

# Regional Political Parties and Coalition Government of Odisha

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**Abstract – The state of Odisha, previously Orissa had had a chequered Political history before its inception as a separate state in the year 1936. The objective of the study is to find out reasons for the emergence of regional political parties in Orissa and to find out different coalitions Governments in Odisha during the period of 1959 to 2009. This study is based on secondary data. The Political history of Orissa after its formation in 1936 was full of hectic politicking which also created an atmosphere of political uncertainty and the germination of coalition government in Orissa. It also paved the way for the formation of a new culture of regional political parties in Orissa. The post Independent Orissa politics has been more interesting and eventful. During the period from 1951-52 to 2014 there has been 23 chiefministers with fourteen Assembly elections. Except the Orissa Assembly election held in 1961, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1995 and 2009 in other elections no party secured absolute majority. The coalition government were formed in Odisha in 1959, 1967, 1971, 2000 and 2004. It is significant and pertinent that the first coalition government, formed in the state was of the congress and Ganatantra Parishada in 1959, the second of the Swatantra-Jana Congress in 1967, the third of the Swatantra, Utkal Congress and Jharkhand in 1971, and the Biju Janata Dal and the BJP in 2000 and 2004.**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Regional Political parties play important role as dynamics of Indian politics today. Political instability and consequence of coalition politics constate important ingredients of political culture of Orissa. The Assembly election in Orissa held in 1961, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 were critical ones and verdict of the people apparently swept off by strong wave's that ensured absolute majority in the assembly for political party in each election. Apart from the above in no other elections since 1952 did a political party win absolute majority in the Assembly. As a result, explicit or implicit coalition became inevitable. Coalition culture and growth of regional parties are very important in the context of state politics specially in Orissa of different points of tome since India's independence and beginning of its democratic era.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

1. To find out reasons for the emergence of regional political parties in Orissa.
2. To find out different coalition government in Orissa during the period of 1959 to 2009.
3. To find out political instability during the period of coalition government of Orissa.

## 3. GROWTH OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES AND COALITION GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA

The growing presence of regional political parties is undoubtedly, the most outstanding aspect of political developments in India over the years. Similarly, regional parties with strong social and emotional bases in their communities and religions have been a significant feature of Indian politics since Independence. Against this background, the study of regional parties in Orissa seems to be relevant and germane to the understanding of the dynamics of Indian politics today.

### 3.1 The Ganatantra Parishad

The natural outcome of the above matter was the birth of the first regional political party of Orissa named 'Ganatantra Parishad' under the leadership of two powerful ex-rulers; R.N. Singh Deo of Bolangir-Patna and P.K. Deo of Kalahandi. It was initially known as "KoshalaUtkalPrajaParishad" of 1948 with its headquarters at Sambalpur which was later rechristened as 'Ganatantra Parishad' in 1950, a full- fledgedstate-based party.<sup>1</sup>

The birth and growth of the Ganatantra Parishad, the first regional party in Orissa, has been a remarkable one. So far as its successful electoral performance is concerned in all the three-general elections of 1952, 1957 and 1961. It was not only

the dominant party in Western Orissa, but it was also the largest opposition party in state politics.<sup>2</sup> However, this party lost its identity in 1961 when it merged with the Swatantra Party, a national one, thus bringing an end to the first powerful regional party in Orissa which played a dominant role in state politics for nearly one decade.<sup>3</sup>

The Gantantra Parishad which was officially recognised as the opposition party in the state legislature effectively challenged the supremacy of the Congress in Orissa in the hill districts. During its terms as the main opposition party, it could mount a potent voice in the Assembly to put forth the demands of the people of the hill and the ex-princely areas of western Orissa. It continued its tirade against the party in power for incompetence, corruption and ineffectiveness in the administrative and public life of the state.

In addition, the party raised a strong voice for the resettlement and rehabilitation of those displaced by the construction of the Hirakud Dam in Sambalpur. However, it shared power with the Congress in a coalition government that ruled the state for about twenty one months from May 1959, to February 1961. It also removed long-standing grievances of regional imbalance in the power structure of the state.

### 3.2 The Jana-Congress

Just after five years of the disappearance of the Gantantra Parishad, another regional party appeared in the political arena of Orissa, named the 'Jana Congress' in 1966 under the leadership of Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab. The birth of the Jana Congress was the end result of factionalism and internal 'groupism' in the Congress party. The party played a significant role in check-mating the Congress Party by forming a coalition government in the state with Swatantra party which lasted for a little period. But the political shrewdness of the most diplomatic mind of Mahatab has been a remarkable factor in the political history of Orissa for a pretty long period.

Critically speaking, though Jana Congress was a state party, its birth was not regionalism-oriented. Its founders did not champion the interest of any neglected region of the state. They were important leaders of the Congress party and they left the party when they were forcibly pushed from the centre of the stage. They did not have any new ideology or any rebel ideology.

The dissidents in the Congress party were as much parts of the Congress culture. The bone of contention, in fact, was their personal interest. The clash of factional interest was at the root of the party split at the state level. It was ego-oriented and meant to satisfy the personal interest of the factional leaders.

The Jana Congress shared power in a coalition government with the Swatantra party from March 1967 till January 1971 under the Chief Ministership of R.N. Singh Deo. This coalition earned the unique distinction of surviving for a longer period than other coalitions in other states during that period. Apart from giving stability, it took some significant steps for socio-economic development of the state along with anti-corruption campaign against the corrupt Congress leaders.

### 3.3 The Utkal Congress

The Orissan politics witnessed one of the most remarkable phases with the birth of the 'Utkal Congress', another important regional party under the leadership of another great stalwart, Bijayananda Pattanaik, popularly known as Biju Pattnaik. During the coalition government of the Swatantra and Jana Congress, when Congress was losing ground and Biju Pattnaik was not given proper importance, the platform for the birth of a new political party was imminent. Consequently, Utkal Congress was formed in the year 1969 which was the brain child of the bold and daring Biju Pattnaik. This was a huge blow to the Congress party, in general, and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in particular.

The Utkal Congress played a vital role in the coalition government of Swatantra, Utkal Congress and Jana Congress party under the leadership of Biswanath Dash. Later, this party merged with the Bharatiya Lok Dal and again it turned into Pragati Party, another regional party in Orissa. During the Congress rule under Nandini Satpathy, this Pragati Party was the strong opposition party.

### 3.4 Jagrat Orissa Party.

Later, due to the intra-party feud and her confrontation with the centre, Mrs. Satpathy left the Congress Party in 1977 and after a short stay in the Congress for Democracy, she formed a new regional party named the 'Jagrat Orissa Party' in 1985. Of course, this party could not make any headway in Orissa politics. During the decade from 1980 to 1990, when the Congress party ruled over Orissa under Janaki Ballabh Pattnaik, there was hardly any vital role of any regional party in the state. The Janata Dal under the great Biju Pattnaik played the role of opposition during that period which later came to power in 1990 which completed its five years term till 1995. Again, when Janaki Pattnaik regained power in 1995 under Congress banner, Janata Party became the opposition one.

### 3.5 Birth of Biju Janata Dal

The death of Biju Pattnaik in 1997 brought a remarkable change in state politics. At that time when the B.J.P. was keen to alliance with the Janata Dal of Orissa unit, there occurred a serious difference of opinion which was prepared for a

division. So, after a long political exercise in the midst of extreme political climate, a new regional political party was born named Biju Janata Dal in 1997 under the leadership of Naveen Pattnaik, the younger son of Biju. The party was so named to instill in the mind of the people of Orissa the charismatic personality of their most popular leader, Biju.

In the last week of December 1997, supported by a large number of the then Janata Dal Legislators Of Orissa. the politically 'inexperienced' son of Biju Pattnaik, Mr. Naveen Pattnaik took over the leadership of the new party Biju Jananta Dal (BJD). In his initial address he announced, "My father had a lot of dreams for Orissa, and to realise those dreams are our goal". As such, Naveen Pattnaik fashioned the BJD along the lines of regional parties like the Assam Gana Parishad and Telugu Desham. He wanted to harness the non-Congress votes, work for the state and realise the collective hopes and aspirations.

The first remarkable achievement of the BJD was its role as a partner in the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Coalition government headed by Atal Behari Bajpayee in 1998. And again, Naveen Pattnaik, its leader became a Central Cabinet minister with Steel and Mines portfolio which was earlier given to Biju Pattnaik in 1977. The next spectacular achievement was when the BJD came to power, aligned with BJP in 2000, with Naveen Pattnaik as the Chief Minister after the fatal defeat of the Congress.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) had achieved such tremendous success in the political scenario of Orissa which was rare in the case of other regional parties in the state itself and in other states as well. Good Governance development and eradication of corruption were the main achievements of the first coalition government of BJD and BJP from 2000 to 2004.

Likewise, the Biju Jananta Dal, in the second consecutive coalition government with BJP from 2004 to 2009, also proved its worth by taking a lot of measures in various fields. The Naveen Pattnaik Government had taken steps to remove poverty, improve the lot of people and secure an all round development of the state. Along with efforts for disaster mitigation welfare measures, empowerment of women by a transparent, responsive and responsible government by the BJD BJP combined coalition were the significant features of that period. This was also seen by the masses as benevolent, spreading prosperity and stability in the state.

The BJD had shown its tremendous influence in state politics in the 2009 elections when it fought single handed after breaking up of its ties with the BJP. It had a fantastic performance in both the Assembly

and Lok Sabha elections with 103 seats out of 147 in the former and 14 out of 21 in the later.

It is worthwhile to note that the Biju Janata Dal has dominated in the political landscape of Orissa by coming to power for the fourth consecutive time in 2014 which has become a rare phenomenon so far as the position of a regional party is concerned. As a regional party, it championed a cause so dear to the people of the state as a whole. It highlighted the backwardness of the state and central negligence. By now, the party has had a continuous and consistent rule in Orissa and has surpassed all its opponents in every sphere of activity.

#### **4. CONCLUSION:**

Thus, although regional parties existed in different phases, these parties could not play any significant role till the birth of Biju Janata Dal in 1997. They did not build any new ideology nor did they project any radical programme. The leaders of those parties, for all practical purposes, continued to be a leader of a new party with only a new label in order to formally establish their separate identity.

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