England.'² Though he admits that the popular Western belief about death during the pilgrimage and the Car festival is exaggerated, he is strongly prejudiced against pilgrims visiting Lord Jagannath. Without any sense of geography, he forecasts that the squalid pilgrim army of Jagannath may someday 'slay thousands of the most talented and the most beautiful of our age in Vienna, London or Washington.'³ This forecast defies any logic of science and geography- how infection can travel thousands of miles to haunt the other end of the globe !

What we have discussed so far is essentially a colonial, anti-Jagannath perspective developed by the West as part of Orientalism, to denounce and defame the Jagannath cult. The missionaries and the British scholar-administrators, all representing the broad colonial establishment in India, made no pretence of praising the institution of Jagannath although the British rulers, after the occupation of Orissa, tried to interfere in the cult either

¹W.W.Hunter, A.Stirling, John Beams and N.K.Sahu, A History of Orissa (Calcutta, 1956), II, p.5

²W.W.Hunter, Orissa, op.cit., p.166

³Ibid., p.167

passively or actively.¹ But their involvement in the cult was primarily intended to control the affairs of the Puri temple for colonial gains. The essentialisations about Lord Jagannath developed by the missionaries and observers such as Hamilton, Stirling and Hunter, came to constitute a standard Western discourse on the subject. But it was essentially negative in tone, though arguably, it may be seen as a part of the West's larger 'civilizing process'- of altering, restructuring and conquering the culture of Indian society and in this case, the Jagannath cult. It amounted to a cultural hegemony of European ideas over the Orient, implying Europe's self-professed superiority over the so-called Oriental backwardness. But paradoxically the Western attitude only increased the importance of Lord Jagannath and *Srikshetra* Puri. Oriyas became more conscious of their deity and its importance in the pan-Hindu pantheon. Lord Jagannath came to be recognised by 'Others' as an integral part of the Oriya religious-cultural heritage.

The other perspective on the Jagannath cult which is sentimental and nationalist, glorifies and exaggerates the importance of Lord Jagannath. This perspective was mostly developed by Oriya writers as a reaction to the Orientalising essentialisations. The hegemony of Orientalism came to be challenged in this nationalist perspective. Inspired by an 'Oriya' consciousness, they tried to glorify Lord Jagannath so that they could boastfully lay claim to Him. But outsiders like R.L. Mitra, (the great Bengali scholar) have also played an important role in identifying Lord Jagannath with Orissa. In the first volume of his 'The Antiquities of Orissa', Mitra has made an objective analysis of the Jagannath cult. While narrating the origin legend of the cult in detail, he comments:

The original story is a pure fiction, got up, long after date, with a view to give circumstantial weight to its claim for remote antiquity

¹This has been dealt in detail in Chapter VI

without which the place would not be readily recommended as the most sacred object on earth, and worthy of being visited at great sacrifices'.¹

So Mitra treats the origin legend as essentially lending meaning to the antiquity and sacredness of Lord Jagannath.

It is interesting to see how the first Oriya historian Pyarimohun Acharya (1851-81 A.D.) treated the subject of the Jagannath cult in his history of Orissa, 'Odisara Itihasa' published in 1879 A.D. . Acharya rejected any romanticisation of the origin legend, but drawing on history and popular belief, believed that Lord Jagannath had long existed in Orissa and was installed there by a King called Indradyumna from Malva.² According to him, the Jagannath cult arose out of the Brahminic attempt to eliminate Buddhism. When Buddhism started to decline in Orissa, Indradyumna came with the intention to restore Hinduism with the help of *Brahmins*, in the Buddhist centre of Puri.³ Though Acharya denies the *Savara* origin of the Jagannath cult, he categorically roots it in Orissa. Like the Oriya poets, he also glorifies the cult and repeatedly emphasizes its syncretic aspect.

But we have a more sentimental and nationalistic description of Lord Jagannath in the Orissa history of Jagabandhu Singh, entitled 'Prachina Utkal' (1929 A.D.). He laments the present decline of Orissa, but is consoled by the presence of Lord Jagannath. Unlike Acharya, he accepts the prevailing origin legend of the Jagannath cult and traces its origin to some distant past, millions of years ago.⁴ Singh celebrates not only the antiquity of the

¹R.L.Mitra, The Antiquities of Orissa (Calcutta, 1880), II, p.103

²Pyarimohun Acharya's Odisara Itihasa, ed., Sk Mutlub Ali (New edn., Cuttack, 1991), pp.57-58

³Ibid., pp.58-59

⁴Jagabandhu Singh, Prachina Utkal (2nd edn., Bhubaneswar, 1982), II, p.85

Jagannath cult but also the holiness and greatness of *Srikshetra*-Puri. According to him, after the Mahabharat battle, Srikrshna was relaxing in Puri when he was hit with an arrow shot by Jara Savara and finally His dead body was burnt in Puri, by the great Mahabharat hero, Arjuna.¹ Singh also finds continuity in the administration of the Puri temple, from the days of the mythic King Indradyumna until the present, through the rule of Kings such as Yayati and Anangabhimadeva.² For him, the Puri temple is the epitome of the universe, as it contains the earth, the heaven and the underworld. Thus glorifying the Jagannath cult, Singh wants to project it as the greatest, the holiest and the most sought-after religion of the world.

Singh's sentimental and nationalist approach to Lord Jagannath becomes more visible when he proposes the Jagannath cult as an 'universal religion'. According to him, the Puri temple is ruled by the principle of equality, the elements of Shaivism, Shaktatism, Ganapatya and Vaishnavism are subsumed there and any faith or religion like Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam finds its fulfilment in the temple.³ Singh concludes that the Jagannath cult and the temple are the crowning achievement of the Oriya *Dharmaveeras* (Spiritual Men).⁴

Though on an objective analysis, such observations would prove fallacious and the expression of mere sentimentalism, their real merit lies in constructing the Jagannath cult to be an exclusive and unique Oriya phenomenon. Drawing on its glorious history and tradition, Oriya intellectuals assigned fellow Oriyas a great religious tradition and made Lord Jagannath an essential part of the Oriya heritage. This sort of perspective on Lord Jagannath, which is nationalistic and sentimental, is responsible for inducing

¹Ibid., p.130

²Ibid., p.97

³Ibid., pp.191-192

⁴Ibid., p.192

in Oriyas a sense of belonging to the great deity, Jagannath.

This point can be given further proof by the historiography of Krupasindhu Mishra, the historian of the Satyavadi school. He wrote his 'Utkal Itihasa' in 1933 A.D. where he depicts Lord Jagannath as the '*Sparshamani*' (touchstone) of the history of Orissa.¹ The very existence of the Lord transformed Utkal, the land of the down-trodden (patita), the *Bratyabhumi* to a great religious and holy land. The elements of equality and fraternity of Hinduism are spread by the Jagannath cult and this makes Orissa glorious and proud. Finally, Mishra sees Lord Jagannath, as epitomising all the essence and glory of Hinduism.²

Beyond the period of our study, we have many other historical writings by Oriya authors on the Jagannath cult which have broadly a nationalistic, sentimental perspective. This sort of abstract understanding of the Jagannath cult and a conscious attempt to glorify it survives in popular perceptions and writings of Oriya authors. For example, Nilakantha Das in his 'Odia Sahityara Krama Parinama' (1948 A.D.), describes Lord Jagannath as the symbol of *Maitree*- friendship which is ultimately required for *Nirvana*- salvation.³ Linking *Nirvana* with universal brotherhood, Das states that *Nirvana* can be achieved only when there is care and appreciation for the others' desire. For him, the Lord, without any distinction, promotes *Nirvana* for all and this equality is also reflected in the *Mahaprasad* system prevalent in the premise of the Jagannath temple. S.N.Dash's 'Jagannath Mandira O'Jagannath Tattwa', is a relatively modern work on the Jagannath cult.⁴ It has also the same perspective which treats the Jagannath cult as a great national, *jatiya* Oriya heritage. The

¹Krupasindhu Mishra, Utkal Itihasa (New edn., Cuttack, 1979), pp. 38-39

²Ibid.

³Nilakantha Das, Odia Sahityara Krama Parinama (2 vols., Cuttack, 1948), I, pp. 212-213

⁴See, S.N.Dash, op.cit.

antiquity, the universality and the syncretism of the Jagannath cult has been so constructed by the author as to make it a great religious faith of the world.

Oriya scholars and authors have a natural urge, as we have seen, to tend to eulogise and mystify the Jagannath cult because of their emotional attachment with and reverence for Lord Jagannath. The primacy of Lord Jagannath in any discourse on Oriya culture and religion has been historically-conditioned, hence any intellectual or imaginative writing by Oriyas on the Lord naturally tends to reiterate and continue this primacy by imputing meanings that glorify Him. Arguably, this also counters the West's orientalising of the Jagannath cult by treating it in a positive manner.

The glorification of the Jagannath cult in sentimental and nationalistic terms by Oriya authors and intellectuals, was really a symbolic construction to induce a sense of Jagannath-centric identity among Oriyas. So it is not important to examine these writings with facts; but it is relevant to contextualise them in the period when these were written. These were written under the historical imperatives of the late 19th and early 20th century when an Oriya consciousness was gradually developing. As we have already seen in the third chapter, the new material and socio-cultural forces, resulting from a dialectical confrontation between colonial and Oriya interests, provided the immediate context for such a development. It provoked and inspired the Oriya middle class to 'construct' their state-deity, Jagannath in such a way as to make Him completely Oriyanised. The origin, nature and glory of the Jagannath cult came to be re-stated and even rhetorised so that Lord Jagannath could be projected as an exclusive, unique Oriya phenomenon.

Our survey of Oriya literature and of the historiography and narratives on Orissa, brings out how at an intellectual level, Lord Jagannath was imagined and His cult constructed. In the literature, we saw the development of two different strands. First, it was essentially a religio-theocratic strand which gradually changed to a secularisation of the Jagannath cult in the later

writings. Similarly, in the historiography and narratives on Orissa, there were two different distinct strands which we have dubbed as colonial, anti-Jagannath perspective and sentimental, nationalist perspective. We have argued that both, a secular approach in the treatment of the Jagannath cult as reflected in the literary writings and a sentimental, nationalistic perspective on the cult, developed in the late 19th and early 20th century, as a reaction to the British colonialism-imperialism. Unless Lord Jagannath was identified with the Oriya *jati* and made a symbol, it was difficult to bind Oriyas together for a common purpose in the era of colonialism. Similarly, without a nationalist perspective on the state-deity of Oriyas, it could hardly have been possible to induce an exaggerated sense of 'self' during the period when the present had very little to offer. During the period under our study, due to all these developments, Lord Jagannath came to be loaded with symbolic meanings and values which located Him at the centre of Oriya life and aspirations. Though Lord Jagannath had already been appropriated to Orissa, with these symbolic meanings and values, He was made the focus of Oriya life.

CONCLUSION

Just as an individual develops a sense of his identity by interacting with other people, so also the sense of collective identity expressed in commitment to a group or community, derives from the necessity to interact with the world outside. So the identity of a community becomes meaningful only when there is contact or interaction with the outside world. Depending on historical circumstances, the community in question asserts its identity. The circumstances leading to the assertion of identity by the community in question, make it to feel under such a severe threat from some external source that if it does not assert its identity it may be diluted. Identity may be used for the mobilisation of the community, for protecting its cultural rights and for gaining some political and economic advantages as a matter of right. It may be also communicative and interpretative to the outside world: the symbolic boundaries, encapsulating the community, convey its peculiarities and distinctiveness to the 'others'.

Our study of Oriya identity focuses on the period 1866-1936 A.D. although it sometimes moves back and forth for better understanding and a broader historical perspective. This is the period when Oriyas were confronted with the challenge of interacting with the outside world in a colonial set-up. Their land, economy, society and culture, were all exposed to external influences which, as we have already seen in the second chapter, gradually marginalised Oriya interests in Oriya-speaking regions. This negative impact of the interaction with the outside world contributed to the development of what V.B.Punekar calls 'the sense of peoplehood or we-feeling' shared by the members of the Oriya community.¹ Its logical corollary was to assert self-

¹V.B.Punekar, 'Ethnic Relations in India: Reinforcing and Regrouping of Ethnic Identities', Man in India, Vol. 66, No.2 (1986), p.110

identity so that the Oriyas' specificities and uniqueness were reckoned with by the outside world.

We have taken the Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult, to demonstrate how Oriya identity has been constituted in them. The construction of an intellectual and cultural discourse on Oriya identity served the purpose of the emerging Oriya middle class to consolidate the 'we-feeling'. But the evidence we have considered brings out the fact that a sense of Oriya consciousness was there even in the medieval ages, though in a rudimentary form. By the 15th century A.D., the geo-political evolution of the historical region of Orissa was almost complete. The term 'Odisha' (Orissa) came to be used to denote this. As we have seen, the earliest Oriya literature that developed in the 15th century, tried to come to terms with the new meaning that 'Odisha' assumed. The literary works of Sarala Dasa and the *Panchasakha* poets bear testimony to it. The evidence discussed earlier suggests how a sense of 'Oriyaness' was embedded in their works. By implanting the all-India themes on Orissan soil, they not only objectified the 'geographic space' broadly corresponding to the present Orissa, but also outlined its distinct and unique features. Its land and inhabitants came to assume distinct identity. The early Oriya literary traditions constructed this identity, in terms of sanctity, landscape, mythic past and even human virtues like bravery.

As the early Oriya literature constructed and projected Oriya identity, so also the Jagannath cult at its early stage of evolution, gradually assumed the distinction as an Oriya faith. The creation of an origin legend helped in making the Jagannath cult an autochthonous faith of the region, by associating the entire process of origin with the land and people. The Hindu rulers of Orissa, starting with the Ganga period, patronised the Jagannath cult and made it the state religion. More important was the close relationship of kings with Lord Jagannath and in the course of time, they came to assume epithets like 'Chalanti Vishnu' (mobile Vishnu) and 'Thakura Raja' (godly king). In the Oriya religious world, Lord Jagannath and the Hindu king came to be so inextricably

linked that they came to be interchangeably invoked, meaning the same. It helped in forging a common religious belief around kings who represented Lord Jagannath in human form. Oriyas, belonging to different faiths and denominations, were bound by this belief which was also strengthened by the remarkable elasticity of the Jagannath cult. The religious world of Oriyas came increasingly under the spell of the Jagannath cult and Oriyas were identified with Lord Jagannath. Moreover, the *Panchasakha* literature, by way of glorifying Lord Jagannath, popularised the cult and brought Him to the Oriya folk. Thus, the Oriya religious identity came to be gradually constituted in the Jagannath cult, in its early stage of evolution.

The Oriya consciousness that had manifested itself at an earlier stage, took the form of identity in the 19th and 20th centuries. The evidence we examined, suggests that the British colonial policies in Orissa together with the linguistic, cultural and economic subordination of Oriyas to the more advanced Bengalis and Telugus, gave rise to a reactionary feeling of peripheralisation and deprivation among the educated Oriya middle class. This directly contributed to the development of an Oriya consciousness which manifested itself not only in political articulation but also in the new Oriya literature and religious culture of the time, in terms of cultural identity.

The new literature that came to be created in the late 19th and early 20th century under the influence of rising Oriya consciousness, was marked by an intellectual search for Oriya's roots in the past and his specific nature. In the chapters IV & V as we saw, Oriya authors used history, tradition, legend, nature and landscape, Indian link and even an externalised 'Other', in their works. Oriya and Orissa came to be projected as distinct from the others. The known facts of the past were reinterpreted and the characters were eulogised and even rehabilitated, so as to invent a new history which is not only glorious but also distinctly superior to others. History was thus pressed into defining Oriya identity. From Phakirmohun to Kalindi Charan, there was a tendency among Oriya authors to invent a new history with such human values like

bravery, prowess, sacrifice and victory. For this, authors had to borrow from tradition, legend and folklore. Radhanath for example, projected a history which was a unique blend of known facts, legend and folkloric elements. The distinction between history and legend was blurred and Orissa became a theatre fulfilling divine plans. Authors like Phakirmohun and Aswini Kumar twisted the historical facts and glorified them to invoke a sense of Oriya pride and honour. The Satyavadi school was so imbued with an Oriya sense that Gopabandhu, Nilakantha, Godavarish and Krupasindhu saw the mute monuments and traditions, symbolising the highest human virtues which were unique to Oriyas. The Sun temple of Konark, thus became a symbol of Oriya pride, in terms of sacrifice, bravery and even love.

Apart from history, nature and the landscape of Orissa were also frequently invoked by authors who made them a distinctly Oriya feature. By imagining the inseparability between Oriyas and their geography, they tried to instil a collective consciousness among Oriyas. Radhanath and Gangadhar made the land of Orissa an object of veneration and glorification. They used the metaphors of 'mother', 'goddess' etc. to objectify Orissan nature and to impute divinity and beauty to it. Moreover, there was a clear tendency to historicise the nature by way of linking history with various natural features of Orissa. By the first quarter of the 20th century, Orissan nature was clearly established as a predominant theme in the Oriya literary tradition.

The quest for identity also involves the projected 'Others' because the definition of identity requires 'Other' as the point of reference. Phakirmohun for example, sought the identity of the Western-educated, urbanised Oriya, imbued with mercenary values, within the framework of a dichotomy between Westernised, mercenary culture and traditional, community-based oral tradition. This dichotomy of 'modern' versus 'traditional' was constituted in most of his novels and stories. The dichotomy arose under the impact of colonialism. Phakirmohun could make the identity of the newly-emerged, modern Oriya more categorical and distinct in this dichotomous framework.

For the Oriya authors, the constructed 'Other' also referred to India and even the whole world. Oriyas were contextualised against India and the world and an inseparable link between Oriyas and the outside world was forged. In their scheme of things, any discourse on Oriya identity must explore and establish the connection with the outside world. In consequence, Oriya identity became broad-based and expansive.

The Oriya authors had to change their perspective on Oriya identity with the change of political mood in Orissa. From a reactionary, inward-looking conception of Orissa and Oriyas, it gradually shifted to a broad-based, expansive definition of 'Oriya'. Oriyas were no more seen in isolation; any definition of Orissa or Oriyas must take into account 'India'. Even, as the evidence suggests, the *Sabujite* writers in the 1920s and '30s conceived Oriya identity, in terms of membership of the whole of humanity. Oriyas were given an identity that transcended all national, linguistic and geographical barriers. This sort of visionary conception projected Oriyas as 'outward-looking and liberal' and as 'nationalists' devoted to the cause of India. For the *Sabujites*, the twentieth century Oriya was the 'new Oriya' whose identity lay in his world-view and in the negation of all man-made restrictions and boundaries. This sort of projection really helped to crystallise the Indian consciousness of Oriyas. It contributed positively to the ongoing anti-colonial, nationalist movement in India. As we have seen, the Oriya nationalists were inspired by such intellectual promptings and themselves participated in the making of the discourse on identity.

As in literature, in the Jagannath cult too, Oriya identity was developed during the 19th and 20th centuries. A common religious belief that had developed in earlier times around Lord Jagannath, took some form of identity that manifested itself in the king-cult symbiosis, the festivals and rituals, the sacralisation of *Mahaprasad* (offering to the Jagannath Triad), the *Mukti Mandap* tradition and the *Mahari*-Odissi dance tradition. Oriyas grew to be a cohesive community of believers on the strength of these features of the

Jagannath cult. We have seen how the Oriya public and press reacted to the British' treatment of the *Gajapati* kings in the late 19th century who had a symbiotic relationship with the Jagannath cult; how the Car Festival and other festive rites were performed more rigorously, binding together the lay Oriyas; how *Mahaprasad* had assumed a symbolic meaning of Oriya brotherhood, enforcing Oriya unity; how the *Mukti Mandap* played a role in imposing socio-religious uniformity among Oriyas even in the later part of the 20th century and how the *Mahari*-Odissi dance tradition became a resource in Oriya cultural life. Even the indigenous opposition to the Jagannath cult, the *Alekh Dharma*, was not a protest movement, but really a 'successor' movement to the cult. The *Alekh* followers came under the overall influence of the cult. Arguably, because of these factors Oriya religious identity came to be indicated by the Jagannath cult and became Jagannath-centric in its various shades and strands.

Over a period of time, the Jagannath cult came to so deeply and comprehensively engulf Oriya life that Oriya identity became Jagannath-centric not only in a religious sense but also in socio-cultural terms. This became possible as Lord Jagannath gradually became a secular symbol. He came to symbolise the essence of Oriya. He became a rallying ground for Oriyas. As we saw, this development took place precisely in the early 20th century and the leaders of Orissa frequently invoked Lord Jagannath to arouse Oriya sentiments.

Any discourse on Oriya identity remains incomplete without referring to the way in which Lord Jagannath has been constructed and construed in the intellectual tradition. In Oriya literature and narratives and historiography of Orissa, as we saw in the VIIth chapter, the Jagannath cult was redefined so as to bring Lord Jagannath to the Oriya folk. This not only increased the acceptability of Lord Jagannath but also strengthened the Oriya bond with Him. In Oriya literature, Lord Jagannath was not only seen as a religious symbol of the Oriyas, sometimes at a very intimate, personal level, but was

also transformed to a secular symbol of Oriya unity, valour, prestige and pride. We saw how Gopabandhu, Kuntala Kumari, Aswini Kumar and Godavarish in the late 19th and early 20th century, tried to put Lord Jagannath into a secular mould. He was made the leader of Orissa, sharing the fate and destiny of Oriyas. The uprooting of Lord Jagannath from His religious matrix and making Him secular, transformed Him to a symbol of quintessential Oriya. No less was the role of narratives and historical writings on Orissa, in making the Lord identified with Orissa and Oriyas. Both genres of writings i.e., colonial, anti-Jagannath and sentimental, nationalist, tried to restructure the knowledge about Lord Jagannath. At an intellectual level, Lord Jagannath was thus, appropriated to Orissa and seen as a unique, exclusive Oriya phenomenon.

The link between the pre-colonial emergent Oriya consciousness and the sense of Oriya identity in the late 19th and early 20th century is important. The commonalities about which Oriya writers and poets spoke in the modern period were not invented ex nihilo; the medieval poets had already talked about them in their writings. What Sarala Dasa or the *Panchasakha* poets implied can be described as a sense of belonging to the particular territory. The modern writers drew upon and recast and refashioned these early ideas, under historical compulsions of the late 19th and 20th century. This is clearly visible in the treatment of Lord Jagannath. If for Sarala Dasa and the *Panchasakha* poets, the Jagannath cult represented the religious glory of a regional kingdom (Utkal), for the 20th century authors such as Gopabandhu and Kuntala Kumari, Lord Jagannath came to represent the essence of the Oriya *jati*. Again if for Sarala Dasa and Balarama Das, the Orissan land was sanctified because it was visited by the *Pandava* brothers and Ramachandra, Laxman and Sita, for Radhanath, Gangadhar and Nandakishore, it was sacred because it was intertwined with the glorious history of Orissa.

While this remarkable continuity can be explored in the evolution of the Oriya consciousness to the manifestation of identity, it is important to observe

how the question of Oriya identity in the modern period came to imply a binary opposition, self and otherness.

It is already suggested that identity of an individual or group becomes meaningful only when the question of interaction with the 'Others' arises. Unless and until identity is contextualised vis-a-vis the 'Others', it does not lend any meaning to a comparative perspective. When interacted with the outside world, identity provides the people in question with a reference point for perceiving their differences vis-a-vis the 'Others'. The perceived difference plays a vital role in consolidating group-solidarity and arousing group consciousness. In case of Oriyas, this was precisely the case during the period under study.

Oriya identity, as it came to be projected in literature and the Jagannath cult, played a decisive role in the development of 'Oriyanness' or 'Odiattva'. If Oriya identity was more of a theoretical and intellectual question, 'Odiattva' implied a state of being, realised by that identity. It may be argued that 'Odiattva' grew out of Oriya identity in the late 19th and early 20th century when there was a growing recognition of self-identity vis-a-vis the 'Others' by the educated Oriya middle class. In other words, 'Odiattva' came to be asserted when the binary opposition of self and otherness was clearly constructed.

'Odiattva' manifested itself politically in the Oriya movement which was launched primarily to protect Oriya interests and unite the Oriya-speaking territories. The Oriya literature of the time, as our evidence suggests, contributed to the growth of the movement by way of an intellectual search for identity, the quintessential Oriya. But the political dynamics of the time together with the changing historical context, particularly after 1920 A.D. inspired Oriya authors to define an 'expansive', broad-based Oriya identity. This also helped in the growth of nationalist politics in Orissa geared for the freedom of the country.

Like Oriya literature, the Jagannath cult also contributed to the growth of 'Odiattva'. The evidence we have examined, suggests Lord Jagannath's

centrality in the religious world of Oriyas and the consequent appropriation of the cult to their socio-cultural life. In the cult, 'Odiatva' came to be clearly expressed when the Oriyas protested against the British treatment of the *Gajapati* kings or in the instances where they stuck to the *Mahaprasad* relations or sought the *Mukti Mandap* ruling on their socio-religious conduct. Thus, the Jagannath cult became instrumental in the development of Oriyas as a cohesive religious community and their main unifying platform. But the religion-centric 'Odiatva' has never been reactionary as it has never prevented Lord Jagannath to be worshipped by non-Oriya Hindus or to be considered as an integral part of the pan-Vaishnavism.

Some scholars treat Oriya identity as some sort of politics played by the Oriya middle class. Sengupta for example, in his study, describes it as politics-an essential tool of political opportunism, a handiwork of the Oriya regional elite in their struggle for more political power and economic advantage within the colonial set-up, rather than an expression of the primordial 'given' of the Oriya society.¹ But our evidence suggests something else. Oriya identity was more a cultural phenomenon, aiming at defining the 'boundaries' of Oriyas. It was constituted in new Oriya literature and the Jagannath cult, not to serve any class interest, but as a natural reaction of the entire Oriya community to the historical compulsions of the time. Authors articulated these 'boundaries' and thus helped in encapsulating Oriya identity in their narratives. In case of the Jagannath cult, all sections of the society came to be under its overwhelming impact and it was ultimately appropriated to be the Oriya religion. Moreover, as we have already argued, the Oriya consciousness that developed into the identity was not a modern phenomenon, it was there even at an early period. So it may be argued that not the Oriya elite of the modern period invented the Oriya identity question, they only refashioned and restated what existed earlier.

¹J. Sengupta, *Politics in Orissa, 1900-1956: Regional Identity and Popular Movements* (Unpublished Cambridge Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1994), p. 5

Once the Oriya middle class discovered their identity, they were activated by 'Odiatva' to achieve their political goal for both a separate province of their own and freedom of India. So 'Odiatva' was never opposed to *Bharatiyata*, rather it was then recognised by the Oriyas that their 'Odiatva' was a complement of *Bharatiyata*. The Oriya movement formally launched in the first decade of this century culminated in the formation of a separate Orissa province in 1936 A.D. . But 'Oditva' had never been aggressive nor exclusive, it had been rather accommodative and broad-based. That is why, even a staunch Oriya leader like Madhusudan Das ignored the ethnic 'given' from Oriya identity and defined themselves as the children of Orissa who felt proud of the ancient glories of Orissa and who aspired for future glory.¹ This broad connotation of Oriya' was more concretely expressed by Gopabandhu Das, Harekrushna Mahtab and the *Sabujites*. They imagined a symbiotic relationship not only between Orissa and India but also between Orissa and the world. Gopabandhu Das compared India with a human body and said that 'as any part of the body is influenced by the whole body-mechanism, Orissa being a part of the Indian body, has to be influenced by the mechanism of the Indian body'.² Thus, a new dimension was added to the assertion of Oriya identity. Perhaps, that is the reason, why as soon as new political forces developed in India and the all-India Congress became sympathetic to the Oriya cause, the middle class came to realise the congruence of the interests of the Oriya movement and the nationalist movement. It becomes clear from Gopabandhu's contention that since the distinction of Orissa was not earlier revealed to the Indian nation, the movement for unification of Orissa had not succeeded.³ So, he continued, in order to overcome this

¹Madhubabunka Odia Baktruta O' Gita, ed., Nabakishore Das (New edn., Cuttack, 1958), p.31

²Gopabandhu Rachanavali, ed., Satyanarayan Rajaguru (2 vols., Bhubaneswar, 1980), II., p.189

³The Samaj, Cuttack, 21 Feb., 1922, quoted in Gopabandhu Rachanavali, *ibid.*, p.458

handicap and put forth the distinct nature of Orissa before India, Oriyas should participate in the national Congress and help to realise its aims.¹ The Oriya leaders accepted the Congress ideology and Orissa was drawn into the nationalist movement though the Oriya movement continued side by side unabated.

¹Ibid. ,p.459

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