

## The Oriya Paika Rebellion of 1817

*Prof. N.R. Mohanty*

The Britishers under Lord Clive laid the foundation stone of the British Raj in India in the month of April, 1757. Lord Clive's army of some four thousand and odd men overpowered the mighty force of 57000, led by Shiraj Ud-dawla, a young lad of 17. It was because, nature conspired against him along with his hostile general Mir Zafar. A sudden torrential rain had spoiled his explosives, on the eve of that war. Otherwise the 5000 strong loyal Kashmiri soldiers under General Shohanlal could have wrested victory from the hands of the Britishers notwithstanding Mir Zafar's non-cooperation.

The English took over Orissa from the Marhattas in 1803, although the foundation stone for British Rule was laid in 1757 in the neighboring province of Bengal. The Marhattas were no lesser blood-suckers under whose dominion, Orissa's economy crumbled. Plunder by the horse-trotting Marhattas, over and above the "chouth" - the practice of collecting a quarter of the possible income of the cultivable land (notwithstanding constant crop failures due to floods or droughts), crushed the Oriya soul to such an extent that his daily search for a hard-to-get morsel of rice made him to wear a permanent expression of sorrow and despair in his face. Passing of Orissa from the Marhattas to the hands of the English had no reaction in the public mind - who were the least

politically conscious at that point of time. But, however, its impact was soon observed at some level which triggered a heavy reaction as a very natural phenomenon.

The English appointed Col. Harcot and Mr. Melvil the administrators of the Cuttack Division. Their first job was to extract allegiance of numerous small kings or Zamindars in whichever ways possible. In 1804, they snatched the management of the Puri Temple from the hand of the King Mukunda Dev-II, as they had their eyes on the vast landed property and other incomes of the temple. Puri was made capital of Orissa till 1816, after which it was transferred to Cuttack.

From the times the Kings of Orissa were sovereign powers, the custom of "Paikas" was well-established as a mechanism of defence - should the occasion so arise. The Paikas were farmers during peace and formidable mercenaries during war. They enjoyed a vast agricultural land in return for their military service. Such lands were available to these mercenaries from Jaleshwar (in Baleshwar) to Puri. They were of 3 categories; such as (i) Prahari (ii) Banua and (iii) Bhenkias. Praharies were the initial defendants whose job was to watch with swords in their hands. Banuas were adept archers and shooters with country guns. Dhenkias were the swordsmen, far

numerous in strength - who fought in the war-fronts. Because of their highly evolved skill, the kings of Utkal were independent for a long time, even when a single empire did not exist. It is a matter of great regret that no king or any other martial man did try to organize these forces into a single unity that could have safe-guarded the safety of a large Orissan Empire, before or during the English occupation. Had this happened, Orissa would have never been exploited by the Muslims, Marhattas or the English. Also the question of the ill reputations of a poor state (inspite of its vast forest and mineral resources) would have not arisen at all.

The Paikas functioned as farmers and also "Police" during peace-time. The number of crimes was far less in Orissa due to their dutifulness as a naturalized police force. A dishonest English man, Major Fletcher by name, was appointed to manage the estate of king Mukunda Dev. He snatched away the Jagir land of the Paikas. They were deprived of the land they heriditorily enjoyed for generations. Repeated land settlements, new currency policy and deprivation of people of their rights to manufacture salt from sea-water were some of the measures which ruined the means of livelihood of people. The Paikas had now two roads to choose; the first, to sulk in silence and die of starvation and the second, to fight. Borne of martial tribes, their natural instinct drove them in the road to armed confrontation.

Buxi Jagabandhu Vidyadhar Mahapatra Bhramarbar Ray was the General of King Mukund Dev. He was enjoying vast landed properties (without any cess) apart from a small estate (Zamindar) named as "Rodang". In the settlements of 1804 and 1805, it was registered under his name. At that point of time, Sri K.C. Singh, a Bengali, was the Dewan of the Collector of Puri. His own brother Gourahari Singh was the Tahasildar of Rahang estate (a Zamindari,

snatched from the king of Khurda by Marhattas - which naturally passed into the English hands who occupied Cuttack without any Marhatta resistance). After the settlement of 1806, Sri K.C. Singh ordered that Sri Buxi should deposit his cess (for Rodang) with him, rather than paying it directly to the Collector. Sri Singh collected this cess of Rodang and showed it as that of the areas under "Rahang and etc." As a result, dishonest Gourahari registered the Rodanga estate under the name of a close relative of his in the Settlement of 1909. this was again purchased by his brother Dewan K.C. Singh after a year. Buxi filed a protest with the Government of Bengal - the final authority. He got a reply in 1941 that he has to prove it in a court of law in Calcutta failing which his authority over "Rodang" could not be restored. Buxi was penniless at that time and had no means to go to Calcutta and fight a case by paying heavy fees to the lawyers, in addition to the required court fees. There was also a provision under the British rule that a person can file a case without court-fees after proving himself as a "Pauper". Buxi thought it to be below his dignity to do so. He also never expected justice from the British who had joined hands with the dishonest Bengalis, in their quest for power.

When the Paikas revolted, Buxi Jagabandhu was their natural leader. In March of 1817, about 400 Kandha tribals of Ghumusar area came marching towards Khurda. The Paikas of Khurda joined them. They first attacked the police station of Banpur and burnt all government quarters. They also killed 100 men and looted fifteen thousand rupees from the government treasury. When they were marching towards Khurda, people from adjoining villages joined with them in great numbers. All government officials fled Khurda which was completely devastated.

On receiving this information at Cuttack, two platoons of soldiers were sent, one each to

Khurda and Pipili. On the 1st of April, 1817 the Collector of Cuttack marched towards Khurda with 60 Sepoys. When they were at Gangaparha, on their way to Khurda, the Paikas intercepted them with grenade attacks. The Collector fled to Balakati and was trying to escape at night from there. He was attacked by the Paikas. Bruised by them, he escaped to Cuttack losing his tents, ammunitions and elephants to the Paikas.

The despatch sent to Khurda were defeated and their leader was killed by the Paikas. The despatch sent to Pipili was defeated too. The police station at Pipili was looted. On the 9th April, fifty of the soldiers sent to Puri were ordered to march to Khurda. On reaching Khurda they promulgated martial law. On the same date, a gang of Paikas reached Puri and burnt the government quarters along with the Puri Court. Unable to resist this attack, the English fled to Cuttack on 18.04.1817. Gajapati Mukund Dev also co-operated with the Paikas. The Pandas of the temple announced that the English rule had been thwarted and the Gajapati's reign had been restored. The entire south Orissa was now under the control of the Baghis.

Subsequently, with possibly fresh despatches there was another fight between the English forces and Paikas in Puri. The Paikas lost in this fight. Mukunda Dev was captured when he was trying to flee. After this, the Paikas avoided frontal attack and resorted to gorilla warfare, hiding in forests.

When the Paika captured Sarang-garh of Cuttack, the Kings of Kanika and Kujanga had co-operated with them. Narayan Paramguru and Bamadev Pattajyotish were the leaders of the Paikas of Kanika and Kujanga. Hence the English marched towards Kujanga in September, 1817. They first occupied Paradip and then went to Nuagarh. About 2000 Paikas fought bravely

against them, but lost. The King of Kujanga surrendered and was imprisoned in the Barabati Fort for one year. Paramguru and Pattajyotish were banished to the Andamans. English soldiers from Pipili reached Gopa and defeated the Paikas. Karunakar Sardar, their leader was arrested and imprisoned. Sporadic resistances at other places were also quelled. Paikas went underground and kept their resistance alive from jungles. In the year 1818, the English recruited a special force to search and kill or arrest them. This continued till 1826. In the absence of any short of Logistic Support, Gorilla warfare had to cease some day and so it did.

Mukunda Dev, who was captured while fleeing, was kept in prison where he died soon in the month of November, 1817. From the month of May, 1817, two Judges were appointed to try the offenders (?) of the Paikas' Rebellion. History has not kept the account of the numerous Paikas and their leaders who were hanged, imprisoned or deported. The Britishers occupied Orissa in 1803. The Paikas rose in revolt against them in 1817. They could not have succeeded with the dire lack support from the public whose back bone was broken under long exploitations. Yet, History must correct itself to record the Paikas' Rebellion (1817-26) as the First War of Indian Independence which was fought 40 years before the Sepoys' Rebellion (1857).

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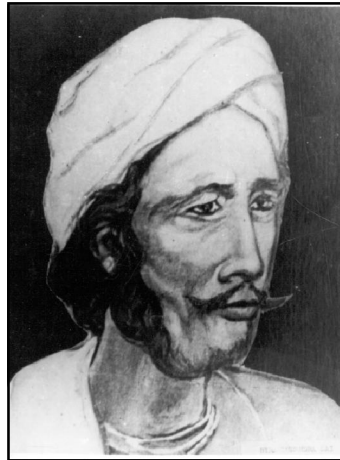
N.R. Mohanty is a Professor of Civil Engineering, NIT, Rourkela.

## Role of Veer Surendra Sai Against the British Colonialism in Sambalpur

*Ratnakar Mohapatra*

The role of Veer Surendra Sai in the resistance movement of Sambalpur against the British colonialism is a landmark in the history of freedom movement of Orissa. The achievements of Surendra Sai and his uncommon heroism for the safety of the tribal people of Sambalpur have few parallels in the history of India. Surendra Sai was a born rebel and an uncompromising enemy of the British Authority. Surendra Sai popularly known as Surendra, was born in the Chauhan family of Rajpur-Khinda. His father Dharam Singh was a descendant of Aniruddha Sai, son of Madhukara Sai, the fourth Chauhan Raja of Sambalpur. The member of this Sai family demanded the throne, being the next to the main line of Sambalpur after the demise of Maharaja Sai in 1827 AD.

As Maharaja Sai had no son, Surendra Sai who then represented the Rajpur-Khinda family, asserted his claims for the 'Gadi' of Sambalpur. At that time British set aside the claims of Surendra because he was a man of independent thinking. The first choice of British went in favour of Mohan Kumari, the widow Rani of Maharaja Sai. The British forces had already occupied Sambalpur in January 1804 AD. After defeating



the Bhonsla Raja in the Third Anglo-Maratha war of 1817, the British decided to establish their paramountcy over Sambalpur. In 1818 AD, after the death of Jayanta Singh, Maharaja Sai succeeded to the throne. Maharaja Sai died in 1827, leaving no son to succeed him. Thereafter, the British authorities allowed his widow Rani Mohana Kumari to rule over the State. This was done against the local customs and laws of the land. Never in the history of Chauhan rule of Sambalpur, a woman had been raised to such a position. Disturbances immediately broke out, and for some years there was constant discord between the recognized ruler and other claimants to the chiefship.

Ultimately, Rani Mohan Kumari proved herself an incapable ruler. Due to her defective measures, the people revolted against her authority.

### **Preparation of Rebellion**

The British authorities suppressed the violent activities of rebels and sent Rani Mohan Kumari to Cuttack to remain as a pensioner in 1833 AD. On 11th October, 1833 the British installed Narayan Singh an offspring of the Chauhan family as the ruler. Narayan Singh had

no capacity for administration due to extreme old age. His right to the throne was challenged by other contending members of Rajpur-Khinda family. Balaram Singh, a brother of Dharam Singh of the Khinda family took up the cause of his nephew, Surendra Sai and guided the rebellion on the ground that they had more legitimate claims over the throne. The Gond (tribal) people also revolted against Narayan Singh. In this chaotic state of affairs Narayan Singh died on 10th September, 1849 leaving no son to succeed him. The Governor General Lord Dalhousie then annexed Sambalpur by applying the Doctrine of Lapse. For that reason Surendra Sai and his supporters revolted against the British imperialism over Sambalpur. The claim of Surendra Sai upon the throne of Sambalpur was justifiable and legal. But Surendra Sai was debarred from occupying his legitimate position because the British authorities were afraid of his strong personality and extreme popularity.

Surendra Sai's revolution against the British colonialism started in 1827 AD. He valiantly fought against the British authorities till 1864 and then finally arrested in that year. The detail activities of this great freedom fighter are briefly discussed below.

### **Rebellion of Surendra Sai**

Since 1827 AD both Balaram Singh and his nephew Surendra Sai had been claiming the 'Gadi' of Sambalpur as the legal heir apparent. But the British authority repeatedly ignored the claim of Surendra Sai regarding the throne of Sambalpur. That is why, Surendra Sai decided to rebel with the help of his uncle Balaram Sai and his own brothers. The local Zamindars and 'Gauntias' also supported Surendra Sai against the British policy. Surendra Sai had six brothers such as Udyanta, Dhruva, Ujjala, Chhabila, Jajjala and Medini. All of them took active part in the rebellion. While Surendra Sai was

mobilizing his supporters for rebellion, Raja Narayan Singh's men killed Balabhadra Deo, the 'Gond Zamindar' of Lakhanpur, who was a supporter of Surendra Sai. At this situation, the Gonds became incensed and decided to take up the cause of Surendra Sai. The supporters of Surendra Sai then avenged the murder of Balabhadra Deo by murdering the father and son of Durjaya Singh, the unpopular 'Zamindar' of Rampur who was a supporter of Raja Narayan Singh. This was a spontaneous revolt but Surendra Sai had no role in it. But the British Government implicated Surendra Sai in this case and arrested him and his uncle Balaram Singh and brother Udyanta Sai. They were sent to the Hazaribag Jail as prisoners for life in 1840 AD. Balaram Singh who was a guide of the rebels died in jail some time, after his imprisonment. There Surendra Sai spent as many as 17 years till the mutineers broke open the jail in 1857.

After annexation, the British took some measures which caused dissatisfaction among the Zamindars as well as the common people of Sambalpur. The British authorities showed no sympathy for the tribal Zamindars and Gauntias and brought them under their rigorous control. The revenue paid by them was indiscriminately raised. It is revealed from a record that the amount paid by the State as annual tribute previous in 1849 was Rs. 8,800 whereas that amount rose to Rs. 74,000 in 1854 AD. At that time none of the tribal Zamindars had the capacity of giving leadership to their people. When the revolt of 1857 took place, then the accumulated discontentment of the tribal people of Sambalpur burst into open rebellion under the leadership of Surendra Sai.

The second phase of Surendra Sai's war against the British began in 1857 when the great explosion occurred and it convulsed the whole country. In this great historic Revolution of 1857,

the Sypoys at Hazaribagh rose in rebellion. They broke open the Hazaribagh Jail and released the prisoners. Consequently Surendra Sai and his brother Udyant Sai got released. At that time, Surendra Sai was fugitive and an escaped prisoner. He was declared as a rebel by the British authority and a reward of Rs.250/- had been declared for his apprehension and for the arrest of his brother. On return to Sambalpur, Surendra Sai was enthusiastically received by the people, Zamindars and Gauntias. On 13th October, 1857 Surendra Sai accompanied by the supporters made a representation to Captain R. T. Leigh, the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Sambalpur for the remission of the sentence of imprisonment on him and for his installation as the Raja of Sambalpur. G.F.Cockburn, the Commissioner of Orissa opposed to any leniency being shown to Surendra Sai. He strongly instructed Surendra Sai's deportation. In the meantime, in anticipation of rebellion, the British Government brought more troops to Sambalpur. In Sambalpur, Surendra Sai was treated as a political prisoner. His residence was strictly guarded and his movement closely watched. Under such circumstances, Surendra Sai anticipated troubles and fled to the Khinda village where his brother Udyant was staying. On the night of 31st October, 1857, he then broke into rebellion and appealed to the people to join him in liberating Sambalpur from the British Paramountcy. Many tribals, tribal Zamindars and Gauntias joined hands with him.

The Rebellion of Sambalpur in 1857 was mainly a tribal rebellion. The tribal Zamindars of Ghens, Kolabira, Paharsirgira, Machida, Kodabaga, Laida, Loisinga, Lakhanpur, Bheden, Patkulanda, etc. had joined it espousing the cause of Surendra Sai. They gave up their comforts and resorted to jungle life. Some of them lost their estates, some were killed in the battle, some were arrested and hanged and many were imprisoned. The tribal people were noted for their sacrifice

and heroism. Surendra Sai could challenge the mighty British power through their strength and support.

Surendra Sai organized the rebels into several groups in different places. Sambalpur's connection with Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Cuttack and Nagpur were for sometime cut off by the rebels. Early in December, 1857, the 'dawk' road to Bombay was obstructed and two 'dawk' stations were set on fire. For sometime the situation in Sambalpur became uncontrollable for the British authorities. Many of the principal Zamindars were collecting their Paikas for the purpose of resisting the Government. It became difficult for the Government troops to carry on operations against the rebels in the jungles. Two British Medical Officers named Dr. T. Moore and Dr. D. Hanson who were proceeding to Sambalpur to give medical aid to the soldiers were assaulted by the rebels at Jujumara. In the skirmish Dr. Moore was killed. Dr. Hanson escaped with much difficulty by hiding himself in the jungle and was rescued after two days by Government soldiers. Later on when Captain Leigh with fifty soldiers visited the spot, the rebels attacked his party and succeeded in killing and wounding several men of his detachment.

G.F. Cockburn despatched more and more reinforcement to Sambalpur to meet the situation. The British Government transferred Sambalpur for the time being to the Orissa Division for the effective handling of the situation with effect from 19th December, 1857. The reason was that it was difficult to control Sambalpur from north and the Commissioner of Chhotnagpur was hard-pressed with work. So the district of Sambalpur, which originally belonged to Chhotnagpur Division, was proposed to be permanently transferred to the Cuttack Division.

In the meantime, Captain Wood arrived at Sambalpur from Nagpur with a cavalry. On 30th

December, 1857 he made a surprise attack on the rebels at Kudopali. A skirmish followed, in which fifty-three rebels including Chhabila Sai, the brother of Surendra Sai were killed. But Surendra Sai was able to escape from the site.

On 7th January, 1858 Major Bates arrived at Sambalpur and assumed overall charge of putting down the rebellion. He occupied the Jharghati Pass, situated on the way to Ranchi, which was being blocked by Udyant Sai. He also destroyed the village of Kolabira, the gauntia of which was a rebel leader. The gauntia was arrested and afterwards hanged. On 20th January, 1858 G.F. Cockburn arrived at Sambalpur with troops.

On 12th February, 1858 Captain Woodbridge and Captain Wood launched an attack on the fort of Paharsirgira, the mountain stronghold of the rebels. In this encounter the rebels shot Captain Woodbridge dead. Two days later, the naked and headless body of Woodbridge was recovered by English.

In March 1858, Colonel Forster took charge of the Sambalpur district from Captain Leigh. Invested with wide military and civil power, Forster adopted stern measures like seizure of the entire food stock of the rebels for suppressing all rebellious activities. He called a meeting of the neighbouring Rajas and Zamindars and sought their co-operation for the suppression of the rebellious activities of Surendra Sai and his followers. The Raja of Patna had been fined one thousand rupees by Cockburn as he was suspected of giving shelter to Ujjal Sai, the brother of Surendra Sai. Ujjal Sai was hanged at Balangir without undergoing any trial by British authorities. Forster also captured and hanged the zamindars of Kharsal and Ghens. But in spite of all the repressive measures, Forster could not capture Surendra Sai, the prime mover of the rebellion.

### Period of Conciliation

In April 1861, Major Impey was appointed as the Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur in place of Colonel Forster. He firmly believed that only conciliatory measures would induce the rebels including the leader Surendra Sai to surrender. On studying the critical situation, Impey adopted this policy for the voluntarily surrender of rebels. On 24th September, 1861 amnesty was proclaimed for all except Surendra Sai, his brother Udyant Sai and his son Mitrabhanu. The second Proclamation was issued on 11th October, 1861 offering free pardon to all rebels who would surrender. The Proclamations attracted a large number of rebels who wanted to settle peacefully with their family and friends. Because of Proclamations, many rebels returned from jungles and surrendered. Towards the end of 1861 Mr. R.N. Shore, the Commissioner of Cuttack came to Sambalpur under express orders of the Government to enquire into matters connected with the rebellion. He found that Major Impey had succeeded to create ample confidence in the minds of local people and his conciliatory policy was highly appreciated. The Government of Bengal also confirmed the terms of Proclamation regarding the restoration of property to the rebels. The Zamindar of Kolabira, a staunch supporter of Surendra Sai, received very generous treatment after his surrender and Impey's conciliatory gesture convinced the rebels about the sincerity of the British Government to restore peace and order in the long troubled district. Negotiations continued with rebels and ultimately the policy of Major Impey was crowned with success. Mitrabhanu, the only son of Surendra Sai, was the first man of the Sai family who surrendered to Major Impey on 7th January, 1862. Two days after that Dhruva Sai and Udyant Sai announced their surrender. Hati Singh of Ghens also surrendered before British authorities in the first week of February, 1862 AD. Early in May

Surendra Sai started negotiation with the British authorities. He again asked for recognition of his claim to the throne of Sambalpur. But that claim was rejected by British authority. Major Impey assured him that he would be given liberal pension for that. Surendra Sai then demanded some money to pay the arrears to his soldiers. Major Impey sanctioned five hundred rupees to him. Thereafter, he surrendered to Major Impey on 16th May, 1862. He was granted a pension of Rs. 1200/- per annum. Liberal pensions (Rs. 4, 400) were also granted to other members of his family. Almost all other rebel leaders except Kunjal Singh and Kamal Singh surrendered to Major Impey. The resistance movement of Sambalpur thus came to an end.

### **Period of Conspiracy**

Some British officers were not happy of the conciliatory measures of their Government. The Deputy Commissioner, Raipur, objected the grant of pardon to criminals like the Ghens brothers and demanded that the order should be withdrawn. J.N. Berial, the Superintendent of Police of Sambalpur, asserted that Surendra Sai was connected with the dacoity committed by Kamal Singh and Kunjal Singh and suggested his immediate arrest. In March 1863, Sir Richard Temple, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces visited Sambalpur. Some prominent persons of the district made a representation that they had been adversely affected by the British administration and that "final tranquility would never exist at Sambalpur till a Chauhan resorted to Gadi". The Chief Commissioner categorically rejected their demand. The British Officers put pressure on the Deputy Commissioner for the arrest of Surendra Sai. Major Impey died at Sambalpur in December 1863 and in his place Captain Cumberledge joined as Deputy Commissioner on 19th January, 1864. In the night of 23rd January, 1864 Surendra Sai, his son and

close followers were arrested at his residence in the Khinda village. His brothers Udyant Sai and Medini Sai were also captured from a different place. They were altogether sent to Raipur. It was decided that their case would be tried in the Court of Raipur and not in Sambalpur. The Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur submitted the evidences and charges against the convicts and after a mock trial; the Commissioner of Chhatisgarh sentenced them to deportation for life.

### **Judgment of Conspiracy**

An appeal against this sentence was filed by Surendra Sai and his followers in the Court of the Judicial Commissioner, John Scarlett Campbell, which was Principal Court of Appeal in Central Provinces. John Scarlett Campbell gave the verdict that the charges against Surendra Sai and his followers were baseless and fabricated and that the Police had leveled such charges, being unable to capture Kamal Singh and other dacoits.

In spite of strong verdict of the Judicial Commissioner, Surendra Sai and six other prisoners were detained at Nagpur under Regulation III of 1818. The British officers further feared that the presence of Surendra Sai and his followers would unsettle the mind of the people and disturb the tranquility in the district of Sambalpur. They were kept in the Nagpur Jail till April, 1866 and thereafter sent to the Fort of Asirgarh. Surendra Sai's brother Medini Sai breathed his last in Asirgarh Fort in 1876. Dhruva and Mitrabhanu were released on 1st January 1876. The eventful story of the great freedom fighter ended with the return of Mitrabhanu Sai to Sambalpur. But Surendra Sai was kept confined in the Fort till the end of his life. We have no authentic records regarding the last days of Surendra Sai. The last hero of the resistance movement of 1857 did not come out alive from the Fort of Asirgarh. It was merely reported by



the Commandant of the Fort of Asirgarh that Surendra Sai, one of the State prisoners died on 28th February, 1884 at the age of about ninety.

It is known from the above discussion that Veer Surendra Sai was a valiant fighter against the British imperialism. His whole life had been devoted in struggle for the cause of people. Such type of fighter is rare in the history of freedom movement in Orissa. He carried on an uncompromising war against the forces of British till 1862. Surendra Sai was not only a great revolutionary throughout his life but also an inspiring leader of the tribal people. He was always in favour of the down-trodden tribal people who were being exploited by the British officials. Surendra Sai spent 37 years in jail in two phases: the first phase being 17 years i.e. from 1840-1857 AD and the second being 20 years i.e. from 1864-1884 AD. The main aim of Surendra Sai was to drive British out of Sambalpur. Although he could not achieve the goal of his life but the vigorous struggle of this hero deserves to be remembered as one of those valiant fighters who defied the British colonialism in the pre-nationalist period. Truly the role of Surendra Sai had acted as one of the milestones for the succeeding freedom fighters to achieve the final independence of our motherland. That is why, it can be rightly said that Surendra Sai was a forerunner of the freedom fighters of India. Prior to the rise of national consciousness in the minds of our freedom fighters, he fought almost single minded-against the most formidable forces of British imperialism. He had tried his best to oust the British authorities from our motherland. The greatest ambition of this hero was futile due to the repressive policy adopted by the British authorities. Both patriotism and heroism have been exhibited by Surendra Sai, which is unparalleled in the history of freedom movement in India. Surendra Sai has suffered untold miseries throughout his life for the end of British. Considering the dedication of his life, the

struggle of Surendra Sai can be compared with his contemporary rebel leader like Garibaldi of Italy. Really, the activities of Surendra Sai in the resistance movement were like that of a gallant lion whom the British authorities could neither dare to kill nor to see moving freely on his soil. Thus, the role of Surendra Sai against the British colonialism undoubtedly occupies a unique place in the annals of armed resistance movement in Orissa.

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Ratnakar Mohapatra is an ICHR Research Fellow, P.G. Department of History, Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, Sambalpur.

## Orissa in the Great Revolt of 1857

*Balabhadra Ghadei*

In the year 1857 India witnessed a great armed uprising against the British Raj known as the Great Revolt of 1857 or Sepoy Mutiny or the First War of India's Independence. The Revolt which broke out at Barrack pore had its shadow cast in different parts of India including Orissa. Of those great patriots of Orissa who actively participated in the Great Rising, special mention may be made of Ramakrushna Samanta Singhar, Chakhi Khuntia, Surendra Sai and a few others.

Ramakrushna Samanta Singhar, the heir of great poet Abhimanyu Samanta Singhar was born in Burran Paragana under Jajpur Police station of Cuttack District. He happened to be the Ex-Zamindar of Balia. On account of the Sunset Law introduced by Lord Cornwallis, he along with many Zamindars was deprived of Zamindari. So in August 1857, he organized the Khandayats under his banner to rise against the British. Dinabandhu Mahapatra and Upendra Jena were two other leaders. Bombs and swords were seized from them and police oppression was carried out. They were arrested and Ramakrushna and his allies were sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment. After the declaration of amnesty by the British Government in November, 1858 Ramakrushna and his associates were released.

Chakhi Khuntia, also called Chandan Hajuri was another popular leader who played a

significant role in the sensational drama of the Great Revolt of 1857 in Orissa. A Panda of the Jagannath temple at Puri he used to visit up-country military stations to induce the Sepoys to visit this sacred shrine. During his such visit he came in close contact with the Sepoys of the 13th Bengal Native Infantry (B.N.I.) which revolted at Lucknow. On account of this, he was arrested on suspicion. After the declaration of amnesty, Chaki Khuntia was released on 15th November, 1858. Chakhi Khuntia, however, has become a popular legend in Orissa.

In Sambalpur the spirit of the rebellion was most fierce under the leadership of Surendra Sai. It was thirty years before the Rising of 1857 that Surendra launched a resistance movement against the British over a succession issue. In 1827, the Raja of Sambalpur, Maharaj Sai died, leaving behind him his Rani Mohan Kumari and two daughters but no male heir. Local custom and tradition did not permit Rani to ascend the Gadi. On the other hand, Surendra being a direct agnate of the royal family had legal claim to the Gadi. This was also admitted by the officiating Commissioner of Cuttack, R.N. Shore. But defying the established local custom, the Political Agent of Chhotnagpur installed Rani Mohan Kumari on the Gadi, hoping that she would be puppet and the British Government would manage

everything on her behalf. Naturally her accession was challenged by Surendra in the form of an armed rising. Meanwhile, the British authorities pensioned off the Rani and sent her to Panchgarh in Khurdha with a pension of Rs.600/- per month. The British authority chose one Narayan Singh, the Zamindar of Barpali as the successor to Mohan Kumari and thus he was the Raja of Sambalpur on 11 October, 1833. Surendra Sai along with his brother Uddant Sai and uncle Balaram Singh challenged the accession in the form of Revolt in 1837 but they were captured and confined in Hazaribag Jail in 1840.

It was on 10th September, 1849 that Narayan Singh died issueless. In December, 1849 the State lapsed and the widow Rani sent off to Cuttack with a pension of Rs.100/- p.m. Eight years later it was on 30th July, 1857 that at Hazaribagh the mutinieers broke open the jail gate and forcibly set Surendra Sai and his brother Uddant free along with 32 other prisoners from the province of Cuttack and other Tributary Mahals.

After the incident Surendra Sai and his brother reorganized the tribal people and the Zamindars. Captain Leigh, the Senior Assistant Commissioner in charge of Sambalpur got alarmed at the approach of Surendra and very soon brought some new forces from Cuttack to meet the situation. As Surendra Sai reached Sambalpur in the middle of September, 1857 the people gave a rousing reception and they promised to fight the British under his leadership. On October, 1857 Surendra Sai accompanied by his friends and followers made a representation to Captain Leigh for remission of the sentence of imprisonment on him and for his installation as Raja of Sambalpur. Captain Leigh forwarded his representation to Captain T.E. Dalton, the

Commissioner of Chhatnagpur who sent it to the Government of Bengal on 30th October recommending the commutation of sentences on condition that both the brothers would reside either at Cuttack or at Ranchi, But he ruled out the installation of Surendra Sai as the Raja of Sambalpur. In the meantime, in anticipation of rebellion the British Government brought more troops to Sambalpur. The residents of Surendra Sai anticipated trouble and fled to the Khinda village where his brother Uddant was staying. On the night of 31st October, 1857 some prominent tribal Zamindars and Gauntias (village headmen) at this moment extended help to Surendra Sai. Thereafter the rebellion took a serious turn. The whole of the district of Sambalpur and a part of Bamra State were in flames. Surendra Sai made a small hillock near the village Kudapoli his headquarters from where he directed his operations and Sambalpur's road connection with Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Cuttack and Nagpur were for sometime cut off by the rebels. Meanwhile the insurgents obstructed the Dak Road to Bombay and burnt down two of the Dak Stations. The British authorities failed to control the situation as it was impracticable on the part of the troops to carry on operations against the rebels in the jungles. Two British Medical Officers, Dr. T. Moore and Dr. D. Hanson who were proceeding to Sambalpur to give medical aid to the soldiers were assaulted by the rebels at Jujomara. Dr. Moore was killed on 17th November, 1857. Dr. Hanson escaped with much difficulty by hiding himself in the Jungle and was rescued after two days by the British troops. He was brought back to Rampur.

Having received the report of the agonizing incident, Captain Leigh visited the spot where he and party were his attacked by the insurgents.

Fighting under the cover of the dense jungles, they killed a few and wounded several men of his detachment. This was the darkest hour for the British. On 30th December 1857, Captain Wood made a surprise attack on the rebels at Kudopali. A skirmish followed, in which 53 rebels including Chhabila Sai, the fifth brother of Surendra Sai were killed. But Surendra Sai managed to escape.

Meanwhile Major Bates reached Sambalpur on 7th January, 1858 and assumed overall command of the troops. He occupied the Jharghati Pass, situated at a distance of 14 miles north of Sambalpur on Ranchi-Sambalpur Road which was blocked by Uddant Sai, the brother of Surendra Sai. He next destroyed the village of Kolabira, which had been stronghold of rebels, and shortly afterwards the Gauntia and 13 of the most influential men gave themselves up. The estate was confiscated, and the Gauntia, convicted of treason, was hanged.

On February 12, 1858 Captain Woodbridge and Captain Wood besieged the fort of Paharasirgida, but the rebels shot Captain Woodbridge dead. Two days later, the naked and headless body of Woodbridge was recovered by Ensign Warlo. It seems that Surendra Sai avenged the death of his brother Chhabila Sai.

In March, 1858, Colonel Forster took charge of the Sambalpur district from Captain Leigh and adopted stern measures to put an end to the rebellion. The Rajas and Zamindars were severely dealt with. The Raja of Patna was fined 1,000 rupees as he was suspected of giving help and shelter to Ujjal Sai, a brother of Surendra Sai. In order to have the fine remitted, the Raja arrested Ujjal Sai and made him over to Colonel Forster who hanged him. In spite of all efforts of

Colonel Forster, Surendra Sai, the leader of the rebellion, still remained at large.

In April 1861, Major Impey was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur in place of Colonel Forster. He believed that only conciliatory measures would induce the rebels including the leader Surendra Sai to surrender. In September 24, 1861, amnesty was proclaimed for all except Surendra Sai, his brother Uddant Sai and his son Mitrabhanu. The next Proclamation, issued on 11th October, 1861 extended amnesty to these rebel leaders. The Proclamation attracted a large number of rebels who were tired of forest life and wanted to settle peacefully with their family and friends. Mitrabhanu, the only son of Surendra Sai surrendered to Major Impey on 7th January, 1862. On the 3rd May, 1862 Surendra Sai wrote to Impey that he was prepared to surrender if his claim to the throne be considered but Impey refused to accept his demand and assured him that he would be given liberal pension for that. Surendra Sai then asked for financial aid to pay the arrears to his soldiers. Major Impey at once sent him a sum of Rs.500/-. Thereafter he surrendered to Major Impey on the 16th May, 1862. Subsequently the amount of pension of Surendra Sai was recommended to be raised to Rs.1200/- per annum.

In March, 1863, when Sir Richard Temple, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces visited Sambalpur, some prominent persons of the district made a representation and that "final tranquility would never exist at Sambalpur till a Chauhan restored to the Gadi". But Mr Temple rejected this demand. It was suspected that Surendra Sai instigated the people to make such representation. The British officers put pressure on Major Impey for the arrest of Surendra Sai but he did not like to do so on flimsy ground.

Major Impey died at Sambalpur in December, 1863 and with his death the political situation underwent a vast change. His successor Cumberledge reversed Impey's policy. It was on 23rd January, 1864 that Surendra Sai, his son and close followers were arrested in his own house at Khinda. His brother Uddant Sai and Medini Sai were also captured from a distant place. Some trumped up charges were brought against them, and on the basis of such charges, the commissioner of Chhattishgarh sentenced them to deportation for life. The accused filed an appeal against the order of the Commissioner of Chhattishgarh in the Court of Judicial Commissioner, John Scarlet Campbell. After a proper investigation into the matter Campbell gave the verdict that the police had leveled such charges being unable to capture Kamal Singh and other dacoits.

In spite of the verdict of the Judicial Commissioner, Surendra Sai and six other prisoners were detained at Nagpur under Regulation III of 1818. They were kept in the Nagpur Jail and thereafter sent to the fort of Asirgarh. Surendra Sai's brother Medini Sai died in Asirgarh fort in 1876. Mitrabhanu, son of Surendra Sai was released. But Surendra Sai was kept in Jail till the end of his life. The details about the last days of Surendra Sai in the Asirgarh Jail are not known. He is, however, reported to have passed away on 28th February, 1884.

There were yet a few other veteran leaders of Sambalpur region whose significant role in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 cannot be ignored. Madha Singh the Zamindar of Ghens and his three sons namely Kunjal Singh, Hatee Singh and Bairi Singh took active part in fighting against British rule. One of the British Commanders named Woodbridge was killed in a battle. Their attack was so formidable that after the suppression of the Revolt in other parts of India, they concentrated their efforts and subdued them. Madha Singh was captured and hanged to death in 1858. In 1865, the three brothers were arrested. Of them Hatee Singh was sentenced to transportation for life and died in Sambalpur. The rebellion in Sambalpur was suppressed ruthlessly. Although the mutiny in India collapsed in 1858, fighting in Sambalpur continued up to 1862 and this was the last district in India where the members of rebellion took a considerably long time to cool down.

Thus, Orissa made significant contribution to the Great Revolt of 1857. The anticolonial uprisings under the leadership of its valiant sons became source of inspiration and patriotism to the succeeding generations of Indian people in their fight for freedom.

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Balabhadra Ghadai is the Principal of M.K. College, Khiching in the district of Mayurbhanj.

## Saheed Dibakar : The Pioneer of Ranapur Rebellion

*Braja Paikaray*

Many glorious chapters of Orissan history have not seen the light of the day. The deep patriotism and supreme sacrifice of the illustrious family of martyr Dibakar Parida can only be compared with that of revolutionary Chapekar brothers of Maharashtra. While Saheed Dibakar had spearheaded the Praja Rebellion of Ranapur, his Patriot brothers Ratnakar and Chakradhar (The Oriya Recruiting Officer of Azad Hind Fouj) and younger sister Indumati had followed his foot prints by involving themselves with the Indian freedom struggle and Ranapur Praja Revolt of 1937-38.

Bisoi Samanta Harihar Parida, the illustrious father of revolutionary Dibakar was the Sarbarakar (Revenue Officer) under the king of Ranapur Gadjat. He was brave, fearless and a self-respecting person. Though an officer under the king of Ranapur he was bold enough to file a criminal case in the royal court of Ranapur against the Daroga (Police Officer) Dinabandhu Mohanty for the latter's involvement with the illegal transportation of rice and paddy to Khurda Khas

mahal area for illegal gain. Due to the timely interference of the then Dewan of Ranapur State, the case had been compromised between Daroga Dinabandhu and Bisoi Samant Harihar. Patriot Dibakar had imbibed with the quality of boldness and uncompromising nature and to fight against injustice from his father.



After the sad demise of his father, young Dibakar took the burden of managing the vast landed property of his family. But for social prestige and dignity he accepted the job of Asst. Manager of Narendra Printing Press of the king. During the period of his service he wrote the astrology book "Jatalankar" and "Sri Sri Arteswar Dev Janan" Chautisha. Later on he had penned the revolutionary

poem "Jagiutha" and "Agei Chal" to infuse new spirit of revolution in the hearts and minds of the tortured subjects of Ranapur.

Witnessing a savage scene of "Sadak Bethi" Dibakar was deeply moved by the plight of the common subjects who were brutally flogged and

tortured by the Daroga of Ranapur. He was determined to end and abolish the evil system of Bethi (wage free labour), Veti (gift given to the ruler and his men under compulsion), Narabali (human sacrifice before Goddess Maninag Durga) and to restore the human dignity of common subjects. A determined Dibakar relinquished his job of Narendra Printing Press in which he had served for long seven years and spearheaded the Ranapur Praja Revolt with the active support of his friend Raghunath Mohanty. In course of time the agitation took gigantic form.

It was the fateful day of 5th January 1939. Thousands and thousands of common people of Ranapur had assembled in front of the royal palace. Being informed by the ruler and Raja of Ranapur the British Political Agent of Feudatory States of Orissa proceeded to Ranapur with military Jawans to suppress and quell the Praja movement. The British Political Agent Mr. R.L. Bezelgette to disperse the people fired and killed a person by his pistol. As a consequence, he was beaten to death by the angry mob.

Being revengeful, the British Government arrested the rebel leaders Dibakar and Raghunath. The historical trial of the young leaders began and the verdict was pronounced by the British Judge. Rebel leaders Dibakar and Raghunath were sentenced to death for the murder of Major Bazelgette. They were hanged in Bhagalpur Jail of Bihar in 1941 before sun rise.

Saheed Dibakar, who was born on 30th November 1911 in village Gadabanikilo of the then princely state of Ranapur, at present a part of Nayagada district of Orissa is no more with us. But he would be remembered for ever by all the freedom loving people of our country for his deep patriotism, dynamic leadership and uncompromising battle against oppression, injustice and wrong.

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Braja Paikaray lives at 342/B, Barabari (Jagamara), Po- Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar-30.

### **Buxi Jagabandhu**



**Leader of the Paik Rebellion of  
Khurdha - 1817**

## Swadeshi Movement in Orissa

*Prabodha Kumar Rath*

Indian National Congress Movement took a new turn with the Bengal Partition of 1905. It marked the beginning of Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. In due course it had its echo in Orissa. A mammoth public meeting was arranged in Cuttack on 20th August 1905 under the chairmanship of Janaki Nath Bose as a part of Partition agitation. Its main purpose was to propagate and popularize Swadeshi ideas. It was vitalized by Dharendra Nath Choudhury and Biswanath Kar. In his fiery speech Madhusudan Das gave a clarion call to the Oriyas to boycott foreign goods and to take a vow to use the indigenous goods. He toured the entire province to popularize the idea of Swadeshi which was greatly supported by student community. It spread like wild fire to many parts of Orissa. Crowded meetings were organized at Balasore Town Hall and in Barabati School, Balasore under the presidentship of Abdus Sobhan Khan and Fakir Mohan Senapati respectively. A meeting was arranged at Puri on 9th September 1905 under the presidentship of Harish Chandra Ghose. Students started signature

campaign and persuaded the shop keepers to sell only swadeshi goods. In village melas (Fair) Swadeshi idea was also propagated.

Swadeshi ideas also spread by Oriya news papers and periodicals like *Prajabandhu*, *Manorama* and *Sambalpur Hitaishini*, In his poems Fakir Mohan Senapati also highlighted the Swadeshi concept.

By the Puri Branch of Utkal Union Conference a Swadeshi Sabha was arranged on 20th October 1905 in the Jagannath Ballav math. Mahanta Bhagban Ramanuja Das, Aswini Kumar Banarjee and Phanindra Kumar justified the utility of indigenous goods and called for boycott of foreign goods. They called on the people to take a solemn pledge in the name of Lord Jagannath to use only Swadeshi goods. Bone-fire on foreign cloths was also organized on the Grand Road, Puri.

Rajas, Maharajas and the Zamindars of Orissa took keen interest in the Swadeshi enterprise. On the day of implementation of Bengal



partition that was on 16th October 1905, People in Cuttack, particularly the students arranged processions shouting "Bande Mataram". They ties Rakhi on each others wrists as a symbol of brotherhood and unity. This practice also followed in Balasore. During Puja swadeshi movement was geared up in Puri town with the arrival of students from Calcutta Students paraded the streets of Puri town with the arrival of students from Calcutta Students paraded the streets of Puri shouting Bande Mataram. There was also a door to door campaign to popularize Swadeshi goods.

They not only patronized local weaving Industries but at the same time used indigenous goods. Being recharged with Swadeshi ideas a

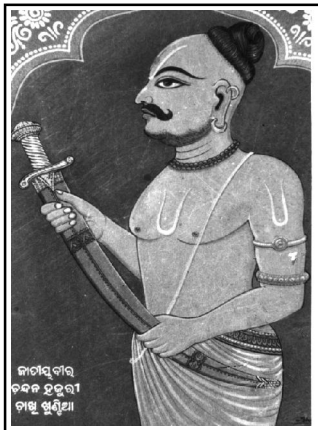
large number of delegates of Orissa attended the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress in 1906. To mark the anniversary of historic Swadeshi Sabha of Calcutta a Swadeshi Hat (exhibition) was also organized on 7th August 1907 in Cuttack Town Hall.

Govt. took strong actions against the students to suppress the agitation but failed to a great extent in suppressing it. After the Congress split of 1907 the Swadeshi movement lost its force.

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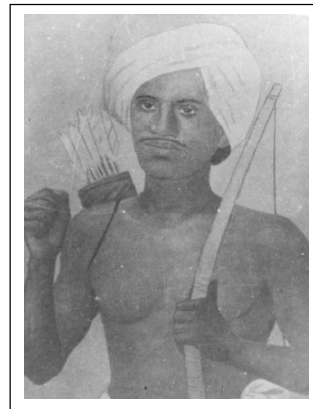
Prabodha Kumar Rath is a Lecturer in History, Kanas College, Kanas, Puri.

### Chandan Hajuri



**Freedom Fighter of 1st Indian War of Independence, 1857**

### Birsa Munda



**(Died in Ranchi jail in June 1900)**

## Mahtab's Approach to Orissa's Social Problems (1946-50)

*Dr. Hemanta Kumar Mohapatra*

The Second Congress Ministry in Orissa worked under the stewardship of Harekrishna Mahtab from 1946 to 1950. The time was very significant as the period was a seeding time for Orissa. A strong foundation for a prosperous Orissa was to be laid. The modern Orissa province had only ten years of life and she was in her tender infancy. Socio-economic and political life of Orissa was to be molded in a proper and purposeful way. India was going to be freed from the yoke of British rule very soon. The country was marching forward in the midst of communal turmoil and bloodshed. Social ills had jaundiced the outlook of the marginal Indians. The magnitude of Orissa's social problems was to be approached with care and caution. In this article efforts are made to assess the approach of Mahtab and his ministry to the then burning social issues especially concerning the backward classes.

The major portion of the population of Orissa was suffering from poverty and backwardness. The motto of a popular government, "the greatest good of the greatest number" could not be achieved when lakhs of her inhabitants were living in virtual poverty. The second Congress Ministry in Orissa realized that the Government should act as moral agent of the people and hence responsible for moral upliftment, the mental welfare and the spiritual and physical

health of the people. The ministry of Mahtab chalked out a time-bound programme for overall development of the people and implemented it with all sincerity.

### **Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe People, and Their Problems :**

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Orissa constituted one of the poorest section of its population. The problem of improving their conditions so as to bring them upto the level of higher section of the population was one which the government of Orissa determined to achieve. But, this was not an easy task to be accomplished. The magnitude of the problem can be known from the analysis of the demographic structure of Orissa. The combined population of the province of Orissa and the Princely States was about 13.7 million. Out of this Scheduled Castes numbered about 18.6 lakhs and the tribals were 35 lakhs.<sup>1</sup> Thus the welfare of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population would involve about 5.5 million people.

The regions of the province of Orissa which was inhabited predominantly by the Scheduled Tribes covered an area of about 20.869 square miles which was about two third of the province proper.<sup>2</sup> Such area were under direct control of the Governor General till 1949 and were called "Partially Excluded Areas".

But the Scheduled Caste population spread over the whole province and there was little scope for a territorial demarcation. They were living under tremendous psychological depression as they were subjected to various social discrimination which inflicted upon them serious social and economic miseries.

In the Princely States which were amalgamated with Orissa at a later stage the social standard of the people remained very low. The economy of this area was completely controlled by a few administrators and moneylender. Economic exploitation in the form of Bethi, Begari, Gothi and rural indebtedness was frequent. The little facilities which were available in health or educational schemes were confined to the administrative centres in these states and not within the reach of the backward class people, particularly the Scheduled Tribes, and the Scheduled Castes.

To add to these miseries there were severe social maladies like widespread addiction to country liquor and opium which used to ruin their morality. Due to economic miseries in certain tribes there developed crime mentality and such groups were categorized as 'Criminal Tribes' who were very often subjected to police harassment. Thus whereas the Scheduled Tribe population was socially secluded, economically depressed and was living in the midst of ignorance, poverty and bondage, the Scheduled Caste population was maintaining its existence with utter social inferiority, educational backwardness and economic bondage. Various social discrimination and disabilities such as untouchability and refusal of entry to the place of worship to certain section of people were prevalent. The Second Congress Ministry made several efforts to bring these downtrodden people to the mainstream by implementing various programmes and projects.

### **The Creation of the Backward Classes Welfare Department :**

In 1938 the Government of Orissa had appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of A.V. Thakkar for studying the various problems of the 'Partially Excluded Areas' and recommending special measures for the good of the Scheduled Tribes. This committee, otherwise known as the 'Partially Excluded Area Enquiry Committee' recommended in 1940 a special department called 'Backward Class Welfare Department' to be created to deal exclusively with the problems of the backward classes welfare. The Government of Orissa created a department in the same name on 4th November 1946. The Prime Minister, Harekrishna Mahtab himself remained in charge of that department from its inception till 12nd September, 1947. The functions of this department were not only to co-ordinate the activities of other department relating to backward class welfare but also to devise plans and necessary measures for bringing the backward classes to the level of the advanced section of the population.<sup>4</sup>

### **Rural Welfare Department**

In order to have an effective control and a satisfactory functioning of welfare activities it was decided that the welfare schemes hitherto administered under other departments should be transferred to the Backward Classes Welfare Department and it was to be renamed as Rural Welfare Department.<sup>5</sup> Its aim was to elevate the backward classes and take up measures of health, sanitation, medical aid and social welfare.

### **Economic Upliftment**

For the economic upliftment the following measures like provision of land including settlement and colonization, restoration of lands taken away from the Scheduled Tribes by the non-scheduled

ones, recovering from indebtedness, prevention of all exploitations, establishment of an organisation to sell cheaply and regularly essential articles, encouragement of cottage industries and imparting vocational education were to be adopted.<sup>6</sup>

The Agency Tracts Interests and Land Transfer Act, 1947 which prohibited alienation of lands of hill tribes to non-hillmen was not fully utilised to the benefit of illiterate hill tribes. In order to make it more useful the act was amended authorising the government officers to take action without waiting for an application by the affected person. Officers were appointed to enquire into restoration cases in Ganjam Agency. They took cognizance of 2121 cases by the end of January 1949 and got 2368 acres of forest land restored to 1330 tribals in 1667 cases upto the end of January 1949.<sup>7</sup> A vast area comprising of 5400 acres of forest land in Bonai State was demarcated for settlement of Bhuyan villagers. 600 acres of land had been leased in Dhenkanal to the Scheduled Tribes.<sup>8</sup>

Financial assistance was given to individuals to help them recover their family economy. 192 bullocks were supplied free of cost to the Bhuyans of Bamara and Bonai States. 3000 mounds of paddy were distributed in the Bhuyan areas of Pallahara. Rupee forty thousand as free grant of loan was given in Sundargarh district. Four spinning centers were opened in Keonjhar State and 1200 Charkhas were distributed free of cost.

Co-operative principals were applied to lessen exploitation. Multipurpose Co-operative Societies were opened to make available daily necessities of life at a reasonable cost. In Nuagaon Multi-purpose Co-operative Society there were 126 shareholders, out of which 42 were Scheduled Tribes and 84 were Scheduled Castes.<sup>10</sup> Government fair price shops were also opened for the hill tribes.

The Government made serious effort to dissuade the tribals from shifting cultivation and 'Poduchasa' and persuaded them to come back to regular cultivation. 'Bhuyanpirha Uplift Scheme' was started at Keonjhar and Pallahara States for settling of the Bhuyans for regular cultivation and for protecting the hill slopes from being denuded. In the Narasinghpur Colony Scheme, 800 acres of land was earmarked for development for the Bhuyans.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Freedom from Serfdom and other Social Evils:**

The Orissa Debt Bondage Abolition Regulations, 1948 came into operation vide Law Department Notification on 17th June 1948 to abolish the system of debt bondage.<sup>12</sup> Thus *Goti* (Bonded Labour) was abolished and actions were taken to abolish *bethi* and *begari*. The Orissa Money Lenders Bill, 1947 was adopted by the Orissa Legislative Assembly on 10th March, 1947.<sup>13</sup> It was another statutory step to check slavery.

The Government of Orissa enacted the Orissa Temple Entry Authorisation and identity Act of 1947 to enable the so called untouchables to enter the temples.<sup>14</sup> To make this mission more forceful this act was repealed and substituted by a more effective act called 'The Orissa Temple Entry Authorisation Act, 1948.<sup>15</sup> This act was made applicable to Orissa States with effect from 1st March, 1949.<sup>16</sup> Such enactments were followed by real implementations. In a historic event the great Jagannath temple was opened to Harijans. It was a 'death blow to the demon of untouchability'.<sup>17</sup> The temple of Sakhi Gopal was opened to the Harijans on 1st March, 1948.<sup>18</sup>

The Orissa Removal of Civil Disabilities Act, 1946 provided for the removal of civil disabilities among certain classes of Hindus.<sup>19</sup> In 1947 the Act was applied in the district of

Koraput and Ganjam Agency and in Sambalpur and Angul.<sup>20</sup>

### **Criminal Tribes Act :**

The Criminal Tribes Act was applied in the districts of Cuttack, Ganjam and Koraput where some particular tribes and gangs were branded as the criminals and were under constant surveillance of the police. This act had tremendous psychological impact on the members of the branded tribes and they were looked down upon as anti-social and professional thieves. This was a central act but the provincial government had the power not to exercise the provision of the act or even to pass a bill repealing this act.<sup>21</sup> The Partially Excluded Area Enquiry Committee recommended for the reformation of this act.<sup>22</sup> The Government of Orissa was not very much in agreement with this act of the British Government in India. So the police had been adopting very liberal attitude towards these tribes. Orders under Section 10 (1) of this Act were kept in abeyance in most of the case to encourage good conduct.<sup>23</sup> The question of starting settlements for reformation of criminal tribes was under consideration of the government. However this act could not be repealed till the end of 1949.<sup>24</sup>

### **Employment, Education and Public Health:**

To provide employment opportunities for the candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the government took up careful steps to provided them representation in the state public service.<sup>25</sup> It was than expected that the appointing authorities would carry out the instructions in a generous spirit and help in increasing the proportion of back ward communities in the service.<sup>26</sup> In the selection of candidates for studying outside the province preference was given to the candidates belonging to backward classes in Agency tracts.<sup>27</sup> In

selection of candidates for technical training preference was given to student belonging to back ward tribes in the Agency tracts.<sup>28</sup>

As regards to public health, besides the general measures, efforts were made to identify the diseases peculiar to the ethnic groups. At that time a major disease called yaws was prevalent among the Koyas of Koraput. The member of this primitive tribe were very much scared of this disease but they were not coming out to hospitals for treatment. A reward of Rs.2/- per patient and in 1948-49 a sum of Rs.10,000 was paid for the purpose.<sup>29</sup> Rupees 15,000 was spent for the treatment of venereal disease in each of the Agency areas of Ganjam and Koraput.<sup>30</sup> Anti-malarial tablets were distributed among the Backward Tribes of Mayurbhanj in 1948-49.<sup>31</sup>

### **Prohibition :**

There was frequent use of country liquor toddy and opium in Orissa. So measures were needed to impose restriction on the use of such toxicant. Gandhiji was fighting for Prohibition and the aim of the National Government was to introduce prohibition. The Orissa Prohibition Act, 1939 was a remarkable step in this direction. The Prime Minister of Orissa was in agreement with the view that in the interest of nation's morality and economic welfare of the people of the province it was the duty of the government to see that mass consumption of excisable articles be stopped immediately and all the rules relating to the sale of liquor were properly enforced.<sup>32</sup>

But financial considerations were standing on the way of complete implementation of prohibition in the province. Even Jawaharlal Nehru was not at all sentimental regarding the Prohibition because it would 'diminish revenue means.'<sup>33</sup> The excise tax constituted about one third of the provincial revenue and the Government of Orissa was getting more than a crore of rupees on this

account.<sup>34</sup> Mahatab had already made reference to Government of India saying that the Government of Orissa did not like to collect revenue from immoral sources. So he thought of introducing Prohibition provided the Government of India would give some more percentage on Income Tax to the province.<sup>35</sup> But the Central Government expressed its inability to do so in the present state of financial stringency.<sup>36</sup> Nehru was of the opinion that it was most unwise from every point of view to proceed with Prohibition.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the in different attitude of the Central Government the members of Orissa Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution of Miss Anne Katherine that the Orissa Prohibition Act should be brought into operation throughout the province of Orissa.<sup>38</sup>

The Government of Orissa had adopted the policy of gradual introduction of Prohibition of drinks and drugs. In order to achieve the desired object the Bihar and Orissa Excise Act, 1915 was amended.<sup>39</sup> Foreign liquor, country liquor and toddy were prohibited in sixteen police stations in the district of Cuttack.<sup>40</sup> The prohibition was reported to be successful and there was practically no illicit tapping of toddy or manufacture of liquor. This Prohibition was then extended to some selected areas of the districts of Puri and Balasore from 1, April 1984.<sup>41</sup>

In general the government had taken the following measures in relation to the prohibition of drinks.<sup>42</sup> Firstly it was decided to convert the outstill system into distillery system in the entire district of Sambalpur with effect from 1st April 1948. Strict measures were taken up to stop 'Kuchni' sale of liquor i.e. illicit sale by hawking and there was substantial improvement in the situation. Secondly the hour of sale and amount of possession of country liquor were curtailed and off sales in the municipal areas were prohibited.

Thirdly, the number of country spirit shops in the district of Ganjam was reduced. Fourthly in the district of Koraput the price of liquor had increased during 1947-48 and from the succeeding year the duty would be raised through out the province. Lastly opening of new excise shops without the permission of government was prohibited.

While partial and gradual prohibition was introduced in case of drinks, total prohibition of opium smoking was introduced. The Orissa Opium Smoking Act, 1947 was enacted giving the existing addicts one year time from July, 1947 to give up the habit.<sup>43</sup> The government also took the following measures relating to the prohibition of opium smoking.<sup>44</sup> The limit of individual possession of opium was reduced to one tola throughout the province. Steps were taken to prepare a register of opium addicts in the province. Rationing of opium in the province was to be effective from 1st April 1949. In the mean time supply of opium to shops was restricted. The Orissa Government was waiting for the decision of the All India Narcotic Board, set-up by the Government of India, to lay down a common policy to be adopted by all provinces with regard to opium eating. The price of opium had been raised from Rupees 3/- to 4-8-0 per tola in 1947-48 and it was further raised to Rupees 5/- per tola effective from 1st April, 1949. Lastly the price of Bhang was uniformly raised to 12 annas in South Orissa as increase in the consumption of the drug was noticed during the year 1947-48. This rise of price was to be given effect from 1st April, 1948.

Thus the Second Congress Ministry under the premiership of Mahatab took up the question with earnest spirit and was able to introduce prohibition in a moderate scale in spite of its various handicaps and compulsions.

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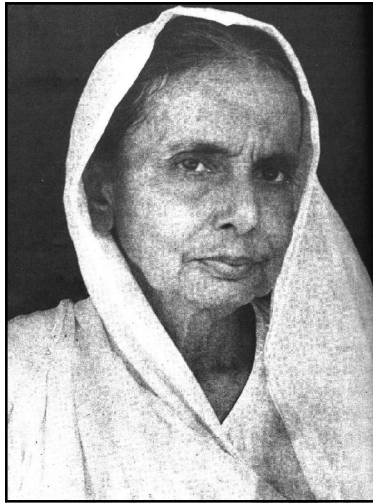
Hemanta Kumar Mohapatra is a Reader in History in B.J.B. (Autonomous) College, Bhubaneswar-751014.

## Rama Devi : An Epitome of Women Emancipation

*Prabhukalyan Mohapatra*

Rama Devi, a freedom fighter of Orissa, became a legend during her lifetime. She is accepted as a "lady of lamp" and considered as the symbol of women's pride for her outstanding contribution to the contemporary society. Her selfless sacrifice for the uplift of the society and generosity for hapless destitute is inexplicable. She as an organiser, worker, campaigner, speaker, writer and inspirer of common people is quite uncommon.

Being the niece of Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das, the father of modern Orissa and influenced by Swadeshi movement from the childhood, she developed an innate feeling of public spirit much before her marriage. Her father was Gopal Ballav Das, the then Deputy Magistrate and her mother was Basanti Manjaree. Rama Devi was born at Satyabhamapur village of Cuttack district on 3rd December 1899. She married to Gopabandhu Choudhury, who resigned from the post of Deputy Magistrate to plunge into the freedom movement. Soon after Gopabandhu relinquished government service, she wholeheartedly joined the nationalist activities.



In 1921, Rama Devi participated in the Khadi movement along with her husband and became a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. She came in direct contact with Gandhiji during his first visit to Orissa on 23rd March 1921.

Thereafter she attended Gaya Session of Indian National Congress (1922), Calcutta Session of National Congress (1928) and emerged as a leader during Salt Satyagraha. In 1928 Alakashram was set up, on the bank of river Alaka, to look after the diseased persons under the leadership of Rama Devi. At the Lahore Session (1930) Congress resolved to launch Mass Civil Disobedience and it was decided to observe 26th January 1931 as the first

Independence Day. The new slogan "Purna Swaraj" reverberated in different parts of Orissa and public meetings were organised to garner mass support under the leadership of Rama Devi, Gopabandhu Choudhury and Acharya Harihar. National flag was hoisted atop Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar on the said day for which Rama Devi along with some prominent congress leaders were arrested by the Police.



Gandhi resolved to launch Civil Disobedience Movement by breaking salt law at Dandi. Hence Utkal Provincial Congress Committee selected Inchudi on the Balasore coast and Kujanga on Cuttack coast as the site for salt collection. Rama Devi alongwith Malati Devi, Kiranbala Sen organised women's meetings to ensure better participation in the movement. The first batch of women Satyagraha reached Inchudi on 20th April 1930 defying government order. Rama Devi with some women leaders went from house to house to mobilize support of the rural women in favour of the movement. The response was highly successful. Rural women plunged into the Salt Satyagrah ignoring their family resistance. In Kujanga of the then Cuttack district, women Satyagrahis under the leadership of Rama Devi and Bhagyabati Pata Mohadei (Queen of Kujanga) came out of their houses with baskets and manufactured salt openly without any fear. Both Inchudi and Kujanga are two important places of Orissa where women Satyagrahis joined the salt movement in in many numbers under the leadership of Rama Devi.

Rama Devi was arrested during salt movement alongwith other prominent leaders. Undaunted by this arrest, Satyagrahis spread the message of the movement to different parts of Orissa like Basta, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kujanga, Astaranga and Chilika. Orissa was pulsated with new life during this historic phase of National Movement.

Despite grilling torture by the Police, a batch of young girl students joined the Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Rama Devi. They picketed in front of the government offices, wine and opium shops, boycotted British goods. Most of the students of Jajpur, Kendrapada, Pattamundai, Dharamsala,

Mayurbhanj area gave up their studies and they took part in the freedom movement. By vehemently opposing un-touchability, she emerged as an eminent social worker. She set up an Ashram at Bari and urged the people to love the Harijans as human beings. Even she lived in their huts, washed their clothes, swept their floors and also taught their children. She also worked for the extinction of communalism, which often sparked off tension among Hindus and Muslims. Following the footsteps of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, she too visited flood and drought affected people of the State.

Bhoodan Movement had a great impact on Rama Devi's life. After Independence she devoted herself completely for the cause of Bhoodan. She accompanied Vinovaji during the four month twenty-two days long historic "Bhoodan Yatra" in Orissa. During the march she organised a number of meetings where she told the landlords to treat Harijans and landless poor as their sons. Sometimes she got a whole village, which were distributed among the landless.

Rama Devi was also a good writer. "Jeevan Pathe" (On the path of life) the autobiography of this luminary is a rare piece of art. She laid much emphasis on education, emancipation and empowerment of women. She was very fond of children too. Rama Devi rose to stature and became a legend during her lifetime.

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Prabhukalyan Mohapatra is a freelance journalist, who lives at Qr. No.-VR-3/2, Unit-III, Bhubaneswar.

## Provincial Legislature in Pre-Independence Era

*Dr. Janmejy Choudhury*

In accordance with the provisions of the Act of 1935, preparations were held for the provincial autonomy. In early 1937, the general election to the provincial legislatures was fixed throughout the country. Though unhappy with the provisions of the Act of 1935, the Indian National Congress decided to contest the election to provincial legislatures. Pandit Nilakantha Das shouldered the responsibilities of conducting the election campaign in Orissa which began in September 1936. The Congress election campaign in Orissa became high moral boost by the arrival of Jawaharlal Nehru on 10 November 1936 who addressed gatherings at a number of places like Salepur, Chandol, Bahugram, Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Biridi, Cuttack, Puri and Berhampur. Nehru explained the Congress programme and appealed to the people to strengthen the hands of the Congress in their fight for Swaraj. He also emphasized that the misery and poverty of the masses would not be removed unless the people achieved Swaraj.<sup>1</sup>

By 1936, a powerful section of the Congress party in Orissa belonged to the so-called 'Socialist Group'. They had formed the Utkal Provincial Kisan Sangha to champion the cause of peasants in Orissa. In order to get full support of the Kisan leaders and their supporters in the election to the legislature, the Utkal Provincial

Congress Committee decided in October 1936 to accept their programmes as the part of Congress manifesto.<sup>2</sup> Besides the Congress, two other political parties i.e. the Orissa Nationalist Party and the United Party were also very active in the province whose goal was to defeat the Congress in order to safeguard their vested interests. The election to the Orissa Legislative Assembly started from 18 January 1937 and continued for six days. Out of 60 seats in the Assembly 56 members were to be directly elected by the people and 4 members to be nominated by the Governor of the province. The election was based on a very narrow franchise and only five to six lakhs of voters exercised their right to vote out of the total population of 82 lakhs. The Congress Party which had set up 37 candidates won as many as 36 seats. Such a resounding victory of the Congress in Orissa was hailed throughout the country and both Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Indian National Congress and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board, congratulated the people and party workers in Orissa.<sup>3</sup> Soon after the general election to the provincial legislatures was completed the problem of acceptance of office was raised in the country. Because British authorities had decided to introduce the Provincial autonomy as provided in

the Government of India Act, 1935, from 1st April 1937. This problem was debated in the meeting of the AICC held at Delhi on 17-18 March 1937. After prolonged discussions, the decision was taken in favour of the acceptance of office on certain conditions. In the meantime, the newly elected Congress members of the Orissa Legislative Assembly met at Cuttack to elect their office bearers. Thirty two legislators attended the meeting and they unanimously elected Biswanath Das as their leader.

In accordance with All India Congress Committee resolution, Biswanath Das, the Congress leader of the legislature party in Orissa, met the Governor of the province on the 24 March 1937. The latter formally invited him to form the Ministry, but Biswanath Das declined to accept the offer unless "His Excellency agreed to give him an assurance that he would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of Ministers in regard to constitutional activities." So Biswanath Das rejected the offer on 28 March 1937.<sup>4</sup> After the breakdown of the negotiations with the Congress on 28 March 1937, the Governor succeeded in persuading the Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deo of Parlakhemundi to form a ministry in Orissa on 1st April 1937.<sup>5</sup> It was a minority ministry consisting of three members and was sworn in on that day at Cuttack. He became the Prime Minister of Orissa.

There was widespread resentment in Orissa against the new ministry. The Congress organised mass meetings and hartals throughout the province on 1st April 1937 and criticised the inauguration of provincial autonomy in an unconstitutional way.<sup>6</sup> The Congress later on made repeated demand to the Governor to summon the Orissa Legislative Assembly so as to embarrass the ministry. It could have been easily

thrown out by a vote of no confidence in the legislature. However, within a few months the Congress High Command made an understanding with the Governor-General for acceptance of office and the latter promised "harmonious co-operation with the Congress Ministeries on the provinces. The working committee then permitted the Congress leaders in the provinces to form ministries. Accordingly the interim ministry in Orissa resigned on 13 July and on the next day Biswanath Das, the leader of the Congress Legislature Party in Orissa, met the Governor and discussed with him about the formation of the Congress Ministry in Orissa.<sup>7</sup> The first Congress Ministry in Orissa took the oath of office and secrecy on 19 July 1937. The ministry continued in office till 4 November 1939, i.e., it remained in power for about two years and four months.<sup>8</sup>

The Congress ministry, following the policy of the party and ideals of Gandhiji, adopted several measures for social reforms in the province. Special emphasis was given on the programmes like the removal of untouchability and enforcement of prohibition. No legal enactment was made for the removal of untouchability, but the government made financial provisions for education of the Harijan boys by providing different facilities. Gandhiji made an attempt in 1938 to convince the orthodox Hindus to open the doors of their temples to the harijans.<sup>9</sup> Another important social programme of the Congress ministry was to introduce prohibition in the province. By the Act of 1935, excise was made a provincial subject, and that opportunity was utilized by the Congress to introduce a new excise policy aiming at total prohibition in near future. Two bills were passed in the Assembly during the tenure of the first Congress Ministry to help the programmes of prohibition. The first bill, the Opium (Orissa Amendment) Bill, 1939 was adopted in the House without much discussion

on 25 February 1939. It empowered the excise officers to investigate the offences coming under the cognizance of the Opium Act. Such an enactment was needed for effective supervision of the prohibition scheme in the district of Balasore.<sup>10</sup> Another comprehensive prohibition bill, the Orissa Prohibition Bill, 1939 was piloted in the House. Another laudable attempt of the Congress ministry was to streamline the management of the Hindu religions endowments in 1938 and it was finally adopted in the House in February 1939.<sup>11</sup> It marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the management of religious endowments in the province. Some of its important provisions were the appointment of a single Commissioner of endowments for the whole province and diversion of the extra funds of the endowment to secular purposes especially for educational programmes, etc. The Congress ministry introduced also a new system of primary education on an experimental basis. That was known as the basic system of education. It was meant to encourage the spirit of self-help in young children and to remove their dislike for manual labour.<sup>12</sup> Other experiment of the Congress Ministry in the educational sphere was the campaign for removal of illiteracy.<sup>13</sup>

The regional development programme of the Congress Ministry was the introduction of local self-government in Sambalpur. Though it was transferred to Orissa Division in 1905, the real local self-Government had not been introduced in the district. Therefore, the Sambalpur Local Self-Government Bill, 1939 was adopted in the House on 8 September 1939 so as to bring it on the same line as the coastal districts of Orissa. Bodhran Dube, the Minister for Local Self-Government, assured the House to prepare a consolidated local Self-Government bill for the whole province by co-ordinating various local board laws prevalent in different parts of the province.<sup>14</sup>

The first political resolution adopted in the House on 22 September 1937 was against the Act of 1935 itself. It wanted to rescind the Government of India Act, 1935 and demanded that the Constitution be made by the people of India themselves on the basis of adult suffrage and through a Constituent Assembly. The next resolution was against the scheme of Federation as laid down in the Government of India Act, 1935. It was adopted on 29 March 1938 by the House.<sup>15</sup> Another political victory of the Congress ministry was relating to the implementation of the princes protection Act. The Governor of Orissa was willing to extend all kinds of help to the rulers for suppression of the movement, but the Congress Ministry decided otherwise. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the power to enforce the princes protection Act was transferred to the provincial governments.<sup>16</sup>

The declaration of war against Hitler on 3 September 1939 by England and France led to the world War II. As a part of the British Empire, India became a belligerent Country, but her involvement in the World War II was without any popular consent. The Congress which had shouldered the responsibility in administering several provinces was also not consulted. Naturally the issue became a serious Constitutional and national problem and ultimately the Congress decided to quit office in the provinces. Before submitting his resignation, Biswanath Das moved a long resolution in the Assembly on 3 November 1939.<sup>17</sup> It protected against the declaration of the British Government involving India in the War without the consent of the Indian people and also against the principle of provincial autonomy. The war aims of the British, it was argued, should be applicable to India. Immediate declaration of Independence was demanded with the right to frame the Constitution for the country so that Indians would be able to help and co-operate

fully with the war efforts of British Government. Finally, the resolution wanted that all war measures in the province should be undertaken with the consent of the provincial Government. The debate continued for two days and the resolution was accepted by the House on 4 November. Immediately after its acceptance, Biswanath Das announced the resignation of his ministry. The Assembly was prorogued.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the tenure of the first Congress Ministry, which had continued in office from 17 July 1937, came to an end. The first phase of experiments in the working of provincial autonomy was over. The holocaust of the World War II clouded the Indian horizon.

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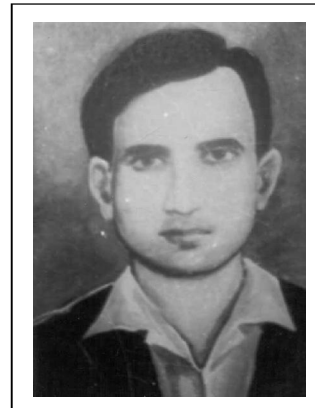
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Dr. Janmejaya Choudhury is a Lecturer in History, Sri Jagannath College, Kaipadar, Khurda.



**Baji Rout**  
(Shot dead on 11.10.1938)



**Raghunath Mohanty**  
(18.07.1910 - 04.04.1941 hanged)

## Azad Hind Fauj : A Saga of Netaji

*Prof. Jagannath Mohanty*

"I have said that today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation. But this honour carries with it a corresponding responsibility and I am deeply conscious of it. I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrows and in joy, in suffering and in victory. For the present, I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and deaths. But if you follow me in life and in death - as I am confident you will - I shall lead you to victory and freedom. It does not matter who among us will live to see India free. It is enough that India shall be free and that we shall give our all to make her free. May God now bless our army and grant us victory in the coming fight. Inquilab Zindabad ! Azad Hind Zindabad !"

This was the concluding remarks of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on the 5th July, 1943 at Singapore after taking over the charge of President of Indian Independence League from



Rash Behari Bose on July 4, the previous day. The speech he delivered that day was in fact one of his greatest speeches which overwhelmed the entire contingents of Indian National Army (INA) gathered there under the scorching tropical sun of Singapore. There was a rally of 13,000 men drawn from the people of South-East Asian countries. Then Netaji toured in Thailand, Malay, Burma, Indo-China and some other countries and inspired the civilians to join the army and mobilised public opinion for recruitment of soldiers, augmenting resources and establishing new branches of INA. He promised the people that he would open the second war of Independence and set up a provisional Government of Free India under whose banner three million Indians of South-East Asia would fight the enemy. He made a clarion call

to all Indians - Karo sab nichhabar bano sab fakir - sacrifice all and be penniless mendicants for the sake of the motherland.

Under blazing sun and heavy rains Netaji used to deliver his fiery speeches and to appeal

the masses to make donations, join the INA and to give arms whatever they had. After the speech, his garlands were put to auction, each garland fetching such a fabulous amount as ten or twenty thousand dollars at that time and this money was earmarked as the fund of the Provisional Government. People also vied with one another to hand over donations to Netaji personally.<sup>2</sup>

Netaji favourably influenced the Governments of Germany and Japan and enlisted their support for the fight for freedom of India. During World War II Burma was captured by Japan and British armies were defeated and INA marched up to Imphal of Manipur through dense forests and hills, incessant rains and inclement weather. The patriotic slogan "Delhi Chalo" (March to Delhi) reverberated the vast areas once occupied by the British.

The tide of the Second World War turned against Japan and Allies tried to recover Burma. Tokyo felt the need to appease the Burmese people in order that they might help in the country's defence against the Allied invasion. On August 1, 1943 power was transferred to Burmese hands and Independence though doubted to be shortlived, was celebrated in Burma. As the Guest of Honour of the ceremony, Netaji praised Japan profusely and eulogised Burmese and Indian people living there. He said, "The Independence of Burma in this momentous crisis has a two-fold significance for us. It shows in the first place, what a nation can achieve if it knows how to seize an opportunity which history has offered. Secondly, just as the conquest of India supplied the British with jumping off the ground for their attack on Burma in the nineteenth century, similarly, the emancipation of Burma has supplied the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia with a spring board for its attack on Britain's Army of occupation in India during the twentieth Century..."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Ba Maw became the head of Independent Burma and declared war against Britain and the USA. Netaji required his help in providing bases of military operation against the occupying force in India and getting seat for his provisional Government of Free India then under contemplation in Rangoon so as to be close to his military target. But Japanese historians have written that Dr. Ba Maw was unwilling to oblige him on two grounds : (i) there was a feeling of animosity among the Burmese towards the Indians because the latter were occupying a predominant position in Burma everywhere and (ii) the Azad Hind Movement which was being backed by affluent Indians in South-East Asia might influence the economy of Burma greatly. But Ba Maw mentioned in his memoirs, inter alia, "I openly welcomed him (Netaji); and so on January 6, 1944 and the days following. Netaji Bose and his army arrived in Burma and remained there till the final defeat of the Japanese in 1945."<sup>4</sup>

It was, however, the fact that Netaji, after months of negotiations with Japanese Government for support could get the concessions with the assurance that the provisional Government or its army would never interfere in the internal affairs of Burma. He then moved to Bangkok on August 4 to meet the Thai Prime Minister and succeeded to secure his consent to the passing of the INA troops to Burma through Thailand. Then he ran to Saigon to meet the Japanese army officers for discussing some strategic military issues. Netaji then returned to Singapore on August 14 and spoke at giant rally of Indians about the "Quit India" movement and renamed INA as Azad Hind Fauj or the Army of Free India. The number of soldiers rose to 30,000 and it arranged to recruit 20,000 more with Japanese support, particularly from among the British Army who were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese.

Netaji also raised a women's regiment as a part of the Azad Hind Fauj" who will wield the sword as the brave Rani of Jhansi wielded in India's First War of Independence in 1857."

Netaji declared the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the names of the Cabinet members who signed the proclamation. Bose was the Head of the State, Prime Minister and Minister for War, Foreign Affairs and Supreme Commander of the INA, others were Capt. Miss Lakshmi, Women's Organisation, S.A. Ayer, publicity and Propaganda, Lt. Col. A.C. Chatterjee, Finance, Lt. Col. Aziz Ahmed, Lt. Col. NS Bhagat, Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz and so on. The Proclamation of the provisional Government of Azad Hind 1943 provided fillip to the freedom struggle and it claimed and allegiance of every Indian irrespective of caste or creed and all were to be treated as equals with equal rights in all respects. It ended with a stirring appeal :

"In the name of God, in the name of by gone generations who have wielded the Indian people into one nation and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice - we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and strike for India's Freedom. We call upon them to launch the final struggle against the British and all their allies in India and to prosecute that struggle with valour and perseverance and with full faith in Final Victory - until the enemy is expelled from Indian soil and the Indian people are once again a Free Nation."<sup>5</sup>

Then the ceremony of taking the Oath of Allegiance took place in an emotionally charged atmosphere. Amidst cheers, Netaji read out the oath, "In the name of God, I take this sacred Oath

that to liberate India and 38 crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life ...." His voice failed and he wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. He tried to overcome his emotions and with difficulty resumed in a steady voice "I shall always remain a servant of India and look after the welfare of 38 crores of Indian brothers and sisters. This shall be for me my highest duty. Even after winning freedom I will always be prepared to shed the last drop of my blood for the preservation of India's freedom."<sup>6</sup> Then other members of the Provisional Government took holy oath to liberate India and to remain absolutely faithful to their leader Netaji. Actually, these martyrs remained committed to this oath till the end of their life and their immortal life will remain an eternal source of inspiration and enlightenment to all.

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Prof. Jagannath Mohanty lives at 2935, Gouri Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751002.



## Kamal Singh Dau - the Martyr

*Dr. Jayanta Kumar Sahu*

History is silent about the sacrifice made by the two freedom fighters of Western Orissa namely Balabhadra Singh Dau and Kamal Singh Dau. They were born in Lakhanpur, a tiny fort on the foot-hills of the Barapahar during the bloody struggle to make India free from the British colonial rule.

Historically speaking, Surendra Sai was one of the most famous rebel leaders of India during British regime. One of his close confident Kamal Singh Dau was the son of Balabhadra Singh, the Zamindar of Lakhanpur in Bargarh District. He organized and led the Gond and Binjhal clans to lodge Guerrilla/Gorilla warfare with the British. His father Balabhadra Singh was a die-hard opponent of the British colonial rule. He was the most prominent among the rebels who protested against the suppression of the tribal people and the anti-peasant policies during the British Raj. He joined Surendra Sai in his struggle against the British when Sai was denied the throne of Sambalpur in the year 1827. Thus, the seeds of rebellion germinated and a popular uprising sprouted against foreign rule. Kamal Singh Dau further precipitated this. He organised the tribal people under the active guidance of his father and Surendra Sai. He formed a dreadful and formidable gorilla force, positioned them at strategic points at Debrigarh and Barapahar in the terrains of Barapahar and Gandmaru hill near Alekhpur village. He armed them with traditional arms and armaments and fought many battles

against the British. Although some portions of these *ghats* have been demolished, the major parts remain unscratched.

The Goutias of forty-two Praganas coming under Lakhanpur Zamindari were also the bitter opponents of British rule. They were occasionally providing financial assistance as well as logistic support to Balabhadra Singh and his soldiers. It was during that time the Britishers dethroned Mohan Kumari and Narayana Singh of Barpali Zamindari clan was made the Raja of Sambalpur ignoring the claim of Surendra Sai. Thus, the British rulers indirectly controlled Sambalpur and partially succeeded in suppressing the uprising against them. Resultantly, Surendra Sai organized the Zamindars of Bodasambar, Ghens, Lakhanpur, Sonapur, Bamanda and Rairakhol against the British and sphereheaded the armed rebellion.

The revolt, which Surendra Sai and Kamal Singh started in the year 1827 with the help of Gond and Binjhal clans, became more focused, sharp, and violent. With Kamal Singh, joining the rebellion Balabhadra Singh had his first encounter with the British on 8 January 1831. Subedar Gurudayal Tiwari and Jamadar Gangadhar Mishra of Ramgarh battalion led the British force. Under Jamadar Wilso more than a hundred fighters attacked the British camp, burnt it to ashes, and returned to Debrigarh. Subsequently in 1837, Balabhadra Singh became a victim of treachery and his hideout was disclosed to the king of

Sambalpur by Pahadu Gond a hench-man of the Rampur Zamindar and was attacked. He fell to the combined force of Narayan Singh and the Zamindars of Rampur and Barpali and was killed in Debrigarh while fighting. However, Surendra Sai though severely wounded, escaped. The three sons of the slain king, Kamal Singh, Khageswar Singh and Neelambar Singh swore in the name of their father for revenge and joined the Ghens Zamindar Madho Singh and his sons Hati Singh and Kunjal Singh.

The combined force of Kamal Singh and Kunjal Singh attacked the British in 1864. Kunjal Singh was captured and thereafter Kamal Singh alone continued the struggle and repeatedly attacked the British camps. The Gond leaders Bandyai Rai and Mahapatra Rai then assisted him. It is believed that the British Commissioner V. S. Kokborn requisitioned an army contingent from the Madras presidency to crush the rebellion and capture Kamal Singh. Some fighters of Madho Singh and Kamal Singh were stationed at Singhora Ghat to stop the entry of the British force to Sambalpur. The British army captured Singhora Ghat in 1858 and subsequently took control of the Zamindari of Lakhanpur, Kharsal, Kolabira and Loisingha. Another rebel leader Madhu Gountia was captured and convicted for attacking the British and killing a British doctor at Jujumura of Rairakhol. Chhabila Sai, the fifth brother of Surendra Sai and many other rebel leaders were killed.

The British administration merged Sambalpur with Madhya Pradesh ignoring huge protest by the common people. The violent protest was ruthlessly suppressed and the people were subject to barbarous cruelty. Surendra Sai's ancestral village Khinda was burnt and people were killed indiscriminately. The rebels could not organize themselves, starved, and got demoralized. This forced Dhruba and Balabhadra

Sai, the two brothers of Surendra Sai and Khageswar Singh Dau to surrender. Kamal Singh was cornered, dejected and tired. A treacherous man of Bardol village while resting under a tree killed him. The Britishers were earlier declared a reward of rupees two thousand for his head. The place where he was killed is known as Mudkati in memory of this incident. It is written in some journals that the Britishers hanged his head-less body on a tree at Lakhanpur to create a sense of terror among the people. However, the famous historian Dr Naveen Kumar Sahu had a different version regarding the death of Kamal Singh. In his book published by the Department of Culture, Government of Orissa, it is mentioned that the capture of Kamal Singh was the handiwork of a treacherous king of Sarangarh for the reward money. Dr Sahu wrote that after his capture, Kamal Singh was sent to Asurgarh prison where he breathed his last like Surendra Sai.

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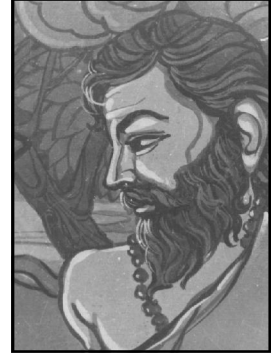
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Dr. Jayanta Kumar Sahu is a Lecturer in Botany Trust Fund College, Bargarh - 768028.

## Jayi Rajguru : The Path Finder of Freedom Movement of India

*Gopal Krishna Das*



Jayi Rajguru was a stalwart warrior, a remarkable hero, a radiant personality, first and foremost martyr of this land. He fought against mighty Britishers in the pre-nationalist age as a great revolutionary patriot. His leadership was a vital prime factor in the freedom struggle. He rebelled first against British Raj opposing their oppressive policies and political hypocrisy. He was one of the greatest fighters who fought bravely for liberation of motherland from powerful imperial force. He sacrificed his life for liberating the motherland, leaving behind a grand legacy of patriotism.

In the pre-nationalist age nowhere in India on the regional level, a Freedom Movement was ever so carefully planned and so vigorously launched as was manifested in the shape of 1804-1825 Paik Rebellion of Orissa under the able command of Jayi Rajguru and Baxi Jagabandhu, the commander in chief of Khurda Kingdom. Though regional, it was the first Indian Independence Movement with true symptoms of revolutionary character. In comparison with that of 1857 Mutiny of India, the revolution on the Khurda soil of Orissa was better organized with significant leadership and well thought plan. Jayi Rajguru shows as a unparalleled and unchallenged hero in the history of India about more than five decades prior to the Indian war of Independence of 1857.

A nationalist and a martyr of first order still glows in public reminiscence. Jay Krishna

Mohapatra, popularly known as Jayi Rajguru was the Royal priest or the Rajguru of the Gajapati Maharaja of Khurda kingdom from 1780 to 1805 A.D. He was born in a respectable 'Kausik Bajapeyi' Brahmin family of the Village Bira Harekrishnapur Sasna, closed to Puri on the auspicious day and Anlanavami i.e. the 24th day of Kartika in the year 1739. His father Chanda Rajguru was the Royal priest of Gajapati Bira Kishore Deb. Haramani Devi was his mother. His grand father Gadadhar Rajguru was well versed in Sastras and literature who composed eighteen valuable books in Oriya and Sanskrit language.

Jayi Krishna has acquired mastery over Sanskrit literature, ethics and having deep knowledge in the field of spiritualism like his illustrious predecessors. He was a bachelor and sincere devotee of Goddess Barunai, the guardian deity of Khurda fort. He earned reputation as a Tantrik Sadhak. Besides this he was also efficient in politics, administration and fully conversant with warfare.

Jayi Krishna adorned the throne of the Rajguru and took over the charge during the rule of the king Dibyasingh Deb in the year 1780 at the age of 41. Jayi Krishna was acting as the regent of the guardian of minor-Raja Mukundadev-II. He was managing the affairs of the state on behalf of the Raja. He was next in power to the king and officiated of his (Raja) on all occasions and situations. He exercised enough power and influence in the State administration as the 'Bebarta' during the minority of Raja.

The Raja of Khurda was the greatest chieftain in this part of the country. The most loyal people of Khurda attributed godhead to their most beloved king from the time of Gajapati Ramachandra Deva who found Khurda Kingdom in the year 1568 A.D. While making preparation for the occupation of Orissa proper the British authorities were naturally anxious for negotiation with him. They came forward to sign a treaty with the Raja thinking that the spread of British empire would be incomplete without the kingdom of Khurda.

During the Maratha rule, a valuable part of Khurda estate including four Praganas such as Lembai, Rahanga, Serai and Chabiskuda with Purusottama Khetra, the seat of Lord Jagannath were mortgaged to Maratha Subedhar by Raja Birakishore Dev in 1760 A.D. They also deprived of his hereditary rights over the temple of Lord Jagannath. In the meantime Lieutenant Colonel George Harcourt, in charge of Ganjam forces requested the Raja Mukunda Deb to allow the Company troops and artillery to pass through the territories of Khurda and sent three thousand soldiers as military assistance to expel Maratha from Cuttack. Mukunda Dev was a mere boy at that time and the administration of his estate was carried by Jayi Rajguru.

In order to get back the lost areas and the right over Jagannath temple, King had agreed with the proposals of Britishers to bring back the past glory. Jayi Rajguru could realize very clearly the motive of the British authority. In such critical juncture, he warned the young king of the conspiracy and the danger of having an alliance with Britishers and was against granting them a safe passage through the estate of Khurda. For recovering the lost Praganas king gave permission subject to the following conditions :

1. The British company would pay one lakh rupees to the king.

2. The four Praganas taken by the Marathas should be returned back to the king.

3. Rights over the temple of Jagannath.

The most cunning diplomat Col. Harcourt accepted this proposal finding no other way out. According to a letter was sent to Raja through a Vakeel<sup>1</sup> after the occupation of Barabati fort at Cuttack. Accordingly ten thousand rupees out of the promised one lakh of rupees was paid to Mukundadeb.<sup>2</sup>

The Britisher had no desire to oblige the king for any territorial concession<sup>3</sup> Wellesley had argued that the whole of Cuttack was absolutely necessary for the direct communication between Cuttack and Madras.

Jayi Rajguru who had doubt on the integrity of the company administration, proceeded to Cuttack with two thousand armed soldiers. He submitted a petition to Harcourt and requested him to consider the matter of restoration of the praganas and the reduction of the annual *peshkash* to the Company. He was disappointed when Harcourt plainly told him that not an inch of land could be given up. Rajguru was given a sum of forty thousand rupees.<sup>5</sup> The remainder was promised to be paid rupees fifty thousand at some future date.<sup>6</sup>

After returning from Cuttack Rajguru told the Raja about the grave situation and reminded him the advice at the beginning. The Raja was greatly shocked by knowing the unwillingness to give up the Praganas and the ill intention of taking the hereditary estate remained in his possession.<sup>7</sup> Such helplessness instigated Rajguru to revolt against the foreign invader, the most cunning and ferocious Britishers. At the same time Col. Harcourt and J. Melvill, Civil Commissioner for the settlement at Cuttack wanted that Raja Mukunda Deva should execute an agreement like other feudatory chiefs to surrender the

management of his estate to the British.<sup>8</sup> Rajguru advised the Raja not to sign the treaty. The British on 29 Nov. 1803 requested to send his Vakeel. Raja turned down the offer, so the Commissioners in their letter of 16th December 1803 requested him to execute the agreement. Again Britishers warned the king that he was under ill-advice in their letter of 20 Feb. 1804. However, after repeated threats and heavy pressure Raja signed the agreement and affixed his seal sometime between February and July 1804. British officer tried to bring the Raja to their side by sending five letters from Nov 1803 to Oct. 1804.

Britishers informed the king that he would get fifty thousand rupees if he only removed his evil advisor. They advised the King to send Jayi Rajaguru immediately to Cuttack for consultation. He was assured a good treatment. He defied the order of the Company. Now Jayi Rajguru fully convinced of the facts that a fight with British was inevitable. So he came forward to resist the British with all his might and accordingly made elaborate preparation to launch agitation. He sought help from the Raja of Berar for a common cause against foreign rule. Antaji Nayak, an officer of Nagpur Government stationed at Raipur came to Khurda to discuss with Raja for providing one thousand horses, some troops and guns.

Mukunda Deva was determined to assert his right by force, finally he withdrew his Vakeel from Cuttack. The Britishers who were following the policy of wait and watch tried to dissuade the king to give up resistance, but it was in vain. Harcourt stated 'our policy of moderation has been construed in the weakness, our silence in to ignorance and our endeavours to conciliation in the apprehension and fear.'

Rajguru strengthened the regiment, trained Paiks, the peasant militia troops stationed at strategic points on all frontiers such as Dampada, Banpur, Delang, Taratua etc. and had secret

discussion with Maratha ruler Bhonsle to root out the British, the most dishonest and conspirator from the land. Raja sought the help of the adjoining princely state of Orissa. He employed Sambhu Bharati an influential religious pandit for mobilizing the public and to unite feudatory kings of the coming fight. Mukunda Deva made triple alliance with the Raja of Kanika and Kujanga and sought the help of Zamidars of Bishnupur, Harishpur, Marichpur and other states. But Sambhu Bharati was arrested by British soldiers who carried secret message of the Raja.

Harcourt's further attempts at conciliation failed when Raja under the pressure of Rajguru refused to give his appearance to captain Blunt. So British authorities demanded removal of Jayi Rajguru from Khurda as he was considered to be at the root of the trouble.<sup>9</sup> They also took prompt step to prevent Raja from getting help from any quarters. Further they threatened princely states and local zamidars not to help the Raja. By the proclamation issued on 7 December 1804 Raja Mukunda Deva - II had been deposed owing to his ill-treatment towards British Government with effect from 5th Dec. 1804 and his territories were annexed to British Orissa.<sup>10</sup>

The direct combat with the Raja became inevitable. The Raja created defenses in Delang and on the bank of river Mahanadi. Rajguru made arrangements to disrupt British communications. The British troops marching to occupy Khurda were resisted at many places. On 22 Nov. 1804 the local Paiks fought at Delang with British army at the head of Col. Harcourt and Hunter, so valiantly that British soldiers were defeated and were forced to take shelter at Peautpur. Hickland posted at Pipili mobilized his forces consisting of one hundred and twenty soldiers and six pounder reached Delang and made a sudden attack on Paiks. On the other side another troop of Raja under the command of Mustafa Khan of Keranga

also fought with Major Robert Fletcher's army at Tangiapada. No party could win this severe battle. The Raja's veteran commander Baishnav Bharati and the Paiks fought with courage and determination against British force headed by Captain Storey at Gangapada. Many Firingi soldiers died in this remarkable battle. The traditional war with sword, shield, bow and arrow of the Paiks lost their value before powerful British armament and advanced technique adopted by well equipped British army. The British soldiers of 2nd and 7th Battalions under the command of four experienced captains like Col. Harcourt, Hickland, Capt., Stoner and Maj. Fletcher started to attack from all side of Khurda fort.

In spite of all attempts of Paiks to protest finally the British army marched steadily to attack the fort of Khurda near the Barunai hills in the first week of December 1804. They took shelter in the mango grove of Mukunda Prasad village. A vigorous fight continued for a period of three days. The nephew of Major Fletcher was killed in the battle. The strong built wall of Khurda fort collapsed with heavy gun shot of British army. The Paiks were scattered away in different directions. The Raja fled away to the nearby forest, where he sent his Vakeel to Col. Harcourt for negotiation. He was arrested by the company army.

The capture of Jayi Rajguru became a matter of grave political concern to the government. They took very cautious step to capture him as he was supported by some of the powerful Zamindars, Dalai and Dalabehera of various Garhs of forts. He had a good number of followers and also retained a considerable hold upon the passions and affection of the people of Khurda.<sup>11</sup>

In such circumstances Jayi Rajguru who came to negotiate was arrested. On the night of 3rd January 1805 Raja was captured by

Harcourt's force due to the treachery of Fateh Mahammad and imprisoned at Barabati Fort, Cuttack and then sent to Medinapur Jail of Bengal. Others who opposed the British surrendered quickly. The Raja of Kanika was sent to Midnapur and the Raja of Kujanga was dethroned. Thus the rebellion was stamped out.

Jayi Rajguru spent his life as a captive in Barabati Fort. The British officers began to torture him both physically and mentally out of strong animosity. After some days he was sent to Midnapur jail far away from Orissa. During the confinement at Midnapur, Raja Mukunda Deva submitted a petition to Government stating all the facts relating to the revolt and praying for restoration of his estate in view of his innocence.<sup>12</sup> The petition of the Raja clearly revealed that Rajguru was the real hero who fought against British.<sup>13</sup>

For some days Rajguru faced the trial in the court of law. Harcourt asked him about his conduct and his part in the rebellion. In the martial court Rajguru declared bravely before Harcourt, "he had caused the disturbance; that the Raja was a child and what has been done had been done by himself". On the basis of evidence given by Raja and by his own confession he was held guilty of waging war against the lawfully established government and causing damage to the civilian and military lives and properties.

Jayi Rajguru certainly did not strive for self-gratification. What he did was for the sake of the Kingdom and for the prestige of the Gajapati dynasty of Khurda. He did it all for risk of life. Britishers regarded him as the arch enemy of them. They put all the blame of abetting the rebellion on him.

On 6 December 1805, Jayi Rajguru was given the capital punishment. He was brutally murdered in an open place outside that jail by the branches of a great Banyan tree at Baghitota of

Medinapur. The hangman did not put a noose around the neck of Rajguru. They knotted his ankles together, put a rope through them, slung the other end ground, the thick rope began cutting into his flesh. He writhed and flailed, blood spread all over the ground, trees and bushes. Jayi Rajguru the first national hero gave up his life, which exhibits an unparalleled commitment for liberating the motherland. Thus Rajguru, the indomitable Prime Minister was given the exemplary punishment in the early days of the British Raj.<sup>14</sup> The objective of taking such drastic steps was to inculcate fear in to the minds of the Indian that "Disloyalty to the British may end in such terrible consequence."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand such exemplary dedication of a great martyr became an object lesson for the whole world.

After the death of Rajguru, however the problem of Khurda was not solved, it reappears in a greater magnitude as Paik mutiny only a few year later. History remembers him as a great lover of motherland, a fearless patriot with a heart of lion and an illustrious warrior. Undoubtedly Jayi Rajguru would be a source of eternal inspiration to this nation for all times to come.

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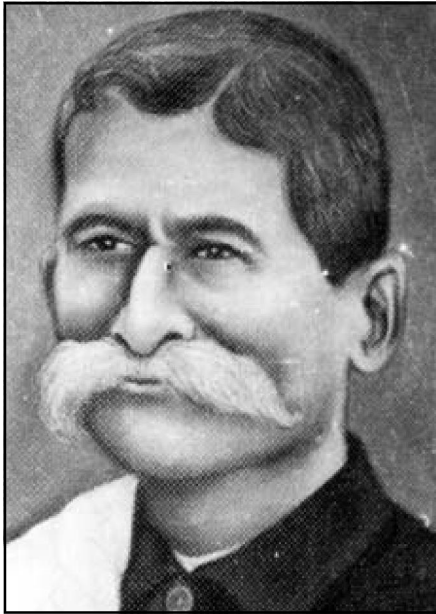
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Gopal Krishna Das is a Lecturer in Oriya at P.N. College, Khurda - 752055.

## Gangadhar Literature : A Bird's Eye View

*Jagabandhu Panda*

Gangadhar Meher has greatly adorned Oriya literature by the gems of his poetry. He was an apt painter of the nectar of poetry. Gangadhar has authored a number of epics, lyrics, sonnets, eligies, odes and a few pieces of prose-writings as well. He composed his epics in classical models. However his short poems are on modern lines. Gangadhar's literature is a harmonious blending of the contents of the mythological age, metric symphony of the Bhanja age; and clarity, vividity and patriotism of the Radhanath age of Oriya literature. His creations are as lucid as they are ornamental. As the water of the river 'Ganga' makes everything sacred, so has the powerful poet Gangadhar beautified every subject that he has laid his hands on. He was such a poetic genius that he borrowed the plots and patterns from his predecessors, and yet turned them into unique and excellent pieces of poetic productions with his original and innovative style of representation. Gangadhar Meher is rightly considered as a miniature Kalidas in Oriya literature.



Among the unique idiosyncracies of Gangadhar's creations, the presence of colloquial elements is the most prominent one. Some regional linguistic elements are found here and there in his works. However he did not subscribe to the source of colloquial elements as a manifestation of any regionalistic thought, rather it was an expression of a creative mind.

Gangadhar Meher never composed poetry for the sake of poetry only. Through his poetry he wished to serve the society. Gangadhar Meher respected the Indian literary tradition by accepting morality as the didactic value of art and literature. His literary creations directly raise the voice of morality. The poet's deep faith in the eternal values of truth, goodness and beauty; is reflected in his larger creations as well as his shorter poems. Gangadhar Meher, through his literature, has exposed the picture of an ideal society at tune with his taste. He has imagined a quiet, beautiful and holy earth in the world of his



literature. He has also portrayed some ideal men and women. Meherian literature also reveals the poet's sympathy for the poorer sections of the society. In Gangadhar's literature we find that the poet's vision and imagination touch all aspects of life, such as : God, nature, patriotism, language, education, ideal love, the actualities of social life, traditional ideals, hospitality, devotion, morality, cultural values etc.

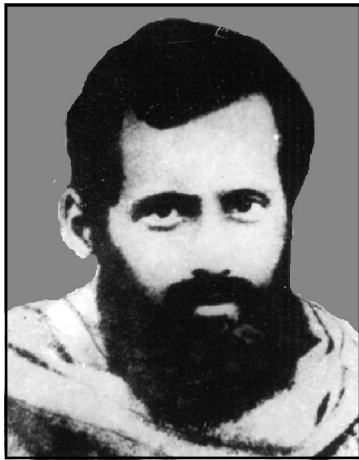
It is said, "Poets are revealed through their works." This dictum proves true in the case of Gangadhar Meher as well. His numerous literary creations, such as : 'Tapaswini', 'Pranayabalar', 'Kichak Badha', 'Padmini', 'Krusak Sangita', 'Kabitamala', 'Arghyathali' etc. are very much life - oriented, and contain the real introduction of the poet.

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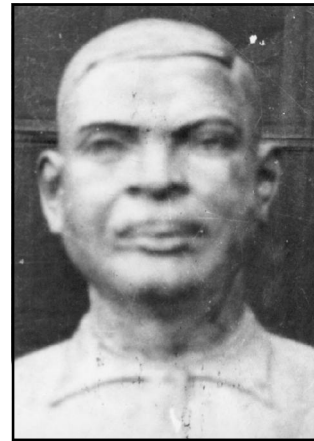
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Jagabandhu Panda is a Lecturer in Education, P.S. College, Komna, Dist. - Nuapada.



**Utklmani Gopabandhu Das**  
09.10.1877 - 17.06.1928



**Laxman Naik**  
(22.11.1899-29.03.1943 hanged)

## Safe Motherhood : Secured Future

*Abhisek Mohanty*

"The future destiny of a child is always the work of the mother."

*Napoleon Bonaparte*

Great men and women have paid glowing tributes to motherhood. A mother is the central figure of a family, the builder of a child's future, and therefore, the maker of mankind's destiny. She is an epitome of love and tenderness. She is all knowledge, and the child takes its first and most important lessons from her. Motherhood has a very humanizing impact on family, community and the nation.

Yet mothers are probably the most neglected persons in the society. Quite a few women die a few days or hours before giving birth to a child or just after the childbirth. They do not live to enjoy the glory of motherhood. And a large number of women become mothers before they are fully grown up and before they understand the implications of motherhood, which is thrust upon them. In the family, most of the mothers face nutritional discrimination, eating last and least. Recent surveys have revealed that about 50% of all married women in India suffer from anaemia. As per recent reports, India is lagging behind in meeting the UN's millennium development goals (MDG) for bringing down infant and maternal mortality rates.

The statistics on maternal mortality are terrifying. In India, a woman dies during childbirth or of pregnancy-related causes almost every seven minutes. This gives us a startling figure of 1,00,000 maternal deaths per year. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 407 deaths per 1,00,000 live births, is almost 100 times more than the ratio in most developed countries, and significantly higher than some developing countries like Sri Lanka and Vietnam. This reveals the gloomy state of affairs of our health delivery system. True, the figures are not the same throughout the country. The situation in rural India is worse, with an MMR over 600, than that in urban areas.

In a large country like India, with different levels of public awareness and family income, regional variations are obvious. States like Kerala, Tamilnadu and Punjab have a relatively lower MMR figure, whereas states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Assam have MMR figures which are higher in comparison to many other States. In India, 15 per cent of deaths of women in the reproductive age are maternal deaths. The main reasons for such deaths include early marriage leading to early childbirth, lack of access to proper healthcare services and emergency obstetric facilities, inadequate nutrition, lack of skilled personnel and, most importantly,

lack of knowledge and interest on the part of other members of the family leading to poor utilisation of pre-natal, natal and post-natal services by pregnant women. Unwanted/mistimed pregnancies, consequences of unsafe abortions, excessive bleeding, infection, hypertensive disease, obstructed labour, malnutrition, etc result in untimely death of pregnant women. Nearly two-thirds of the maternal deaths occur in the Empowered Action Group (EAG) States such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and Assam, according to the latest figures released by the Registrar General of India and the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

These deaths cause serious social and economic problems in the society and thereby affect the development of the nation. Studies reveal that motherless children are often prone to early death and are less likely to receive proper care, nutrition and education. The household economy also suffers on this account. With death of the mother, additional responsibility often falls on siblings or older members, who are most likely to get affected physically and economically. Deprived of proper guidance, motherless children often fall in bad company and become susceptible to crimes. Considering the gravity of the situation, a way needs to be found out at the earliest to protect mothers and reduce MMR. We must know that almost all such deaths are avoidable and safe deliveries are very much possible.

Maternal mortality in Orissa is quite high, 367 per lakh. The State Government have taken steps to reduce the MMR. In collaboration with the UNFPA and the Population Fund of India (PFI), four tribal dominated districts--Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri--have been targeted to reduce the MMR. Under this scheme, efforts have been taken to sensitise public

and private healthcare service providers, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to address the issues of maternal mortality and safe motherhood by building up awareness at the district level.

With a view to promoting institutional deliveries, the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Orissa Health & Family Welfare Department have jointly launched a new scheme called Janani Express, which would provide round the clock free transportation facilities to pregnant women. Initially, the scheme would be implemented in 124 Blocks having a delivery load of more than 50 deliveries per month. The Janani Express aims at helping expectant women to deal with any emergency situation during the pre and post-delivery periods. Sick infants would also be benefited by the transportation facility for their casual medical treatment. Drivers of these vehicles would have mobile phones to help them furnish information about the health status of the patients to hospitals. Vehicles would be available at the Government Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres or at other suitable places.

Moreover, it is absolutely necessary to create awareness about safe motherhood in order to bring down maternal mortality rate. This can only be possible if people are enlightened about the causes and consequences of maternal deaths. Only then there could be a motivational change which can result in preventing such tragic deaths. This state of awareness cannot come overnight. Proper campaigns need to be carried out in a sustainable manner over a long period of time. The campaigns could be on the lines of the Pulse Polio Campaign or the AIDS Awareness Campaign. The message should reach the most affected areas at the grassroots level. Global

bodies, government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both at the international and local levels, need to come together to bring the MMR down. Organizations like the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, UNICEF, Population Foundation of India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have taken initiatives and launched programmes to reduce maternal mortality. Media is another important stakeholder which can influence public opinion. Both print and electronic media should come forward and give adequate coverage to the campaign.

Death of a woman during childbirth is not always accidental; it is often the result of prolonged neglect on the part of the family. It brings to light the social injustice prevalent in the society and the denial of basic human rights to women. Women's empowerment is therefore important, as women can rise and fight for their right to lead

a safe and dignified life. A movement must be carried out to create a proper environment, in which everyone-whether living in a rural or an urban area, whether a literate or an illiterate--is aware of safe motherhood. This change of attitude cannot be forced upon individuals; it can be brought about by making people realize its importance. A case needs to be built for this noble cause. Campaigns, rallies, workshops for all kinds of stakeholders, media coverage, production and distribution of literature and screening of relevant films will immensely contribute to this effort. The combined endeavour of all concerned will result in safe motherhood, which is a big step towards establishing a healthy society.

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Abhisek Mohanty lives at Akarpuri Colony, Rath Road, Old Town, Bhubaneswar.



His Excellency the Governor Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare presenting Ruchi Prativa Samman to Shri Bimal Prasad Panda, topper in this year's High School Certificate Examination on the occasion of 12th Ruchi Prativa Samman Samaroha at Kala Vikash Kendra, Cuttack on 25.7.2008.

## Utkal Ratna Biswanath Mishra : The Forgotten Pioneer of Oriya Movement

*Dr. Shridhar Charan Sahoo*

Pangs of poverty and fetters of society often stand as stumbling blocs on the path of a man's growth and evolution. But even then there are some who courageously transcend their poverty and resolutely defy the fetters of society. Through their sheer will power and staunch determination they grow and evolve into greater heights of personal excellence and even carve out a niche for them in the public life of their country.

Biswanath Mishra born in the 19th century Orissa belongs to that rare breed of individuals who even though born in a poor family could not only dream but even actualize his dream of becoming the first Barrister of Orissa with requisite qualification acquired from England. He remained steadfast in his determination and defied also all social fetters the backward looking and conservative forces of the time who frantically sought to hinder his education either in the Puri Zilla school or even when they tried to checkmate his ambition to visit England and acquire the Barrister qualification. Apart from becoming the first Barrister of Orissa- a rare feat of the time, he also played a dedicated role in the Oriya movement for amalgamation of Oriya - speaking tracts scattered under different provinces under one administration and in the formation of Orissa as a separate province. This Oriya movement, as

it were, took an organized and definite shape in early twentieth century with the formation of Utkal Union Conference (Utkal Sammilani) in 1903 by Sri Madhusudan Das.

Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das was the prime -mover and the god -father of the Oriya movement. But along with him, there were also many others who under his overall leadership and direction did their very best to actualize the dream of the Oriya movement. Biswanath Mishra was one such forgotten pioneer of the Oriya movement who represented and epitomized the early wave of Oriya nationalist consciousness or as has been said "Jatiprana Sindhura Adya Taranga".

Biswanath Mishra was not only the first Barrister and a pioneer of Oriya movement , he had also many other feathers to his cap. He was, as it were, a sober and liberal social reformer, a learned and efficient lawyer, a torch bearer of women's awakening, a well- wisher of student community and an advocate of education, an effective parliamentarian and a matured politician. Leaving aside all this, he was over and above, a very good man, a nice person, and an adorable and lovable personality.

The life and struggle of Biswanath both for his personal a growth and evolution and with

regard to his role in the public life of Orissa in the Oriya movement makes an interesting reading. The story of his life is, in a way, quite thrilling and inspiring. It is more so when one thinks of the present society and crippling social ethos in the 19th century where he sought to grow and evolve in the midst of all odds.

### **SOCIO - POLITICAL SCENARIO**

The life and struggle of Biswanath and his role can perhaps be better appreciated if one keeps in mind the socio - political scenario of the time.

#### **a) The Social Scenario**

Biswanath was born on 18.10.1878 in new Someswarpur Brahman Sasan under Sakhigopal police station in the Puri district. It was a time when society was heavily caste-ridden, outlook extremely narrow - superstitions and blind beliefs ruled the behaviour pattern of people.<sup>1</sup> In those days the highest ambit of educational ambition was up to middle vernacular level. Beyond this, higher English education in the matric level was more or less a forbidden zone frowned upon in the Brahmin sasans of Puri in general and new Someswarpur in particular. It was considered to be sinful, ignoble and defiling by the conservative Brahmin Pundits and it was religiously enforced by them. When anybody ventured to violate this norm he was put to stringent social boycott and ex-communicated. Over and above those who ventured to cross the seven seas and visit England for higher education were treated as a set of sinners, a fallen and unholy lot to be abandoned by the society. It was considered to be a great sin beyond redemption. Though the present generation may possibly look at his with a sense of amused smile, it nonetheless was the social reality of the time.

It was in this social terrain, Biswanath had to traverse and fight a battle royal to become the first Barrister of Orissa.

#### **b) The Political Scenario**

Biswanath, as has been said, was born in the latter part of the 19th century on 18.10.1878. At the time of his birth Orissa did not have a distinct political identity of its own. What was called Orissa division at the time consisted of only the three districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore which were tagged with the province of Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

The Oriya country which Biswanath saw under British rule during his time was a dismembered Orissa with Oriya people being "territorially fragmented."<sup>3</sup> and tagged on to the tail ends of different provinces. As regards this dismembered Oriya country, it has been said: "Orissa was conquered by the British in a piecemeal manner by 1803 and kept politically divided under three provinces, the Orissa Division consisting of the coastal districts (Balasore, Cuttack and Puri) in Bengal, the Ganjam and Vizagpatnam districts in Madras and the Sambalpur district with adjacent feudatory states in the Central provinces."<sup>4</sup>

This political dismemberment had disastrous effect on the homogeneity of the Oriya race and prejudicially affected the culture, language and its all round development.<sup>5</sup>

As a matter of fact, the hostile attitude of the Bengalis in Orissa division, Hindi-speaking people in Sambalpur, the Telgus in Ganjam and Vizagpatnam placed the Oriya language and culture in jeopardy. This was the political scenario of Orissa which Biswanath Mishra was exposed to when he grew and evolved. In view of this sad scenario, the problem that agitated the minds of

enlightened Oriyas was the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts into one administrative unit and then the formation of a separate province of Orissa.

It led to an organized movement a sustained constitutional struggle for many years to achieve the said objective. The agitation for amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts aroused and moulded public opinion in the province and helped much for the growth of political consciousness of the people in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

A birds eye of the main contours of the Oriya movement is submitted below keeping in view our objective to mainstream Biswanath's role in the movement.

Two years before Biswanath's birth in 1876, Raja Baikuntha Nath Dev of Balasore and Sri Bichitrananda Patnaik possibly for the first time memorialized to the British Government for Union of all the Oriya-speaking tracts under a single administration.

During the latter half of 1902, a memorial signed by hundreds of Oriyas was submitted to Lord Curzon, the then Governor General of India wherein the memorialists prayed the government of India to bring together the scattered divisions inhabited by Oriya-speaking peoples i.e. Ganjam in Madras, Sambalpur in the Central Provinces and Orissa in Bengal, under the government of Bengal or under anyone government.<sup>7</sup> Early in 1903, a small band of enthusiasts gathered in the town of Rambha established the Ganjam Jatiya Samiti (National conference). It held its first meeting at Berhampur in the ensuing Easter with participation of persons from Orissa and other Oriya Speaking tracts. The meeting unitedly

expressed the desire of their people to be amalgamated in a common administration.<sup>8</sup>

On the 2nd of April 1903 a meeting of the Orissa Association was held at Cuttack under Madhu Babu's leadership which resolved to submit a memorial to the Governor General of India praying him to transfer to the Orissa Division, the Oriya-speaking portions of the districts of Ganjam, Vizagpatnam, Sambalpur, Chota Nagpur, and Midnapore so far as this could be done, having regard to territorial contiguity.<sup>9</sup>

In 1903, the Utkal Union Conference or the Utkal Sammilani which was the brainchild of Madhu Babu and the foremost national institution of the Oriya race met at Cuttack on December, 30th and 31st with representatives from Midnapore, Sambalpur and Ganjam along with the feudatory Chiefs of Talcher, Keonjhar, and Dhenkanal. The first resolution related to the administrative union of the Oriya tracts<sup>10</sup> apart from many other resolutions in the said Conference.

This was the scenario of the Oriya Movement when Biswanath was a youngman of 25 years. Influenced and inspired by Madhu Babu, the architect of Oriya nationalism and impelled by his own urge and dedication Biswanath played his part in the Oriya movement until his death in 1933 in far off Simla. But unfortunately, he was not there to see the separate Orissa Province which came into existence on 1st April, 1936.

### **Biswanath Babu and His formative years of life and struggle.**

Formative Years roughly refer to the period from early school days up to the college level by which time one's personality is formed, shaped and moulded.

Biswanath Babu was born in a poor and ordinary Brahmin family and his father Kulamani Mishra of Someswarpur Brahman Sasan was a priest of small means and limited income, Biswanath's early life started with this background.

As regards his early school life, it comprised of his study in the Village Chatasali, Primary School and his passing out from the Borbei Middle Vernacular School in his area.

In the foregoing pages, it was indicated that the highest ambit of educational ambition in those days was upto this Middle Vernacular level and no young man of his Village till then had gone for higher English education in the High School or Matric level which as per existing social norm was considered sinful, ignoble and defiling.

In those day's Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das, the first graduate, the first MA and the first advocate of Orissa was the ideal and role model of young people. One popular song concerning him which often sprang from their lips seems to have inspired and impressed Biswanath. The said song was, "I will read and read; compete with Madhu Babu and mount the black horse".

Accordingly, Biswanath inspired by Madhu Babu and backed up by his father, Kulamani Mishra took admission in Puri Zilla School which however was unbearable to the dominant conservative leadership. They now imposed a fine of Rs.20/- on Kulamani Mishra by no means a small amount of those days along with social boycott with a warning that he should forthwith cancel Biswanath's admission in Puri Zilla School which as per their interpretation unceremoniously violated the aforesaid social norm (which considered English education as sinful, ignoble and defiling).

Biswanath's father Sri Kulamani Mishra inspite of his poverty was an enlightened man of his days with an independent and fearless mind. Otherwise he would possibly not have been able to defy the aforesaid dictate and dictat of the conservative pundits of his village who were bent upon thwarting his son's education in the Puri Zilla School. Those traits of his father's character which Biswanath perhaps imbibed foreshadowed his independent and fearless stance in the Oriya movement vis-à-vis the British and in his fearless exposure of the lapses and deficiencies of British rule in India on the floor of the Central Legislative Assembly.

In Puri Zilla School he studied from 1897 to 1902 under conditions of acute hardship and pinching poverty. It could not however overpower his determination to creditably get through the Entrance/Matric examination in 1902 with a scholarship of Rs. 10/- PM. This spirit of staunch determination to fight and transcend all obstacles and accomplish his goal with almost the spirit of a fighter became a distinct facet of his character and personality. It was subsequently evident even more vibrantly during his days in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and in his visit to England to acquire the Barrister's qualification.

### **Days in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack : - Sign-Post of his future role in the Oriya Movement.**

Biswanath's ambition to go ahead in life propelled him to take admission in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack where he studied for two years during 1902 and 1903 for his F.A. Examination. This sojourn of two years in Ravenshaw Collage, Cuttack was an important phase of his life. Apart from affirming his staunch determination to complete his studies in the midst of all hardship



and poverty, it became a signpost-a future indicator foreshadowing his life-long dedication in the cause of the Oriya amalgamation movement and also formation of Orissa as a separate province. Regarding his struggle and determination at Ravenshaw College Cuttack, it has been said : "He stayed at Cuttack in a private mess with his school friends Damodar Rout and Sankar Sarangi. To pay for a cook was difficult for them so they cooked in turns. Even apart from that, Biswanath took up tuition in private houses as there was no hope of any help either from his father or any other source."<sup>11</sup>

This inspiring trait of being self-reliant and prepared to fight all adversity and adverse situation to reach his goal characterized his life and work. It is rightly said ." where there is a will there is a way"

In his final year in F.A. Examination in 1903, Madhu Babu's Utkal Sammilani had just started its work. Madhu Babu's inspiring words at the time virtually surcharged the whole atmosphere in Orissa, with a surge of Oriya nationality feeling in the mind of the youth. That was also the time when Madhu Babu was organizing and motivating the students to join and dedicate themselves in the amalgamation movement. Among the inspired and motivated students who came forward to extend their help, Biswanath was most prominent one. In the conference of the Utkal Sammilani in 1903 at Cuttack, Biswanath worked as a sincere and dedicated volunteer and attracted the attention and admiration of the Sammilani leadership.<sup>12</sup>

It is said " His discipline, sobriety, manners and sense of duty attracted the attention of delegates and more particularly the delegates and spectators of Ganjam. In this Session, though

Biswanath did not declare his mind and goal orientation, he seems to have decided that after passing his F.A. examination, he was to jump into the life's struggle with two distinct motives namely (a) Service of the nation and (b) Taking care and looking after his family.

This service of the nation which he was determined to take up was what destiny ordained him and which foreshadowed his life and work.<sup>13</sup>

### **Role of Biswanath in the Oriya amalgamation movement and formation of Orissa as a separate province.**

Biswanath's participation in the Utkal Union Conference of 1903 under the inspiration of Madhu Babu had set the stage for his role in the Oriya amalgamation movement. At that time Gopabandhu had also formed his 'Young Utkal Association' at Cuttack to actively inspire the students community in the service of their country' which also inspired Biswanath.<sup>14</sup>

Biswanath's role in the Oriya movement may be mainstreamed under the following heads to inject a systematic and scientific precision.

#### **a) Teachership in Rasulkonda Training School (1904)-Apprenticeship for the service of Orissa.**

In those days Ganjam was under Madras Presidency. When after a lot of agitation Oriya was introduced as medium of instruction in Schools and colleges of Ganjam it was an irony that sufficient number of Oriya teachers were not available in this land of Upendra Bhanj of hallowed memory who was a great icon of Oriya literature. To add to this problem, a set of Telgu teachers who claimed to be bi-lingual experts in both Telgu and Oriya virtually made a ridiculous mockery of Oriya language and culture acting like

quacks in a doctor's role. This language crisis in Ganjam needed a broader Oriya movement to facilitate the entry of more and more of Oriyas as teachers who were to see that Oriya language grows and develops properly as it should. That is what Biswanath believed as a lover of Oriya language and culture. Under the circumstances, Biswanath with a view to contribute his bit joined as a Oriya teacher in Rasulkonda (Bhanjanagar) training school in 1904. This teaching assignment was also part of an unwritten agreement which Gopabandhu had with people like Barrister Biswanath Mishra, Harihar Acharya, Pandit Godavarish, Pandit Nilakantha and Pracharaka Ananta Mishra. Accordingly they were not to enter government service but to dedicate themselves in the service of their country and to see that it is in a better condition before their death. Over and above, they were also called upon to contribute one fifth of their income for public service.<sup>15</sup>

This teacher assignment to him was virtually an apprenticeship a training ground for the service of our people. It not only put him in the active service of our Oriya brethren and in the service of Oriya language and culture in Ganjam; it also made him confident to play a pro-active role in the Oriya movement with required maturity and statesmanship.

In another way, his teachership at Rasulkonda is said to have opened his eyes to the unspeakable torture of Oriyas by the anti-Oriya brigade of Ganjam then under Madras Presidency. He now felt strongly on the need of having a language-based separate province for Orissa. Here onwards, the Oriya Nationalist movement and thought of separate Orissa province acquired a strong foundation in his heart and psyche.<sup>16</sup>

Biswanath attended the Utkal Union conference of 1904 as a delegate of Ganjam while working as a teacher at Rasulkonda (Bhanjanagar). In this Conference he played a Pro-active role with the maturity of a statesman. This pro-active role was unlike his place as a volunteer at the Utkal Union Conference of 1903 at Cuttack when he was only a silent listener.

By now he had acquired a sense of Self - Confidence as a teacher activist in the public domain. This emboldened him to become articulate and firmly put forward his view.

In the course of supporting the proposal for amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts under one political administration, Biswanath apprised the delegates of the pitiable state of affairs of Oriya language and its teaching in Ganjam under Madras presidency.

Another memorable dimension of his personality which smacked of his maturity as a leader in the Oriya amalgamation movement came in bolder relief in the conference. This was marked in his passionate plea for unity in the Oriya movement at a time when Madhu Babu and young Gopabandhu almost came to a clash with regard to their divergent perceptions.

This conflicting situation developed like this. Young Gopabandhu in a booklet entitled "Prayer" proposed that Sambalpur along with all Oriya-speaking tracts should be put under Madhya Pradesh. As against this, Madhu Babu desired that all Oriya-speaking tracts including Ganjam and Sambalpur should be tagged with Bengal under one administration. In this encircling gloom of disunity and clash of perceptions, Ganjam held aloft the flag of unity spearheaded by Biswanath.

He was firmly supported by distinguished personalities of Ganjam like late Narasingh Das

of Ghumsar, late Harihar Panda, lawyer of Aska and late Sashibhusan Rath, Editor of Asha. Making a fervent and passionate appeal for unity in the greater and larger interest of the Oriya amalgamation movement, Biswanath said "The huge Oriya Bhukhanda or the large and far - long Oriya - speaking territory spread from Mahendra mountains to Meghasan. It is not the proper time or the right moment to raise this question on whether to tag this huge Oriya Bhukhanda or territory with Madhya Pradesh or Bengal. Let us now close this debate. Let it be left unto the future".<sup>17</sup>

Biswanath's plea for unity earned the admiration of the delegates and was adopted with overwhelming support. It may be said that this successful effort of Biswanath prevented an early rupture in the Oriya movement which had to traverse miles ahead in its struggle for amalgamation and formation of a separate Orissa province. Biswanath certainly deserves recognition for his successful role as a trouble-shooter when the Oriya movement was in a state of crisis.

#### **Lawyer Biswanath and His Work at Aska in Ganjam District.**

Biswanath Babu passed the lawyer's examination of Madras Presidency in 1906 and he had to decide now about the right place of work in view of both his need and dedication.

He had left his teaching job at Rasulkonda and became a lawyer because he felt that as a lawyer he can more effectively play his role in the Oriya amalgamation movement apart from the need of earning money which he and his large joint family badly needed for maintenance and sustenance.

Ganjam district which was then under Madras presidency with large Oriya-speaking tracts and where the Oriyas were more or less treated like second class citizens by the hostile anti-Oriya brigade must have been in his mind's eye as regards his right place of work.

Being an enlightened Oriya of the Oriya country and a devotee of amalgamation, he must have also been aware that it was Ganjam which had first given the Deshmishrana call<sup>18</sup> and was the pioneer of the Oriya amalgamation movement.

With this mindset he consulted with Madhu Babu on this matter. It was finally decided that he would work as a lawyer in Aska in the district of Ganjam which provided ample scope for work to further the Oriya cause and movement.

In cooperation with the eminent leaders of the Oriya movement at Aska (like Sri Harihar Panda, lawyer, Sri Madhusudan Panigrahi, Sri Batakrushna Mohapatra and Sri Abhimanyu Patnaik). Biswanath now took up the leadership of the Oriya movement in Ganjam.

As the chosen leader of the Oriya movement his most important task was to spread and boost up the Oriya movement in the nook and corner of Ganjam. It was Madhu Babu's view that a few people sitting at Cuttack and shouting slogans for amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts will virtually serve no purpose. He felt rightly that unless the huge mass of Oriya people living outside Orissa division of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts were actively involved in the Oriya movement, we can not hope to succeed in our struggle to amalgamate all the Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration. Madhu Babu when advising Biswanath to work at Aska as lawyer had this in mind. It was certainly important that the vast mass of Oriya people living in Ganjam

under Madras Presidency and separated from their Oriya brethren should be sensitized and activated to contribute their mite for the success of the Oriya movement.

In those days, required number of teachers were not available in Ganjam to teach Oriya. Biswanath being a proud Oriya and a lover of Oriya language and culture brought in a number of educated young men from Puri and Cuttack to solve this problem.

As a devotee of the Oriya movement, he wanted to utilize the services of those who would be teachers and make them the vanguard to spread the message of Oriya nationalist feeling. For that he even put those young educated to be teachers in his own residence for a few days in order to sensitize and train them.

During this stay, he sensitized and motivated them to create and bolster up Oriya nationalist feeling in the nook and corner of Ganjam along with their teaching assignment. What deserves mention is that those young educated people were employed as teachers by different kings with whom Biswanath had a good rapport. As it were, his sincerity and dedication in the Oriya movement earned for him the good will and support of many kings of Ganjam.

Through these inspired and motivated teachers, the message of the Oriya movement spread and reached the grassroots. Consequently, the Oriya movement in Ganjam acquired intensity and momentum as is evident from the increasing number of Ganjam delegates at the conferences of the Utkal Sammilani and their active participation in all its activities and proceedings. As a leader and strategist, he sought to widen and expand the base of support for the success of the Oriya movement. For that he sought the

help and co-operation of kings and zamindars of Ganjam who undeniably wielded great influence. His strategy clicked and he could earn the good will and cooperation of kings of Dharakot, Khallikote, Badagada, Sankhemudi and Badakhemudi and also the help and cooperation of eminent persons of Takkali, Suringi and Chikiti.

In view of the increasing vigour and momentum of the Oriya movement in Ganjam under Biswanath's leadership, he certainly needs recognition along with other leaders like late Harihar Panda, Batakrushna Mahapatra and Sashibhusan Rath. It of course strengthened the hands of Madhu Babu and immensely empowered him to fight for the Oriya cause with greater vigour and strength. This fearless work of Biswanath in the Pre-Satyavadi period in Ganjam and before Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement in the early years of twentieth century when British rule in India was at the height of its power and when fear reigned the length and breadth of India is certainly memorable. It was perhaps his fearlessness which emboldened people to raise their voice before concerned authorities of Madras government. In sensitizing the people and internalizing in them a spirit of pride as an Oriya nationality or even in emboldening them to raise their voice, Biswanath certainly played a remarkable role. In this respect, he was perhaps one of the pioneers to have laid the foundation of the Oriya movement along with his ideal and model Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das who was the God-father of the Oriya movement.

Another memorable and pioneering work which Biswanath did during his Aska phase of work as a lawyer was with regard to the use of Oriya language in courts of Ganjam. At a special meeting of the Ganjam Utkal Samiti, it was resolved to request the Oriya pleaders of Ganjam

to use the Oriya language in all the petitions, applications and statements submitted by them to the different courts of Ganjam. This proposal was moved by him and seconded by Harihar Panda. The star of Utkal in its issue of January 13, 1906 praised this work. It was called 'a self-denying ordinance-a sacrifice of self-interest for what was considered to be beneficial to their country'.

This proposal for the use of Oriya language in courts, ushered in a movement in Ganjam. It was reiterated in the meetings of the Utkal Sammilani in Ganjam and in different other forums. It is said to have succeeded when the Governor of Madras issued orders that in all courts of Ghumsur, Oriya was to be used in place of Telgu. Biswanath of course had left Aska by then to start his legal practice at Calcutta after becoming a Barrister in 1912.<sup>19</sup>

The above-said special meeting of the Ganjam Utkal Samiti also adopted another proposal to establish a student scholarship fund for Oriya students.

Thus, Biswanath's leadership and work left its imprint in the following directions -

- (a) Strengthening of the Oriya movement in Ganjam.
- (b) Struggle for use of Oriya language in the courts of Ganjam.
- (c) Establishment of a students scholarship fund.

#### **Non-Inclusion of Oriya-Speaking tracts under Madras Presidency in the proposed Bihar-Orissa province and Biswanath's Protest (1912)**

The Collector of Ganjam in his letter dated 11.8.1912 intimated to the Secretary, Utkal

Sammilani, regarding a letter of Government of India rejecting the proposal to include Oriya-speaking tracts of Madras Presidency in the proposed Bihar-Orissa province.

Against this a protest meeting was organized on 22.9.1912 at Berhampur under the leadership of Biswanath. It was attended by four thousand people of Ganjam reflecting a wonderful upsurge of Oriya consciousness.

This well-attended protest meeting was an epitome of his leadership and dedication.

#### **Biswanath's Visit to England to Qualify as a Barrister and His Work for the Oriya Cause**

In September 1910 Biswanath Babu visited England and came back to India as a qualified Barrister in July 1912.

This ambition of becoming a Barrister sprang from his dedication to the cause of Oriya movement. As has been said : 'Leaving aside his leadership at Aska if he went to England to qualify as a Barrister, it was to make him more able and capable to serve the cause of Orissa.'<sup>20</sup>

In the second week of October 1912, he visited England for the second time to collect the Barrister Diploma and stayed there for about one month.

During this short stay of one month at England, the only thing that pre-occupied his mind was the question of amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration and what best could be done to articulate the voice of Oriyas in the corridors of power at England. In this connection he appears to have been inspired by Madhu Babu who during his second visit to England in 1907, apprised the British authorities of the Oriya demand for amalgamation articulating the voice of Oriyas.

Following the foot-prints of Madhu Babu, he sought to carry forward his work and articulate the voice of Oriyas.

In this connection, what deserves specific mention is his work at England in connection with the movement for amalgamation of Oriya-Speaking tracts under one administration. In his letter to daily Asha on 18.10.1920 he wrote "My work in connection with the movement for amalgamation of the Oriya-Speaking tracts under one administration needs no special mention. Not only here, but while in England also, I carried on the agitation and secured sympathetic consideration at the hands of responsible statesmen. As a result of my labours, Mr Mac Callum Scott, M.P. advocated the cause of Oriyas in the House of Commons and Mr. E.S. Montague, then Under Secretary of State was convinced of the desirability of the formation of one province for the Oriyas."<sup>21</sup>

During this time, he is also said to have met Emperor George-V. Normally, it used to be more or less a formal meeting. Those who qualified as Barristers, they met the king and shook hands with him. But in case of Biswanath it was little bit of an exception. On the request of some privy councilors on his behalf, His Majesty, the Emperor gave him some more time as a special case where he briefly put up before him the question of amalgamation of Oriya-Speaking tracts under one administration.<sup>22</sup>

This shows that the range of his influence and area of his amalgamation work was not confined to Ganjam or the Oriya country comprised of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, it extended far beyond into England where he articulated the voice of Oriyas. Lord Curzon during the time had

said that if Oriyas would have been an agitation launching people, they would have made their voice heard in every ear. Possibly Biswanath had those words in mind which propelled him to do his best to articulate the voice of our Oriya brethren in the corridors of power which mattered.

### **The first Oriya Barrister in Calcutta High Court and His contribution to the Oriya Movement.**

Biswanath Mishra was the first Barrister of Orissa.<sup>23</sup> Though Madhu Babu M.A.B.L. is popularly called as Madhu Barrister and was the guide and preceptor of many Barristers like V.V. Giri, he did not qualify as a Barrister with the requisite qualification obtained from England.

On his return from England as a Barrister, Biswanath started his legal practice at the High Court of Calcutta which at the time was the Capital of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.<sup>24</sup>

During this phase of his life, his legal practice was virtually subordinated to his over-riding mission of dedicating himself to the cause of the Oriya movement.

The Oriya movement, was a very broad movement which not only worked for amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts and formation of Orissa as a Separate province, it also aimed at a total upsurge of our national life as Oriyas. It called upon its devotees and adherents to embody in them and inject in our Oriya brethren an immanent love and swaviman (Pride) for our language and culture and devote to the development and flowering of the Oriya race in different areas of life. In the light of this parameter, Biswanath's contribution during his Calcutta phase of life may be mainstreamed broadly under the following heads:-

**(a) Bolstering up a sense of Oriya nationality and unity.**

Biswanath at Calcutta rendered memorable service to the Oriya cause by trying to create and bolster up a spirit of Oriya nationality and bring in unity among the Prabasi Oriyas or Oriyas living in Calcutta. In this respect, Biswanath is considered to be a pioneer. As a matter of fact, his residence at Calcutta first in Bahubazar and then in Dharmatala became the hub of activities and the meeting point of students, youth, the zamindars and kings in the furtherance of the Oriya cause.

**(b) Meetings and tours and evolution of his strategy.**

Soon after he joined the High Court at Calcutta Biswanath concentrated his mind and attention on the Oriya movement. Along with Gopabandhu, Braja Sundar Das and Sashibhusan Rath he attended a meeting in 1913 at Barhampur. The meeting regretted that inspite of repeated prayers to govt to amalgamate Oriya-speaking tracts, Oriya people still remained scattered and separated. The meeting reiterated its appeal to the government to bring Ganjam and also other Oriya-speaking tracts lying scattered in different provinces under one administration.

Thereafter, he undertook a marathon and strenuous tour to Aska, Rasulkonda and finally to Kharsuan to organize and activate the Oriyas through sensitization and brain-storming.

His marathon tour in those scattered Oriya-speaking tracts led him to conceptualize a two point strategy to facilitate achievement of the Oriya goal. The two-point strategy consisted of:

(a) Forming a powerful Oriya students organization and inviting and associating students

with the Oriya movement for amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration.

(b) Associating 'Garjat Rajas and Maharajas' who were sympathetic to Oriya movement particularly in Cultural and educational domains. What he had in mind was to appeal them for contributions for introducing M.A classes in Calcutta, for introduction of law classes in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and introduction of Science streams and improvement of library facilities.

In this connection, the proposals passed in the meeting of the Utkal Samiti (Utkal Union) during 1913-1914 at Calcutta under his inspiring presidentship shows his love and concern for Orissa and his efforts to actualize the Oriya movement.

The proposal related to the establishment of a university in Orissa, introduction of B.Sc. and B.L Classes, in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and a vote of thanks to Raja of Kanika and to M.S. Das, C.I.E for assuring to provide scholarship to Oriya students studying M.A and law under Patna university.

The aforesaid dreams which Biswanath dreamed of did not go in vain and came to be realized with the munificent contributions of kings and Maharajas. What deserves mention is that the Maharaja laboratory in Ravenshaw College was made possible by contributions from Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. The Kanika library was also established by the contributions of the king of Kanika.

Significantly, M.A in Oriya was opened under Calcutta University with the help of Sonepur Maharaja along with a chair for research in Oriya language and literature in Santiniketan of R.N. Tagore.

Not small achievements are these at that point of time. It speaks eloquently of the man and his convincing and captivating personality. It was this which could make it possible to promote larger interest of Oriya students.

Subsequently when Orissa was separated from Bengal and tagged to Bihar, Biswanath had to leave Calcutta to Patna for his legal practice. In the meanwhile, he attended different conferences of the Utkal Sammilani. Finally he came down to Cuttack for his legal practice and was elected as president of Students' Society or the Chhatrasamiti of which Sri Jadumani Mangaraj, Sri H.K Mahatab and Sri N.K. Choudhury were members.<sup>25</sup> They were also baptized by him to devote to the Oriya cause.

Biswanath attended the Utkal Sammilani Session at Puri (1913) and the Utkal Sammilani Conference at Parlakhemudi in 1914.

In the Conference of 1913 at Puri held under Madhu Babu's presidentship he highlighted the injustice meted out to Orissa under British rule whereby Oriya-speaking tracts were scattered under different provinces apart from giving his unstinted support to the proposal for introduction of engineering education in Orissa.

In the Conference of 1914 at Parlakhemundi he reiterated the demand for amalgamation and demanded that Oriya language and literature be taught in Oriya-speaking tracts lying scattered in different provinces.

It was not only in Sammilani platform but in other forums too he championed and spearheaded the cause of Orissa and the interest of Oriya People.

**Biswanath and his role in 1920s as a member of Central Legislative Assembly :**

Consequent upon the resignation of Nemai Charan Mitra, Biswanath was elected as a

member of Central Legislative Assembly and took oath of office on March 15, 1922.

As a member of Central Legislative Assembly, Biswanath appears to have shown a remarkable degree of independence with a fearless disposition.

He was no sycophant of British rule hoping to get into a high profile post under them sacrificing his independent stance. That he was no sycophant or admirer of British rule is evident from his Budget speech reflections on increase in salt tax, critical references on lavish expenditures of British Officers in India and their hypocrisy and autocratic style of functioning.

But what is of relevance to our purpose is Biswanath's question of 28 February 1922 on Orissa's struggle for amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts and the response of the government.

On 20.2.1920, Honourable Sachidananda Sinha had introduced a proposal to unite Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration and the home member had given a definite assurance that he would seek the opinion of different local governments. The pointed questions that he asked on this assurance to extract answer unmistakably show his dedication to the Oriya movement.

As a member of central legislative assembly, he frantically sought to move the government pressurizing it to take early action on the issue of amalgamation.

A report was published in Utkal Dipika on 8.7.1922 regarding Biswanath's proposal to be moved in the coming assembly. The said proposal was: This legislative assembly recommends the Governor General to please seek approval of the Secretary of State and his Majesty, the Emperor



to amalgamate the Oriya-speaking tracts lying scattered under four provincial governments namely Bihar-Orissa, Madras, Madhya Pradesh and Bengal under one administration and put them under a government or Deputy governor as considered desirable.<sup>26</sup>

### **Biswanath and the report of Philip-Duff Commission (1924)**

The government of India in 1924 instituted a Commission under Mr. C.L. Philip, the political agent of native states in Orissa and Mr. A.C. Duff, the Collector of Vizagpatnam district to enquire into the general feeling of the Oriya-Speaking people of Madras Presidency on the question of their amalgamation with Orissa.

Barrister Biswanath Mishra was an important adjunct of the Commission and moved with them to assess the feeling of the people.

This Commission submitted a favourable view pointing out that the general feelings of the Oriya-Speaking people under Madras Presidency are "entirely in favour of amalgamation."<sup>27</sup>

It has been said that Biswanath's association influenced the Commission to give a report favourable to the Oriya aspiration. "The responsibility of determining whether the Oriya-speaking tracts were amalgamation friendly or otherwise was vested with Biswanath Mishra who was to do that by touring with and interacting with them"<sup>28</sup>

### **The Simon Commission and Biswanath**

Meanwhile in 1927-28, the Simon Commission came to India to propose further constitutional reforms and was boycotted throughout India as per Congress directive.

In Orisa, some of the leaders did not consider it proper and desirable to boycott the Commission but rather press the Oriya demand for amalgamation and formation of Orissa as a separate province.

In that group was Barrister Biswanath Mishra who led by Braja Sundar Das welcomed the Commission at Patna with the placards which read "We welcome you Simon." They submitted a memorandum to the Commission demanding a separate Orissa province. In a way, it clicked. The Commission in its report showed a favourable attitude when it pointed out that Bihar and Orissa province provided the most artificial and defective unit of all provinces of India from linguistic and cultural points of view.

When the whole of India boycotted the Simon Commission during our struggle for freedom, welcoming the Simon Commission by those Oriya leaders like Biswanath might at the first sight appear to be narrow provincialism. But then the other side of the spectrum with regard to the then Congress attitude for the aspiration of Oriyas and their struggle for a long time to amalgamate the unjustly dismembered Oriya-Speaking tracts and putting them under a separate province needs to be taken note of.

In this connection the Nehru Committee report of 1928 under Motilal Nehru deserves mention. This report which recommended a separate Sindh province but blissfully ignored the Oriya claim created a sense of resentment and even a spirit of rebellion against this step-motherly attitude of the Congress based on sheer discrimination. People like Biswanath were no less than patriots who like others also dreamt of a free India but then, the interest of Orissa at that point of time and the prime and paramount consideration of how to seize the time and

opportunity and facilitate the cause of amalgamation and formation of Orissa as a separate province rankled their mind and psyche. That determined their decision to welcome the Simon Commission.

### **The Major Attlee Sub-Committee and Biswanath**

The Simon Commission which took a favourable view appointed a sub-committee under Major Attlee as chairman which recommended a separate province for Orissa.<sup>29</sup>

The Attlee sub-committee which toured the different Oriya-Speaking areas met at Visakhapatnam the delegates of Oriya-Speaking people living under Madras Presidency. Among the Oriya delegates led by Bikramdev Burma, Barrister Biswanath was the most prominent.

He was not a mere delegate but the master-brain behind the preparation of the memorandum which was submitted to the sub-committee espousing the claim of Oriyas.<sup>30</sup>

Barrister Biswanath was a dedicated champion and advocate of the proposed Orissa province which as per his visualized ideal and conviction should include all Oriya-Speaking areas which deserved to be included. He was shocked to find that the sub-committee had not recommended some Oriya-Speaking tracts of Madras presidency to be included in the separate Orissa province.

He expressed his sense of deep concern in an article entitled "Madras, Oriyas and Simon Commission" reflecting his views on the non-inclusion of certain Oriya-Speaking tracts under Madras Presidency in the proposed Orissa province.

As he is reported to have written : "The sub-committee formed by the Simon Commission has neither been able to consider the Oriya claim justly nor in the best possible manner. More particularly, their recommendation with regard to the Oriya-speaking people of Madras presidency are careless and inadvertent. They have cited no reason as to why Vizag agency and Sompenh, Parlakhemundi and Tekkali taluks of Ganjam should be excluded from the proposed Orissa province."<sup>31</sup>

### **O' Donnell Boundary Commission (1931) and Biswanath**

In the meanwhile, the demand for a separate Orissa province was put forward forcefully by Parla Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati during the First Round Table Conference in January, 1931. Consequently, a boundary Commission was appointed by the government under the chairmanship of Sir Samuel O' Donnell to determine the boundary of the proposed Orissa province. The two other members of the Commission T.R. Phockun and H.M. Mehetta strongly pleaded for the inclusion of Jeypore and Parlakhemundi in the proposed province. But chairman Sir O' Donnell held a different and contrary view.

It is said that the British policy of divide and rule and the anti-amalgamation brigade spearheaded by a few of Parlakhemundi and Jeypore influenced the chairman to hold a contrary view.

Biswanath eventhough at the time was elected to the 4th central legislative assembly is said to have protested this anti-Oriya view and fought strongly against this inner act of betrayal. So far as amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts of Ganjam was concerned, he was the main

exponent and champion. Hence, his word and deed with regard to the amalgamation of Ganjam and Koraput was extremely valuable.

### **Biswanath's Second Term of Membership in Central Legislative Assembly and His Role as 'Mr Orissa'**

Barrister Biswanath Mishra was elected in September 1930 to the Central Legislative Assembly in place of Pandit Nilakantha who resigned to join the Salt Satyagraha movement of Gandhiji.

As a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, he sought to advance and expedite the formation of Orissa as a separate province. Pleading for Orissa's claim with critical reflections on British policy and hypocrisy, he referred to the British policy of inaction to carry out the recommendations of the Simon Commission for formation of a separate Orissa province.

With a sceptic look on the various British declarations and their lack of sincerity to implement them he is reported to have said: "Honourable members ! In 1903, Lord Curzon made a declaration that Oriya-speaking areas would be put under the administration of one province." "In 1917, we got to hear some such declaration with an assurance that a new province would be formed shortly." "Now the Simon Commission says, "Orissa province should be immediately formed."

Almost like a fearless critic with a note of sarcasm, he continued : "We are not very much used to English words and the style of their expression. If they say something to be done shortly or after a few days, what does it exactly connote ?

Is it after how many years ----- twenty, thirty or hundred? Immediately means immediately to us. That is what we understand but not after hundred years or so. Honourable members sitting in the treasury benches have not taken any action on the issue of Orissa. They have not mooted any proposal to take immediate steps for the formation of a Orissa province".<sup>32</sup>

Biswanath not only questioned the sincerity and seriousness of the government with regard to amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts and formation of a separate Orissa province, he also underlined the urgency of immediately forming a boundary Commission.

Biswanath's appeal in this connection appears significant in view of the appointment of O' Donnell Commission in 1931 to determine the boundary of the proposed Orissa province.

Love of Orissa and a concern for its interest was the running theme of his speeches between 1930-1933 on the floor of the Central Legislative Assembly. His conceptualization of Oriyas as a nationality also epitomizes the vision of a broad and enlightened nationalist. In 1932, while delivering his speech on the railway budget and style of functioning of the railway board, Biswanath as a vanguard and champion of Orissa's interest enquired from the railway member the percentage of his Oriya brethren employed in the BNR railway.

Justifying the need of a fairdeal to Oriyas with regard to their employment under BNR railway he said. "Honourable members ! Oriya-speaking areas constitute a far-flung area from Bilaspur to Parlakhemundi, from Khargpur to Jharsuguda where there are more than eight railway lines. Even then, one does not find one percent of Oriyas in the railway jobs of BNR

railway operating in this zone; people of other areas are not satisfied with 20% of jobs, I will be happy if the company employs even 5% of Oriyas under the existing situation." Questioned on the percentage of Oriyas under BNR railway the honourable railway member gave an amusing and mind-defying answer that such a question was communal and did not deserve any answer.

The response that Biswanath made being provoked by his vague and evasive reply brings out and conceptualizes his broad and enlightened vision of Oriya nationality. As he said: "Honourable members ! Should I have to interpret here the meaning of the word communal and community?"

In my view, Oriyas mean all people living in Orissa may they be Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, Non-Brahmins, Christians and Jains. Orissa embraces all people living in Orissa.<sup>33</sup> At this moment was heard the cry : 'Bravo! Mr Orissa' which Biswanath really was.

All roads for Biswanath led to Orissa. Accordingly, with or without context, he dragged Orissa to the centre-stage of his deliberation in the Central Legislative Assembly. It did not matter whether it was a discussion on Central Budget, on railways or on the life style and functioning of British officers in India. Somehow or other, he brought intelligently the question of Orissa and drew the attention of members to hear him. So he was rightly called Mr Orissa. Maybe some of them did it derisively and some others appreciatively. But whatever it is, Biswanath deserves to be rightly called Mr Orissa' for prioritizing (a) the interest of Orissa and that of the Oriya People (b) the paramount need of amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts and formation of Orissa as a separate province

(c) the urgency of instituting a boundary Commission to determine the boundary of the proposed Orissa province.

In those days, Orissa was virtually unknown and constituted a dark region to be blissfully ignored. Orissa was hardly a topic or point of reference in the Central Legislative Assembly. It was rare and even fell in to the rarest category when Orissa became a matter of serious concern on the floor of the Central Legislative Assembly. As has been rightly said : 'such a thing looked like 'Haribol in Lanka' or perhaps like talking of God in the land of Satan.

But Biswanath did it and could do that. He sought to centralize Orissa and prioritize the concern of the Oriyas on the floor of central assembly. His motive was crystal clear. He wanted to galvanize the members; build up support and thereby move the government and British authorities to take urgent steps and concede Orissa's demand for a separate province as soon as possible.

The unseen power and planner has his own plan for everybody. Rightly or wrongly, we are forced to move along that ordained plan and carry it forward. Once the purpose of the divine plan is served, there is an end to the span of our life.

Barrister Biswanath who was not to be over-powered by pinching poverty and adverse circumstances reached a high level of accomplishment and could have the honour of becoming the first Barrister of Orissa. Right from the time he was baptized by Madhu Babu's ideal and idealism from his Ravenshaw College days, he tried to serve Orissa and the interest of Oriyas. As per his ideal and idealism, inclination and capacity, he did his best. He sought to develop and bolster up the spirit of Oriya nationality and

Swaviman (Pride) among his people and his life was almost a total dedication and devotion to facilitate the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts lying scattered under different provinces and formation of Orissa as a separate province.

But there came an abrupt and early end of his life at the age of only fifty four when he died of heart failure at far off Simla. On his death, the statesman in its issue of September 21st 1933 said - Pioneer of Oriya movement, Mr. B.N. Mishra Dead. Simla-September 19.

Mr. B.N. Mishra, a member of the assembly representing an Orissa non-Mohammedan constituency, died of heart failure at the Hindu Hotel this morning. He was in his seat at yesterday's sitting of the Assembly.

Mr. Mishra was a Barrister of Gray's Inn and a pioneer of the movement for the creation of a separate province of Orissa. In his early days in England, he devoted much time and patience to studying in the British museum the history of the Oriya people and their present territory and the results of his prolonged researches are embodied in a book 'A short history of ancient Utkal' which he was noting to publish very soon.

As a Barrister he practiced successfully in Calcutta, Patna and Cuttack but for the past two or three years, the complaint which brought about his death compelled him to stay away from the courts. His home was in Cuttack where he leaves a widower, five sons and four daughters. He entered the assembly when he won the seat vacated by Pandit Nilakantha Das, the Congressman in 1930. At first he was a frequent and humorous speaker. But ill health dogged him for sometime before his death.<sup>34</sup>

### **Biswanath-the man : Remarkable traits of his character**

Biswanath's life of struggle and footprints of his work bring to the forefront remarkable traits of his character. Eventhough any such probe appears to be out of the box in view of the main thrust of the article, a few words on this man and his personality are given below taking a holistic view of the matter.

From his school days, Biswanath evinced a sense of determination as regards having higher English Education in Puri Zilla School which the then conservative elements frowned upon. He had the knack of a fighter in his blood and veins to fight out all adverse circumstances to reach his goal. This was evident during his school days and days at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack where he prosecuted his education in spite of the pinching poverty which was more or less his ever-present companion of those days. With an in-built capacity in him to weather any storm, he hardly cared the conservative and backward-looking forces which sought to drag his feet when he dreamt of visiting England and qualify as a Barrister of Gray's Inn. The conservative elements pounced upon him and his family. Backed up by Mukti Mandap of Jagannath Temple of Puri, they enforced stringent social bycott for a long period of twelve years which continued till 1924-1925. Even then he was firm and unbending to realize his goal. What is remarkable is that in spite of being so much tortured he held no grudge against society and those conservative elements. His sobriety and goodness finally changed them at a point of time and under circumstances which fall beyond the purview of the article to be detailed.

He was an unflinching advocate of Oriya culture and tradition. His almost two years sojourn

in England hardly made any difference in his life style and manners. It was vividly perceptible when this London-returned Barrister landed at Sakhigopal railway station in 1912 not with a tie and coat on but like a Dhoti-clad typical Oriya. He even defied all apprehensions of Gopabandhu and many others of the Satyavadi grove School when instead of using the ear-marked chair and table for dining, he sat down on the carpet in the dining hall room and took his meal served on plantain leaf along with students and teachers.

He was a very simple, sober and self-effacing man. His sobriety was evident when he was conferred the title of Utkal Ratna at a meeting in 1914 or 1915 which was held in Chikitipentha of Ganjam to felicitate and honour him. He considered it unreasonable to confer any honour during a man's life time. It may create, he said, an ego-boosting mindset and retard his growth.

As a lawyer, he gave his hundred percent in the interest of his clients and did not want them to undergo loss even when ill or ill-disposed.

Over and above, he was a Karma Yogi doing his very best as an Oriya activist dedicated to amalgamation and formation of Orissa as a separate province. He was an ordinary man who could achieve extra-ordinary things under all constraints and adversity. It epitomized his staunch determination and extra-ordinary will-power. In this respect, he remains a beacon-blaze- a hope and inspiration for all those who struggle under adverse circumstances for their growth and excellence. 'You can do it' that is what our "Mr Orissa"- this Barrister Biswanath radiates from the other world for whom it concerns. Over and above, he had a progressive mind with regard to women. At a time when women hardly attended any public meeting, he took his wife to the Utkal

Union Conference of 1917 held at Idga field of Cuttack. In a way, it was a social revolution of the time.

### Conclusion

Barrister Biswanath was not a freedom fighter. His sphere of action was not direct action and agitation. He was a liberal and constitutionalist. His field of battle was the public forum-the forum of either the Utkal Sammilani or that of Central Legislative Assembly. Through appeal, prayer, petition, memoranda, building up of public opinion, criticism and pressure on British rulers, he wanted to achieve his goal.

He was no sycophant of British rule in India. Though not a freedom fighter, he was a patriot nonetheless and also a fighter to the core of his being. He fought against the injustice and excesses of British rule in India and the acts of its Commission and omission on public forums and on the forum of Central Legislative Assembly. In spite of all restraints and restrictions of British imperialism, he displayed a remarkable degree of courage and independence.

He loved Orissa and the Oriya people with every fibre of his being. He was rightly called 'Mr. Orissa.' He was a votary of Oriya language and culture. His life was almost a tiredless dedication to the work of amalgamation of Oriya - Speaking tracts and formation of a separate Orissa Province. He sought to do his very best to be an able disciple and lieutenant of Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das who was the architect of Oriya nationalism and the God - Father of the Oriya movement. He was an embodiment of the early wave of Oriya nationalist consciousness or what has been said to be "Jatiprana Sindhura Adya Taranga and 'a pioneer of Oriya movement.' Like Pandit Gopabandhu, another outstanding maker

of modern Orissa, he was not there in life to see the separate Orissa Province on 1st April, 1936 for which he worked so hard along with many others. But the Orissa of his dreams - the comprehensive Orissa of his vision including all Oriya -Speaking tracts that lay scattered under different provinces was not realized. Many Oriya-Speaking Oriyas still remain outside Orissa in the neighbouring provinces where Oriya language and culture is said to be belittled by the dominant linguistic majority. It devolves on all of us to see what best could be done for our own brethren- for the sake of the dignity of our language and culture in areas outside Orissa.

Biswanath like many other great souls of the Oriya movement (Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Maharaja K.C. Gajapati Dev, Maharaja S.C. Bhanjdeo, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Sri Ramchandra Mardraj etc) led by Madhu Babu did his best for us- for our interest as Oriyas to facilitate the formation of a separate Orissa province. The area of his dedication went beyond Ganjam and Orissa stretching far to the shores of England during the early years of the Oriya movement. But unfortunately he is more or less unknown - nay forgotten as a pioneer of Oriya movement. Let us remember this 'Mr Orissa' and draw lessons from his life and struggle. To forget those forefathers like him is an injustice to our ownself -our own blood and to our own Oriya Swaviman of which we should be proud of.

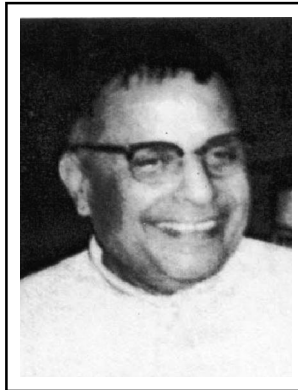
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Dr. Shridhar Charan Sahoo is working as a Reader in Political Science, in Ravenshaw Junior College, Cuttack.



Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab



Annapurna Moharana





*Message of*  
**SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE**  
His Excellency the Governor of Orissa  
on the occasion of  
Independence Day 2008

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

My heartiest congratulations to you all on the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of our Independence.

2. On this day in 1947 our country attained Independence. We became free from the British rule. This landmark achievement was the result of a long and difficult struggle. It was unique because for the first time in the world history it was non-violent. We offer our heartfelt gratitude and homage to the martyrs of our country. Their sacrifices will always inspire us. Their martyrdom will continue to enliven our memories to work for the society and the nation.

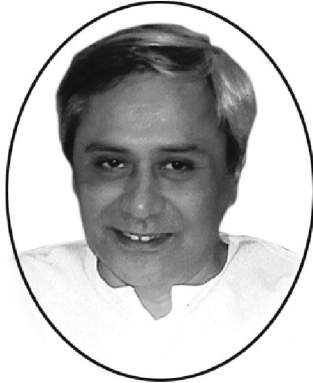
3. Today we fondly remember our beloved Bapuji, the Father of the Nation. He not only guided the historic freedom struggle through his human principles of Satyagraha and non-violence and but also was a role model for the entire world to ensure human rights particularly human right to life with equal dignity without discrimination and deprivation to every citizen on our planet. His ideals will continue to inspire the Indian Nation and the rest of the world for all time to come. He was truly the father of today's world of human rights. We also pay our respectful homage to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhji Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and many others who shaped the destiny of our motherland during the freedom struggle and thereafter.

Orissa was no exception to Gandhiji's magic of mass mobilization. During course of freedom movement Gandhiji visited Orissa several times, staged *padayatras* and addressed public meetings. Gandhiji was deeply moved by seeing the poverty in Orissa and said, "The famine stricken skeletons of men and women in Orissa haunt me in my waking hours and in my dreams. Whatever can be useful to those starving millions is beautiful to my mind. Let us give today first the vital things of life and all the graces and ornaments of life will follow." He had abiding love for Orissa and its people.

4. Orissa's contribution to the freedom struggle is quite significant. Paika Rebellion of Khurda, rebellion of Sambalpur, Ghumsar, the Ranpur Rebellion, the Salt Satyagraha at Inchudi, martyrdom at Eram are some of the amazing chapters of state's chequered history of freedom struggle and tell the supreme sacrifice and the spirit of nationalism exhibited by the Oriyas which is exemplary for all time to come. With great courage and conviction many worthy sons of Orissa laid down their lives. Their struggle against the British Raj started much earlier to 1857. The History of India bears testimony to the sacrifices made by the great sons and daughters of Orissa like Jayee Rajguru, Buxi Jagabandhu, Veer Surendra Sai, Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das, Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Laxman Naik, Baji Rout, Rama Devi, Malati Devi and many others. We pay our humble homage to all of them.

5. Independence Day is a solemn occasion for all of us. It reminds us of the great struggle and the dedication of our patriots in attaining independence. It is our bounden duty to work hard to uphold the freedom and civic rights of our people and ensure inclusive growth, both economic and social and balanced development of our nation. Let us join hands together to forge ahead on the path of peace, progress and prosperity and drive away poverty.

***Jai Hind.***



*Message of*  
**SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK**  
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF ORISSA  
ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY-2008

On this auspicious occasion of the Independence Day, I extend my greetings and good wishes to the sisters and brothers of our State.

On this sacred day, I offer my heartfelt tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, Netajee Subash Chandra Bose, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Maa Ramadevi, Shaheed Laxman Naik and other Freedom Fighters.

I also pay my homage to Jawans who laid down their lives for safeguarding the motherland.

The struggle for Indian Independence is an event carrying much significance in the world history. The people of India under the successful leadership of Mahatma Gandhi fought against the British imperialism on the path of truth and non-violence which is unparalleled. The mighty British Government bowed down before the weapons of truth and non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi. Crores of Indians emerged victorious. India attained freedom. Our freedom struggle exhibited a new dimension to the people of the world seeking liberation.

The contribution of Orissa to the freedom struggle of India was quite significant. Under the able leadership of Buxi Jagabandhu, the first struggle against the British Government was launched in the year 1817. This rebellion of our valiant Paiks made the Britishers panic-stricken. The struggle of Veer Surendra Sai, against the British rule during the First War of Independence in 1857, is unique in history. The Freedom Fighters of Orissa strengthened this movement at different phases since 1857 till the Quit India Movement of 1942.

Nation will never forget the sacrifice, valour and patriotism shown by our Freedom Fighters for the benevolent cause of the Independence of our country. Their invaluable contributions to Indian Independence will continue to inspire our youths.

Today India is celebrating 62nd Independence Day. The country as well as our State has attained remarkable progress in different spheres during these 61 years. Our success in a democratic form of Government has enhanced our dignity during this period.

Democracy has become successful in uniting the vast country like India where people live with diverse religions, creeds and languages. A renaissance has already aroused National Consciousness in the minds of Indians.

Democracy is the best form of Government, in which, the rights and duties of the citizens carry much importance. Democracy will be reinforced when the common man is well aware of their rights. Apart from our rights, we should also be devoted to our responsibilities. We can build a powerful and prosperous country if we properly observe our sacred duties towards the nation.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, India is the country of villages. The soul of India reverberates in villages. So he always laid stress on the development of village. He emphasized on strengthening of village economy. The progress of village and villagers is of much importance for the growth of our country. Therefore, the development of agricultural sector and infrastructure like electricity, roads and irrigation is quite essential.

In the Post-Independence era, the country as well as our State has experienced tangible progress in various sectors. Education has spread. Public awareness has been noticed. But some people have not come into the mainstream of development till now. Political independence has no value in the absence of economic freedom. So we can achieve real independence through the economic empowerment of the poor. Our struggle against poverty, unemployment and hunger should be revitalized. The dream of Gandhijee can be realized if the benefit of development process will reach the poorest of the poor.

The Independence Day is the day of resolution. On this august occasion, I appeal all of you to join hands for the progress of our country as well as the State and uphold the sovereignty of our nation.

*Jai Hind*

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**BIJOY CHANDRA JENA, I.A.S.**  
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**BAISHNAB PRASAD MOHANTY**  
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**SASANKA SEKHAR PANDA**  
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**Editor**

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Editorial Assistance  
**Bibhu Chandra Mishra**  
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**Manas R. Nayak**  
Cover Design & Illustration

**Hemanta Kumar Sahoo**  
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D.T.P. & Design

**Raju Singh**  
**Manas Ranjan Mohanty**  
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*E-mail : [iprsec@rediffmail.com](mailto:iprsec@rediffmail.com)  
Visit : <http://orissagov.nic.in>  
Contact : Ph. 0674-2394839*

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