

## Continuity and Change: Political Situation in Odisha from 2000 to 2025


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### ABSTRACT

Odisha is a land of heritage sites, arts, cultures, traditions and plenty of natural resources. Since ancient times many rulers were ruled over odisha due to its location and geographical importance. When the rulers are from the same family that maintains power for several generations, then the dynastic rule has been initiated. There were several dynastic rulers were ruled to Odisha until it became a separate state as per modern time or before emergence of democracy. But after emergence of democracy in odisha as a state of India following India's independence from the colonial rule more than two hundred years of exploitative rules. Democracy gives opportunity to many new faces to be part of the ruling process as believed to the end of the dynastic rule. But frankly speaking a new kind of politics emerged in democracy due to the rulers has been chosen from same family by the voters from several elections which known as dynastic politics or political dynasties. Dynastic politics, which has been treated as the contrast of democracy, usually is a practical aspect of politics in many modern democracies. The political dynasties that exist in India are a product of democracy in India which has been reflecting in almost all the states including Odisha. since 1951 to 2024, there are seventeen general election has been conducted in Odisha where different dynastic leaders came into power but one who has ruled more than two decades and dominated the odisha politics i.e. Naveen Patnaik. The leadership style of him is usually linked to dynastic politics, making him as a central figure in the state as well as Biju Janata Dal (BJD). But after 2024 general elections the political landscape has been changed in odisha due to the emergence of a grassroots leader as a chief minister which replaced to the long standing and sitting dynastic ruler from his post. The central question of this paper is to understand what are the major factors behind the defeats of the most popular chief minister of India? The paper also explore answers of some other questions like how the present chief minister Mohan Majhi maintain the same popularity of odisha as maintained by Naveen Patnaik? How the present chief ministers fulfill the expectations of odisha people as they have changed the most dynamic leader? Can Mohan Majhi is able to provide good governance to people? What are major challenges in front of Majhi's govt. as odisha is one of natural calamities prone state? The paper concludes with some observations of Majhi Govt. regarding their ruling structure.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Dynastic, Politics, Rule.*

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Odisha is known around the world not only because of its heritage, culture, temples, tourist spots, natural beauty, abundant natural resources but also its dynamic politics. The politics of Odisha formally started soon after it became a separated province after bifurcation from Bihar Province in 1936, under Government India Act of 1935 after relentless efforts by its formidable leaders like Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das and Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das. The leaders of Odisha, they put their tireless efforts not only for administrative purpose but also for empowering Odia speaking people for their cultural identity. After attainment of separate province, with support from Indian National Congress, the leaders were demanded the civil rights and greater autonomy from British rule. Against oppressive British rule and its ruling structure, the leaders were participated in various social reforms movements, opposed zamindari system and joined together in various liberation movement declared by national leaders for independence. National leaders and other leaders of different province including Odisha showed a big dissatisfaction against British rule as they took the resources from different parts of India for use of war at the time of World War without consulting them. Due to the transfer of resources, a food scarcity arises in Odisha which further developed unrest and anti governmental sentiments among Odia people. In response to these conditions, a strong sense of patriotism emerged among Odia leaders and their supporters, fueling their commitment to liberate their homeland from colonial domination and to participate in the broader national struggle for independence. The growing discontent among the Indian populace ultimately culminated in the passage of the Mountbatten plan by the British Parliament on July 18, 1947, which not only marked the end of British rule in India but also facilitated the independence of India and its provinces, including Odisha.

Odisha, following its independence from British rule, saw the unification of 27 princely states under the Odisha state agreement, ultimately becoming a part of India in 1950. Odisha's political scenario was dominated by the leaders of Indian National Congress (INC), as it

seen from the 1<sup>st</sup> general election (conducted in last part of 1951 and early part of 1952) and up to the 11<sup>th</sup> general election (from 1995 to 2000). Conversely, it is also found that, leadership shifted to other political parties in certain periods like from 1967 to 1972 coalition government formed by the Swatantra Party and Jana Congress, 1977 to 1980 by the Janata government, and 1990 to 1995 by the Janata Dal. A significant turning point in Odisha's political history occurred in 2000, when the Biju Janata Dal, a regional party established on December 26, 1997, emerged victorious under the leadership of its founder, Sri Naveen Patnaik, the son of Biju Patnaik, who had previously served as Chief Minister of Odisha from 1961 to 1963 and again from 1990 to 1995. The BJD secured a plurality of seats and, in coalition with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), formed a government with Naveen Patnaik as Chief Minister.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF ODISHA'S POLITICAL DYNAMICS UNDER NAVEEN'S LEADERSHIP**

Odisha politics entered into the vibrant momentum after Naveen Patnaik became its chief minister in 2000. The political landscape of Odisha has been changed drastically under his guidance and supervision. Under his leadership, the BJD party maintained its dominance and supremacy in both the region and the Centre because Naveen Patnaik was the central figure of the party. Due to his long standing tenure (2000-24), he was able to served Odia people by giving better governance, paid more attention on welfare schemes, developed a horizontal political atmosphere where both leaders of ruling and opposition parties adhere political toleration, put all its administration efforts to manage and mitigate all the natural calamities and its crises through his sincere dedication (aimed at zero causality), able to maintain his popularity among the Odia people by addressing their local issues and problems and after all his versatile leadership qualities made him a popular global leader. Let us overview Odisha's political dynamic under Naveen's leadership.

- **Political stability and governance**

Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has maintained its hold on power continuously since 2000, which is quite rare in India's frequently volatile political

landscape. This long standing tenure has given opportunities for implementation of long term policies, reducing the interruptions that usually accompany changes in government. The major focus of BJD govt. on decentralization of administrative power, for that reason a new initiative was taken such as Mo **Sarkar** (My Government) program (2019), which focuses the citizen's feedback to improve the accountability of bureaucracy. In addition to the ensure the effective of the delivery of public services, a new form of governance model developed i.e. **5T** initiative (2019), which stands for Technology, Transparency, Teamwork, Time, and Transformation.

- **WELFARE PROGRAMS**

For the welfare of disadvantaged people in Odisha, BJD govt. put more emphasis on various social welfare programs like The *Madhu Babu Pension Yojana* (2008), which provided financial support to the old age people, widows, and divyanga etc., for the benefit of farmers community in Odisha he was introduced the *KALIA* scheme (2019) which stands for Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation, which offers direct cash transfers to the account of small and marginal farmers. Furthermore, to enhance women economic condition as well as their empowerment and capable them to participate in decision making process, a flagship initiative introduced which known as Mission Shakti (2001).

*Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY)*: Another important initiative launched by the Patnaik's government in the field of health sector i.e. *Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY)* in the year of 2018 for the purpose to provide free medical assistance to the people of Odisha in all govt. medicals and some private hospitals.

*People-centric policies*: Throughout his tenure, many welfare schemes was introduced by his administration, such as in the housing sector the *Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana in 2014* (housing scheme) and in the pension sector the *Madhubabu Pension Yojanain 2008* (pension scheme), has received favorable responses from the public.

- **DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

*Infrastructure and Urban Development*: During the BJD regime, Odisha has experienced the rapid infrastructure development in terms of roads, ports, and urban facilities due to the investment a substantial amount of state's budget in this field. For the better connection from city to remote area and developed trade connectivity in Paradip and Dhamra ports The *Biju Expressway project* was introduced in the year of 2014. But apart from such development still rural areas are requires more attention.

*Economic Growth and Industrialization*: Odisha, since its origin, its economy totally depend upon on an agriculture and mining but BJD govt. brought a transformation in the field of economic growth by attracting many companies to invest their money in the field of steel, aluminum, and power industries and ensure to provide the abundant mineral resources, which are available in the different regions of Odisha, where companies are like Tata Steel and Jindal invested huge amount in Odisha. The year 2016 was the most influential year of Odisha as it became a manufacturing hub in the various sectors like textiles, electronics, and renewable energy by offering incentives for industries because of a flagship initiative launched i.e. *Make in Odisha* The state's GDP growth rate has consistently exceeded the national average, with per capita income rising from <sup>1</sup> 11,976 in 2000-01 to <sup>1</sup> 128,645 in 2022-23. On the other hand, his administration also been criticized by oppositions and many others due to the pertaining issues related to displacement (industrial project), environment matters, have sparked debates regarding sustainable development.

*Steady Economic Growth*: Under the leadership of Naveen Pattnaik, Odisha reached its highest economic growth which was above the national average. In the financial year (2022-23), the state's economy expanded by 7.8% in real terms, in contrast to the national growth rate of 7%.

*Increasing Per Capita Income*: Odisha's per capita income has experienced a remarkable annual compound growth rate of 10.9%, exceeding the national average of 9.4%.

*Attracting Investments:* During BJD regime, Odisha has better governance system and suitable economic policies, which attract to many Information and Technology (IT) companies and various other industries for investments.

*Infrastructure Development:* The state has initiated substantial infrastructure projects, including the building of the Gurupriya Bridge to bolster internal security and the Madhusudan Setu to enhance connectivity.

- **A CRISIS MANAGER**

Odisha is a natural disaster prone state, every year it has been faced numerous cyclone and other types of natural calamities. The Super Cyclone (1999) that badly affected the lives and resources of odia people due to the lack of early preparedness and technological support. After learning from super cyclone, Navin Pattnaik's administration developed a splendid disaster preparedness and response system and able to manage successive cyclones like Phailin (2013) and Fani (2019), which helped diminish casualties and received a strong appreciation from United Nations. The *Odisha Disaster Recovery Project* has bolstered coastal resilience, but the threat of climate change continues to loom large. This has helped reshape Odisha's reputation from being "disaster-prone" to "disaster-ready."

- **WOMEN SUPPORTERS**

*Mission Shakti:* This flagship initiative is all about empowering women and has made a remarkable difference in the lives of 7 million women who are part of 6 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs). It's all about creating economic opportunities and providing financial support. The government set an ambitious goal of channeling Rs. 5000 crore to SHGs over 5 years, and they have made impressive steps toward that target.

*33% Reservation for Women:* Odisha govt. showed its impartial attitude towards gender equality community by passing 33% of reservation for women in parliament and legislative assembly.

- **A SPORTS ENTHUSIAST AND CULTURAL ADVOCATE**

BJD govt. has been made its dedicated efforts to endorse not only the odia language but also its culture and heritage. The result was odia language attained the classical status in 2016. Apart from that, govt. also provided its whole hearted support to made Odisha as a sports hub in India by hosting international hockey world cup, which has contributed to enhancing "Brand Odisha" on the global platform.

*Emergence as a Sports Hub:* Odisha is evolving into a prominent sports destination in India, attributed to significant investments in sports infrastructure. The state has effectively hosted major international events, such as the FIH Hockey Men's World Cup in 2023.

*World-class Infrastructure:* For smooth organize of Hockey world cup, BJD govt. spent huge amount to provide world class infrastructure facilities to abroad players and the result was the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, recognized as the largest fully-seated hockey stadium globally, along with Kalinga Stadium, exemplify this investment.

- **A CARETAKER OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION**

In the field of health and education, Pattnaik's administration put its sincere efforts towards health care and literacy enhancement of odia people by providing them free health checkup and medicine facilities under the *Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana(2018)*. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the way this govt. addressed issues of people by providing vaccine and oxygen which not only appreciated by various state's govt., national govt., and international agencies but also a role model for other states/nations. In the field of education, his administration also more cautious, as education is the benchmark of any society for its transformation. After realizing the same, lot of initiative had taken like *Mo School (2017)*, *Mo College (2021)*, and *5T Grants (2019)*. Under such schemes many grants have been implemented to improve college and school infrastructure. Under the "5T" governance model (Teamwork, Technology, Transparency, Time, and Transformation), this substantial initiative has transformed over 6,132 government high schools,

ensuring that students receive quality education comparable to modern private institutions, even in the most remote regions.

- **A VISIONARY GOVERNANCE LEADER**

*The '5T' Model of Governance:* In his later terms, Patnaik introduced the '5T' model – which represents Teamwork, Technology, Transparency, Transformation, and Timeliness – as a foundational principle for effective governance. Under the 5T model, the focus was to make governance system more accountable, efficient and to deliver various services to citizens for better outcomes.

*"Mo Sarkar" Initiative:* under this initiative, the administration provide a platform where citizen's feedback can to noted on various issues related to public services as delivered by the government. After receiving feedback from the people, the governance try to improve the delivery of public services.

*Anti-Corruption Position:* Naveen Patnaik has consistently upheld a "clean" reputation and is recognized for his strong opposition to corruption, even taking the step of dismissing ministers when deemed necessary.

No doubts, Naveen Patnaik's administration has been brought many remarkable changes in various sectors by taking effective measures and positive steps but at the same time the govt. was failed to address some the core issues like unemployment and uneven industrial growth which continue to exist. However, his long standing tenure and visionary leadership played a significant role in fostering considerable development and stability within the state of Odisha.

The Conclusion of an Era: Significant Reasons for Naveen Patnaik's Unexpected Loss in the 2024 Election, Odisha:

After more than 24 years of ruled over odia people, Naveen Patnaik's era was came into an end in 2024 during Odisha assembly election, was the signifying a substantial political transformation in Odisha, as for the first time BJP govt. was able received the majority seats winning 78 out of 147 seats, while

the BJD's representation diminished to merely 51. This kind of situation development due to combination of factors, including rising anti-incumbency sentiments, the BJP's tactical campaigning, and several significant missteps by the previously dominant BJD.

One of the narrative developed by BJP govt. during the assembly election that "**Odia Asmita**" (**Odia pride**) was in theft or decline due to BJD's influence. For the protection of same, people of Odisha need to change the present govt. by casting their votes towards BJP party. This narrative skillfully underscored the increasingly contentious figure of V.K. Pandian, a Tamil-born former bureaucrat who had become Patnaik's closest advisor and political strategist. The BJP skillfully describe that Pandian as an "outsider" wielding excessive influence, inciting concerns regarding the future of Odisha's governance and cultural identity. The notion that a non Odia was making pivotal decisions for the state struck a chord with numerous voters.

Second issue related to the **Naveen Patnaik's health, his age (77 years) and infrequently visibility in public life**. During the election rally, The public appearance of Naveen Patnaik was not that much of good due to his words, which are fumbling and hands are vibrating. The same issues are highlighted by BJP national leaders during election campaign in Odisha including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This resulted in a eye-catching leadership gap or alternative of Naveen Patnaik, that the BJD found challenging to address.

After more than two decades in power, a natural wave of **anti-incumbency sentiment** began to emerge. Although Patnaik still maintained considerable personal popularity, frustrations with local MLAs and a sense of stagnation in certain areas ignited a desire for change. The BJP adeptly capitalized on this yearning for a new political alternative.

The BJD's **own strategies and calculations were gone wrong** during the election campaign, so that BJD party was decline. BJD leaders were overconfidence, as they won election several times, may have not engaged in the election campaign in dedicated manner. Moreover, there was no certainty who will be

the successor of Naveen pattanaik after his death and about party's future, gave fuel to BJP party to take advantage of.

Furthermore, the BJD's earlier strategy of offering issue-based support to the BJP at the national level while attempting to preserve a distinct identity within the state appeared to backfire. This "ideological vagueness" confused some voters, facilitating the BJP's portrayal as the sole genuine agent of change.

***Unfulfilled Promises and Governance Issues:***

It has been come to the notice of voters that many promises were not full filled by leaders of BJD party, after having rule over more than 20 years. Major issues like unemployment, agrarian distress, and insufficient healthcare infrastructure continue to be urgent issues. The opposition has highlighted these issues with the voters during election campaign and raises questions about the effective governance system.

***Shift in Tribal and Rural Vote Banks:*** once upon a time, tribal and rural populations were big supporters and campaigners of BJD party but due to the land acquisition policies and inadequate welfare schemes, a unrest arises among these voters. During the election campaign, the BJP promised to the tribal and rural voters regarding the proper implementation of central welfare policies as it was not properly implemented by the present govt. have been game changer from shifting votes to the BJP.

***Failure to Counter BJP's National Narrative:***

During the election campaign, the BJD priorities over Regional issues and neglect by the Central Govt., as it have been the universal election campaign slogan, which are BJD party used to own the previous election. However, the BJP priorities over the National narratives like Hindutva and nationalism to draw the attention of odia voters which was not properly counter by the BJD party and its leaders.

***Allegations of Corruption and Bureaucratic Overreach:*** The BJD political parties and its leader's image were damaged due to the allegation of corruption, nepotism, favoritism in the field of mining, land allocations and inefficiency of bureaucratic officers.

***Youth and Urban Dissatisfaction:*** When the BJD party unable to provide employment opportunities to the youth in the urban areas, a strong dissatisfaction arises among them was resulted to the shifted of votes to BJP.

***Strategic Errors in Alliance Formation:*** After the 2000 Odisha Legislative Assembly election, the BJD party maintains equidistance from the BJP and Congress and maintains same temperament in 2024 general election was proved one of the strategy errors. Because of this strategic error, the votes are gone to the pocket of opposition.

In contrast, the BJP not only adopted the proper planned election campaign but also focused the regional issues of Western Odisha as it has been continuously neglected by the BJD govt. by highlighting "Odia Asmita". The BJP's commitment towards the better development of the regions and provide opportunities to the various stakeholders due to the "double-engine" government created a sensation among the voters.

***Ratnabhandar*** (the treasury of Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri) key issues were also highlighted by the BJP, which accused the BJD government of negligence and a ignore for Odia heritage.

Ultimately, the 2024 Odisha election emerged as big dynamite for the BJD. A potent combination of emotional appeals to regional pride, a well organized BJP campaign machinery, increasing anti incumbency sentiment, and the BJD's own strategic errors culminated in the conclusion of a long and illustrious chapter in Odisha's political history, paving the way for a new era of saffron governance under the leadership of Sri Mohan Charan Majhi.

***SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MOHAN MAJHI'S ADMINISTRATION IN ODISHA (2024 TO PRESENT):***

As Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's administration celebrates its first anniversary on 10/06/25, it has concentrated intensely on fulfilling the essential promises set forth in the BJP's election manifesto (Sankalp Patra). The Majhi's government has managed to execute various welfare schemes and address

issues through the effective decisions has display the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration. The following some of the important achievements have been mentioned of Mohan Majhi government during its first year:

- **KEEPING CORE MANIFESTO PROMISES**

After assuming the power from its 1st cabinet meeting, the Majhi's administration introduce various flagship initiatives to address public grievance:

- **Reopening of All Four Gates of Puri Jagannath Temple:** The very first and foremost decision taken by Majhi's administration on June 13, 2024, that reopen of all the four gates (Singhadwara (Lion gate-East), Hastidwara (Elephant gate-North), Vyaghradwara (Tiger gate-South), and Ashwadwara (Horse gate-West)) of the Jagannath Temple in Puri to manage huge crowd, as promised to people during election campaign.
- **Increased Paddy MSP to ₹ 3,100:** One of the important manifestos of BJP was to increase the price of paddy. Soon after capturing the power, the cabinet approved to increase the minimum support price for paddy to 3100 rupees for quintal..
- **Approval of the Subhadra Yojana:** During the election campaign, one of the election agenda was to provide financial assistance to women through a scheme i.e. known as Subhadra Yojana for women empowerment. Under such scheme, women will be received 50,000 rupees, where they are self reliance or financial self independent. After coming to the power, the majhi's government has been providing financial assistance to women in accordance to the guidelines of Subhadra Yojana.
- **Formation of a Committee for Ratna Bhandar:** The treasury house of the Jagannath Temple is known as Ratna Bhandar, which consists of the valuable jewels and ornaments of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Maa Subhadra. Last few couple of years before conduction of 2024 assembly election, a narratives and frustration was developed among people regarding the proper care and audit of the jewels and

ornament. Soon after coming to the power majhi's government constituted a High Level Committee for Ratna Bhandar Inventory (2004), consisting of Retired Judge of Odisha High Court, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, Puri Collector, and others to supervise, inventory, security, and reopening of Ratna Bhandar treasury.

- To achieve better outcomes and result, the majhi's administration put more emphasis in the field of Governance and Accountability. Let's have close to at these field.
- **Tackling Corruption:** Corruption is an antithetical to integrity. It affects the administration and raise questions about the transparency of the government. After becoming Chief Minister of Odisha, Majhi's administration adopted the zero-tolerance policy on corruption and direction given to all the departments to follow the transparency in their every activity .
- **Commitment to "Good Governance" (Sushasan):** Sushasan is a dream project of every administration where Officials of the various departments have been directed to be more responsive and accountable to public concerns and frequently move to the remote areas to better know and address issues at the local level. After assuming power, Majhi's administration stress on Good Governance.
- Let's have an analysis on economic and agricultural initiatives. Majhis' government not only increased the minimum support price for paddy but also lengthening its focus on agricultural and economic field.
- **State Budget Priorities:** Under the 1<sup>st</sup> budget of Mahi's government, which introduced in July 2024 the focus was on infrastructural development, women empowerment, and agriculture due to the electoral commitment.
- **Renewed Investment Efforts:** The new administration is diligently working to foster a more attractive environment for industrial investment, with the goal of leveraging the "double-engine government" (BJP at both state and central levels) to draw in substantial projects.

Let us engage in a discussion regarding the management of natural disasters.

Since 1999, every year in the month of October is a panic period for Odisha people as well as govt. due to the natural calamities. It was also challenging for Majhis administration as previous govt. achieved more success or praise with zero causality, when meteorological department predicted about Cyclone Dana is going to affect Odisha in October 2024. With aim of zero casualties, he was moved with early preparedness and takes many measures to achieve the target. Those strategies his administration have been taken to manage the cyclone Dana and showed the commitment to disaster preparedness became widespread and received well recognition from both national and international level. The “zero casualties” achievement was a notable success, enhancing public confidence in the new administration’s ability to handle natural disasters. This initial challenge illustrated that the state’s robust disaster management system, combined with the new leadership’s proactive approach, could continue to protect lives and mitigate the impacts of such disasters.

- Lastly, let us discuss the healthcare and the social sector.
- Addressing Doctor Shortages: The last govt. was opened many new hospitals during their tenure but failed to appoint doctors against the total vacancy. The Mohan Majhis’s govt., soon after assuming power has been implementing various measures to attempt the numerous vacancies for doctors and paramedics in state-operated hospitals, with the objective of improving healthcare services, particularly in remote and village regions.

<sup>vvv</sup> After completion of one year of his tenure as a chief minister, his govt. delivering various services as they promised during the time of election campaign, especially those pertaining to culture, religion, and agriculture. The forthcoming years will be more important as well as crucial for him and his administration for fully implementing its initiatives and

demonstrating a lasting influence on the state’s development and economy.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to say that Odisha politics became memorable for generation to generation because of Naveen Pattnaik and his effective governance towards welfare of odia people due to his visionary mind, versatile leadership and long serving period from 2000 to 2024. However, the year of 2024 became a historic day in Odisha politics not because of BJP emerged as victorious party but one of the most popular, people friendly leader was defeated. However, the year 2024 marked a significant turning point, as the BJP emerged victorious under leadership of Mohan Charan Majhi, initiating a new chapter in the state’s political leadership and priorities. This transition represents a pivotal moment, indicating a significant shift in the political preferences of the Odia electorate. The manner in which the state responds to evolving political dynamics while simultaneously achieving its developmental objectives will fundamentally influence its governance in the forthcoming years. As Odisha advances, the interplay between leadership, policy, and public sentiment will continue to shape its political trajectory.

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