

VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF TRIBALS IN ORISSA

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been prepared by me and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar item.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that Mr. Patitapaban
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P R E F A C E

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The present work seeks to study the voting behaviour and political participation of the Kondhs, a tribal community, of Tumbiguda, a small tribal area constituting a part of the Rayagada Municipality in the Koraput district of Orissa.

The successful functioning of democracy depends, to a large extent, on political participation of the people. The degree of their participation determines their allegiance to the Government and their identification with the political system. It may not be improper to say that the higher is the degree of participation, the greater is the identification with the system. Political participation of the people on a wider scale confers legitimacy on the Government; brings stability to the system; makes the people politically conscious; promotes their awareness; gives them an opportunity to form, control and dismiss the Government; and influences their recruitment into politics. Political participation, thus, influences political culture, awareness, and recruitment.

People participate in politics when they vote;

discuss politics; join the campaigning organized by a political party; support its ideology, manifesto, policies and programmes; provide financial assistance to it; and become its passive or active members. Participation also includes their seeking of power and becoming powerful.

Voting may be said to be the lowest rung in the ladder of participation. When people vote they certainly participate in politics. But their participation is minimal. However, its importance and significance in a democratic system cannot be undermined, neglected and ignored.

In India, quite a large number of studies have been made on voting behaviour and political participation of the people. But not much light has been thrown on this aspect of the tribals in India in general and in Orissa in particular.

The tribals, who are 38,015,162 in number, constitute $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent of the total Indian population. In Orissa, which was carved out as a separate state in India in April 1936, tribals constitute 22.40 percent of the total

population which stands at 26,370,271. The tribal population of Orissa is 5,915,067 of which 3,642,376 are males and 2,272,691 are females. The tribals, thus, constitute a significant section of the society. However, not much work has been done on their participation and voting behaviour. But the present work seeks to study them. Hence the importance of the study.

Normally the tribals live on the hill tops and in the forests, leading a life of isolation, Poor, backward, illiterate and ignorant, they have been socially ostracized, economically exploited and culturally isolated by the clean caste people. They lead a life full of miseries and sufferings, pains and anguish. Their grim poverty may be attributed to their merciless and inhuman exploitation.

But things are now changing because of welfare measures adopted by the Government. And there are some tribals who now live with clean castes in a village or in a town. And those who live in urban areas are, as expected, exposed to modernization and enjoy all the facilities that a town provides to its people. And it is assumed that because of modernization and urbanization political consciousness, awareness and participation of these urban tribals

would be more than those who live in forests, villages and on hills.

Therefore, an attempt has been made in the present work to study the voting behaviour and political participation of the Kondhs living in a town. And in this connection we have deliberately chosen Rayagada town for our study besides being an important commercial town and business centre, it is also highly industrialized with the presence of a number of industries like J. K. Paper Mill, Ferro Alloys factory, gas cylinder company, sugar factory, etc. It is also highly developed in terms of education, culture, irrigation, communication, transport, etc.

Tumbiguda is a tribal area and comes under the jurisdiction of the Rayagada municipality. The tribal population of this area is 1,587 (according to the 1981 census). It has 284 residential houses. Since the Kondhs live in an industrial town they are expected to be urbanised and industrialized. And it is assumed that because of this industrialization and urbanization they should have undergone changes in their approach towards life as well as politics. It is further presumed that their level of political consciousness, awareness and participation must have gone up.

It is also assumed that their voting behaviour might have assumed a different pattern and a new dimension.

The present study seeks to test the following hypotheses :

- i. The tribal voters of Tumbiguda tend to be literate and educated.
- ii. They tend to be aware of politics and highly politically conscious.
- iii. They tend to participate in politics on a wider scale.
- iv. They tend to vote impartially and without any bias and prejudice.
- v. They tend to discuss politics with their parents, children, friends and others.
- vi. They tend to be active members of a political party.
- vii. They tend to become power-seekers.
- viii. They tend to become powerful.

So far as the methodology is concerned we have adopted the case study method. Because we have felt the importance of studying the voting behaviour and political participation of the Kondhs of a particular area as this would certainly give us an over-all picture about tribal political

behaviour and provide us an insight into their political participation. We have also purposively selected a particular area because of several factors. It may be mentioned here that besides Rayagada, there are other towns like Mayurbhanj, Rairangpur, Phulbani, Bolangir, Sundargarh, etc. in Orissa inhabited by the tribals. But these towns are not that industrialized as Rayagada is. Besides it is only a hundred miles away from our place of work. Out of 980 voters of Tumbiguda, we have taken for our study 500 respondents: 313 males and 117 females. Initially attempt was made to select equal number of respondents from both the sex groups. But when it was found that tribal women of Tumbiguda are shy, conservative and reluctant and suspicious, only 187 of them were chosen as they were found to be cooperative with us. on the basis of random sampling the respondents were selected.

For the sake of collection of data and necessary information the respondents were approached with a schedule. Besides this, formal and informal interviews were also held with them. Sincere efforts were made to establish rapport with them. But inspite of that we fear they were not much cooperative with us as we expected them to be. They were reluctant and apprehensive; neither open

nor cooperative. Truth were some'times vague and inconsistent. Because of their attitude and approach to us and our study, we have to work with certain limitations which, however, has not diluted the gravity and sevlourness of the study nor has affected much in drawing inferences and arriving at conclusions.

Relevant and important books, journals, articles, etc. have also been made are of for necessary data collection.

The present work spreads over six chapters. In the first chapter a conceptual framework has been given on voting behaviour. The second one discusses different aspects of tribals like their organization, political life, interaction with non-tribals, etc. The third chapter highlights tribal development in Orissa since independence. Attempts have been made in the fourth chapter to study political movements of the tribals. Voting behaviour and political participation of the Kondhs of Tumbiguda are discussed in detail in the fifth chapter and the last chapter is devoted to conclusion and suggestions.

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