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**Cuttack City: Blending between tradition
and modernity**

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Cuttack City: Blending between tradition and modernity

Radhakanta Barik

Idea of the City

Cuttack is among the oldest cities in India. It was the capital city of the state of Odisha for the longest time before relinquishing the title to the city of Bhubaneswar. Cuttack was established almost a thousand years back. The Barabati *killa* (fort) of Cuttack was the centre of activities of the erstwhile dynasties. Around the *killa* the city expanded which today constitutes the oldest part of Cuttack. Bakharabad and Chaudhuri bazaars are the oldest landmarks in the city. Some of the abiding old markets are Balu bazaar, Chaudhuri bazaar, Chatra bazaar, Buxi bazaar, etc. The city area was dominated by the business and artisan classes and the elite resided around the *killa* next to the Mahanadi river. During the British time the Cantonment Road was built with the officials and bureaucrats living in their bungalows next to the river. There were a large number of old neighborhoods such as Keuta Sahi, Sagadia Sahi, Santa Sahi, Tulsipur, Haripur, Sekharpur, etc. The leaders of these social groups congregated in the city of Cuttack. Odisha had a pastoral society which continued for a long period, till the 18th century. All the leaders of these communities congregating in the city laid the foundations of the city (Mumford, 1961). The surrounding villages provided various services to the city. During the Muslim period two important bazaars—Mahamudia bazaar and Kazi bazaar—got

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added to the list of bazaars. B.N. Sinha, in his paper “Geography of Cuttack city” argues that Cuttack is by and large an overgrown village and “it has engulfed in course of time many villages” (2002: 8). It is correct to say that the city has engulfed the neighbouring rural landscape.

Concept of Modernity

The history of Cuttack’s modernity began in the year 1866 in the backdrop of the great famine which pushed thousands of famished people to the city. The famine created a shock and gave a blow to their mental strength. The question came up before the city: Could I provide an answer to the problems faced by people? A city has the capacity to provide space for the ‘individual’ to think boldly. It allows space for an individual to be an autonomous actor who can play a creative role in the intellectual history of humanity. In the past individual creativity might not have been encouraged by the monarchy as an institution whose base is also the city. As an Odia folk story goes, around 900 years back a creative individual came up to the king and pleaded with him to accept his planning model for the city which could save people from the ravages of the floods caused by the rivers of Kathajodi and Mahanadi which were on either sides of the city.

The old man, Baimundi, gave a planning model, using some coins, for the construction of an embankment around the city of Cuttack. After the work was executed the city was saved from the ravages of the flood. But the creativity of an individual in the archaic past was dependent on the mercy of the king. A modern city encourages individuality and creativity, both being the basis of a modern world. Baimundi’s creativity was recognized, but very often it was mocked and laughed at by the feudal elite as “Kaahara kou chinta, Baimundi ku Cuttack chintaa” (others were thinking differently but Baimundi was thinking of only Cuttack). Here “Cuttack” stands as a novel idea and innovation for which serious thinking faculties were employed by Baimundi. Baimundi was the first public intellectual of the city but was laughed at by others as there was no supporting



environment. This environment is possible in the urban space of a modern city for sustaining individuality, community, and class. All may overlap, but individuality has a bigger say in a modern city where community and class can play supporting roles in the urban mental mapping. This was the starting point of modernization but faltered in the subsequent years, until in 1866 when *Utkal Dipika* was founded as a platform for a group of public intellectuals who started thinking in terms of the whole Utkal society. A liberal intellectual environment was cultivated with a critical outlook and rational ideas. Technology played a definite role in improving the quality of a liberal atmosphere. Print technology improved the carrying of ideas in different languages and availability of books in the market facilitated the movement of ideas. Liberalism improves the free play of ideas. A certain degree of certainty with facts and accuracy allows the acceptability of arguments. Statistical data and various methodologies in understanding social and economic situations sustain the vigour of arguments. Knowledge of diverse disciplines makes it possible to illuminate an idea. Public intellectuals used this framework to argue their viewpoints in a careful and sustained manner. During the second half of the 19th century, the city experienced renaissance. Many individuals started speaking differently. They raised moral and ethical issues for improving the religious and social environment of a traditional society.

Composite Elite of Cuttack

For almost two centuries, books like Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata* became a household name. This text was recited by all in spreading ethical values regarding social discipline. This brought a standard of literacy, subsequently defining those who got educated up to a level capable of counting and reading of the *Bhagabata* to be considered as literate. Literary movement in the late medieval period was boosted by the elite in Cuttack. The elites were a mixed group as Bengalis had already settled in the city during the Chaitanya Deb movement. They were fluent in both Odiya and Bengali and helped to spread modernity in Odisha. This movement strengthened the anti-caste movement but faltered

in the subsequent years until in 1866 when an intellectual platform got established. Cuttack had a liberal approach towards the caste system. Moreover, the reading public got an additional text with Sarala Das's *Mahabharata*. It contains 16 volumes written in a prosaic style easily understood by common people. Demand for *chatsali* (primary) education was always there by the common masses. These books, 'constitute the largest and the finest mass reading in Orissa. They are a great factor in the spontaneous acquisition of literacy among the Oriya peasantry and they constitute also the most potent ethical inspiration in rural society' (Mansingha, 1962: 110). These books remained on the bookshelves of the educated elite. These books were kept in the *bhathak khana* (drawing room) of their homes and people started to congregate socially and discuss the various texts. This strengthened chatsali education in Odisha wherein people could read and write at a basic level. It is found that primary education was quite widespread even before the colonial administration initiated modern education. Moreover, the spread of moral education led to a movement against liquor consumption which resulted in the banning of alcohol in villages and towns. The reading public promoted a moral order where quoting couplets from these texts was quite common during discussions and dialogues. This was the pre-British intellectual environment which was slightly dull and sluggish. It was waiting for a stirring moment via the inflow of new ideas infused with novelty which was provided by modern education by colonial administration during the 19th century Odisha.

Emergence of Modern Art and Literature

Traditional intelligentsia shifted to modern education the moment they got an opportunity. A new interpretation was provided to the traditional texts. Modern critics start their works with a strong criticism of these medieval poetic works. According to Biswanatha Kar, as the Editor of the *Utkala Sahitya*, these poetic works did not reflect social tensions of modern society and moreover these poems did not express a variety in human emotions. He advised other Odiya writers to study classics in the

English, Bengali, and Sanskrit literature and only then could they attempt at producing modern literary works (Nayak 1999: 23–25). He was critical of Odiya writers as he felt that they were apprehensive of hard work and that talent by itself was not enough. Rather a combination of talent and hard work would produce a better quality of works. His advice and encouragement produced results and many such pieces were published in the journal edited by him between 1897 to 1934. A large number of prominent writers in Odiya emerged and shaped the literary style and flavour of the literary landscape. *Utkala Sahitya* became a platform for writers from other fields such as science, sociology, economics, and politics. New ideas in these disciplines were discussed by the leading writers of that time. Some of them wrote in both Bengali and Odiya. The best example was Jogesh Chandra Roy, a leading scientist who was comfortable in both the languages. He brought Pathani Samanta, a leading astronomer, to limelight. He published an article on Samanta in foreign journals such as *Nature* and *Knowledge*. It is interesting to note here that in those days Chandra Sekhar Nanda used to write a column on socialism taking a title from an English poem by Southey, ‘Where for do the poor complain?’ He highlighted the issues of economic and social inequalities in his essays. Studying plebian ideas made Nanda a complex thinker of his time.

For a period of hundred years the three major premises of intellectual history—renaissance, reformation, and enlightenment—merged together. Intellectual leadership of these three phases was led by the same people; it is difficult to differentiate them from one another. Moreover, the middle class and the feudal elite underwent a fusion for some time. Radicalization of politics pushed the feudal elite out of public activities, though there was a marked space within the city for feudal elite. Some big landlords had bungalows with a spacious compound. These bungalows were based on modern architectural designs whereas the middle class preferred a mixture of vernacular and modern architecture. Very often, homes of the landlords were next to vernacular architecture. But looking at the architecture alone sometimes provides a fuzzy picture; it is difficult to differentiate the middle class from the

lower classes. Except for areas around the cantonment it is difficult to see space marked for the rich in particular. Each spatial zone was a mixed one; this became the strength of city. Urban design of the city shaped the mentality of people who had a sense of fraternity towards each other. This tradition needs to be strengthened in urban planning wherein the poor and the rich should be allowed to share the same space. A non-hierarchical society derives its strength from its history and tradition which need to be respected by the modern town planners and urban designers.

An intellectual group was formed with people sharing similar thinking based on facts and logic. They offered a platform to raise voice against injustice inflicted on people of Odisha. They made convincing arguments based on facts and logic. They faced two challenges at the same time. The city of Cuttack turned into a place for “thinking”. For that the city needed a public library, cultural centers, and sports activities. It also required a town hall where all could congregate to discuss the issues affecting their society. People started contributing to these activities. For the first time the concept of a civil society came up in the city. People started ‘thinking’ as a socio-cultural group of public intellectuals who could hold a constant dialogue with the state. They had time and money to spend for the public. Their intellectual differences made it possible to work as a group for a wider cause and for public interest. The city made it possible to converse in a rational manner. It was understood that there is something known as public space which is different from private space. One can keep his or her private interest subordinated to the public interest. The human tragedy of the great famine of 1866 compelled them to think critically. In collective memory it remains as a part of the subconscious world. For instance, when somebody faces hunger and looks famished, people perceive him or her as *Naankiya* (famished). Collective recollection is remembering a sociological process where individual memory supports collective memory (Ricoeur, 2004: 95). The art of memory as a rhetoric during the 19th century was subjective and concerned with inner life. Discourses of history and memory both acted as registers of the

crisis ushering modernity (Terdiman 1993: 3–32). The crisis accelerated the process of modernity. Only a modern and rational outlook allowed the elite to work in a positive manner.

Establishment of Ravenshaw College

The outlook of the modern elite worked positively. The Divisional Commissioner of Odisha was based in Cuttack. It was headed by the Commissioner T.E. Ravenshaw who came under their pressures and persuasion which resulted in establishment of a college in the city. Ravenshaw was not an outstanding officer. When he was posted to Cuttack in 1865, he did not take the job seriously as he was waiting for a transfer to Calcutta. Most of the English officers across Odisha wanted to come to Cuttack by avoiding responsibilities in Puri and Balesore towns, as Cuttack allowed them modern facilities such as the night clubs and horse riding. Strong criticism in the *Utkal Dipika* warned the officials to be alert and prepare a disaster plan for management of famine (Das, 1992: 78–79). T.E. Ravenshaw took interest in the establishment of the Ravenshaw College as a place for learning liberal ideas and science. Two important institutions came up around the canal at Ranihat: Engineering School and School for Medical Education (it became a Medical College in 1944) to pursue higher learning in technology and medicine. Technology and modern medicine shaped the rational arguments advocating justice. Mr. Ravenshaw captured the public imagination in such a manner that when Justice Harihar Mohapatra who came to the campus to address the students in 1964 and referred to Ravenshaw, “...it is high time for Odisha to remove the name of Ravenshaw from the college and that it should be renamed by a prominent national leader such as Madhusudan Das or Gopabandhu Das”, there was immediate reaction. The audience stood up objecting with loud protestations of “No, No” (in an interview with Lalatendu Mansingh (retired IAS) on August 14, 2014). This is proof of their respect and moral obligation to Ravenshaw who built the College in Cuttack. The memory of the College is parallel to the history of modern Odisha. In almost all fields, the college was the leader.

Cuttack city was an educational centre from the beginning of 19th century. Some schools were established by Christian Missionaries and they provided a foundation of the modern education and schooling in the city. Some schools were started by the local community on a voluntary basis. The city was feeling the absence of a college which was eventually fulfilled by Ravenshaw. For the first time the group of social reformers brought out a journal *Utkal Dipika* which was a milestone in the intellectual history of Cuttack. “Utkal” stoked the political imaginary where memory confronted history. *Utkal Dipika* became the mirror articulating the works and problems of a society. The journal *Utkal Dipika* earned a reasonable circulation where people from different corners contributed and made the journal a commercial success. Odisha had a past which had been almost forgotten by people. Their memory was rekindled with the images of the past. This public intelligentsia searched for a connection between place and memory. They marked a large number of historical sites as the sites of memory. People gathered around these sites of memory such as the fort, river, embankment, Ranihat bridge, and college square to build and evoke memories of the past. Very often they gathered in the city’s Town Hall where they were able to articulate their demands and concerns. The Town Hall and the Utkal Sahitya Samaj (Sri Ramchandra Bhawan) were the two places which became the arena of public speaking. It is fascinating to know that public speaking turned into a public action. People started learning the art of speaking in public. It is an art which they started learning in their debating societies of schools and colleges. These societies produced many public intellectuals in various fields. Writing on public issues became an important activity. There were wall posters carrying short pieces, writings, sketches, and paintings of artists. All these activities motivated the creative people who are basically private persons adopting public personas. The readers and listeners became people with a critical faculty who started questioning the public speakers then and there. They did not remain a passive audience. This new relationship between the speakers and listeners is based on critical appraisal of public persona. The tradition of public speaking continues till date. In post



independence period many forums were formed in Cuttack which organized public seminars and meets by inviting writers, journalists, and social workers. By evoking collective memory, people started coming out in support of public intellectuals and their viewpoints. The stirring of historical consciousness of people made them aware of their rights. Memory and history both go together. The realms of historical consciousness of a society depends on its collective memory.

A rail line was connected to Cuttack while going from Madras (present day Chennai) to Calcutta (present day Kolkata). From 1919 onwards development of the town accelerated. Construction of bridges across Mahanadi, Birupa, and Brahmani Baitarani has integrated the rural hinterland with the urban landscape of Cuttack. Building the national highway boosted and expanded the economy of the town. With the coming of the railway station and Ravenshaw College, the city expanded beyond Ranihat. In 1919 the College building came up near the railway station. With the coming of the railway station people from different places started migrating and settling down in the city. The College Square became an important public space in the city. It became a centre of political and cultural activities. This was also the time when the South Indian Hotel by a philanthropist businessman from Madras came up in Cuttack providing cheap food to college students. The hotel continued functioning in the same place till the middle of 1980s. The College Square was connected with the main city by a bridge at Ranihat. Prior to the establishment of the college, the Ranihat canal got constructed by employing those affected in the 1866 famine. They received work in exchange of food. The Ranihat Bridge evokes the melancholic times of the great famine of the past and a moment of enlightenment for the present. The construction of the bridge brought many social groups together at one place, “remembering, reminding and remembering” the famine of 1866 in their minds (Whitehead, 2009). The canal was used as a means for navigation for people from far-flung places. Vanuji Rao, a leading Odiya poet, wrote a poem about the Ranihat Bridge which stands as a symbol of modernity. The bridge at Ranihat has been used in an allegorical

sense as it blends the hardships of the 1866 famine and its dialectical relationships with the movement for modernity in Cuttack. It connects the city of renaissance of the past to the city of enlightenment in the present. Ranihat area is the place where all three modern public institutions stand together. This modern Cuttack is imprinted in public imagination in a popular proverb as “Katakanagar dhabala tagar” (Cuttack stands for a flower *Tagar*). This popular proverb was incorporated into the *Barnabodha*, an Odiya primer to explain the words without conjugation and vowels. This Odiya primer by Madhusudan Rao remains the largest published book in Odiya till today. It is still used as a primer for school children. *Tagar*, a commonly available flower for all seasons with its white colour glistening during the day time and in a moonlit night, is used as metaphor for Cuttack town which is easily accessible for all sections of the society and all linguistic groups. The city has never discriminated anybody on the basis of caste, community, and gender. In medieval literature, flowers and trees often evoked poetic images. Flowers symbolize love and beauty. Many girls are named after these common flowers as flowers carry fragrance. The city of Cuttack embodies similar beauty and fragrance which attracts everybody.

Reciting poetry is a public activity in rural and urban Odisha. Urban societies institutionalize these activities in colleges and schools in the form of seminars, festivals, cultural programmes etc., where poetry is recited. Recitation of poetry in these gatherings was not restricted to modern poetry alone. Both ancient and medieval poetry incorporating nature, love, and human emotions played an important role. Feminine beauty was expressed in lyrical words. In an instance, description of the eyes of women gets expressed through images of flowers and as Jivan Pani, a well-known lyricist, says that one *palawala* recited poems by different poets, regarding eyes of women, which lasted into the early hours of dawn. This is the strength of Odiya poetry. So many poets have written about the beauty of women, in an astonishing diverse form of lyricism. Furthermore, to make a girl brunette; mothers feed special diet to their girls to accentuate features such as a sharp nose, rounded eyes, and beetle leaf-sized

cheeks. Description of beauty in Odiya poetry does not give emphasis on fair skin. Fair colour is an invention of European rule. This sort of non-prejudiced literary sensibility is the product of an urban ethos to which Cuttack town contributed a lot.

Image of the City in Literature

Prose writing emerged with the influence of Western literature and Bengali literature. The leading Odiya novelist and father of modern prose in Odiya wrote in his autobiography about the city of Cuttack with a quotation from Odiya poetry. He was a rich man of his times, as he was employed in the courts of many local kings. Such a reputed person, desired to have a house in modern Cuttack. It was his life's dream. Fakir Mohan Senapati, a leading Odiya writer, in his novels and stories makes frequent visits to Cuttack. It is interesting to note here that Fakir Mohan in some of his early stories referred to Calcutta as business hub and a centre of learning. This was so in the first half of 19th century, when people from Odisha used to go to Calcutta to pursue higher studies and do business. Cuttack replaced Calcutta in their mental landscape towards the end of the 19th century. Cuttack and its urban space was used as a theatre of power politics by local landlords, lawyers and judges, and businessmen. Lawyers and judges emerged as an important professional group during the colonial administration as Cuttack was the administrative headquarter and held many for local courts. The professional groups included the doctors, writers and journalists, social workers, and politicians. The urban space provided the convergence of all these actors. With the numerous colleges and schools, this became a leading place of educational learning where students from different corners came and worked. It is interesting to study the family history of some of the lawyers and doctors. There are families where law is taken up as a family profession lasting for several generations. Medicine is taken as a profession and then passed from father to son or daughter. People from these professions played a decisive role in the city's public life. These professions were the harbinger of professional ethics which weakened traditional social identities. For example, Gangadhar

Rath, a leading lawyer got married to Nirupama Mohanty, a doctor (Rath, 1994: 176–180). Convergence of professions led to a wider mental horizon. Both of them became active in public life. Dr. Mohanty became a leading woman activist in the modern times of Cuttack. She became president of the Utkal Mahila Samiti, a women's front which focused on gender issues. Their children and grandchildren often continued in these professions. Medicine and law converge in many families. Caste boundary is often broken for stronger family bonds. Mr. Rath became a great patron of a publishing house and literary activities.

Sarat Patnaik, a leading social activist in the 1930s, worked in public life spanning many areas. He had a live-in relationship with Dr. Labany Bati Devi, also a doctor (in an interview with Sarat Patnaik). The institution of family was modernized. Inter-caste marriage and sexual relations outside of marriage were accepted by sections of the public. The Sahi tradition in Cuttack accepted this modern social institution. Modernization of traditions, with new values shaped social change in Cuttack. In the social sphere an individual makes choices without inhibition. Marriage rules were subverted with the emergence of new social institutions. It caused cracks in the social pyramid and social hierarchy. It shaped an egalitarian social value based on equality and justice. The city brought in a new moral and ethical order. These professions made leisure more diverse and productive with a demand for theatre, and sports activities on a regular basis. They had time to enjoy and indulge in these activities and money to spend on entertainment. A demand for entertainment became a real industry in the city.

The city provided a place for workers and artisans. Everybody had a right and to access to the city's space. Streets became an important landscape where people from all castes and communities and linguistic groups could move, commute, and congregate, conversing, interacting and acquainting with each other, irrespective of their background.

A major mode of public transport was the cycle rickshaw which were often plied by the Telugu workers. They were the



backbone of the urban transport system till the middle of the twentieth century. Sonal Mansingh, a leading Odishi dancer recollects coming to the town for the first time in the 1960s from Gujarat with her father, but could not find a taxi near the railway station and had to go to Mayadhar Mansingh's house in a cycle rickshaw (Jena, 2008: 200–204). Workers in shops and business centres were Odiyas. A mixed working class from the beginning of the 19th century, built a cosmopolitan and progressive in their outlook. Many writers wrote stories of workers in the city. Kalindi Panigrahi's *Luhar Manish* or *Iron Man* became a classic about urban labour. Though he belonged originally to Puri, he subsequently adapted to Cuttack and lived there. His brothers and daughters contributed to Odiya literature substantially. His brother Bhagavati Panigrahi and his daughter Nandini Satpathy became prominent writers and leading political personalities. Another literary family was of Kanhu Charana Mohanty and Gopinatha Mohanty who lived in Cuttack and who authored several novels and stories.

Celebration of the Festival of Baliyatra

In the early 1920s as an undergraduate student, Kanhu Mohanty wrote a novel *Baliraja* which beautifully visualized Odisha's trades and business with South Eastern countries. The metaphor of Baliyatra has been taken from the City of Cuttack, which holds a festival annually in the month of November, remembering the stories of the city people and tradesmen who used to travel to far off places. This city was not only a business centre but also the river port town from where traders and boatmen used to venture out to south eastern coasts. Moreover Odiyas used to migrate to Sri Lanka as traders and religious leaders. The city at one time was a flourishing centre of Buddhism and from here many religious leaders travelled to far off regions to spread their religious belief. The traders and artisans and religious preachers sometimes were one and the same people. They were enlightened people of their times. It seems that in the late medieval period Cuttack lost its glory but from that emerged the celebration of the festival of Baliyatra. Defeat and humiliation

made people more inclined towards religious ceremonies and rituals. The elite of the city reminded themselves of the glories of the ancient history by skipping the medieval period. Utkal stood for the best artisanship in Odisha producing some of the best craftsmen and sculpturists. Etymology of Utkal stands for excellent quality of artistic products. Kalinga is another historical phase of ancient Odisha when the empire extended from the river Ganges to the Godavari. The king of Kalinga fought the battle against Ashok, the great empire-builder who fought a great brutal battle and eventually realized the futility of war. They were not interested in remembering the medieval past, specifically the Marhatta period. Mothers still sing lullabies about the soldiers (*bargis*) of the Marhatta kings who unleashed destruction and plundered wealth. Fear of approaching *bargis* made children fearful and drift off to sleep. Stories of horror of the Marhatta rule has been articulated in the autobiography of Fakirmohan Senapati (*Atmasharita*, 1911). Stories of the Moghul rule, though not as bad as the Marhatta, were sometimes remembered as “Subarna Thalire heda parasile Mukunda devanka rani”. Mukunda Deva, the last Odiya king (Hindu king of Odisha), lost to the Muslim rulers. This was not appreciated by the elite. This folk song speaks of the stories related to the queen of Mukunda Deva who was fed beef in a plate. This story has a symbolic meaning which explains their antipathy to the Muslim rule. The modernist elite constructed history in such a manner that glorious historical phases got connected to the modern period. The elite shaped the consciousness of the people with dreams by inventing the image of city and its historical past. The present can be reconstructed by associating with its glorious phase of the past. As Bachelord notes, “great images have both a history and a prehistory, they are always a blend of memory and legend—Every great image has an unfathomable oneiric depth to which the personal past adds special colour”. This sense of history gets assimilated into the consciousness of the reader. The image “has touched the depths before it stirs the surface” (Bachelard, 1969: 13). Utkal and Kalinga historical periods were entrenched in the cultural and historical consciousness of Odiya people.

Urban and Rural linkage

Cuttack city receives its commercial linkages and flow from three major rivers. Mahanadi, Brahmani, and Baitarani. These rivers have formed an extensive delta stretch known as the Mahanadi delta. Cuttack district has two great valleys providing the economic catchment area to the city's economy. One of the valleys lies between the Baitarani and the Brahmani and other between the Mahanadi and the Brahmani. Both valleys are bounded by a river on either side. These rivers used to cause heavy floods during the monsoon. People of the city constantly fought with the floods. After the Hirakud Dam was constructed there has been a considerable check on the floodings. The river systems in the district have shallow beds and winding inter-laced streams that floods still continue to be a common phenomenon occurring almost every year. In many areas the banks are artificially raised and protected by dykes. Navigation in Mahanadi gave a boost to commercial activities in Cuttack. Near Cuttack there is the *anikat* (barrage) built across Mahanadi and its branch, the Birupa river. Water from these rivers is diverted into irrigation cum navigation canals. Taladanda canal and Kendrapara canal, the high level canal range, provides navigation of people and goods. The Patamundai canal, branching off from the Kendrapara canal, runs almost parallel to the southern bank of the Birupa and of the Brahmani for total length of 75.5 km.

Cuttack city was surrounded by an extensive rural hinterland which was later incorporated into the city. They brought the *Sahi* (Lane) culture into the cosmopolitan space of the city. There are 72 Sanskritan mandals which are grouped into four zones: east, west, south, and north. In the east there are 22 Mandals; West: 19, North: 16, and South: 25. In the east, Sankarpur, an important village, dominated in the zone. This Sahi provided security to the important market places of the city such as the grocery market in Malgodawan and fruits and vegetables market in Chatrabajar. The Sagadia Sahi next to it used to provide the local transportation for these goods. They used to cultivate and contribute to the city's economy. Slowly their rural economy was integrated into

Cuttack's urban economy. They do not exclusively depend on agriculture for their livelihoods (interview with S.C. Barik, a village leader held in his residence on 14 September 1914). Each village stands for construction of a community identity. This communal identity was not a closed one. It was open to migrants belonging to different castes and linguistic groups. And the Sahi identity was ready to accept and assimilate these diverse people without any discrimination. They had to pay the subscription to their community fund for holding public functions. This shaped their mentality with openness and flexibility. The Sahi tradition shaped their moral and ethical values towards women. This transformed the city into a more gender-friendly one. The urban culture in many Indian cities developed in a manner, which threatened women, creating fear psychosis among them. But this did not happen so in the case of Cuttack (in an interview with B. Radhika, IPS officer on 14 August 2014). Moreover the myths and legends defining the city are related to Cuttack Chandi. Till the middle of the 20th century, Cuttack Chandi used to draw throngs of worshipping crowds to seek blessings for new ventures. The mythical Cuttack Chandi creates fear and respect in the minds of men in the city. Their respect for women was rooted in this fear psychosis created by Chandi Devi.

Domination of Marwaris in Business

The main business centre of the city traverses through Bauxi Bazaar to Chandini Chowk. According to Jayanta Mahapatra, the leading English and Odiya poet, Bauxi Bazaar was dominated by the Muslim community in the *zari* business around the 1930s. These businessmen were pushed out by the Marwaris and Gujaratis. Those involved in *zari* business are no longer active. When the Durga Medha moved through this road it was led by a Muslim Pahalwan Nashar Mian. It encouraged participation from all. There were three bookstalls selling English and Odiya books. In every neighbourhood square there stood a big peepal tree. In front of each house there was a pond and other water bodies. In the 1940s theatre, literature, and sports saw movements. Sports culture was organized, resulting in the construction of the stadium



(interview with Jayanta Mahapatra on 14 September 1940 in his residence, Cuttack). The main market of Cuttack town is dominated by Marwaris who pushed Odiyas from business and trading in the 1960s. Moreover, the puja festivals now became restricted to the Hindus. Durga Puja was largely held by Bengalis till the middle of the 20th century. Today every Sahi in Cuttack feels proud of celebrating it. Durga Puja has turned into the festival of Cuttack. Each Sahi makes a Committee consisting of people from all communities and some officials to monitor the celebrations and the setting up of the pandals. Recently there was a clash between two Sahis during the puja time. The strife was depicted via a poem supported by a cartoon in a popular daily reminding people of the city of their Bhaichara (brotherhood) tradition. “This city is famous for the Bhaichara tradition. For no reason there was a quarrel between two Sahis. If it does not stop now, the city would burn and the Tagar flower would be perished.” (*The Sambad*, 9-10-14)

Role of Christian Missionaries in the Development of Cuttack

The contribution of Christian Missionaries cannot be underplayed in shaping the city as a cultural and educational capital of Odisha. In 1833, the Christian Sahi was established in the city; along with other Sahis such as Societypur (1833) near Cuttack Chandi, Leshi Sahi or Sutahat (1845), Petin Sahi (1861). Missionary schools played an important role in the educational movement here. In 1822, Cuttack Sunday Schools were established by Bampton and Pegash Sahab. In 1823, the English Charity School for Anglo-Indian children came up. In 1829, the first boarding school by Mrs. Charles Lesi was established. The children orphaned during the 1836–38 famine required an orphanage which was subsequently instituted. Mission Girls School in Cuttack was set up in 1836 where girls belonging to the Hindu and Muslim communities began to enroll. In 1846, the Odisha Mission Academy was established by Sanat Saheb and in 1881, the Cuttack Stuart School was established by the Catholic Baptist Mission. Mission High School in 1882 was the first co-educational school. These multiple modern institutions such

as the orphanage, an old age home, schools, boarding houses, and charities became the backbone of the urban life.

Launching of the press by the missionaries became a milestone in spreading literacy and education in the town. In 1848, the Odisha Mission Press brought out the *Jagannath Tirtha Mahamtya*. It published two Odiya journals, *Gyanaruna* and *Probodha Chandrika* that reported news and events from all over Odisha including the losses in flood and famine. In 1888, Lalit Mohan Chakravarty published *Samyabadi* from Cuttack.

Role of Brahma Samaj

The print culture contributed in creating a new socio-political awareness among people who started participating in the ethical explanation of social and political milieu. In 1866, the *Utkal Dipika*, a journal started by Gaurishankar Ray and Bidchitranand Patnaik became the first critical forum that studied the deaths in the great famine of 1866. The most important movement by intellectuals influenced by the Brahma Samaj called the Rationalist movement began in Cuttack. Intellectually, Calcutta created an echo in the city of Cuttack. The modern city encouraged the intelligentsia to learn a new language, English. Traditionally bilingual, it was easy on their part to turn into trilingual. The modern intelligentsia could speak Odiya, Bengali, and English which immensely contributed to the shaping of the liberal environment. The city was active in the social reform movement supported by the Brahma community here.

Bishwanatha Kar's *Utkala Sahitya*, a monthly journal became a vehicle for carrying progressive ideas in Odiya literature. Bishwanath Kar was an important social thinker of Cuttack and was active in public speaking across Odisha. He highlighted bold issues related to the social reform movement where gender and caste became integral to the social agenda. He reflected on utilitarianism of Bentham and Mills in his journal and supported ideas such as compulsory primary education and women education. He was critical of the Utilitarian view of happiness

on the basis of material pleasure. He pleaded for spiritual happiness and aesthetic pleasure by engaging in artistic works. Fakirmohan Senapati, a leading writer and reformer paid tribute to Biswanatha Kar in his poem “Utkal Bhraman”—“For some time now I am thinking of him, there is no such man like Biswanath Kar. His public speaking like flood water goes ahead with a high speed” (Nayak, 1999: 9). Kar encouraged young writers to contribute to the journal *Utkala Sahitya*. Mansingh, reflecting on the role of this journal, “For a period fifty years Kar remained at the centre of all literary activities where poets, writers, critics and friends and literacy supports always surrounded him” (Mansingha, 1967). To cite one example was when Kalindi Panigrahi as a student was encouraged by Kar to write when he joined Ravenshaw College in the 1920s. As a school student in a Puri Zilla School he wrote a story when in class 9. Kar calculated the year he joined as a college student and came to his hostel seeking him. The encouragement and support helped him to write for the journal (an interview with Late Kalindi Panigrahi with the author). Later he went on to become a leading Odiya writer whose book *Matir Manish* is considered a classic in Indian literature. Panigrahi, along with five others, started the “Sabuja” (green) which was a progressive movement in Odiya literature; described as Sabuja Sahitya.

Role of Women in Literature

This movement gave a definite shape to literary style and content that ideas of equality and justice also belong to the world of stories and novels. All these five writers with prominent women writers wrote a novel, with the central character of ‘Basanti’ as a modern woman and her role in society. *Basanti* works as a feminist text in modern Odiya literature. Sarala Devi, the woman who collaborated this text became a prominent social and political leader of Odisha during the national movement and beyond. She redefined modern relationship between man and woman in a dialogue between Braj and Basanti.

“Braj: For this women education is required.



Basanti: Yes! Good quality education is required for the liberation of women.

Braj: Will women ignore their maternity for the liberation of women?

Basanti: No! To be mother is not against women freedom. It is every woman's duty. But she has to plan her reproductive power by which she can control the number of children. Not imposed by her husband. Then motherhood will not keep her in darkness and unnecessary responsibility. Only reproduction work reduces her personality. Being a mother of many children she can neither take responsibility of them or herself. She will not feel as a proud mother. But it is a fact of life that motherhood and woman liberation are not opposing each other. Both are complementary (Mohanty, 2004: 14).

Biswanatha Kar was a pioneer of the women movement and his daughters were the first women graduates of Odisha. Srimati Pratibha Kar and Srimati Suprabha Kar have made names as writers (Mansingha, 1962: 212).

Relationship between Writers and Readers

Writers, poets, and social thinkers gathered together for contributing to the intellectual evolution of Cuttack. They played a critical role in shaping the city and its moral and political values. Their contributions remain substantive in inculcating egalitarian values of a city. Williams highlights the intellectual evolution of a city by defining the underlying points:

First, the relationship between a writer and readers changes. Second, the emergence of different habitual attitude towards the public is manifested. Third, the production of art comes to be regarded as a highly specialized form of creativity. Fourth, a theory of a superior reality of art as the core of imaginative thought receives increasing emphasis. Fifth, the idea of the independent creative writer and the autonomous genius slowly becomes a kind of rule. All these points are interrelated (Williams, 1958: 32).

In every field of art and literature people started engaging with a degree of finesse and specialization. People started indulging in various literary genres and producing artistic works with a degree of professionalization. Poets, dramatists, and painters started teaching apprentices the skill to attain a professional touch. They started reworking their relationship with the audience by cultivating a bond of aesthetic values in between the arts and its audience. Many writers like Kalindi Panigrahi resigned their regular jobs and became full time writers. A profession of writing was employed enthusiastically in the city. For creating literary culture amongst children they wrote literature for children on a wide scale. These popular writings became the responsibility of modern Odiya writers. Some of the publishing houses started publishing and marketing these books at a reasonable price, extending distribution to far off places. The network of book shops and publishers became the backbone of modern education.

Public intellectual tradition was increasingly strengthened by the contribution of poets, writers and novelists, and journalists. The convergence of these intellectuals played a decisive role in building Cuttack as a cultural capital of the state. The tradition of public intellectual activity slowly merged with political activities. Writings and politics converge very often. A profession in politics became a reality only in the 1930s. It is interesting to note here that politics and regional journalism developed simultaneously. The city provided the space for journalism to take a definite shape. Here journalism and literature converged. Many writers became journalists and many journalists became prominent writers. Many of them started publishing dailies and edited periodicals. Balkrishna Kar's *Ananda Lahari Upanyasha Mala* became a vehicle of publishing numerous prominent novelists' works. This journal became a leading monthly during the 1930s. It published the work of novelist Godavarish Mohapatra's *Premapathe*. It was a narrative style depicting a boy writing letters to his girlfriend and her replies to them. This backdrop became an important novel in Odiya. A love relationship mediated by letters where printed words carried human emotions. Words turn into a powerful instrument cementing human bond.

Geographical distance and social distance was reduced in the world of printed words. Space in the city reduced the social distance between men and women. Postal telecommunication reduced the geographical distance between men and women.

Kar's journal published another important novel of Upendra Kishore Das, *Mala Janha*, which speaks of intercaste marriage. All these writings had human beings as the centre, often depicting human sufferings navigated by the focus of caste, community, or poverty. Sufferings were studied in the context of the social structure or economic and political structure. Writings were embedded in systems and structures. These structures can be changed with human intervention. Human beings have the potentiality to change their circumstances. This is the age of hope and social progress. This is the age of ideas and passion. Human beings suffer not because of shortage of food alone but also due to lack of ideas and knowledge. A city provides the socio-cultural space for the availability of resources and creativity for removing these lacunae for realizing the human potential.

Role of Journalism in City's Life

Prajantra as a publication was organized when literature and journalism blended. *Prajantra* or mass democracy began in 1923 as a weekly journal by a group of social reformers and nationalists led by Harekrushna Mahatab. In the year 1947 it became a daily newspaper. It used to report daily events and corner literature and art. *Jankar*, then a literary journal, became a leading mouth piece for literary works. Most of the leading writers of Odisha have contributed to this monthly journal. *Prajantra* created Bishuba Sammilani society which held an annual literary festival inviting artists and writers from all over India. It used to award leading writers in its annual function. Mahatab used to publish a weekly piece called "Gaun Majlis" which later received the Sahitya Academy award. The editor often interacted with the young scholars of Odisha and borrowed ideas about rural society. It explains the interconnection between rural and urban society, that plays out in an urban landscape. In 1950,



“Bishuva Milan” organized an Odiya literary gathering which later became an annual event where prominent writers of Odisha were recognized and awarded. It held an annual lecture inviting leading Indian or foreign scholars often working on Indian society. It was a big milestone in the literary canvas of modern Odisha. The *Samaj* began as a weekly by Gopabandhu Das in 1919. It was a nationalistic journal which turned into a daily paper in 1930 providing a space for discussion on society and politics. The *Samaj* reached different corners of the state and soon daily papers in the popular lingo began to be known as samaj. Balkrishna Kar started a paper *Matruvumi* in 1947 and he also edited *Sahakar* a prominent literary journal. Biju Patnaik’s *Kalinga* in the 1960s also became both a newspaper and a literary paper. His Kalinga Foundation started giving prizes to internationally recognized scientists. The Kalinga Foundation gave a prize to J.B.S. Haldane, a leading scientist, who made Odisha his home state in his last days. He wanted to encourage Indian youths to science and technology. It is interesting to note that political culture respecting dissent appreciated in both newspapers and journals. *Niankhunta*, edited by Godavaris Mahapatra, became a leading journal. It became an avenue for discussing politics and lampooning cartoons caricaturing the political personalities in exposing corruption in public life. Political culture developed with political values preventing intolerance. This created a healthy political tradition in Odisha. For dissident political opinion, nobody was harassed in those days. This tradition of tolerating dissident views declined by the mid-1970s with the closure of *Niankhunta*. Liberal environment of the city was disturbed when some fanatic groups attacked a reputed writer of Odisha, Mayadhar Manasingh, when he converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. It is interesting to note here that Buddhism was the dominant religion in Odisha till the 9th century. Furthermore, society in Odisha embodies a ... Hindu culture embedded with Buddhist tradition. The conflict between raw and cooked food has not risen till date. Most of the festivals in rural Odisha are not mediated by the priestly class. For instance, Ram and Hanuman are not worshipped in Odisha. It is Jagannatha who is taken as the deity, worshipped and respected by all. Jagannatha is revered by both Hindus and Muslims. Many

Muslim saints used to worship Jagannatha. Sankaracharya was not a known personality in Odisha. In 1971, Sankaracharya of Pune came to Ravenshaw College to address the students in an open auditorium where he spoke in favour of the practice of untouchability and gender discrimination by showing his five fingers which could not be the same. Students threw chairs at him and snatched the mike away. He was asked to abort the speech and leave. (In an interview with P.K. Das, retired Income Tax Commissioner, 14 September 1914).

Public Intellectual Tradition

During the second half of the 19th century some important public intellectuals such as Madhusudan Das and Biswanatha Kar emerged. They started advocating public issues and canvassed across the state holding talks and meetings on different political and social issues. Das belonged to the Karan caste and Kar to the Brahmin caste but did not align themselves exclusively to their individual caste interests but reflected upon a wide spectrum of social issues such as education of women and caste hierarchy. They also studied the economic issues affecting the economy of Odisha based on colonial exploitation. The logic of a modern and urbane intelligentsia shaped their broad outlook towards society and did not allow them to become the victims of their caste identity. Das created the first shoe factory in the city and its showroom was in Balubazaar, though it did not last long. Bhikari Patnaik owned a showroom for *abhanga kande* or unbroken toys at the Balubazaar (interview with Narendra Kumar Mishra, retired from Odisha Mining Corporation on 14 September 1914). The state had a rich tradition of handicrafts made of different materials. Each region has a unique handicraft tradition. These little traditions were integrated into the “big tradition”. The city played an innovative role in bringing these products into the market and to the public. Madhusudan Das held an exhibition of these industrial products in London in 1897. Utkal tannery, filigree of Odisha, and Nilgir stone were some of the works exhibited there.



During the 1950s Biju Patnaik started his industries across the river at Chaudwar though they were shortlived. But public intellectual tradition remained a living tradition. Girija Patnaik was a public intellectual of the town who organized various discussions and debates in the city. He took the responsibility for bringing out a series of volumes on *Cuttack: One thousand years*. Girija Patnaik was a great social organizer and event manager. He was crucial as a public intellectual of the town. He mobilized historians and artists of the city with unfounded enthusiasm.

A liberal environment does not necessarily support industrial capitalism. It does not have an essential industrial class who could pursue the adventurist work. The trading communities are poor and cannot take risks in enterprising activities. On the contrary, they lost their shops and traditional business activities to the Marwaries. For example, the traders hailing from the Teli Sahi at Ranihat used to have their business activities in Ranihat market. During the 1990s they sold their business to the Marwaries in lucrative deals. This is against the community tradition. They lost their shops and trade. They did not invest in any other activities and in the process were often pauperized.

A historical memory of failure from the early medieval period was celebrated as the Baliyatra, a haunting journey. Memory is not always a pleasant experience. Memory acts as a travelling concept between historical periods. It forges a unity within the city and its people across the Kalinga period to the modern period. Rich and poor alike, surpassing their castes and communities, go to celebrate the Baliyatra on the river banks.

Memory of the City

The landscape of the city, specifically its fort and rivers, have been captured by the numerous poets and writers (Pike 1981). Mayadhar Mansingh wrote a poem “Mahanadira Jyshnavihar” where the poet invokes the image of river in a moonlit night comparing it with the past glory of Cuttack. His poetic imagination captured the most important landmarks of the city:

fort and river. The river played an important role in the imaginative world of the city and its people. The fort became a metaphor for the past where kings used to rule over this region and contributed to the economic welfare of people. Today the fort is in a dilapidated condition and neglected. Jayanta Mahapatra writes in his autobiography, “Whenever I could snatch a little time I sat on the river bank, I haunting in my childhood days (sic). The moat and the ruins of Barabati Fort excited my imagination. If you take a slow walk around the fort, you could visualize the battles and intrigues in the sky of our history and then all of a sudden defeat engulfs you. The cry of the land that centres Cuttack silences me” (Mahapatra 2014: 23). Gandhi used the river bed as a ground for holding public meetings when he came to the city twice. The crowd thronged to listen to him. He advised people of the city to work on the charka. Any implication regarding the city cannot go for industrial capitalism but artisanal capitalism. A large number of people in the city adopted weaving on the charka.

The slums are dominated by Telugus who were cycle-rickshaw pullers. Pan Sahi are an important part of the slums. The Pans were discriminated against. This made the artists and social workers more rebellious. A leading novelist Gopinatha Mohanty in his novel on Harijan gave a vivid description of the Dalits in the city (Mohanty 1985; Bhagwat, 1995). They worked as an integral part of the Municipality in the city, but because of their caste position were often exploited by the rich people. They were the victims of untouchability. The women workers were sexually exploited by the rich and powerful. The novel brings a Gandhian worker among these people who helps them organize and mobilize against these unjust practices. Their land was getting appropriated by the builder who opposed them. The writer expressed his thoughts that a community is to be a part of the city on the basis of equality and justice. They should be respected as citizens. It is interesting to note that today the community does not suffer from such discrimination. With the intervention of Gandhian socialists like Biswanatha Pandit, the project was implemented by their inclusion as citizens who should be respected. They now



feel as if they are a part of the community who want to contribute to its economy and culture. Being a part of an imaginary community accentuates the identity of Cuttack. Any identity cannot be based on the basis of discrimination and injustice. The city or *nagar* stands on the concept of citizenship and *sahar* or town is based on equality or *samata* (equality). Today Cuttack's identity is so strong that minorities and people belonging to the lower strata feel a part of the broad identity. This reflects in their social life. Intercaste and inter-community marriages are an accepted part of an unseen lifestyle. Demographic changes have brought about a cosmopolitan outlook. Linguistic groups from all over India have come and settled here. They contribute to Cuttack's economy and culture. They are a part of the imaginary community of the town.

The city's society and culture gets articulated in the politics of the city. The *Bhaichara* tradition and a sense of fraternity is strong. Its history is traced back to the countryside after which it got institutionalized into city life. Bhanuji Rao's memory of the city haunted him. He worked as a Lecturer in the LBS National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie for a decade. He has written an article in which he compares Mussoorie with Cuttack. He finds the beauty in the drains of Cuttack not in the good quality of roads of Mussoorie where one can eat food making the road as a plate (Rath 2012: 50–54). Lack of conflict and communal violence is a basic feature of its society. Cultural advancement through theatre and films gets reflected in the politics of a city. A Muslim singer from Cuttack used to be a popular singer for Jagannatha *bhajans* (*devotional songs*). For instance a member of the Muslim League from Cuttack opposed the idea of Pakistan when the resolution was discussed in the league conference. It is difficult to mobilize people of the city on the issue of Hindutva politics. Politics of the city for a century carried a moderate liberal blend of parties like the Congress, Socialists, and Communists and the right wing parties (Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League) were in the background. The Hindu Mahasabha had a support base among the Marwari community and soon the city experienced a riot against the Muslims in 1969 in which shops of the Muslim

businessmen were burnt. This whole riot happened in a span of an hour when the city residents were taking their afternoon siesta. Guruprasad Mohanty describes the political debates in the city in a poem, “We all tell stories and write letters and read out poems—Sometimes we dream—We discuss Marxism and Gandhism....” (Mohanty 2013: 363). The city is a place for dreams and without dreams life cannot move. This is expressed in the poetic expression of the above poem. Mohanty, a non-political poet captured the political reality of the city in his imagination. It is interesting to note that Bhanuji Rao compares the sand mass of the river Kathajodi with the city space where one can dream (Rath 2012).

Role of All India Radio

All India Radio established its branch in Cuttack in 1948 and was responsible for pioneering work in the cultural domain of Odisha. Its director Krishnmurti, a Tamil gentleman, played a positive role in encouraging artists to play a role in the cultural domain. He encouraged the Odiya dancers such as Kelucharan Mahapatra to start an Odishi dance school. Babu Lal Joshi began a Music School to teach young children music and dance. This went on to become an institution which encouraged many young artists to take up the profession of classical dancing. They encouraged theatre lovers to start writing plays and organize theatre groups. Gopal Chotaray became an Akashbani artist and playwright, making significant creative contributions. Many Odishi singers such as Balkrishan Das and Akshay Mohanty became leading vocalists in Odiya music and poetry. Bhubaneswar Mishra became a leading music director in Odiya films. Sikandar Alam became a prominent Bhajan singer in Odiya. Most of Odiya film-makers ventured into the industry from Cuttack town such as Bamoksha Tripathy, Gaur Gosh, Nitai Palit, Akshay Mohanty, Gobinda Teja, Mahamod Mahasin, etc. They created some of the best melodramatic films in Odiya such as “Kaa”, “Matirmanisha”, “Malajanha”, and “Nua Bau” as a powerful visual mode of social protest. Binodini Devi became a lyricist in these films who in her songs invented the Odiya trading



(*Sadhav*) tradition. “Rakat talamal, Khair Panch Pal, Kahile sadhavani, se keun desh fala.” (O Sadhavani which country’s fruits you are eating where blood and beetel nut are a part of it.) (Ojha, 2014)

It boosted the theatre movement in Odisha. In Cuttack there were three prominent theatre halls where Odiya plays were staged on a regular basis till the 1970s. Kalicharan Patnaik became the founder of the modern Odiya theatre movement. As Mayadhar Mansingha says, “Kalicharan brought a spoken style in play writing, removed the highly poetic style from play writing. Being a play writer, musician, and stage director made him a unique personality in theatre movement of Odisha (Mansingha, 1967). He has written 30 plays. Out of them “Bhat” created history for being staged for hundred days which is a record in modern theatre. For 20 years he started moving with a theatre group all over Odisha. Most of the leading actors and actresses hail from his theatre group and they dominate the theatre scene of Odisha (Mansingha, 1967). Bhat speaks about the feudal exploitation of people often reducing them to starvation. “Raktamati” speaks about the conflict between labour and capital in the backdrop of the city scene. He lived in Cuttack and established a permanent theatre group here. Kali Patnaik became a household name known as Kalibabu (Patnaik 1975). In a popular novel, “KAA”, by Kanhu Mohanty there has been a discussion about going to the Arnapurna Theatre for a second show of “Gana Davata” play (Mohanty 1955: 80). Ramchandra Mishra, Bhanjakishore Patnaik, and Gopal Chotaray were the stalwarts of the theatre movement in Cuttack. Between 1950 to 1970 theatre movement was dominated by a commercial dimension as it had a purpose of mass entertainment.

Science Movement

It is interesting to note that there was a science movement established by leading scientists of that time who held meetings regularly on a weekly basis in Ravenshaw College to spread scientific temper among students and people of the city. Every week students from the neighboring colleges, specifically the

medical and engineering school, thronged to these meetings. The leader of movement was Professor Gokulanand Mahapatra, Leading Scholar in Chemistry. He started writing science fictions. These books were very popular and widely read among students. Debakanta Mishra, a young scholar in Physics followed his footsteps and wrote many novels and articles in newspapers for popularizing science and technology. In the 1950s, Prof. B.N. Patnaik, who was a student at that time participated in these meets. Students belonging to different backgrounds came to attend the classes in European History by Prof. Altaf Hussain who used to deliver lectures on the French Revolution and Italian Unification in a dramatic and poetic style. Such participation was led by conviction in the students that they could do something for Odisha society besides the jobs and professions they eventually take up. That was the spirit of student community of those days (interview with B.N. Patnaik on 14 September 1914). Teaching was taken as a social activity. Most of the brilliant students went to far off places as teachers in the rural hinterland. Their contributions made the common schools as the backbone of the educational system where the Odiya middle-class excelled in various fields. This continued till the 1980s.

It needs to be noted that students of Ravenshaw staying in hostels often built close associations with the political leaders who used to stay in the city. Once H.K. Mahatab, the Chief Minister of Odisha came to the East Hostel in Ravenshaw, early in the morning and came to Prof. Patnaik's room. He advised students to eat an egg in the morning rather than only flattened rice. He also encouraged them to go to the library to work hard for their intellectual development. Many of the students used to contribute to the *Prajatantra* as writers. Moreover, there were continuous and evolving debates between the academia and the political leaders on various issues. Once Dr. Mahatab received an invitation to speak on Odisha history which later he published as the iconic *History of Odisha* in three volumes. Some of the scholars present during the lecture suggested corrections to notes. He accepted those with humility and openness.

Cuttack city contributed to the cultural and political movements in Odisha like many other cities in India during the colonial period (Kennedy 1990). All reform movements in Bengal had an echo in Cuttack. The city from the Tinkonia Bazaar to the Chandini Chowk created the momentum and buzz for each movement.

The Bhaichara Tradition

When traveling in a taxi in the main bazaars of the old city which ended in Buxi Bazaar where a temple and mosque standing together, the taxi driver, a young man said, “this is the place which symbolizes the bhaichara of the Cuttack city. Furthermore he added that “people from diverse social, linguistic and religious backgrounds have come to the city and lived here together and created a social bond known as bhaichara. These values sustain the pluralistic culture of the city” (Rebecca, 2000). Kohinur Press *Panji* which guides Odiyas in their daily life regarding issues related to religious and ceremonial practices are being published by a Muslim which is still a popular yearly *Panji*. The city has some important deities such as Cuttack Chandi which is being worshipped by the Hindus, whereas the Muslims go to the spiritual place in Daraga Bazaar and the oldest Church is located nearby. This is regarded as a spiritual place for all communities. In 1985 Cuttack Chandi Trust was constituted to look after the temple. It imposed a tax on goat sacrifice which received opposition in the local media. There was a popular protest against sacrifice of animals there which resulted in its subsequent banning. It explains the city transforming into a non-violent space where there was the sub-culture of violence by people. It got a fillip from the students of Ravenshaw College.

Role of Individuality and Community in the City’s Life

Artisanal capitalism integrated the rural hinterland of Cuttack which used to provide these services. Moreover, these villages became the Sahis of the city. They lost their caste and ethnic identity. They adopted a cosmopolitan identity which provided

the basis for a cultural and political movement in Odisha. This brings forth the question of Redfield's face-to-face identity along with Lewis Wirth's individuality blending into one (Redfield 1954; Wirth 1938). This is the strength of Cuttack city which created an imaginary community identity where each caste and religious group lost their narrow identities into a larger identity which is known as Cuttacki (a resident of the city of Cuttack) identity and has been nurtured by print culture of the city, social reform movements by bringing gender equality, and a strong sports culture that turned into "Chhak Adda" as a part of popular culture where people congregated to talk of every issue under the sky and on the earth. The younger lot spent time in the Chhak and added to the flourishing cultural activities in the city. The way the students and people behaved and acted in the Chhak was often articulated in the various plays and pictures. The streets became a stage for commoners. In Shakespeare's play "Julius Ceasare" people discussed palace politics on the street during the 15th century. The city of Cuttack nourished this tradition of collecting on the streets and discussing high politics. It also created a ... culture of *dadagiri* where younger people start admiring the muscle men who slowly groomed them into real *goondas* (street gangs). They were invited by the Sahi people to participate in the Durga puja festival time. This recognition made them into important and local heroes.

Decline of City

In the 1980s these goons/goondas became a public nuisance. Many of them were killed in factional politics and strife against the various gangs and the city people did not support this phase of violence. It is interesting to note that one known gangster who was killed at Tinkonia *bagicha* (garden) subsequently had a statue installed in his name. This became a place of meeting for the local *dadas* (strongmen) where liquor and meat was consumed on certain occasions. This is a cultural site today where as all other cultural sites have lost prominence as no political class or social elite patronize them.



Cuttack City: Blending between tradition and modernity 33

The spirit of Cuttack still survives. Though the city has declined, people from different languages and castes continue to live together without conflict and confrontation. The city is proud of its social peace and tolerance. The bhaichara tradition reinvents every day by convening the modern institutions such as peace committees and sahi committees. There can be conflict within a Sahi group or between Sahis. Both can meet and settle the issue with mediation by the peace committee or another Sahi committee. Strong cultural institutions such as theatres, cinema halls, and football clubs have declined. These were created by people through their collective contributions, without active state assistance. The state government should contribute towards its revival as most of the political leaders belong to the city including the present Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik who was born here and spent his childhood here. All the political parties have their headquarters here. Most of the newspapers are published from the city. Media, civil society, and political leadership could work together for the cultural regeneration of the city, reinstating itself as both a cultural and political capital. It is interesting to note that the cultural mapping of the state has been done from a tourist point of view. There is a tourist triangle between the three cities including Puri, Bhubaneswar, and Konark which are the temple towns but Cuttack has been ignored. Another triangle revolves around Lalitgiri, Udaygiri, and Khandgiri whereas the very cornerstone of Odisha's cultural and historical traditions and renaissance, embodied in the landscape and the urbanism of the city of Cuttack, remains obscured and sidelined. In present day Odisha, the embers of the city's identity still burn with intensity, evolving the grand old past.

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